Join SOLAS at the LAII for presentations by LAII and Tinker Foundation Field Research Grant Recipients Andrew Bernard and Grant Florian.

“Urban Acequias and the Desert Oasis: An Exploration of Integrated Water Infrastructure in Mendoza, Argentina”

Andrew Bernard is a M.A. student of Landscape Architecture (2014), at the University of New Mexico. His studies have focused on the integration of infrastructure, nature, culture and water as a means to resilient design in arid regions. As a FRG recipient, Andrew was granted the opportunity to explore a successful example of integrated infrastructure in the arid region of Mendoza, Argentina in the summer of 2013.

Mendoza is a city located at the foothills of the Andes mountains and as a desert oasis, its identity is supported by an intricate network of acequias or irrigation channels that run along each street providing irrigation for the vibrant street tree canopy. In addition to providing irrigation, the acequias integrate storm water capture and function as linear public spaces that connect the city, fostering social and cultural exchange.

“The Socio-politics of Umbandaime”

Grant Florian is a M.A. student of Anthropology (2014) at UNM and has been researching the blending of two syncretic Brazilian religions: Umbanda and Santo Daime. Umbanda is a religion that formed in Rio de Janeiro in the early 20th century as a blend of esoteric mediumistic practices from Europe, which in Brazil are associated with what is referred to as Kardecismo, popular Catholicism, and Afro-Brazilian religion. Santo Daime formed during the same period in the Amazon region of Brazil, and centers around the ritual consumption of ayahuasca accompanied by dance, song, or meditation. Originally Santo Daime was chiefly a rural, mixed race religious practice, but around the 1970’s many middle class urban Brazilians -many of European descent but of varied ethnic backgrounds- brought the religion to cities like Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Umbanda, on the other hand, has always attracted members from all social classes, but has chiefly been an urban religious practice. Now there are practitioners of both Umbanda and Santo Daime who are blending these two syncretic religions in a variety of ways, and this is connected to a broader movement toward spiritual eclecticism in urban Brazil’s middle class. Grant’s research, conducted at two Santo Daime churches and three Umbanda centers, focuses on how this hybrid religion relates to broader social trends in contemporary Brazilian society.