

Alfonso Reyes Lectures: 25 Years of Humanist Impact



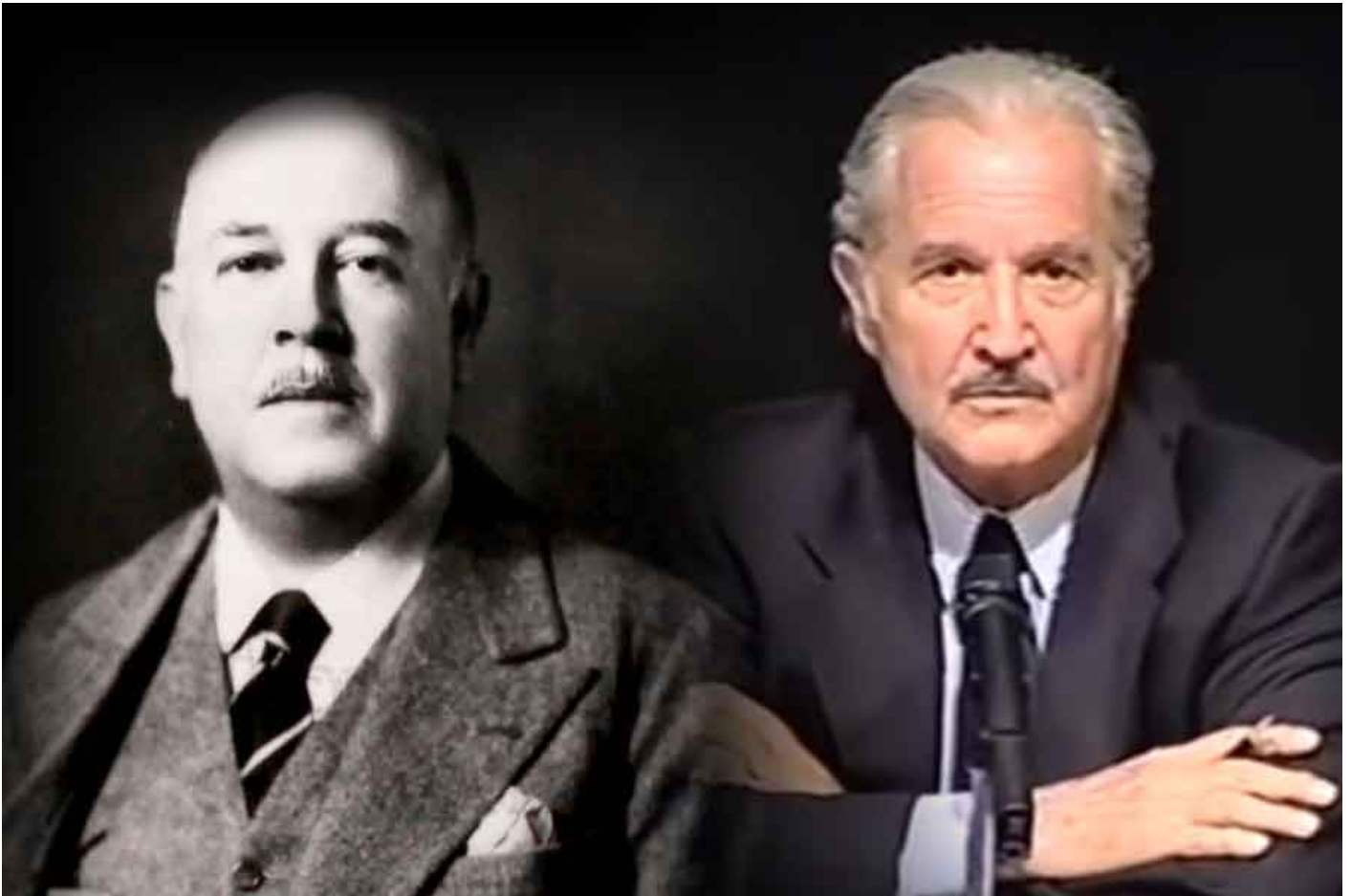
Nobel Prize winners José Saramago, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Mario Molina, as well as other **renowned authors and intellectuals**, have been part of the [Alfonso Reyes Lectures](#) (CAR for their initials in Spanish) for the past **25th years**.

*“(For 25 years) the [Alfonso Reyes Lectures](#) have allowed us to connect with **internationally renowned personalities** who enrich us and can even transform our lives,”* said **Ana Laura Santamaría**, the director of this cultural project.

These lectures began in **1999** as one of [Tec de Monterrey’s](#) **greatest efforts to promote the humanities** in its community and to bolster **awareness** of social, economic, political, ethical, and philosophical issues.

Since that year, the Alfonso Reyes Lectures have also been distinguished for their **use of technology** to have a **multiplier effect** on society and for support from the Tec’s professors.

This space was the **brainchild** of **writer Carlos Fuentes**, who promoted the project until it became a reality.



Celebrities who have participated in the Alfonso Reyes Lectures

Nobel Prize winners, intellectuals, and writers have visited different **Tec de Monterrey campuses**. Here are some of the speakers who have contributed to this story.

These people have won **Nobel Prizes** in different areas such as **Chemistry, Literature, Economics, and Peace**, amplifying the aim of these lectures to explore different fields of knowledge.

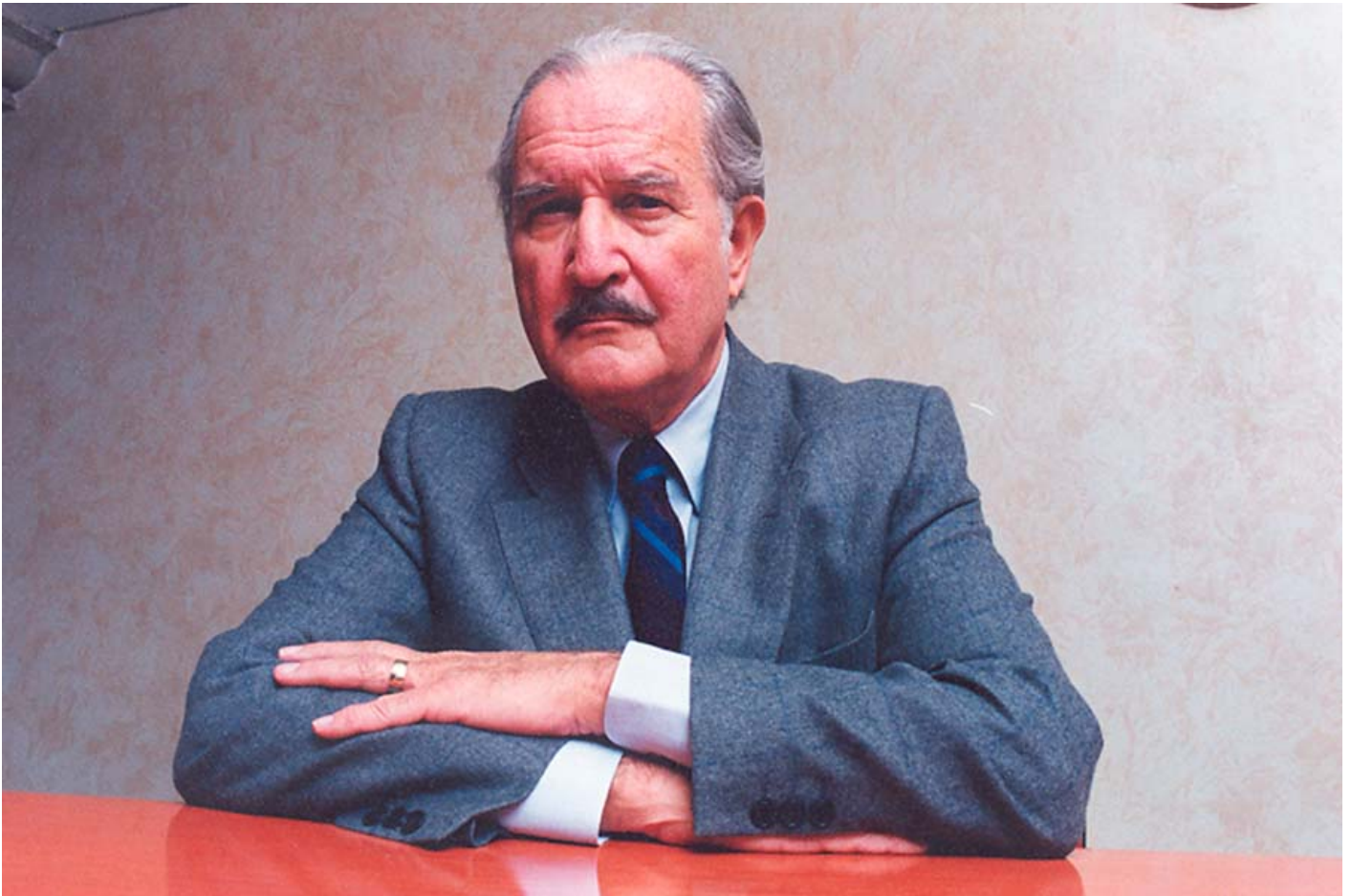
1. Carlos Fuentes

Mexican writer, intellectual, and diplomat Carlos Fuentes gave [the first lecture](#) at the Luis Elizondo Auditorium on Monterrey campus.

Fuentes, who was also a founding member of the Alfonso Reyes Lectures Advisory Board, gave a talk entitled “**A New Social Contract for the 21st Century.**”

This talk addressed the complex relationship between the public and private sectors and civil society, and the importance of finding a **balance of power to achieve democracy**.

In 2001, he presented his recommendations on how to become a good writer in the talk [“Writing: Encounter and Memory.”](#)



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2. José Saramago

The winner of the **1998 Nobel Prize for Literature** visited Tec de Monterrey on several occasions for the Alfonso Reyes Lectures.

This **Portuguese writer, novelist, poet, journalist, and playwright** talked about [“The Awakening of Blind Democracies”](#) and his book [“The Name and the Thing.”](#)

He also gave a talk called [“A new geography? Perhaps a new novel,”](#) in which he proposed that approaching a new literary text requires a discomfort of the spirit.

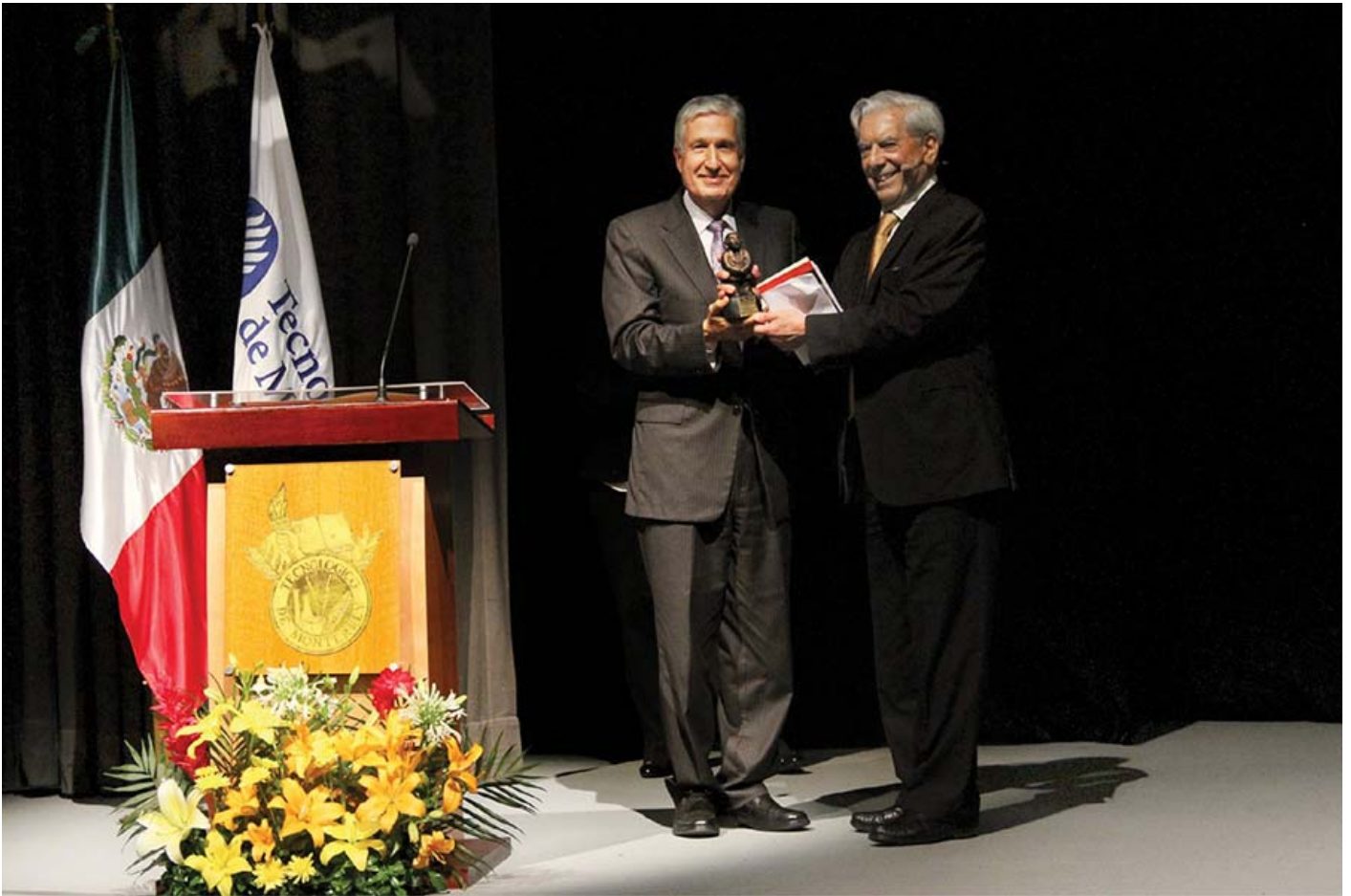


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3. Fernando Savater

During his first visit in the inaugural year of the Alfonso Reyes Lectures, the **Spanish philosopher, novelist, and intellectual** addressed the concept of citizenship as an indispensable requirement for thinking about the future in his talk [“Ethics and Citizenship.”](#)

He also spoke about the [importance of education](#) in contemporary democracies as a social commitment.



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4. Mario Vargas Llosa

Considered one of the great contemporary writers of Latin America, Vargas Llosa has participated in these lectures.

In 2000, the **Peruvian writer, politician, and journalist** discussed the relationship [between literature and politics](#) and explored the ethical and utopian possibilities of the literary imagination.

In the same year, he held the seminar [“Literature is a new flame”](#) for educators.

A few years after receiving the **Nobel Prize for Literature**, he received a tribute at Tec de Monterrey, where he gave the speech entitled [“Victor Hugo and my literary passions.”](#)

5. Luisa Valenzuela

The author of books such as **“Strange Things Happen Here”** and **“As in War”** was a member of the earliest Advisory Board to the Alfonso Reyes Lectures.

During one of her visits, the **Argentine writer and journalist** conducted a [workshop on writing micro-stories](#), which was broadcast to all **Tec de Monterrey campuses**.

6. Noé Jitrik

The author of many short stories, novels, and critical, literary, and historical essays visited the Monterrey campus in November 2002.

This **Argentine literary critic and writer** gave a talk entitled [“Village or World: Identity, Literature, Discomfort,”](#) in which he addressed the perspectives of nationalism and universalism within a globalizing framework.



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7. Sergio Pitol

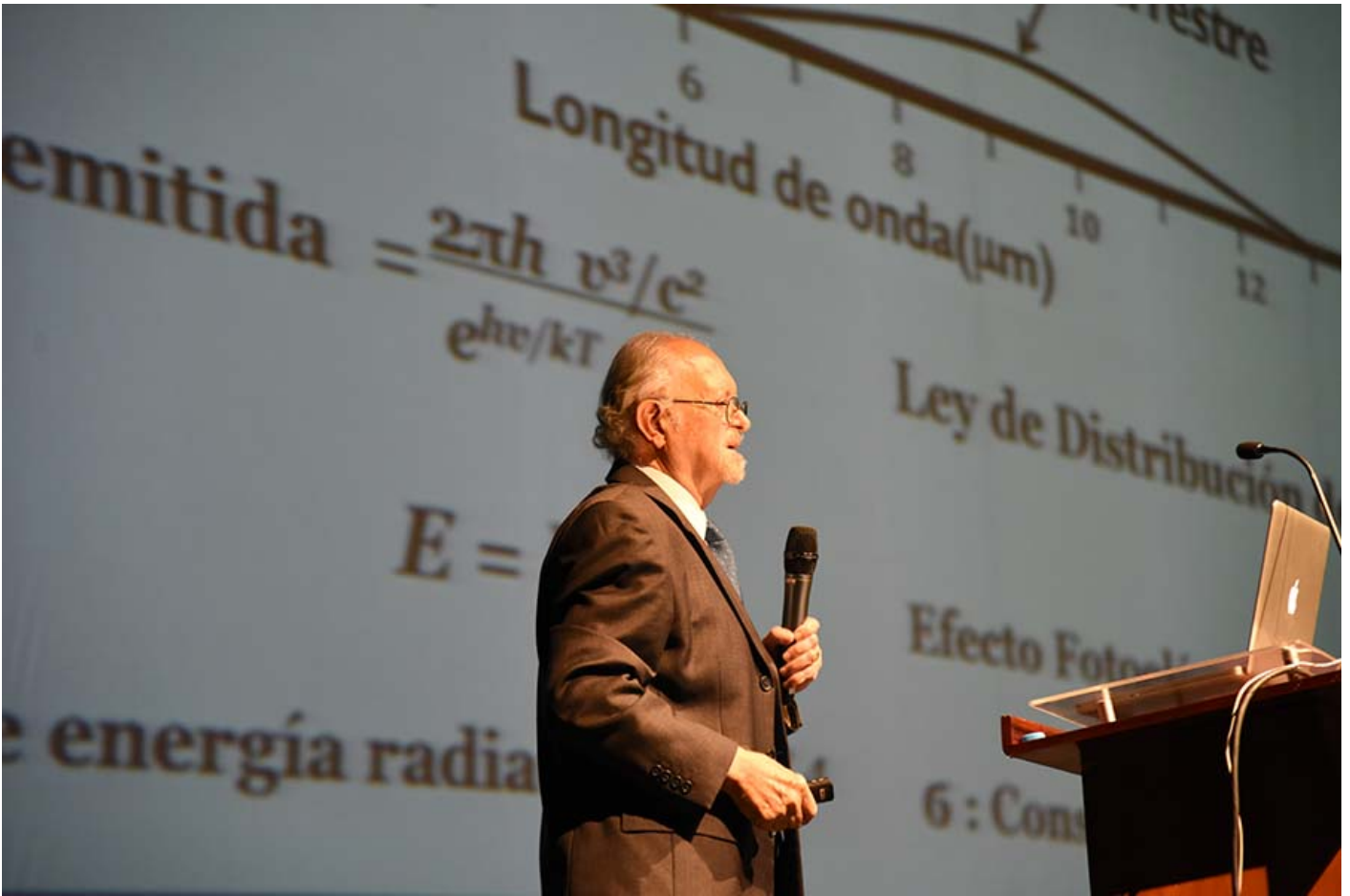
One of the most important Mexican writers of recent times, Pitol visited the Tec community on several occasions as part of these lectures.

During one of his visits, the **Mexican writer, translator, and diplomat** held a seminar on [“The Golden Age of Russian Literature,”](#) in which he talked about 19th-century Russian literature.

8. Mario Molina

Mario Molina, who won the 1995 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, participated in the Alfonso Reyes Lectures in 2017 with the talk **Citizenship and Sustainability**.

Molina warned about the worldwide consequences of continuing global warming with the use of fossil fuels.



9. **Alessandro Baricco**

The Alfonso Reyes Lectures director remembers the conversation between **novelist Alessandro Baricco** and Tec professor Raúl Verduzco because she heard **students talking about Immanuel Kant and aesthetics** in the lobby, bathrooms, and hallways after that.

“Seeing how Alessandro made the ideas of a philosopher such as Kant exciting for students has been one of the most beautiful moments I have experienced in these lectures.”

10. **Carlos Monsiváis**

Mexican writer and journalist Carlos Monsiváis chronicled Mexican poetry at the end of the 19th century, beginning with modernism.

During his first appearance, this author presented a review of the main poets, their relationships, aesthetic interests, ideals, and importance to the cultural life of Mexico from the Porfirio Díaz Era until after the Revolution.

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11. Adonis

Syrian poet [Adonis](#), a frequent candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature, told students about the importance of this literary genre at the Monterrey campus in 2018.

The author of more than 20 Arabic poetry books said that they are the people who should be changing society.



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Otras personalidades

- **Amartya Sen**, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economics
- **Jason Shogren**, winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize
- **Enrique Krauze**, mexican writer and historian
- **Irene Vallejo**, spanish philologist and writer
- **Rosa Montero**, spanish writer and journalist
- **Jorge Volpi**, mexican writer
- **Fernanda Melchor**, mexican writer and translator
- **Enrique Serna**, mexican writer

- **Valeria Luiselli**, mexican writer and essayist
- **Martha Nussbaum**, american philosopher
- **David Le Breton**, french sociologist and anthropologist
- **Donna Haraway**, american philosopher
- **Judith Butler**, american philosopher and one of the founding theorists of Queer theory
- **Lauren f. Kelin**, director of the Digital Humanities Lab at Emory University

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Interesting facts about the Alfonso Reyes Lectures - Carlos Fuentes proposed their name

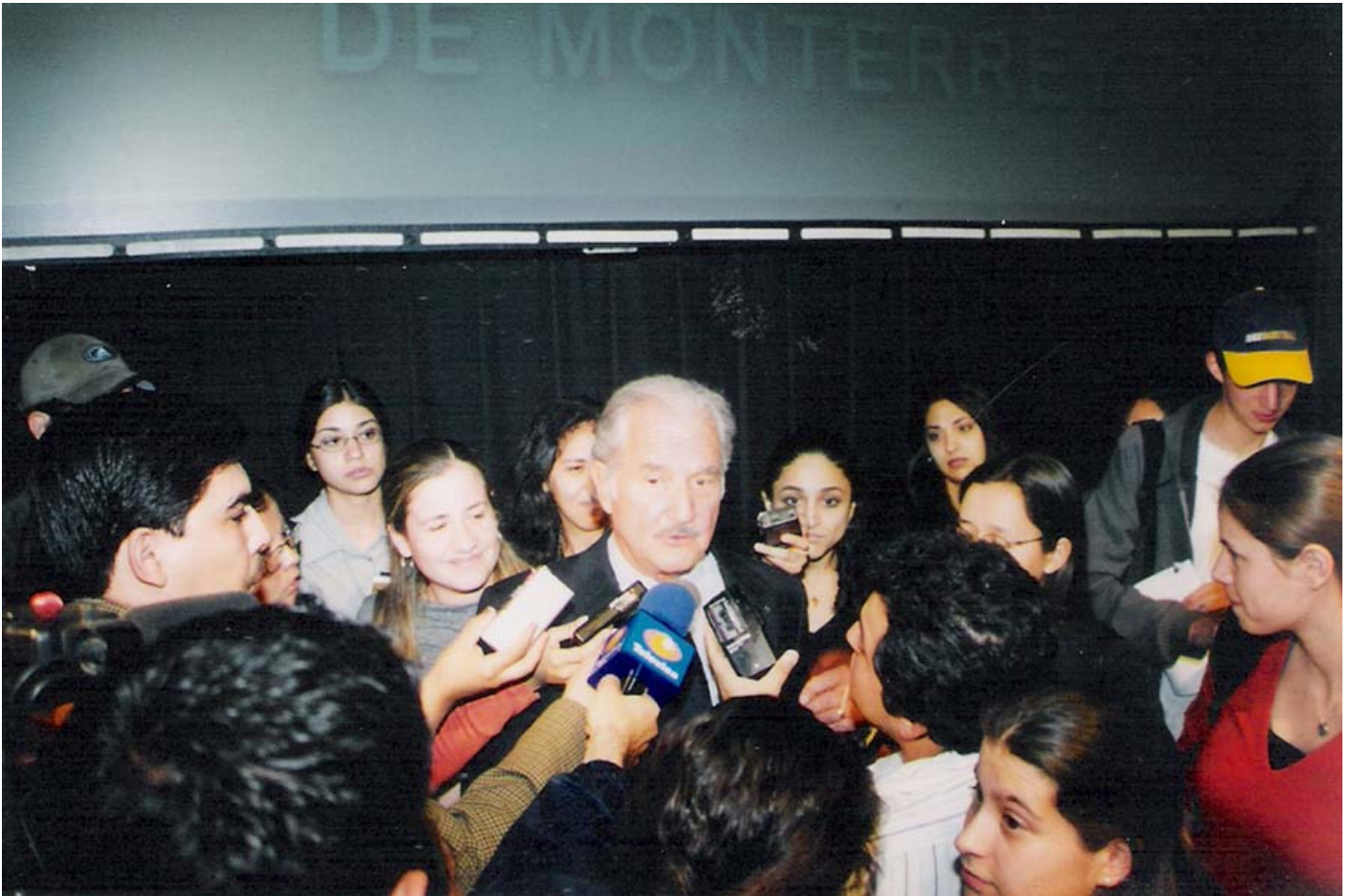
The name of this space was the brainchild of the Mexican writer **Carlos Fuentes**.

Alfonso Reyes (1889-1959), recognized as the **polymath from Monterrey**, transformed contemporary Mexican **literature** and **culture with his contributions**.

Fuentes proposed paying tribute to the person he considered his mentor, promoting the project until it became a reality on **February 16, 1999**.

According to **Silvia Garza Garza**, coordinator of this project in its early years, **Reyes was also considered one of the greatest humanists of the 20th century**, who also placed Monterrey in the highest intellectual leagues.

The lectures are a tribute to the memory of this writer from Monterrey.



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- Present on every Tec campus and site

The Alfonso Reyes Lectures have stood out from others due to their academic commitment and purpose, as well as their **use of technology** to reach a wider audience and have a greater impact.

Technology has been used from their first edition, allowing the lectures to be shown at every Tec campus and site **via satellite** transmissions through the **Tec's Virtual University**, thus enabling **thought without borders**.

- Free and available to the general public

The purpose of this space was also to **share knowledge**, which is why these speeches and activities have been **available to the public** since 1999.

This represents one of their most important characteristics, says **Ana Laura Santamaría**, director of the lectures:

"We want to continue to encourage the community to participate in these events, which is why they are always available to the public and free to access. It's a way in which Tec de Monterrey also demonstrates its social commitment."



/> width="900" loading="lazy"> - **Video archive of more than 500 talks with record watch times**

The Alfonso Reyes Lectures feature a **video archive** available on [YouTube](#) that includes more than 500 videos, with more than 2 million views.

According to Ana Laura, the average watch time is 25 minutes, a very high average.

“This record reveals that although we live in an instantaneous culture, we have an enormous capacity to concentrate when ideas are important.”

- **Most watched talk: on the Apocalypse**

The most watched video in these lectures is by **philosopher Amelia Valcárcel**, and is entitled *Apocalypse Seminar: images, music, and stories of the end of the world*.

This talk is about the narratives of the Apocalypse, from the biblical book of John and contemporary movies that talk about the end of the world, including music and a philosophical perspective.

- **Featured in documentary on philosopher Markus Gabriel**

[Philosopher Markus Gabriel's](#) visit was documented on video for a documentary about his life.

Santamaría recalls filming him from when he arrived at the airport, with the microphone placed in his van to record all of his conversations.

“It was very interesting and fun to wear a microphone knowing that our conversations were being recorded. I felt as if I were in a reality show.”

Markus is considered the founder of the **New Realism model**, which proposes that everything appearing in a **field of sense** is real.



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- Pandemic announced during Jomana Haddad's talk

The beginning of the pandemic was announced following the participation of Lebanese writer, journalist, poet, artist, and activist [Jomana Haddad](#).

As the airports were closing, it was a challenge to return the writer to her home in Lebanon.



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The guest for the first virtual Alfonso Reyes Lecture, during the pandemic, was French philosopher, sociologist, and anthropologist [Bruno Latour](#).

He was one of the first to talk about how **the pandemic could be a great opportunity to think and consume differently.**

Alfonso Reyes Lectures: an engine for literary research and reflection

The impact of these lectures has been enormous, raising awareness, instilling passion, and even boosting ideas and new fields of study at Tec de Monterrey.

“The lectures are a permanent space of deep enrichment. They’re a space for fulfilment and personal and community development,” says Ana Lucía as she goes on to share some examples:

- Driving new areas and fields of study

Following the participation of sociologist **David Le Breton** in the lectures, **a general education course was created at the Tec and research groups on the anthropology of the body were also set up.**

In addition, the virtual presentation about gender by philosopher **Judith Butler** **triggered studies into gender at the institution.**

- Raising student awareness

As well as **Alessandro Baricco's** talk, another important moment that the Alfonso Reyes Lectures director recalls is the participation of the **poet Gioconda Belli**.

"We got the chance to hear her read one of her poems about science, and I recall seeing the students with tears in their eyes; it was deeply moving."



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- Inspiring ideas

During her visit to the Tec, Mexican writer **Guadalupe Nettel** received the profound gratitude of a young Leader of Tomorrow.

"He came up to her and told her how grateful he was to her. His mother had given him her book "The body I was born in" as a gift and reading it had inspired him to write the essay that got him admitted to Tec de Monterrey.

"He thanked her and asked her to autograph the book with a dedication for his mom. It was a very special moment."

The **Leaders of Tomorrow** scholarship is offered by the Tec for talented young people with limited resources to study their degree at the institution with a 100% scholarship.

- Sparking passions

“Everyone who has experienced the lectures can agree we have discovered that we have many passions, or maybe we thought we had a few, but they have multiplied in this space,” says Santamaría.

For example, she recalls *“**Rosa Montero’s** beautiful talk on the art of reading, where many students and professors talked about rediscovering their passion for reading.”*

Also, the visit from **David Carrasco**, Harvard professor and personal friend of Carlos Fuentes. During his participation in the lectures, he displayed photos of Fuentes, García Márquez, and Toni Morrison.

“He shared anecdotes about Carlos Fuentes in such a special way that the students asked us as they were leaving what they should read first or where they could buy Carlos Fuentes’ works.”



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About the 2024 Alfonso Reyes Lectures

- This year, **the Alfonso Reyes Lectures celebrate their 25th anniversary**. Their archive will be preserved as cultural heritage at the **CERVANTINE Library**.

- The book of the year will be *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, by **Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra**.

Information and pictures by Martha Mariano.

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