During the Spring of 2016, The KU Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) hosted a series of events as part of the “Latino Americans: 500 Years of History” programing (LA500), made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the American Libraries Association (ALA).

The University of Kansas, in partnership with the Lawrence Public Library, KU Libraries and the Tonantzin Society of Topeka, were one of more than 200 grantees nationwide, to receive funding, resources, and support to host variety of public events about Latina/o American history and culture, including exhibits, film screenings, lectures, and more.

We are proud to have worked with a number of scholars and community partners; each brought different expertise to the programs they participated in, corresponding to the subject and issues raised by the films and/or the topic of their presentations. Almost all of them also brought their personal stories into the presentations as well.

KU supported the exploration of five centuries of the rich and diverse histories and experiences of Latina/os, who have helped shape the U.S., with a particular focus on the history, experiences, and contributions of Latina/os in Lawrence. We were pleased to see the Lawrence and Topeka communities come out and engage with these programs.

Here is a brief overview of our LA500 programs and the people who made them a success:

Santa Arias, Professor of Latin American Literatures and Cultures at the University of Kansas, was instrumental in putting the entire project together. Arias spoke in connection with the film, "Foreigners in their Own Land (1565-1880)," which uncovered the colonial history leading up to the Mexican American War. Program attendees appreciated her expertise in the subject area, the context she provided, and the questions she raised from the film.

Betsaida Reyes, librarian for Spanish and Portuguese and Latin American and Caribbean Studies, curated the multifaceted “Latino Americans: 500 Years of History” exhibit,
Upon my return to the Center, I had the opportunity to reconnect with many of you and make new friends at meetings and amazing events organized around our different fall programs. In addition to the outstanding lineup for the Meriendas and the sessions at the Hall Center Colonialism Seminar, the highlights were the multi-event programs around the exhibits “In the Shadow of Cortés” and “Portraits of Latinx Identity,” and various collaborations to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. I want to offer my appreciation to those who participated in these events, in particular, our guests John Schwaller from SUNY Albany, Kathleen Myers from Indiana University, Juan José Ponce Vázquez from the University of Alabama; and from KU: Constanza Castro, Marta Caminero-Santangelo, Mauricio Gómez Montoya, Stefanie Torres-Maksimowicz, Adam Newhard, Randy David, Philip Duncan, Bob Augelli, and finally, the 2015 Woodyard Awardee for International Education, Chris Brown.

There is no doubt that straddling the lean times without Title VI funding has been challenging, yet in many ways has been an enriching experience. We have ventured into new directions that have brought us closer to student organizations (HALO and LAGO) and others, such as the KU Libraries and the Lawrence Public Library. We continue serving our community earnestly; in creative ways shifting agendas in a different climate where nothing can be taken for granted. These testing times have revealed loyal supporters from various corners of the university who share our vision and are helping us to move forward. I want to acknowledge the support we received this semester from Beth Whittaker and her staff at the Spencer Research Library; Stuart Day, Interim Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs; Jennifer Hamer, Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; the Office of Multicultural Affairs; and Dean Carl W. Lejuez, Associate Dean Henry Bial, and Assistant Dean Erin Spiridigliozzi at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The effort of these individuals has been central to an exciting fall semester.

At the Center, we have reconstituted our team with two new staff members that are already making a great difference. Chad O’Bryhim (Administrative Associate) and Aron Muci (Communications Assistant) are jointly supporting CLACS’s communications to reach out with more frequency and reshape our message to appeal directly to our students. With the support of Cécile Accilien as Associate Director and Director of the Graduate Program, and Robert Schwaller, Director of the Undergraduate Program; we have redirected attention to the articulation of our academic programs. Cécile and I have overseen the approval progress of the new graduate certificate program, submitted last year by Brent Metz. This new certificate will allow students to choose between three tracks: Brazilian Studies, Mexico and Central America, and a general track to deepen their interdisciplinary training in the region and gain a recognized credential demonstrating their expertise. In Undergraduate Studies, Robert Schwaller has worked diligently streamlining the articulation of our requirements for the major. Much remains to be done, yet I am confident that with more visibility and support of advisors across campus, students will find Latin American and Caribbean Studies a challenging degree that can provide opportunities for exciting careers.

Our efforts to improve the curriculum and expand our programming for students as well as members of our community go hand in hand with our commitment to diversity and inclusion. Our center is a safe place, and our programs recognize, celebrate, and teach about diversity. In our effort to teach and bring visibility and understanding about the region and peoples from Latin America and the Caribbean, our top priority is to contribute making KU a safer environment for learning and working for all.

Santa Arias, CLACS Director

“Our efforts to improve the curriculum and expand our programming for students... go hand in hand with our commitment to diversity and inclusion. Our center is a safe place, and our programs recognize, celebrate, and teach about diversity.”

-Santa Arias
CLACS and KU Libraries collaborated for the first time to display “In the Shadow of Cortés: From Veracruz to Mexico City,” a traveling photographic exhibit, supplemented by materials and artifacts curated by Kenneth Spencer Research Library, that retraces the route of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés’ 1519 invasion of central Mexico.

Created by Indiana University Professor, Kathleen Myers in collaboration with National Geographic photographer, Steve Raymer, it visualizes the route of Hernán Cortés from Veracruz to Mexico City, bringing to the forefront cultural traditions, landscapes, and glimpses at the early colonial encounters. Among the portraits are some of the sixty-one Mexicans that Professor Kathleen Myers interviewed along the route once crossed by the army of Spaniards. They retold their version of the conquest while weighing on the impact for them today.

Other photographs show the storytellers, scholars, and townspeople interviewed, and of commemorations of Cortés’ conquest, including festivals and locations that give prominence to Spanish and Catholic influences. Some depict resurgent celebrations of indigenous cultures dating back 500 years and archaeological efforts that reveal pre-colonial architecture and artifacts systematically supplanted by Cortés’ invasion.

In conjunction with the traveling exhibit, KU Libraries is showcasing original materials, including some modern editions and facsimiles of books and maps related to Cortés and the conquest. The exhibit uses these materials to provide glimpses into the pre-Hispanic world in Mexico, the Spanish in the Americas from Columbus to Cortés, accounts by participants in and eyewitnesses to the conquest, histories of the conquest by other authors, and Spanish post-conquest colonization efforts.

This project is not a celebration of Hernan Cortés or the Spanish Conquest, but a close examination of its pervasive legacy, surviving traditions, and historical representations of places and landscapes shaping people’s identities and daily lives. Indeed, the images and stories collected by Myers make us think of the cultural impact of fieldwork: hearing/listening/collecting stories thus illustrating the complexity of cultural memory and collective identity.

Alumnus Schwaller Gives Opening Reception and Lecture

CLACS and KU Libraries, with additional support from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Department of History, Hall Center for the Humanities, Department of Religious Studies, and Indigenous Studies Program, hosted an opening reception for the traveling exhibit, “In the Shadow of Cortés: From Veracruz to Mexico City,” on Wednesday, September 28 at the Spencer Research Library.

CLACS was pleased to welcome back University of Kansas alumnus, and current professor of history at the University at Albany (SUNY), John Schwaller to discuss portions of his most recent publication, The First Letter from New Spain: The Lost Petition of Cortés and His Company. Schwaller articulated the historical context for an authoritative translation and analysis of the only surviving original document from the first months of the Spanish conquest.

Schwaller spoke about his time in the Spanish archives, discovering an early-sixteenth-century letter from Veracruz signed by the members of Cortés’ company. Because of his work, we now understand the socially competitive men who risked charges of treason by renouncing the Spanish Crown in a quest for entrepreneurship and other overlooked traits that fueled the conquest.

John Schwaller and his family’s contributions to the University of Kansas are voluminous, and his lecture only continued that proud tradition by helping to make the opening reception a succes.
Salsa Dancing with “Chinese Characteristics”

Ketty Wong-Cruz, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology

Salsa music emerged in New York City as a symbol of Nuyorican pride, and later became an expression of pan-Latin American identity. Today, however, salsa has also become a transnational expression devoid of identity politics that characterized this music in the 1960s and 1970s. Images of a happy, passionate, and sexy dance have replaced those of the Latino barrios and working-class struggles in the inner cities. This change in salsa’s perception is partly due to the globalization of salsa dancing as a result of the codification and standardization of the dance steps in the 1990s, which are inspired by the sensual body movements and gestures of the international ballroom dances.

Salsa dancing in China is a recent phenomenon and is gradually growing and spreading to cities without a connection to a large Latino immigrant community, as occurs in the United States. In China, interest in salsa dancing began in the 1990s when Latin American diplomats and businessmen started arranging dance nights in clubs in Sanlitun, a business and diplomatic area in Beijing. Salsa music was still not very well known in the country and the “Macarena” epitomized what many Chinese thought salsa music was. In 2005, American dancer Jack Dunn opened the first full-time salsa dance studio where Latin dance enthusiasts could take lessons, and in 2006 he organized the first China Salsa Congress, which gave broader visibility to the dance. In the same period, foreign dancers began to arrive in Beijing and Shanghai to teach salsa lessons for short or extended periods, and soon afterwards Chinese salsa enthusiasts began to teach salsa to other Chinese nationals. Some taught salsa as a fitness activity in Chinese universities, while others rented a gym or asked local bar owners to lend venues on a weeknight when business was slow. One instructor, David Huo is arguably considered the “King of Salsa” in China. He spent a year studying the dance in Cuba and received international recognition when he won the 2005 World Latin Dance Competition in Havana.

What are the characteristics of Chinese salsa fans? They tend to be professionals born in the 1980s, the early years of the economic reform and opening of China. They typically work in management and/or technology and hold white-collar positions, which provide the incomes needed to support a middle-class lifestyle. Many take lessons at dance studios and practice their new dance skills at salsa parties organized in bars and nightclubs. Those who have adopted salsa as a way of life attend salsa congresses both within and outside China, where they seek to improve and try to show off their salsa moves at workshops taught by international instructors. Some push themselves further by dancing in competitions and stage shows. Unlike their parents, who expe-
rienced the harshness of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), they have been raised in a more prosperous China that thrives in a socialist market economy. Many Chinese I interviewed in Beijing and Shanghai described their encounter with salsa dancing as life changing, some even quitting their lucrative jobs to become full-time dance instructors and DJs. Several people I interviewed told me that following their heart’s desires and being happy were more important than making money.

Chinese reactions to salsa trigger several questions: Why is salsa dancing appealing to a particular segment of the Chinese population? Do Chinese salsa fans associate salsa with Latin American culture? Finally, what meanings does salsa dancing convey to them? This last question is particularly important in a culture shaped by Confucian moral values and Chairman Mao’s communist ideology, both of which discourage dancing as a social activity. It must be noted that the idea of dancing for the purpose of socializing is a major change in traditional Chinese society, which is accustomed to socializing at dinner tables and through toasting people and singing karaoke. China has undergone rapid processes of modernization and urbanization in the past four decades and it is hardly surprising that Chinese professionals born in the late 1970s and 1980s view, or wish to view, themselves in contemporary China. Most importantly, salsa dance inserts them into a globalized form of popular culture, thus connecting them with a transnational community that shares similar cosmopolitan urban sensibilities. For Chinese salsa fans, salsa is not just a happy, sexy, and passionate foreign dance, but also “a gateway to the cultural Other, a fascinating and often exotic world where new selves find liberation from cultural struc-

dances that retired people practice in outdoor venues, or the rock and pop music that the younger generations listen to. They identify with salsa, an umbrella term that also includes other Latin dances such as the bachata, merengue and cha-cha-cha, as it speaks to their cosmopolitan life experiences and new social status in contemporary China.

While Chinese salsa fans are aware of the Cuban origins of salsa, they generally know little about its people, language, and culture. Interestingly enough, Chinese and other non-Latino salsa groups tend to trace salsa’s beginnings to a ballroom sphere, rather than to the Latino barrios or streets. Non-Latino people learn to dance the “studio salsa,” a style of salsa dancing that relies more on globally disseminated steps retained in their kinetic memory than on their hearing and feeling the music. The commercialization and dissemination of salsa on the Internet have also de-emphasized its ethnic origins, further removing this dance from its Latin American roots (Hutchingson 2013). However, it must be noted that while some Chinese people are initially attracted to the kinetic aspects of the dance, they later become interested in the musical aspects, lyrics, performers, and history of the genre, especially when they achieve a certain degree of proficiency in the dance movements. Many travel to Cuba in search of salsa’s roots.

“Salsa dancing has come to symbolize modernity, happiness, passion, and sensuality, elements that are not characteristic of traditional Chinese society...”

Just as with many other popular musics in the world, salsa is a polysemic expression that generates a multiplicity of meanings when it travels across cultures and national borders. I would like to point out two of them: the construction of gender identities and the insertion of Chinese salsa fans into a transnational community of cosmopolitan people. In my view, salsa dancing contributes to the construction and expression of gender identities in the era of Chinese reform, especially because symbolic differences between genders were practically erased for the generations growing up during the Cultural Revolution, a period Keiko Ohama refers to as the age of “desexualization.” This is observed, for example, in the use of “Mao suits,” the indistinguishable military jackets that men and women used to wear and that would hide their gender identities. In the dance studio context, gender patterns are explicitly taught in order to construct sexual differentiation, a feature that is generally absent in Latin American dancing style. For example, women are taught to move in a “sexy” and flirt way, while men are instructed to lead the dance. Latin American salsa dancers, however, focus less on turning, spinning, and looking sexy, and more on how the total body moves to the music. As a result, people who learn salsa outside of the Latin American environment have a tendency to sexualize it, while those who have grown up dancing to salsa music do not (Pietrobruno 2006). The perception that salsa is merely a form of sexual expression often fades as individuals become more involved in the dance.

Salsa scholars agree that today salsa dancing no longer points only to New York Latino barrios, or Cuban, Puerto Rican, or Latin American cultures in general; it also speaks to urban settings, cosmopolitan audiences, and the multiethnic interactions in transnational leisure environments. Salsa dancing has come to symbolize modernity, happiness, passion, and sensuality, elements that are not characteristic of traditional Chinese society, but that represent how Chinese professionals born in the late 1970s and 1980s view, or wish to view, themselves in contemporary China. Most importantly, salsa dance inserts them into a globalized form of popular culture, thus connecting them with a transnational community that shares similar cosmopolitan urban sensibilities. For Chinese salsa fans, salsa is not just a happy, sexy, and passionate foreign dance, but also “a gateway to the cultural Other, a fascinating and often exotic world where new selves find liberation from cultural struc-

REFERENCES


LA500: Events Involve Broad Community (cont.)

which is the first exhibition on Latina/o history at KU. The exhibit focused on the Coronado expedition into Kansas in 1541 and the explorer's lasting legacy on the region, a relatively unknown part of Kansas’ history. Reyes developed the concept, located and purchased the materials, and handled all the visual and written content of the exhibit.

Norma Valenzuela, Professor of American Ethnic Studies at Kansas State University, is a leading scholar in Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies, specializing in Spanish language instruction, gender, class, and race/ethnicity studies within a transnational context. She lent her expertise for the educator workshop, “Latina/os in the Midwest,” which was a professional development workshop for K-14 educators, including administrators and school librarians. This workshop and affiliated course was intended to help educators grappling in the classroom with the history and experience of Latina/os in the U.S.

Yajaira Padilla, Professor of English and Latin American and Latina/o Studies at the University of Arkansas, is a former Professor at KU in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. She is a leading Central Americanist and Latina/o Studies scholar, and, given the emphasis on the role of women in her research, gave the opening keynote. Her talk, “Centroamericanas in the US: Rendering the Central American Female Immigrant Experience Through Latin@ American Cultural Production,” was scholarly and very engaging.

Rubén Flores, Professor of American Studies at KU, is an intellectual and cultural historian from El Paso, Texas and the former Associate Director of CLACS. His academic work, combined with his personal background, made him the natural choice to lead the discussion in connection with the film, “Empire of Dreams (1880-1942):” which detailed the surge of immigration to the U.S. from Latin countries. He provided excellent context for the film, even sharing a letter his mom wrote to a friend shortly after immigrating to the U.S.

Magalí Rabasa, Professor of Hispanic Studies at Lewis and Clark University, was a Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at KU. Her teaching focuses on social movements and popular media, as well as feminist and postcolonial studies, with particular emphasis on the U.S., Mexico, Bolivia, and Argentina. As a scholar and activist, she led the discussion for the film, “Prejudice and Pride (1965-1980),” which covered the cultural revolutions and political actions of frustrated Mexican Americans and Chicana/os, particularly in connection with the United Farm Workers Movement. She led an informative, thought-provoking, and inspiring discussion.

Norma Cantú, Professor of Latina/o Studies at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, a leading expert on Latina/o Cultural Studies, Border Studies, Chicano/a and Latina/o Literature & Film, Folklore and Women’s Studies, was an ideal scholar to lead the discussion for the film, “Peril and Promise (1980-2000),” which focused on the Latina/o diaspora from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Her discussion combined rich knowledge of the subject with personal familiarity, and created an environment that was highly conducive to audience participation.
Jeanette Rodríguez, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Seattle University, was suggested as a scholar for this series by our community partner, the Tonantzin Society. Her closing keynote presentation brought attention to two major understudied themes in Latina/o research, women and religion, and focused on the Virgin of Guadalupe, who serves as a central point of community and connection in the Latina/o community in Topeka.

Chris Ortiz, local M.F.A. photography student at Savannah College of Art and Design, partnered with CLACS on a portrait project as part of the LA500 program series. Ortiz took high quality portraits of the Latina/o community in Lawrence, which were on display at the Lawrence Public Library during several of the events. The portraits were intended to reflect Latina/os living, working, and studying in the Lawrence community.

The series of events drew in a lot of participants, raised visibility of Latina/o American history and presence locally and nationally, and generated great interest. CLACS strengthened existing partnerships and formed new connections with community organizations, community members, and scholars that will support ongoing engagement.

CLACS appreciated receiving feedback about our programs, which demonstrated the community’s interest learning more about the histories of Latina/o Americans, as well as contemporary issues affecting this group of people locally and nationally.

We will continue to plan programs intended to reach a wider audience, and are working to make related resources widely available and accessible via our website. For example, we have consolidated various resources about Latina/o Americans in the Midwest and nationally on our website, collected pictures and stories, and are working with the KU Libraries to digitize the Latina/o Americans exhibit on Coronado’s expedition. Moreover, our Topeka Oral History Project resulted in two short documentary video segments on the Mexican American Community in Topeka, which we will be shared widely upon completion of production.

At CLACS, we are eager to continue working with activists, artists, community members, and organizations to produce thought-provoking programs that explore the rich and varied history and experiences of Latina/os living in the Midwest.

Kathleen Myers discussed her book, *In the Shadow of Cortés: From Veracruz to Mexico City*, and accompanying photographic exhibit. Myers’ lecture detailed her travels collecting testimony, narratives, and interviews that reflect the indelible cultural and political shadow of Hernán Cortés’ conquest. Hernán Cortés’ invasion in 1519 across central Mexico was a catalyst for one of the most rapid and profound changes in human history. Myers also presented work from renowned National Geographic photographer Steve Raymer, whose collaborative effort added visuals to the textual narrative of cultural memory and collective identity retold and reinterpreted differently by individuals and groups.

Her book proposes a visual and cultural history of the legacy of contact between the Spanish conquistadors and indigenous groups of Mexico. It highlights the route by showing cultural traditions, landscapes and glimpses of the historical archive resulting from this early colonial encounter. Furthermore, Myers offered a close examination of Hernán Cortés’ pervasive legacy and the surviving indigenous traditions and places shaping people’s identities and daily lives.

We appreciate Myers’ willingness to visit KU and discuss her perceptive research in central Mexico, which works to challenge a singular identity of Mexico and its people that often permeates politics and popular culture.
Grupo Huitzilopochtli, a traditional Aztec dance group from Metropolitan State University in Denver, CO, returned to KU for another thrilling performance as part of Dia De Los Muertos celebrations. With support from Topeka’s Tonantzin Society, they performed in several locations in Lawrence and Topeka on October 27 and 28, 2016, visiting local K-12 schools, and performing at KU on the Watson Library front lawn. Grupo Huitzilopochtli, a mixture of people from several generations, performed ceremonial dances, recited traditional prayers, and educated viewers on aspects of the indigenous Aztec culture.

According to Grupo Huitzilopochtli, “the dance performance forms a circle, which is symbolic of life and the universe. This artform not only involves dance and music, but also community respect, [providing] an opportunity for all to pray for their families and for the world.” They stress that the performance is meant to relive and share the ancient practices of the indigenous peoples of Anáhuac.

Grupo Huitzilopochtli welcomed dozens of passing students, faculty, and staff to witness and participate in the traditional dance performance. Several instructors and their students attended the public event, attracting a diverse group of people to engage with traditional Aztec culture. Following the performance, Grupo Huitzilopochtli led much of the audience in a procession westward on Jayhawk Boulevard, through Strong Hall, and to the Spencer Research Library to tour the “In the Shadow of Cortés” exhibit. As you can imagine, the colorful and vibrant costumes, the loud banging of the drums, the rhythmic rattles, and soulful flutes drew eyes and ears as they marched across the KU campus.

In the end, Grupo Huitzilopochtli demonstrated the importance of recognizing the contributions of indigenous peoples locally, nationally, and abroad. CLACS is continuously grateful for Grupo Huitzilopochtli’s willingness to educate the KU community, and we look forward to future performances and partnership from this talented group of
LA500 Programs Inspire Campus and Community Engagement

Our Center has many plans to extend the LA500 initiative beyond the grant term. With our community partners we are focusing on new events, funding proposals, and projects that will enhance our efforts together. Here is a summary of what’s to come:

Building on the portrait project that we started during the LA500 initiative, we collaborated with Chris Ortiz and the Hispanic American Leadership Organization at KU to put together an exhibit and an exhibit of portraits of Latina/os at KU entitled, “Portraits of Latina/o Identity.” The exhibit ran from October 31 – November 12 in the Student Union Gallery at the Kansas Memorial Union. The exhibit featured portraits of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff lit with hard light and set against a black background so as to center focus on the individuals and inspire empathy in viewers.

The exhibit was intended to increase visibility of Latina/os at KU, which is essential to cultivate community, create a sense of inclusiveness, and move beyond stereotypes. By displaying the portraits of individuals who identify as Latino, Latina, Latin@, Latinx, etc., and who work, study, live, and teach at KU, the project also showcased the diversity of the community.

In addition to high quality portraits, each participant was asked to provide a short narrative about their identity and how that has influenced their experience at KU. The portrait project gave way to an insightful panel discussion, featuring several participants who discussed their personal identity, the history and meaning of various terms, such as “Latino,” “Hispanic,” and “Latinx,” the importance of self-identification, and the current political climate.

Due to our strengthened relationship with Lawrence Public Library, we partnered to apply for an NEA Big Read grant. Together we selected In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez. Our grant application was successful, so we are again partnering on a community-wide series of programs between February-March 2017 intended to highlight readings to diverse audiences. Alvarez will speak at KU’s Leid Center on March 05, 2017.

Our librarian, Betsaida Reyes, is working to turn the Latina/o Americans exhibit into a digital presentation. Working with Omeka, an image management system, she plans to have a map of the state of Kansas where she can pin relevant locations to the expedition. Users can then open the pins to get more information on the items and locations. Coronado’s expedition into Kansas in 1541 is well known. This digital exhibition aims to bridge that gap.

We plan to work with the Lawrence Public Library and the Tonantzin Society to build on the Oral History Projects we began as part of the LA500 initiative. The full audio will be hosted on our website to make accessible to the public. Also, we hope that we can use these initial efforts and projects to apply for further funding to take part in a larger collection of stories. We would like to interview more subjects and produce several additional video segments.

Due to the popularity of the educator workshop, “Latino Americans in the Midwest,” we will be developing a template for future workshops to bring more awareness to local educators. Also, because we expanded the workshop for educators seeking continuing education credits, we were able to collect additional resources, such as lesson plans and episode study guides that we will be made available as resources on our website.

At CLACS, we are excited to extend the benefits of the “Latino Americans: 500 Years of History” nationwide programming initiative. We are always interested in your feedback and involvement, and look forward to working together to showcase Latina/os locally and nationally.
Chris Brown Recognized with Woodyard Award

I remember traveling with Chris to Brazil and Uruguay to help establish better research and international opportunities for both our students and their students. It was always amazing to watch Chris move back and forth between the more formal and informal settings as we met with various administrators during our visits. His ability to connect with everyone is always incredible, as is his ability to remember the names and details of people that we met in passing on one occasion or another. That was one of the more memorable parts of the trips, as was almost missing our plane since we were having a little too much fun in the São Paulo airport bar!

-Dr. Nathaniel Brunsell, Chair and Professor, Geography

Prof. J. Christopher Brown received the 2015 George and Eleanor Woodyard International Educator Award for his outstanding leadership in international education at KU.

The University of Kansas honored Prof. Brown as the 2015 recipient at a ceremony held on November 02, 2016 at the Kansas Memorial Union. At the event, he presented his work in international education as well as his research. For you, we have a collection of statements from two of Prof. Brown’s colleagues, providing snapshots of his amazing work at the university and abroad.

Faculty Spotlight Lua Kamál Yuille

Lua Kamál Yuille is an interdisciplinary scholar whose work connects property theory, business law, and group identity. Before joining the KU Law faculty in 2013, Professor Yuille enjoyed a diverse professional career. In addition to wide-ranging experience in traditional legal fields—for example, she served as a law clerk in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit, taught at the University of Oregon School of Law, and spent nearly a decade at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP in New York—Professor Yuille was a socio-economic development lawyer in Latin America and developed legal practice that emphasized Latin American corporate transactions and maintained a robust pro bono immigration litigation practice. Professor Yuille draws on these experiences in her teaching of Property Law, Immigration Law, Business Associations, and Asylum Law, where she uses collaborative approaches designed to allow students to construct their own understandings of the power, value, and importance of law.

Professor Yuille’s research is as diverse as her professional and academic experience and as innovative in her teaching. She has examined American sexual harassment law as a form of societal pedagogy; offered sophisticated jurisprudential analyses of the implicit human rights regimes in religious scripture; and compared the legal organization of European Roma and Latinx communities in the U.S.

Professor Yuille’s current research seeks to understand market interactions not just as engines of financial wealth, but also as interactions that are important to self-identity and self-definition by creating value and meaning. She examines how the meanings and structure embedded in law shape markets and market actors in ways that are unanticipated and unrecognized. The empirical and theoretical work borne from this research is exciting. She has argued that street gangs are complex corporate bodies engaged in the creation of a special category of capital she calls “identity property,” and that governments should compensate the members of these gangs for refraining from certain gang conduct. This work has begun being replicated by researchers in Brazil and Italy. In another project, Professor Yuille is reversing her gangs-as-corporations analogy to suggest that corporations behave like gangs. This comparative project examines corporations in the United States, Europe, and Latin America to determine the role of these bodies in the development of the identities of their agents in order to better understand “pathological” corporate behaviors, from malfeasance to altruism.

Professor Yuille is currently developing a course that will offer students practical experience in all aspects of doing business in Latin America.
Glenn E. Adams, Professor, Department of Psychology

In September, Adams traveled to South Africa where he delivered a keynote address on the topic of “Decolonizing Psychology: A special thematic section of the Journal of Social and Personality Psychology” as a member of an American Psychological Association delegation to the annual congress of the Psychological Society of South Africa.

With Nadia Jessop (a KU Tinker Fellow), he authored the journal article: “Internationalizing the Psychology Curriculum: Preliminary Notes on Conception and Assessment of Anticipated Benefits” soon to appear in Psychology Teaching Review.

Giselle Anatol, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of English

In 2016, Anatol published a chapter of “From Granny’s Knee to Graduate Seminar: The Travels of the Soucouyant” in Mobile and Entangled America[s], edited by Maryemma Graham and Wilfried Raussert. In June, she traveled to Port-Au-Prince, Haiti to present “Papa Bois and Mama D’Lo in Contemporary Children’s Books” at the 41st Annual Caribbean Studies Association Conference. Lastly, she was the recipient of the Ned Fleming Award for Excellence in Teaching by the University of Kansas.

Santa Arias, Professor, Department of Spanish & Portuguese, Director, CLACS


Stuart Day, Interim Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Associate Professor, Spanish & Portuguese

Day has two books forthcoming: Strategic Alliances: Performances That Shape Mexico (University of Arizona Press, spring 2017) and Mexico Through Art (University of Arizona Press, fall 2017). Current projects include the book Spaces of Change in the Americas.

Verónica Garibotto, Associate Professor, Department of Spanish & Portuguese

In 2016, Garibotto published The Latin American Road Movie co-edited with Jorge Pérez. In addition, she published several articles and book chapters, including: “Pitfalls of Trauma: Revisiting Post-Dictatorship Cinema from a Semiotic Standpoint” in Latin American Research Review; “Reconfiguring Precarious Landscapes: the Road Movie in Latin America,” co-authored with Jorge Pérez, and edited by Verónica Garibotto and Jorge Pérez from The Latin American Road Movie; “Lecturas al limite: tensiones ideológicas en la ficción histórica de la editorial Sudamericana” in The Latin American Literary Review.

Cecilia Menjívar, Foundation Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology


Throughout 2016, she presented at several papers, including: “Country Conditions for the Migration of Central American Women,” at the Plenary Session, CLINIC (Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.) in Kansas City, MO; “Geopolitics, Securitization, and the Definitional Question in Asylum Admissions: The Case of Central Americans Then and Now” at Shifting Landscapes of Asylum in North America held in Harvard University; “Comenista. Encuentro Internacional sobre la Situación de las Mujeres Trabajadoras Migrantes” at ONU-Mujeres y El Colegio de México.

Robert Schwaller, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Director of Undergraduate Studies, CLACS

Following the recent publication of his book Generos de Gente in Early Colonial Mexico: Defining Racial Difference, He has begun working on an article examining sixteenth century conflicts between Spaniards and maroon communities. He is interested in how those communities engaged in their own conquests of land from the Spanish, which in turn necessitated renewed campaigns of conquest on the part of Spaniards. He hopes to continue this research during the summer of 2017 at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Spain.

Marta Valentin Vicente, Associate Professor, Department of History, Department of Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies


In the spring of 2016, she was the recipient of the Friends of the Hall Center Book Award and travels to San Diego, CA to present “Spanish Feminists Theorize Sex and Gender: Lessons from the Enlightenment” at the ASPHS annual meeting.
Rachel Denney is a 4th year doctoral student in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department, with a concentration in Political Science. She has a professional background in the international non-profit sector. Her dissertation research focuses on the relationship between developing state governments and non-governmental organizations in Central America and the Caribbean. From Fall 2013-Spring 2015, Rachel was a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow, studying Haitian Creole. Since Fall 2015, she has served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the WGSS department, including a “live lab” in qualitative methodology focusing on KU’s Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Initiative. She was an Institute for Policy and Social Research Fellow in 2015-16. Rachel is pursuing a graduate certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies. She is currently revising an article for publication based on research conducted in the Dominican Republic on the intersection of citizenship and human trafficking.

This past summer, Rachel used funds from the Tinker Field Research Grant to conduct fieldwork in Guatemala. She interviewed over a dozen NGO representatives, activists, and local experts to learn more about their work and their interactions with the local, regional, and federal government. This research will form part of her dissertation project, analyzing government-NGO relations in Haiti, Guatemala, and Jamaica and investigating how the ongoing legacies of colonialism are impacting the international development efforts.

After defending her dissertation proposal in the upcoming months, Rachel plans to conduct research in Haiti, Jamaica, and Washington D.C., with funding from the Charles Stansifer Fellowship. The purpose of these trips will be to conduct interviews with key stakeholders in the development and foreign aid sectors, including NGO staff, government officials, and community activists. By triangulating sectors, Rachel hopes to represent a diverse cross-section of the international development world, including local and global contexts and the advantages and challenges associated with international development work.
Stouse Awards in Latin American Geography

Diana Restrepo

“Restrepo works with communities in Paraguay and Uruguay, and ... hopes to identify generational practices that may aid these communities in adapting to the potential impacts of climate change in this region of the world.”

Diana Restrepo is in her third year as a PhD student in the Geography department. She is currently preparing to take her comprehensive exams and has recently started working as a hydrologic investigator with the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) unit at the United States Geological Survey’s Kansas Water Science Center. Restrepo is furthering her understanding on the ArcGIS platform and its applicability in the analysis of water resource data sets. She will utilize these skills in the analysis and dissemination of hydrologic data associated with her research project in the Southern cone of South America.

Restrepo works with communities in Paraguay and Uruguay, and she is interested in evaluating stakeholder perceptions regarding natural resource management in urban and rural contexts. More specifically, she is interested in the influence of perceptions on civic engagement for the sustainable management of soil health and the water resource. In the rural areas of Paraguay and Uruguay she plans to gather discourses and narratives from farmers, including cattle ranchers, regarding the implementation of best management practices. Restrepo hopes to identify generational practices that may aid these communities in adapting to the potential impacts of climate change in this region of the world.

In the urban areas of Paraguay and Uruguay, Restrepo is interested in exploring the role of perceptions on civic engagement for the management of basic services like water and garbage disposal. Ultimately, she would like to explore the connections between water quality, human health, and culturally-based techniques utilized to ameliorate disease.

Will Penner

He is specifically interested in understanding how women can be included in new and alternative forms of sustainable food production that combat malnutrition. Last spring at the American Association of Geographers (AAGs) conference in San Francisco, Penner presented on how a moral-geographic framework can better inform the way people understand and implement food systems. This spring Penner will once again present at the AAGs, this time in Boston. Penner will discuss the struggles of implementing food system transitions within the context of an industrial coffee economy.

In May of 2017, he will defend his thesis and graduate with a masters of geography and a masters of urban planning. Upon graduating, Penner hopes to return to Latin America on a research fellowship that will allow him to combine field work and policy analysis to better understand issues related to hunger and food security.

Personally, he also hopes to spend more time working with indigenous agrarian communities in Latin America who are at the forefront of the food sovereignty movement and who are the most vulnerable to climate change and global food policy decisions. After gaining more hands on experience with these issues related to food security policy and food system transitions, Penner aims to return to academia for his PhD in Geography. By that time, he would like to develop a career aimed at dismantling the tools that allow multinational agrochemical corporations to effectively control global food production through the commodification, genetic modification, and control of seed.
Tinker Field Research Grants Provide Students with Funding for Research in Latin America

In 2013, CLACS was awarded a prestigious grant from the Tinker Foundation to fund graduate student field research in Latin America. The grant, together with KU matching funds, provides $30,000 per year through 2016 for students to conduct short-term research on a non-dissertation topic in Latin America that is new to them. Each year, students benefit from access to invaluable data and research experience they would have otherwise been unable to attain.

Jennifer M. Abercrombie-Foster, Spanish and Portuguese, performed field research in Santiago, Chile. While there, she dedicated most of her time attending the 6th annual film festival FemCine to investigate the overarching question of how Latin American women filmmakers perceive themselves and their role within a larger Latin American film community. During her time at the FemCine she had time to view 12 films, but only one of the film directors was present for an interview. She explored many different museums such as "Nos/Otras: En la calle, en la casa y en la cama" an exhibit of revolutionary women’s participation in Chile in the 1980s, Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos and the Museo de Bellas Artes. She also attended a workshop entitled “Encuentro: Cine de mujeres y distribución internacional” with Yvonne Welbon who discussed her organization that promotes the appearance of more women filmmakers in cinema. Altogether, her time in Santiago made her better equipped to design and teach a future film course that emphasizes Latin American women filmmakers. For future research, she would like to look more closely at documentaries, especially those that are directed by women filmmakers from Central American and Caribbean.

Kevin Chovanec, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, travelled to the Dominican Republic to work with local collaborators to study fossil deposits from the island’s Barahona Peninsula, a species-rich region of high conservation priority. He studied the remains of Caribbean sloths, primates, tortoises, lizards, birds, and rodents to better understand what a healthy Caribbean ecosystem would look like without human interference. A trip full of cave excavation studied over time how the animal life has changed in the Caribbean. Top layers were full of invasive rat remains, but as Chovanec dug deeper extinct and extralimital species become more common. The samples collected will quantify temporal changes in the local vertebrate community and to date critical extinction events. The bones will take a while to sift through, but eventually the hope is that this study will provide important temporal context to better understand the island’s unique herpetofauna.

Rachel Denney, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, explored the field of international humanitarian aid in Guatemala. More specifically, she wanted to explore the relationship between NGOs and the governments of developing states. Denney discovered that the low socio-economic indicators of Guatemala relative to its neighbors in the region attracted an unusually high number of NGOs. While in Antigua, Denney interviewed more than 12 NGOs and found that they were split on aid philosophies. Some were very politically active and wanted to provide services that often fell short coming from the government. These NGOs set up parallel institutions like schools or medical clinics. Others took the opposing side, attempting to supplement existing institutions and improve services, but perceived setting up schools or clinics as overreach. Guatemala has more than 40,000 NGOs working throughout the country today, yet socio-economic indicators are actually getting worse. This research illuminates the varying philosophies of international development and could enhance the best practices for services in the future.

Sarah Estrada-Villalta, Psychology, engaged in critical research about the construction of social and national identity in Costa Rica and Guatemala. Estrada-Villalta specifically wanted to explore perceptions of nation in these two countries and how these related to attitudes of social justice issues like minority rights and environmental protection. She approached these questions mostly in the urban hubs to sample the incredibly diverse populations of Costa Rica and Guatemala, and researched the organic opinions of everyday people by approaching individuals in public spaces. In total, Estrada-Villalta surveyed 189 people across the two countries and found that both had interesting yet divergence perceptions of social justice. In Costa Rica, respondents associated their national identity greatly with nature, as well as a strong notion of peace. Both of these relate to the abolition of the military. In Guatemala the majority of the participants mentioned multiculturalism and Indigenous cultural products such as food and textiles as an important attribute that makes the nation exceptional. Many participants also mentioned their perception of citizen insecurity as distinctive attribute of the nation. Neither country’s respondents strongly associated the flag with national identity. These fascinating findings give insight into the complex formation of national identity in Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Matthew L Fahrenbruch, Geography, researched the jellyfish export industry on the Miskitu Coast of Nicaragua. He interviewed several local individuals associated with the jellyfish industry as well...
as met with the Deans and faculty of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment at BICU (FARENA) and the Institute for Natural Resources, Environment and Sustainable Development in URACAAN (IREMADIES). One interview was with Larry Finley, a local plant supervisor and buyer in Bilwi. After meeting with Larry, he learned that the 2015 jellyfish season was very weak and lasted only about a month from December to January 2016. Fahrenbruch also talked with others such as Fidel, a local fisherman/businessman, regional fishery technician Howard Henrique, and Xenia Gordon Martinez a local fisheries manager in Pearl Lagoon. From the interviews he learned that, like in Bilwi, there is no active management of the jellyfish in Pearl Lagoon. Aside from his other research he also wanted to get an idea of how territories negotiate the seasonal movement of people who work in the factories and the extraction of resources that very well may cross territorial boundaries. For this, he interviewed Dean Hodgson. Fahrenbruch stated that everyone he met with, from fishermen to faculty to government officials related their concern over the lack of scientific information on the jellyfish fishery and expressed their support for his project.

Joey Hentzler, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, set out to understand better if development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) influence the way indigenous Bolivians express their indigeneity through their targeting mechanisms. He spent a majority of his time identifying potential organizations for case studies, introducing himself to them, and building his professional network in Cochabamba - the city and department. He likewise was able to position himself to the point of obtaining interviews with Sustainable Bolivia and gaining access to their network of 32 other NGOs in Cochabamba. This enabled him to connect with rural development NGO and travel into the countryside multiple times to meet with technicians and formally interview some of them. During his time in Bolivia he gathered useful interviews from three organizations: Sustainable Bolivia, IDEI, and Project Artesania Zona Andina (PAZA) in the small town of Independencia 8-hours outside of Cochabamba. He mentioned that although he did conduct useful interviews, the difference in culture and context was a massive hurdle to overcome while pursuing interviews and access to NGOs.

Nadia Jessop, Psychology, researched the intricate relationships between cultural identity, education, and civic engagement specifically for Afro-Costa Ricans. Her research design was complicated by a lack of diversity of students in the San José campus of UCR. In addition, Afro-Costa Ricans, though in greater numbers at the UCR Limón headquarters, were not in the majority at that campus. During her 2-week stay in San José, she conducted 27 interviews and 175 surveys with only 1 student identifying as Afro-Costa Rican. She therefore focused her interviews (20 total) during her 2-weeks stay in Limón on Afro-descendants, and she collected data from 134 student participants in Limón, 16% of whom identified as Afro-Costa Rican. Overall, she collected data from a total of 309 survey participants and 47 participant interviews during her 4 week stay in Costa Rica. Thus far, her research seems to show that understanding shared cultural identity is important to understanding the individual experience of ethnic identity. It also shows that individuals’ belief in equality – when they live in multicultural communities – can be more powerful than actual day-to-day equitable practices. It is not yet clear whether embracing ethnic-specific cultural identity provides any advantage for Afro-Costa Ricans over the mainstream Costa Rican cultural identity. Generally, Afro-Costa Ricans report that they feel fortunate, not aggrieved, to be an Afro-descendant growing up in Costa Rica, or more specifically, Limón. A more definitive conclusion awaits formal data analyses.

Pietro Longo Holland de Mello, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, was able to go to the Dominican Republic and collect specimens through a transect that crossed the Central Cordillera to verify if two populations were effectively independently evolving lineages. His Tinker proposal was guided by a 2015 publication that suggested that Anolis distichus dominicensis, a subspecies that is widespread throughout Hispaniola, is made up of four independently evolving lineages. Two of these lineages are separated by the Cordillera Central, the largest and highest mountain ranges, which crosses the Island from Hispaniola from Northwest to Southeast, going from Haiti to the Dominican Republic. Mello contacted Cristian Marte who is currently responsible for Herpetology in the MHNRD. His help was key for the success of his field expedition. In less than two weeks they were able arrange two short field trips, one to each slope of the Central Cordillera, prep the specimens and arrange the documentation for exportation with the Environment Ministry of the Dominican Republic. They sampled over 80 specimens, which were then prepped, and successfully imported to the University of Kansas Herpetology Division. With the genomic information that he will obtain from the data he brought from the Dominican Republic, plus morphometric data that he will obtain from these individuals he will be able to not only confirm the aforementioned proposal predictions, but also, in collaboration with Cristian, verify if these populations are actually different species.

Lina Muñoz, Spanish and Portuguese, went to Ecuador to study how Ecuadorian Indigenous media and film work alongside and against the problematic representations from larger media institutions, their particular aesthetics and narrative practices, the conditions of their production and distribution, how they reflect an
Undergraduate Spotlight

Bing Zhang, Undergraduate
B.A. Latin American Studies

Aron Muci, CLACS: Share a little bit about yourself. Who are you? Where are you from? What has brought you to KU?

Bing Zhang: I come from Beijing, and I was born and raised in a middle class family. I chose to come to KU when I joined a foreign exchange program in Wichita, KS. My host family told me that KU was an outstanding college, and I Googled it and found out that KU is impressive. So, that’s why I am here.

Muci: Why are you interested in Latin American Studies?

Zhang: I can speak Mandarin fluently and English well. If I can speak Chinese, English and Spanish, I can speak with nearly 75% of the world. Second, I love soccer, and soccer is a huge part of my life. And, the third reason is because both of my parents are business people, and, once I graduate, I want to start my own business. Why shouldn’t I make a challenge for myself? Why can’t I start a business in Latin America and China? I have been learning about Latin American culture for five years, and the more I learn, the more I become attracted to the culture and history... I found a lot of similarities between Chinese and Latin American cultures. You have no idea how much I enjoy going to class!

Muci: Do you have a favorite class in LAA so far?

Zhang: One of the classes is “Topics in Latin American Area Studies: Haiti and the Dominican Republic” with Dr. Cécile Accilien. Before I started that class, I only knew of Haiti being the poorest nation in the world. Once I learned the history of Haiti, I realized that Haitians never quit and they completely want to decide their own destiny. It gave me a very strong impression.

Muci: When you finish your LAA degree at KU, what do you hope to do? What are your future plans?

Zhang: I love jewelry. I know there are a lot of countries in South America with amazing gem stones. Because of the history, Chinese businesses often only take what they want from South America back to China. I don't want to be the same kind of businessperson. I want to be someone who knows their culture, respects their culture, and I want to make a business that benefits both sides. I want to build a bridge between the two cultures so that Chinese people can learn more about Latin America.

Tinker Field Research Reports (cont.)

appropriation of audiovisual technologies, and the impact these products have in the indigenous producers and in their communities. During her stay in Quito and Otavalo, she met and interviewed a wide variety of people: Kichwa film and media producers, members of governmental and nongovernmental organizations who work with indigenous mass media and film, independent filmmakers, indigenous intellectuals, and viewers. She also attended the Ecuador International Film Festival, and visited the Cinemateca Nacional de Ecuador (a film library in Ecuador) and the film library of EDOC (Ecuador Documentary Festival). Overall, it was a great experience that allowed her to know more about the Kichwa culture. By interviewing anthropologists, archaeologists, and indigenous professors, she better understood the scholarly view point. Kichwa Otavaleños filmmakers, producers and viewers are using media technologies not only to recover or preserve traditions and culture knowledge, or to support political activism but also to create particular artistic expressions. After her research, she can reaffirm that Kichwa film and media works deserve more attention in the academic sphere.

Ginett Pineda, Spanish and Portuguese, investigated, from a comparative perspective, different kinds of education offered by three Indigenous universities in Bolivia (UNIBOL). These indigenous universities, functioning since the 1990s, are a counter-hegemonic response to long-lasting forms of domination of Western knowledge. Pineda examined the social impacts of the three Indigenous universities: Casmirio Huanca, Tupac Katari andApiaguaiki Túpa and explored if this educational project, launched by president Evo Morales, has reached its goal of promoting a cultural and linguistic revitalization of particular indigenous communities. She met with a variety of professors and students to understand the underlying context of teaching indigenous knowledge, models, methods, and content within traditional or non-traditional educational systems and the larger scheme of education laws in Bolivia. Ultimately, these experiences have moved Pineda towards designing a strong article related to indigenous education—probably a comparative analysis—that contrasts these education policies with those in the United States. The contacts and knowledge gained from her Tinker research will facilitate a deeper understanding and potential return visits to conceptualize and interpret an intercultural education in Latin America.
Aron Muci, CLACS: Share a little bit about yourself. Who are you? Where are you from? What has brought you to KU?

Miranda Ganter: I am a cisgender woman and a multiracial Latina. I am a Junior at the University of Kansas. I am from Houston, Texas...[and] I knew I didn't want to stay in Texas for college. I wanted something different that I had never experienced before. I had never lived in a small town or gone to a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). So, I thought this would be a good learning experience for me outside of my comfort zone.

Muci: Why are you interested in Latin American Studies?

Ganter: I decided to get a minor in Latin American Studies because I felt that Latin America is underrepresented in the history department. [CLACS] lets me take classes in Anthropology, English, History and Sociology. LAA allows me to not just study Latin America with historian’s glasses, but with a critical mind and social justice lens.

Muci: Do you have a favorite class in LAA so far?

Ganter: My favorite class that I have taken for my LAA minor would be, Marta Caminero-Santangelo’s ENGL 573, “Latina Literature.” Being able to use my historical knowledge of Latin@s in the United States allows me to put on my critical lenses and examine the struggle of Latin@s through their literature. Also, Marta is a fantastic professor who is always energetic and excited to be teaching.

Muci: When you finish your LAA degree at KU, what do you hope to do? What are your future plans?

Ganter: I hope to go to Law School after I finish my undergrad. I want to work with undocumented individuals or focus on migration reform.
Joey Hentzler is focusing on the intersection of development and indigenous identity for his thesis. Over the summer, he spent three months in the Cochabamba department of Bolivia with the generous support of a Tinker grant. He met amazing people connected to NGOs in the city and rural towns, and had several opportunities to observe some of Bolivia’s vibrant culture first-hand.

In addition to Hetzler’s interviews, he will incorporate a spatial analysis of development in Bolivia into his thesis. He essentially will be updating a previous analysis that showed development money was allocated to areas with higher concentrations of indigenous peoples – and had no correlation with poverty, literacy, or health indicators. Furthermore, a different qualitative study of a community in Cochabamba posited NGOs require individuals and communities to perform their definition of indigenousness to access funds. The world seems to be incredibly interested in providing indigenous people aid, but if we are truly committed to empowering disadvantaged peoples, we have to take care to do it right. Hentzler is excited to contribute to this conversation with an interdisciplinary lens. Hopefully, he can elevate the stories of some of the people he met over the summer and create some positive change in the process.

Aron Muci, CLACS: Share a little bit about yourself. Who are you? Where are you from? What has brought you to KU?

Joey Hentzler: I am a native Kansan. I came to KU as an undergraduate, and it offered opportunities that I really wanted to explore, particularly teaching and field research.

Muci: Why are you interested in Latin American Studies?

Hentzler: For me, coming from political science, Latin American history is different than other regions, because it plays out dramatically. It is a region of rich culture and a vibrant political society.

Muci: Do you have a favorite class in LAA so far?

Hentzler: In winter 2015, I went with Prof. Brent Metz to Guatemala where we hung out with some Ch’orti’ Mayas, and, while we gained first hand experience, Brent pulled history into contemporary issues. This was my first study abroad program, after many unsuccessful attempts, and it was great. Human interactions outside of the classroom offer more than we can get by staying in Bailey Hall.

Muci: Given your struggles to participate in a study abroad program, do you have any tips or best practices for undergraduate/graduate students who, like yourself, might not have had this great opportunity?

Hentzler: Apply often. Get over your fear of rejection. It is just going to be a thing of life if you are planning to work in academia, so it is something to get used to. Lastly, I would say to always look around for scholarships and never give up.

Muci: Can you describe current academic projects that you are working on?

Hentzler: Well, I am beginning to write my thesis … I am also taking a class with Prof. Peter Herhily, a seminar in geography, and I really look forward to approaching Bolivia through a spatial lens because of my interest in foreign aid. I am studying the correlation of foreign aid and poverty, ethnicity, indigenous status, etc. I am really excited to contribute to this academic conversation, and hopefully benefit the foreign aid community.

Muci: When you finish your LAA degree at KU, what do you hope to do? What are your future plans?

Hentzler: I have found teaching in the classroom very fulfilling. The amount of decolonization of history that can go on in paper for LAA 100 students is inspiring. While at KU, I confirmed a hunch that teaching could be really cool and something that I could do as a career. With that in mind, I am applying to PhD programs so that I can continue to work and share in the classroom. Ultimately, I want to continue to travel abroad and continue my research to make impacts on NGOs and foreign aid to particular regions.

Muci: At the end I like to give people an opportunity to share whatever they like. What would you like to say?

Hentzler: As I have arrived near the end of my career at KU, there are so many people here that continue to support me. People who will write letters for me or be positive resources in whatever I need. I am really grateful for the opportunities that the Center provides and I hope to do it proud.
João Batista Nascimento Gregoire, M.A. LAA

Aron Muci, CLACS: Share a little bit about yourself. Who are you? Where are you from? What has brought you to KU?

João Batista Nascimento Gregoire: I am from Brazil. I went to college at Pittsburg State, Pittsburg, KS, where I earned a degree in business. After that, I went to live in Bangkok, Thailand for 3-4 years, and after that I moved to Santiago, Chile. For the last 3-4 years, I have been working in business in Brazil. While in Brazil, I had an opportunity to speak at a conference about my international experiences, and I realized that I needed to return to academia. So, I contacted Prof. Brent Metz, and he helped me navigate the application process.

Muci: Why are you interested in Latin American Studies?

Nascimento: I have lived in many different places and traveled a lot. When I travel, I tend to compare things to Latin America, and I am fascinated with different perspectives of the world. In addition, Latin American studies is very interdisciplinary, and I want to pursue a PhD in history following my time here at KU.

Muci: Do you have a favorite class in LAA so far?

Nascimento: I am taking a class with Prof. Elizabeth Kuznesof, “The History of Brazil,” which has clarified my personal academic goals. The class has inspired me to pursue a career in history. She is an excellent professor and I am learning so much from her.

Muci: Can you describe current academic projects that you are working on?

Nascimento: I am working on two projects. The first is the transition from an authoritarian government to a democracy in Brazil. My argument is that Brazil had to go through the industrial revolution in order to create its current form of democracy. I haven’t found direct causation, but there are definitely aspects of the authoritarian government that contributed to the rise of democracy. In Prof. Santa Arias’ class, I am analyzing the Bahian Carnival, specifically the mix of sacred icons, traditions, and histories along with what people might describe as profane.

Muci: When you finish your LAA degree at KU, what do you hope to do? What are your future plans?

Nascimento: I really want to have the experience of teaching in the United States. However, I feel like I need to return to Brazil, because I am very attached to my country. I think it is my duty as a Brazilian to bring back all the knowledge that I have gathered around the world.

Muci: At the end I like to give people an opportunity to share whatever they like. What would you like to say?

Nascimento: My experience at KU has been so great. There are so many opportunities to meet interesting and fascinating people in a variety of departments. Everyone has been nice and supportive to me and my family.
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Latin American & Caribbean Studies

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