

Latin American and Latino/a Studies ICS Cluster Report Academic Year 2007-2008

Facilitator: Valeria Grinberg Pla

Cluster Members

Amílcar Challú (Department of History)

Francisco Cabanillas (Department of Romance and Classical Studies)

Federico Chalupa (Department of Romance and Classical Studies)

Cindy Ducar (Department of Romance and Classical Studies)

Steve Meardon (Department of Economics)

Lynn Pearson (Department of Romance and Classical Studies)

Susana Peña (Department of Ethnic Studies)

Amy Robinson (Department of Romance and Classical Studies)

Special Events Organized by the Cluster

With the aim of making our field of study more visible on campus, we organized several academic and cultural events. All the activities were very well attended, and we received extremely positive feedback from faculty and students.

Screening and Discussion with filmmaker Jill Freidberg

We hosted a screening of two documentaries on current social issues in Mexico by filmmaker Jill Freidberg, who was present at the event. Jill Friedberg's screening was an excellent teaching opportunity and further gave us many elements to think about grassroots political activism across the border.

Several cluster members integrated the screening with activities and readings in class: Cindy Ducar, Lynn Pearson, Amílcar Challú, Susana Peña, and Valeria Grinberg Pla. Faculty members also reported that their research was influenced by this event. For example, the films and discussion influenced the way Amílcar Challú understood how late colonial Mexicans gave meaning to market relations (and how they operated within that cultural framework to change their lot).

Graduate and undergraduate students responded favorably and even the BGeX office received good reports on the event.

Bilingual Reading by Francisco Cabanillas

We also hosted a bilingual reading by Francisco Cabanillas on Caribbean identity in the diaspora. In 2006, Francisco Cabanillas won the prestigious Puerto Rican Ministry of Culture's best essay award, and the public reading of excerpts from his essay collection *Pedreira nunca hizo esto* was meant to honor his scholarly achievement and to share this award winning work with BGSU students and faculty across campus.

This was a highly collaborative event as Cindy Ducar, Lynn Pearson and Susana Peña translated selected passages into English. This allowed us to hold a bilingual event which underlined the cross-cultural nature of Latino/a Studies.

Lecture by Dr. Bernadette Callafel

We co-sponsored a public lecture by Dr. Bernadette Callafel, a prominent Latino/a scholar in the field of Communication. Our goal was to use this event to create new connections and strengthen existing ones with colleagues from different disciplines in our field of study. In this context we also held a seminar for faculty and graduate students from Ethnic Studies and Romance and Classical Studies with Bernadette Callafel.

Workshop with filmmaker Elena Herrada

We invited social activist and documentary filmmaker Elena Herrada to a workshop on oral history as social activism for faculty and graduate students from History, Ethnic Studies and Romance and Classical Studies, as well as members of the Latino/a community on campus.

As a cluster, we gained a deeper understanding of our scholarly activities and the relationship with the community through Elena Herrada's documentary and the workshop offered by her. For instance, Amílcar Challú pointed out how these discussions influenced the way he advises graduate students.

Involvement with the Latino Issues Conference

Francisco Cabanillas, who is co-director of the Latino Issues Conference, became familiar with Elena Herrada's work through the cluster's discussion of her film "Los Repatriados. Exiles from a promised land." As a result, he invited Elena Herrada as a speaker to this year's conference.

The collaboration between the cluster and the Latino Issues Conference is also reflected in Susana Peña's participation in the conference as moderator and the participation of undergraduate and graduate students invited by cluster members.

Service Learning: Connections to the Latino/a community, Both On and Off Campus

Our interest in establishing meaningful connections with the Latino/a population in the area is not restricted to research, but it affects the way we think about teaching too. As a result of this, Valeria Grinberg Pla and Susana Peña had several meetings with representatives from "Adelante" (a Latino/a resource center in Toledo, OH) to establish a partnership and discuss the development of a new service-learning course.

Based on those discussions and the support of the Service-Learning Faculty Learning Community, Valeria Grinberg Pla designed SPAN 489Z: a new service-learning 400 level course on Latino/a and Latin American culture to be taught in the fall of 2008 among other activities. Susana Peña will possibly develop and offer another Latino/a centered service-learning course through the Department of Ethnic Studies in the future.

Curriculum Development and Interdisciplinarity

The interdisciplinary nature of our cluster is reflected in many ways: the diverse departmental affiliation of its members, the focus on Latino/a and Latin American studies from different perspectives including literature, film, oral history, communication as well as the choice of topics such as identity, migration, social movements, education, that are relevant for several disciplines within the broad field of Latino/a and Latin American Studies. In this context Amílcar Challú and Amy Robinson are interested in designing and co-teaching an interdisciplinary course on México in the near future.

Federico Chalupa particularly acknowledges the positive impact of the cluster in his teaching: for instance, he is currently developing a graduate course for the following academic year on Spanish American Women Writers, where testimony and memory, two topics discussed as part of the cluster, will have a central role.

Another important way for us to foster an interdisciplinary approach in the area of curriculum development is through the active participation of several cluster members (Amy Robinson, Amílcar Challú, Susana Peña and Valeria Grinberg Pla)

in the North American Studies Consortium (NASC) directed by Federico Chalupa – who is also a member of the cluster. As members of the NASC committee we are currently developing teaching modules on nationalism and contested identities in North America.

Collaboration with Other On-Campus Groups

The cluster's collaboration with other groups and institutions at BGSU (NASC, Communication Studies, Latino Issues Conference) as well as the cultural events organized by the cluster contributed to increase the visibility of Latino and Latin American Studies as an area of expertise at BGSU, and more importantly showed the relevance of Latino/a and Latin American Studies in our contemporary society.

Assessment

All the members of the cluster agree on the positive way in which the cluster affected their thinking about the field. The critical discussion of texts and films as well as the workshops and cultural events have been successfully linked to research and teaching.

According to Francisco Cabanillas, in addition to providing a forum to share ideas and bibliography with colleagues from related fields (ethnic studies, history, linguistics), some issues discussed in the cluster unexpectedly emerged in the context of the classes he was teaching, allowing him to expand on the range of explanations and examples at his disposal for class references. Cabanillas writes: "Overall, I feel the cluster has created an important forum to tackle issues that I would not normally explore on my own, but that are nonetheless very much connected with my classes as well as my scholarship."

Amílcar Challú states that the Latin American and Latino/a Studies cluster had an impact on his thinking on the major issues in our fields. In his view, the readings and discussion of texts on the status of Latino Studies were insightful to realize the conceptual and historical differences between and inside our fields. In his opinion, more than a single contribution, the cluster is allowing him to become a more rounded, conscious and engaged intellectual.

To conclude, we believe that the Latin American and Latino/a Studies Interdisciplinary Cluster experienced great success during its first year. We believe that the cluster's ambitious agenda (two seminars and two academic and cultural events featuring invited speakers, regular reading and organizing meetings)

benefited the individual members enhancing their teaching capabilities and their scholarly success.

Schedule of meetings

DATE	SUBJECT	READING/FILM
August 29, 2007	Establishing the Cluster's agenda	
September 19, 2007	Organization of the Jill Freidberg event on Wednesday, September 26 th	
October 24, 2007	Discussion of possible ways of articulating the Cluster with the North American Studies Consortium	
November 14, 2007	Discussion of the award winning essay "Pedreira nunca hizo esto" by Francisco Cabanillas	"Pedreira nunca hizo esto" (Premio Internacional de Ensayo 2006, Primer Certamen de Literatura del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueño)
November 28, 2007	Discussion of readings on the state of Latino/a Studies and of Latin American Studies as disciplines	Text: Pedro Cabán
	Discussion of readings on the state of Latino/a Studies and of Latin American Studies as disciplines	Text: Walter Mignolo
April 4, 2007	Critical discussion of the documentary in preparation to the workshop with film maker Elena Herrada	Film: "Los repatriados. Exiles from the Promised Land"

Cultural Events organized by the Cluster

Date	Event	Audience
September 26, 2007 The Gish Film	Public screening of two documentary films on social movements in Mexico ("Un poquito de tanta verdad" and "Granito de Arena") followed by a	faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, community across campus

Theater	discussion with film director Jill Freidberg	(aprox. 80 people)
November 13, 2007 Prout Chapel	Bilingual Public Reading by Francisco Cabanillas from his award winning Essay book on Caribbean Identity	faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, community across campus (aprox. 50 people)

Workshops and Seminars organized by the Cluster

Date	Event	Audience	Participants
April 1, 2008	Seminar with Bernadette Callafel on mentoring and love as empowering strategies for faculty and students of color	Faculty and graduate students	Francisco Cabanillas Elisabeth Graham (grad student, ROCS) Josh Atkins Tamara Serrano (grad student, ACS) Valeria Grinberg Pla Susana Peña Amy Robinson
April 17, 2008	Workshop with Elena Herrada on social activism and oral history	faculty, graduate students, and community activists	Amilcar Challú Francisco Cabanillas Dustin McLochlin (grad student, History) Mariella Zucchi-Bingmann, Kate Swartley and Amanda Ward (grad students, ROCS) Norman Ospina (community

Date	Event	Audience	Participants
			organizer and teacher) Susana Peña Anita Serda (community organizer and BGSU employee) Valeria Grinberg Pla