

CLASP Notes

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Report of the Steering Committee

Challenges to Area Studies

Gil Merkk's talk at the CLASP meeting at UCLA last November on the future of Latin American Studies prompted a good deal of discussion, much of it upbeat, about the future of area studies within the college curriculum. A summary of Merkk's remarks follows. We welcome your comments either in writing to Valerie McGinley Marshall at CLASP Notes or via CLASP's new [listserv](#).

The emergence of a new international political economy in Latin America, and throughout the world, invalidates many of our traditional understandings. What's out? Import substitution industrialization in Latin America, powerful unions, monopoly capitalism, and the welfare state. What's in? Global competition, outsourcing, inequality, and the shrinking of the state. These changes challenge but do not eliminate the need for area studies. How we manage campus-based programs, however, will be critical to the future of area studies in the United States. Our efforts will play out in the context of reduced public dollars— a freeze in federal support for international and area studies in the higher education budget and reaching the apparent limits of state support for public institutions—and increasing student populations.

To develop and implement appropriate management strategies for the future, it is helpful to think of area studies programs in terms of the smaller structures that constitute them and explain them in relation to the larger structures in which they are embedded. Area studies in general is under attack, often seen as a weak component of the larger academic mission of a college or university or as a frill whose contributions could be made in other ways by other departments. Major foundations no longer fund, and are unlikely to return their support to, traditional area studies programs, attempting instead to pick up some of the welfare burdens dropped by public authorities by addressing human rights issues, the alleviation of poverty and the development of self-help projects. Globalization—a fad that is world wide and a micron deep—threatens area studies because it seems not to demand of scholars the kind of expertise area specialists spend years developing. Area specialists learn the culture(s) and language(s) of world regions in addition to receiving extensive training in an academic discipline. On the other hand, proponents of globalization, in an intellectual cheap shot at area studies, argue that language and culture skills are not needed in the new political economy in which people to people solutions will resolve all problems.

Globalization has also been a boon for the international education community, especially for organizations like the Association of International Education Administrators, National Association of Foreign Study Advisors, Association of Professional Schools of International Administration, and Council of American Overseas Research Centers, which are in the business of providing services for international education and students. Area studies comprises only a small part of this community's mandate. Similarly, the five presidential organizations, along with the umbrella organization, the American Council on Education, are more preoccupied with other aspects of higher education. After all, Title VI funding for international and area studies programs constitutes only one-third of one percent of the federal higher education budget.

The foreign language community is also deeply divided, and therefore unsteady in its support for area studies, between promoting second language acquisition (primarily of French or Spanish) and advocacy of the "less commonly taught" languages. The former position, while recognized as important by area specialists, does not usually meet the needs of most area studies programs.

Area studies also provokes attacks from overly reductionist proponents of rational choice theory whose commitments to formal modeling of behavior deny the need for the concrete knowledge of cultures, histories, and peoples that ideally underpin traditional comparative research. Even the Cultural Studies community, which has brought so much attention to the cultures of the regions most often the object of area studies programs, often dismisses the traditional preoccupations of area specialists with history, economics and politics in favor of "consciousness," especially the consciousness of subaltern peoples, as the primary historical force. Cultural Studies' emphasis on bottom-up research, which often focuses on the empowerment of the disenfranchised—liberations via small victories—has led to a rejection of area studies on grounds of its supposed elite and Eurocentric biases. These challenges notwithstanding, area studies programs possess several assets: They still have federal funding and the majority of their faculty have appointments in traditional departments. There is little short term savings, then, in eliminating them. Area studies also has earned respect due to the amount of good theoretical and empirical scholarship produced via its programs, particularly in the United States. Area studies programs also have a large student base, so demand for courses is still high. Finally, the area studies community is better organized than before and has shown itself to be effective in promoting area studies at the federal level. Latin American Studies comprises the largest student and faculty base of all area studies fields in the United States, a base with links to Latino, Latin American and Caribbean communities, to Spanish departments (whose faculty is often the largest on campus), to the Peace Corps and to Latin American universities. This scholarly community has been the most intellectually productive of all area studies faculty. Most major intellectual trends that have affected the Third World in the post-war era have come out of Latin America, for example, dependency theory, the concept of bureaucratic authoritarianism, redemocratization and privatization. It follows, then, that there are more journals devoted to Latin American Studies than to other world areas. The high percentage of Latin American faculty and researchers at, and the inflow of Latin American students into, U.S. universities, the steady growth of Latino ethnic communities, and reasonably good press coverage of Latin America means that, for the foreseeable future, Latin American Studies will continue to enjoy national and geopolitical relevance. Implicit in these apparent strengths are more challenges: Ethnic heritage programs may channel resources away from Latin American Studies, and the size of our faculty base in Latin American Studies may impel fragmentation along discipline and ideological lines, which could lead to destructive competition for resources within programs. We may also fall victim to the Spanish and Portuguese wars, in particular, those between peninsulares and "New Worlders"; between the language and literature faculty; and between the Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies camps. We also have to reassess our role vis-à-vis our Latin American colleagues: What is the role of U.S. scholars as they are less needed to create knowledge about "their" countries or regions? Finally, we are facing a generational shift as traditional area studies faculty retire. In short, we are challenged now to demonstrate and increase our practical usefulness to the academic and broader public communities we serve.

Merkx's talk elicited a number of comments regarding how we can and do demonstrate the continuing relevance of Latin American Studies, among them keeping deans and departments well informed about the purposes and accomplishments of the Latin American Studies program; getting LAS courses into general education requirements; offering more courses that focus upon the Americas (e.g., Border Identities, Environmental Issues, Public Health, etc.); introducing dual/double MA degrees (e.g., MA/MBA, MA/MPH, MA/MPA); placing students in internships in the local or Washington offices of the congressional delegation. CLASP can play an important role in demonstrating the relevance and quality of Latin American Studies in the United States, for example, by developing an annual report on Latin American Studies that would standardize data collection and quantify program impacts. Regarding our relevance, given changes in Latin American scholarship on Latin America, we should emphasize the excellence of our libraries and research facilities, and that our training as area specialists permits us to understand Latin American issues in comparative perspective, which is not always the case with Latin American scholars. In addition, our status as tenured professors in U.S. universities, removed from the daily fray of Latin American politics, can allow us to facilitate or broker the resolution of the conflicts we study.

We will be discussing these and other issues relevant to Latin American studies programs at the CLASP meeting, April 17, 2:45 pm, at the LASA97 Congress in Guadalajara. Please join us.

Outreach Committee Report

Activities of the Committee

Over seventy titles have been received for the 1996 Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature competition. The award recognizes U.S. published works (picture books, folklore, poetry, young adult novels) that positively present Latin America, the Caribbean or U.S. Latino cultures. The award and commended list will be announced in early April. Contact Julie Kline if you would like to receive the 1996 and future lists, or visit www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLA/outreach.html.

CLASP will also be sponsoring a session at **LASA 1997 in Guadalajara** on April 18, 1997. The session, entitled **Integrating Technology in the College Classroom: Practical Applications**, will be part of the sessions available to LASA attendees in the PC Training Center sponsored by [UT-LANIC](#). The session is scheduled for April 18 from 2:45 to 4:45 pm and will include presentations by faculty and staff from the Center for Latin American Studies and the Latin American Library at Tulane University. Please see the LASA97 program for more details on how to sign up for these Internet sessions.

Elizabeth Mahan, Valerie McGinley Marshall, and Julie Kline presented on outreach program resources, experiences and ideas at the November CLASP meeting at UCLA. For a summary of the presentations, please contact Julie Kline.

Title VI Centers K-12 and Post-Secondary Outreach

- Duke/University of North Carolina

In order to present a more balanced opportunity for information, the Outreach Office, in conjunction with the Program's Cuba Working Group, decided to devote this year's 7-12 public school workshop to an in-depth look at the history, politics, and culture of Cuba. Titled **Cuba Considered**, the workshop is scheduled for May 1-3. Duke and UNC core faculty will present on history, U.S. Cuban relations, literature, food, dance and other topics, and a representative from the Cuban Interests Section in Washington will give an opening lecture. Several scholarships will be offered to help teachers defray travel expenses.

The Duke/UNC Program will also offer its sixth summer workshop, **Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Culture and Civilization of Latin America**, June 2-13. As of June 1996, 52 professors from universities and community colleges in the southeast have participated in this workshop. In addition to seminars and discussions with faculty, participants will have access to libraries and other campus facilities, films, and informal interaction with the local Latin Americanist community. Applications from faculty in the mid-south region (North and South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky) are currently being accepted.

- Tulane University

The CRC will be sponsoring a number of activities for middle school and high school teachers this summer. The first event will be the co-sponsorship of the **Environmental Literacy Interdisciplinary Workshop** at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. This event, which is scheduled for June 22-26, is the culminating event in the Fulbright collaborative project with UW-Milwaukee to develop instructional materials on environmental literacy for middle and high school grades. The workshop is unique in that it will be bringing together teachers from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico. For more information, please contact Valerie McGinley Marshall at Tulane University or Julie Kline at UW-Milwaukee.

The CRC is currently accepting applications for its **Summer Workshop for Spanish Teachers** in Mexico City. This two-week intensive summer program includes courses on foreign language methodology, an introduction to Latin American literature, and Mexican culture, in addition to special seminars in Latin American Studies. Participants will take courses at the Universidad Iberoamericana and be housed at a hotel near the Zona Rosa. Tulane will provide a scholarship which covers tuition, housing and a series of tours. The program is scheduled to take place from July 5 to the 19th. For more information and an application, please contact the CRC. The deadline for application is April 11, 1997.

- University of Florida

In response to overwhelming teacher requests for more up-to-date information on changing events in Latin America, the Florida Outreach Office will offer a one-day workshop on Cuba, scheduled for March 22. In addition to presentations, teachers will receive supplemental packets to utilize in the classroom. To help defray travel expenses, a modest stipend will be awarded to each workshop participant.

- University of Kansas

The Kansas Center has organized a conference for March 15 entitled **1997 Update on Latin America**, an extended full-day program that will provide up-to-date information and insightful analysis of key events and trends in Latin America and the Caribbean. Secondary and post-secondary teachers are being targeted as primary audiences for the event. Topics for discussion will include: the Guatemalan Peace Accords; Transitions to Democracy; Political and Social Implications of NAFTA and MERCOSUR; Ethnicity, Political Protest and Social Policy; and Environment, Conservation and Development.

- University of Wisconsin - Madison

Madison plans an extensive and diverse series of events entitled **The African Diaspora in the Americas: Spring 1997 Performance and Lecture Series**. The overall objective of the series is to increase an understanding of and appreciation for the significance of the African Diaspora in the Americas among the university and broader Madison communities through an original combination of events including dance, music performance, lectures, workshops, demonstrations, and exhibitions. Presentations are scheduled at several local elementary, middle and high schools, and a school district staff development workshop will be linked to an **African Music as Resistance** symposium.

- University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

CLA is cosponsoring, with UW-Green Bay, a 3 credit (grad or undergrad) study program in Guatemala, Guatemala for Teachers, scheduled for June 28-July 12. The program, open to teachers of any subject area, will combine Spanish language study (beginning to advanced), homestays, and travel in the highlands. In particular, participating teachers will have many opportunities to learn from contemporary Maya communities.

Milwaukee is also helping to support a collaborative workshop with the Wisconsin International Outreach Consortium (WIOC), **A Shifting Target: The Challenge of Teaching About Global Ethnicity in the College Classroom**. Sessions include the use of computers and the Internet; cultural media such as art, texts, and performance; and group methods including team teaching and role playing. Area and International Studies Centers will also provide information about teaching tools for various world areas, ranging from web sites to film recommendations to texts. The institute is scheduled for June 2-4 on the UW-Madison campus. Some support for participation is available through the related WIOC 1997 College Faculty Access Grants for Improvement of International Curricula.

CLA announces the availability of the new curriculum, **Boots, Bananas and Biodiversity: Interdisciplinary Environmental Activities for Grades 6-9**. This collection of activities was written by the 12 middle school teachers who participated in the UW-Milwaukee 1995 Fulbright Group Project in Costa Rica, which ran in collaboration with Tulane University. Additional information is available upon request.

Report of the Language Teaching Committee

The Language Teaching Committee's main function is to publish under CLASP a comprehensive list of summer programs in lesser taught Latin American languages offered in universities throughout the United States. We appreciate everybody's efforts to provide this information and to help in keeping this list up to date.

This list is also published on the world wide web through the CLASP web page. We have found that it is very helpful and accessible to provide the list in this format, and at the same time, it can be updated frequently. Many individuals have contacted us having found the information on the website. Since we also receive requests for information about Spanish language summer programs, we are trying to put that on the website as well and will include any about which we have adequate information.

- Intensive Aymara

Where: University of Chicago

When: June 23- August 30, 1997

Deadline: June 2, 1997

Approved for FLAS and for CIC FLEP fellowship holders. (Students from participating institutions must apply for these grants through their home institution in time for February grant deadlines.)

Contact: Summer Session Office, 5835 S. Kimbark Avenue, Judd Hall 207, Chicago, IL 60637, phone: (773)702-6033

- Kaqchikel Maya

Where: Antigua, Guatemala

Sponsored by: Tulane University & University of Texas at Austin

When: June 16- July 25

Cost: Inscription \$400. Transportation must be arranged individually.

Contact: Dr. Judith Maxwell, Dept. of Anthropology Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118-5698, email: maxwell@mailhost.tcls.tulane.edu students at UT-Austin contact: Dr. Brian Stross, Dept. of Anthropology, ETS 1.130, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78712, email: bstross@mail.utexas.edu

- Intensive Yucatec Maya

Where: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill When: June 9- July 18; deadline and final payment due: May 2, 1997

Approved for FLAS fellowship holders. Students from participating institutions must apply for these grants through their home institutions.

Cost: tuition, a \$700 program fee and housing cost for whom: open for anyone (15 students) contact: Sharon S. Mújica, The Yucatec Maya Summer Institute, Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies, 223 E. Franklin Street, CB 3205, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3205, phone: (919)962-2414, fax: (919)962-0398

- Brazilian Portuguese

Where: Rio de Janeiro

Sponsored by: University of Florida When: summer B session 1997

Cost: N/A

FLAS fellowship available- due before March 1, 1997 contact: Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 319 Grinter Hall, PO Box 115530, Gainesville, FL 32611-5530, phone: (352)392-0375, fax: (352)392-7682

- Bolivian Quechua

Where: University of California at Los Angeles

When: summer 1997

For whom: any interested students

contact: Latin American Center, UCLA, phone: (310) 206-6571, fax: (310) 206-6859

- Intensive Brazilian Portuguese

Where: University of Chicago

When: June 23- August 28; deadline: June 2, 1997

Approved for FLAS and for CIC FLEP fellowship holders. (Students from participating institutions must apply for these grants through their home institution in time for February grant deadlines.). Contact: Summer Session Office, 5835 S. Kimbark Avenue, Judd Hall 207, Chicago, Ill 60637, phone: (773)702-6033

- Intensive Brazilian Portuguese

Where: University of Wisconsin at Madison

When: June 16-Aug 8, 1997; orientation: June 13; deadline: April 18, 1997 Deadline with FLAS: March 10, 1997

FLAS fellowships are available to graduate students in conjunction with the Institute. They provide tuition and \$1,500 stipend.

Contact: Department of Spanish and Portuguese, 1018 Van Hise, 1220 Linden Drive, UW-Madison, WI 53706, phone: (608)262-2093

- Portuguese Language & Culture

Where: In Vitoria-Velha, Brazil

For whom: Beginning, Interm, or Adv. Brazilian Portuguese

Sponsored by: University of Kansas (also UT-Austin)

When: June 16, July 26, 1997; contact: Office of Study Abroad, Attn: Summer Institutes, 108 Lippincott, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-1731, phone: (913)864-3742, email: OSA@ukans.edu

- Brazilian Culture And Portuguese

Where: Fisk Language School, in Limeira, Brazil

Sponsored by: University of New Mexico

Costs: Includes airfare from Los Angeles, three weeks homestay with meals, three weeks classes.

For whom: any person interested

Contact: Valeriane Moffatto, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Ortega 409, Albuquerque, NM 87131, phone: (505) 277-5106

- Quechua

Where: Cornell University

When: June 30- August 12; deadline: March 14, 1997

Tuition and fees: \$3,240.

Funded by Title VI. A limited number of graduate fellowships are available for US citizens or permanent residents who meet academic requirements. Fellowships cover tuition and include \$1,500 stipend. Student who wish to be considered for a fellowship should indicate their interest on the application form.

Contact: Mary Jo Dudley, Associate Director, Latin American Studies Program, Cornell University, 190 Uris Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-7601, phone: (607)255-3345