Mass Transitiology: Political Vectors in Cuba

By Max Ashbrook Fitzpatrick,
Latin American Studies student, M.A.

Over the years Latinamericanists have created a cottage punditry out of pondering Cuba’s future after Fidel Castro. The prolific ponderings of the Great Man theorists have used the term “post-Castro” so many times that it might qualify as a word in the next dictionary. Yet not many answers have emerged. In August 2007, a U.S. defense analyst, plainly applying the laws of the universe to the Cuban case, reported that “change is inevitable in Cuba. Both Fidel and his brother Raul are aging.”

Even with the transfer of legal authority from Fidel to Raul Castro and the latter’s military history with, and recent allusions to, economic reform, observers still do not seem to know what to make of the situation. Jorge Castañeda equivocated in Newsweek that “reforms the younger Castro may or may not want to implement will remain blocked until the elder Castro either passes away or truly fades away. By depicting the state of affairs as a binary equation, such generalities retain the reductionist perspective that one man will decide the fate of the island, that everything revolves around a single point. A shrewder analysis that accounts for the compatibility between *fidelismo* and *raulismo* as well as the historical precedents of popular participation will reveal a political picture of greater magnitude and more criollo direction.

As in any society, change has been a constant throughout revolutionary Cuba’s history. Transitions have occurred from the 1960s’ economic experimentation to the 1970s’ economic sovietization and political institutionalization to the 1980s’ rectification of negative tendencies to the 1990s’ depression and subsequent decentralization to the 2000s’ intensified integration with Latin America and the world. It is safe to say that tomorrow in Cuba will be different than today.

Cuba’s future, by definition, requires a central role for youth. Subjective political thought in Cuba has always considered society’s course to hinge on the younger generation. For example, in 1952, a 25-year-old Fidel wrote “the Revolutionary Party requires a revolutionary leadership, young and from the ranks of the people.” Objectively, too, the cohort effect thesis has born out. The failed 1933 revolution and the repression and unemployment of the Batista years increased favorability toward the revolution in
Letter from the SOLAS President

Greetings,

My first few months as President of the Student Organization for Latin American Studies have certainly been eventful. We have already accomplished a lot as an organization. We signed up more than 60 new members at our “Welcome Back Days” table and our first few events. We have already seen significant increases in student turnout at our organizational meetings and all of our brown bag lectures. We elected a great new group of SOLAS officers and committee representatives and have been able to schedule a wide variety of interesting speakers for the semester. Three of these speakers are particularly noteworthy as they are coming from outside the University of New Mexico community and will each speak in different ways about the search for social justice in Latin America. On October 5, Liza Smith, a field volunteer for Peace Brigades International, spoke about her nonviolent work assisting the struggle for human rights, peace, and justice in Colombia. On October 15, Arturo J. Cruz, Jr., the Ambassador of Nicaragua to the United States, will speak about recent political developments in Latin America and the challenges facing the Ortega government in Nicaragua. Finally, on November 19, SOLAS will host Thomas Melville, the author of Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America, and a former Maryknoll priest exiled from Guatemala for his work in organizing peasants in opposition to the government. SOLAS is off to a great start and I hope that the enthusiasm, participation, and dedication that many of you have already demonstrated will continue throughout the rest of the year!

Peter Meyer

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

I am excited to serve as the new LIMON newsletter editor. I hope to continue the legacy of publicizing student and faculty research interests from across campus.

My primary goal is spreading awareness about the role LIMON plays at UNM and increasing the diversity of submissions. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Latin American Studies program, LIMON is an outlet for students of all disciplines to voice their opinions and experiences. I hope to balance student and faculty submissions, serious and fun articles or tidbits, and disciplinary content. I encourage you to continue LIMON’s thematically and substantively diverse content by submitting your own work or by recommending someone to showcase in the “UNM Faculty and Student Highlights” found on page 6 of this edition.

Sincerely,

Lisa Burns
those generations. Similarly, coming of age during the depressed socioeconomic circumstances of the 1990s has influenced the outlook of today’s youth. Sociologist Maria Isabel Domínguez has attributed as a defining characteristic of this “transitional generation” as “the search and adaptation to a different situation, not yet completely specified and delineated, full of contradictory tendencies, to which socializing institutions do not hold all the answers.”

Certainly Fidel has recognized the precarious and potent position of today’s youth, for he republished, in August 2007, his aforementioned 1952 statement on the need for youthful revolutionary leadership.

If the young masses will blaze Cuba’s trail, then we can gain insight into the current transition process by studying the activities of the Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas. This fall, according to its newspaper Juventud Rebelde, the UJC has tasked its nationwide membership with reading, discussing, and critiquing Raul Castro’s July 26th, 2007 “state of the union” speech. In addition to invoking the requisite alarm over U.S. aggression, Raul pointed out the need for rational reorganization of the economy. He called on Cubans “to accurately identify and analyze every problem in depth, within our working areas, in order to combat” absurd inefficiencies that keep production and wages demoralizingly low. Shortly thereafter managers from over 600 Cuban firms attended a conference on perfeccionamiento empresarial (the capitalism-derived business techniques originally employed by Raul’s military-run enterprises in the late 1980s).

Alongside Raul’s milestone speech on economic reform, the UJC has also assigned for debate editorialist-in-chief Fidel’s subsequent serial essay on historic U.S. meddling, “The Empire and the Independent Island.” As its introduction states, the article is for "the new generations with the aim of helping them learn about very important and decisive events in the destiny of our homeland" vis-à-vis U.S. interference. The five part history lesson deals with the U.S. imposition of the Platt Amendment and the loss of Guantanamo Bay during Cuba’s period as a neocolonial “pseudorepublic.” In Cuba, a sense of history continues to act as a guiding as well as absolving force.

While euphoric capitalists and unperturbed Marxists obliviously push their respective visions of Cuba, perceptive observers will see that it was no accident making these two readings the centerpiece of nationwide discussion groups (eventually to involve not only the UJC but also regular communist party activists and trade unionists). The strategic thrust of the elegant pairing of the two texts, as Manuel Alberto Ramy has astutely noted, is "to place the need for internal changes...in the context of confrontation with...Washington’s persistence in absorbing us [Cuba] as a nation and liquidating us [the Revolution] as a project." Figuratively speaking, Raul’s speech and Fidel’s essay serve as twin tracks towards the future of the island.

That broad sections of civil society are entering into open deliberation on these themes dispels the one-man-is-an-island theory. Instead of a centrifugal revolution revolving about and emanating from a single point, it could be said that the evolving situation in Cuba will play out on a field of triangular proportions. The base of the triangle will be firmly anchored on one side by Raul’s calls for eliminating entrepreneurial inefficiencies and delimited on the other side by nationalist resistance to the type of imperial intrusion chronicled by Fidel. At the apex of the triangle—the final member of this political triad—the Cuban populace, through digesting, negotiating and reconciling the two stated national needs, will determine the height and slant of their society’s trajectory.

A hypothetical course along which Cubans equally balance considerations of both “the risks and hopes” involved in transition could be imagined as an isosceles triangle. Other potential outcomes of this dynamic triad are a variety of acute triangles: where people lean toward the ideas hinted at in Raul’s July 26th speech, rapid economic change could leave

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the country vulnerable to U.S. forays and economic sabotage, where they refuse to be naïve about looming U.S. plots, a more guarded stance and conservative pace could slow economic reform. Of course, the Cuban people are not in the least obtuse, so it remains highly improbable that they would choose an extreme path that veered beyond the parameters established expeditiously by the brothers Castro.

(Point of clarification: it should not be construed that Fidel and Raúl stand at opposite ends of a continuum, much less that they are at odds. The two nodes of the political triangle’s base represent the two, different but not divergent, themes treated in the respective communiqués. In fact, both men exhibit considerable and shared appreciation for both of the nation’s stated needs.)

At this juncture, a successful projection along a route at once independent and prosperous is certainly not assured. Much depends on Cubans’ willingness to take part in this nationwide group exercise, their confidence to propose and criticize in a little used, if not wholly novel, forum. In a previous period of transition—the early 1990s’ dawn of the Special Period—people formed assemblies to express, release, and brainstorm. In the 1970s, another moment of transitional crisis after the failed superharvest—in the wake of the 13th Cuban Workers Congress, workplaces opened up as arenas of dialogue and ideas. The historical pattern here shows that transitions and more intensive popular participation have indeed occurred periodically in revolutionary Cuba—often times hand in hand.

For years now, the Cuban directorate has tagged the ideological struggle against the capitalist imperium with the José Martí-inspired slogan “the battle of ideas”. After so much rhetorical priming, invitation to thoughtful pan-society conversation presents the opportunity for Cuban citizens to join the battle.

Assuming the masses take part, another question is whether leaders from the communist party, mass organizations, and state companies will cede some decision-making responsibility to their neighbors and coworkers. Ramy suggests that "national leadership" may be assigning discussion of the two texts as a springboard from which "to demonstrate popular support for certain measures that might lack support among the leading cadres." In circumventing entrenched bureaucracies and appealing directly to reactivated citizens, the veteran regime would be, in a manner, once again falling back on its most reliable old tool: mass mobilization to informally ratify, get input on, and gain broad approval for landmark programs.

Providing that Cubans take to the discussion sessions and middle management does its best not to obstruct, a number of innovative initiatives—possibly along the lines of *perfeccionamiento empresarial*—are sure to emerge.

Concomitant with the civil society debate on efficiency and sovereignty is occurring the idiosyncratic Cuban electoral process. The general public and the mass organizations have partial say in who becomes a member of parliament. Candidates run on their past record as competent contributors to society; they are barred from making campaign promises around specific issues. Thus, political representation is produced totally devoid of any programmatic content. When elected deputies arrive at the National Assembly, they break into commissions, where they formulate legislation by consensus. This is where the national discussions on economic reform will come into play.

As has occurred in past instances of transitional popular participation, the thousands of ideas proposed at the base level of society will filter up to the legislative commissions. Only at this point are politician and platform joined. Where vanguardism, *fidelismo, raúlismo*, mass mobilization, popular participation, and semi-democratic processes converge exists the nexus of the Cuban political universe.

Once elite ideas of economic reform and national independence are popularly processed, legisla-
tively filtered, and finally enacted, the subsequent questions will be: In places like the currently stagnant service sector, will managers and workers find motivation to implement the changes? Will hardliners from the political class allow progress?

But let us ignore not the elephant in the room (nor the donkey, for that matter). The most significant contingency that could influence the shape of Cuba’s way forward is the degree of pressure the U.S. applies to the already delicate situation. In mid-September, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez (the highest ranking Cuban exile ever in a U.S. administration)—after displaying willful ignorance by insinuating that Cubans are prohibited from changing jobs or choosing their own doctors—proclaimed that the U.S. “stand[s] ready to help... Cuba make a transition...to a free market economy.”

Cynical U.S. deprivations, either for electoral or geopolitical reasons, could disrupt the internal equilibrium of the Cuban political triad. In this case, the external imposition of a fourth pole would distort the dynamic triangle into something of an oblong trapezoid. For this unshapely reason, the roll out of economic restructuring will proceed slowly with an eye on rash movement out of Miami/D.C.

In his July 26th speech, Raul tangentially men-

tioned the “erratic and dangerous” President Bush’s time left in office, and the possibilities for detente with the next U.S. administration. Also, according to his daughter, Raul’s implementation style endeavors to achieve consensus and methodically ensure all components be in place before finally moving forward on important matters. The reference to the U.S. political calendar, insight into Raul’s deliberate approach to governance, and the fact that the newly selected National Assembly will not convene until summer 2008 suggest that reforming the Cuban economy will not take place overnight.

Without a doubt, over the last half-century the Castro brothers have left an indelible inscription on Cuba. But given the myriad forces—economic and political, popular and generational—at play in an always transforming Cuban society, it is pure folly to believe that outcomes depend on the health of a single octogenarian. By paying attention to little reported items such as the developing dialectic debate in Cuban civil society, Latinamericanists can begin to operate in a post-post-Castro world. 

8. http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=13563
La Cara Amable del Enemigo: Consciencia e Ideología de Ejecutivos de Empresas Privadas e Instituciones Internacionales de Financiamiento en el Campo de Salud

Howard Waitzkin,
Departamentos de Sociología y de Medicina Familiar y Comunitaria

Introducción. Aunque la visión crítica de economía política usualmente ve la ganancia como el motivo principal de ejecutivos en el campo de salud, realmente existe poca información empírica sobre este tema. Tales personas frecuentemente aparecen como estereotipos de explotadores, sin datos sobre sus verdaderos pensamientos y orientaciones ideológicas.

Objetivo. Investigamos la ideología de ejecutivos de empresas y oficiales de instituciones internacionales de financiamiento en dos contextos: a) organizaciones de atención gerenciada participando en el programa estatal de Medicaid; y b) empresas multinacionales e instituciones internacionales de financiamiento con operaciones enfocadas en el sector de salud en EE.UU. y América Latina.


Resultados. En todas las entrevistas, los ejecutivos y oficiales expresaron un punto de vista que la responsabilidad cívica figura como su motivo principal, como parte de su misión organizacional de servicio al público. Esta responsabilidad perteneció a los éxitos no-financieros de las organizaciones que dirigieron, incluyendo el bienestar de sus trabajadores. Los ejecutivos pensaron que la experiencia de sus empresas en programas públicos apoyó la capacitación de habilidades en el sector privado, por eso fortaleciendo su posición financiera general. Las tasas de ganancia se pusieron menos importantes que la capacidad predecir la posición financiera futura de la empresa. Los ejecutivos señalaron una experiencia mezclada con funcionarios de la burocracia estatal y generalmente dijeron que el estado no fue buen socio de negocio; según la percepción de los ejecutivos, el estado realmente no fomentó competencia económica.

Conclusión. Quién es el enemigo? Ejecutivos y oficiales financieras fomentan una ideología/creencia/religión que dice: a) La tarea como profesional es reducir el sufrimiento de la humanidad (además de avanzar sus propios intereses financieros y las ganancias de sus organizaciones). b) El mercado privado es la base de alcanzar estas metas. c) El avance de la civilización depende de la ciencia de la economía, aunque no es necesario mostrar la evidencia científica de éxitos de sus políticas económicas. Los ejecutivos fabricaron una benigna construcción social de la relación entre la economía y la salud. En vez de los principios de capitalismo salvaje, la conciencia e ideología empresarial mantuvieron una cara amable de capitalismo, que es la naturaleza del enemigo.

Dr. Waitzkin’s abstract was selected for presentation at the inspirational Congress of the Latin American Social Medicine Association and Brazilian Association of Collective Health in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, July 2007.

2007 FIBEA Conference

Professor Raul de Gouvea Neto, Chair FIT Department, from the Anderson Schools of Management, continues to coordinate conferences in promotion of business and academic excellence. The next FIBEA conference (Fostering Indigenous Business and Entrepreneurship in the Americas Conference) will be November 7 through November 9 in Acoma Pueblo at the Sky City Resort in New Mexico. UNM students and members of the local community will join forces with business leaders from Canada and Latin America to exchange business ideas, solidify local and international businesses projects, and increase networking opportunities. The purpose of FIBEA is to build bridges between the local Native American community, UNM, and indigenous populations across the Americas. Students interested in attending the three day conference should contact the program coordinators as soon as possible to reserve a space at: fibea@mgt.unm.edu. The cost for the conference and luncheon is $50.
Traversing the Globe to and fro: Studying Abroad for Local and International Students

By Carolina Ramos, Dual Degree, Latin American Studies and Law student, M.A./J.D.

International exchange programs are an integral part of the learning and work we do at the Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI). The Study Abroad Program of the Latin American & Iberian Institute continues to develop relationships with international institutions and universities that provide UNM students with diverse opportunities to study in Latin America and Spain as well as opportunities for international students to study at the University of New Mexico.

In the 2006-2007 school year the University of New Mexico received students representing Spain and five different countries in Latin America. The Latin American countries represented in last year's incoming group came from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela in addition to several students from Spain. Last year students representing different schools and departments at the University of New Mexico traveled to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Spain. Both incoming international exchange students and outgoing UNM students represented broad fields of study. Contracts established between the LAII and universities in Spain and Latin America facilitated exchanges in which UNM students and international students were able to study languages, arts, social sciences, business, law, computer science, physical sciences, and engineering.

We hope that you will take advantage of the opportunities that are available to you through our Study Abroad Program. Deadlines are October 1 for Spring, February 15 for Fall, and April 1 for Summer. Tuition fellowships are available for summer language study and are due March 15. For more information about study abroad opportunities available to you please browse our website at http://laii.unm.edu/study.php or contact our Program Coordinator, Robyn Côté at rcoe@unm.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

Students and faculty gobbled up the homemade delights made by Studies Abroad Coordinator Robyn Côté for the studies abroad party September 7.

Students abroad studying at UNM

Fall 2007 semester:
Bolivia: Luis Daniel Ybarnegaray Fernandez; Brazil: Fernando Canever, Gisela Fernanda Fagnani, Mruilo Oliveira Moraes, Diego De Oliveira Silva, Rodrigo Vergnhanini; Colombia: Yuli Cavavid Agudelo; Ecuador: Veronica Gabriela Ordoñez León; Mexico: Mauricio Gomez Aguñaga, Arturo Adrian Cordova Alvidrez; Nicaragua: Ana Lucia Alvarez Vigil; Spain: Sara Alcaraz Sanchez, Sairo Navarro Perez, Enrique Ruiz Bendito, Jonathan Navidad Rodrigo, Juan Carlos Blanco Diez, Lisa Rosier-Gordon, Marco Antonio Gutierrez Giraldo, Angel Alegre Garcia, Jose Ivan Rodriguez Ruiz, Jose Mascaro Osorio, Gonzalo Chamorro Fernandez, Rodolfo Del Moral Paredes, Antonio Jesus Anguita Tinho, Francisco Lafuente Del Olmo.

UNM Students studying abroad during the 2006-2007 academic year:
Argentina: Daniel Salazar, Nathan Todd, Christopher Watson; Brazil: Keeley Lowney, Kara Miller; Costa Rica: Casey Leo; Ecuador: Michael Acosta, Melissa Brandenburg, Collen Marie Chavez, Anna Keener; Mexico: Jessa Bunker, Daniela Crespin, Miranda Evjen, Chad Keaty, Karim Jackel, Anna Maria Havens, Ryan Van Otten, Jonathan Paiz Schuyler Thompson; Spain: Honora Bacon, Xochitl Campos, Elijah Gjeltema, Adrian Gonzales, Michael Green, Tarun Gudz, Wesley Morton, Michael Nilan, Anna Ralph, Sylvie Reydam, Brandon Schoen, Kelly Seibert, Schuyler Thompson, Evan Vincent.
From Pollywog to Shellback, and Beyond: The Value of the Semester-at-Sea Program

By Ray Hernández-Durán, Ph.D.
Department of Art and Art History

In August 2006, David Gies, Professor of Spanish Literature at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, contacted me in his capacity as the newly appointed academic dean of the Summer Semester-at-Sea program. The University of Virginia, having recently bid for and been awarded directorship of the SAS academic program, was planning an itinerary along the Pacific coast of Latin America, the first of its kind in the program’s history. Typical voyages during the regular 15-week Fall and Spring semesters are truly global, and consist of sailing across the Atlantic with stops in Europe, Africa, and Asia, then sailing back to the Americas across the Pacific. Summer trips tend to be more concentrated in one world area due to their abbreviated nature.

The email I received urged me, as an art historian of colonial arts and architecture, to consider applying for the Summer 2007 Art History faculty position. Although I had heard of Semester-at-Sea, I knew very little about it at the time and was thus not particularly interested. Although my level of enthusiasm was initially low, once I was offered the job, I began to get excited about the opportunities such an experience would present, not only in terms of money or travel but of my own research and teaching at the University of New Mexico. My anticipation grew when Dean Gies informed me that over 600 individuals had applied for 11 faculty positions, 35 for Art History alone. Following the course guidelines as closely as possible, I subsequently devoted many hours to designing two new courses—“Latin American Art, Colonial to Contemporary” and “Urbanism and Culture in Latin America”—so that they corresponded to each of the countries on the travel itinerary. I was particularly excited about my urbanism class since we would be visiting regions whose cities had Pre-Hispanic and/or colonial foundations; in many instances, cities were like palimpsests, evincing a historically and culturally layered, hybridized environment.

My Semester-at-Sea experience officially began on July 13 in San Diego, California, where our ship, the M/V Explorer, was docked. After staff and faculty boarded, we sailed to Ensenada, Mexico, where we were to retrieve the students, transported from San Diego on buses. With everyone present and accounted for, we shipped off to our first destination. The scheduled ports included Acapulco, México; Panama City, Panamá; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Valparaíso, Chile; Lima-Callao, Perú; Puntarenas, Costa Rica; Corinto, Nicaragua; and Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala. Our return date to San Diego was August 21.

Through the course of the Summer, I learned that faculty at the University of Virginia had debated whether or not they should bid for the Semester-at-Sea program since many professors felt the program lacked sufficient academic substance. In spite of initial protests, a majority of faculty ultimately supported the bid and UVa was selected out of a pool of university applicants to work with the Institute for Shipboard Education as the next sponsoring institution for SAS.

“I was particularly excited about my urbanism class since we would be visiting regions whose cities had Pre-Hispanic and/or colonial foundations...”

Dr. Hernández-Durán visits the archbishop’s palace in the plaza major in Lima.

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Wanting to augment the academic rigor of the program, UVa set out to overhaul the curriculum in order to more closely approximate Virginia’s academic standards. This past Summer’s voyage was thus a first for two main reasons: one, it was the first voyage independently organized and directed by the University of Virginia, and two, this was the first time this particular itinerary was followed, which presented a series of challenges or problems, not the least of which included dealing with varied expectations.

The shipboard community was actually quite varied. Undergraduate students from universities across the United States, including some from other countries, applied to participate. The sponsoring university, in this case, the University of Virginia, provided approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the faculty, while the remaining positions were filled via a national search; consequently, about half of the professors came from various universities in the country. In addition to faculty and students, the shipboard population included the crew, mainly the officers who pilot and direct the ship, as well as the ship’s complement, who was responsible for ship maintenance, the dining halls, laundry, cleaning, audio-visual support, and security. There were also ISE staff members, responsible for running the administrative offices and directing student life, such as the resident directors who live with students and supervised the student halls and extra-curricular activities. Other groups on board included: Teachers-at-Sea (elementary and high school teachers who are interested in incorporating Latin American themes into their classes), Kids-at-Sea (the offspring of faculty and staff), and Lifelong Learners (mostly seniors or retired individuals who wish to travel and attend classes). The ship community was thus diverse, not only in terms of gender, age, and background, but also sexual orientation and race, although it was evident that more work needed to be done to increase racial and ethnic diversity, and to better incorporate the LGBT presence.

In terms of the academic curriculum, each student was required to register for three courses, as well as attend a Spanish conversation section. The primary class was a core course, which was required for everyone; the remaining two course selections were electives and thus left up to the students. This past Summer, the core course was titled “Latin America Today,” which provided a historical overview of this region of the world as a foundation for understanding the contemporary condition of the country destinations. This common class also linked all of the courses offered by engaging different disciplinary themes and providing the opportunity for guest lectures by other instructors in such areas as Cultural Anthropology, Climate and Environmental Science, Literature, Economics, Political Science, and in my case, Art History. I gave a total of four guest lectures in that class, which brought images, architecture, and space into the larger discussion.

Classes were held daily while the ship was at sea; however, formal lectures were suspended while the ship was docked, in order to allow passengers time to travel through and explore each area. Students could sign up for pre-arranged trips or travel independently. Since the academic program was based on geographical movement, i.e. sailing south along the Pacific coast then back up again with intermittent stops, course lectures were expected to coincide with each of the countries on the itinerary. Each of my classes, for example, had an overall chronological organizational structure but also included site relevant thematic subsections. The lecture before each port stop addressed issues or topics that were relevant to that region while assignments required

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Dr. Hernández-Durán arriving in Valparaiso, Chile on a rainy day.
students to integrate site visits by basing research on specific locations and/or collections. As a follow up, the post-port lecture at sea was spent processing port experiences through discussions of activities and research results in that country. As such, the field trips were not only embedded in the course structure, they determined the syllabus organization and the lectures, as well as being central to student research.

In addition to academic work, a variety of extra-curricular programming was organized for the shipboard community. Three activities that stand out included Neptune Day, the Sea Olympics, and Convocation. Following an ancient maritime tradition, sailors who cross the Equator for the first time undergo an initiation ritual. This rite of passage requires that the ‘pollywog’ (the uninitiated individual) be dunked in a pool, have his/her hair snared to the cap, then baptized by having a pail of fish entrails poured over the head. Once initiated, the pollywog becomes a ‘shellback’ and is now considered a member of the fraternity of sailors. The entire shipboard community took part in the celebration, which included carnivalesque costumes and processions. Members of the administration dressed up as Greek gods and goddesses, and conducted the ceremony. Interestingly, both men and women participated in the initiation rites, while others watched and were entertained. The Sea Olympics, as the name suggests, describes a daylong event consisting of competitions. What made the Olympics even more challenging was that several events took place outside on the pool deck as we sailed south of the Equator, meaning that the climate transitioned from a warm tropical clime to cold, windy, winter-like weather. Teams were formed by dorm wings and named after seas, such as the Yellow Sea, Caribbean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and so on. Faculty, Staff, and Lifelong Learners together formed an additional team. Games included such familiar activities as dodgeball, synchronized swimming, basketball, tug-of-war, karaoke, and trivia, as well as Twister, M&M hunt, and flip cup. Finally, Convocation took place at the end of the voyage as we sailed back to San Diego from Guatemala. This event provided an opportunity for the shipboard community to acknowledge those students who were graduating from college, as well as students who had performed outstandingly in their courses. Each faculty member had to identify one exemplary student from each class to honor at the closing ceremony. Convocation also served as the closing event that signaled the end of the voyage. In addition to these three major events, there were socials, dances, student club meetings, workshops, talent shows, and many other things. The ship truly was a floating university.

The Summer voyage was intense, in certain cases difficult, yet always stimulating. I was able to try my new urbanism class, which I’d been planning on teaching at UNM. I collected information and materials for two new classes, one of which may look at indigenous fiber technologies, and may also have a new, potential research project focused on colonial Central America. Most importantly, I visited numerous locations and interacted with people about whom I had only learned from books or film. As a result of the latter, I was able to network with representatives from various universities and museums in Latin America. Of equal import, I formed what will clearly be lifelong friendships with a variety of individuals I would never have met otherwise.

The ways in which this Summer experience has enriched my academic work and my personal life are incalculable. Although I had little knowledge or interest in the SAS program a year ago, I am now one of its greatest advocates and strongly encourage undergraduate students and faculty colleagues to consider applying if they have a chance to do so.

“Although I had little knowledge or interest in the SAS program a year ago, I am now one of its greatest advocates and strongly encourage undergraduate students and faculty colleagues to consider applying if they have a chance to do so.”
Making Local Impacts: Spain, Argentina, and New Mexico Study Abroad Experiences in Biogeographic Studies, Culture

By Celia López-Chávez,
University Honors Program

Biogeographic studies: New Mexico and Argentina

The Program From the Rockies to the Andes: Exploring the Arid Zones of Western Argentina and New Mexico is an interdisciplinary program that took place during the Spring of 2007 with a field trip to Argentina during Spring Break. The Program was organized by UNM University Honors Program and directed by Drs. Celia López-Chávez and Ursula Shepherd. The Program combined two courses: one on biogeography and other on the human impact in the arid zones. In both cases students did a comparative study of the two regions, located at the same latitude but in different hemispheres. Unique in its approach, this program offered to undergraduate students the opportunity of learning research skills in different disciplines and being able to do synthesis of topics using interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives. The program included field study in New Mexico (Sevilleta, Jemez, Valles Caldera, Camino Real Monument and Las Cruces), and the provinces of Mendoza and San Juan (Biosphere Reserve of Ñacuñán and the Andes mountains in Mendoza, and the valleys of Zonda and Ullum in San Juan). The use of water resources in both regions was one emphasis of the classes, as well as environmental history.

Contact information: Dr. Celia López-Chávez, University Honors Program (cellalop@unm.edu)

Conexiones: Studies in España

The University Honors Conexiones Program is an integrated program of culture and language that alternate summers between Mexico and Spain. During the Summer of 2007, 25 UNM Honors students participated in Conexiones Spain. Dr. Celia López-Chávez directed the program that included Spanish classes taught by faculty from the UNM Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and by a professor from the University of Extremadura.

Students attended classes in their campus (a 15th century renovated convent run by the Fundación Xavier de Salas) in Trujillo. Weekly excursions took place in cities such as Mérida, Cáceres, Guadalupe, and Alburquerque (in this last one, the City Mayor hosted a reception for students and faculty.) Some highlights of the program included exploring Salamanca, a private tour to the 12th century University Library, and a visit to a bull ranch. Students also had the opportunity to attend the performance of Eurípides’ Fedra at the Roman Theatre in Mérida.

The Conexiones Program in Spain emphasizes the historical and cultural connections between Spain and the Extremadura, with UNM Southwest. The medieval city of Trujillo has been an excellent home for the program; students live with local families and interact daily in Spanish with trujillanos. Trujillo represents the history and diverse cultures that occupied Spain since Roman times, and UNM students have the opportunity of studying the art and culture through an in-depth field study in the streets, Plaza Mayor, and monuments of Trujillo.

Contact information for Conexiones Spain: Dr. Celia López-Chávez (cellalop@unm.edu).

For Conexiones Mexico: Dr. Michael Thomas (mthomas@unm.edu), both are faculty in the University Honors Program.
MST Fights for Social Equality in Brazil

By Grant Burrier, Political Science student, Ph.D.

In 1984, the MST (o Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) was founded in order to organize a coherent resistance to the vast inequality pervading the Brazilian countryside. According to an MST website, 1.6 percent of the landowners in Brazil own 46.8 percent of arable land. In order to combat the situation, the MST has launched various “encampments” on unproductive plots of land, demanding that the government implement an agrarian reform that will allow the rural campesinos the possibility to ply their trade. These acts are protected by the constitution which states that unproductive land should be used for a “larger social function.” Once the encampment is established, the organization builds cooperative farms that are environmentally sustainable and gender equal. Furthermore, schools and clinics are set up to meet the needs of the community.

According to estimates, the MST is the largest social movement in Latin America with some 1.5 million landless peasants. The movement first grew in the south of the country (Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná), but has expanded to encompass 23 of the 27 Brazilian states. The idea behind the land occupations is rooted in the Brazilian Constitution, which says land that remains unproductive should be used for a “larger social function.” Because of MST actions, more than 350,000 families in 2,000 settlements have received land titles. Currently, 180,000 encamped families are awaiting government recognition.

While fighting against land inequality, the rural campesinos have invariably run against a neoliberal logic that invalidates the existence of a small farmer. International (Monsanto, Cargill, etc.) and national agro-business increasingly control land. The companies have furthered mono-culture and introduced potentially harmful GMO’s. They are critical actors behind the recent push for non-sustainable biodiesel (sugar cane ethanol). While the Lula government has disappointed many by accommodating these neoliberal forces, the MST continues to push for an alternative economic vision based on social justice and equality.

The pictures below were collected from this past summer while I was in Brazil on a LAII (Latin American and Iberian Institute) grant researching the PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores, Workers Party). For more information on the cause, check out www.mstbrazil.org (English) or www.mst.org.br (Portuguese).

Above: Close to Campo Mourão: MST encampment.
Right: Porto Alegre: protest.
Left: Campo Mourão: Multinational corn granary.
Top: Brasilia- March on Presidential Palace during 5th National Congress, which boasted some 20,000 delegates.

Above: MST encampment close to Campo Mourão. Paulo (center) landless worker.
Left: Porto Alegre- a gaucho protestor.
Right: Porto Alegre- MST demonstration in front of the Central Bank. Participants demand better access to credit.
Latin American Studies:  
A Pursuit of Interdisciplinary Knowledge, Skills

By Amanda Wolfe,  
Latin American Studies Program:  
Academic Program Manager

The Latin American Studies (LAS) Program, housed within the Latin American and College of Arts and Sciences, is an interdisciplinary B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. program drawing upon the course offerings and expertise of 61 faculty affiliates from seven Colleges and Schools at UNM. Both the major and the minor are offered at the undergraduate level. In addition to the stand-alone M.A., the LAS Program also offers five dual degree options that pair the M.A. in LAS with professional degrees in Business Administration (MALAS/MBA), Community & Regional Planning (MALAS/MCRP), Education (MALAS/MALLSS), Law (MALAS/JD), and Nursing (MALAS/MSN). The nature of the interdisciplinary degree allows for extensive collaboration between faculty and students from diverse academic backgrounds creating a broader understanding of Latin American issues from multiple disciplines.

As of the Fall 2007 semester, 30 students are pursuing their B.A. with a major or minor in LAS. Fifty students are pursuing the M.A. in LAS. Of the graduate students, 29 are enrolled in dual degree programs and four students are pursuing the Ph.D. in LAS.

The Fall 2007 incoming graduate class includes one Ph.D. and 15 M.A. students coming from Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington. For more information about undergraduate or graduate programs, contact Amanda Wolfe at akwolfe@unm.edu.

New LAS graduate students:

Minea Armijo  
Lisa Burns: Political Science and Human Rights Concentrations; research interests in regime transitions, deepening of democracy, and income inequality
Amy Collins: Political Science and Spanish Literature concentrations
Abby Diaz: Human Rights and History concentrations; research interests in the U.S.-Mexican border
Winni (Edwina) Du Bois
Bryan Gibel
Shaun Haines: Economics and History concentrations; research interests in Guatemala, Argentina, and state repression
Michael Helm: Political Science and Spanish Linguistics concentrations
Ana Jurissin: Human Rights and Economics concentrations; dual degree JD program
Stephanie Peterson Knight
Pablo Jose Lopez Oro: Community and Regional Planning and Sociology concentrations; research interests in Honduras and the Caribbean
Joachim Marjon
Jennifer O’Hearn: Political Science and Human Rights concentrations
Carolina M. Ramos: Human Rights and History concentrations; dual degree JD program; research interests include gender, race and class, immigration, sexual orientation, and human trafficking
Izaae Tajani: Spanish Linguistics and Brazilian Literature and culture concentrations
Ben Waadell: Spanish Linguistics and Political Science concentrations; research interests in migrant populations within the U.S. and Latin America

HSI SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Scholarship deadline Oct 15th!
The College Scholarship Program is available on a competitive basis to community college, four-year college, and graduate students of Hispanic heritage. Award amounts generally range from $1,000 to $5,000.

Vision: To strengthen America by advancing higher education for Hispanic Americans.

Mission: To double the rate of Hispanics earning college degrees to 18 percent by 2010.

Go online and visit the website at www.hsfnet.net/
SOLAS Calendar

Monday, October 15 at noon – Arturo Cruz, Jr. will speak on the topic “The Challenges Facing the Ortega Government.” Cruz was appointed Nicaraguan Ambassador to the United States in February 2007 by recently elected President Daniel Ortega. Ambassador Cruz participated in both the early Sandinista government following the 1979 overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship and the Nicaraguan Resistance during the 1980’s. Prior to becoming Ambassador, he was professor of political economy at INCAE. He is the author of several books, including the forthcoming, Varieties of Liberalism in Central America: Nation-States as Works in Progress.

Wednesday, October 24 at noon – Dr. Sam Truett, Associate Professor of History; Dr. Enrique Lamadrid, Professor of Spanish; and Dr. Manuel Garcia y Griego, Associate Professor of History, will participate in a panel discussion about environment, resources, and immigration.

Wednesday, October 31 at noon – Dana Levin Rojo will present her work, “Strategies of Survival: Community Land and Water Management and Repossession Struggles among Hispanics in North Central New Mexico After Reies Lopez Tijerina, with Particular Emphasis on the Embudo-Trampas-Truchas area.” Dr. Levin Rojo received her doctorate from the London School of Economics and is Professor of History at the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Atzcapotzalco, in Mexico City. During Fall Semester 2007, she is the Richard E. Greenleaf Visiting Scholar at the University of New Mexico.

Wednesday, November 7 at noon – Wendy Courtemanche is pursuing a Masters Degree in Latin American Studies. She will present her field research, “The Role of Female Traditional Healers in Chiapas, Mexico.”

Wednesday, November 14 at noon – Aaron Sussman is pursuing Dual Masters Degrees in Latin American Studies and Community & Regional Planning. He will summarize his field research, “Indigenous Identity in Monimbó, Nicaragua as a Catalyst for Community Organizing.”

Wednesday, November 28 at noon – Albert Palma is pursuing a Doctorate in Political Science. He will present the results of his field research, “Strategic Choices in Brazil’s Landless Worker’s Movement.”

Wednesday, December 5 at noon – Katie McIntyre is pursuing a Doctorate in History. She will explain the findings of her field research, “Protestantism and Mixtec Identity Formation in the 1970’s.”

All Brown Bags are held at the Latin American and Iberian Institute at 801 Yale NE
The Student Organization for Latin American Studies is an organization promoting social, political, and cultural issues pertaining to Latin America in scholarship, in activism, on the UNM campus and in the broader community. For further information contact SOLAS president Peter Meyer at solas@unm.edu

CINE DE LATINA AMERICA

by Michael Heim, Latin American Studies student, M.A.

Cidade de Deus: 2002 (Brazil)

Whether in Portuguese or Spanish if you have not seen this movie you have missed the train! A tale of one man’s coming of age and desertion of a vicious cycle of crime harbored in the Brazilian favelas, Cidade de Deus lives up to the acclaims as “one of the best movies ever!”

Nueve reinas: 2000 (Argentina)

Ingenious! Will keep you guessing all through the movie and DEFINITELY won’t let you down in the end. A film about greed and deception and what it does to people affected by it. Fine acting and direction with a superb story makes "The Nine Queens" one of the best con movies made and a MUST SEE!

LIMON welcomes IDEAS, News, PICTURES, Article Submissions, POLITICAL OPINIONS, Art, POETRY, ETC..... Regarding Latin America!