


Fall 2016

La Voz Fall 2016

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

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El Instituto

Instituto de Latino, Caribbean and Latin American Studies

UConn

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

VIDA

LA VOZ

Fall 2016

FROM THE DIRECTOR

December 2016

Estimadxs colegas,

We, members of the core faculty and affiliate advisory board members of UConn's El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, & Latin American Studies, write to express our commitment to advocating for the rights and freedoms of our students and co-workers at the university and fostering a welcoming intellectual community of critically engaged scholars. In its foundations, the president-elect's 2016 campaign exacerbated a wide range of discriminatory, nativist, racist, misogynist, and heterosexist actions and targeted Latinx populations and undocumented immigrants in particular. Our research and teaching emerges from and is sustained by a long history of struggles for social justice in Latinx, Caribbean & Latin American communities. As such, we reaffirm our commitment to fight discrimination and division and to support diversity, equity, social justice and human rights. We stand in solidarity with all our UConn colleagues and students who are feeling vulnerable at this time and pledge to actively work to protect their rights and freedoms

En solidaridad,

Mark Overmyer-Velázquez

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FACULTY NEWS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Michele Back is a recipient of the 2017 Dean's Research Incentive Awards (DRIA) for her research "Translanguaging and Multilingual Ecology: Scaffolding Success in Linguistically Diverse Schools."

Milagros Castillo-Montoya is a 2017 DRIA recipient for her research "Teaching Through Diversity: Faculty Professional Development for Teaching Racially and Ethnically Diverse College and University Students."



Samuel Martinez was awarded the American Anthropological Association (AAA) President's Award. He also received the Humanities Institute Public Discourse Project Fellowship for his project, "Beyond Schism: Searching for a Unified Theory of Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery."

Daisy Verduzco Reyes received the Humanities Institute Public Discourse Project Fellowship for her research "Student Protests Against Racial Micro-aggressions and for Inclusion on Campuses."



Michael Willig, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, was named Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The AAAS, which publishes the journal *Science*, grants fellow status based on scientifically or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications.

FIRE AWARDS

The CLAS Dean's office awarded FIRE (Fund for Interdisciplinary Research Endeavors) awards to the following El Instituto core faculty and affiliates in May 2016:*

Jorge Agüero* was awarded funds to support his current research on whether social programs are able to reduce long-term inequalities in Latin America.

Marysol Asencio* was awarded funds to support her research (with Bandana Purkayastha) titled "In the Shadow of Immigrant Hubs: An Exploratory Study of Inequality and the Integration of New Immigrants and Refugee Groups in CT."

Milagros Castillo-Montoya was awarded funds to support her work related to learning through diversity.

Robin Greeley was awarded funds to conduct research on her book manuscript Conversación: Néstor García Canclini

Front Cover: Photo by Zareen Thomas taken in Meta, Columbia summer 2016 while attending a workshop on children, human rights and street art. See page 5 for more information on Zareen's research.

TINKER FOUNDATION FIELD RESEARCH GRANTS

In December 2015 El Instituto was awarded a three-year grant by the Tinker Foundation's Field Research Program to provide graduate students with travel funds to Latin America and the Caribbean. These awards allow students to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of language and culture, to familiarize themselves with information sources relevant to their studies, to conduct pilot studies and preliminary investigations, and to develop contacts with scholars in their fields. These awards are made over a three year period and are matched by funds from UConn's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Vice Provost of Research, and the Office of Global Affairs.

Funding awards are made to individuals to assist with travel and field-related expenses for brief periods (two weeks to four months) of pre-dissertation field research in Latin America, defined by the Tinker Foundation as the Spanish-

and Portuguese-speaking countries of the region. Eligible recipients may be graduate students at the master's or early stages of the doctoral level studies, including those pursuing professional degrees. These grants are not to be used for advanced dissertation research; they are intended to provide graduate students with early experience conducting hands-on field research in Latin America and the opportunity to develop independent research projects. Citizens of Latin American countries enrolled at UConn are eligible provided they have no previous field research experience in that country.

Application materials for 2018 funding, can be found at <http://elin.uconn.edu/tinker-grants/> (Due November 1st, 2017)

MALDONADO: TINKER FIELD REPORT

Katheryn Maldonado spent summer 2016 conducting her research in the Dominican Republic while also interning at the Observatorio Judicial Dominicano (OJD) in Santo Domingo. The internship at the OJD exposed her to the legal system of the Dominican Republic while also allowing her to continue to do research with greater access to scholarly resources. Through the internship she established connections with tribunal and high court justices to further her research. Katheryn had the opportunity to interview Constitutional Tribunal Justice Hermógenes Acosta de los Santos, who was involved in a series of cases that decided the conventionality of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, as well as the fate of Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.



Maldonado (far right) with members of Instituto Dominicano de Aviación Civil

In the TC256-14 decision of the Constitutional Tribunal of the Dominican Republic, the court's majority opinion decided the constitutionality of accepting the competition of the power of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The majority opinion of the Constitutional Tribunal declared that accepting the competition of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights was unconstitutional on the basis that the treaty was signed and ratified without following proper protocol. Justice Hermógenes Acosta de los Santos handed down a dissenting vote that argued that the procedures followed by the legislative, presidential and the judicial

powers had in fact accepted the competition of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The state powers accepted the competition for various reasons, according to Justice Acosta de los Santos: that the actions of the court itself in citing decisions made by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in previous national decisions revealed consent to the competition of the court. The state also accepted a justice from the Dominican Republic serving as a justice on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for several years. Justice Acosta de los Santos argued that jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on Latin America had been recognized and that no other agreement was necessary to declare whether a state would accede to the competition of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. When Congress signed and ratified the initial treaty that binds the Dominican Republic's participation in the Organization of States and in turn the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the state accepted the competition of the court.

Decisions made by the Constitutional Tribunal in the Dominican Republic in TC256-14 are significant regarding the treatment of Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic for several reasons. The case not only decided that the state will no longer accept the competition of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in intervention that highlights human rights abuses in the Dominican Republic; it also rationalizes the behavior of the state to continue xenophobic and racist practices that have led to the problem of statelessness in the Dominican Republic. The case also gives rise to the question of the extent to which states can argue the idea of sovereignty to justify human rights abuses and to prevent the intervention of international human rights powers.

TINKER FOUNDATION REPORTS—2016 AWARDS

Luisa Arrieta traveled to Bogota, Colombia where she visited the Archivo General de la Nación to gather documents regarding the inner organization of the National Museum, the contracts for the acquisition of objects, and letters of donation(s). Locating these materials served to reinforce her argument that the National Museum's 1880 reorganization marked the point the where desire to build a national narrative drawing on a more visual and cultural perspective was explicit in Colombia.

Vialcary Crisóstomo spent a month in the Dominican Republic and two weeks in Cuba where she conducted research for her dissertation project, *La República trujillista del ayer y el hoy* (tentative title). Her research focuses on Dominican literature post-Trujillo dictatorship and explores the topics of race and gender in the national discourse.

Claudio Daflon traveled to Buenos Aires to investigate its urban peripheries and to question how its inhabitants collectively organized to demand political participation and to claim rights in the city in times of decisive global power shifts, including the expansion of urban neoliberal policies.

Orlando Deavila Pertuz traveled to Cuba to examine how tourism development was impacting Cuban society, specifically looking at transnational linkages between the experiences of tourism development in Cartagena, Colombia and Havana, Cuba.

Katheryn Maldonado traveled to the Dominican Republic to research the relationship between the media and the government in the formation of public opinion and the relationship between the public and governing institutional bodies in states and around the globe. Specifically, she looked at the Dominican media's coverage of the *Sentencia 168*—which motioned for the denationalization of people residing in the Dominican Republic.

Olivia Marcus travel to Peru for ten weeks to conduct ethnographic interviews and participant observation at a mental health clinic in Tarapoto. This trip allowed her to develop a relationship with a transcultural psychiatrist who works in Lima's public psychiatric clinic.

Neil Oculi spent two weeks in August in the Dominican Republic where he conducted interviews with policymakers on various aspects of climate change vulnerability, particularly related to climate change policies and the idea of integration, or lack of, by Spanish Caribbean islands with the rest of the Caribbean region.

Shaine Scarminach traveled to Ecuador in August to conduct pre-dissertation research on relations between the U.S. and Ecuador in the years after World War II. He plans to use his findings to develop an article on fisheries conduct in the Eastern Tropical Pacific. He learned a great deal about differing conceptions of the ocean environment, the form and purpose of natural conservation, and the fraught conflicts over national development and world capitalist economy.

TINKER FOUNDATION AWARD RECIPIENTS 2017

Vialcary Crisóstomo received funding to continue her research on post-Trujillo Dominican literature.

Natalie Hernandez will travel to Cuba to meet with and interview writers from the Soviet-Cuban community.

Josue Lopez will travel to Honduras to make comparisons between the United States and Honduras. He plans to look at how cultural and linguistic diversity of students are valued and developed in both political systems.

Gabriel Martinez Vera will use his funds to travel to Peru to meet with specialists on Andean and Amerindian languages.

Valerie Milici will travel to Panama to develop the foundation for field experiments related to how tropical forest structures may respond to climate change.

Andrea Miranda will travel to Panama to conduct research on the changing dynamics of the educational system in the Panama Canal Zone.

Adaliss Rodriguez will travel to Costa Rica to develop contacts related to her research on the prevalence and experience of obesity among Latino children and the applications of biotechnology to agriculture or agrobiotechnology.



Marisol Ramos is the Subject Librarian for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Latino Studies, Spanish and Anthropology, and the Curator of the Latina/o, Latin American and Caribbean Collections at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center. She was in Guadalajara, Mexico to attend the International Book Fair/Feria Internacional Nov. 26-Dec. 4, 2016 and will report on that trip in the spring issue of La Voz.

EL INSTITUTO RESEARCH AWARDS 2015-2016

El Instituto received several meritorious funding requests from graduate students interested in conducting research in areas that fell outside of the criteria which would have made them eligible for Tinker Field Research awards. El Instituto provided financial awards to support three of these projects:

Gisely Colon-Lopez, second year M.A. student, El Instituto: “This past June I traveled to Puerto Rico to engage in research with community activists, artists and educators. I met with members of the growing DiaspoRicans organization to discuss their activism and community mobilization during the current economic and humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico. I met with local artists in Loiza who keep African history, presence and contributions alive and visible within the Puerto Rican community. I conducted two oral history sessions with the artists, capturing their narratives of the intersectionality of culture, race, family, gender and religion present in their work. I visited local museums and historical venues and connected with educators creating teaching guides based on the artwork in their collections. At the Parque Ceremonial Indígena de Caguana in Utuado I watched a documentary about the history of Tainos in Puerto Rico and their knowledge and use of astronomy to sustain themselves. I met with a local family in Quebradillas, PR who turned to farming as a solution to the current economic crisis. They grow all of their produce on their small family farm. I recorded a tour of their farm and they also demonstrated the process of growing coffee and how it becomes a “Café con leche.” I expect to edit this footage and use it as a tool to teach about agricultural and coffee production still present in Puerto Rico. Finally, I visited Cayey and Caguas, two towns where many of the Puerto Ricans residing in Hartford, CT come from.”

In September, second year M.A. student **Katie Quinn** traveled to Port-au-Prince, Haiti to conduct research on a collective impact initiative called the Model School Network Initiative. Katie met with representatives from the University of Notre Dame, the University of Quisqueya, InnovEd, USAID, the Kellogg Foundation, Summits Education, the Digicel Foundation, and from the Haitian Ministry of Education to discuss the Model School Network Coalition, established to oversee the planning, implementation, and governance of the Model School Network (MSN) initiative. The vision for the MSN initiative is to improve life outcomes for children in Haiti’s Central Plateau through a sustainable, multi-layered, data-driven, and effective government and civil society partnership model for the Haitian educational system. Katie also had the opportunity to speak directly with members of the Haitian education system including the Haitian Minister of Education’s representatives and major funders of schools throughout the country to learn about how governmental, nonprofit and for-profit institutions and organizations are coming together to ensure children in Haiti are provided with high-quality education that meets the needs of the whole child. (Photo: **Port-Au-Prince, Haiti**)



Anna Sjodin, Ph.D. student in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, went to Puerto Rico over summer 2016 to capture wild bats in a range of habitat types. She collected and preserved non-lethal saliva, feces, urine, and blood samples from a selection of the captured bats. Her research applies tools to understand the abundance and distribution of free-living organisms to examine the bat-virus system from a community ecology perspective. “The ongoing outbreaks of Ebola and Zika are harsh reminders of threats that emerging viruses pose to humanity. Global efforts to manage such outbreaks have generally focused on reactive care, treating patients and stifling transmission post-emergence. But what if we could prevent emergence in the first place? The field of disease ecology considers specific pathogens (e.g. Zika virus) as “species” and uses well-established theories concerning the environmental distribution of free-living organisms to understand, from a geographic perspective, where pathogen “species” will occur and spread. Coupled with advances in molecular technology, this provides a framework for preventing emergence. My research will use the niche concept of community ecology to understand distributions of bat viruses and investigate their potential threats to human health.”

REPORTS: PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP AWARDS 2015-2016

Sixteen students were recipients of El Instituto's 2015-16 pre-doctoral fellowship awards. Following are brief reports by three recipients on how their awards were used.

Ayanna S. Eastman, Communications:

Man vs Storm: Assessing Audience Responses and Perceived Self-efficacy Using CERC in the Aftermath of Hurricane Sandy

"First, I wish to express my sincerest gratitude for the financial support provided by El Instituto for my research. So far, over 100 minority community members have participated in this study. Minority community members continue to be disproportionately impacted by natural disasters. Race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status have continued to hinder the response of minorities to natural disasters. Numerous studies have measured the impact of natural disasters on stakeholders from minority and economically disadvantaged groups in the aftermath of these disasters; and suggest that recommended preventative actions for such events were not implemented in many instances, oftentimes due to circumstances beyond the control of impacted groups.

Minorities who resided in coastal areas of Connecticut and who experienced Hurricane Sandy first hand were surveyed. The survey measured perceived self-efficacy and perceived threat among minority populations impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Participants completed surveys online or in person (interviewer administered surveys). Funds received from El Instituto were used to facilitate commuting from Meriden to Bridgeport, Fairfield, West Haven, and New Haven to collect data. The data collection process involved visiting centers frequently utilized by minority populations including: Bridgeport YMCA, Fairfield YMCA, Action for Bridgeport Community Development (ABCD) and churches in the New Haven area.

Oftentimes minority populations were reluctant to share information. The fact that there were no direct benefits, financial or otherwise, appeared to hinder responses. A second phase of the research will involve the recruitment of a larger segment of the minority population using Mechanical Turk. I have already received IRB approval for this phase to facilitate a larger sample of at least 400 participants. It is anticipated that these results will both assist in improving risk communication messages to minority populations and also save lives in times of natural disasters such as hurricanes."

Shaine Scarminach, History:

"I used funds received from El Instituto to conduct research at the U.S. National Archives in College Park, MD, May 8-15, 2016 for my dissertation on the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea. Funding provided me with the opportunity to learn the process and procedures of conducting research at the National Archives, to gain a sense of the type and extent of materials available, and consult documents for my current research on U.S. relations with Ecuador.

I reviewed documents related to the fisheries dispute that plagued U.S. relations with Ecuador during the 1960s and 70s. The documents I consulted consisted primarily of daily reports and policy briefings from U.S. Embassy staff stationed in Ecuador. With reports from U.S. officials in Ecuador, I was able to see a clearer picture of the interaction between U.S. and Ecuadorian officials as they engaged in divisive negotiations over difficult issues. Policy reviews produced by the U.S. Embassy proved especially useful for gaining a long-term understanding of how the dispute evolved. I also found extensive documentation on Ecuador's numerous seizures of U.S. fishing vessels. These documents provide detailed information on the time, place, and circumstances of the seizures and include statements and reports from U.S. and Ecuadorian officials and U.S. fishermen.

Reports from the U.S. Embassy gave me a view into Ecuador's domestic politics as well as its foreign relations with other Latin American nations. In the domestic sphere, for example, U.S. Embassy reports contain detailed information about military coups that took place in Ecuador in 1963 and 1972. They describe the personnel involved, the actions of the military, press reactions in Ecuador and abroad, and the fate of deposed leaders. The documents also highlight some of Ecuador's foreign policy during these years. The U.S. Embassy reported extensively on Ecuador's attempts to revise the 1947 Rio Protocol, the controversy among various nations over extending diplomatic recognition to Ecuador's different military governments, and Ecuador's establishment of relations with nations such as Cuba, China, and North Vietnam.

Finally, I convey my deep appreciation of El Instituto and its generous support, especially at the early stage of my doctoral career when funding has been crucial for conducting the research necessary to advance and refine my dissertation proposal."

REPORTS: PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP AWARDS 2015-2016

Zareen Thomas, Anthropology:

Youth, Institutions and the Politics of Peace in Bogota, Columbia

"I spent one month this summer in Colombia with funding from the El Instituto Pre-Doctoral Fellowship, conducting research with the Bogota-based youth organization, Fundación Artística y Social La Familia Ayara. My goals for this research trip were two-fold: (1) to conduct follow-up interviews with my participants and (2) to learn about Ayara's new peacebuilding initiatives.

I have collaborated with La Familia Ayara since 2014, investigating how NGOs in neoliberal states frame human rights and peacebuilding discourses through the transnational urban genre of hip-hop. Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with Ayara's participants and staff, as well as with unaffiliated Colombian artists, I learned firsthand the ways in which young people, and the institutions with which they work, mediate individual and collective testimonies of their lived experiences and subjectivities through music and art. This summer I returned to the field to witness how Ayara's new initiatives correspond (or not) with the national peace process. La Familia Ayara is openly campaigning for a 'yes' vote, believing that it is the only step toward peace.

Since my last research visit in 2015, Ayara has been particularly concerned with issues of child recruitment in the civil war. Children and youth will be among those demobilized in the FARC; however, as trained soldiers, they remain vulnerable to re-recruitment by other extant armed groups. La Familia Ayara, in conjunction with ICBF (The Colombian Institute of Family Well-Being) has launched a project for the prevention of child recruitment in twenty different municipalities around the country. I accompanied one of Ayara's teams for five days this summer to observe their peacebuilding workshops with children and youth. The artists who facilitate the workshops center their teachings on children's rights – particularly the right to identity, peace, freedom of expression, participation and decision-making. Through these messages, youth become constructed as agential rights-bearers, and by fomenting young people's critical thinking skills in the workshops, Ayara maintains that youth develop skills which afford them hope and opportunities outside of illegal armed groups.

This summer, I conducted seven follow-up interviews with artists and one interview with a state representative. I fell ill as soon as I arrived in the field which

delayed my start schedule, and I discovered that some of my former participants no longer work with the organization; however, I found this return trip to be very successful, and I am confident that I have all the material necessary for my dissertation analysis. The interviews and participant observation I conducted in Bogota and Meta allowed me to better understand how youth in Colombia have embedded hip-hop within national discourses to strengthen its legitimacy as both an art form and political tool. They have centralized the place of youth within national and local decision-making, and demonstrated young people's grassroots leadership capacities for inciting social change. In doing so, they have garnered attention from local and international NGOs, foreign embassies, and governmental institutions, all of which are increasingly looking to involve young people in innovative ways for peacebuilding and nation-building purposes. The artists I work with are vigilant of state collaborations and work with such entities insofar as they maintain agency and do not become manipulated for hegemonic political ends. With more than eighty interviews from Colombia, Bolivia and Denmark, I anticipate that my final analysis will provide critical theoretical insight into the successes, tensions, and negotiations that take place between youth and institutions in citizenship engagement and empowerment strategies."

Call for Proposals:

Borderlands 2017 Graduate Symposium

This two-day symposium will explore scholarship and artwork that highlight the many faces of power, inequality, oppression, and resistance within our social worlds. All disciplinary interventions are welcomed!

Following types of proposals are sought: Single academic papers, wholly constituted panels or workshops, visual or performance artworks, and academic posters. All proposals should be submitted via: <https://goo.gl/forms/jRXrCTCjRRoTrHsr2> by **January 20th, 2017.**

Submissions should include 2-5 keywords, short abstracts, contact information, A/V needs and short bios of all presenters. For updates go to: <https://borderlandsgraduatesymposium.wordpress.com/> Email questions to borderlands.uconn@gmail.com

PRE-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS - 2016-2017 RECIPIENTS

El Instituto awarded twelve 2016-17 pre-doctoral fellowships, ranging from \$490 to \$2,000, to support pre-doctoral graduate student research or creative projects related to Latina/o and/or Latin American Studies. These awards are made possible through funding from the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School.

Joshua Abreau, Neag School of Education, will present his research on English instructors at a Hispanic-serving community college at AERA's 2017 annual meeting.

Orlando Deavila Pertuz, History, will travel to Lima to visit archives that held the papers of Jose Carlos Mariategui. He also plans to attend the 2017 LASA conference.

Ayanna Eastman, Communication Science, will travel to San Diego to participate in the 2017 ICA Conference.

Bianca Gonzalez-Sobrin, Sociology, will use funds to conduct research on the role of identity in the understanding of racial groups as threats, either real or perceived.

Devon Goss, Sociology, will use funds to continue her research on expatriates in Mazatlán, Mexico.

Cristina Khan, Sociology, will use funds to conduct in-depth interviews and ethnographic observations related to the exploration of erotic performance by queer women of color.

Charles Lebel, Literatures, Cultures & Languages, will conduct research at the Instituto Universidad Autónoma de México, the Hemeroteca Nacional de México, and the Biblioteca Nacional de México.

Aimee Loiselle, History, will use funds to travel and offset expenses related to her research on women textile and garment workers from the 1950s to the 1990s with particular focus on Puerto Rican women.

Shaine Scarminach, History, will travel to Maryland to further his dissertation research on the role Latin American nations in motivating and shaping the development of the Law of the Sea Convention.

Gabriela Tafoya, Political Science, LASA 2017 will use her funds for travel support to present dissertation research.

Michelle Tennyson, Literatures, Cultures & Languages, will travel to Puerto Rico to explore the National Theatre and Film Archive and interview playwrights and theatre directors.

Joanna Zegarra, Agriculture and Resource Economics, will travel to present her findings related to research in farmers' decision-making processes in Peru.

SO THAT THE THIEVES WILL NOT INHERIT THE EARTH: PROPHETIC HISTORIES OF LAND GRANT STRUGGLE IN NEW MEXICO

On September 19th, Professor Simón Trujillo, English Department, New York University gave a talk on the reclamation of land grants, as well as the Chicano/a movement. Trujillo discussed "El Grito Del Norte," a leftist newspaper focused on activism. Newspapers like El Grito would cut up papers about land reclamation and combine them into one, so in some cases one article would include cut-ups from various different newspapers. Trujillo also mentioned the "Almanac of the Dead" by Leslie Marmon Silko, which prophesied social displacement, as well as called for the abolishment of private property. He brought up the difference between Christian culture and Indian culture in relation to reporting news. Indian culture focuses primarily on the place where actions occur, while Christian culture focuses on the time in which actions occurred. Trujillo also touched upon how in the United States land is a commodity to be sold, while in Native American culture, the land holds deeper meaning. Overall, Trujillo emphasized the point that this was all an argument for sovereignty, rather than human rights.

On September 20, Trujillo also conducted a workshop, "The Mexican American War Has Never Ended: Fugitive Translation and Indigenous Land Reclamation."

Both events were sponsored by El Instituto, Africana Studies Institute, Asia and Asian American Studies Institute, Department of History and the Humanities Institute. (Article contributed by Jennefer Banos-Vale).

NEW ENGLAND COUNCIL OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (NECLAS) 2016 ANNUAL MEETING

On Saturday November 12th, nearly 100 Latin Americanist scholars gathered at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut for the 2016 New England Council of Latin American Scholars (NECLAS) Annual Meeting. This was a day of sharing interdisciplinary academic work and ideas, learning from one another, and Samba. Academics from across New England gathered to discuss politics and policy in (post)-peoliberal Latin America, sustainability in teaching, new Caribbean studies initiatives, and political philosophies. Presentations included “Imágenes de violencia: la producción cultural en tiempos de crisis;” “Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research;” “Catalysts of Creation in Borges;” Inequalities in Education: Dimensions of Race and Class in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Continental U.S.” and much more.

Following a day of panel presentations and roundtable discussions, conference presenters and attendees picked up their instruments for a Samba hour led by Dr. Eric Galm and the Trinity Samba Ensemble.

The conference was co-hosted by El Instituto and Trinity College. (Article contributed by Katie Quinn)

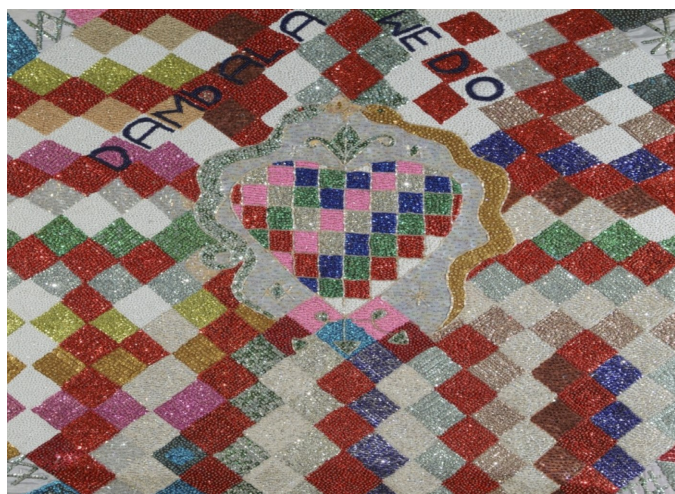


Photo: EZILI. Beaded flag from the Edith A. Graham Collection of Haitian Art, Trinity College

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT ADVOCACY WORKSHOP

By: Cindy Portillo

The Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC) hosted a workshop/training on October 5 to inform students and faculty about the fight led by undocumented students at UCONN for equal access to institutional aid. The interactive and engaging approach proved to be a great way to get vital information across to the audience.

The first issue addressed was the fact that not all states grant undocumented students the right to apply to higher institutions, even if a student has all the qualifications and the desire to pursue higher education. Currently, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, at least 18 out of the 50 states have provisions allowing for in-state tuition rates for undocumented students, with two states, Georgia and South Carolina, completely prohibiting undocumented students from enrolling at any public post-secondary institution. Although Connecticut has provisions for undocumented students, according to the Migration and Policy Institute, there are an estimated 17,000 undocumented students (18 to 24 years of age) in Connecticut, of whom only one to two percent are enrolled in college.

In 2011, the CT General Assembly approved a law that offered undocumented students in-state tuition benefits. Additionally, in 2015, the law was expanded to reduce the requirement for Connecticut high school attendance from four years to two under House Bill 6844. In response to this, UConn encourages all academically accomplished students to apply for admission, regardless of citizenship status. Unfortunately, undocumented students still face a

hurdle regarding financial aid because they do not qualify for state or federal financial aid; thus, students are encouraged to seek scholarship and loan opportunities from private sources, a responsibility that families cannot take and which furthers the narrative that only the highest, documented, achieving students deserve an education.

Workshop leaders Eric Cruz López and Joseline Tlacomulco are both strong student advocates and voices for undocumented students. In order to inform the audience on terms/phrases that affect migrants in general, and that are a part of their everyday life, attendees played “Definition Bingo”, where they had to explain terms such as “F-visa”, “generation 1.5”, “DACA”, “second generation”, among others. The next activity was to write down characteristics that would create an ideal school that would be inclusive to all students, regardless of citizenship. Ideas such as “free and reduced lunch”, “health benefits”, “no sheltered English programs”, popped up, which led to the conclusion that current institutions are failing at providing basic educational needs to Latino migrants.

This workshop, though informative, also pointed out that higher education continues to fail undocumented students—on the national level the right to study is only fully granted to documented students. Fortunately, organizations such as Connecticut Students for a Dream will continue to bring forth the voice of this marginalized community and advocate for change and equal inclusion into higher education.

VII ANNUAL LANGSA CONFERENCE

Migration and Displacement in Literatures, Cultures and Languages – Keynote Speakers Roundtable

By: Lauren M. Pérez-Bonilla

The Languages Graduate Student Association (LANGSA) held its 7th Annual Conference on Nov. 11, 2016. Keynote speakers were Professors Silvio Torres-Saillant and Jorge Duany. Torres-Saillant addressed the topics of migration and displacement and began by stating that “People do not leave their countries voluntarily. A stress perpetrates people’s migration. It [migration] is propelled by crisis.” He pointed to the massive migration of Dominicans to the U.S. during the 31 years of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo’s dictatorship, a period known as the Trujillista Era. After the assassination of “El Jefe” most citizens did not return to their Dominican Republic homeland. Why? one must ask.

In 1962, a year after Trujillo’s assassination, democratic elections were held and Juan Bosch was elected president. His short term was characterized by a focus on human rights and division of State and Church, which was branded as progressive for some and “too Cuban” for others. Such dramatic changes led to a coup d’état in 1963 and then Civil War in 1965. The land of Quisqueya was still not safe, and the economy was reaching rock-bottom.

Dominicans used various mechanisms to cope and integrate into American society. One was marriage in order to become legal residents and be able to work and send remittances back home to support the rest of their relatives. Additionally, Dominican ethnic spaces flourished in cities like New York and Providence. Museums and other institutions that emphasized the conservation of the Island’s culture were also promoted and established by the Dominican government in the U.S.

By 1994, Dominicans living in the U.S. were improving the island’s local economy. Hence, a move to incorporate them into national politics was made. Initiatives like absentee voting and dual citizenship (re)connected islanders with their roots, allowing them to reaffirm their identity in and outside their beloved Quisqueya.

In conclusion, although Dominican migration was historically forced by a political and economic crisis, it is now a transnational process that goes back and forth, enhancing power struggles and the promise of a better future. For more on conference speakers and activities go to <http://www.langsa.uconn.edu/>.

Silvio Torres-Saillant is a Dean’s Professor in the Humanities Faculty at Syracuse University. He formerly headed Syracuse’s Latino-Latin American Studies Program and co-founded La Casita Cultural Center, an organization that links Syracuse University with the Latino population of the city and promotes the Hispanic heritages of Central New York.

TERTULIA: YAZMIN GARCIA-TREJO

Latino Census Participation in the U.S. and Cross-Cultural Survey Research

By: Stephanie Mercado Irizarry



The Latino population is the fastest growing in the United States and is projected to increase to 24% of the nation’s total population within the next three decades. This would mean that Latinos are poised to become the majority minority group in the United States by 2050.

On October 6th, Yazmin García-Trejo, PhD, UConn Political Science, and post-doctoral research fellow, gave a talk on “Latino Census Participation in the United States and Cross Cultural Survey Research.” García-Trejo, who works as a survey statistician in Language and Cross-Cultural Research Group of the United States Census Bureau’s Center for Survey Measurement, presented her current research on the preliminary findings from an analysis of secondary data on Latinos/as participation in the Census 2010. García-Trejo pointed out the significance of conducting research regarding the second-largest Spanish speaking population in the world, and discussed the importance of collecting comparable information from a diverse and non-English speaking populations. She reviewed conceptual constructs across languages and translation and ended her talk by noting the importance of the conduction of usability tests and expert reviews on surveys for non-English dominant populations and hard-to-reach populations.

TRUMP VS CLINTON: RACE, IMMIGRATION AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS

By: Lauren M. Pérez-Bonilla

This October 7th panel presentation brought together three well-known academic scholars in the fields of demography, political science, and race to talk about the 2016 elections. Rather than speak to the candidates' positions and plans, speakers focused on the national action that gives these people the ruling position, which is voting. They looked at how issues concerning race, immigration, and the future of American politics affect and can be affected by elections.

Even though the panelists had differing backgrounds and expertise, the emphasis on history was constant. This is important since, through the study of the past, we, as human beings, can learn about our—as well as others—victories and failures. For that reason knowledge is power, as Francis Bacon once said.

Natalie Masuoka, Associate Professor at Tufts University, compared demographic data from previous years to the present. She noted that the U.S. population has diversified in terms of race, class, education, religion, and gender. The U.S. is now home to migrants from all around the world, economic inequality has dramatically increased, citizens are more educated, and multiple gender identities have come to play. Why is this relevant? Because it has shaped a new form of national identity. Therefore, a focus on these details is, panelists argue, what will make us understand the implications, range, and consequences of this presidential election's outcome.



Left to Right: Natalie Masuoka, Evelyn Simien, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, Shayla Nummally

Who would win is a question none of the speakers could answer. Nonetheless, they all stated that whatever the result, it would be historical. One thing we must remember/know, said Evelyn Simien (Associate Professor, UConn), is that Hillary Clinton is not the first woman to run for President of the United States. Shirley Chisholm was the first African-American woman to run for the presidency in 1972 under the Democratic Party. Consequently, a Clinton win could also have meant a victory for Chisholm. On the other hand, a Donald Trump win, would be the first time in U.S. history a television personality and entrepreneur with no political and/or military background is elected, and the first time the Commander-in-

Chief won't have any national security experience.

Juhem Navarro-Rivera, senior policy analyst at Demos, addressed the election campaign in terms of how voting has been done through time in relation to characteristics such as religion, which could help dictate the aftermath of this year's election.

The panelists pointed out relevant informational characteristics of the general population and reminded the audience that the outcome would come down to the voter turnout. Two questions remained unanswered: Who would exercise their right to vote? And, finally, who would get the chance to write history as the winner?

This event was sponsored by El Instituto, PRLACC, Political Science, Africana Studies Institute, and Asia and Asian American Studies Institute.

POST-ELECTION RALLY AT UCONN

PHOTO CREDIT: ASHLEY ORTIZ-CHICO



2016 ROBERT G. MEAD LECTURE

Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans

By: Ashley Ortiz-Chico

Edwin Meléndez, Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning and Director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Hunter College, CUNY, presented the 2016 Robert G. Mead Lecture “Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans” on November 16th. Professor Meléndez discussed Puerto Rico’s economic and humanitarian crisis and the effect it is having both in Puerto Rico and the United States.



There are currently around 5,660,000 million Puerto Ricans living in the United States, surpassing the estimated 3.5 million living in the island. As the economic crisis deepens, migration to the mainland is expected to continue in ever-increasing numbers. Puerto Rico’s economic crisis exploded in 2015 when the current governor, Alejandro García Padilla, declared its 70+ billion dollar debt unpayable. In response to this, the U.S. Congress passed the Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act, also known as “PROMESA.” The bill establishes a federal control board on the island composed of seven non-elected members, of which only one must reside on the island.

While there is disagreement over the PROMESA bill (with some seeing it as necessary and others regarding it as a return to a colonial government) one thing is clear: the economic crisis has had vast humanitarian repercussions. As Meléndez emphasized, approximately

40% of the island population and over 50% of children are living below the poverty line. In addition, there is a 12.1% rate of unemployment—the highest of any state, and the pension plan is poised to run out next year. To top things off, educated Puerto Ricans are leaving the Island in droves in order to escape these dire conditions. While Meléndez’s perception that the migration of educated Puerto Ricans contributes positively to the community of the diaspora is correct, he failed to acknowledge the severity of the choice these Puerto Ricans have to make when they do not wish to leave the island; they are forced to do so.

Professor Meléndez points out that, as the Puerto Rican community grows in the United States, so does their political power. Therefore, now is the time for organization within and between the island and the mainland to properly address Puerto Rico’s crisis. This is especially important since the citizens and residents of Borinquen lack voting power and representation in Congress.

The lecture offered much needed information about the humanitarian side of Puerto Rico’s crisis; however, it would have been interesting for Professor Meléndez to expand on the history of colonialism and how it works as a factor in the creation of the crisis. The talk provided insight into the economic struggles Puerto Rico faces, as well as how the Puerto Rican community in the mainland can contribute through political organization. It is hoped that El Instituto will be able to host a follow-up talk in the Spring.

Sponsored by El Instituto and UConn Humanities Institute

Centro hosts Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans New England Summit

By: Gisely Colon-Lopez

More than 300 community members, leaders, and educators attended an all day summit organized by Centro (Hunter College/CUNY) on Saturday, September 17, 2016 at Holyoke High School in Massachusetts. Betty Lichtenstein, Executive Director of Enlace de Familias, Inc., was the lead regional partner for this historic event. The goal of the *Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans* summit was to convene members of the Puerto Rican diaspora to explore solutions and opportunities in response to the current economic and humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico. The day consisted of three plenary panels and five concurrent panels during the morning and afternoon portions of the program. Key topics emerging from the concluding plenary included advocating for and creating bilingual education programs, HIV/AIDS research and support, and a national unification supporting the needs of the next generation of Puerto Rican youth.

Centro remains connected to the New England community while also coordinating other regional and more focused summits. On Saturday, December 3, 2016, Centro and the National Puerto Rican Day Parade are organizing a Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans Parades and Festivals Summit in NYC and plans are underway for a Florida summit early in 2017. During the spring semester Centro will have its second annual national Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans Diaspora Summit and its first ever National Puerto Rican Youth and Millennials Summit. To find out more and stay connected sign up for Centro’s Puerto Rican Nation at centropr.nationbuilder.com

COLIBRÍ

The Colibrí Center for Human Rights

By: Shanelle Morris

Colibrí is the Spanish word for hummingbird. In 2009, a man crossing the U.S.-Mexico border was found dead outside of Tucson, AZ. Inside his pocket was a dead hummingbird. In many Latin American indigenous cultures, the hummingbird is a symbol of strength, hope and migration. It is also believed to be a messenger between the living and the dead. The Colibrí Center for Human Rights, a nonprofit organization located in Tucson, is named after the story of this man. The staff of the center is dedicated to helping people find loved ones who may be missing or dead at the border. When families come to The Colibrí Center, they come with every last ounce of strength and hope they can muster.

Last October at the Humanity in Action Conference, Chelsea Halstead, Deputy Director of Colibrí, told heart-breaking stories of families uncertain of what happened to loved ones who were last seen crossing the border. Mothers, siblings, and children give a detailed description of their loved ones hoping for a conclusive answer as to what happened to them. Sometimes there are no answers and sometimes, when there are answers, they take the form of skeletal remains. The Colibrí Center for human rights is committed to ending migrant deaths at the borderlands, bringing answers to families, and bringing awareness to this oftentimes invisible human rights issue.

Ms. Halstead's presentation made it clear that the increasing number of deaths at the border is the result of U.S. border control policies that force migrants to take the most dangerous path across the border. Thus, migrant deaths are more about inhumane policies than about dehydration or unbearable heat. In the mid-1990s, new laws required the border patrol to heavily surveil and militarize the safer paths in order to deter migrants from crossing. However, the policies did not deter migrants from making the dangerous journey for a better life. Instead, it simply made that life much more dangerous to obtain. Since 1998, 6,500 people have lost their lives at the borderlands and at least 2,500 remain missing.

While Americans concern themselves with the current refugee crisis in Europe, many are unaware of the migrant crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. Media focus has been on Syrians and other Middle Easterners fleeing their homes for a better life in a new country, despite the dangerous terrain. However, there is no Aylan Kurdi of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Latin Americans crossing the border are viewed as willingly placing themselves in danger. As Ms. Halstead mentioned, many ignore the historical, economic and political implications that have led to massive migration such as NAFTA, gang violence, and a lack of employment opportunities. In some cases, staying in Latin America is a matter of life and death. With the president elect's mission to extend the wall at the U.S.-Mexico border, it is feared that the number of deaths at the border will increase and that hate will overshadow empathy, which makes The Colibrí Center's work even more urgent and necessary.

CT REPERTORY THEATRE—NUEVO CALIFORNIA

"Nuevo California" By: Katherine Pérez-Quinones

UConn's Connecticut Repertory Theater brought Nuevo California, by playwrights Bernando Solano and Allan Havis, to the Studio Theatre Oct. 27-Nov. 6, 2016 with support from the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, El Instituto and PRLACC.

Borders, walls or fences....They all help keep the 'undesirables' out and simultaneously define those inside. This way, we are free to shape our conceptions of 'the other side' just the way we want. 'They' can also do the same. But in 2028, an earthquake stirs Southern California and poses a challenge to San Diego and Tijuana. A wall is coming down and Felipe, an eccentric 'postmodern' Mexican Pope, leads the efforts of unity between both places. Yet, even though the region that is going to be considered as 'Nuevo California' is already inhabited by hybrid identities, there are still some borders people refuse to bring down. Through a narrative evocative of Alejo Carpentier's 'realismo mágico', a talented cast of UConn students make us re-negotiate our notions of borders. Nuevo California throws us at the borderland where



Shavana Clarke, BFA Acting '17. Photo: Gerry Goodstein.

we must face our anxieties towards otherness. By exploring this "what if" panorama, different characters engage in overlapping and sometimes contested accounts of their relation to "the border". We perceive how our notions of borders, impregnated with vast political, historical and personal baggage, shape the way in which we relate to others daily. 'Nuevo California' suggests that this mediation is and should always be actively questioned. We begin by recognizing the 'other' beyond the borders to which we confine them.



NUEVO CALIFORNIA company. Photo: Gerry Goodstein

OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Gisely Colón López is a second-year student pursuing a Master of Arts in Latino and Latin American Studies. She received her B.A. in Puerto Rican and Latino Studies with a minor in Anthropology from Brooklyn College. She is interested in urban youth and education.

Katheryn Maldonado is a second-year graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Latino and Latin American Studies. She received her B.A. in Political Science and human rights from UConn in 2015. Her research interests include immigration law, Latino migration, and undocumented students.

Cynthia Meléndez is a first-year graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Latino and Latin American Studies. She received her B.A. in Hispanic Literature from Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and her Master in Fine Arts Studies from UConn. Her research interest is to unify and shed further light on social justice discourses emerging from Latin American artists.

Stephanie Mercado-Irizarry, a first-year MA student, received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras in June 2014. She is interested in contemporary political theory and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean. Her current research focuses on the privatization of environments and the displacements of communities through neoliberal policies and migration.

Andrea Miranda is a first-year MA student who received her bachelor's degree in History from the Universidad de Cartagena, Colombia. In 2012 and 2013 she won The Young Research Scholarship granted by the Colombian National Science System (COLCIENCIAS). In 2014 and 2015 she received her postgraduate studies in Cultural Heritage and Higher Education at the Universidad de Panamá. Her research interests include race, politics, Caribbean studies and the history of education.

Shanelle Morris is a first-year graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Latino and Latin American Studies. She received her B.A. in International Studies from Trinity College in 2016. Her research interests include colonialism, imperialism, race, culture and the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Ashley Ortiz-Chico is a first-year graduate student who received her bachelor's in Political Science with a specialty in International Relations and Political Theory and a minor in Latin American and Puerto Rican Literature from la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras in 2016. Her research interests include Latin American and Caribbean Politics and economic development. Currently she is studying the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States and the PROMESA bill.

Lauren Pérez-Bonilla obtained her bachelor's degree in 2015 at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences with a minor in International Relations. Her area of work includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques, which comes with a fair handling of computer programs such as SPSS and GIS (including Model Builder). At the moment she is interested in the fields of demography, sociology, geography, and anthropology, as well as population change, identity, and HIV/AIDS in Caribbean and Latina women.

Katherine Pérez Quiñones received her B.A. at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras. While majoring in Political Science, she also received a certificate in Women and Gender Studies. Her research considers higher education, inequalities and dissent from the frameworks and theories of democracy. Her other interests such as memory studies and the uses and abuses of history, always manage to infiltrate her scholarly activity.

Cindy Portillo is a first-year graduate who received her B.A. at the University of Richmond, where she double majored in International Studies and Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Studies with a minor in History. Cindy's research interests include Central American migration to the United States (specifically from the Northern Triangle region: Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador), unaccompanied minors, and the factors that pushed/push people to migrate. Currently, she is focused on the effects of educational policies on Latino migrant students.

Katie Quinn is a second-year graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Latino and Latin American Studies. She received her B.A. in Hispanic Studies from Trinity College. Her interests are international human rights law in South America, identity formation, cultural nationalism and the arts.

Ilan Unger is a first-year graduate student pursuing a Master of Arts in Latino and Latin American Studies. He received his B.S. in Business Management and a B.A. in Spanish/Portuguese from UNC-Asheville in 2013. His research interest is U.S. corporate strategy in Latin America, specifically how multinational companies adapt to the idiosyncrasies, policies, and history of the country in which they want to be established.

SPRING 2017—EVENTS

Feb. 1, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

HACHA: Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-Crossing Academics. Informal graduate and faculty gathering to share research

El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

Feb. 28, 4:00pm

Eyzaguirre lecture, **Vicky Unruh**, Professor Emerita, University of Kansas.

TBA

March 1, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

HACHA: Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-Crossing Academics. Informal graduate and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines. Show and Tell: New Library Acquisitions.

Babbidge Library

March 30, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

Contested Citizenship Conference

Alumni Association

March 31, 9:00am – 4:00pm

Contested Citizenship Conference

Alumni Association

April 5, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

HACHA: Alternative Hour for a Hospitable Community of Border-Crossing Academics. Informal graduate and faculty gathering to share research and experiences across disciplines.

El Instituto, Ryan Bldg., 2nd floor

April 17-19

TBA – possible screening of *Our Lives in Transit*

April 20-21

Borderlands: A Critical Graduate Symposium

TBA

April 25 1:30-3:00pm

Jorge Agüero: “Health Consequences of Schooling for Disadvantaged Women in Zimbabwe”

Dodd 162

May

Conference: Puerto Rico and U.S. Empire: New Directions in Puerto Rican Studies. For more information, contact Charles.venator@uconn.edu

TBA—UCONN

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS

Jihan Asher is currently a Program Associate at the Financial Transparency Coalition in Washington DC. To learn more about the Financial Transparency Coalition go to <https://financialtransparency.org/>

Pauline Batista (featured at right) was the torch bearer for 2016 summer olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Currently Pauline teaches two Portuguese courses online for Eton Institute’s New York City branch.

After several years at Rutgers, **Yesha Doshi** has returned to Connecticut as Staff Accountant, Financial Accounting, Ascena Retail Group, Inc.



M.A. IN LATINO & LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES AT UCONN

In the interdisciplinary M.A. program at UConn's El Instituto, our students explore Latina/o, Caribbean and Latin American worlds.

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- Graduates work in education, administration, business, government, and not-for-profit organizations and earn Ph.Ds. or other advanced degrees

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