

# THE LATIN AMERICAN ICAN IST

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UNIVERSITY *of* FLORIDA  
CENTER *for* LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

**Artist in residence leads  
"impossible" student art exhibit**

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**Students craft documentary  
films for capstone projects**

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# Director's CORNER

DR. CARLOS DE LA TORRE

This fall, we were excited to welcome our first artist in residence thanks to the generous support of the Kislak Family Foundation. Mexican artist Eduardo Abaroa joined us for the semester's activities, including his course which culminated in a fantastic art gallery exhibit, "An Incomplete Collection of Impossible Projects," on display in the Gary R. Libby University Gallery until January 24, 2025. Abaroa designed a dynamic exhibition space to showcase the thought-provoking projects his students developed.

Next semester, we will welcome new Center faculty Dr. Jairo Baquero-Melo, who will teach courses on environmental justice and human rights. Additionally, we are saying farewell to Center faculty Dr. Robert Walker as he retires.

In February, we are co-hosting the conference "The Struggle from Below: Democracy and Civil Society in the Age of Backsliding," together with the Centers for African and European Studies, and the Raymond and Miriam Ehrlich Eminent Scholar Chair in the Department of Political Science. We will also host a Bacardi Family Eminent Scholars lecture series with four speakers focusing on sustainability, green business, and innovation in Latin America.

Finally, I want to thank you for your support in helping the Center accomplish several milestones during my tenure as director.

We had six successful new hires thanks to the collective work of affiliate and Center-based faculty. Our MALAS students graduate on time, and many pursue PhDs or get jobs where they can use their Latin Americanist skills.

The Center staff, under the leadership of Jessica Mrozinske Baker, is outstanding.

Two were recognized by the university with Superior Accomplishment Awards, and hopefully this year that number will grow to three.

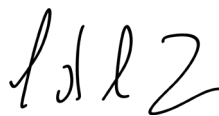
As I promised when interviewing, I strengthened the humanities and thanks to the generosity of the Kislak Family Foundation we were able to bring writers and artists in residency. With funds from the Department of State and the Institute of International Education, we will host anti-corruption and human rights defenders from Central America for five years starting January 2025.

Thanks to a donor's generosity, we started a pilot program to bring first-generation undergraduates from the Universidad Tecnológica del Chocó, Colombia for a one-semester program at UF. The first students will arrive Fall 2025.

We made great progress in bringing diverse cohorts of MALAS students from the Americas. The Department of Education awarded the Center Title VI funding as well as FLAS fellowship (Foreign Language and Area Studies) funding. In addition, we were granted the Tinker Foundation Field Research Collaborative that was recently renewed for five more years.

Provost Joe Glover has named Dr. Leonardo Villalón as interim director, beginning in the spring. Dr. Villalón has ample experience leading international centers and programs. As the Center navigates these changes, it is my hope that we will continue teaching and researching topics to strengthen democracy and enhance social justice in the Americas.

Happy holidays!!



**Dr. Carlos de la Torre**  
CENTER DIRECTOR

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**ON THE COVER:** Kislak Family Foundation Artist in Residence Eduardo Abaroa chats with a gallery visitor as others peruse the works on display in "An Incomplete Collection of Impossible Projects." **Read more on page 4.**

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# Kislak Artist in Residence leads students in creating "impossible" art exhibition

*Mexican artist Eduardo Abaroa fosters creativity and imagination in class of multidisciplinary students*

This semester, we welcomed our first Artist in Residence through the generous funding of the Kislak Family Foundation! Mexican artist Eduardo Abaroa joined us in Gainesville to teach the course "The Art of Sharing" and lead his students in the development of an art exhibition. His presence this semester fostered greater connections among our Center and campus community with contemporary art and artists of Latin America.

"I developed 'The Art of Sharing' to review the art of Latin America with an emphasis on learning, the transmission of traditions, and new ways of considering artistic expression," Abaroa explains. For a class composed of students from diverse disciplines, not just the arts and art history, making artist expression accessible and achievable was a particularly important goal. This is reflected in the design of the culminating exhibition of student work, "An Incomplete Collection of Impossible Projects," on view at the Gary R. Libby University Gallery until January 25.

"I wanted every artist in the group to propose a project that they thought would be impossible to make," Abaroa shares. "Nevertheless, you can illustrate that project." Given free rein, the students produced sculptures, videos, paintings, models, and interactive installations that communicated their imaginings, however impossible. First-year MALAS student Elaine Machado never saw herself as an artist—her research is in education, languages, and social issues—but participating in Abaroa's class and producing a piece (*Choice?*) for the exhibition made a lasting impression. *Read more from Elaine below.*

## REFLECTIONS ON "THE ART OF SHARING" BY ELAINE MACHADO

This is my first semester as a MALAS student, and it has already been an exciting and enriching experience. During the first week of classes, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the courses being offered. From the moment I heard about Abaroa's class, I was intrigued. The course was titled "The Art of Sharing," and right from the start, we knew that we would be preparing for an exhibition at the end of the term. This was a one-time opportunity to study in a diverse group with a professor that would be at UF for a single semester, I knew that I had to take this opportunity. I knew that the discussions about art and artists would be interesting and valuable.

People in general have always discussed creativity. In a world where we are talking extensively about AI, discussing creativity seems fundamental. I have always believed that the concept of creativity tends to come hand in hand with the discussion of art. I am not an artistic person myself, but I am an art admirer and my interest in art motivated me to enroll in the course "The Art of Sharing."

The classes have been incredibly engaging, providing not only the chance to learn from Abaroa but also to meet other prominent artists, such as Abraham Cruzvillegas and Rita Ponce del León. It has truly been a unique opportunity to connect with such brilliant individuals, and it has inspired

me to awaken the artist within myself. As someone from Brazil, I was especially grateful that Abaroa encouraged me to share my personal experience with the group about visiting one of Hélio Oiticica's posthumous works at Inhotim, MG. This experience was profoundly impactful, and it was an honor to contribute to the class discussion.

In my group there were artists whose major were related to Art or Art History at UF, but there were also students from International Relations, Latin American Studies and the visiting artists invited by professor Abaroa to help our discussions.

Overall, this course has been an invaluable learning experience, blending theory with practical engagement, and offering space for us to share and learn from one another. After all, isn't that what art is all about—connection, exploration, and shared experience?

As a Brazilian, I felt privileged to be able to understand and discuss artists like Lygia Clarke and Helio Oiticica, whose artwork are well known in Brazil and around the globe. As a non-art student, I could understand some cultural and historical influences that these artists imprint on their work.



# An Incomplete Collection of Impossible Projects



**GLIMPSE INTO THE GALLERY:** Two visitors contemplate *Choice?* by Elaine Machado. Elaine's installation invites us to explore the tension between quiet and sound, stillness and action. Centered on a simple choice, the piece presents two paths: to sit in silence on a meditation cushion or to pull a rope that rings a "bell" made of hanging keychains. Each choice creates a different experience one of tranquility or one of disruption. The project's "impossibility" lies in the fact that these two states—stillness and noise—cannot coexist.



**GLIMPSE INTO THE GALLERY:** Rachel Sue Horn channeled her interest in marine biology for her mixed media sculpture *Consumed*, which confronts the issue of plastic pollution. Rachel presents eight plastic bottles containing marine specimens suspended with pieces of colorful plastic waste, from plastic bags and straws to food packaging.



**GLIMPSE INTO THE GALLERY:** Salenka Chinchin's *The Smell Recorder* invites visitors to experience the sensation of smell in conjunction with listening. Salenka says: "To smell is to be touched, intermittently, by impermanence. The installation seeks to brush against the impossible, attempting to recall, record, and reproduce olfactory experiences—each inherently unrecordable. With each breath, we bring our histories and our bodies to meet that elusive trace, and in that encounter, a quiet dialogue begins."



Photos courtesy of (L-R) Diana Rodríguez Allende, María de la Cruz Mora, Rebeca Almonacid Leal

## MALAS students craft documentary films for capstone projects

*Visual storytelling offers advantages, challenges for communicating research*

As they develop their research projects, most MALAS students opt to channel their results into a written thesis. But in the MALAS 2025 cohort, three students—Rebeca Almonacid Leal, María de la Cruz Mora, and Diana Rodríguez Allende—have chosen to create documentary films from their fieldwork research. Read on to learn why Rebeca, María, and Diana decided to use visual storytelling to communicate their research, and why this path is more challenging than it might seem.

**Q:** What is your research project and what is the visual element?

**MARÍA DE LA CRUZ MORA:** I went in looking for post-NAFTA trade policies that might be contributing to changes in customs and traditions in Michoacán, Mexico. But when I got there, being in the community, having all these visuals and interviews, I realized I had to look at pre-NAFTA, too. It became a story about how people are adapting to changes

because of policies, getting testimonials about their lived experiences through different historical changes. I wanted to be able to show the community: the transformation in landscape, what the avocado orchards look like, what the traditions are like. I went during the prime religious festival of San Antonio and recorded everything on the day celebrating the agriculture sector. You can see people in processions, how they're dressed, what the music is like.

**DIANA RODRÍGUEZ ALLENDE:** My project centers around the Dominican-Haitian conflict, and the lived experiences of Haitian migrants residing in the Dominican Republic, as well as the perceptions Dominicans themselves have of that population. I visited a lot of the *bateyes* where Haitian immigrants reside; they're like refugee settlements, but Haitians are not really considered refugees in Dominican Republic because of the historical hostility that is still very tense today. I wanted to create a

documentary because I thought it'd be the best way to reach wider audiences outside of academia. There are not a lot of people who will read a 50-page thesis, so I wanted to reach those people and show them what is happening in this conflict.

**REBECA ALMONACID LEAL:** My project is about indigenous resistance in Brazil. The most recent threat that indigenous communities are facing is under the “marco temporal” thesis that restricts indigenous land possessions: all the communities that were living in this specific territory as of October 9, 1988 can have possession of their territory. But if they were not there before the Constitution of 1988, they don't have the right to live there. Because of that, they are facing a lot of displacement and violence. They are trying to claim their lands. My project is to understand their perception and how they are fighting to guarantee that they will have their rights.

Every year, they have an event called Acampamento Terra Livre, and all the communities around the country gather together in Brasília to protest. They stay there for a whole week showing what they are advocating for. So I went to Brasília to record them during the whole event. I interviewed a lot of the leaders and it was amazing. My visual element will be a documentary; I want the same as Diana: to give them visibility, and to be more accessible especially for people not in academia.

**Q:** What are some of the advantages of communicating your research through visual storytelling?

**MARÍA:** We talked about this in Professor Clate (Korsant)'s class (Ethnographic Storytelling, Subjectivity, and the Visual in Latin America)—visuals are easier to understand, so they're really beneficial for explaining larger issues. But at the same time, the disadvantage is that they only touch at the surface level, and you're constrained by time especially. It's also hard to piece it all together so that it makes sense to someone else who might not know your topic, and yet captivate them to be interested to know more.

**REBECA:** I think one of the advantages of the visual is that it brings emotion. The impact is bigger for the audience when they can use empathy to understand a cause better.

**DIANA:** It's one thing to read about something and another thing to hear it come out of someone's mouth. For me it was really important to showcase the faces of my participants. I wanted to make it more personal to them, and to me, and to whoever's watching.

**Q:** What challenges have you encountered during this process?

**DIANA:** One of the biggest challenges that I'm having right now is that I am by no means a filmmaker. So I'm really learning everything as I go.

**REBECA:** I had a lot of issues with equipment, and relying on others to help with technical parts, like with the camera and microphone. I had to find people to help me, and it's been a challenge to communicate my ideas because they don't know anything about what I'm studying.

**MARÍA:** I had similar challenges with hiring a videographer and coordinating a filming schedule in the field. There were also so many "micro" issues when I was there, like finding transportation, being a woman doing fieldwork, trying to build trust with participants so that they would feel comfortable being interviewed.

**DIANA:** One of the challenges that you don't really think about until you're there is just how uncomfortable you, yourself, will feel about whipping out a camera and pointing it at someone while they're talking in their own home.

**Q:** Was it hard to get people comfortable in front of the camera?

**REBECA:** In my case, since I was at an advocacy event that happens every year, there were a lot of people who wanted to do an interview on camera. They were so prepared to talk about their cause.

**MARÍA:** I definitely had a nervous interview who didn't want to mess up or say the wrong thing. He was very conversational when we weren't recording, but when I turned the camera on it became less organic.

**DIANA:** None of my interviews indicated that they didn't want to be on camera or that they didn't want to talk. But, these are all people in vulnerable situations and I didn't want anyone to feel obligated to talk to me. In some cases, because my topic is so controversial, the minute I turned on the camera to catch organic conversation, people shut up because they didn't want it recorded.

**Q:** It's so challenging to capture people talking naturally.

**MARÍA:** When I was at my godmother's house, she was telling me about lost traditions and customs in relation to food and food production. It was so wonderful because she was telling stories and showing pictures of cooking before she got a modern kitchen with cookware and appliances. It was exactly what I wanted to explain in my research. But when I asked her if I could record it, she said no, unfortunately!

**Q:** What are the plans for your finished documentaries?

**DIANA:** I want to keep working on it. I think that this is going to be a longer

term project. So for now, I don't think I'll put it anywhere publicly. It's a work in progress that can use a lot of more depth and refinement.

**MARÍA:** Similar, yeah, I don't think I'm going to share it anywhere. But I do have the intention of going back to the community and doing a showing there, since a lot of the people I interviewed had interest in viewing the finished product and knowing more about the topic. Eventually, I would also like to do more work in a similar area.

**REBECA:** My plan is to keep working with these communities. I met a lot of organizations that are really involved with the indigenous cause and they are very interested in sharing the film. I plan to post it on my social media channels and also share it with them to support their work.

**Q:** Now that you have all this wisdom from your experience, what advice would you give future MALAS students pursuing a documentary project?

**MARÍA:** Ask questions to people who have done it before. Always have back-ups. Take advantage of the resources on campus for equipment.

**REBECA:** Plan ahead, and always have a Plan B. Things will never go exactly how you planned them.

**DIANA:** Take someone that knows more about the equipment. You want to be the person asking the questions and multitasking is really hard.

**Q:** It seems like there's a perception that a documentary option is easier somehow, but I imagine all three of you would disagree with that.

**DIANA:** No, I'm stressed out. *[They all laugh.]*

**MARÍA:** It's not easier. There's some creativity in how you find the way to tell the story, but you're still doing this for your master's degree. You want to do it justice.

**REBECA:** It's true. It's been a good experience though.

**DIANA:** Yeah, I'm proud of what I have so far. I can't be upset about what footage I have or don't have. I went over there and I did my thing, and it's enough. ♦

## Radio Ambulante podcast brings "El voto latino" listening session to Gainesville

*Students gathered to discuss the "Latino vote" in the 2024 presidential election*

In October, Radio Ambulante Studios selected Gainesville as one of five U.S. cities to host a listening session and discussion for an episode of their podcast "El péndulo: Voto latino 2024." Before arriving in Gainesville, sessions were held in New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, and Las Vegas.

Approximately 30 attendees, representing both UF students and faculty, gathered in the Reitz Union to share their perspectives on U.S. politics and explore the myriad attitudes within the Latino electorate. First, the group listened to the Florida episode of "El péndulo," which conducted interviews in Central and South Florida, exploring the role of Spanish-language radio, the political

divide among Florida's diverse Latin American immigrant communities, political rhetoric in Latin American countries vs. the U.S., and debates surrounding the issue of abortion rights.

After listening to the episode, the group turned to one another to share their thoughts on the episode based on their own experiences and reflections. The conversation was moderated by Juan David Naranjo Navarro, a community leader on Radio Ambulante Studios' Growth Team. This discussion, like all those fostered in Radio Ambulante's Clubes de Escucha, reflected their overall mission of hosting meaningful conversations in a respectful, tolerant, and constructive environment.



Thank you to Radio Ambulante Studios and Juan David for coming to Gainesville! These listening sessions were funded with the generosity of a grant from the American Press Institute. Gainesville hosts a regular Club de Escucha for other Radio Ambulante episodes. ♦

## Center events AT A GLANCE

FALL 2024



- **Gainesville Latino Film Festival** *Latina Women's League* °
- **Meet the Author Club de Lectura** *Seis sesiones del club de lectura con escritores latinoamericanos* [12]
- **Noche de Museo** *Harn Museum of Art* [7]
- **The Total Destruction of the Anthropology Museum and Other Art Projects** *COLOQUIO with Eduardo Abaroa\** [6]
- **Conversatorio sobre la política ecuatoriana** *Carlos Andrés Vera* ° [5]
- **Brazil & Florida Bilateral Relations** *Consul João Lucas Quental* [9]
- **Abraham Cruz Villegas: Some projects** [1]
- **Global South Indigenous Socio-Linguistic and Cultural Manifestation in the United States** *Santiago Gualapuro* [2]
- **Club de Escucha: El voto latino 2024** *Radio Ambulante* [3]
- **Airline Route Maps** *Gallery opening with Center alum Steve Keats* [10]
- **Paternalism and ventriloquism as forms of white privilege and colonial legacies in Latin America** *COLOQUIO with Carmen Martínez Novo\** [4]
- **Book launch | Daughter, Mother, Grandmother, and Whore by Gabriela Leite** *Meg Weeks\*, Laura Rebecca Murray°, Esther Teixeira°, moderated by Rafael Ramírez Solórzano\*, Sandy F. Chang\**
- **"An Incomplete Collection of Impossible Projects"** *Gallery opening with Eduardo Abaroa and students\** [8]
- **Daughter, Mother, Grandmother, and Whore | Book launch at The Lynx** *Meg Weeks\*, Laura Rebecca Murray°, Esther Teixeira°, Amber DiPietra°, moderated by Jill McCracken°* [11]

° Guest speaker from outside institution

† Center student or alum

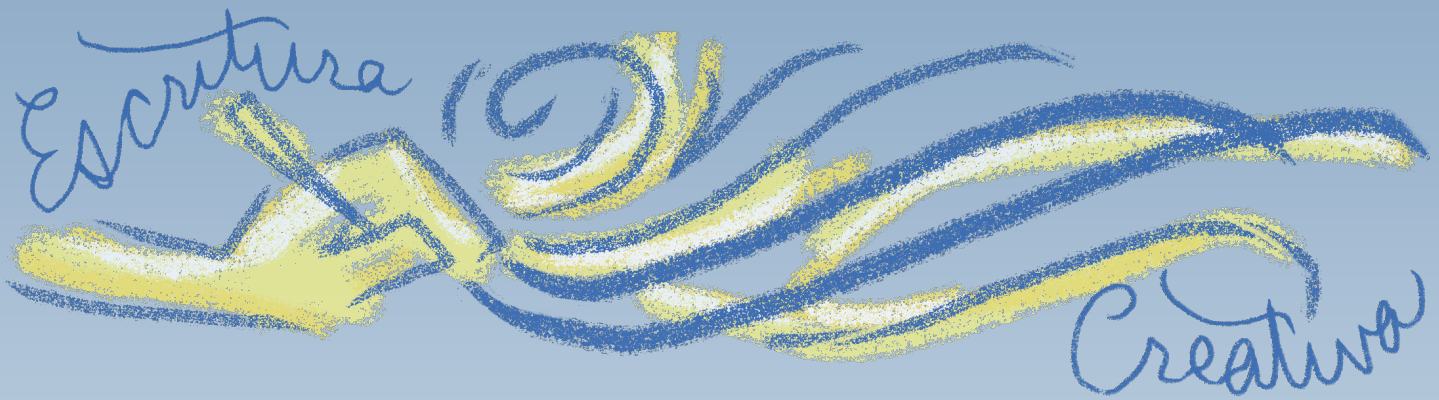
\*Center faculty (Core, affiliate, or visiting scholar)

■ Watch on YouTube! [youtube.com/uflatinamerica](https://youtube.com/uflatinamerica)





# Featured STUDENT WORK



*The following creative work was written during the class "Fictional and Non-Fictional Narratives," taught by Professor Luis Felipe Lomelí at the Center for Latin American Studies. This excerpt belongs to a novel-in-progress.*

## Emulation of an Estancia

ELUNEY GONZÁLEZ

People look at me strangely when I tell them there's only one photograph that I love. At least, one of that variety taken not for fun or to remember a particular occasion but for the absolute beauty of the subject. 'But you're a photographer,' they say with a puzzled look that maddens me, 'shouldn't you love a whole lot more?' Only other artists, and even then just a few, truly understand my point. It's this one work you love, that you see once and it sets off an instant motivation in futile pursuit of its emulation. Of all the beautiful photographs in the world, I've only found a few that are worth a damn to look at more than once. But when you start looking... cagaste. You lose yourself chasing the feeling of that first glance.

The photo I found wasn't in any high-profile journal, or a white-walled museum with an author's description beside it and a whole collection of black-and-white nude bodies and close-ups of brilliant eyes hung around it. I found it at twelve, rooting through a scrapbook whose pages felt slick with age in my mother's Provincia de Buenos Aires

town. I had picked a loose, brittle photo from a pale folder tacked onto the end of an album labeled SOBRE PARA NEGATIVOS with unwinding film reels spilling over and under it. There was only one photo inside it: a man wearing a black boina vasca, mate in hand, sitting at a rough-hewn wooden table overlooking the pampas at sunset, whose faded mix of violet and huevode-rancho orange was reflected in a pool of standing water by the fenceline. The man watched a pair of children, his perhaps, running after each other in a distant field.

It was that kind of photo that was only special because it had been forgotten. Putting it in one of the many empty spaces left in any of the albums would only remove the charm of accidental discovery. That sobre pálido in the back was its rightful place. And so I put it back, patted the folder, and shelved it where I found it.

I was obsessed for the next two years. When we finally returned, that first day before even unpacking

my bags I remember running into my grandfather's closet, the cloying newspaper-scented dust filling my nose, and not being able to find it again after hours of searching. The album and folder were there, but the photo was not. It had vanished. Even though I didn't know anyone in the photo – Abuelo with his dementia wasn't much help, and Papá and Mamá were too busy visiting friends and family to look for even two seconds – I felt a painful hole where my obsession had been.

I asked Papá for a camera that Christmas fully ready to sacrifice my next year's worth of presents to offset the substantial price. He looked at me quizzically.

"Pero si tenemos una cámara aquí", he said stiffly.

He took twenty minutes rummaging in the office to procure a chrome Sanyo whose flasher had become a dull yellow and whose strap had grown thin and loopy. Papá showed me which of the greasy buttons did what, and while we

messed with the camera between us I accidentally snapped a photo of us both. Only after I had filled the camera's reel and went to print off the stack with him at the Walmart Photo Center did we see how it turned out: a scene blurred with movement, his scowling face next to my surprised one. The accuracy with which he recreated that scowl again was uncanny.

"Borrало", he said. He snatched the camera from the Walmart employee's hand and started pressing every button except the one that opened the delete menu. He, instead, had managed to replace the decent photos – I hesitate to call anything I took back then "good", although in some ways I could tell I sure had chops for choosing a scene to capture – with more blurred images of his sneering face.

"Es una porquería de mierda", he seethed after the protracted struggle. He tossed it into the bin meant for throwing away botched Polaroid negatives and before I could even think about fishing for it again, he dragged me to the car and drove us home. I asked him if I could have a new camera for my birthday and he only laughed, said: "jamás".

Two years later, at fourteen, I got another camera on my first flip phone. The quality of the photos was universally awful, and combined with the fact that I had long since outgrown that phase where I had been obsessed with photography, I wasn't all that upset about it. I would take some for fun, but they always disappointed me with their blurriness. Only halfway through high school when my parents had finally gotten their long-deserved promotions did Mamá think to buy me a decent camera for my birthday against Papá's wishes. We had just returned from a two-week family visit again, and my subconscious desire to recreate that photo had been renewed by yet another failed search through Abuelo's closet.

Ever since beginning photography in earnest, when I snuck out at the end of the school day to catch the sandhill cranes feeding in the school water reservoir, that feverish obsession to recreate that forgotten photo never ceased. Every picture I took was merely preparation for getting the right angles, the best lighting, and the steadiest hands for the Big Recreation. We were going to my Abuelos' for the funeral of some tío of a tío I had never met, and by the by we would visit family. I wanted to be ready by that time to take the photo and do it well. But, strangely, the better my skills became the less I felt

I could make the photo come to life. I practiced in my room, set up the framing, and never thought I got it quite right.

I remember arriving that summer (American summer, ergo an Argentine winter) and, pulling my jacket tight around my body for the piercing wind, walking along those dusty roads that crisscrossed the Pampas between campos at right angles. I had described the photo to Papá, told him what I wanted exactly, and after a beat he said he knew the perfect place. His secondary school buddy had been working diligently on a local bankers' ranch for over a decade, a guy with bottomless pockets for decorating his estancia with hedges and neatly trimmed grass and an orderly shed. His work had left the place begging to be photographed. He came with me to navigate the paths, though on the condition that I keep the camera hidden underneath my jacket, que es demasiado cara para que algún chorro la afane.

It had just rained the night before, and from the mud, our yellow rubber boots had started to look like the decaying leftovers of corn still in the field from last month's harvest. By late afternoon, the sky was still gunmetal gray and the air was pungent with the earthy smell of rain. Brown puddles dotted the road like an inverse archipelago. Along the road's edge in the cunetas that were omnipresent just outside of town, green algae bloomed around rocks in the stagnant water. I'd picked a cola de zorro from one of the dozens of patches along the roadside and used it to trace lines in the dirt as we walked.

We got to the ranch just in time for sunset, and I prepared the framing just as I had in my room while Papá watched with crossed arms from the wooden doorway.

"Papá, necesito un subject". I said. He looked at me blankly, his eyes fearful. I gestured to the chair; the sun was falling fast. "Dale, que no hay nadie más quien lo puede hacer".

Papá grunted and reluctantly sat and grimaced into the sunset over the Pampas. As I adjusted his posture, (exhausted but peaceful and strong, I directed) the slant of the boina on his head, and the angle of the bombilla in his mate to exactly what I remembered from the photo, I felt that something was wrong with the scene that I hadn't prepared for. I wouldn't realize it until after Mamá had printed, framed, and displayed it on the living room mantle: the photo of the forgotten man had been smiling at his children. Papá had only mustered a scowl for his. ♦

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT:**

Eluney González grew up in Gainesville, Florida, and is currently a third-year English and History undergraduate at the University of Florida. He has published work in the 25th and 26th editions of the TEA Literary Magazine, in the latter of which he received the Palmetto Prize for Prose from author David Leavitt.



## Business students embark on undergraduate research in Ecuador and Galápagos

*Research Tutorial Abroad connects collaborators from virtual exchange initiative*

Thanks to a virtual exchange project facilitated by the UF International Center (UFIC), professor Megan Mocko (Warrington College of Business) and professor Ricardo López from the Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador have built a successful collaboration between multiple classes. This summer, their collaboration expanded when Prof. Mocko was awarded funding from the UFIC and the Center for Latin American Studies to facilitate a Research Tutorial Abroad (RTA). Prof. Mocko and two UF undergraduate students traveled to Ecuador and, together with Prof. López, conducted interviews with business professionals. They visited a large food distributor and three local businesses to learn about entrepreneurship, sustainability, technology, and business communications. Read on to learn more about Rousemary's experience on the trip!

### MY RESEARCH EXPERIENCE IN ECUADOR AND THE GALÁPAGOS BY ROUSEMARY ESTRADA

My research journey in Ecuador and the Galápagos Islands was an eye-opening experience that broadened my understanding of both nature and entrepreneurship. On our first day, while touring the Galápagos Science Center, I was amazed at how much I learned about the delicate balance of the ecosystem and the innovative scientific research aimed at preserving it. Seeing the pristine wildlife up close, I developed a deeper appreciation for how fragile yet resilient the natural world is.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the trip was witnessing the life of entrepreneurs on the islands. With limited supplies and resources, their ingenuity and determination were clear. On San Cristóbal, I visited Hacienda Tranquila where I had the privilege of meeting the owner and his dedicated team. The warmth and hospitality they offered, despite the challenges of running a business in such an isolated location,

were truly inspiring. This experience opened my eyes to the real-world challenges of entrepreneurship in remote areas, where sustainability is not just an ideal but a necessity for survival.

I also became more aware of how the Galápagos Islands are marketed as a hub of unique biodiversity, though it may not be as widely recognized as some other global eco-tourism destinations. The rich ecosystem and the islands' efforts to protect it are not always top of mind to the outside world, but it holds immense potential for eco-conscious travelers.

The contrast between the Galápagos and mainland Ecuador was striking. On the mainland, particularly in Quito, the research process was far more formal and structured. I had the opportunity to conduct interviews that revealed differing perspectives on culture, entrepreneurship, and even public policy. One of the most impactful moments was learning about the organizational

structures and responsibilities within high-tech national companies, which was a great supplement to my studies in business.

A highlight of my research in Quito was meeting the executive board of Impaqto, a Benefit Corporation. I've been studying B-Corps since my freshman year, but witnessing the passion and purpose of a team in action made everything come to life. Their commitment to balancing profit and purpose was something I had read about, but hearing them speak about their mission with such dedication was incredibly motivating.

I am incredibly grateful for this experience. From the unique ecosystems of the Galápagos to the bustling business world of mainland Ecuador, I met so many inspiring individuals who expanded my knowledge and challenged my perspectives. This trip has left a lasting impact on my academic journey and personal growth.

# Ongoing support for student, educator travel and study in Latin America

Facilitating opportunities for students and educators to experience Latin America firsthand remains a valuable and rewarding mission for the Center's outreach initiatives. In addition to Prof. Mocko's Research Tutorial Abroad (RTA) in Ecuador and the Galápagos (*see left*), here are some other recent projects and programs we've helped fund and/or develop:



## New study abroad programs for 2025:

- *Engineering* | UF in Panama: Exploring the Canal across Disciplines. (Engineering, Business, Liberal Arts) Short Term Study Abroad. Led by Dr. Pingchien Neo.
- *Construction* | UF in Peru: Ancient and Modern Built Environment, Summer A. Led by Dr. Eileen Pesantes-Tavares.
- *Journalism & Communications* | UF in Costa Rica: CJC Explorers. Conservation Media. Spring Break. Led by Dr. Cynthia Barnett and Dr. Gabriela Salazar.



**Educators in Ecuador, Summer 2024:** After a successful virtual exchange with Universidad de San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), UF Education professor Tara Mathien led a group of students to Ecuador and the Galápagos on a study abroad. The students developed bilingual literacy activities and volunteered at a local school.

**Professional development in Campeche, Summer 2024:** Florida K-12 teachers and Santa Fe State College students participated in a 10-day study abroad organized and led by Santa Fe professor Marcela Murillo and Monica Guerrero, director of the Centro Español y Maya at the Autonomous University of Campeche. Participants learned about Mexican culture, arts, food, and history through visits to ruins, museums, and workshops with local experts. ♦



## Center team brings Day of the Dead activities to local school

*Professor Rafael Ramirez Solórzano, students Melisa Mantilla and Jonny López lead bilingual workshop*

BY JONNY LÓPEZ AND MELISA MANTILLA (MALAS 2026)

On October 25, Dr. Rafael Ramirez Solórzano and MALAS students Melisa Mantilla and Jonny López led a Day of the Dead workshop at Hawthorne School. This Latin American tradition, celebrated on November 1-2, honors deceased loved ones. Given its cultural significance, schools often incorporate it into Spanish and cultural classes. At the request of Mrs. Currea, a teacher at Hawthorne School, the Center for Latin American Studies organized an interactive workshop for 35 tenth graders aged 15-17, currently learning Spanish.

The two-hour bilingual workshop was planned by MALAS students Melisa Mantilla and Jonny López and professor Rafael Ramirez Solórzano, with Mrs. Currea assisting with logistics. Their workshop began with a presentation and video explaining the tradition's history. Dr. Solórzano provided an overview, while Melisa and Jonny introduced the

ofrenda, detailing the meaning behind each artifact on the altar. To connect the tradition to broader themes, the team highlighted notable figures like Pelé, Selena Quintanilla, and Frida Kahlo. Students engaged actively, sharing examples of cultural rituals, such as grave decorations, commemorative objects, and personal expressions like tattoos or candles.

Then, students created their own altars in small groups, using butcher paper and provided materials. These altars honored pets, famous figures, and relatives. The activity fostered creativity and curiosity while deepening their understanding of the tradition.

The workshop successfully raised awareness of the Day of the Dead, highlighting its connections to identity, culture, and remembrance while allowing students to explore diverse traditions. ♦

## Meg Weeks shepherds activist memoir from Portuguese to English

*MALAS student Jorgelina Benitez interviews Dr. Weeks about the challenges, opportunities of translation process*

In this interview, Jorgelina Benitez (MALAS 2025) chats with Center professor Meg Weeks about her English translation of the memoir *Daughter, Mother, Grandmother, and Whore*, by Brazilian sex worker activist Gabriela Leite (1951-2013).

**JORGELINA BENITEZ:** How did you come to know Gabriela Leite's story? What drew you to this particular project?

**MEG WEEKS:** My first semester of grad school, I found a document in a historical monograph about prostitutes during the dictatorship, and how they were surveilled and thought to be potential subversives. That really piqued my interest, and it led me to change course on my project. I read both of Gabriela's memoirs eagerly, and just became enamored with her—her intellect, her iconoclastic approach to thinking about politics, her irreverence and her humor. I'd say what drew me to this project was trying to make sense of her political thought and approach to doing politics.

**JB:** What were your main challenges in translating this book from Portuguese to English?

**MW:** The main challenges were reconciling and elucidating some of its more culturally specific aspects for an anglophone readership, while also ensuring that it read smoothly, because at the end of the day this is a literary text that I want people to enjoy. So, I aimed to give enough explication through footnotes and in-text explanation, and of course through our introduction that frames the book. But I wanted it to have the fluidity that the original does. In terms of adapting specific phrases and idioms, the word *puta*, of course, is the perennial question. This has different parts of speech in Portuguese that don't exist in English, so I had to work around that creatively to maintain the spirit in translation.

**JB:** Were there any specific cultural aspects of Brazilian society that you were particularly mindful of when translating?

**MW:** I did think a fair amount about race—how race is treated in Brazil and how people refer to race. Of course, this has shifted in Brazil; it's not a static thing. Gabriela was in her 50s writing in the 2000s, so she had a certain sensibility, and things have certainly shifted since then. There are some substantial differences between discourse here in the U.S. and in Brazil. The topics of sex and sexuality are also really fascinating in



*L-R: Sandy F. Chang, Meg Weeks, Esther Teixeira, Laura Murray, Rafael Ramírez Solórzano, at memoir book launch*

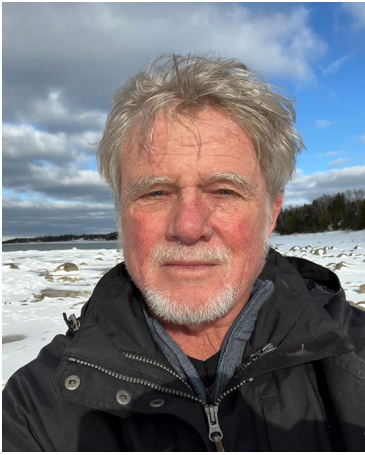
Brazilian culture. On the one hand it's a sexually liberated society, if we think about Carnival and other expressions of bodily freedom through beach culture, etc. All of that sexuality is on the surface, but there's also a tradition of very repressive, socially conservative Catholicism and other repressive religious frameworks. That different relationship to sexuality was something I wanted to get at in the translation.

**JB:** How did translating this book challenge or deepen your understanding of Brazilian culture or feminist themes?

**MW:** The book definitely helped me understand Gabriela more and revealed a lot about social movement dynamics and the redemocratization period in Brazil. It also helped me think more about oral histories and testimonial literature and how to treat these sources critically while also appreciating their unique properties—what they can tell you about the past, but perhaps also what they might embellish or distort. It taught me to be more attentive to the specific properties of oral history. Finally, I think Gabriela has helped me expand my notion of feminism—specifically to stretch the definition when actors don't necessarily conform to what we might expect from a feminist vein of politics. I think she's helped me challenge those understandings.

**JB:** What role do translators play in bridging cultural gaps and fostering cross-cultural understanding?

**MW:** Translators are so important, and I'm not saying this to inflate my own role. A writer really is only powerful and impactful if their work can be read, and if writers are not translated then their impact is really limited. Gabriela is such an important thinker and leader for an international movement that isn't very well known outside of Brazil, and I think so much of that has to do with the fact that her work is only available in a language that not many people speak outside of Brazil. So, I'm really hoping that this book more thoroughly introduces her to a broader audience, not just in the U.S. and in English-speaking countries, but also in Europe where people read widely in English. We need to be reading people who write in languages that we don't speak, and the only way we can do that is through translation. Translators are fundamental in that aspect. ♦



# Center-based professor Robert Walker retires

*Career in human geography interwove physical and social sciences, diverse science communications efforts*

Dr. Robert Walker is retiring with emeritus status after a 38-year career as a professor of human geography, the last ten of which he spent here at the University of Florida in the Center for

Latin American Studies and Department of Geography. Dr. Walker earned his BS in Chemistry and his MS in Environmental Engineering from UF before completing his PhD in Regional Science at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Walker's training blended social and physical sciences, setting the stage for a career traversing disciplinary boundaries. Most of Dr. Walker's research has focused on land cover change processes in development frontiers, primarily in Brazil but also in Mexico and Ecuador. His prominent work has integrated data from multiple sources with the remote sensing of land cover in studies of tropical deforestation. In 2021, he received the Carl O. Sauer Distinguished Scholarship Award from the The Conference of Latin American Geography.

In more recent years, Dr. Walker has turned his attention to climate change in the Amazon region, raising warnings about what he calls “a tipping point,” whereby the sprawling ecosystem would undergo a level of destruction beyond the possibility of recovery. He was the first person to publish an article providing a date for the demise of the Amazonian Forest due to a tipping point transgression.

In 2021, the National Science Foundation awarded a grant of nearly \$1 million to a multi-disciplinary team of researchers led by Dr. Walker. Carried out by a team of scholars from UF and other universities, the project has collected data through ecological assays, scientific surveys, and key informant

interviews. The purpose of the research is to gain insight into Indigenous practices that maintain a balanced relationship between humans and their surrounding ecosystems, and share that knowledge in partnership with Indigenous people and communities who need it. The project is set to conclude this year, with Dr. Walker integrating their findings to test their hypotheses about the sustainability of Indigenous Territories.

In March 2023, Dr. Walker began publishing a regular column in the Brazilian digital publication *Revista Interesse Nacional*. Over the course of fourteen articles, Dr. Walker has written on Amazonian conservation, tackling topics like deforestation, Indigenous rights, hydroelectric power, and Chinese investment in the Amazon, among others. One guiding touchstone is the drive to call attention to meaningful climate action beyond political promises in Brazil—especially with the visibility of the upcoming November 2025 COP30 conference in Belém, notable for its location at the gateway of the Amazon River.

In addition to academic and journalistic writing, Dr. Walker has also embraced creative means for science communication. In 2021, he published the first piece of creative non-fiction to appear in the *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, “NAFTA’s Cartel Economy.” In 2024, he published the narrative non-fiction work “Apocalyptic Species” in *Anthroposphere: The Oxford Climate Review*. His most recent work is titled “The Human Sickness,” a fictional tale exploring why orcas attack boats off the Iberian Peninsula. The ocean has long been a source of adventure and curiosity for Dr. Walker. A devoted surfer, sailor, and backpacker in his youth, his quest for all places new led him to his career in geography, mapping the unknown.

Congratulations on a distinguished career, Dr. Walker, and thank you for your contributions to the Center! Best wishes charting new courses in your retirement. ♦

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## Affiliate faculty retirements

*Congratulations to Dr. Needell and Dr. Buschbacher on their retirements!*



### JEFFREY NEEDELL

Professor Emeritus  
Department of History

Research topics: Politics, culture, ideology, society, and slavery in 19th- and early 20th-century Brazil.

### ROBERT BUSCHBACHER

Director, Governance and Infrastructure in the Amazon (GIA)

Tropical Conservation & Development Program



# Student RESEARCH MAP

## DANIELA LIZARAZO

LATINA MIGRANT WOMENS WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

My research focuses on the oral histories of Latina migrant women working in the construction industry in North Florida. Through their oral histories, I examine how working in a traditionally masculine field affects their kinship relations, self-perception, and family dynamics. This study not only addresses issues of gender and labor but also contributes to a broader understanding of how structural inequality shapes migrant identities and lives. Central to my research are feminist frameworks as well as qualitative and historical methods. As a Colombian migrant, I consider myself an "outsider within" (Patricia Hill Collins); my personal experiences have allowed me to understand and navigate the diverse challenges migrant communities face, fostering close connections with the women and families I work with.



## THAIS ZSCHABER

POPULIST STRATEGIES IN DEBATING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY DURING BRAZIL'S 2022 ELECTIONS

I was both fascinated and terrified by the fact that the interviews I conducted in Brazil confirmed there is no simple resolution to the conflict between Jair Bolsonaro and the judiciary. My data revealed that casting doubt on the voting machines during Brazil's 2022 elections was a deliberate part of Bolsonaro's broader strategy to radicalize opposition against the electoral court and the judiciary as a whole. However, the interviews with specialists in electoral and constitutional law highlighted significant disagreement among lawyers and academics. Some argued that the courts acted entirely within the Constitution, doing what was necessary to uphold democracy. Others acknowledged the necessity of the courts' actions but conceded that, at times, they operated beyond the boundaries of the law. Finally, a third group stated that the courts exceeded their constitutional authority, leading to instances of censorship. This divergence raises pressing questions: how can Brazil move forward as a divided nation without a consensus on what went wrong and what changes are needed?

## CARLOS PAREDES

AUTHORIZING EMPIRE: MYTHS AND NARRATIVES OF EMPIRE AND COLONIALISM THROUGH SPANISH ACCOUNTS OF THE AMERICAS

I went to various archives to read about the first 100 years of Spanish colonization of the Americas. The goal of my research is to uncover the ideology of empire that exists in Spanish accounts of the Americas and how these texts provide a rhetorical defense of Spanish colonialism in the Americas. I read rare books, copies of letters, and tried to decipher 16th-century Spanish handwriting to the best of my ability. The cities I went to were beautiful but I felt the presence of Indigenous peoples and colonialism the most in Albuquerque, New Mexico where the unique blend of architecture, landscape, and food was unlike any I had encountered in the continental US. I visited churches dating back to the 1700s and saw landscapes and sunsets that overwhelmed me with awe. Indigenous is culture present in Albuquerque in a way that stood out. I recall that at the coffee store at the University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research, one of the workers had a pin on declaring that he was proudly Indigenous. The American Southwest, and Albuquerque especially, is such a unique and amazing place.



## MARIA DE LA CRUZ

VIEWING PERSPECTIVES AND NARRATIONS FROM THE MESETA P'UREPÉCHA ON CULTURE AND TRADITIONS POST-NAFTA

I gained invaluable insights from the agro-religious communities that were the focus of my investigation. These communities' daily practices are deeply rooted in maize cultivation. Yet, due to economic challenges in the 1990s-2000s, Hass avocado production emerged as an alternative market, reshaping traditions and customs. Despite this, many avocado producers preserve their agricultural traditions by planting maize, an act of cultural preservation and resistance, still incorporating it into their daily practices both in food production as well as religious practices. Through this research, I not only deepened my understanding of these acts of resilience but also gained profound insight into my own heritage and the richness of my community's history.







**DANIELA LIZARAZO**  
USA: TAMPA, ORLANDO, JACKSONVILLE

**VANESSA GILLETTE WYLAND**  
MEXICO

**ADRIANA SELA**  
USA: MIAMI

**MARIA DE LA CRUZ**  
MEXICO

**ASHLEY BORGES**  
USA: PUERTO RICO

**AAYA KINGSBURY**  
GUATEMALA

**CALLUM KAROLESKI**  
MEXICO

**GABRIELLE SOTO**  
MEXICO

**WILLIAM ANDERSON**  
TRINIDAD / TOBAGO

**JORGELINA BENITEZ**  
USA: BOSTON

**MIREYA RODRIGUEZ**  
USA: CALIFORNIA

**ANA GARCIA DE DIOS**  
USA / ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

**CARLOS PAREDES**  
USA: ALBUQUERQUE, CHICAGO, MIAMI

**RAFAEL GALINDO CRUZ**  
MEXICO

**HAILEY MUCHNOK**  
COSTA RICA: SARAPIQUÍ

**JUSTIN WEIMORTS**  
COSTA RICA AND PANAMA

**LYDIA SOIFER**  
CERRO CHUCANTI, PANAMA

**DIANA RODRIGUEZ ALLENDE**  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

**SIXTA CHAVERRA MARTINEZ**  
COLOMBIA

**MARIA CUERVO**  
COLOMBIA: BOGOTÁ

**ANA RAMIREZ GOMEZ**  
COLOMBIA: CALI

**JUAN ESTEBAN VARGAS**  
COLOMBIA

**CAROLINA SIMON-PARDO**  
COLOMBIA

**ESTEFANY GÜECHÁ SÁNCHEZ**  
COLOMBIA: BOGOTÁ, MEDELLÍN

**VERONICA SOUZA**  
BRAZIL: SÃO PAULO, USA: GAINESVILLE

**MCCALL VOY**  
PERU

**REBECA LEAL**  
BRAZIL: BRASÍLIA

**MARIA SELLERS**  
PERU

**NILTON QUIROLI**  
BRAZIL

**THAIS ZSCHABER**  
BRAZIL: BRASÍLIA, BELO HORIZONTE

**ALFREDO ORTIZ**  
BRAZIL

**MARIA ROMAN**  
CHILE

**MESLY MATA LOYA**  
BRAZIL: PORTO VELHO

## ANA GARCIA DE DIOS

A THEMATIC AND COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS, CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN VENEZUELA FROM PUNTO FIJISMO TO CHÁVEZ

Through my research, I found that civil-military relations theories from the Global North fail to account for Venezuela's unique socio-political and economic context, highlighting the limitations of a top-down approach in the Global South and emphasizing the need for frameworks that better reflect the realities of regimes like Venezuela. Using a comparative historical analysis, I compared the Punto Fijo era to Hugo Chávez's presidency, gaining a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of civil-military relations. The thematic analysis allowed me to identify and interpret patterns of meaning in legal texts and reveal underlying themes related to civil-military relations and military professionalism across different laws and historical periods. By combining these methodologies, I provided a nuanced understanding of the interplay between law, military, and political authority in Venezuela.



## Jorgelina Benitez delves into dynamics of Brazilian au pairs working in U.S.

*Complex dimensions of labor, economics, culture, and personal relationships mark multi-faceted research*

an au pair program might seem like an attractive option. You have the chance to travel, immerse yourself in a second language, and develop personal and professional skills. Meanwhile, your host family gains valuable childcare services and the chance to learn about another country's culture. The experience is tantamount to an international exchange.

This is, of course, how au pair agencies advertise the benefits for potential participants. But beyond this superficial description, there's a tangle of complexity to explore—which is exactly what MALAS 2025 student Jorgelina Benitez is doing for her research. "The au pair program is not easily summarized in a sentence, or even a paragraph," she laughs. "But I've found it so fascinating to study, because there is a lot of nuance."

For her research, Jorgelina interviewed former Brazilian au pairs currently living in the U.S. to better understand how intersecting factors like race, gender, and class shape their experiences as childcare workers. Through her analysis and their transition into the U.S. labor market, these dynamics reveal broader societal structures of labor, economics, and migration and the complex ways in which those forces impact personal experience.

While the au pair program is available in many countries to candidates from around the world, Jorgelina says that typically au pairs from the Global South tend to apply for work in the U.S., whereas U.S. au pairs set their sights on Europe. This trend not only reflects economic realities and perceptions of status for these regions, it also manifests in the marketing strategies by au pair agencies seeking to recruit and then match au pairs and host families. "The profiles became clear to me," Jorgelina explains. "In the U.S., Latina women are portrayed as warm, loving caregivers who will be more willing to take on additional domestic help, compared to a European au pair."

This blurry line between childcare and domestic labor is just one of the gray areas within the au pair experience. Another is the ambiguity in the definition of labor itself. Jorgelina's research examines the au pair program as a form of migrant domestic labor, even though it isn't officially classified as such. Instead, it's considered a "mid-size public diplomacy program," defined by its hallmarks of intercultural exchange. This means that workers' rights like fair hours and wages aren't guaranteed for au pairs, whose protection depends entirely on the agencies

For young people seeking the opportunity to live and work abroad,

and host families—the latter of whom are the paying clients in the transaction. Jorgelina points out that unlike other migrant caregivers, au pairs also have distinct characteristics, such as the requirement to be 18-26 years old, single, and childless, and to have at least a high school education and some knowledge of English.

Then there's the gray area between the professional—providing skilled labor—with the personal—living in a family home with your employers. "There are rules about the work, of course, but when you live with your boss, they become ambiguous," Jorgelina explains. "And you're working with kids, who see you as part of the family. They don't understand work hours versus off hours. They just want to be around you." Jorgelina points out the challenges of maintaining the boundaries of work while also navigating the interpersonal relationships within a family, attempting to address the unique needs of the children while also meeting the expectations of the parents—all while adjusting to life in a new country away from one's own family and friends.

Even before her research, Jorgelina was familiar with the experiences of Brazilian au pairs working in the U.S., simply because she was one. But having the chance to examine it from an academic perspective has shed light on the sociocultural, historical, and economic forces underpinning the program experience. One Center faculty member has been a particularly useful resource: Brazilianist historian Meg Weeks. "I found the perfect match in Dr. Weeks," Jorgelina shares. "Because she has expertise in studying Brazilian women and domestic service, she's helped me explore complex theories and the legacies of historical dynamics about Brazilian women and domestic work."

Even though Jorgelina has carried her personal experience into her thesis research, she's found that there's still a stigma around being an ex-au pair. "Society undervalues childcare skills, so a lot of former au pairs don't like to talk about it," she explains. "But not only are childcare skills important, being an au pair gives you valuable skills of communication, problem-solving, resilience."

This affirmation guides her plans for continuing to work within the au pair community, alongside other advocates for labor rights legislation and mental health resources, but also as a mentor. "Being an au pair provided me with all the skills I need to succeed in other professional fields," Jorgelina says. "But a lot of au pairs don't think they're capable. So I want to help them realize they can go to an American university or get a good job with the skills that they already have. My goal is to empower au pairs and help them take their next steps to grow." ♦



Ana (left) conducting one of her fieldwork interviews in Cali

## Ana Ramírez examines socioeconomics of Black women entrepreneurs in Colombia

*Research puts focus on economic development, social mobility*

When you imagine an entrepreneur, your mind might first conjure a young man working in Silicon Valley or meeting with investors for his start-up. But MALAS 2025 student Ana María Ramírez Gómez is more interested in a demographic often excluded from many people's definition of entrepreneurship: Black women in Colombia. "Black women in Colombia create amazing businesses all the time," Ana says. "They are raising their children, facing many social issues, and they need to make money to survive."

But Ana's not only interested in understanding entrepreneurship for survival, she also wants to highlight its necessity to achieve a better way of life. After all, she's witnessed it in her own family: while her grandmother only received an elementary education, as an adult she made money from a small business making and selling desserts. The profit from this business made it possible for her children, Ana's mother and aunt, to get more education than their mother. Ana's mother completed an associate's degree, Ana's aunt was the first woman in the family to get a bachelor's degree, and now Ana has her bachelor's degree in journalism and will complete her MALAS degree this spring. "It's all possible thanks to the business my grandma created," Ana says.

Crucially, Ana's research frames the topic of Black women entrepreneurship on social mobility rather than poverty, something that makes her research distinct from existing scholarship. "A lot of the research you find on Black populations in Colombia is about poverty," she explains. "Obviously, poverty is a part of my research. But it's not about poverty, it's about how Black women create businesses to make money."

In order to analyze the socioeconomic dynamics of their entrepreneurship, Ana interviewed 70 Afro-Colombian women in Cali about the ways they make money and how money shapes their lives. The wide range of ages in her participants helped shed light on how generational wealth is (or isn't) built, as well as the importance of saving money for retirement, and the challenges women face when they have family members to support, whether aging or young.

Throughout all Ana's interviews, three common themes emerged in the women's stories: the challenge of providing financial support for the family as a single caregiver, the value of education to navigate financial paperwork and economic systems, and the experience of racism. "I interviewed women

from different age groups, social classes, and education levels, and racism came up with all of them," Ana shares. "One of the women I interviewed is 100 years old and she owns a big farm. Many people assume that she is one of the domestic workers from that farm, but really she is the owner."

As Ana's analyzed her data, she's also noticed how money is regarded in different ways within different cultural settings. "In Latin America, we don't speak a lot about money, especially compared to the United States," Ana points out. "And in Afro-Colombian communities, there's a mindset almost like we shouldn't want more and more money. If you're good right now, then why do you want more money?" But this attitude directly impedes the kind of financial planning that helps facilitate the social mobility that lifts families from poverty. Moreover, it reinforces the false idea that financial literacy and economic growth isn't a space for Black people to occupy, much in the same way that the legacies of slavery in Colombia mean that Black women are often seen as workers, not entrepreneurs.

Ultimately, Ana hopes to contribute to a shift in this mindset and the realities surrounding it. "I want to talk about Black people and finances, not just Black people and music or dance or food or education," Ana says, pointing out the topics commonly associated with Black communities. "Money is not everything, but it's so important to talk about economics. If you want to build a better society, you need money."

In November, Ana presented her research for the first time as part of a panel at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in Tampa. "It was my first academic conference and my first time presenting in English," Ana shares. "It was an honor to showcase the resilience and power of Afro-Colombian women entrepreneurs to African American audiences and a global community." In addition to making valuable connections with scholars and mentors at the conference, Ana was also awarded the Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole Student Travel Award by the Association of Black Anthropologists, a section of the AAA.

Going forward, Ana plans to present her data again—this time with the Chamber of Commerce in Cali. "It's important that they have information about Black women entrepreneurs so that they can understand better that community, analyze what they need, and support their businesses," Ana says. Then, she says, her sights are on developing her career: "I want to get a job where I can incorporate all the knowledge I've learned to support all women's economic development." ♦

## "Educator at heart" Tania Trejo-Mendez (MALAS 2024) serves as Latinx leadership fellow

BY MARÍA DE LA CRUZ MORA (MALAS 2025)

Tania Trejo-Mendez, a Chicana first-generation graduate scholar from Lakeland, Florida and recent graduate of the MALAS program, is making strides in education equity in the South. For eight weeks this past summer, Tania served as a Southern Education Leadership Initiative (SELI) fellow, a position that has empowered her to impact and address inequalities alongside Latinx education in North Carolina.

Tania's master's project in MALAS was focused on the women of the Young Lords party, exploring the activist role they played in the 20th century. Her work also sheds light on the intersections of Latinxs civil rights movements and Latinx history as a whole. In part of Tania's professional journey, she has been striving to bridge her academic research with community advocacy. Her commitment to this led her to apply to the SELI fellowship following graduation.

The Southern Education Leadership Initiative is an organization that pairs fellows with non-profits and education-focused organizations throughout the South to provide access to better educational opportunities. Leaders are provided with hands-on work on pressing social issues affecting underrepresented communities.

During her fellowship with SELI, Tania was placed with LatinxED, an educational initiative in North Carolina dedicated to advancing educational equity for immigrants. With LatinxED, Tania taught classes, helped develop and refine curriculum, coordinated events, and connected with her growing community. "It was so meaningful to be in a space where our students, our fellows, and the staff that I was working with were all Latinos, all from immigrant backgrounds or immigrants themselves," Tania shares. "And all people who are invested in building a better state of education."

As she progressed through her fellowship, Tania credits the mentorship and teachings of Dr. Rafael Ramirez Solórzano, specifically the concept of *testimonio*, personal narratives that uplift Latino history, and "translanguaging," using both Spanish and English delivering curriculum so that mixed groups wouldn't self-segregate. "All of these concepts that we talked about in Dr. Solórzano's class, like talking about how language configures into identity, were really essential to the work that I was doing

at LatinxED and thinking through how to develop curriculum that is meaningful, engaging, and also culturally responsive," Tania reflects.

Tania was also able to apply some of what she'd learned from her MALAS research, in addition to her coursework and mentorships. "Part of leadership development is encouraging folks to see themselves as leaders by teaching them about their history and the people in their history who've made great strides in changing the world for the better," she explains. So, as a result, she was asked to teach a session that covered Latinx civil rights movements, from the women of the Young Lords party that anchored Tania's research, to other activism like the Dreamers movement and the 1960 East Los Angeles walkouts for education. "It was so cool to bring that little bit of my MALAS research and to tie it into a lesson that we were doing with our fellows, and encourage them to reach back into Latinx history as a source of cultural pride," Tania says.

Currently, Tania is working for Planned Parenthood as a community organizer in reproductive justice. At first, she didn't know if her experience would match a job that wasn't in education. But soon she realized that her organizing skills, passion for reproductive health, and experience in community education fit perfectly for the role. "I care about this topic, and I'm an educator at heart," she says. "This may not be education in the traditional sense, but it's a new opportunity to educate folks and tie in my purpose."

This process has helped shape her perspective for the future to come. The advice she shares with other MALAS students is to not be afraid and allow your interest to take you to unexpected places, and different opportunities. Also, don't be afraid to reach out to past alumni about new opportunities. MALAS alumni like Tania are continuing to shape the work and leave legacies of change in transforming the world for the better. ♦





## TCD alumni culminate Fulbright Amazonia collaborative research projects

*Cross-border, cross-disciplinary teams developed action-oriented recommendations on climate change, human and environmental health, and bioeconomy in the Amazon*

In June 2023, a group of scholars from Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and the United States gathered in Belém, Brazil to embark on an eighteen-month journey of collaborative, action-oriented research with the goal of securing a sustainable Amazonian Basin.

This was the kick-off meeting of the Fulbright Amazonia cohort, which consisted of sixteen scholars and two co-leads working in three thematic teams: Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, Strengthening Human and Environmental Health and Security, and Bioeconomy and Sustainable Development. At the meeting, facilitated by UF/TCD alumnus Dr. Pamela Montero and LAS faculty member Jonathan Dain, the group of scholars was tasked with addressing complex challenges in the Amazon through collaborative thinking, analysis, problem-solving, and multi-disciplinary research.

Over the next eighteen months, each member of the cohort conducted individual research projects within their area of expertise, but also met monthly with members of their thematic groups to report updates, exchange ideas, and develop policy recommendations. At the midway point of the project, the scholars gathered in person again, this time in Leticia, Colombia, to further collaborate on their discussions and integrate their results.

Among the cohort are a multitude of connections to the University of Florida and our Tropical Conservation and Development Program: the project was co-led by two UF alumni, Valério Aguiar Gomes (PhD, Geography, TCD certificate) and Jeffrey Hoelle (PhD, Anthropology, TCD certificate, advised by LAS faculty emerita Marianne Schmink). Of the sixteen Fulbright Amazonia scholars, three—Ane Alencar (Brazil), Danny Pinedo

(Peru) and Simone Athayde (Brazil)—are TCD alumni, and Galia Selaya (Bolivia) was a doctoral scholar at UF. When it came to choosing a university for the Fulbright scholar exchange visits, five team members, including Drs. Pinedo and Selaya, opted for UF, as well as Hortensia Caballero-Arias (Venezuela), Mayra Esseboom (Suriname), and Sabina Ribeiro (Brazil).

To culminate the project, the entire group of scholars reconvened in Washington, DC in December to share their research as “science diplomats.” They attended multiple events to meet with stakeholders about their findings, and, crucially, they presented their policy recommendations at a multi-session symposium with government representatives and the public in attendance.

Across the three thematic groups, a clear takeaway is the importance of cross-border, cross-disciplinary collaboration. “The Amazon is changing, in terms of the environment, but also in terms of the people who live there and their relationships with the environment,” said co-lead scholar Jeffrey Hoelle. “We need social and natural science perspectives working together on issues that are more complicated, and more urgent, than ever before.”

The cohort also highlighted the crucial role of collaboration through the logistical challenges they faced throughout their research. Sabina Ribeiro, a member of the climate change team, explained the difficulty in simply accessing data about extreme climate events across borders. “Some countries [in the region] have the capacity for acquiring and interpreting the data, and other countries don’t. In other cases, data exists but isn’t available,” she pointed out. “But climate disasters don’t have borders. We need to have transnational policies.”

The cohort’s emphasis on collaboration manifested personally as well as professionally. “I’ve got a lot of experience in different

kinds of teams and I've never experienced what I experienced with Fulbright Amazonia," Liliana Dávalos shared during one of the panel events in Washington, DC. "I didn't expect to have meetings at 5:00 PM Eastern on Fridays that I was eager to go to."

"For me, it was such an enriching experience because I could see how different minds and ways to see life complement each other and start being a new organism," Juan Pablo Iñamagua echoed.

With the success of the initial Fulbright Amazonia cohort, the U.S. and Brazilian governments announced a renewal of the program for a second cycle. "We as colleagues have no doubt that Fulbright Amazonia has become a consolidated space for promoting applied research in the region in such a short period of time," affirmed co-lead scholar Valério Gomes. "I am confident that many more results will emerge through the network of collaboration built, and it will last far beyond the mandate of the Program."



Moreover, the inaugural cohort will continue their research and collaboration to address the challenges facing the region. The team has their sights set on integrating an event at the COP30 climate conference in Belém, plus plans to continue establishing strategic channels of communication for their findings: at universities, with local communities, and with policymakers across the Amazon and in the U.S.

"Being a co-lead scholar of Fulbright Amazonia has been inspiring, challenging, and rewarding," concluded Dr. Gomes.

"We seek common scientific answers and propose concrete recommendations for public policies to promote sustainable development in the Amazon countries. We have articulated a bottom-up approach with a strong collaborative and participatory spirit among scholars. This, combined with the amazing support of the Fulbright Commission in Brazil, ECA and IIE, has transformed Fulbright Amazonia into a space to promote concrete research results rooted in the environmental and social realities of the region." ♦

[Read the Fulbright Amazonia policy recommendations here](#)



## Alum Steven Keats exhibits airline route maps in Grinter Gallery

BY CURATOR DAMON REED (PH.D. STUDENT, ART HISTORY)



While many of us can hardly fathom having to navigate to and arrive successfully at a destination with a physical map, this exhibition seeks to emphasize the central role that Latin America played in the creation of airline advertisements from companies based in the United States and Europe. Steven Keats is a collector of stamps, memorabilia, maps, and travel posters since his first job in international shipping.

Maps, which are primarily tools for geographic navigation, possess symbolism and conventions reflecting the worldviews and biases that produced them. Increasing the complexity of the works on display, these maps were meant to allure patrons to travel to the Americas through commercial airlines, rather than inform them on how to get there. Consequently, by examining these objects, we can understand how other parts of the world perceived and interacted with the Americas in the mid-twentieth century. While these maps at times portray Latin America in problematic and primitivizing ways, we know that the Latin American avant-gardes provided invaluable contributions to the development of global contemporary arts, although many of their contributions have yet to receive the critical attention that they deserve.

At UF, we are proud to be a part of an international community of scholars, activists, professionals, and students that have been connected, in one way or another, by modern technology—such as the jet plane. By embracing these perspectives and talents, we have gained access to a wealth of ideas, traditions, and knowledge that only enhances our ability to address the complex challenges of our own time here at UF and beyond. Ultimately, our participation in a global community will only create a more inclusive, dynamic, and globally informed future. ♦



**Alumni, want to see your update here?**



Complete our Alumni Update Form online: [bit.ly/3s5H2KA](https://bit.ly/3s5H2KA)  
Let us know what's going on with you! Your update might be included in the next issue of the *Latinamericanist* (space permitting).

**Virginia Rada (MALAS 2001)** “I love to see that the *Latinamericanist* is still on the run. As a student, I contributed to the first few editions—that was part of my assignments as a student assistant.”

**Tomas Castellanos (MALAS 2013)** “After graduating from UF in 2013 I attended law school at Notre Dame, graduating in 2016 with a JD. Following Notre Dame, I returned home to Miami to work as an associate attorney at Holland & Knight LLP and have been there since. I am part of the real estate practice with a focus on Spanish and Latin American clients.”

**Caitlin Schroering (MALAS 2015)** “In August 2022, I joined the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in the Department of Global Studies, Affiliate Faculty in Sociology and Latin American Studies. In September 2024 my book, *Global Solidarities Against Water Grabbing: without Water, We Have Nothing*, was published by Manchester University Press.”

**Tania Trejo-Mendez (MALAS 2023)** “In the spring of 2024, I was selected as a 2024 Southern Education Leadership Initiative Fellow under the Southern Education Foundation. In the summer of 2024, I served as a Curriculum Development Consultant (internship) for an education nonprofit named LatinxEd in North Carolina.”

**Tonyaa Weathersbee (MALAS 2016)** “After serving as bureau chief for Chalkbeat Tennessee from August 2022 to July 2024, I was appointed as the Hardin Chair of Excellence in Journalism in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media at the University of Memphis. I became the sixth person—and the first woman—to hold the Hardin Chair of Excellence.”

## MALAS alumna wins TCD dissertation prize



*Vanessa Luna (center) interviewing a Quechua farmer with the support of a local interpreter*

Dr. Vanessa Luna Celino (MALAS 2019) is the 2024 recipient of the Marianne Schmink Outstanding Dissertation Award from UF's Tropical Conservation and Development Program! Dr. Luna completed her dissertation in Interdisciplinary Ecology in the School of Natural Resources and the Environment in May 2024 under the supervision of Dr. Karen Kainer (advisor) and Dr. Bette Loiselle (co-advisor). Her dissertation was entitled “Fire in the Peruvian Andes: Agricultural burns, changes in community-based management, and key actor perceptions.”

The selection committee was impressed by Dr. Luna's ability to engage Indigenous communities to better understand the complex issues related to fire governance and decision-making around fire use. The committee noted that her dissertation was an outstanding example of interdisciplinary research that both advanced scientific understanding while also addressing fire governance strategies and potential collaborative solutions to reduce risk of escaped fires, which can destroy property and impact adjacent protected areas.

Dr. Luna has complemented her research with a TCD Practitioner Experience grant where she returned results to the Quechua communities and worked with local universities in the organization of symposia that brought together young fire related scholars. She also worked with a local filmmaker to create a short documentary that communicates her findings, highlighting the participatory processes she used to generate results and encourage reflections regarding fire management and governance strategies. After leaving UF, Vanessa has polished three manuscripts from her dissertation for publication and is currently collaborating with Dr. Kainer and TCD to develop a proposal focused on Amazonian conservation and collaborative learning with support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. ***Congratulations, Dr. Luna!*** ♦

# MALAS student Rebeca Almonacid Leal wins second prize for photography



Congratulations to Rebeca Almonacid Leal (MALAS 2025), who was awarded second place in the International Students, Scholars, and Employees category of the UF International Center's global culture photography contest!

Rebeca captured the photo, which she titled "Indigenous Resistance," at the Acampamento Terra Livre activities in Brasília, Brazil, during her fieldwork research. The activities, held annually for the last 20 years, consisted of rallies, marches, and plenary sessions centered on indigenous land demarcation and tribal rights. Rebeca's fieldwork recorded these events as well as interviews on video, which she is editing into a documentary.

The photo will be on display in Grinter Galleries until January 31, 2025. To learn more about Rebeca's research and documentary, please see [page 6](#). ♦

## Students awarded by International Center

Congratulations to the six MALAS students, six MDP students, two MDP alumni and one TCD alumna who were recognized by the UF International Center in November!

**MALAS students, Certificate of Outstanding Merit:** Ana María Ramírez Gómez, Daniela Lizarazo, Nilton Quiroli Jr., Jorgelina Benitez, Rebeca Almonacid Leal (*not pictured*), and Thaís de Menezes Goncalves Zschaber (*not pictured*)

**MDP students, Certificate of Outstanding Merit:** Rosemary Maro, Estefany Güechá Sánchez, Salvador Cuadros Cerpa, Danielle March, Jennifer Quartey, Veronica Manguinho De Souza

**MDP alumni:** Mirian Yadira Molina de Cruz, **Outstanding Post-Graduate Award;** Daniel Acosta, **Alec Courtelis Award**

**TCD alumna:** Claudia Garnica Diez, **Alec Courtelis Award.** ♦



## UF group for advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in science recognized

The SACNAS (Society for Advancing Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science) chapter at the University of Florida received the Outstanding Chapter Award for Innovative Science. Chapter president Claudia Garnica Diez (PhD Biology and TCD) accepted the award and shared with the audience that “This recognition celebrates a belief we hold dear: that science is not just for a few but for all of us, and that when we welcome diverse voices into STEM, we unlock new

dimensions of creativity, discovery, and possibility.”

Throughout the past year, the UF chapter has organized innovative initiatives like the Three Minute Thesis Competition en Español, as well as community outreach and social events and professional development workshops and webinars. Congratulations to the group for such outstanding work and commitment to diversity in science! ♦





## Undergraduate LAS Certificates & Minors

**José Borges** (Criminology)

**Cristián Izquierdo** (History, Criminology)

**Gemma García-Gijón** (Political Science, Sociology)

**Alexandra León** (History, English)

**Nephtali Dzubin** (Philosophy)

## MALAS Degree

**Ana García de Dios**

Thesis Topic: "Ni Lo Uno Ni Lo Otro Sino Todo Lo Contrario": a Thematic and Comparative Historical Analysis of Civil-Military Relations and Professionalism in Venezuela from Punto

Fijismo to Chavez

Specialization: Latin American Politics

Chair: Carlos de la Torre

## Graduate LAS Certificates

**Claudia Lorena Del Pilar Odgers Ascencio**,

PhD Criminology, Law and Society

**Katharine McNamara**, PhD Public Health

**Cody Case**, PhD Music

**Karen Romero Leal**, PhD Anthropology

## Sustainable Development Practice

### Certificate

**Ana García de Dios**, MALAS

## Tropical Conservation and Development Graduate Certificate

**Yuley Encarnacion Pineyro** (Biology)

**Elión Beaton** (Biology)

**Rosemary Maro** (MDP)

**Hanan Lachmansingh** (MDP)

**Bailey Dunn** (MDP)

**Antonio Juarez-Sanchez** (Wildlife & Ecology Conservation)

**Katharine McNamara** (Environmental and Global Health)

# Faculty NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

## Leslie Anderson (Political Science) Invited

**keynote:** Conference of the Argentine Political Science Association in Buenos Aires November 29, 2024. "Institutions and Civil Society: Resources for Democracy in a Hostile World."

**Presented paper:** International Political Science Association, Lisbon, Portugal, September 13-15, 2024. "Social Capital and Institutions in Argentina and Nicaragua," co-authored with Ana Luisa Melo Ferreira and Danilo Ramon Ramos Nisio.

## Mark Brenner (Geological Sciences)

**Publications:** (1) Martínez-Abarca et al. 2024. Precipitation variability and environmental change across late Quaternary glacial-interglacial cycles in lowland Central America: Insights from Lake Petén Itzá (Guatemala) sediments. doi.org/10.1016/j.quascirev.2024.108985. (2) Brenner & Kenney 2024. In defense of mud II: lakes as carbon sinks. doi.org/10.1002/bes2.2187. (3) Brenner 2024. My circuitous but fortuitous path to paleolimnology. doi.org/10.1007/s10933-024-00317-z. (4) Pérez et al. 2024. Diversity, equity, and inclusion in paleolimnology: insights from the 2022 IAL-IPA Symposium. doi.org/10.1007/s10933-024-00320-4. (5) Morrison et al. 2024. Influence of the keystone grazer, *Sesarma reticulatum*, on the hydrology and organic matter cycling of salt marshes in the southeastern United States. doi.org/10.1007/s12237-024-01336-9

## Robert Buschbacher (School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences)

organized a Side Event at the UN Biodiversity Convention COP16 in Cali, Colombia on how academic research and education can contribute to Biocultural Conservation by engaging with Indigenous knowledge and wisdom. The event centered the voices of five

Inga, Matapí, Mayan and Australian Indigenous leaders who shared their experiences integrating different forms of knowledge which opened a dialogue with practitioners from community organizations, NGOs and academia. Key recommendations addressed collaboration strategies, transdisciplinary knowledge, and achieving conservation outcomes. Andrea Chavez, Francisca Saavedra and Carolina Simon-Pardo co-organized along with Field Museum, Legado, Tropenbos and Simon Fraser University.

## Daniel Contreras (Anthropology) (i)

Contreras, Daniel A. 2024 Archaeological 14C assemblages and the Chavín Phenomenon in the Central Andes. *Quaternary International*, 703:67-81. DOI:[10.1016/j.quaint.2024.05.001] (doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2024.05.001)  
(2) Conlee, Christina A., Daniel A. Contreras, Ann H. Peters, and Kevin J. Vaughn. 2024. Reconsidering chronologies and cultural change on the south coast of Peru: A compilation and analysis of radiocarbon dates from Nasca, Ica, and Paracas. *Quaternary International*. DOI:[doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2024.06.014](doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2024.06.014)

## Carmen Diana Deere (LAS/FRE Emerita)

Presented the paper "Feminist proposals and the reform of the marital regime in South America in the first half of the twentieth century," at LASA Congress in Bogota (June) and at the International Association for Feminist Economics Conference in Rome (July).

## Elizabeth DeVos (Emergency Medicine-Jacksonville)

travelled to Asunción, Paraguay with the support of the Center for Latin American Studies in April 2024. At Hospital Pediátrico "Niños de Acosta Ñu, a hands-on Ultrasound training for Pediatric Emergency

Medicine physicians treating Dengue Shock Syndrome and visiting faculty lecture "Rapid Ultrasound for Shock and Hypotension." Supporting human resource development for access to care for acutely ill and injured, UF College of Medicine-Jacksonville Department of Emergency Medicine hosted a faculty development observership for Dra. Karina Rivarola Medina, Jefe de Cátedra y Director de posGrado de Emergencias de Adultos, Universidad del Centro Médico Bautista, Asunción. Dr. DeVos gave 2 lectures at the Primer Congreso de la Federación Latinoamericana de Medicina de Emergencias in Buenos Aires in April 2024.

## Carlos de la Torre (LAS) Books: (i)

*Populismos Globales*, with Treethep Srisa-nga, updated translation of *Global Populisms*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2024. (2) *Still the Age of Populism? Re-examining Theories and Concepts*, Michael Bernhard, Amie Kreppel, and Carlos de la Torre, eds., London and New York: Routledge, 2024.

**Invited Lectures:** (1) Mesa redonda en torno al libro *Populismos Globales*, Trump y Milei en la era del populismo global, Departamento de Ciencia Política y Estudios Internacionales, Universidad Torcuato di Tella, Buenos Aires, December 2, 2024. (2) "Fascismo y Populismo", Seminario, Estudios Recientes sobre el Populismo, Escuela de Ciencia Política, Universidad Diego Portales, Chile, November 29, 2024. (3) "Populismo y Fascismo" Department of Sociology, Universidade Federale do Ceará, May 28, 2024. **International**

**Conferences:** (1) "Authoritarian Temptations" International Conference Celebrating Andrew Arato's 80th birthday Democracy and Democratization after the Third Wave, University of Guadalajara October 25, 2024. (2) "¿Populismo radical de derecha o fascismo?"

Estrategias de legitimización, uso del espacio público y política de lo extraordinario”, XVIII Simposio de la Asociación Iberoamericana de Filosofía Política Valparaíso, Chile, October 16, 2024. (3) “Populismo y autoritarismo”, Los Regímenes Populistas”, Latin American Studies Association Meeting, Bogotá June 13, 2024. (4) “Radical Right Populism or the Return of Fascism” Taiwanese Foundation for Democracy and Catholic University of Perú, Lima May 17 2024.

**S. Luke Flory (Agronomy) Publication:** Co-authored with former PhD student Gonzalo Rivas-Torres, Bette Loiselle, and Chris Wilson on research in Galapagos. Rivas-Torres, G., C. Wilson, B. Loiselle, and S.L. Flory. 2025. Experimental removal of an invasive tree in Galápagos promotes native and endemic species but also secondary invaders. *Restoration Ecology*. doi.org/10.1111/rec.14356

**Research workshop:** Led with collaborators from the University of Puerto Rico, University of Tennessee, and the University of Arkansas-Monticello, and students from throughout Puerto Rico and the southern US on using remote sensing, distribution modeling, and surveys with landowners to better predict and manage non-native vine invasions in the Puerto Rico and the Southeast US. Funded by the Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Center.

**Glenn Galloway (MDP - LAS/CAS) Book:** P. Katila, C. Colfer, W. de Jong, G. Galloway, P. Pacheco, and G. Winkel (eds.). 2024. *Restoring Forests and Trees for Sustainable Development*. International Union of Forest Research Organizations’ Special Project World Forests, Society and Environment (IUFRO/WFSE): iufro.org/science/wfse. Oxford University Press. Open access: academic.oup.com/book/58200. **Book chapter:** P. Katila, C. Colfer, W. de Jong, G. Galloway, P. Pacheco, and G. Winkel. 2024. Introduction: Restoring Forests and Trees for Sustainable Development, pp. 1-22; 3) Sustainable and Fair Forest and Land Restoration: Balancing Goals, Interests and Trade-offs. pp. 335-361. **International Conference:** Restoring forests and trees: balancing goals, interests and tradeoffs, IUFRO WFSE Sub-plenary session in the 26th IUFRO World Congress, Stockholm, Sweden, 28 June 2024.

**Ben Hebblethwaite (Languages, Literatures, and Cultures)** received a 12-month fellowship (2024-25) from the National Endowment for the Humanities for my book project, “The Songs and Prayers of Sèvis Ginen: Historical Linguistic Approaches to Haitian Vodou”, as well as a 3-month fellowship with the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) in Leiden for my sub-project, “Willem Bosman (1703) and the Politics, Religion, and Economics of Coastal West Africa: Transatlantic Historical and Linguistic Approaches to Haitian Vodou.”

**Tace Hedrick (English)** Conference Paper, SAMLA Jacksonville, Florida, 17 November-20 November “The Disruptive (In)Visibility of Cuban Jewish History: Achy Obejas’ Ruins.”

**Philip Janzen (History)** Philip Janzen, “Glimpses of Haiti in West Africa, 1890-1920,” *Journal of Social History* vol. 58, no. 2 (Winter 2024): 291-312.

### **Karen Kainer (LAS/School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatics Sciences)**

**Publications:** (1) Luna-Celino, V. and K.A. Kainer. 2024. Living with fire: Agricultural burning by Quechua farmers in the Peruvian Amazon. *Human Ecology*. doi.org/10.1007/s10745-024-00547-9. (2) Medeiros, T.K.A. de, Wadt, L.H. de O., & K.A. Kainer. 2024. Traditional knowledge of tree “bleeding” in brazil nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsa*) management. *Revista Brasileira De Ciências Ambientais*, 59, e1858. doi.org/10.5327/Z2176-94781858. (3) Márquez-García, M., C. Nuñez-Godoy, A. Eguren, C. Segovia-Salcedo, F. Carrasco-Rueda, N., M. Moreno de Los Ríos, A., C. Lanao, P. Stowhas, M. Varese, J. Dain, K.A. Kainer and L.C. Branch. 2024. Overcoming gender-related challenges and supporting women in conservation in Latin America. *Biological Conservation* 294:110625. doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2024.110625

**Valeria D. Kleiman (Chemistry)** Author of “Mi Comida Latina” visits students in final day of Spring Class. For the third time, Marcella Kriebel, watercolor artist and author of several books on Latin American cuisine participated in a conversation with students in IDS2334 (Chemistry in the Cocina Latina). During the semester, students cooked and tasted recipes from one of her books while learning the associated chemistry. As a final course activity, students prepared multiple dishes from “Mi Comida Latina” and shared them while having a virtual chat with Kriebel about food and Latin American culture.

**Clate Korsant (LAS) Panel:** June/2024 Co-Convenor and chair (with Angela D’Souza) “Possibilities for Pedagogies of Liberation: Questioning Decolonial Pathways and Socio-environmental Justice” University of London. **Presentations:** (1) Nov/2024 “Material and Sensuous Nostalgia: An Ethnographic Photo-Essay for Gainesville, FL” American Anthropological Association, Tampa, FL. (2) July/2024 “Fantasies and Frictions of Frontier Politics,” in *Troubling with Wilderness: (Un)doing Human-Animal Relationships in the Anthropocene*, European Association of Social Anthropologists University of Barcelona. (3) June/2024 “Ecopedagogy As Ecological Sustainability: Advocacy and Practice,” in *Possibilities for Pedagogies of Liberation*, The Royal Anthropology Institute: Anthropology and Education, University of London.

**Bette Loiselle (LAS/Wildlife Ecology and Conservation)** (1) Karichu, M.J., B. N. Ngarega,

J. J. Jefwa, B. A. Loiselle, and E. B. Sessa. 2024. Tracing the range shifts of African tree ferns: insights from the last glacial maximum and beyond. *Ecological Informatics*: 102896. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoinf.2024.102896. (2) Rivas-Torres, G., S. L. Flory, C. Wilson, and B. A. Loiselle. Experimental removal of an invasive tree in Galápagos promotes native and endemic species but also secondary invaders. *Restoration Ecology*. doi.org/10.1111/rec.14356

### **Luis Felipe Lomelí (LAS) Book:**

*Cincuenta ciudades y una isla* (fiction). Audible, USA, 2021. *La Pequeña*, Puerto Rico, 2024 (128 pages). **Interviews:** (1) Universidad Claustro de Sor Juana. “La tierra pródiga, de Agustín Yáñez.” Serie “Clásicos mexicanos para el siglo XXI.” Oct. 22, 2024. (2) Letras vivas. “Ciencia, Baja California Sur y literatura.” Podcast and Radio with Ramón Cuéllar Márquez. Oct. 3, 2024. (3) Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México—ENES Morelia. “Literature Nobel Prize.” Serie “Descubriendo el Nobel.” May 2024. (4) Habla Española. “La cultura y la fortaleza de los hispanohablantes en EE. UU., desafíos y oportunidades.” May-June 2024, hablaespanola.com.

### **Lucas Majure (Natural History) Publications:**

(1) Majure, L.C., and T. Clase. 2024. Seasonally dry tropical forests of the Greater Antilles yield a new species of the Caribbean clade of Castela, *Castela plenaensis* (Simaroubaceae), an endemic to the southern slopes of the Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic. *Brittonia* doi.org/10.1007/s12228-024-09810-1. (2) Majure, L.C., R.F.C. Naczi, J.R. Abbott, K.R. Wood, J.E. Valencia-D., G. Stonehouse, and K.M. Neubig. 2024. Phylogeny of North American *Dichantherium* (Panicoideae, Poaceae): testing species limits in one of the most taxonomically complicated group of grasses. *International Journal of Plant Sciences*. doi.org/10.1086/728893. **International conferences:** Presented research results at two international conferences in Spain and US, and gave invited talks at congresses in Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru Fall semester.

**Carmen Martínez Novo (LAS) Awards:** (1) Fulbright Specialist status for the period 2024-2027 and granted a scholarship for work on Latin American Elites at the Federal University of Ceará in Fortaleza, Brazil. (2) Rothman Summer Fellowship from the Center for the Humanities in the Public Sphere for her new project: “Surviving Fascism in the Past and Undoing it in the Present: Family Memory in Spain.” **Keynote addresses:** (1) V Congress of Anthropology and Archaeology of Ecuador and (2) Annual Tinker Symposium at the University of Arizona. **Presentations:** Paper “Settler colonialism and “colonialismo interno” at the 2024 LASA meetings in Bogotá, Colombia. **Publication:** “Report from the Editor” (2024) in *Latin American Research Review* 59 (3).

**William A. Messina, Jr. (Food and Resource Economics) Report:** Prepared under contract & submitted to U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Cuba Supply and Demand For Agricultural Goods, 2018 through 2023." William A.

Messina, Jr., and Frederick S. Royce. May 2024. **Presentation:** Cuba's Food Situation: Bad News, Good News, Bad News and More Bad News. William A. Messina, Jr. at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy. Miami, Florida, October 2024.

**Susan Paulson (LAS) Publications:** (1) S. Paulson et al. Degrowth and Anthropology. In Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology. New York: Oxford University Press. (2) F. Demaria et al., Chapter In Futurs (im)possibles. Propostes i imaginariis per una transició ecosocial. Barcelona: Escola de Transicions. (3) Economics of abundance with degrowth. In Economics and the Biophysical Limits to Economic Growth. World Economics Association Books.

**Fellowship:** University of Hamburg Futures of Sustainability Centre. **Invited Lectures:** (1) Technological and organizational innovation for abundance with degrowth. Capgemini/Sogeti conference for IT executives, Dallas. (2) Regenerative attachments with decolonial feminisms and caring masculinities. Hopeful Attachments on a Ruined Planet. Centre for Futures of Sustainability, University of Hamburg.

**Charles A. Perrone (SPS emeritus)**

"Dissonância e dissidência: a dramaturgia musical de Chico Buarque" in *Literatura e Sociedade* (USP) 31.40 (2024): 345-62. Published a review of *Secret Poetics* by Hélio Oiticica in *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 57.1 (2024): 136-38.

**Anna Peterson (Religion) Book:** *With God on Our Side: Religion, Social Movements, and Social Change*, published in September by De Gruyter. This book provides the first systematic analysis of the ways religion contributes to diverse movements for social change. It draws on a variety of case studies, particularly from the US and Latin America, to build an argument about religion's distinctive capacity to provide logistical support, to inspire and legitimize activist practices, to connect different spatial scales, and to link big ideas to everyday experiences. More information is available at [degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783111235387](https://degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783111235387).

**Rafael Ramírez Solórzano (LAS) Invited speaker:**

(1) "Migrant Refusal and Memory: The Story of the Trail of Dreams," Florida State University, History Department Fall 2024 Speaker in November. (2) Graduate student research talk on archiving 21st-century social movements. (3) "A Citizen's Right to Know," event hosted by Latina Women's League and League of Women Voters of Alachua County at the Matheson Museum. Spoke about mobilizing Latinx voters and creating accessible ballot information for the Spanish-

speaking community. **Exhibits:** On December 5th we unveiled the "Disruptors: Cal State LA Undocumented Working-Class Youth Activism" online archive at Special Collections at Cal State LA's University Library.

**Mary Risner (LAS)** Served as 2024 president of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP) and received the 2024 Excelência em liderança award from the American Organization of Teachers of Portuguese (AOTP). She led two studies on connecting languages and careers at the K-12 and higher education levels, and moderated a panel on the results at the 7th International Symposium on Languages for Specific Purposes (ISLSP) in Washington, D.C. She published the supplements "Spanish for Life and Career Success" in the second edition of the high school textbook series entitled "Entre Culturas."

**Leah Rosenberg (English)** Conference presentations: (1) "Islands on the World: Windrush Writers and Postwar Tourism" & "The Potential of International Virtual Exchange for Caribbean Literary Studies." The 42nd Annual West Indian Literature Conference, 9-12 October, 2024. (2) "Multispecies Consciousness and Imperial photography: Teaching Margarita Engle's *The Silver People* and the US Photographic record of the Panama Canal." The Annual Caribbean Studies Conference, Saint Lucia June 3-7, 2024. (3) I also completed "Guide: Materials on the Morant Bay Rebellion in the Digital Library of the Caribbean." Digital Library of the Caribbean, 2024. [ufdc.ufl.edu/aa00106742/00001](https://ufdc.ufl.edu/aa00106742/00001)

**Antonio Sajid López Méndez (Spanish & Portuguese)** Through a collaboration between the University of Florida and Universidad Estatal a Distancia de Costa Rica (UNED), I worked alongside international educators to coordinate a project that empowers students to propose tourism initiatives aimed at reducing migration and strengthening local economies. This initiative, supported by the UF International Center and the U.S. Embassy in Honduras, highlights how creative entrepreneurship can drive development and preserve cultural identity. The project culminated in a video showcasing student-led proposals for inclusive growth, reflecting my dedication to transformative education and global collaboration. [youtu.be/ugUAYTfdsqo](https://youtu.be/ugUAYTfdsqo)

**Marianne Schmink (LAS/TCD Emerita)**

Rachael Garrett, Joice Ferreira, Ricardo Abramovay, Joyce Brandão, Eduardo Brondizio, Ana Euler, Daniel Pinedo, Roberto Porro, Emiliano Cabrera Rocha, Oscar Sampaio, Marianne Schmink, Bolier Torres, Mariana Varese. 2024. Transformative changes are needed to support socio-bioeconomies for people and ecosystems in the Amazon. *Nature Ecology and Evolution* (2024). DOI: [10.1038/s41559-024-02467-9](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-024-02467-9)

**Maya Stanfield-Mazzi (Art+Art History)**

**Conference Papers:** (1) "Invisible Soldiers and Constant Servants: The Pre-Hispanic Roots of the Andean Cult of Angels," at *Reimagining the Americas: New Perspectives on Spanish Colonial Art Symposium*, Johnson Art Museum at Cornell University, November 2024. (2) "The 'Secular' in the Spanish Americas: The Case of Flower Paintings from Seventeenth-Century Potosí," at *SIGA/Seguir: Moving Forward in the Study of Iberian Global Art*, Society for Iberian Global Art Triennial Conference, September 2024

**Catherine Tucker (LAS/Anthropology)**

**Publications:** (1) Tucker, C. & A. Gunya. 2024. "Mountain Governance." In *Mountain Lexicon: A Corpus of Montology and Innovation*. F. Sarmiento, A. Gunya, I. Alcántara-Ayala, eds. Springer Academic Press & IGU Commission on Mountain Studies. Pp. 173-180. (2) "Sostenibilidad y Comercio Justo: Experiencias de la Empresa Café Orgánico de Marcala, Honduras." Invited Lecture. Polytechnical University of Valencia, Spain. Nov 4, 2024. (3) "Climate Change Mitigation & Innovations Among Small-Scale Coffee Producers and Organizations in Honduras." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Tampa, FL, Nov 22, 2024. (4) *Hakun Tinkuy: Cumbre de Comunidades de Montañas*. Conference Co-organizer. Sponsors: NSF & Instituto de Montaña. Huaraz, Peru. Dec 7-10, 2024.

**Paola Uparela (Spanish & Portuguese)**

**Book:** *Invaginaciones Coloniales. Mirada, Genitalidad y (De)Generación en la Modernidad Temprana* (Vervuert Award, Madrid/Frankfurt: 2024). **Awards:** Best Collaborative Project Award by GEMELA (Grupo de Estudios sobre la Mujer en España y las Américas (pre-1800)), *Revista de Estudios de Género y Sexualidades* 48.1 (2022). **Invited lecture:** "Cosa prodigiosa y rara" o "rara limpieça": Inspecciones de la anatomía genital y verificaciones visuales del género en la Modernidad temprana, Georgetown University. **Invited conferece:** "Cuando paren se van al río y se lavan": agua y autonomía en las representaciones de partos indígenas en América." *Identities, Knowledge and Cultural and Aesthetic Epistemologies in the Anthropocene: Geopolitics of Water in Our Afro-Abya Yala*. Maria Sibylla Merian CALAS, Guadalajara."

**Margarita Vargas-Betancourt (LACC)**

**Publications:** Vargas-Betancourt, M.; Skokan, B.; Serpa, H.; Domínguez Alemán, B.; "Planning Collaborative Practices for Archiving Farmworker Communities' Histories." *Society of American Archivists's Archival Outlook* (Jul/Aug 2024): 4-5. *Archival Outlook* : Jul/Aug 2024 ([mydigitalpublication.com](https://mydigitalpublication.com)). (2) Vargas-Betancourt, M.; Stapleton, S.; Serpa, H.; Fernández Guevara, D.; Domínguez Alemán, B.; "Cuéntame Tu Historia: Archiving Florida Farmworkers' Histories." *Voices of Mexico*,

National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Center of Research on North America, 122 (2024): 57-60. [revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices](https://revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices). June 9, 2024. **Panels:** (1) Organizer and moderator of the panel 75 Years of the Latin American and Caribbean Collection at the University at the University of Florida and presenter of the paper "LACC's Path Forward: From Coloniality to Community" at the LXIX conference of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials. (2) June 27, 2024, Organizer of the panel Documenting Our Communities: Archiving Florida Farmworkers' Histories and

presenter of the paper "Archiving Florida Farmworkers' Histories: Overview of a Collaborative Partnership" at the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Conference. (3) June 7, 2024, "Collaborative Archiving of In-between Spaces: Florida Farmworker Community Support Organizations" at the Agricultural History Society Annual Meeting 2024.

**Meg Weeks (LAS) Article:** Co-authored with Joaze Bernardino-Costa and Renata Lima published in *Cadernos de Pesquisa*: "Ativismo das trabalhadoras domésticas: Da cozinha à arena nacional e internacional" (Nov. 2024).

**Award:** Winner of the Harold K. Gross Prize (Harvard University Department of History) for the dissertation that "'gave greatest promise of a distinguished career of historical research.'" (dissertation completed in 2023 but prize awarded in 2024).

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# Looking back AT GRINTER HISTORY

There have been many changes at the Center for Latin American Studies since we moved into Grinter Hall in 1973. Recently we uncovered this cache of photos taken in the mid- to late-1980s when the third floor was undergoing its first renovations! Notice that the front office had a single wooden door instead of the glass double doors that exist today, and the bust of José Martí was a faithful fixture of the lobby area then as today. Our most recent renovations were last summer, when we painted the walls shades of blue and orange, put down new carpeting, and redesigned the layout of the front office to be more accommodating to students.



**[1]** The view down the northwest hallway from the third floor lobby; **[2]** Center for Latin American Studies lobby with bust of José Martí, logo and sign, and door to front office; **[3]** View of front office from the entryway to the printing room, with original logo on the bulletin board designed by PhD student Allyn Stearman in 1973; **[4]** A glimpse into office 319F (today used as the office of the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs) complete with vintage computer

Do you have any memories or information about these photos, or your own photos of Grinter Hall? Email us at [communications@latam.ufl.edu](mailto:communications@latam.ufl.edu) to share!

# Snapshots FROM THE SEMESTER



L-R: MALAS 2026 cohort during Center orientation; "Intro to Latin American Studies" students with research projects



L-R: MALAS students decorate the Center for the holidays; checking out merchandise at the book launch of "Daughter, Mother, Grandmother, and Whore;" MALAS students interacting with artwork at "An Incomplete Collection of Impossible Projects"



L-R: Retired Faculty of UF (RFUF) 50th anniversary celebration with Elizabeth Lowe, Terry McCoy, Marianne Schminck, Richard Phillips, Carmen Diana Deere, and Ofelia Schutte; Center students enjoying the holiday lunch





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