Letter from the Director

Greetings from the Latin American Institute. Spring is in the air, and we are pleased to announce a full range of exciting activities from now until the end of our academic year in mid-June. This week, the LAI is organizing or co-sponsoring numerous events including: a conference on modernity in the Luso-Hispanic world, a working-group symposium on medical surgery and culture in Latin America, and a film series to celebrate the acclaimed Brazilian filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos, who is coming to Los Angeles for a career retrospective. And that is just in the next few days! We encourage you to consult our weekly calendar, which appears every Monday, for information on all these events, which are open to the public.

The LAI is pleased to collaborate with the new UCLA Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America, which will make its debut with an Inaugural Spring Symposium on May 1, titled "Informing Responses to Reduce Poverty and Improve Health in Latin America." A complete program agenda and registration can be found by visiting the Inaugural Spring Symposium page. Deadline for registration is today, April 19.

The LAI also continues to sponsor important outreach activities with K-12 teachers. Most recently, the LAI’s Outreach Coordinator, Cynthia Gómez, organized a 2-day workshop on corridos for several teachers from the Los Angeles Unified School District, titled "Ballads Without Borders: Mexican Corridos Past and Present." Experts and teachers came together to examine the long history of corridos in Mexico and the US Southwest, and their enduring legacy as expressions of social commentary in the present.

Finally, I turn your attention to an op-ed piece (below) from one of my distinguished colleagues in History, Lauren Robin Derby, who has written on the implications of the passing of Hugo Chavez, former president of Venezuela.

We wish you well and look forward to seeing you this spring!

Upcoming Events:

Cinema According to Nelson Pereira dos Santos:

April 20- May 12, 2013
Billy Wilder Theater

Born in São Paulo in 1928, Brazilian filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos has been one of the most significant and influential filmmakers over the last half century. Inspired by neorealism, he forged the beginnings of a new, politically engaged Brazilian cinema in the 1950s with films such as Rio, 40 Graus (1956) and Rio, Zona Norte (1957) that brought the lives and neighborhoods of Rio’s urban poor to the screen. The UCLA Film and Television Archive is honored to host Nelson Pereira dos Santos in person on the opening weekend of this modest sampling from his monumental career.

More details and ticket information
In the News

Remembering Hugo Chávez: Reflections from the Caribbean
By Robin Derby, Professor of History

Washington is breathing a secret sigh of relief at the death of Hugo Chávez – the “pink” populist who ruled Venezuela for over a decade -- but that is not at all the case in Haiti. Trepidations there are running high in the wake of Chávez’ death. In evaluating his legacy, commentary has focused on his impact on the Venezuelan polity and economy, and his tense relationship to the U.S.. But he is remembered very differently among the poorer nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, for whom he provided a beacon of hope. Indeed, while in Haiti at the beginning of April, I spoke with Jean-Claude François, who is counsel to the Minister of Education in Haiti, and who told me that was very worried about the forthcoming Venezuelan elections and Chávez’ potential successor.

Under Chávez, Venezuela has been a very good friend to the poorer nations of Latin America. Haiti has a special place in Chávez’ nationalist project since Chávez called his movement the Bolivarian revolution, in honor of the independence leader who liberated Gran Colombia (later Venezuela) from Spanish rule. This is due to a strong historical link between the two nations. Simón Bolivar twice landed in Haiti, where he received arms, boats and soldiers and other crucial support when he arrived on the island requesting help in 1816. More recently, Chávez aided Haiti enormously by providing oil at a subsidized rate through Petrocaribe, which since 2005 has offered oil to Caribbean nations though a very generous financing arrangement with low interest loans and an extended payment schedule. . . Read More

Funding Opportunities:

Field Research Grants 2013-14
Awards (up to $2,000) support students from all disciplines conducting research on Latin American topics. Research may be conducted domestically or abroad. Deadline: April 19, 2013

Library Research Grants 2013
Funding for non-UCLA faculty and graduate students to use the vast resources of the Latin American collection at UCLA for a short term. Awards (up to $1,000) can be used to cover lodging, transportation and meals over at least one week in Los Angeles. Deadline: April 22, 2013
Video and audio podcasts are available for each of the presentations of a two-day conference that brought together 30 researchers, scholars and policy makers actively involved in the discussion, analysis and combating of organized crime, corruption and drug trafficking in Latin America.

In addition to a policy panel featuring drug enforcement and government officials from Latin America, the conference featured presentations on topics including the effects of aerial spraying on production of coca in Colombia, an analysis on drug violence in Mexico, and the consequences of “pacification” efforts in Rio’s favelas.

CLICK HERE FOR CONFERENCE VIDEOS and PODCASTS