


Spring 2014

La Voz Spring 2014

El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies

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Recommended Citation

El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies, "La Voz Spring 2014" (2014). *La Voz*. 6.
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El Instituto

Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies

LAVOZ

SPRING 2014

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Estimada/os colegas,

New events and initiatives for the Spring 2014 semester highlight El Instituto's growing engagement with "global latinidades", a broad examination of the Latin American and Caribbean diaspora within the hemisphere and beyond. In addition to research workshops focusing on education and Latina/os in the United States and our annual visiting artist, Patrick "Pato" Hebert who will present his Latino LGBT activist survey, our work brings us to locations such as Amman, Jordan where we are collaborating with colleagues at the Leonel Fernández Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Jordan and to Cuba with the launch of a new faculty-led study abroad program. Here in Storrs, along with other events, we will continue our conversations about the region's diaspora while hosting the state's Brazilian consul, the first in a series of visits by consular representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean. At the center of these initiatives are El Instituto's core and affiliate faculty, graduate and undergraduate students who through their research all contribute to the advancement of our interdisciplinary field of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies. We welcome your active participation in these and all events. Please join us!

Saludos cordiales,

—Mark Overmyer-Velázquez

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TERTULIA BY JORGE AGÜERO

During the Fall 2013 semester's Tertulia, El Instituto's very own Dr. Jorge Agüero. Assistant Professor of Economics, discussed the various research projects he is undertaking. Professor Agüero spoke of how, in Latin America, school enrollment rates are high when compared to those of other developing nations around the world. The quality of education however, is subpar. Therefore, Professor Agüero researches different methods to improve the educational performance in various Latin American countries including Peru and Mexico. Furthermore, he examines the effectiveness of attempts to add days to the school calendar in order to improve overall academic performance rates. His findings reveal that more days are not necessarily beneficial for poorly performing schools. Along with education, Professor Agüero also spoke of health concerns in various countries of Latin America, specifically diarrheal disease. The solution to this problem is quite simple: hand washing before every



meal, after bathroom use, etc. Nonetheless, the results of large-scale public health efforts in Latin America proved to be ineffective. Dr. Agüero examines the correlation between the H1N1 public safety measures taken during the 2009 pandemic and the decrease of diarrhea-related diseases after the pandemic. The main focus of the Tertulia and Agüero's latest research assesses the potential health effects of climate change in Latin America. Mexico is predicted to experience several heat waves and higher temperatures in the near future. In the United States, the health effects of heat waves are minimal excluding vulnerable populations such as the elderly and children. However, very little research has been conducted on the various health risks associated with these extreme temperatures in Latin America. Dr. Agüero has just received a grant to conduct research on this topic and possibly identify any vulnerable groups by gender, location, and economic status.

Contributed by Inara Fernandez

MARK OVERMYER-VELÁZQUEZ APPOINTED RESEARCH PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN

Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, Director of El Instituto, has received a gratis appointment of Research Professor in the Leonel Fernández Center for Latin American Studies, Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II School of International Studies and Political Science at the University of Jordan, Amman. In the coming years, Professor Zaid Eyadat, Dean of the School of International Studies and Political Science at the University of Jordan and Professor Overmyer-Velázquez will collaborate on a number of projects including an international conference and corresponding edited volume on "Immigrants, Minorities and Democratic Transitions: Comparative Studies of Latin America and the Arab World." UConn's Vice Provost for Global Affairs, Dr. Daniel Weiner was instrumental in initiating this relationship.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS: ART STORIES IN 1990s MEXICO CITY

PRESENTED BY ROBERTO TEJADA



In the Fall 2013 Robert G. Mead Endowed Lecture, “Outside the Window: Art Stories in 1990s Mexico City,” Professor Roberto Tejada contended that the art scene in Mexico during the 1990s illustrated how both official and underground artwork appeared in juxtaposition to the Neoliberal turn in Mexico. Throughout his talk, Professor Tejada also maintained that Roberto Bolaño’s *Detectives Salvajes* served as an inspiration and an embarking point from which to read the different artistic terrains explored in Mexico during that time. Professor Tejada provided images that enabled the audience to visualize how 1990s Mexico was re-textualized, disseminated, and reprinted through varying outlets, such as art, media, literature, and government discourse. Professor Tejada drew on Bolaño’s novel to ask “What’s outside the window?” as a self-reflective narrative

thread linking the works of artists such as Teresa Margolles and Miguel Ventura to the socio-political, cultural, and economic turmoil in Mexico in the 1990s. Quite rightly, he concludes, the “narrative bricolages” of Margolles, Ventura, coupled with Bolaño’s novel; and archival material, such as news reports and government documents, further analyze the historical consciousness of 1990s Mexico. However, the questions and comments from the audience were indicative of what many are most curious about – how

“Despite the increase in access to artists’ work, the art world still remains an exclusive space with gatekeepers.”

access to the Internet and digitalization are affecting the visibility of certain artists. Professor Tejada pointed out that, despite the increase in access to artists’ work, the art world still remains an exclusive space, with “gatekeepers,” who determine which artist(s) enter or do not enter the global art market. An imperative part of the conversation was art’s political role

in creating alternative or counter discourses to the normative subjectivities imposed by Neoliberal discourse. It was an exceptionally informative lecture that put into perspective the complex relationship between creative texts, the global market, socio-political and historical dilemmas, and consumers. Professor Roberto Tejada is an Endowed Professor of Art History at Southern Methodist University School of the Arts. His research and teaching methods interrogate modern and contemporary image environments from an interdisciplinary viewpoint: a critical art history whose visual knowledge can locate objects and actors in the global-culture context. Tejada is author of many books that include, most recently, *National Camera: Photography and Mexico’s Image Environment* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), and *Celia Alvarez Muñoz* (UCLA/CSRC; University of Minnesota Press, 2009). He has also served as co-curator on the exhibitions “Manuel Álvarez Bravo: Optical Parables” at the J. Paul Getty Museum (2001), and “Luis Gispert: Loud Image,” at the Hood Museum of Dartmouth College (2004). His research has earned awards from the Creative Capital | Warhol Foundation (2009) and from the National Endowment for the Arts (2007).

Contributed by Melissa Huerta

DURAN PRESENTS DCF'S WORK WITH CONNECTICUT'S UNDOCUMENTED

Yadira Duran, a representative of the Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services (DCF), discussed with undergraduate students the various aspects of DCF’s work. Duran’s presentation focused on providing a sense of the department’s mission as it relates to the needs of special populations such as undocumented

immigrants, specifically those in Connecticut. In her presentation, she highlighted research DCF had conducted to better understand the demographics it serves, which has allowed it to adapt its practices to serve these populations more effectively. One of the ways DCF has better served all the children in

Connecticut is by offering a full array of services to the undocumented. This policy was adopted in 2008, and was highlighted by Duran in her presentation. Duran concluded her visit with a discussion of her own personal experiences as a case worker and a brief Q&A session.

Contributed by Michael McGuigan

ALTURAS DUO PERFORMS AT HACHA

Photos by Carla Silva-Muhammad

During October's HACHA, Alturos Duo, a musical group, presented to guests at El Instituto their mix of Latin American and Classical music performing songs to honor the lives lost in Chile's 1973 coup. The duo, comprised of Carlos Boltes and Scott Hill, has been playing a mix of original compositions and Latin American folk songs using a variety of string instruments for 13 years.



Contributed by Charlie Fuentes

The musicians gave a lively introduction to the Charango, a string instrument that claims its roots in the baroque guitars brought to South America by the Spanish and later modified by the indigenous peoples of Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and the northern areas of Chile and Argentina. After discussing the history of the instruments, the duo performed a series of instrumental compositions



inspired by the Atacama Desert. During the well-attended performance, Hugo Gonzales accompanied the duo as they performed several songs by the Chilean folk singer Víctor Jara. Gonzales provided the vocals for the politically charged lyrics that were crucial to the opposition of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. "It is not just music, it is a part of our lives" said Gonzales, "an essential part of our strength to make Pinochet go." Although this performance had a clear political connection, Hill explains that Alturos Duo's music is about entertainment and does not have a specific message. According to Hill, "there is a theme, which is to play South American music that hasn't been heard."



MIGRANT FARM WORKER CLINIC

About the Clinic: Migrant farm workers are among the most economically disadvantaged and medically vulnerable groups in the United States having little, if any, access to health care or medication. Difficult access to health care includes unaffordable health insurance, language barriers, and lack of transportation. Migrant workers also experience additional barriers such as fear of deportation, lost or garnished wages, and being dismissed or not invited back to work by employers due to missed work or health issues. A coalition of local organizations, including UConn, has formed a network to overcome these barriers and attend to the health care needs of migrant and seasonal farm workers. Each year El Instituto, with support from the UConn Honors Program, awards a Migrant Farmer Worker Clinic Summer Intern Fellowship (MWF) to two undergraduates. Divya Iyer, one of the summer of 2013 recipients shared her experience. For more information on this program visit <http://publichealth.uconn.edu>.

Divya Iyer, recipient of the 2013 Fellowship

"This summer, students and health professionals teamed up again through the UConn Health Center Migrant Farm Worker Clinic Program to provide health care for seasonal migrant farm workers that work in Connecticut during the summer months. From June to October, volunteers set up and run mobile clinics at farms around the state where workers can receive care and medication free of charge. Workers and volunteers alike benefit from this unique health care initiative that brings resources and care to a growing underserved population in Connecticut.

Established in 1997, the Migrant Farm Worker Health Clinic is an effort put together by the UConn Health Center, El Instituto at the University of Connecticut, and Central Area Health Education Center (CT AHEC) that brings together local physicians and health professionals, medical students, physician assistant students, undergraduates, and high schools students to provide care to migrant farm workers. Every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday night, volunteers go to a different farm and take patient vitals, medical history, and provide diagnoses and medication to the workers.

After many long hours of physically demanding work in the heat and dust, the patients are always grateful to receive care or even just chat and joke around with volunteers. With no health insurance and little spending money, the clinic is the only access to care available to the workers, who, due to the nature of their work and lack of access to healthy food, often suffer from various muscle and joint injuries, skin irritations, and chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. In addition to treating these issues, the clinic emphasizes the importance of prevention by offering blood pressure and blood glucose screenings, information on healthy living, and dental services.

For students, like myself, volunteering at the clinic is an opportunity to bridge knowledge from the classroom about health care, culture, language, and politics to real life, while having the rewarding experience of serving people in our community. Each year, new volunteers are surprised to learn that this population exists in Connecticut and that these workers contribute so greatly to our economy through their agricultural work. The reason I and other volunteers come back each year is for the opportunity to improve the patient's experience here in a country that is not their own, but that they support economically through strenuous physical labor. Providing basic health care and a friendly face at the end of a long day is the least we can do for a population that is essential to the economic welfare of our state. By the end of every night, volunteers leave with a sense of accomplishment that in just a few hours they were able to contribute tremendously to the well-being of the migrant farm worker population. The Migrant Farm Worker Health Clinic is a rewarding and eye-opening experience as well as an opportunity to learn and to serve."

UConn Today Features Melissa Huerta's

PATH TO PROFESSORIATE

Pre-Doctoral Fellow and PhD candidate Melissa Huerta was featured in UConn Today, distinguishing a unique program that has allowed her to work at El Instituto. Melissa was one of four students chosen to receive the Vice Provost for Diversity Pre-doctoral and Post-MFA In-Residence Fellowship, offered at UConn for the first time during the 2013-14 academic year through the Office of the Vice Provost for



Diversity. Melissa along with three other scholars (in Asian American Studies; African American Studies; and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies) will use this time to complete their dissertations and to build networks within UConn. Melissa's dissertation examines the role of Latina feminism and Latinidad in the development, evolution, and practice of Teatro Luna; Chicago's only all-Latina theatre ensemble.

ARAB REVOLUTIONS, POLITICAL ISLAM AND THE NEW TRENDS IN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES



In Fall 2013, UConn welcomed Professor Zaid Eyadat, Dean of the School of International Studies and Political Science at the University of Jordan, to connect

with both students and faculty and discuss his research as El Instituto and the University of Jordan's Leonel Fernández Center for Latin American Studies develop a deeper partnership. Professor Eyadat met with a group of El Instituto's core faculty and students to better acquaint himself with the university. Later, Professor Eyadat gave a lecture at the Human Rights Institute titled, "Arab Revolutions, Political Islam and the New Trends in Middle Eastern Studies," where he examined the far-reaching political and academic impacts of the Arab Spring throughout the Middle East. He explored questions such as, Does religion impact political behavior? And in what ways? His research has

led him to see the Arab Spring as a revolution of dignity which caused the collapse of the political rationale of fear that is very prominent in the Middle East. Moreover, Professor Eyadat demonstrated the limitations of Middle Eastern Studies to predict the Arab Spring because current literature neglects to address the role of the



military and the rise of Arab nationalism in the Middle East. However, he added that the Arab Spring was not a movement that could depend on predictability alone. Professor Eyadat called for Middle Eastern Studies to study the Middle East beyond the politics of democratization and the notion of the

state to be territorial. Professor Eyadat is a political scientist and human rights professor, with over ten years of experience in researching the democratization of the Middle East within the framework of game theory. He has been formally trained in comparative and international politics and game theory methodology. His expertise lies in Middle Eastern politics, with his current research focusing on human rights, conflict management and resolution, the democratization and politics in the Middle East, and Islamic politics. Through his membership in governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as international institutions, he has contributed extensively to the analysis and advancement of Middle East politics within a comparative and international framework, working extensively on legislation, policies, elections and electoral procedures with the Jordanian government and NGOs.

Contributed by Andrea Chunga-Celis

SHOULD THOSE FLEEING GANG VIOLENCE BE GRANTED ASYLUM?

Professor Jon Bauer, co-founder and Director of UConn Law School's Asylum and Human Rights Clinic, spoke to students and faculty on the topic of gang violence and asylum in the United States. The main question he posed was "Should Those Fleeing Gang Violence Be Granted Asylum?" He illustrated this question with the case of a mother and son from Guatemala fleeing for different reasons. The mother left on the grounds of domestic violence, while her son hoped for asylum for refusing to join a Guatemalan gang. Both cases faced very different legal dynamics.

Professor Bauer spoke in-depth about the very stringent circumstances for granting asylum along with the probabilities for winning the cases. Students learned about the complexities and restrictions involved with asylum proceedings. To be granted asylum one must fit into specific criteria and have a compelling and plausible case. All of these factors must be considered when analyzing cases which are more humanitarian rather than civil or criminal. Professor Bauer gave an excellent presentation and thoroughly explained all the elements that allow for many to be



granted asylum. He did so in a manner in which students completely unfamiliar with the topic were well-engaged.

Contributed by Pahola Almonte

MANOS UNIDAS FEATURED ON NPR RADIO SHOW

Marie Coppola, Assistant Professor of Psychology, was featured on the Global Activism series of Chicago Public Radio's WorldView program, known in Connecticut as Hartford's NPR radio station. Manos Unidas, founded and co-chaired by Dr. Coppola, promotes equal access to educational and vocational opportunities for deaf people in Nicaragua. Professor Coppola explained that Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Western hemisphere, lacks significant infrastructure to assist the deaf community. Her research originally focused on language advancements in Managua, the capital city with a vibrant deaf community, where a new sign language had emerged demonstrating how in the absence of language, humans are incredibly innovative, creating new forms of communication. However, in rural communities the deaf did not have the same access nor resources to learn language. Therefore with Manos Unidas, she implemented two sign language classes in rural areas on Saturdays for three hours empowering children, adolescents and adults. Collaborating with Dr. Coppola, Zhenwei Chen, a recent UConn Psychology graduate, discussed Language For All, the new student organization at UConn promoting awareness of sign languages, bilingualism, and the importance of linguistic input for children's development. Zhenwei is also raising funds to maintain the programs run by Manos Unidas. Dr. Coppola's work with Manos Unidas is a testament that deaf people can do anything that hearing people can do.

REMEDiating FLUSSER SYMPOSIUM

El Instituto, along with other departments at UConn co-hosted The ReMEDiating Flusser symposium. This event brings together scholars in media studies, art and cultural studies and international Flusser specialists to dialogue about Vilém Flusser's work, his philosophy, and to engage each other in discussions on the arts and humanities in a digital age. As a Digital Humanities project, this symposium takes Flusser scholarship and the representation of Flusser's work one step further: for three days, participants work collaboratively to create a script to reMEDiate Flusser's main ideas and concepts online. The final product will be published online in a multi-media format using Scalar in order to explore new forms of digital scholarship.

SAMUEL MARTÍNEZ COMMENTS ON DOMINICAN CITIZENSHIP CONFLICT

The Christian Science Monitor article "Thought you were a citizen? Dominican Republic changes the rules" by Ezra Fieser shed light on a controversial situation in the Dominican Republic where top courts ruled that children who were born in the nation to parents of immigrants were not considered citizens. This ruling was meant to retroactively assess the citizenship of people back to 1929 potentially stripping citizenship from hundreds of thousands of people who considered themselves Dominican. One of El Instituto's core faculty, anthropologist Samuel Martínez, was quoted in the article regarding his perspective of the Haitian government's role in the current conflict. Professor Martínez's expertise was sought because he has extensively studied Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic. Martínez explained that, "Unfortunately the government of Haiti has in recent years taken a rather equivocal and ineffective line [in terms of being] an advocate for the rights of the Haitian-ancestry minority. So I doubt that this measure will add much if any lasting tension. In the long run they will shrug this off."

UConn LIBRARIES' ACQUIRES THE MAGDALENA GÓMEZ PAPERS

The UConn Libraries' Archives and Special Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center announced the acquisition of the **Magdalena Gómez Papers (1979-2012)** in Fall 2013. This collection will be one of the cornerstones to the newly created Latina/o collecting areas. Born in NYC, but currently a resident of Springfield, MA, Gómez is the quintessential Renaissance woman: an award winning poet, playwright, performance artist and social activist. She has the ability to combine art with social activism to create projects that are uplifting and empowering. One such project is Teatro V!da, <http://www.teatrovida.com/>, the first youth Latino theatre in Springfield, MA. She has also taught art and theatre workshops for children, women and prisoners and materials related to these workshops can be found in the collection. As a young woman, she was part of the early Nuyorican Poets movement and was mentored by notable poets such as Pedro Pietri, Jose Angel Figueroa, and Louis Reyes Rivera. She eventually left NYC and the movement to follow her own path. Magdalena is involved in many, many things. In addition to being director of Teatro V!da, she co-edited a book on bullying with Maria Luisa Arroyo titled, *Bullying: Replies, Rebuttals, Confessions, and Catharsis: an Intergenerational and Multicultural Anthology* and, most recently, was named Master Artist by the renowned Pregones Theater from NYC, which, in collaboration with the Puerto Rican Travelling Theater, adapted and musicalized a selection of her works.

Contributed by Marisol Ramos



SPRING EVENTS 2014

January

Jan. 23 — Robin Greeley, UConn Art and Art History, "Land, Photography and Citizenship in Post-revolutionary Rural Mexico." UCHI Fellows' Public Talk, 4:00pm-5:30pm, CLAS/Austin Room 301

February

Feb. 11 — Paulo Roberto de Almeida, Brazilian Consul: "Brazil in the world economy, and some issues of current economic policy." 3:30pm, Homer Babbidge Library, Class of 1947 Room

Feb. 27 — Patrick "Pato" Hebert, intermedia artist, educator and cultural worker based in Los Angeles and New York, 3:30pm-4:45pm, Homer Babbidge Library, Class of 1947 Room

Feb. 28 — Workshop by Pato Hebert, TBD, El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

March

Mar. 5 — José Roberto Martínez, "Puerto Rico on the Global Scene — 1952-1992," discussion of Puerto Rican diplomacy and global outreach. 12:00pm, Homer Babbidge Library, Class of 1947 Room

Mar. 5 — HACHA: *Hora Alternativa para una Comunidad Hospitalaria de Académicos alambristas* (Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-crossing Academics). Informal graduate student and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines, 5:00-7:00pm, El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

Mar. 6 — Eyzaguirre Lecture: Diana Taylor, Professor of Performance Studies and Spanish, NYU, "Performing the Thing: Teatro Vertigim's Bom Retiro." 2:00pm, Homer Babbidge Library, Class of 1947 Room

Mar. 13 — Film: "Las Abuelas de Mayo and the Search for Identity." Followed by Q&A with the filmmaker. 5:00pm, Laurel Hall 101

Mar. 14 — Peacejam lecture by Oscar Arias, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and former President of Costa Rica. 7:00pm, TBD

Mar. 25 — TAULA: *Urban Workshop of the Americas/Taller Urbano de las Americas*. "The Civic Imagination: A comparative ethnography across the Americas." Panel presentation by Gianpaolo Baiocchi (NYU), Elizabeth Bennett, Alissa Cordner, Peter Klein and Stephanie Savell (Brown University). 3:00pm, El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

Mar. 26 — Tertulia by Daisy Reyes, UConn Sociology Dept. "*Nested Latino Politics: How Campuses Shape Students' Political Styles*." 12:00pm, El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

April

Apr. 1 — Performance: Teatro Luna presents "Generation Sex." 7:00pm, Ballard Institute, One Royce Circle

Apr. 2 — HACHA: *Hora Alternativa para una Comunidad Hospitalaria de Académicos alambristas* (Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-crossing Academics). Informal graduate student and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines, 5:00pm-7:00pm, El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

Apr. 10 — Melissa Huerta, "A Case Study: Teatro Luna and Theories in the Flesh." 12:30pm, Laurel Hall 301

Apr. 15 — Cara a Cara (Face to Face), Juana Bordas, author of *Salsa, Soul and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age*, will speak on the importance of diversity in education and leadership, 12:00pm-2:00pm, PRLACC, Student Union, 4th floor

Apr. 15 — Juana Bordas, author of *The Power of Latino Leadership*, will speak on the Latino culture and its contributions to leadership, 6:30pm-7:30pm, Laurel Hall 102