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Cover Photo

*Street Vendors, Mexico City*

Keegan Boyar
PhD Candidate, History

Established in 1968, the **University of Chicago Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS)** brings together faculty and students across the University in interdisciplinary and interdivisional research, teaching, scholarly events, and public engagement related to this vital region of the world.

**Interim Director (2018–19)**
Michael Albertus

**Associate Director**
Natalie Arsenault

**Student Affairs Coordinator & Office Manager**
Jamie Gentry

**Outreach and Campus Programs Coordinator (2017–18)**
Tania Escobedo

**CLAS Lecturer**
Stefanie Graeter
Letter from the Director

Michael Albertus, Associate Professor of Political Science

CLAS was under the able directorship of Professor Brodwyn Fischer in 2017–18, who, along with Associate Director Natalie Arsenault, seamlessly brought me on as interim director for 2018–19 while Brodie is on a much-deserved year of academic leave. We all thank her for her deep dedication to CLAS, leadership, and service.

Events in Latin America were tumultuous in 2017–18: Mexico’s political establishment was rattled to its core with the presidential election of outsider Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Venezuela slid deeper into economic crisis and dictatorship, Colombia continued the hard work of healing after 50 years of civil war, corruption and judicial jousting reached epic proportions in Brazil, Peru’s president resigned under an unfolding corruption scandal, Cuban-American relations took a step backward, and Nicaragua descended into violence. And that is just the tip of the iceberg!

It has consequently never been more important to research, teach, and learn about the region. And this year reminds us that it remains critical to foster channels of collaboration and communication across the University with our Latin American Studies colleagues and to support our students who have dedicated their time to studying a wide range of issues in the region.

CLAS rose to meet these challenges and opportunities with a broad suite of activities in 2017–18. CLAS organized or co-organized nearly 100 public events during the academic year. Some of these events engaged public audiences; others focused on developing scholarship on the region across a host of disciplines at the University; all sprang from the energy and entrepreneurialism of our affiliates. Our Tinker Visiting Professors engaged students and audiences on subjects spanning from malaria transmission to ethnographies of slave-descendant societies to musical performances to literary understandings of intimacy in contemporary Latin slave-descendant societies to musical performances to ethnographies of intimacy in contemporary Latin slave-descendant societies. This complements our ongoing blog, EntreVistas. Our first four episodes feature affiliated faculty discussing 20th-century monuments, police reform and citizenship in Latin America, decolonization, and patronage relations in Bolivia. This complements our ongoing blog, Contextos.

CLAS also supported our students in the classroom and funded their research throughout the hemisphere, propelled by indefatigable Student Affairs Coordinator Jamie Gentry, Lecturer Stefanie Graeter, and BA preceptor Enrique Dávila. At the heart of this effort are our interdisciplinary BA and MA programs. These are bolstered by dozens of sponsored courses across the University as well as robust support for graduate research in the field. Our students thrived, developing a range of fascinating theses, traveling widely throughout Latin America in pursuit of their ideas, and winning a host of fellowships and awards. We will miss the outgoing cohort in equal fashion to which we welcome a new one. And we encourage you all to stay connected to CLAS in your new pursuits.

The 2018–19 academic year presents exciting new possibilities. We welcome new faculty and postdoctoral scholars in Comparative Literature, English, Political Science, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Sociology. Our incoming Tinker Visiting Professors—an artist, a historian, a sociologist, and a physicist—will bring an impressive set of methodological and substantive interests and skills to campus. CLAS is working to sponsor a range of conferences on land and development in Latin America, the meaning-making of violence, and a commemoration of Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s path-breaking book, Silencing the Past. We will continue our weekly speaker series, bringing to campus a range of dynamic scholars, activists, and public intellectuals whose interests and expertise will deeply enrich our community. And we will host events on critical events on the horizon in Latin America, such as Brazil’s upcoming presidential election and the first months of López Obrador’s presidency in Mexico. We encourage you to come join! Finally, CLAS has started a new podcast series named EntreVistas. Our first four episodes feature affiliated faculty discussing 20th-century monuments, police reform and citizenship in Latin America, decolonization, and patronage relations in Bolivia. This complements our ongoing blog, Contextos.

The stories in this newsletter are a testament to the impact of our mission: to provide an intellectual forum for members of our University and extended community to study, engage, debate, and shape the big questions surrounding Latin America. I invite you to peruse them. And most important, stay tuned to the host of CLAS events, affiliated faculty publications, Tinker Visiting Professors, student research, and more in what promises to be another exciting year in Latin America.
Telling Their Own Stories: Catalytic Communities’ Theresa Williamson on Favela Narratives

With the support of the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation, Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, and Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, CLAS invited Theresa Williamson, executive director of the nonprofit organization Catalytic Communities, for a full-day campus visit. Williamson met with faculty and students and gave a public lecture as part of CLAS’s Latin American Briefing Series, which brings influential experts, activists, journalists, and policymakers to the University to explore current issues in the region. In “Whose Narrative? What Happens When Rio de Janeiro’s Favelas Speak for Themselves?,” Williamson focused on the 100-plus-year legacy of marginalization in light of recent trends to greater visibility for Rio’s favelas and the new narrative that is unfolding due to communities’ empowerment, strategic global communications, and social media.

When she began her fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro while working on her doctorate in City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, Williamson was struck by the difference between what she had heard about favelas and what she was experiencing on site. In her early days in the field, she was mesmerized by a recurring image, which has remained with her to this day: communities organizing. Communities were building sewage systems, constructing housing, creating dance programs, offering dental hygiene, providing elderly care...collectively addressing an array of challenges. She began to think about creating an organization that could support these grassroots efforts. With the encouragement of her adviser, Williamson founded Catalytic Communities (CatComm) in 2000 as her doctoral project. She describes CatComm as “dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Rio de Janeiro residents by driving a creative, inclusive, and empowering community-led integration between the city’s informal and formal communities, in which the city’s favelas are recognized for their heritage status and their residents fully served as equal citizens.”

In her introduction to Williamson’s lecture, CLAS Director Brodwyn Fischer noted that CatComm “not only seeks to promote communication, information, and organizing in favor of permanence and services and improvements in Rio de Janeiro’s favela communities, but it also serves as a locus where the exciting and innovative work that’s going into community
organizations, that’s going into community journalism, that’s going into this incredible transition from a situation where others came into favela communities and claimed to speak for them to a state where in all different kinds of arenas—artistic, cinematic, musical, and journalistic—favela communities have come to be able to represent themselves.”

In 2010 CatComm, which had until then focused on training and networking of favela activists, began to work with residents to seize the pre-Olympic moment—the period when international media coverage of Rio de Janeiro increased exponentially in anticipation of the 2016 Olympics—to try to change the traditional narrative of the favela. Until then (and even to today in certain outlets), coverage of favelas tended to rely on a set of stereotypes revolving around violence, neglect, marginalization, and exoticism. What Williamson had come to experience in the favelas were self-built communities that, although they were informal and thus lacked regulation and public services, were creative and highly adaptive.

CatComm worked to change this narrative. It put journalists in touch with local informants. It worked with favela residents to produce a series of videos, available on YouTube, to explain what favelas are and to highlight important favela stories, including social issues, sustainability, evictions and forced removals, and police violence. It launched Rio Olympics Neighborhood Watch, known as RioOnWatch, a news site designed to bring visibility to favela community voices in the lead-up to the Games. In addition to local stories, RioOnWatch provided an extensive set of online resources to support nuanced reporting about favelas. Still active today, RioOnWatch is a hyperlocal-to-global community news site that has become a reference for international media outlets covering Brazil as well as international researchers on Brazil and urban topics, and since the Olympics has expanded to inform municipal decision making, mainstream favela perspectives, inspire collaborative development initiatives, and more.

In addition to CatComm’s work, the proliferation of smart phones and social media has changed the narrative about Rio’s favelas. Smart phones allow activists to document police violence and evictions, and to share these incidents widely. Blogs, Facebook groups, and Twitter feeds allow favela residents to share their stories with each other and with the world. CatComm shares many of these resources, in Portuguese and in English, through RioOnWatch. The narrative about Rio’s favelas has expanded and diversified, opening up new voices that had not been heard in mainstream media. While this shift is welcome, Williamson concluded by noting that much work remains to be done. Referring back to CatComm’s mission statement, she reflected on the dream that has pushed much of this work: “what would Rio be like if it embraced the unique history of each of the city’s favelas, recognized their contribution, and supported their future development in ways that honored resident knowledge and history?”

Recent RioOnWatch Highlighted Stories

#FavelaLivesMatter Protest in Rio: ‘I sent him clean to school, he returned covered in blood’
On Thursday, June 28, hundreds of people gathered in Cinelândia, downtown Rio, to march on the Court, Legislative Assembly, and Candelária Church, calling for the obvious: for the basic and universal right to life.

Campaign Calls on UNESCO to Recognize Favelas as World Heritage Site
The Chilean nongovernmental organization committed to improving housing in informal settlements, TECHO, is today active in 19 countries across Latin America. In Brazil, where it is known as TETO, the NGO works in more than 100 communities across four metropolitan regions.

‘Sustainable Turn’ Event Combines Virtual Reality, a Thrift Shop, and Women’s Health in Maré
On Saturday, June 9, the NGO CEASM (Maré Center for Solidarity Studies and Actions) hosted Virada na Maré, an event that aimed to educate people on the importance of sustainable development and mobilize them to act.
When asked about the inspiration for South Side Projections’s Winter-Spring 2018 film series on undocumented immigration, founder and director Michael W. Phillips, Jr. explained, “The border wall, the fight over DACA, ICE raids that separate parents from their children, travel bans, the fact that the administration is thinking about rescinding temporary protected status for Syrian refugees and sending them back into a war zone….Every day there’s a new outrage. This list of topics is too broad to do justice to all of them, so we focused on undocumented immigration from Central America and Mexico as a subject that has a lot of local angles that we could cover in detail in a short series. It’s still not exhaustive—there are so many films out there that we could have included, but we whittled the list down to a handful.”

CLAS was pleased to cosponsor this series, which presented four films that highlight the impact of migration on both sides of the US-Mexico border. The films shared stories of why individuals decide to immigrate to the United States, the struggles immigrants must confront on their journey northward, the challenges they face once they arrive in the United States, and the triumphs of these immigrants in their new communities.

South Side Projections, a nonprofit dedicated to presenting films on Chicago’s South Side in order to promote community conversation revolting around current political and social issues, screens seldom-seen films of historical and artistic value for the South Side community that are often followed by discussions led by scholars, activists, and filmmakers.

The series began with the Mexican film Llévate mis amores (All of Me, 2014), screened at La Catrina Café in Pilsen, followed by a conversation led by film critic and Contratiempo editorial board member Marco Escalante. This documentary, directed by Arturo González Villaseñor, tells the stories of a group of women from the town of La Patrona, Mexico, who give food and water to migrants clinging onto trains heading north toward the United States. The lively conversation that
followed switched from English to Spanish, and addressed corruption and political repression in Mexico, as well as strategies for supporting undocumented immigrants in the community.

The Other Side of Immigration (2009) formed part of the opening of Casa Michoacán's exhibit of blankets from the Smart Museum show “Jayna Zweiman: Welcome Blanket,” which confronts issues around immigration and refugee resettlement through a tapestry of handmade blankets.

Staff from the Smart and the Pozen Center for Human Rights spoke before the screening. Directed by Roy Germano, this documentary examines why so many people leave rural Mexico in search of jobs in the United States and how this immigration affects Mexican communities. The ensuing discussion included direct engagement with the film, both criticism of it as a cinematic work and discussion of the specific issues it raised. There was a great deal of discussion about how NAFTA failed (or was designed to fail) Mexican farmers and how corrupt local officials stymie national aid efforts. Other topics included the culpability of previous presidential administrations, including Obama’s, in the ongoing crackdown on undocumented immigrants, and the appeal of strongman dictators to people who feel powerless. In this discussion, more participants related their own experiences to the film.

The screening of Elvira (2009) took place on campus at the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, which also cosponsored the series, and featured a discussion with activists Elvira Arellano, Emma Lozano, and Quintiliano Rios-Perez. Arellano, working without legal documents at O'Hare International Airport, was arrested in an anti-terrorism sweep of US airports. This documentary, directed by Javier Solórzano Casarin, showcases Arellano’s struggle. Attendees discussed Arellano’s life since the film was made, and local organizing efforts against the current presidential administration’s immigration policies, including a march in Springfield that was planned for the following week.

Finally, Don’t Tell Anyone (No le digas a nadie, 2015) was screened at Yollocalli Arts Reach and featured a panel discussion with Stephanie Manriquez and Quintiliano Rios-Perez. Directed by Mikaela Shwer, this documentary showcases the life of Angy Rivera, who, undocumented herself, works as an activist for undocumented youth and writes a popular advice column, touching on issues of mental health and sexual assault. The audience was mostly high school students enrolled in Yollocalli’s after-school programs, so the panel discussion, featuring two undocumented educators, was mostly about resources available in Chicago for undocumented students who wish to pursue secondary education.

In the end, Phillips and South Side Projections hope the films empowered and inspired audiences. Phillips summarizes, “These screenings [were] an invitation to nonimmigrants to come learn something from people with personal experiences of immigration, and a request to immigrants or the families of immigrants to share their stories and fill in the gaps left by sound bites and headlines on Facebook….In general, I hope the screenings were useful as a small part of the much broader efforts in Latino communities to reclaim the narrative about undocumented immigration.”
Student-Organized Events Address Range of Interests

CLAS builds and serves the Latin Americanist community at the University by reaching out to students across disciplines to provide critical support as they pursue their studies. Our grants and fellowships (such as Tinker Field Research Grants, Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships, and the new Mellon Dissertation Research Travel Fellowship), teaching opportunities (including teaching assistantships in core and Tinker-taught courses, and the Ignacio Martín-Baró Prize Lectureship), and scholarly events foster a sense of intellectual community and draw students from across disciplines and programs. As a result, we currently count more than 120 doctoral students in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Biological Sciences, and Harris School as CLAS affiliates.

As part of our efforts, CLAS provides support to the two Latin America–focused Council on Advanced Studies workshops: Latin American History Workshop and the interdisciplinary Workshop on Latin America and the Caribbean. Through these two workshops, 17 doctoral students presented early research and draft dissertation chapters to their peers in 2017–18. We also cosponsor a number of student-organized events that relate to student research interests and help create networks between the students and an international network of scholars who work on the region. The following examples from this year highlight the diversity of student-led events supported by CLAS.

Religiosity, Resistance, Resilience: Islam in the African Diaspora

Despite the fact that close to 30% of the world’s Muslim population lives in or calls Africa home, the history and contemporary issues affecting Muslims of the African diaspora are often understudied, ignored, and erased in popular media and scholarship about Muslims. Thus, the purpose of the conference was to center the experience and histories of Muslims of African descent in India, Haiti, Senegal, Somalia, and the United States. Key themes discussed throughout the conference included religious authenticity, political legitimacy, African Islamic scholarship and education, black identity, religious pluralism, colonialism, the refugee crisis, enslavement, resistance, and liberation. Presenters included graduate students and professors from the University of Michigan, New York University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and UChicago. Critical feedback from attendees included suggestions that the conference be held annually and that discussions around African Muslims in Europe and the Middle East be explored, as well as the various sects of black Muslims that emerged throughout the United States in the early to mid-20th century. Perhaps the most significant impact of the conference was its ability to situate the history and experiences of Muslims in the African diaspora, within the arc of human history, in order to reveal a more complete picture of the current moment in which we live.

Third Chicago Graduate Conference in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Studies—Corrientes y contracorrientes: El mar y el mundo luso-hispanico

The study of the Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian world is inherently transcontinental and transoceanic, in which the sea and maritime crossings, and their figurations, have often been both sources for reflection and producers of new realities. Journeys across the sea brought with them numerous consequences—colonialism, transculturation, the legacy of slavery, the development of port cities, and the extraction of natural resources from the Caribbean islands and the American continent—that profoundly depended upon oceanic geography and the cultural interactions that were acted out with this landscape as their backdrop. In this sense, the sea, currents, and countercurrents serve as conceptual axes by which to examine certain elements in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian studies. This event,
Key concepts discussed at the conference will include the juxtaposition of frontiers vs. borders, central to the work of Friedrich Katz, who studied Mexico’s northern frontier at the time of the Mexican Revolution and its relevance for both Mexico and the United States; the idea of closed borders in historically intercultural spaces, such as the current plan to build a wall at the Mexican-American border or the Iron Curtain cutting through Europe over four decades; and the concept of phantom borders, i.e., the lasting impact of disappeared borders in the regions they used to separate.

This conference extends Katz’s scope on Mexico’s northern frontier as a transnational space to discuss issues of labor migration, linguistic borders, cultural hybridization/cohabitation, and border regimes. Its thematic scope stretches from current controversies about the bordering of empires in the Northern Hemisphere (EU, USA) back to important changes to the political maps of North America and Central Europe in the mid-19th century.

By combining studies of both past and present and inviting approaches from history, sociology, cultural sciences, and migration studies, this conference hopes to contribute historically saturated in-depth analysis of one of the central issues of our day. Vienna, as a former “borderliner” of Cold War Europe, is an ideal location to host such a conference, contextualizing related experiences of seemingly remote spaces and periods.

The conference is organized by the University of Chicago (Katz Center for Mexican Studies) and the University of Vienna (Vice-Rectory, Research and International Cooperation), in cooperation with the Department of History and the Research Group on Latin America, University of Vienna.

Second China & Latin America Forum

At this critical juncture in history, when the United States pursues protectionist policies and China champions free trade and globalism, the discussion about the future of Latin America and China relations is becoming increasingly important. The Second China & Latin America Forum offered an opportunity for scholars to discuss the economic and geopolitical factors affecting the relationship between Latin America and China through two panels, one on the changing economic relations between China and Latin America as China transforms itself from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based market, and the second on the geopolitical implications of China as it leverages its economic and political influence in Latin America, with specific focus on its desire to incorporate Latin America in its Belt and Road initiative, and the impact this transition has on the United States.
## Highlighted Faculty Publications & Awards

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<th>Faculty Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Albertus</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td><em>Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy</em></td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>Susan Gzesh</td>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>“Mexican Asylum Seekers and the Convention Against Torture,” Mexico’s Human Rights Crisis, Alejandro Anaya-Muñoz and Barbara Frey, eds.</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brodwyn Fischer</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>“Law, Silence, and Racialized Inequalities in the History of Afro-Brazil,” with Keila Grinberg and Hebe Mattos, Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction, George Reid Andrews and Alejandro de la Fuente, eds.</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>Robert L. Kendrick</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2018</td>
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<td>Benjamin Lessing</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td><em>Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America</em></td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>Luis Martinez</td>
<td>Harris School of Public Policy</td>
<td>“Transnational insurgents: Evidence from Colombia’s FARC at the border with Chávez’s Venezuela” Journal of Development Economics</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>Mauricio Tenorio</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Humboldt Research Award, from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation of Germany, which honors a scholar “whose fundamental discoveries, new theories, or insights have had a significant impact on their own discipline and who are expected to continue producing cutting-edge achievements in the future”</td>
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<td>Stefanie Graeter</td>
<td>CLAS Lecturer</td>
<td>“To Revive an Abundant Life: Catholic Science and Neoextractivist Politics in Peru’s Mantaro Valley,” Cultural Anthropology</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>Miguel Martínez</td>
<td>Romance Languages &amp; Literatures</td>
<td>“Writing on the edge: the poet, the printer, and the colonial frontier in Ercilla’s La Araucana (1569–1590),” Colonial Latin American Review</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>Rachel Galvin</td>
<td>English Language &amp; Literature</td>
<td><em>Decals: Complete Early Poems of Oliverio Girondo</em> translation with Harris Feinsod</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>Christopher Taylor</td>
<td>English Language &amp; Literature</td>
<td><em>Empire of Neglect: The West Indies in the Wake of British Liberalism</em> (Duke University Press, 2018)</td>
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<td>Fernando Alvarez</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2018</td>
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*Decals: Complete Early Poems of Oliverio Girondo* translation with Harris Feinsod (Open Letter Books, 2018)

Tinker Visiting Professors

For more than 30 years, CLAS’s Tinker program has been vital to building UChicago’s reputation as a stimulating intellectual destination among Latin American scholars. Here we profile our cohort of 2017–18 Tinker Visiting Professors and announce our incoming Tinkers for 2018–19.

**Olívia Gomes da Cunha**, a graduate of the doctoral program in anthropology at Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, initially received tenure at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro before returning to the Museu Nacional, where she has established the first accredited creative writing degree program in Argentina. Cunha taught The Maroon Societies in South America, which examined recent ethnographies on slave-descendant societies in South America. In addition to her course, Cunha shared her research with colleagues at the University and planned future collaborative projects. She noted, “As a result of these intense dialogues and interactions and outcomes of the Tinker Visiting Professorship, along with Professors [Stephan] Palmié and [Brodwyn] Fischer, I began to plan a conference to be held in the Autumn 2019 at CLAS, tentatively entitled ‘Ethnographies of History in the Afro-Atlantic World.’ We are planning to bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America to discuss different perspectives on ‘past-making,’ the place of history in the Afro-American societies.”

**Tamara Kamenszain** is a prize-winning poet, critic, and scholar and currently affiliated with the Universidad Nacional de las Artes in Buenos Aires, where she has established the first accredited creative writing degree program in Argentina. Kamenszain is a prolific writer, with nine books of poetry and a 10th volume consisting of her complete poetic works. Kamenszain taught *Nuevas formas de la intimidad en las escrituras latinoamericanas actuales*, which focused on tracing forms of intimacy in contemporary Latin American narrative, poetry, essays, journalism, and theater. José Estrada, Kamenszain’s teaching assistant, explained, “What fascinates me the most about Tamara’s work is how she incorporates the role of the author in her discussion of subjectivity. As a person who studies early modern Spanish theater, and the self-fashioning of a playwright, I can say that Tamara’s work is not only relevant to contemporary times but also to the early modern period.”

**David Alonso** holds a prestigious Ramón y Cajal Fellowship and currently works at the Center for Advanced Studies of Blanes (CEAB-CSIC) in Spain. He has applied his quantitative skills to the study of complex systems in ecology, challenging questions on species diversity in ecosystems, and the transmission of infectious diseases that are environmentally driven. Alonso taught Stochastic Processes in Continuous Time: Ecology and Epidemiology. He noted that his interactions with his host, Mercedes Pascual, were particularly fruitful. “In collaboration with Dr. Pascual, I have studied the malaria system integrating the transmission of a *Plasmodium* parasite between humans and mosquitoes. This system is very sensitive to temperature changes. This disease is a public health concern in most tropical areas around the world. I finished a manuscript with Mercedes Pascual and Andy Dobson from Princeton University on the dynamics of malaria transmission and the possibility of sharp, unexpected transitions from low to high malaria incidence when temperature changes smoothly. Our results are relevant for current climate change research.”

**Olivía Gomes da Cunha**, a graduate of the doctoral program in anthropology at Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, initially received tenure at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro before returning to the Museu Nacional, where she has been since 2007. After completing her PhD, Cunha branched out in two directions: to a comparative focus on the interconnected histories of anthropological engagement with African American societies in Brazil, the US South, and Cuba; and to an ethnographic focus on Cuba and Suriname. Cunha taught The Maroon Societies in South America, which examined recent ethnographies on slave-descendant societies in South America. In addition to her course, Cunha shared her research with colleagues at the University and planned future collaborative projects. She noted, “As a result of these intense dialogues and interactions and outcomes of the Tinker Visiting Professorship, along with Professors [Stephan] Palmié and [Brodwyn] Fischer, I began to plan a conference to be held in the Autumn 2019 at CLAS, tentatively entitled ‘Ethnographies of History in the Afro-Atlantic World.’ We are planning to bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America to discuss different perspectives on ‘past-making,’ the place of history in the Afro-American societies.”

**Miriam Escudero** is Professor of Musicology, Harmony, and Counterpoint at the Conservatorio Amadeo Roldán in Havana and is recognized as one of Cuba’s leading musicologists. Beginning with her work on 19th-century archives in Havana, she has shaped current ideas about liturgy, musical practice, the circulation of musicians, and the transmission of materials in Santiago de Cuba (and more recently in Havana), 1750–1850. Escudero taught Research and Performance: Latin American Baroque Music, which examined the musical document as a source of musicological studies and its relationship to performance. Escudero’s visit culminated in a concert in which she conducted the Motet Choir, the flagship choral ensemble of the University, in a program honoring Our Lady of Charity, patroness of Cuba, and featuring works by Cuban composers from the 18th century to the present, including Esteban Salas, Cratilio Guerra, José María Vitier, and Miguel Matamoros. This Marian devotion in Cuba dates back to 1612, and it can be argued that most Cubans, regardless of their faith and across all social classes, feel devotion for “Cachita,” as she is affectionately called.

**Tinker Visiting Professors, 2018–19**

**Autumn 2018**

**Mariana Castillo Debball** Visual Arts
Artist/Academy of Fine Arts, Münster, Germany

**Alexandre Ramos** Ecology and Evolution
Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil

**Winter 2019**

**José María Portillo Valdés** History
Universidad del País Vasco, Spain

**Spring 2019**

**Antonio Sérgio Guimarães** Sociology
Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil
Brodwyn Fischer (History) and Larissa Brewer-García (Romance Languages and Literatures) were recently featured in divisional publications in conversation about their academic work. Fischer focuses on urban dynamics of inequality, law, race, poverty, and social movements in Brazil and Latin America. In *Dialogo*, a biannual publication of the Division of the Social Sciences, she was featured in “Common Ground” as she talked about the city with Marco Garrido (Sociology), who focuses on the Philippines. Brewer-García, whose book in progress focuses on black interpreters in 16th- and 17th-century South America, was featured in *Tableau*, the magazine of the Division of the Humanities, talking about the process, pitfalls, and payoffs of translation.

Excerpt from “Common Ground” with Brodwyn Fischer and Marco Garrido

**Fischer:** Cities are at the core of some of the most important modernizing narratives that shape how people think about history in the North Atlantic: the development of liberalism, the expanding rule of law, the growth of capitalism, the evolution of political movements for greater equality. Cities are supposed to be the spaces where all of that happens. When people talk about the urban ideal what they’re talking about are cities that are mostly formalized—that is, places run mostly by formal institutions, on the basis of formal rights and rules, where issues of equality and inequality are mainly mediated by laws and markets. They are places, in general, that are relatively prosperous and “developed” along western lines. The problem with thinking of the urban that way is that most cities work differently, especially outside of the North Atlantic.

I see Marco’s work as connected with mine because we are each focusing on urban forms that are significantly informal, and on the types of urbanism that are, in fact, most common across the globe. As we think about what urban studies are all about, as we think about how the University of Chicago ought to be conceiving and teaching urban studies, it’s important that scholars also focus on urban phenomena that play themselves out in ways that don’t fit our preconceived ideas of what a city is. I think your case in Manila is a great example.

**Garrido:** Urban sociology is particularly parochial, and I feel its limits keenly. For a long time, the paradigmatic city has been Chicago or perhaps L.A. It’s important that we push the cities we study—Manila, Recife—into the center of discussion. This is the modal urban experience and it requires a particular set of analytical tools to make sense of. New ways of seeing the urban, new categories, new ways of thinking about the intersection between politics and urban space and poverty. Class relations look different! It’s been a challenge to talk about these cities in a way that’s not misunderstood by people who don’t know what they are like. Look, I’m interested in the relationship between the urban poor and the middle class in Manila. To even begin talking about that requires a lot of context. I’m not talking about workers and factory owners or about labor organizing. I’m talking about categorically unequal relationships that encompass feelings of mutual obligation as well as resentment and fear.

**Fischer:** A lot of writing treats these cities as being disjunctive, dysfunctional, and somehow out of proper historical sequence. We are used to the trope that cities outside of the North Atlantic are uniquely problematic, and that their problems are caused by everything that is wrong with the contemporary world. That is why it is so important to think about these places historically. If you give these places a
history, you take them out of the realm of emergency thinking. You come to understand the juxtaposition, say, of poor, self-built neighborhoods and skyscrapers as more than a shocking image. That kind of inequality structures the city’s economic and political life, it’s at the core of how this urban system has functioned over a very long period of time. Informal neighborhoods are vital to these cities, they resolve all kinds of tensions and problems and are not going to disappear without radical economic, institutional, and political restructuring. To eliminate the worst consequences of urban informality, you need to think about how it became vital to the urban system in the first place, and change things that run much deeper than the construction norms or property titles. I think all of the work that I’ve done is focused in one way or another on that problem.

To read the full conversation, please visit Dialogo at https://dialogo.uchicago.edu/content/common-ground-brodwyn-fischer-and-marco-garrido.

Excerpt from “Two Perspectives on Translation” featuring Larissa Brewer-García

There is an incredible Jesuit treatise about how to use translation to evangelize black men and women in the early transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America. I was struck by the statement it makes, that the entire project depends on finding the right interpreters—who happened to be other slaves. At that time there were more than 50 different languages being spoken in the Caribbean slave port of Cartagena de Indias, in modern-day Colombia.

Some fundamental concepts of Christianity might be difficult to translate to non-Christians, but what’s curious about the Jesuits’ writing is that they in no way want to convey that translation is impossible in such a context because it also would suggest that their evangelical project could come to an impasse. So they use an Augustinian notion of the universal sign that is God to justify using chains of enslaved interpreters to evangelize groups of newly arrived slaves.

These translation strategies were very different from those used for New World natives at the same time. For example, it was decided early on that missionaries should not translate “God” into native languages, but instead import the Spanish term “Dios.” Because using a native word might evoke or reinforce notions of a “wrong” kind of religiosity—“a god” instead of “the God”—you have to say, “there’s this divinity who’s a father whose name you will now know as Dios.” No such rules were made regarding how African interpreters should translate Christian concepts to black populations. As a result, African interpreters generally had more control over the messages they translated than other New World intermediaries.

African interpreters were able to parlay this special influence into shaping certain documents about black men and women during the period. I found that texts produced in collaboration with African interpreters use a unique notion of blackness that’s entirely positive. People of African descent are not described as “black but beautiful,” as stated in the Song of Songs, but rather black, radiant, and beautiful. With this, I see the interpreters appropriating some Christian language about light to present blackness in a new way—changing it from question of pigment associated with enslavement, sin, or bad luck to one associated with brilliance and beauty.

I’ve also started a new translation project about writings about black saints in 17th-century Spanish America. For this project, I am translating a collection of early hagiographies composed in Spanish into English.

Translation is important for making works like these accessible to a wider audience interested in the African diaspora who can’t read Spanish.

For the full article in Tableau, please visit https://tableau.uchicago.edu/articles/2017/10/two-perspectives-translation.

Introducing the CLAS Podcast, EntreVistas

In May 2018, CLAS launched EntreVistas, featuring chats with UChicago faculty and students about current research on the region. EntreVistas is designed to provide interesting and enjoyable content about Latin America that is accessible to the general public. Each episode is approximately 15 minutes long, and new episodes will be posted regularly during the academic year. Please visit our website—or wherever you download podcasts—to start listening today!
During the first half of the 16th century and before the establishment of the Inquisition in New Spain, idolatrous practices carried out by indigenous people were punished with extreme severity. This sparked a religious debate on how to deal with the newly converted subjects. American Indians, because they were considered ignorant new Christians, would be excluded from the jurisdiction of the Holy Office, whose operations pertained only to mestizos, Africans, creoles, and Spaniards. Instead, a tribunal was specifically created to attend to the indigenous population: the Provisorato de Indios.

Among the activities of this institution was the vigilance and extirpation of idolatry among indigenous peoples. The processes carried out by the Provisorato were commonly initiated by accusations made by individuals to fellow members of their community and, if grave, ended in an auto-da-fé. There were some cases, however, in which people turned themselves in. Such is the case of an indigenous woman who confessed to being a witch before Juan Ignacio Castorena Ursúa, head of the Provisorato de Indios from 1709 to 1728.

Big changes in the configuration of Mexican cities occurred in the 18th century. Indigenous people had formerly occupied the margins of urban spaces, but gradually, many of these villages were integrated into bigger cities. This resulted in the introduction of syncretic unorthodox religious practices into urban life, a situation that certainly troubled religious authorities. The Provisorato was a key institution in the attempt to suppress the heterodox religiosity of the “rustic” groups that suddenly erupted in the cities. This is the context surrounding this indigenous woman’s confession.

The confession is preserved in a 1736 manuscript I recently began to examine. Because it is a testimony in the first person, it serves as a fascinating window into colonial religious practices and the process of self-fashioning before ecclesiastic authority.

The woman begins by narrating her childhood. She was born, we are told, in a family with a long tradition in sorcery and witchcraft. There were some cases, however, in which people turned themselves in. Such is the case of an indigenous woman who confessed to being a witch before Juan Ignacio Castorena Ursúa, head of the Provisorato de Indios from 1709 to 1728.

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The woman begins by narrating her childhood. She was born, we are told, in a family with a long tradition in sorcery and witchcraft. While she was still a baby, her parents gave her away to Lucifer, who became her nagual. This syncretic representation of the devil takes us back to the first contact between Spaniards and the indigenous peoples, when practices such as nahualismo were amalgamated under Catholicism as evidence of the devil’s presence in the Americas. In the religion

This essay appeared in Contextos, the CLAS blog, in January 2018.
of the ancient Mexicans, the term *nahualli* designates the spiritual companion or “alter ego” of a person, which usually takes the form of an animal. From the beginning of her confession, the woman represents herself through duality. The devil is certainly an intrinsic part of who she is, but reason—and with it, the possibility of redemption—still lies within her.

She then goes on to tell us how Lucifer raised her: He taught her to walk, to dress, to make her bed. He gave her baby animals to play with and took her on walks through the maize fields. The devil is portrayed as a maternal loving figure, a *chichigua* (wet nurse) who nurtured her with knowledge about witchcraft, but also with practical, everyday-life skills. Perhaps one of the most interesting characteristics of this testimony is precisely the connection drawn between the fantastic world of flying, shape-shifting witches and the mundane life of common individuals. The devil and the witch, far from being esoteric figures, are placed here in the concrete, familiar contexts of colonial life.

When the woman grows older, she marries Lucifer in a big celebration in which guests danced the dance of the Moors and the Christians (a traditional Spanish dance that enacts Christian domination over the Moors, but that in the Americas was adapted to dramatize the process of colonization). In this dance, our witch plays La Malinche—Hernán Cortés’s famous interpreter and mistress—and, thus, the devil plays the conquistador. Through this dramatization, both Cortés and La Malinche emerge as demonic figures. Her union to Lucifer mirrors that between Spaniards and Mexicans, symbolically making mestizos the offspring of a diabolical alliance.

As a wife, the witch gains deeper knowledge about demonic customs, acquiring higher powers and ascending in satanic hierarchy thanks to her superior talent. She recounts explicit tales about raping sleeping nuns, eating babies in tamales, using their blood to knead tortillas, and even murdering her own mother at her father’s request (he had grown bored of her). She becomes the new head of her family and a sort of “First Lady” of the Satanic Church, accompanying Lucifer in his travels around the world.

Out of this document emerges a strong female voice that freely brags about her power and talent with deep pride. Her association with Lucifer allows her to occupy a position in society that is not typically reserved for women: she replaces patriarchal authority in her own family, annuls her maternity by eating her children, satisfies her sexual desires unrestrictedly, and even challenges the authority of Lucifer himself. When demanded to sacrifice the only son she has ever been fond of, she protects the baby by offering him to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Reciprocally, the devil does not act according to “traditional” masculine roles. He helps women in domestic tasks—such as grinding nixtamal to make tortillas—so that they do not exhaust themselves with too much housework. At Lucifer’s side, the woman has radical liberties that she does not find in her earthly Christian marriage to an Indian cacique. With her human husband, who ignores her true identity, she says the “worm” of her desire has died and she feels condemned to die “dumb.”

How were all of these tales received by the authorities in the Provisorato de Indios? The final whereabouts of this witch is a question I have yet to answer. She may have been processed, or perhaps the gravity of her crimes was lessened by the fact she confessed. Indeed, her insisting reiteration about her demonic lineage, along with her representation of confession as an act of rebellion against Satan, seems to constitute a strategy for attenuating her culpability. In representing herself as an ignorant, irrational woman who was “fooled” into worshipping the devil by her family, she would have been able to protect herself while simultaneously talking extensively about her past. Regardless of her final destiny, this unique document shows how colonial subjects manipulated existing religious discourse to negotiate their position in an ever-changing society.

Interning Abroad: Two BA Students in Mexico City

Chase Harrison (LACS AB’18) and TJ L’Heureux (Public Policy Studies and LACS major) spent summer 2018 in Mexico City as part of an internship. We corresponded with them via email about their work and about the experience of being in Mexico during an important election.

What was the title of your internship, and what kind of work did you do? What made you pursue this particular internship?

We are analysts at Emerging Market Political Risk Analysis (EMPRA), a small political risk consultancy. EMPRA helps foreign firms who do business in Latin America better understand political and security developments in the region. We helped research and author reports on a range of topics—like the recent Mexican elections, the country’s ongoing problem with fuel theft, the Brazilian truckers strike, the mining sector in Panama, or the plastics industry in Colombia. We also help compile monthly comprehensive updates on violence and security in Mexico.

How was it to experience your internships together as friends and as LACS majors? Not often do our majors have this sort of opportunity.

It’s been wonderful! Living abroad is always a great experience, but it can be a tad lonely. Having someone else to explore the city with, I think, has pushed us to see every museum, park, and neighborhood. We’ve also explored Puebla, Cuernavaca, San Miguel de Allende, Guadalajara, and Oaxaca together.

What was it like to be in Mexico during such a monumental election? How did it feel to be a nonvoting (temporary) resident during the celebrations and in the following days?

The weekend of the election was super dynamic! With López Obrador dominating in the polls, the whole city was anticipating his victory (though many of the banks boarded up their entrances in case AMLO lost and there were riots).

After Meade and Anaya made concession speeches, we went to the Zócalo for AMLO’s victory speech, and it was packed. Supporters of all ages crowded as close as they could to the stage, donning all sort of AMLO apparel, which vendors sold in and around the Zócalo. They projected footage of AMLO’s motorcade snaking through Mexico City on the giant monitor perched in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral. AMLO must have shaken every hand of all the Chilangos [residents of Mexico City] who threw themselves at his car because it took him forever to take the stage. Fortunately, his party, Morena, has a very catchy theme song that was played on loop while we waited. He spoke for a brief period and ended around midnight. Horns honked through the night like they had after Mexico beat Germany [at the World Cup] a few days earlier.

For the most part, the buzz of excitement died down over the next few days. It was a historic victory, but it wasn’t particularly surprising.

What will you remember most about these experiences? How do you think they will influence you as you move forward in your careers?

This internship has reminded us of the importance of being adventurous and digging into unfamiliar ideas/topics. Both inside and outside the workplace, we’ve been pushed out of our comfort zone. Many of the projects we get assigned are not industries or regions we have a deep familiarity with. However, our background in Latin American Studies has made it easy to handle and understand any topic.

TJ L’Heureux (L) and Chase Harrison in the Zócalo on election night
2017–18 GRADUATES

BA MAJOR IN LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN STUDIES (LACS)

Cosmo Albrecht LACS, with honors; Public Policy, with honors
“The Plurinational Paradox: Autonomy and the Right to the City in Evo Morales’s Bolivia”

Paula Carcamo LACS, with honors; Anthropology, with honors
“History and Narratives in Commemoration Projects in Chile: Paine Memorial and Tres Sillas Memorial”

Chase Harrison LACS, with honors
“Our Senadora: Catherine Cortez Masto’s Appeals to Latino Voters from 2005 to 2016”
Postgraduation: MA program, Oxford University

Alice Kallman LACS, with honors; Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, with honors
“Tourism at Archaeological Sites in Mexico: Interactions between Local and National Bodies”

BA MINOR IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Abigail Brockman Sociology

MA

Rohan Chatterjee LACS
Postgraduation: History PhD program, UChicago

Robert Figueroa LACS
“Bonó, Hispaniola, and Race: The Dominican Republic and Haiti”

Rebecca Hershock LACS
“A Neglected Population: Women’s Health in Guatemala and the Failings of the Guatemalan Health Care System”
Postgraduation: Legal writing specialist at Hudson Legal, Canton, MI

Kerry LePain LACS
Postgraduation: Program coordinator, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities, Washington, DC

Jian Ren LACS
“Stability of International Silver Prices and Mexico’s Mining Industry, 1902–1904”
Postgraduation: History PhD program, Rutgers University

Elizabeth Roddy LACS
“Negotiating Space: The Role of Interiority in the Art of Norah Borges”
Postgraduation: Business intelligence analyst, Christie’s, New York

PhD

Milena Ang Collan Granillo Political Science
“Corrupting Accountability: Elite Control and Corruption Prosecution in Comparative Perspective”
Postgraduation: Collegiate Assistant Professor, UChicago Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts

Ramaesh Bhagirat History
“All ah we is one”: Race, Nation, and Performative Culture in the Southern Caribbean, c. 1950s–1970s

Emilio de Antuñano Villareal History
“Planning a ‘Mass City’: The Politics of Planning in Mexico City, 1930–1960”
Postgraduation: Sawyer Seminar/Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, International Institute, University of California, San Diego

Christopher Dunlap History
“Parallel Power Play: Nuclear Technology and Diplomacy in Argentina and Brazil, 1945–1995”
Postgraduation: Nuclear Security Postdoctoral Fellow, Stanford University Center for International Security and Cooperation

Maria de los Ángeles Gutiérrez Bascón Romance Languages & Literatures
“La Habana imaginada: Nostalgia, ruinas y utopía después de 1990”

Keshia Harris Comparative Human Development
“Somos Uma Salada de Fruta: Adolescent Achievement in Brazilian and Colombian Structures of Opportunity”

Thelma Jiménez-Anglada Romance Languages & Literatures
“Territorios, Arte, y Soberanía: La Novela del Narcotráfico en México”
Postgraduation: Assistant Professor of Spanish, Lawrence University

Romina Robles Ruvalcaba History
“The Emergence of the Rancho and the Socioeconomic Transformation of the Caxcana, Jalisco, 1939–1959”
Postgraduation: Lecturer, California State University Long Beach

Pablo Robles Santamarina Economics
“The Impact of NAFTA on Prices and Competition: Evidence from Mexican Manufacturing Plants”

Daniel Rothenberg Anthropology
Following the Chocolate Trail: Cacao in the Amazon and the Origins of a Popular Confection

In April 2018, LePain wrote about his thesis fieldwork for Contextos.

Where does our food come from? I immediately think of two ways to answer this question—one in the sense of where the food was grown, and another, further-off response concerning where a specific foodstuff or plant originated. It was this second way that brought me bumping down an ocher, dusty road on a motorcycle, arms wrapped around the waist of Seu Pedro, a proud grandfather and pioneering farmer, to the Transamazonian Highway region in the Brazilian state of Pará as he took me on a show-and-tell trip through his cacao forests, locally known in Medicilândia for their distinctive cabruca agroforestry configuration.

While much of the margins along the Transamazonian Highway are lined with sweeping expanses of palms, electric-green pasture, and equally garish red earth, our trip along a northern side road led through increasingly towering and lush vegetation. Bright yellow piles of recently harvested cacao pods lie in piles, dappled by light filtering down through the boughs of the surrounding cacao trees. Following Seu Pedro as we now walked through the forest, he gestured toward the crunching leaves underfoot—natural fertilizer from cacao and larger trees that served as a breeding ground for cacao’s main pollinators—and to massive fallen bromeliads that recently tumbled from the crown of a Brazil nut tree about a hundred feet above.

Pedro’s cacao agroforestry belongs to a larger regional history intricately interwoven with the environment and is part of a growing drive to work with(in) the Amazon’s native vegetation and ecosystems. Brazil’s 2012 Forest Code requires that agricultural properties maintain an area of native vegetation as “Legal Reserve” corresponding to quotas established on a regional basis. At least on paper, landholdings within the “Legal Amazon” should reserve 80% of their total area as a forest preserve. As an answer to the question of environmental origin, cacao occupies a privileged place within Amazonian agriculture under the Forest Code. Cacao is native to the Amazon, and cacao trees count as reforestation and toward the native vegetation “Legal Reserve” quota. Medicilândia, a municipality at kilometer 90 of the Transamazonian Highway largely blessed with rich soil, has leaned heavily into cacao agriculture, earning the reputation of Brazil’s “Cacao Capital,” while neighboring communities have followed suit in attempts at prosperity and a rewrite of the Transamazonian’s failed agriculture narrative.

Brazil’s military regime began construction of the Transamazonian Highway in the early 1970s as part of a large-scale agro-colonization scheme designed to alleviate land crunches and leftist worries elsewhere in the nation, occupy the vast “empty” Amazon interior, and create a new Brazilian breadbasket. Much attention was focused on the modernization of the Amazon—its residents long perceived as decadent, folkloric, and lackadaisical—but little planning attention went toward understanding the micro-regional specificities of a greater region that covers roughly 30% of South America’s total area.

Erroneously viewed as one big forest, the Amazon is a conjunction of highly diverse—and diverging—forests, rivers, climates, and soil types, constituting a variety of ecosystems and
agricultural potentials. When limited preliminary soil analyses along the Transamazônica Highway around Medicilândia indicated rich soil, these results were extrapolated as representative of the entire region, and used as justification for agricultural projects without properly taking into account climatic variation, potential pests and diseases, and the possibility of soil inconsistency. The military regime and its colonization agency, INCRA, recruited large numbers of colonists from the south and northeast and incentivized waves of commodities because they grew well elsewhere in Brazil. Medicilândia’s farmers tried their hands with rice, beans, black pepper, tomatoes, guarana, coffee, and sugarcane, but their efforts were frustrated by heavy rains, hungry animals, diseases, and patchy soil conditions. The dirt roads frequently washed out after heavy Amazonian rains, and construction on the gargantuan network of planned roads could not keep pace with demand and stalled out after 1974 when the government prematurely classified the entire colonization project as a failure and largely left agricultural colonists in the Amazon, Brazil’s Wild West of sorts, to their own devices.

Distinctly wild cacao trees grow throughout the forests surrounding Medicilândia, but it wasn’t until the late 1970s that several colonists from the state of Bahia, historically associated with cacao agriculture, planted Medicilândia’s first commercial cacao groves. Elisangela Trzeciak—a regional government representative, member of a nascent cacao cooperative, and a daughter raised between ranching and cacao agriculture—claimed that cacao used to fetch a price equal to a kilogram of meat, an important benchmark as the trees fell and the Transamazônica region increasingly gave way to cattle ranching.

As with other previous commodities, cacao farmers in Medicilândia have confronted obstacles to their success with cacao: at home in the Amazon, cacao is subject to indigenous pests, and prices have at times plummeted so low that some farmers took to cutting their cacao groves and abandoning their investments. By and large, however, Medicilândia’s cacao has been highly productive in comparison with other Brazilian regions and has allowed farmers with smaller plots of land to earn livable incomes that would be impossible with cattle. With groves of cacao trees, farmers are able to maintain gardens alongside and, in some cases, among the trees, supplementing their income and providing additional food for their families. Because cacao naturally grows as an understory tree, beneath the Amazon’s vaulted canopy, cacao naturally lends itself to agroforestry initiatives like Seu Pedro’s *cabruca* plots, where cacao trees are mixed among native vegetation, remaining hardwoods from before the plot was cleared, and new palms, hardwoods, and vines that have returned, making Seu Pedro’s plot a commercially productive interpretation of the regional forest ecosystem.

It is in large part because of this “re-agro-forestation” potential that cacao has increasingly garnered attention within the Amazon; however, the environmental services provided by properly managed cacao agroforestry plots and the farmers who work them underscore problems in the ways we purchase and know our food. Fair trade and organic agriculture receive attention as ethical choices available to consumers and as more equitable, environmentally sound means for growers to sell their products.

Ivan Dantas came to the Medicilândia region as a young boy with his family with the onset of colonization and has been awarded prizes at Salon du Chocolat, the international chocolate fair in Paris, for the quality of his cacao beans. He is a staunch advocate for environmental stewardship of the forest, which he calls his “paradise,” but he also laments the local infeasibility and high cost of organic agriculture. Although the majority of cacao grown in the region is de facto organic, organic certification requires farmers to follow strict sets of regulations, to use specially designated fertilizers, and to front the cost of pricey inspections and certifications. Ivan explained that farmers within the Medicilândia region had inconsistent access to the organic fertilizers necessary for productive cacao, and due to falling yields and exhausted soil, he explained that he was leaving the town’s organic cooperative.

Throughout my time with Medicilândia’s cacao growers, their stories called into question the sufficiency of existing certifications and the necessity of more comprehensive ways of differentiating products, educating and informing consumers, and justly compensating growers for higher-quality cacao and the environmental services that accompany it. Seu Pedro’s *cabruca* agroforestry cacao, for example, comprises a far greater effort and renders a much larger service than either organic or shade-grown agriculture. His trees are shaded in rehabilitated forest, designed to replicate as best as possible the Amazon’s native vegetation while still permitting cacao agriculture. Because an accurate certification and label do not exist, Pedro’s cacao is sold alongside conventional, full-sun cacao beans grown on deforested land, and he receives no larger monetary return, despite the substantial investment required to restore the forest. While Pedro’s cacao and pocketbook can benefit from increased productivity, pollination, and soil fertility as a result of the restored forest, farmers such as Pedro could stand to benefit a great deal more if their environmental services were labeled, marketed, recognized, and sold.

Stepping away from my research in the Amazon, I see the problem come full circle, returning to the question of our food’s origins. While consumers may appreciate picturesque nature photos adorning an organic bar of chocolate or a packet of coffee, they are able to abstract themselves from the realities of labor and production wrapped up in the package. The fundamental problem with these certifications, their fairness, and their value to farmers is that they come with a choice. Save money today, or reward a distant farmer with higher wages? Save money today, or compensate a farmer somewhere for an environmental service? In this sense, justice becomes the prerogative of the consumer, and not the right of the farmer. The burden of the origin of food, how it is made, and caring for the environment that supports it falls to farmers, whereas consumers have the right to choose to not understand their food.
MULTIMEDIA CLAS

The Center for Latin American Studies continues to serve the larger national and international Latin Americanist community through the development and dissemination of innovative research in a variety of disciplines. In an effort to share current thinking and trends with a wider audience of students, faculty, alumni, and friends, we have expanded our online multimedia materials and our social media presence. Please visit our website and follow us on Facebook and Twitter to keep up with what’s going on at CLAS.

Blog

*Contextos*, the CLAS blog, is intended to provide students, faculty, alumni, associate members, and friends with an interactive space for sharing knowledge, research news, professional projects, and engaging stories and photographs about Latin America and the Caribbean. As the name denotes, *Contextos* intends to reflect the heterogeneity of the region as seen through a variety of disciplinary lenses, as well as to capture the contrasting political, economic, and social realities that Latin Americans encounter in their lives.

Podcast

As described on page 12, *EntreVistas* is CLAS’s new podcast series. Our first four episodes feature junior faculty, who discuss 20th-century monuments, police reform and citizenship in Latin America, decolonization, and patronage relations in Bolivia. As we expand *EntreVistas*, we look forward to featuring more student work as well as chats with visitors, such as Tinker Visiting Professors and other esteemed guests.

On the topic of podcasts, we want to share that affiliated faculty Michael Albertus and Benjamin Lessing will be featured on future episodes of *Open Stacks*, speaking about their recent books. Recorded at Seminary Co-op Bookstores in Chicago, *Open Stacks* invites listeners to sit in on the kind of candid discussions and lively debates made possible by the participation of readers in a public space, with the aim of expanding and encouraging a broader community of ideas.

Videos

Whenever possible, we post videos from conferences, panels, and other cosponsored campus events on our website. We also share videos of presenters at our teacher training workshops, aimed at delivering engaging area studies content and classroom materials to K–16 educators, through educatoroutreach.uchicago.edu.

Social Media

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter, where we share CLAS events, op-eds penned by faculty, new blog posts and podcast episodes, and other news.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH CLAS

We encourage alumni and friends to keep in touch with CLAS in a variety of ways. While we welcome financial support, we also invite you to attend campus events; visit our website to stay up to date about initiatives at the Center; read our blog, *Contextos*, which highlights student and faculty work; and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media. Alumni involvement opportunities include our career webinar series and mentorship opportunities that allow students and alumni to connect with one another through one-time meetings, short- and long-term relationships, campus events, or career shadowing. Please contact us at clas@uchicago.edu for more information.

Subscribe to CLAS email lists and visit our online events calendar at clas.uchicago.edu.