

**Calynn Dowler**

**Project Title:** *Tides of Change: Migration, Environment and Identity in India's Sundarbans Islands*

**Abstract:**

My proposed project is a three-month oral history project with East Bengali refugees living in the Sundarbans islands of West Bengal, India. This population was displaced from the territories that today comprise Bangladesh in the wake of Partition and during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War. The oral history project focuses on refugees' experiences and interpretations of these political events, their subsequent migration, and the process of settling in previously forested tracts of the Sundarbans mangrove forest. The project contributes to my broader dissertation project, which is an ethnographic examination of environment and identity in the low-lying deltaic islands known as the Sundarbans. My project addresses past and present migration in the region and the multiple meanings attached to place and landscape. As climate change-related processes like salinization and land erosion transform the Sundarbans today, I focus on links between the natural world and shifting social and cultural geographies. Through close attention to practical and symbolic engagements with landscape, I explore how identities like "Hindu," "Muslim," and "refugee" are constructed in relation to place, as well as relationships across difference.