


# noticias

INSTITUTE OF  
LATIN  
AMERICAN  
STUDIES

COLUMBIA  
UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2007  
JANUARY



Protesters in Mexico gather at the capital's Zocalo square to clamor against rising tortilla prices, which have tripled or quadrupled in some parts of the country since last summer. (AP Photo)

## ILAS ANNOUNCES FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### Institute expects record number of applications with expanded program for students and faculty

ILAS has recently announced a major expansion in its 2007 program of summer research and internship travel grants. Funding is being made available on a competitive basis to Columbia students with plans to travel to Latin America during the summer to pursue advanced research or to engage in internship programs. "We are convinced that the best way for students to learn about Latin America is to go there," said Tom Trebat,

Executive Director of the Institute. "Thanks to the generosity of various donors to ILAS, summer 2007 beckons as a great opportunity."

A mainstay of Institute funding for student academic development, the Institute's Pre-Dissertation Field Research Travel Grant program provides funding for Columbia graduate and doctoral students doing independent or pre-dissertation research in Latin America for up to \$1,500. Research periods typically range from six to twelve weeks.

In addition, the Institute is providing funding for students working in Latin America through its new Graduate and Undergraduate Internship Grant program. The goal of the program is to encourage SIPA/CU graduate

and CC/Barnard undergraduate students to travel to Latin America to take advantage of short-term internship or study opportunities. Awards will range up to \$1,500 for qualifying expenses associated with travel to and within the internship country.

This year, assistant and associate professors will also be eligible for Institute travel funds through the Junior Faculty Research Travel Grant program. Field research money for junior members of the regular faculty at Columbia University will be made available up to \$1,500 for Latin American related research work. Research periods typically cover the summer, sabbatical periods, but may be used at other times throughout the year as well. (continued on next page)

ilas  
online

ILAS is pleased to invite students, faculty and those interested in our comings and goings to visit our redesigned website. While we acknowledge that it is a work-in-progress, we look forward to providing you with a better ILAS on the web and will roll out updates and new features during the Spring Semester. We welcome your feedback!

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ilas>

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ILAS also administers the Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship program for the study of Portuguese, Spanish and Indigenous (Amerindian) languages. The FLAS competition is open to Columbia graduate students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents and are concentrating in world area studies, and is available for both the 2007-2008 Academic Year and Summer 2007. The FLAS award offers fellowship assistance to students undergoing beginning, intermediate, or advanced training in modern foreign languages and related international or area studies. The award provides payment of tuition and fees and a stipend for the academic year.

Prof. Trebat is optimistic about student reception to the grant programs. "We hope that as many students as possible will formulate their plans with their advisors and present proposals for financing of their travel."

ILAS' funding opportunities are made possible thanks to the generous support of the Leitner Family Foundation, The Tinker Foundation, and the US Department of Education. Each program has its own set of eligibility rules, requirements and deadline. For more information, please stop by the Institute or visit our website for details on these funding opportunities, and be sure and flip to page 6 for application deadlines.



## Faculty Spotlight: Renato Gonzalez-Mello

ILAS welcomes Professor Renato Gonzalez Mello as our Spring 2007 Tinker Visiting Professor. Professor Gonzalez hails from Mexico and has his Ph.D. in Art History and has frequently acted as curator for museums throughout his home country. Professor Gonzalez-Mello is teaching two classes at SIPA this semester, "Art, power and violence in Mexico during the XXth Century" and "Social Realism and Avant Garde subversion in Mexican Art." He is our featured faculty this issue and we spoke with him a bit about his thoughts on Columbia.

Q: *What are your impressions of Columbia?*

A: Like anyone else who visits an American university from anywhere in the world, I am impressed by the libraries. However, I am a little bit frustrated because I don't have enough time to read everything! I can prepare my classes as if I were in Mexico utilizing 80 percent of the same books from Mexico, but I also have the opportunity to resolve equivalent questions about Italy and the U.S.—or wherever—with the same ease. I will soon have impressions on my students, however so far they have all been very kind.

Q: *What's your favorite event in Latin American History?*

A: Through this question, I realize I do not have a favorite event in Latin American History. I promise to look for one. Maybe Vespucci's navigations, but they happened and were written about long before "Latin America" existed as a concept.

Q: *What's your favorite course to teach?*

A: Twentieth Century Mexican Art

Q: *What's the weirdest thing a student has ever done or asked in class?*

A: A student who was supposed to lecture on Mexican gangs' photographs arrived with a banded head, a bloody rag was wrapped around his whole skull volume. He claimed he had just been beaten by some guys from a rival gang, so he had not had the time to prepare the talk. The band was very realistic, and the blood seemed real. Besides the obvious cheating, I guess he really wanted some kind of non-representational thing, the true return of the real-special effects and all.

Q: *Who's your favorite former Latin American leader?*

A: Pedro Lascuráin (45 minutes in office, a true idealtipus)

Q: *Who do you think will come after Fidel?*

A: If I knew, I wouldn't tell anyone. Predictably, though, she or he will have a shorter tenure.

Q: *Out of all your work, what are you most proud of?*

A: I usually have better thoughts on the latest work I have done. In this case, a collectively curated exhibition, by a team of undergraduate History students whom I coordinated with a colleague, on the links of eugenics to 20th Century Mexican architectural theory, under the title of *Utopía/no utopía. La arquitectura, la enseñanza y la planificación del deseo.*

Q: *What's the last book you read?*

A: Bruno Latour's *Pandora's Hope*

(continued on page 4)

## Regional Roundup:

### A slightly irreverent look at the news related to Latin America...

#### 1. Ahmadinejad's Excellent Latin American Adventure

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, made his second swing through Latin America in January, cultivating anti-U.S. allies and using trade and ideology as his weapons. He is, predictably, visiting leaders of what he hopes will be a broad coalition against the United States: his good friend Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, along with Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Ecuador's Rafael Correa, and Evo Morales of Bolivia. Notably absent was a visit to Nestor Kirchner, whose country is still seeking to prosecute senior Iranian officials for their role in the 1994 bombing of the Jewish center in Buenos Aires. Everyone else seems to have forgotten the attacks ever happened.

#### 2. Speaking of Chavez...he rules. Really.

Venezuelan lawmakers have unanimously given Hugo Chavez sweeping powers to legislate by decree and impose his radical vision of a more egalitarian socialist state. The law gives Chavez, who is beginning a fresh six-year term, more power than he has ever had in eight years as president, and he plans to use it during the next 18 months to transform broad areas of public life, from the economy and the oil industry to Venezuela's claim on Jupiter and the Oort Cloud. Washington has expressed concern about an "undermining of democratic institutions" in Venezuela and called rule by decree as dangerous, to which Chavez replied that President George W. Bush is "more dangerous than a monkey with a razor blade." Somewhere, a Geico ad has just written itself.

#### 3. Estamos aquí y somos gay (Part II)

Late last month, Karla Lopez and Karina Almaguer became the first gay couple in Mexico to register a "civil solidarity union," taking advantage of a recently enacted Coahuila state law that provides same-sex couples with numerous social benefits similar to those of married couples. Bishop Alonso Garza of Piedras Negras joined the (expected) conservative uproar, calling the union "a disgrace" and "a show." After graduating, Regional Roundup Guy looks forward to returning to this home state to put on a show himself.



## Fitzcarraldo, Opera in the Amazon and Latin Tenors at the Met

by Adam Barcan

In the 1982 film *Fitzcarraldo*, set a century ago at the peak of the Amazonian rubber boom, an Irishman and his wife spend two weeks rowing down the Amazon to see Enrico Caruso perform in a Verdi opera at the Teatro Amazonas in Manaus, Brazil. Exhausted, and clad head-to-toe in elegant evening garb, they sprint to the door, win the sympathies of the usher (played by Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento) and sneak into the sold-out show. The Irishman, Bryan Sweeney Fitzgerald (hence the title) is so enthralled by the great tenor that he hatches a plan to build an opera house in his city of residence, Iquitos, Peru. For the next two hours, we watch him carry out a crazy scheme to get rich on the rubber trade. I'll spare you the ending, but it does probably involve the most ambitious scene change in the history of theatre.

Two years ago, another opera-crazed gringo (this one from New Jersey) happened to be in Manaus during a historic opera festival. Maybe now is a good time to settle on the first person. I worked as an English teacher in Manaus for a year after college and took several trips up the Rio Solimões, the great tributary that meets the Rio Negro outside the city and forms the Amazon. Retracing Fitzgerald's steps is easy. He left his rowboat in grimy port Manaus and sprinted across town to Praça São Sebastião, on which the theatre sits. How he did that in 90 degree heat while wearing a tuxedo is another story. And wondering how his wife ran across cobble in a ballroom

gown, feather hat and heels is the kind of annoying armchair-quarterbacking that ruins movies.

If he's a little prone to fantasy, German director Werner Herzog spins a lovely picture of the turn-of-the-century Manaus opera scene in *Fitzcarraldo*. His image is gorgeous – an elegant theatre, with a gleaming exterior of pink and white masonry and a dome

Asian producers under the British crown began to dominate global rubber production. Despite a brief spike in rubber demand during World War II, the city had a hard time replacing the lost income until it became a national industrial pole in the 1960s. The Teatro fell into disuse until the early 1990s, when a governor sought to revitalize the state orchestra around Eastern European musicians. I visited during another milestone moment: the first production in Brazil of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, the epic four-part opera by German Richard Wagner, known as the Ring Cycle. At nearly 15 hours of music, it's one of the most ambitious works in all of opera, and a sure sign that the Teatro has returned to the international circuit.

Of course, another prime opera house is close to home, and even occasionally accessible on a student budget (more about that later). In this season in particu-

lar, there are many great Latin American singers at the Metropolitan Opera. The most famous are tenors singing in the lyric style, known for its high register and nimble breath control. The "Figaro, Figaro, Figaro, Fiii-gaa-

rooo" line from the *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* is a classic example (not to mention a great line to sing in the shower. We won't tell anyone). If you're lucky, you can get tickets to the new *Barber of Seville* production that stars Juan Diego Florez, a young Peruvian who is one of the world's most beloved lyric tenors. Chilean soprano Cristina Gallardo-Domâs won terrific press for her starring role in a new staging of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and is now starring in *La Bohème*. You'll even catch an unexpected conductor, the multitalented Plácido Domingo, who started his career in Mexico nearly 50 years ago, singing Spanish zarzuela opera in his parents' company. Next week, Mexican lyric tenor Ramon Vargas opens in *Eugene Onegin*, based on a Pushkin novel set to the score of Tchaikovsky. If the Fitzgeralds can brave the Amazon to hear Caruso, a trip down the red line is a small price to pay for a great night at the opera with the best Latin American talent.

*Adam Barcan is a second year MIA candidate in international finance and policy. His musical talent is limited to whistling.*

covered in thousands of ceramic tiles that form the Brazilian flag. Inside, the elegantly dressed crowd sits in carved wooden piers, under wrought iron and glass chandeliers, surrounded by Carrara marble columns. It's the fitting portrayal of a newly wealthy city with a taste for European style. If the opera-goers were dressed in business casual two years ago, the setting in the nicely restored theatre was just as impressive as it must have been a century back. The shows sold out, opera fans came from across the country and overseas, local aficionados attended en masse, and kitschy actors in period dress mingled with the

Some tips on getting into the Met on a student budget: Download a calendar at [www.metopera.org](http://www.metopera.org) and call the morning of the show (212 362-6000) to see if there are student rush tickets. This season, a new public rush ticket program puts 200 orchestra seats on sale at \$20 each two hours before curtain time. Judging from the lines that form in the opera's parking garage several hours in advance, bring the Bubula problem set on price controls with you, both to pass the time and to think about the supply-demand mismatch that's unfolding in front of your eyes. See you there!



Adam, the underdressed tourist at intermission, June 2005.

crowd during intermission (Yes, I posed with some. See below).

From the fall of the regional rubber boom, it took Manaus about 90 years to return to staging operas. The city's fortunes waned in the mid-teens, when cost-efficient

# events

Please note that all events are held in Room 802 unless otherwise noted.

Note also that these events may change; we will do our best to provide timely updates if necessary. For more information, please check the Columbia University Events page or sign up to receive our newsletter and weekly "ILAS Events" e-mail.

Events:

[www.columbia.edu/events](http://www.columbia.edu/events)

Newsletter:

[ek2159@columbia.edu](mailto:ek2159@columbia.edu)

Subject "Mailing List"

Please make sure and check the ILAS website for information on these and other events as it becomes available:

[www.columbia.edu/cu/ilas](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ilas)

## february

### 8

*"Tracking Down the Truth in Castro's Cuba"*

4:00 - 6:00 PM

Room 707

Speaker: Anthony DePalma, Staff Reporter for the *New York Times*

### 13

*"The Argentine Political System and the Evolving Nature of Peronism"*

4:00 - 6:00 PM

Speaker: Torcuato di Tella, Sociologist and Professor at the Universidad de Buenos Aires

### 15

*"Las Mesas de Diálogo en Colombia: Peace Efforts in a War-Torn Country"*

5:00 - 7:00 PM

Room 707

Speaker: Mario Gomez, Executive Director of the Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco

### 27

*"Cry for Latin America"*

4:00 - 6:00 PM

Speaker: Desmond Lachman, Resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute

## upcoming conferences and seminars

### 8 march

Conference: *"The Challenge of Climate Change in Latin America"*

### 28 march

Panel Discussion: *"Income Inequality in Latin America"*

### 29 - 30 march

ALAS 5th Annual Education Across the Americas Graduate Student Conference

### 5 april

Conference: *"Chile After Pinochet"*

### 4 - 5 may

Spring History Consortium Conference: *"New Research in Latin American History"*

Q: What's your favorite meal?

A: Gnocchi alla bolognese

Q: Favorite fruit you can only get from south of the border?

A: Guayaba

Q: If you had to live in one place the rest of your life, where would it be?

A: Mexico City

Q: If you were to start your career over again, what would you do or who would you be?

A: Art historian

Q: The famous ILAS question: Mets or Yankees?

A: Yankees

"A student who was supposed to lecture on Mexican gangs' photographs arrived with a banded head, a bloody rag was wrapped around his whole skull volume. He claimed he had just been beaten by some guys from a rival gang, so he had not had the time to prepare the talk. The band was very realistic, and the blood seemed real. Besides the obvious cheating, I guess he really wanted some kind of non-representational thing, the true return of the real-special effects and all."

-Prof. Renato Gonzalez-Mello

## Student Spotlight: Angela Ortiz

We recently caught up with Angela Ortiz, first year SIPA student and the newly-installed President of the Latin American Student Association.

Q: What did you do before SIPA?

A: Well, right before coming to NY I lived in Mexico for almost 6 months, but right before that I was working in the non profit sector as Project and financial Manager of the Galilea Forest Donation Program for the Tolima University, motivating and coordinating private corporations to invest in national forest conservation in Colombia.



Angela Ortiz, LASA President.

*Q: What made you choose SIPA?*

A: Many things. For more than a year I did my research choosing the perfect graduate program. Because Columbia University is a premier American academic institution, I was sure that my multidisciplinary academic foundation was going to be enhanced by the course offering, especially by the Environmental Policy Studies Concentration (EPS) that I am interested in. The Columbia-Externado (the school I attended in Colombia) link gave me the opportunity to know more about the teachers and research possibilities at Columbia, and that convinced me that SIPA was the next step in my intellectual and professional route.

*Q: You've recently been elected President of the Latin American Student Association. What plans do you have for the student group?*

A: Well as you know, for the past several years LASA has been known for being one of the most active, entertaining, influential and popular student associations, not only because it attracts large crowds to its social events but also because it enables students from different backgrounds to learn, share and enjoy all that Latin America has to offer.

My goal, as well as the goal of the whole new board is to maintain the association's well-earned reputation and work to ensure that the LASA continues making a difference in the lives of Columbia students. We actually have plans in terms of the creation of new channels of information like conferences and panels to discuss topics of importance for those with an interest in Latin America, to enhance and foster the relationships LASA enjoys with other regional associations inside and outside Columbia in order to promote mutually beneficial exchanges, and of course we want everybody to have fun with us.

*Q: How do you see LASA's relationship with ILAS?*

A: I really think we should stop seeing ILAS and LASA as a two completely separate entities, and understand that they are more like partners in the effort to promote Latin American reality and perspectives, our goal is therefore is to strengthen the link between the two, and increase student academic interest in Latin American issues.

*Q: What other activities or groups are you involved with?*

A: I'm part of the SIPA Net Impact group, and also participate in "Por Colombia," an active student organization created for students with Colombian heritage.

*Q: How do you balance your time between school work and outside activities?*

A: I always try to participate in different activities, go out and do what I like outside school. It's not easy and I have to confess that sometimes I find myself being just a "student"... but with my friends we try to manage the time as efficiently as possible.

*Q: How do you gauge student involvement at SIPA?*

A: Since we started back in the fall I found a very engaging attitude toward student associations, and I feel all over that students somehow want to be involved in the decision-making processes. Sometimes I feel it is not enough, but I am so confident that my peers are willing to participate in the different processes we are facing this year.

*Q: What are your plans for the future?*

A: I want to work here for a while in sustainable investment issues and keep researching topics I enjoy such as "ecoefficiency" and social corporate responsibility initiatives. In the long run I dream of going back to Colombia.

*Q: Tell us something people don't know about you.*

A: That is a very complicated question, I don't know... maybe that the sports section is the first one I read in any newspaper. I am a big soccer fan, and I collect soccer jerseys. I plan to go on a stadium tour around the world some day (As soon as I finish paying my student loan).

*Q: With baseball season a couple of months away from starting, we have to ask... Yankees or Red Sox?*

A: Can I say Cardinals? ...but if I have to choose then Yankees.

Angela Ortiz looks forward to an exciting 2007 at LASA's helm. She stores her sugar in her freezer and can be reached at [ao2200@columbia.edu](mailto:ao2200@columbia.edu).

## The 2007 LASA Executive Board

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Community Outreach Chair

For more information, please visit:  
<http://sipa.columbia.edu/students/lasa>

## ANÚNCIO! Falatório Conversação e café

Prof. Luis Gonçalves has organized a Portuguese hour every Tuesday from 3 to 4 pm at Casa Hispânica on the 2nd floor for coffee, cookies and good conversation. If you are in a Portuguese class or if you are still around New York come speak Portuguese and meet new friends.

If anyone has pictures or souvenirs from other trips to any of the Portuguese speaking countries [Angola, Brasil, Cabo Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Moçambique, Portugal, São Tomé e Príncipe, Timor-Leste or the regions of Galiza (Spain), Goa, Damão and Diu (India), or Macau (China) please bring them and share your experience.

# Message from the Executive Director

Thomas J. Trebat



The busy Latin American election season has now wound down. What are we to make of eight presidential elections

other than a welcome sign of stronger democratic institutions?

One much-commented aspect is the so-called "pink tide rising": leftist or populist candidates either won outright in many cases or, as with Lopez Obrador in Mexico or Humala in Peru, waged spirited contests.

The success of the left in 2006 in Latin America is not too difficult to understand. A widespread disillusionment with the so-called Washington Consensus sweeps the region as the most ambitious economic reforms in history have failed to lift the living standards of the majority of its residents.

In this atmosphere of disillusionment, candidates aligned with the status quo were bound to find the going tough in 2006, and they did. Alvaro Uribe's easy win in Colombia is the exception to the rule and Calderon did squeak by in Mexico, but just barely and only after going negative. Lula won easily, so did Correa in Ecuador. Chavez prevailed in a landslide and even Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua managed a comeback.

It is interesting to note that Wall Street investors, not a group known for enthusiasm for leftist leaders in Latin America, have taken all of these election results in stride. Most Latin American sovereign bonds rallied in the wake of the elections. Even the foreign bonds of Ecuador, where the leftist candidate threatened to default on the debt if elected, have performed well in the aftermath of Correa's second round victory.

What is going on here? Savvy international investors have learned to discount the rhetoric of leftist candidates who have not been proven to be very radical once in office. Exhibit A is, of course, President Lula in Brazil following his election in 2002. The business community is not the least bit concerned that the newly-re-elected Lula will change his policies in the coming years.

So are we to conclude that nothing much is going to change despite the rise of the left to power? Maybe, but this should be a matter of some concern as new, more ambitious economic policies that would yield better growth are long overdue. Few of the elected leaders in 2006, whether from the left or the right, campaigned on the need to start closing

the growth and income distribution gap between Latin America and China, India, and much of the rest of the world. But isn't that what voters were clearly asking for?

No candidates promised meaningful reform to education in Latin America, for example, or argued the urgent need to support science and technology innovation in a region desperate for new knowledge. None urged a greater opening of the Latin American economies to world trade despite the fact that the East Asian economies have long shown the utility of doing so. In fact, Oscar Arias barely won in Costa Rica against an opponent opposed to CAFTA. Ortega in Nicaragua is hardly a proponent of freer trade for that impoverished land, and neither is Correa in Ecuador who has doubts about the free trade pact with the U.S..

The newly elected crop of leaders have very limited views of the potential for creative partnerships between the private and public sectors. Lula won handily in the second round by opposing any further privatizations in Brazil, despite an obvious need for greater infrastructure where private sector involvement is critically needed. Evo Morales' first act in Bolivia was to nationalize foreign gas properties, including the large holdings of Brazil.

Fewer candidates still proposed policies that would lead to a much needed diversification of the Latin American economies away from their dependence on natural resources. In Venezuela, President Chavez's entire economic policy can be summed up as a poorly planned redistribution of a temporary oil bonanza. Re-elected in a landslide, Chavez promises more of the same in an economy desperate for diversification.

Some of these new Latin leaders, once in office, may actually come up with policies that will give Latin America the hope of catching up with the rest of the emerging world. More likely, they may once in office do exactly what they promised— not much to change the alarming economic status quo.

## About the Institute

The Institute of Latin American Studies is the center for Latin America policy development and research at Columbia University. The Institute is housed in the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), which provides students and faculty with access to the resources of one of the major policy institutions in the world.

For more than 40 years, ILAS has supported scholarship and professional achievement in the field of Latin American Studies. It was founded in 1962 in response to the government's need for knowledge of what was then a relatively understudied region. In recent years, ILAS has become known within the University community as the best resource for both rich information and institutional contacts in Latin America.

### Institute Staff:

DIRECTOR: Albert Fishlow  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Thomas Trebat  
ADMINISTRATOR: Eliza Kwon-Ahn

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## upcoming dates and deadlines

Friday, March 9, 2007

Pre-Dissertation Summer Field Research Applications due

Tuesday, May 1, 2007

Graduate and Undergraduate Internship Grant Applications due

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

Junior Faculty Field Research Applications due

For more information, visit: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ilas>