

Latin American Studies Center News



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Fall 2005

"Vivir la Democracia"

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"To Live Democracy" by Sosnowski

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For ten consecutive weeks, beginning in October 2005, the Venezuelan newspaper *Últimas Noticias* has been publishing a series of inserts on democratic values. This initiative was first presented by Saúl Sosnowski in a Forum held in Caracas in 2000. The ten inserts, each on a democratic value, was produced by a team of Venezuelan cultural experts and designers with Sosnowski. The first series of 12-page inserts focus on “Liberty,” “Co-Existence,” “Equality,” “Tolerance,” “Solidarity,” “Honesty,” “Rights,” “Responsibility,” “(A sense of) Belonging,” and “Participation.” Profusely illustrated and aiming at both the general public and educational institutions, the texts draw materials from, primarily, Venezuelan poetry, prose fiction and popular culture. Each “value” is traced from the 1500 to the present and its appearance in the Venezuelan constitution is highlighted to draw attention to citizen rights and obligations. The initial launch of 240,000 copies will be supplemented by bound volumes of the entire material to be used by school and cultural centers throughout Venezuela. The publication of “To Live Democracy,” under LASC’s aegis, has been made possible with contributions from Banco Mercantil, Fundación Bigott, and *Últimas Noticias*.



The University of Maryland, College

Publications

Periodismo de frontera: un proyecto para la paz (Border Journalism: A Project for Peace)

The book brings together the activities developed by Peruvian and Ecuadorian journalists who participated in the “Programa de Periodistas para la Consolidación de una Cultura de Paz en la Zona de Frontera Perú-Ecuador” from 2000 to 2003. The objective of the Program was to bring together the most influential journalists to offer them a space to review the role they must assume in the peace process initiated on October 26, 1998, by Ecuador and Peru. It builds, moreover, on the University of Maryland’s four-year led project on peace-building in the region (<http://www.lasc.umd.edu/Projects/grupomaryland/index.htm>) The program was made possible by the “Asociación de Universidades del Sur del Ecuador y Norte de Perú, by the Spanish province of Navarra, ProPeru and the University of Piura. According to Luisa Portugal, the project’s coordinator, this book is intended to be used as a document for permanent consultation and inspiration, as it encompasses the knowledge, observations and suggestions proposed/reached by historians, politicians, journalists, journalism professors, sociologists, development experts and conflict management experts on ‘transborder’ journalism, from the different perspectives their professions offer.

Periodismo de frontera: Un proyecto para la paz
2004 , ed. Luisa Portugal Universidad de Piura, Piura - Perú



Memories of Villa Clara by Judith Freidenberg

In “Memorias de Villa Clara” (“Memories of Villa Clara”), Judith Freidenberg, Department of Anthropology UMD, synthesizes the oral, material, and written histories of Villa Clara to depict the village’s unique heritage. Situated in northeastern Argentina, Villa Clara was founded by Jewish colonists brought to the country by the Baron de Hirsch at the end of the 19th century. Freidenberg’s ethnographic and ethno-historic studies which form the basis of “Memorias” consider the strong history of other European immigration to Villa Clara later in history, as well as the experiences of the native gauchos. The book is directed towards a general public audience in order to encourage members of the Villa Clara community to reconstruct the village’s past. “Memorias,” written in Spanish, is available for purchase on Amazon.com; all proceeds from book sales benefit the local Villa Clara Museum.

Memorias de Villaclara
2005 , ed. Judith Freidenberg, Antropofagia, Buenos Aires - Argentina



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José Emilio Pacheco:

Poeta - puente, Confluence of Two Cultures

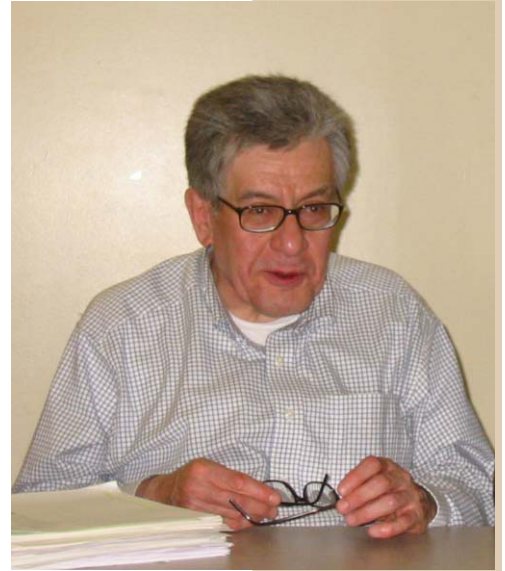
by Sandra Cypess

The renowned Mexican poet and critic, Jose Emilio Pacheco, was honored by the University of Maryland, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Mexican Cultural Institute in a program held April 12-13, 2005. Entitled *José Emilio Pacheco: Poeta-puente, Confluence of two Cultures*, the program focused on Pacheco's impact on Mexican and Latin American literature and culture and his influence in the United States and on the U.S. Academy. Pacheco is known internationally for his multiple achievements in poetry, narrative, translation, and criticism. The Distinguished University of Maryland Professor has written *Irás y no volverás* (*And So You Go, Never to Come Back*, 1973), *Islas a la deriva* (*In the Drift of the Islands*, 1976), *Desde Entonces* (*Since Then*, 1980), *Los trabajos del mar* (*The Labors of the Sea*, 1983), and *An Ark for the Next Millennium: Poems* (illustrated by Francisco Toledo, translated by Margaret Sayers Peden, 1993), among his collections of poetry. Among his short stories and novels can be found *El principio del placer* (*The Pleasure Principle*, 1997) and two novels: *Morirás lejos* (*You Will Die in a Distant Land*, 1978) and *Las batallas en el desierto* (*Battles in the Desert*, 1971).

Sponsored by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, the Latin American Studies Center, the Jiménez Porter Writer's House and the Department of English of the University of Maryland in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Mexican Cultural Institute, the event was inaugurated to a standing room only audience at the Mexican Cultural Institute on the evening of April 12. Dana Goia, poet and Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, and renowned poets and translators Alastair Reid, and Pura López Colomé, joined Pacheco in a bilingual poetry reading and an informal conversation about poetry. Pacheco not only read his own works,

but also his original translations of Goia, Elliott, and other American poets.

The conference continued on April 13, on the University of Maryland campus with scholarly papers, including several by University of Maryland Faculty: Graciela Nemes, Sandra Cypess and Hernán Sánchez, as well as Rebecca Biron, Professor of Latin American Literature, University of Miami, and María Rosa Olivera Williams, Professor of Spanish, University of Notre Dame. In addition, Pacheco read his own compositions, accompanied by translations by one of his students, Tanya Huntington. Pacheco and University of Maryland Professor and poet Michael Collier read original translations of each others new writings. Several of his students gave presentations to conclude a wonderful program in Pacheco's honor.



José Emilio Pacheco



Tania Huntingtm, José Emilio Pacheco, Pura López, Rebecca Biron, María Rosa Olivera Williams and Sara Cypess at the event

Establishing a Community of Latin Americanists and Caribbeanists:

First Latin American and Caribbean Graduate Student Conference

by *Luciana Beroiz*

Organized by graduate students Leandro Benmergui and Luciana Beroiz, with the sponsorship of the Latin American Studies Center and the support of a group of professors at University of Maryland, College Park, the First Latin American and Caribbean Graduate Student Conference (April 14-15, 2005) launched a series of seminars that are intended to discuss current projects, dissertations and work in progress on Latin America and the Caribbean. A set of interrelated questions gave birth to this inter-disciplinary project. On the one hand, what does Latin America and the Caribbean mean for Latin Americanists and Caribbeanists? And, how are these two spaces studied and explained as both material realities and symbolic constructs? On the other hand, how does studying outside their birth country, in the case of Latin American and Caribbean students, change their personal and intellectual approach to Latin America and the Caribbean? And, how does studying Latin America and the Caribbean from a U.S. perspective, in the case of U.S. students, determine their method, topics of interest, and final results? The conference, primarily thought-out to bring together graduate students and professors from different disciplines interested in Latin America and

the Caribbean, included a varied selection of topics and presentations. Each of the panels—"Cultural Activism through Music and Film: Audio-Visual Representations of Politics in Brazil," "Migration, Transnationalism and Global Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean World," "México: History, Culture, and Politics during the 20th century" and "Argentina: New approaches to a *militant* era"—clustered studies on a particular geographical region of the Americas produced by students working in different fields. Such organization facilitated a



fruitful exchange of research methods, approaches, questions, suggestions and presentation techniques.

In "Cultural Activism through Music and Film: Au-

dio-Visual Representations of Politics in Brazil”— moderated by Dr. Barbara Weinstein— Gisele-Audrey Mills (Ethnomusicology), Paula Halperin (History) and Luciana Beroiz (Comparative Literature) discussed the connection between Brazilian performance and identity, the role of Cinema Novo and its politics of racial representation, and the effects of translation practices on the representation and rhetoric of violence in the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro. In “Migration, Transnationalism and Global Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean World”— moderated by Dr. Dorith Grant-Wisdom— Philbert Aaron (Education Policy and Leadership), Silvia Mejía (Comparative Literature) and April Shemak (English) referred to the connections between education, media, and migration in the Dominican Republic, the role of nostalgia and cyberspace among migrant Ecuadorian communities, and the connections between media, literature, and consumption.

In “México: History, Culture, and Politics during the 20th century”— moderated by Dr. Sandra Cypess— Susanne Einegel, Kathryn Flom Kline, Pablo Acuahuitl (History), and Jennifer Dix (Comparative Literature), analyzed middle-class identities in Mexico City at the turn of the twentieth century, Mexican Political Culture and the Alliance for Progress, organ trafficking in detective fiction, and Mexican art and nationalism.

Finally, in “Argentina: New approaches to a *militant* era”— moderated by Dr. Laura DeMaría— Laura Lenci, Leandro Benmergui (History), Laura Maccioni, (Spanish), and Meghan Gibbons (Comparative Literature) presented on “guerrilleros” violent politics in Argentina, Peronism and the representation of urban space in Post-Peronist Literature, Left discourse in the Argentinian magazines *Punto de Vista* and *La Ciudad Futura*, and political motherhood in the U.S. and Argentina.

The conference closed with a Film/Debate session that included the screening of *Ilha das Flores* (1990), directed by Jorge Furtado (Brazil), and *Por esos Ojos* (1997), directed by Virginia Martínez and Gonzalo Arijón (France/Argentina/Spain). Both current and critical, these films generated debate around controversial socio-political practices and their representation in Latin America.

The First Latin American and Caribbean Graduate

Student Conference provided a comfortable space where to share our interests and receive relevant feedback and critique on our work. It enabled each of us, its participants, to discuss our projects, re-define our questions and objectives, and learn about each other’s very diverse but equally interesting studies. Future seminars will enable, we believe, the solid establishment of a Latin Americanist and Caribbeanist academic community active in its intellectual and social exchange and invested in producing work with social value and impact.



Faculty and Graduate Students at the Seminar



Latin America Through Film

by Paula Halperin

We asked Paula Halperin, the organizer of the film screenings, what was the relevance of the screenings during the Seminar and what were her thoughts about the experience. Here is what she told us:

“Films are always good artifacts to think, feel, and discuss a particular theme or topic. This was our sentiment when we thought a way to show our reality in Latin America.

We wanted to point at the problems that the continent is going through; poverty, political corruption, the traces of state terrorism in collective memory among others. But, at the same time, we really wanted to emphasize the way in which Latin America fights against injustice and fear and the multiple ways in which its people respond and organize themselves against the dilemma of their particular history.

Many undergraduate and graduate students and faculty came to share these films with us. There was a common feeling of sadness because of the subject matter of the films but there was also amazing engagement with the themes brought up by them

The discussions that took place after the screenings and the interest people showed on the issues depicted on the films, tell us all how important it

is to organize this kind of meetings, which allows us to engage with people from other countries and look for common grounds on the way we think, research and participate in our countries' societies. These two films about two different countries, shot with two extremely different styles, and with different intentions, were the ideal vehicle to think, feel, and discuss about our countries.”



Paula Halperin introduces the films to the audience.

2006-2007 Post-Doctoral Fellowship Competition

We are pleased to announce the competition for residential fellowships to begin in Fall 2006. For the current round, the Center will particularly welcome proposals that address issues related to Latin America, focusing on culture and democracy, governance and civil society, literature and ethnicity, and migration studies.

For further information and applications contact us or visit our website at www.lasc.umd.edu

WHERE IS DON FELIPE'S RETIREMENT MONEY?

The Testimony of a Bracero and a Legacy of Injustice

by Gladys Guzmán

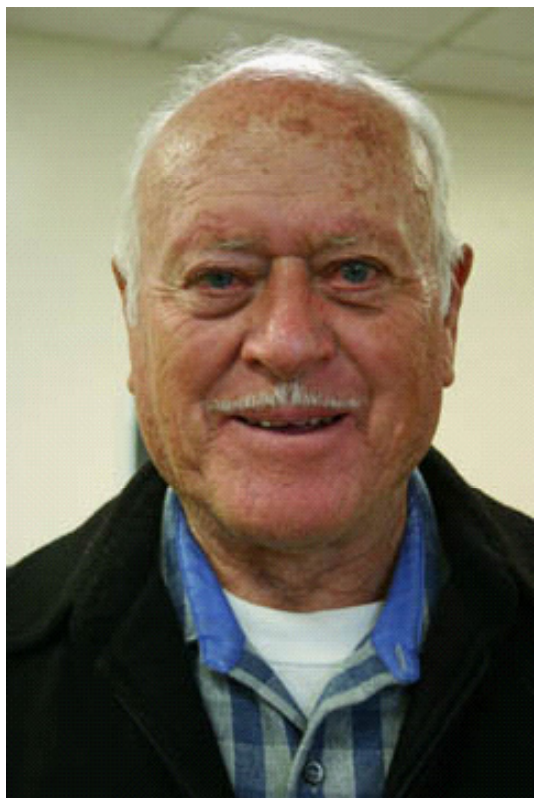
Ms. Macrina Cárdenas, Legislative Coordinator for Mexico Solidarity Network, was invited to the University of Maryland last April to present the story of Don Felipe Muñoz Pabón, member of the National assembly of Braceros in Tlaxcala, Mexico. Don Felipe is one of thousands of Braceros who came to the United States in the 1940's to work the land while many Americans were fighting the war in Europe and Asia. Today Don Felipe and his assembly are struggling to claim the 10% deducted from their paychecks and then deposited in retirement accounts while they worked the fields and railroads of the United States in the 40s, 50s and 60s. To this day, the Braceros' funds seem to have disappeared in a complicated story of transfers that have no paper trail. The United States affirms that the

money was deposit in a Wells Fargo bank account. The bank confirms the deposit but it also claims that they sent the funds to the National Bank of Mexico which does not account for any deposit.

Don Felipe, who came to the United States more than 5 times under the Bracero program, said that most Bracero workers came to help the economy of the United States and they are only asking for the money they placed in retirement accounts.

"We are not asking for charity; we are asking for what is right; we earned those few dollars with the sweat of our hard work," explained Don Felipe. He told students that from the beginning he knew work in the U.S. was not going to be easy: "Our arrival to the United States was a sad and humiliating one. We were showered and fumigated like cattle, our blood was drawn for collections to blood banks, and finally we were body searched as if we were criminals."

Finally, Don Felipe remarked that he is realistic about his situation. He is aware that those few dollars that are owed to him, with more than 40 years of interest, must add to an amount that neither the Mexican nor American government will ever be willing to pay back to him and to all the Braceros.



Brazilian and Latin American Pension Systems at the Crossroads

by Amir Francisco Lando

During the first semester, LASC hosted then Brazilian Minister of Social Security, Dr. Amir Lando. He is currently President of the Senate Committee to investigate fraud accusations against ruling Partido do Trabalho (Labor Party). Dr. Lando addressed the University community on the state of pension systems in Latin America. Here is an excerpt of his presentation.

Structural reforms implanted throughout the region have not overcome the existing problems in the public social security systems in Latin-American countries. Administrative costs have risen, the amounts of benefits have fallen in relation to the 1970s, the number of contributors has also continued to fall, and evasion is still rising. The groups with stronger voices have been usually better able to obtain privileged access to higher retirement benefits. Therefore, the positive effects expected by the reformers failed to materialize. Even with increased resources channeled to the capital markets, there was no growth in investments. The Brazilian experience, in which a parametric type of reform was carried out, was more successful, with administrative costs falling during the 1990s. The amount of the benefits increased, especially for those in the lower brackets, thus affording better living conditions to the poor population. The financing system provided by the 1988 Constitution was temporarily sustainable, at least for workers in

public and private companies and for those whose incomes were very low and who worked under very unstable occupational conditions. Notwithstanding, the number of contributors kept decreasing and revenue has become increasingly limited. If economic growth continues low and if public finances continue to show chronic deficits, as has been occurring in most cases, the situation will inevitably worsen.

Systems of individual accounts are unlikely to provide adequate pensions for most workers in Latin America. With roughly half the region's labor force in the informal sector, and those workers affiliated with pension funds not in full compliance, these new pension systems are likely to provide adequate pensions for only a minority of workers. Pension models that strictly link contributions and benefits can result in exclusion and precariousness for a large percentage of the population. Low incomes and low contribution densities for a large segment of the population do not recommend classic models of social insurance or systems of individual accounts as they fail to deliver adequate benefits.

There is no simple solution. Between 50% and 70% of pensioners in Latin America countries have access to only a minimum pension. Given budget crises in various countries and the size of the rural population, lowering the floor would lead to pres-



tures on essential services in urban areas if cuts prompted migration to cities from rural areas. Lower spending on pensions would require increased compensatory spending on other social programs. International experience also suggests that tightening eligibility can lead to a rise in disability claims. For these reasons, the critical importance of a state-provided basic pension has gained new currency within policy debates, as indicated by recent World Bank reports. Even with a renewed focus on the importance of a basic safety-net pension, there is little consensus on how pension systems should be structured (or restructured), and that no single model is panacea. Indeed one of the emerging lessons is that given country-specific conditions, a range of policy solutions beyond individual accounts may be viable.

In recent years, national accounts have gained attention, however they should be viewed with caution. For national accounts to function effectively they must be based upon updated actuarial information which is non-existent in many countries, including Brazil. Also, there is a great deal of controversy over technical methods, which can have a tremendous impact on benefit outcomes. Furthermore, without transparency, benefits are subject to manipulation given budgetary exigencies. In countries with highly heterogeneous labor forces characterized by an aging population and precarious employment, some form of capitalization is essential. The possibility of accumulating funds during times of prosperity and high employment that could be consumed at a later time appears prudent, and capitalization has the added benefit of being portable - a significant advantages when the labor force is highly mobile.

In Brazil, particularly, a more approximate view shows that no reform, parametric or structural, is

likely to succeed since most of the problems related to management and technology of information remain unsolved. Preliminary action shows that over 1,5 million benefits are irregular and could reduce the expenditures by 10 percent in the short term. There are problems with the collection of contribution such as evasion, frauds and legal provisions to exempt employers from contributions that reduces the receipts by 3.5 billion dollars. Parametric or structural reforms are doomed to fail if managerial problems are not solved in a convenient way. The failure of reforms seems to be concentrated in the diagnosis, that was very fragile in topics related to the national economic conditions and state or private sector capacities, that should improve in order to attend the beneficiaries.

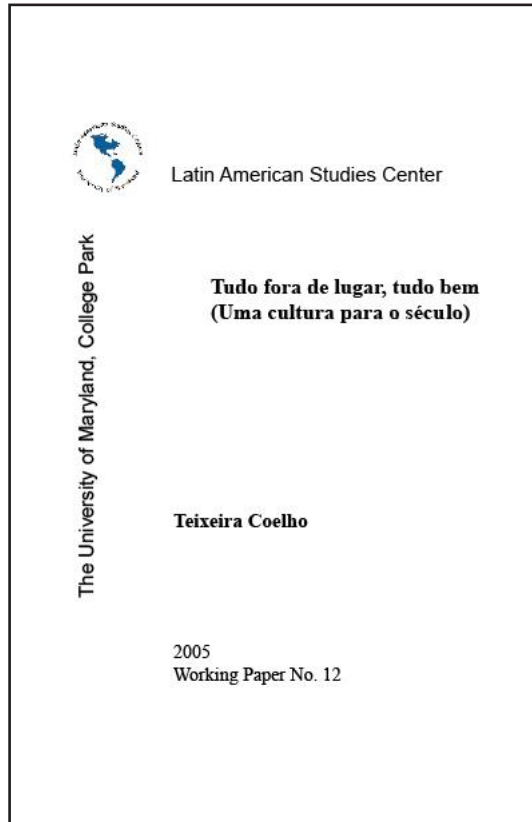
"Systems of individual accounts are unlikely to provide adequate pensions for most workers in Latin America"

Visit our website at: <http://www.lasc.umd.edu>



We encourage you to contribute to our Web Calendar of Latin America-related events in the Washington, D.C. area. Please send pertinent information regarding place, date, and time, as well as the title of the event and a brief description, to: lasc@umd.edu

LASC Publications



Tudo fora de lugar, tudo bem

(uma cultura para o século)

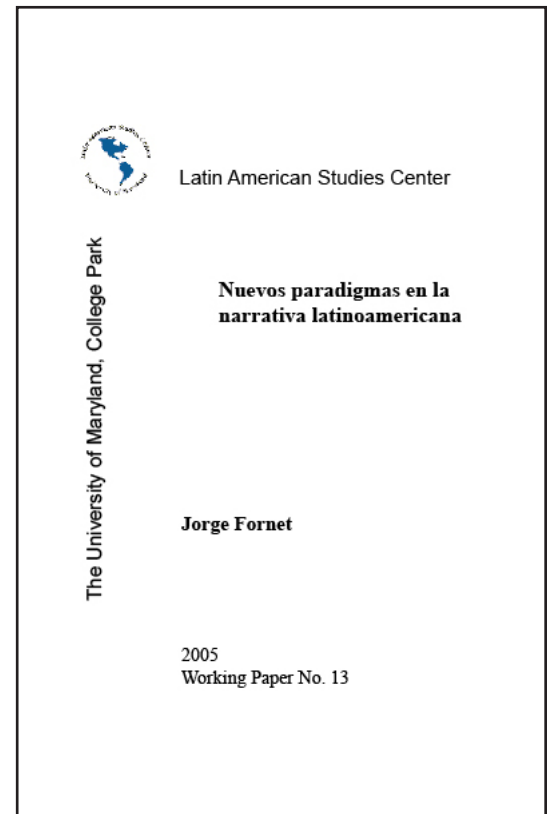
by Teixeira Coelho

The latest LASC Working Paper, by Teixeira Coelho, Professor of Cultural Policy at Universidade de Sao Paulo, explores ideas of culture as a floating entity. The XIXth and XXth century idea of cultural roots (as well as cultural heritage) has experienced an enormous erosion of its original meaning. The expression “cultural dynamics” must retrieve its real meaning: movement is the soul and matter of culture. Globalization does not mean annihilation of cultures; it can mean conflict of cultures (such conflicts, he underscores, have always existed, for globalization is a rather ancient phenomenon). More than at any other time perhaps, it reflects ample displacements of different cultures in a greater number of directions, with the resulting changes in each one of them. Teixeira addresses the main traits of this floating culture, the actual uses of culture, the way some Latin American authors deal with this subject, the cultural policies required for a new democratic sociality and governance and the role of art at a time when culture has become as floating as art itself.

Nuevos paradigmas en la narrativa latinoamericana

by Jorge Fornet

LASC Post-Doctoral fellow, Jorge Fornet (Director, Centro de Investigaciones Literarias, Casa de las Américas, Cuba) addresses contemporary perspectives on Latin American narrative, focusing on the projects and worldview of writers born towards the end of the 1950s. Fornet presents the common threads found in the region’s current literary expressions, which include the urban context, technology and communications media. He emphasizes, at the same time, that there is a certain disenchantment which does not seem to suffice to generate an opposing model. The author also explores the relationship between the publishing apparatus and the state of the region’s literature, questioning the very concept of a Latin American literature. He asserts that the publishing business and the mechanisms to consecrate “stars” are still geared by Spanish companies, and that even when they do come to Latin America, they focus on local authors in restricted national markets and not to the region as a whole, as other Spanish publishers did in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, this process proves that “globalization can contribute to provincialism.”



LASC Faculty Profile

Roberta Lavine, Department of Spanish and Portuguese



Roberta Z. Lavine, Associate Professor of Spanish, is currently in Chile on a Fulbright Fellowship for the fall 2005 semester. Lavine is working on a project at the University of Concepción called “Prototype for Faculty Development: English as a Foreign Language Instruction at the University of Concepción.” Using the University’s successful *English On Line* program as a base, she is creating interactive multimedia materials addressing faculty needs.

The Chilean Ministry of Education has stated that English proficiency is a national priority, making Lavine’s project of special interest. Lavine is also working closely with the Fulbright Commission in Santiago to create a pilot program to aid Chilean Fulbright grantees improve their English skills.

Janet Chernela Department of Anthropology



I am working on several projects. I’ve been selected to work as a scholar on Amerindian narratives, rituals, and songs, and other materials I collected in the Brazilian Amazon. This work will enable me to review these materials and prepare several products for several audiences. Among them is a book by me on women and language; others will be the bases for bilingual histories of and by the indigenous peoples of the northwest Amazon. I continue to work at the interface of environment and indigenous rights. Along these lines, I am looking at two projects among the Kayapo in which international environmental NGOs attempt to establish partnerships. I use

these cases in order to 1) evaluate the factors that contribute to the success or failure of any project; 2) identify performance indicators that may then be used in any partnering situation. Part of this work includes an analysis of linguistic practice and miscommunication in three meetings between chiefs and NGO representatives. In addition, I am reviewing the representations of both wildlands and “wildmen” in several contexts within Brazil. Among these are representations of landscapes in rubber boom postcards sent from the Brazilian Amazon; representations of Indianness in the 16th century legal discourse; and representations of the Indians in the Brazilian festivals Bumba Meu Boi in Maranhao in the northeast and Parintins in the Amazon. I am working with students on projects involving Carnival in the city of Olinda and caboclo lake preservation in the middle Amazon basin. The first project examines carnival before and after the city became a UNESCO Heritage site. The second project compares two phases in a community preservation project, prior to and after NGO involvement. Students are invited to participate in any of my research projects; I expect to take a group of students to Brazil this summer and to conduct research there before and after.



Briefly Noted

• On September 22, Ronald Walters, Professor of Government & Politics at the University of Maryland, gave an informal presentation on his visit to Venezuela as a member of a commission headed by Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, who was invited by President Chávez to discuss common issues among the populations of African descent in the Americas. Members of the commission and President Chávez also exchanged ideas about U.S.- Venezuela relations, focusing on strategies to improve them. The talk was very informative and the audience engaged in an interesting debate at the end of the presentation.

• Study Abroad is offering a new program in Latin America for the Winter term. “Anthropological Fieldwork and Experiences in Argentina: The Relevance of Context and Place,” headed by Judith Freidenberg, Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, and LASC affiliate faculty. The program offers students the possibility of experiencing “hands-on” anthropological fieldwork, while learning about culture from multiple perspectives and in different regions of Argentina.

• Edgar Krebs, research associate at the Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution, was invited by LASC to talk about his research for the upcoming exhibit about Alfred

Metraux, an early 20th century ethnographer, whose work on the Tupinamba Indians of Brazil and on Voodoo in Haiti, among others, are considered among the best books written about the topics thus far.

• The Argentinean Embassy, LASC and Enlaces Latino Americanos will be hosting the world’s foremost performer of *charango*, Jaime Torres, on Wednesday, November 30th, at the Hoff theatre at UMCP. Torres blends traditional native rhythms with jazz and other styles with magnificent results.

• Barbara Weinstein, Professor at the Department of History and LASC affiliate faculty, was elected President of the American Historic Association. She will serve her term in 2007.



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