consistent with its mission to foster the integration of the international and local dimensions of a Fordham education, LALSI offered this spring exciting cultural and educational programming and courses that encouraged and prepared students to become effective global citizens who are also committed to our local NYC communities. During this historic year of ongoing negotiations to normalize Cuba-US relations, LALSI offered a spring study tour in Havana, hosted by the renowned Cuban institute Casa de las Americas, which focused on the impact of the country’s current economic and social changes on contemporary Cuban culture. (See coverage on InsideFordham: http://news.fordham.edu/politics-and-society/after-decades-of-stalemate-a-homecoming-lalsi-students-make-first-visit-to-cuba-since-normalization). Twenty undergraduate students from both campuses and a variety majors, from Social Service and Business to International Studies, Politics, Anthropology and Literature, participated in this study tour, which, according to student reviews, was life-changing for them. In Havana, our students had the opportunity to discuss with local scholars and with people on the streets the impact of the new social and economic changes, as well as their impressions about the ongoing process of normalization.

They visited museums, dance and artist studios, attended film presentations and music venues, and patronized the new paladares or family-owned restaurants. A highlight of the trip was a conversation with Rev. Juan Miguel Arregui, S.J., the superior of the Jesuits in Cuba at the Church of The Sacred Heart where he runs tutoring and educational programs for children of his mostly immigrant parishioners from Cuba’s Oriente Province who have settled in Havana. Prior to the trip, LALSI organized a series of conferences and panels to acquaint students with contemporary Cuban society and politics: a panel with distinguished Cuban-American novelist and journalist Achy Obejas, the director of Columbia University’s Cuba Program and Vice President of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, Prof. Margaret Crahan, and CUNY professor Sujatha Fernandes, author of Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures, organized and moderated by me; addressed “Empowerment, Humanitarian Aid, and the Normalization of US-Cuba Relations” (See the coverage on InsideFordham: http://news.fordham.edu/arts-and-culture/panel-explores-the-new-normal-for-u-s-cuba-relations), a conversation with Fordham alumnus, Alberto Tornés, director of Economic Empowerment at the Raíces de Esperanza, on humanitarian aid to Cuba, and a talk by renowned Latin Americanist Prof. Julio Ramos on his film La Promesa and the cultural context of Cuba’s “special period.”

Once again LALSI partnered with NYU to sponsor a three-day conference on Latin American film titled Encrucijadas/Encruzilhadas, organized at Fordham by Prof. Carl Fischer, which brought scholars from all over the United States and Latin America to discuss current scholarship on Latin American cinema. LALSI and the History Department sponsored a workshop on Prof. Yuko Miki’s book manuscript on indigenous slavery in Brazil with distinguished Brazilianist historians Prof. João José Reis from the Universidade Federal da Bahia, in Salvador, Brazil, and Prof. Hal Langfur of SUNY Binghamton. And the brilliant Mexican poet Gloria Gervitz read from her latest book of poetry in a visit organized by Prof. Javier Jiménez-Belmonte. LALSI also focused on U.S. Latino communities and cultures. It partnered with Fordham’s Theater Department and the Queer Studies Seminar to sponsor a lecture and workshop by acclaimed Chicana poet, playwright and essayist Cherrie Moraga, which was organized by Prof. Carl Fischer. It also joined forces with the Women’s Studies Program and the English Department to present a new anthology of essays on the experience of Latinas in Higher Education, appropriately titled Wise Latinas: Writers on Higher Education, edited by Jennifer De Leon and with a contribution from the English Dept.’s doctoral graduate and local NYC Latina poet Li Yun Alvarado, in conversation with Prof. Clara Rodríguez of the Sociology and Prof. Beth Frost of English.

LALSI also joined the English Department and Poets Out Loud to organize a reading by acclaimed NY Latino writer Willie Perdomo from his latest book, The Essential Hits of Shorty Bon Bon, the first book of poems by a Latino to be published in Penguin’s distinguished poetry series. The Institute joined the African and African American Studies Department and LALSI secretary Sandra Arnold’s Enslaved Africans Burial Database Project in co-sponsoring a visit to Fordham by the students from Middle School IS 318 in the Bronx. During this visit, these middle school students from mostly Latino and African American backgrounds engaged in a lively conversation with Fordham professors about envisioning attending college which was covered by InsideFordham (See story at http://news.fordham.edu/inside-fordham-category/on-campus/professors-inspire-bronx-middle-schoolers-to-seek-path-to-higher-ed). LALSI professor Emilio Estela and I participated in the discussion. Also inspirational was the workshop offered by Ira and Jewell Williams Jr. Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and director of the Cultural Agents Institute at Harvard University, Prof. Doris Sommer, who spoke on public humanities and the use of art and culture to inspire and foster cultural activism and greater literacy among students. As the semester came to a close, LALSI joined The Loisaida Center in the Lower East Side in co-sponsoring, as part of its 28th Annual Loisaida Fest, a series of cultural, educational events on the contribution of LGBTQ artists to the culture of the Lower East Side, curated by me.
Photo 1 (Left): Fordham students at the Plaza de la Revolution.

Photo 2 (Right): Danielle Serigano in front of the statue of José Martí in Havana’s Parque Central.
Photo 3 (Above): Amanda Varrone, Danielle Serigano and Mayra Gutiérrez in front of Che Guevara.

Photo 4 (Below): Raïsa Ahmed in Old Havana.
Photo 5 [Above]: Christina LaBruno, Danielle Serigano and Alejandra Adarve discuss social issues with Cuban scholar Ana Niria Albo at CENESEX [Center for the Sexual Education]. Photo 6 [Below]: Cuban choreographer and dancer Julio César Iglesias with Prof. Cruz-Malavé and Travis Hernández.
Photo 7 (Above): Victoria León in Havana’s waterfront promenade, El Malecón.

Photo 8 (Below): Rebecca Alvarez-Petit, Kate Maddigan and Laura Gerkis in front of the National Museum of Fine Arts.
Photo 9 (Above): Prof. Sara Lehman in Old Havana.

Photo 10 (Below): Students on the coastline east of Havana.
Contents

LALS FACULTY
Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé, Director
Modern Languages & Literature
Sara Lehman, Associate Director
Modern Languages & Literature

Gregory Acevedo
Graduate School of Social Service

Sal Acosta
History, Executive Committee

O. Hugo Benavides
Sociology & Anthropology

Susan Berger
Political Science

Daniel Contreras
English

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Adjunct Instructor

Carl Fischer
Modern Languages & Literature

Greta Gilbertson
Sociology & Anthropology

Javier Jiménez-Belmonte
Modern Languages & Literature

Carey Kasten
Modern Languages & Literature

Rafael Lamas
Modern Languages & Literature

Michael Lee
Theology

Luz Lenis
Assistant Dean for Sophomores (FCRH), Executive Committee

Héctor Lindo-Fuentes
History

Gioconda Marín
Modern Languages & Literature

Ronald Méndez-Clark
Director of International and Study Abroad Programs

Yuko Miki
History

Barbara Mundy
Art History, Executive Committee

S. Elizabeth Penny
History

Rose Perez
Graduate School of Social Service

Monica Rivera-Mindt
Psychology

Clara Rodríguez
Sociology & Anthropology

Orlando Rodríguez
Sociology & Anthropology

Luisita Torregrosa
Distinguished Adjunct Instructor

Cynthia Vich
Modern Languages & Literature

Sandra Arnold
Senior Secretary (LC)

Isaac Tercero
Senior Secretary (RH)

Christopher Schmidt-Nowara:
In Memoriam (1966-2015), Page 9-10

Faculty and Staff News, Page 11

Spanish Civil War class visits the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, Page 12-13

Prof. Michael Lee discusses with liberation theologian Father Gustavo Gutiérrez The Imperative of Hope, Page 14

Not in Our Son’s Name: A New Film on Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez’s Journey to Forgiveness after 9/11; Dr. Luz Lenis’ induction into Alpha Sigma Nu, Page 15

Wise Latinas: Writers in Higher Education, Page 16

Migraciones: a poetry reading and conversation with Mexican poet Gloria Gervitz; Fall 2015 LALS Course Highlights, Page 17

Poets Out Loud: a poetry reading and conversation with poet Willie Perdomo, Page 18

Encrucijadas/Encruzilhadas: Dialogues for the Latin American Cinema; Queer Seminar with Cherrie Moraga, Page 19

Empowerment, Humanitarian Aid, and the Normalization of US-Cuba Relations, Page 20

Doris Sommer’s Workshop on Cultural Agency and Public Humanities, Page 21

Back cover: Congratulations to the Class of 2015!
It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of our former colleague and friend Prof. Chris Schmidt-Nowara, who was a member of LALSI and Fordham’s History Department from 1999-2011. Chris received his B.A. from Kenyon College in 1988 and his Ph.D. in History from the University of Michigan in 1995, with a dissertation on slavery and emancipation in nineteenth-century Spain, Cuba and Puerto Rico, directed by acclaimed historian Prof. Rebecca Scott, which soon became his first book, Empire And Antislavery: Spain, Cuba And Puerto Rico 1833-1874 (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), the first in a long line of influential scholarly works. At Fordham, where he excelled as a scholar, teacher and colleague, he was a Magis Distinguished Professor. In 2011, he joined Tufts University’s History Department where he was named Prince of Asturias Chair of Spanish Culture and Civilization.

An internationally recognized scholar, Chris was an authority on slavery and emancipation movements in the Americas and on the history of ideas in the Spanish empire, especially during its nineteenth-century decline and on the eve of the Spanish-American War of 1898. As much a Latin Americanist and Americanist as he was a Europeanist, Chris studied Spain and the Spanish empire from the perspective of its imperial peripheries, Cuba and Puerto Rico, becoming an innovator in the field of Atlantic studies. As Prof. Ada Ferrer of New York University has recently suggested in The Junto, a blog on early American History, “[s]tarting with his dissertation on Spanish abolitionism (which later became Empire and Antislavery), all of Chris’s work sits at the intersection of European and American history, Atlantic from its conception long before that was fashionable.” He would go on to publish Slavery, Freedom and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World (University of New Mexico Press, 2011), which was selected by Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries as one of the year’s outstanding academic titles, and Slavery and Antislavery in Spain’s Atlantic Empire (Berghahn Books, 2013). “A truly Atlantic scholarly work,” Prof. Yuko Miki of our History Department at Fordham asserts, this “superb book, with which I always begin my course ‘Slavery & Freedom in the Atlantic World,’ elegantly and concisely lays out the Iberian precedents … of slavery in the modern world, thus challenging readers to move beyond the familiar confines of the U.S. and Britain.”

In addition, Chris served on the editorial boards of some of the most important journals in his field: the Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, Illes i Imperis/Islands and Empires (published by the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Spain), and Social History, for which he edited two special issues, one on contemporary Spanish historiography (August 2004) and the other on emancipation in the Caribbean (August 2011). And he was a member of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University.

As a teacher, he excelled as a caring, much-loved, and dedicated mentor to his students. One of his Fordham graduate students, Louie Dean Valencia-Garcia, remembers Chris during his years at Fordham: “As a mentor and dissertation advisor, Chris Schmidt-Nowara [was] a lifeline since I first started graduate school at Fordham University. When he left Fordham for his position at Tufts, Chris called me into his office and reassured me that he would continue as my advisor. He kept that promise. His passing is a profound and shocking loss.”

We cannot say enough about Chris’s contributions as a colleague. As we are still processing our sense of loss, messages of sadness and shock have poured in from colleagues at Fordham constructing a clear portrait of Chris as a generous, incisively learned, unassumingly wise and gentle spirit who naturally brought people together through his intelligence and good cheer.
He was a hard-working, focused and accomplished director of LALSI who launched the graduate certificate program in LALS and recruited Prof. Clara Rodríguez to embark on a project to clarify the history of the establishment of LALSI as a Puerto Rican Studies Institute at Lincoln Center and a Puerto Rican Studies Program at Rose Hill in the 1970s, which resulted in a report on the early history of LALSI and on Latino student activism at Fordham. He organized major conferences such as “Paradigms and Paradigmas: Spanish Colonialism and Historiography,” which became the book *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005), co-edited with Prof. John Nieto-Philips, and “Whose National Pastime? Baseball between Cuba and the United States,” with the participation of acclaimed professors Roberto González Echevarría and Louis Pérez, and Fordham history graduate student Mari-Claudia Jiménez, whose research on baseball he mentored. Chris was also an Associate Chair of the History Department at Lincoln Center, where he distinguished himself as a mentor to students, created a webpage for majors, and established a tradition among his colleagues of going out to a pub on 57 Street or eating at a restaurant in the area to share ideas and create a sense of community.

Most notably, Chris is remembered by his colleagues for his generosity, engaging intelligence, modesty and good cheer. Prof. Cynthia Vich, who succeeded him as director of LALSI, remembers Chris’s “leading role as an organizer of a faculty seminar with the Universidad Iberoamericana of Mexico City, where he was a great host to our Mexican colleagues and led all of us in very interesting discussions.” Like many of her colleagues, she remembers him “as someone who fostered a great sense of community among LALSI’s faculty through scholarly projects such as this one,” as an always “welcoming and constructive human being,” as Prof. Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, a former director of LALSI and associate chair of the History Department, succinctly states. Professors Monica Rivera-Mindt, Carey Kasten and Viviane Mahieux, who is currently a professor at UC Irvine, recall his generous mentoring of them as assistant professors when they first joined Fordham. And Prof. Mahieux adds: “Chris was a kind, generous and warm person, who made me feel right at home in my first job at Fordham. His enthusiasm for creating a welcoming and stimulating intellectual atmosphere at Fordham, particularly in LALSI, was contagious. He knew how to create a space for dialogue that was inviting and never intimidating.” Prof. Yuko Miki, who currently teaches his courses on slavery and freedom in the Atlantic world at Fordham, also evokes his mentoring of her when she was still a graduate student at New York University and he shared with her some of the sources he had found in the archives of Bahia, Brazil, on black-indigenous *mestiçagem* with which she still works. Former director of LALSI Prof. Beth Penry’s memories of Chris are joyous conversations which often “involved food and drinks—martinis and hamburgers at the Knickerbocker in Greenwich Village, pasta in Modena, Italy, white port in Lisbon, tapas in Madrid and Seville…” “I myself remember him laughing,” said the current director of LALSI, Prof. Cruz-Malavé. “All my memories of him are conversations about the often brutal realities of Hispanic Caribbean history, about its often impossible impasses and contradictions, which for one reason or another always ended in laughter…. To me this was a sign that Chris was not only a specialist on the Hispanic Caribbean, but also someone who shared the spirit of Hispanic Caribbean culture, which is not to let the weight of history and life paralyze you, but to lighten the load, as it were, to make a way for liberation and freedom, even if for a brief moment, through relajo, joking, jesting and laughter.” “No wonder he was a specialist on emancipation and liberation movements,” he concluded.

A series of scholarly talks and events on Chris’s influential scholarship are being planned by LALSI and the History Department which will culminate with a panel in his honor at the upcoming Latin American Association’s annual convention which will take place in New York City next spring.

The LALSI faculty and staff extend their heartfelt condolences to Chris’s family in New Mexico and especially to his daughter Althea. We share your grief and honor his memory.
In the past six months, Luisita Lopez Torregrosa (Latin American and Latino Studies) published cover pieces on Puerto Rico and Antigua in the *New York Times*'s Sunday Travel; a cover profile of Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, in *The Washington Post Magazine*; a profile of CBS anchor Norah O'Donnell in *More* magazine; and an article on the impact of the influx of Puerto Ricans in Florida politics for *Yahoo News*. She will soon start writing a column for the Women in the World//*New York Times* site.


Over the last few months, Cynthia Vich (Modern Languages and Literatures) participated in the symposium "Encrucijadas/En cruzilhadas: Latin American Film Symposium" on February 27 – 28 with the paper "Geografía de la Precariedad: una lectura del film *Paraíso* de Héctor Gálvez" co-organized by Fordham and NYU. Her article "De estetizaciones y viejos exotismos: apuntes en torno a La Teta Asustada de Claudia Llosa" appeared in issue # 80 of *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*. Also, she and Carl Fischer inaugurated the newly launched ‘MLL Lecture Series’ with two lectures on Latin American film: she presented "Bodies and Souls at a Standstill: A Dystopian Vision of the Peruvian Human Settlement" and Prof. Fischer presented "Exploitation and Animal Discourse in 1960s Latin American Cinema." The lecture series was held in the President’s Dining Room at the Lincoln Center campus on March 2.

This year LALSI’s secretary at Lincoln Center, Sandra Arnold, remained busy giving talks at universities and educational institutions, such as Harvard University and the New York Public School system, on the initiative she founded and is presently directing, the Periwinkle Initiative. The Periwinkle Initiative is a nonprofit dedicated to the education and protection of heritage sites associated with enslaved Americans. It is equipped with an advisory team that includes the National Park Service, Fordham Law School and The Gilder Lehram Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition at Yale University. Its core project is the National Burial Database of Enslaved Americans, the first and only national database to document burials and burial grounds of enslaved Americans. As Executive Director of the Periwinkle Initiative, Sandra was invited this year to participate in the *Facing History and Ourselves* Conference at Harvard University. She shared the stage with distinguished NYU professor of philosophy and law, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures Doris Sommer, the director of the Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard University. Sandra is a graduate of Fordham’s School of Professional and Continuing Studies. As a result of Sandra’s successes in implementing her cutting-edge initiative, this year Fordham University changed its policy to acknowledge non-faculty members as research project leaders. In so doing, the University recognized the creativity of its non-traditional adult graduates of its School of Professional and Continuing Studies and of its staff. We are very proud of you, Sandra!
On March 13, Carey Kasten's (Modern Languages and Literatures) course on the Spanish Civil War visited the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) at the Tamiment Library at NYU. They had the opportunity to examine authentic documents from the war, such as posters, photographs, letters and drawings that the volunteers in the Lincoln Brigade sent home. Prof. James Fernández (Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at NYU), led them through their tour of ALBA's materials. He was accompanied by Kate Donovan (Instruction Librarian at the Tamiment) as well as Marina Garde (Executive Director of the ALBA). See page 12 and 13 for photos from this trip.

Photo 1 (Above): The class poses with the staff from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade archive. Left to right: Liana Katz (Executive Assistant at ALBA), Kathleen Kanaley, Irena Nilaj, Reese Grosfeld, Dylan Ungaretta, Samantha Carty, Anna Barbano (seated), Austin Sherman, Santiago Aguado, Federico Klinkert, Joey Gonzalez (seated), Priscilla Cintron, James Fernandez (Associate Professor of Spanish at NYU), Kate Donovan (Instruction Librarian, ALBA), Marina Garde (Executive Director, ALBA)

Photo 2 (Left): Marina Garde looks on as librarian Kate Donovan shows students Reese Grosfeld, Samantha Carty and Kathleen Kanaley drawings made during the war by children at La Casa Ben Leider, a children’s colony for orphaned republicans named in honor of a Lincoln Brigadeer.
Photo 3 (Above): Austin Sherman, Federico Klinkert, Santiago Aguado and Priscilla Cintrón look at photographs and letters that Lincoln Brigadeers sent home from the Spanish Civil War.

Photo 4 (Below): Irena Nilaj and Dylan Ungaretta examine Republican memorabilia from Lincoln Brigadeers.
The Imperative of Hope: Recovering the Prophetic in Christian Life Today

In a wide-ranging conversation on May 6 at Fordham Lincoln Center, sponsored by the Curran Center for Religion and Culture, Prof. Michael Lee, Associate Professor of Theology and Latin American studies and expert on liberation theology, an interpretation of Christianity that focuses on mercy and the poor’s suffering, struggles, and hopes, widely theorized and practiced in Latin America, discussed with Father Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP, the acclaimed Peruvian priest and scholar whose book, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation; the Power of the Poor in History*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973) has become seminal in the study and practice of this theology. Father Gutiérrez, who received the University’s highest honor, the President’s medal, spoke eloquently and passionately about the importance and universality of the ethical commitment to the poor, what is also known in Catholic circles as the “preference for the poor,” which liberation theology advocates and which Pope Francis has made a key goal of his papacy. Prof. Michael Lee, who is the author of *Bearing the Weight of Salvation: The Soteriology of Ignacio Ellacuría*, winner of the 2010 Hispanic Theological Initiative Book Prize, questioned Father Gutiérrez about the relevance of liberation theology to contemporary American society. Father Gutiérrez agreed that liberation theology, which became a powerful popular movement during the 1980s in dictatorship-ruled Latin America, is not monolithic but contextual, and as such an important tool that could be used by oppressed groups in the United States such as such as African Americans and feminists in their struggles. Congratulations, Prof. Lee, for an inspiring, informed, and thoughtful discussion.
Not in Our Son’s Name: A New Film on Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez’s Journey to Forgiveness

On September 11, 2001 Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez lost their only son Gregory to the attacks on the World Trade Center. The film Not in Our Son’s Name, which features the couple’s story dealing with the attack and premiered on February 24 at Fordham’s Keating Hall, takes its title from a letter to the NY Times the couple wrote after 9/11, arguing that a warlike response would “not avenge our son’s death,” but would only add to “dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against” the United States. The film, traces the couple’s hard and inspirational journey to forgiveness and nonviolence activism in the aftermath of the attack. Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez, who is Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, specializing in criminology, became active in the nonviolence and peace movement after their son’s death, befriending Aicha El-Wafi, the mother of Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called “20th hijacker,” who also joined the nonviolence movement, and even testified for the defense in opposition to giving Moussaoui the death penalty following his conviction. “In the social sciences, we’re trained to be empathetic,” Orlando explains. “We try to look at a situation and ask, ‘Why did this person do that?’ But in the end, empathy has to come from within.” Congratulations Phyllis and Orlando for being such an inspiration to all of us!

Congratulations, Dean Luz Lenis for your Outstanding Contribution to Fordham Students and to LALSI!

At a ceremony on April 9, Dean Luz Lenis, Ph.D., along with five other members of the Fordham faculty and administration, were made Honorary Members of the University chapter of Alpha Sigma Nu, the only Jesuit honor society for institutions of higher education. The society, which recognizes those who distinguish themselves in scholarship, loyalty and service, honored Dean Lenis for her outstanding career of service as class dean at Fordham College-Rose Hill. Pictured above with their certificates are (from left to right) Michael M. Martin, dean of the School of Law, Dean Lenis, James Hennessy, dean of the Graduate School of Education, Michele Burris, associate vice president for student affairs, and John T. Dzieglewicz, SJ, senior class dean of Fordham College at Rose Hill. Also pictured are (far left) Msgr. Joseph G. Quinn, vice president for University mission and ministry, Stephen Freedman, provost and professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, and (far right) Joseph M. McShane, SJ, president of Fordham. Also inducted were more than 100 students from the University’s nine schools.
On April 13, the English Department, the Women’s Studies Program, Fordham College at Lincoln Center’s Office of the Dean, and LALSI joined forces to co-sponsor an event to showcase the recently published anthology, *Wise Latinas: Writers on Higher Education* (Nebraska, 2014). The reading and discussion featured Jennifer De Leon, editor of the anthology, and Li Yun Alvarado, a contributor to the anthology who also received her MA and PhD from Fordham University. After a brief reading, Prof. Clara Rodriguez from Sociology commented on their work and fielded questions from the packed audience, leading to a spirited panel discussion about the authors’ experiences as Latina writers navigating the worlds of higher education and publishing. The authors signed copies of the anthology which were available for sale and spoke to students after the formal program. Jennifer De Leon, an editor, educator and essayist, has published her work in *Ploughshares*, *Ms.*, and *Best Women’s Travel Writing 2010*. She teaches at Grub Street Creative Writing Center and at the Boston Teachers Union School. Li Yun Alvarado, a poet, writer, educator, has just received her Ph.D. in English from Fordham University. Her essay in *Wise Latinas*, “After Yale,” is a highlight of the anthology, which also contains essays by acclaimed authors such as Sandra Cisneros and Cherríe Moraga. She teaches at Long Beach City College in California.
MIGRACIONES: a poetry reading and conversation with Mexican poet
GLORIA GERVITZ

On April 17, the Mexican poet Gloria Gervitz visited Fordham to present the forthcoming definitive edition of Migraciones, book of poetry she has been writing for the past over 30 years. Gervitz, who is considered one of the most important Mexican poets of the post-Octavio Paz generation, started to write Migraciones in the late 1970s. At Fordham, Gervitz talked about the coexistence of life and literature, memory and physicality in her poetry, and read excerpts from the last edition of her long, working-in-progress book of poetry, which she insists, is a single poem. The students were thrilled to have the chance to discuss in person with this well-known avant-garde Latin American poet some of the issues that they had previously studied in class in the work of some other major Latin American poets such as Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Alejandra Pizarnik, Octavio Paz and Nancy Morejón. The ineffability of the poetic experience, the viability of a social and political poetry, or the ability of poetry to create and validate alternative histories to the official ones, were some of the issues that came up during an exciting session of questions and answers with the acclaimed poet Gloria Gervitz.

FALL 2015 LALS COURSE HIGHLIGHTS!

LALS 3344 C01 L 4.00 CRIME, LITERATURE & LATINOS R 06:00 pm-08:45 pm Emilio Estela
This course examines the relationship between criminal law and literature. We will study how writers use stories about the law to express ideas of humanity. We will also examine the interplay between law and morality and discuss how authors have viewed the criminal justice system, with particular emphasis on the experience of Latinos. The reading list will include criminal law and criminal procedure law, as well as works by Latino fiction writers such as Bodega Dreams, Carlito’s Way, and The House of the Spirits, and by non-Latino writers such as Billy Budd also The Trial.

LALS 3346 C01 L 4.00 LATINOS AND THE MEDIA M 06:00 pm-08:45 pm Luisita L. Torregrosa
A seminar and workshop on the impact and influence of the news media on Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos and their image by acclaimed journalist and memoirist, Luisita Lopez Torregrosa, former national editor at The New York Times and author of the critically acclaimed memoirs, Before the Rain: A Memoir of Love & Revolution and The Noise of Infinite Longing. This course will discuss and analyze the impact of negative labels and cultural and social typecasting on news written about Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos. It will also examine sources, such as films, memoirs, and scholarly books, as alternative ways to transform and reinvent these images of Latin Americans and Latinos in the news. Students will learn to analyze the presentation of Latin American and Latino subjects in the news and compose news reports and essays that present more expansive and knowledgeable views of the lives and cultures of Latin Americans and U.S. Latinos.
Even a necessarily abbreviated bio demonstrates why Willie Perdomo is widely recognized as one of the leading voices in Latino poetry—and indeed poetry in general. A very selective list of his awards—his most recent collection of poems, The Essential Hits of Shorty Bon Bon (Penguin Poets, 2014), was a National Book Critics Circle Awards finalist, and his second book of poetry, Smoking Lovely, received a PEN Beyond Margins Award. His first poetry volume, Where a Nickel Costs a Dime, was a Poetry Society of America Norma Farber First Book Award finalist. His children’s books have garnered further honors—and the delight of many readers and their parents. According to Junot Diaz, this celebrated writer is “the hurricane we all write home about”. That hurricane has also been involved in video, television and theater productions. Currently an English Instructor at Phillips Exeter Academy, Perdomo formerly taught at Fordham University and is co-founder and publisher of Cypher Books.

If Willie Perdomo sometimes writes about entrapment, paradoxically he writes much more about its apparent opposite: movement and travel in all their senses. His poems literally refer to expeditions (notice, for example, the prose poem about the child who visits the library and the lyric about the Metro North). A lovely book he composed for children is about a trip to Langston Hughes’s house. But these poems themselves are so often staccato in their rhythms, dashing and gliding and jerking between their brief stops with the rapidity and energy of a NY subway train. They travel among languages, registers, and codes as well—they shift abruptly between prose and poetry, between Spanish and English, between vulgar street language and literary allusions. Listen to:

Gather your clouds & pearls, eagle-colt, glass slipper,
Bitch mink, evil-faced guitar wail, O bongo...

Like the so-called signifying techniques of many African-American writers, Perdomo’s techniques of pastiche and montage often ironize the world of commerce and commodity. Riffing on an ad for United Airlines he refers to the “friendly skies.” Alternatively, such shifts question political complacencies. Another recurrent subject—and target—of these poems is of course identity. If on some level Perdomo writes as and writes about being a Puerto Rican poet, even more often he writes against that sort of categorization. As he observes, playfully, his shifts among codes may be traced to “being a Caribbean writer, who was born in the Puerto Rican diaspora that used to be East Harlem.”

In writing about identity, Perdomo often evokes the worlds of prejudice and violence—in a passage all too timely today, the “forty-one bullets / like silver-colored push pins / that map a body.” But in addition to the mean streets of drugs and crime, these poems record a wide range of other subjects: love, tender families, music.

Speaking of music, many critics have noted the influence of Langston Hughes on his work and he is also in dialogue with—can I say in concert with—many types of music throughout, as his very title, The Essential Hits of Shorty Bon Bon, demonstrates. He refers frequently to Billie Holiday, and one is also conscious of the influence of blues rhythms and phrasings and salsa music. Whatever its sources, his style is characterized by electric wit and word-play, by both epigrammatic concision and more expansive lyrical moments. Please join me in welcoming him.
Encrucijadas/Encruzilhadas: Dialogues for the Latin American Cinema

The second Encrucijadas/Encruzilhadas Symposium on Latin American Film, organized between NYU and Fordham, with major support from LALSI, was held on February 27 and 28. With Carl Fischer working as the lead organizer this year, Encrucijadas gathered scholars, curators, filmmakers, and graduate students working on Latin American cinema in the New York area to interrogate the current trends of study, research, and production of film and media from Latin America. The symposium was an opportunity to share research and information, engage in collaborative efforts among institutions, and encourage an open discussion related to the topic of “Corpos/Corpus/Corpses”: connections between materiality, canonicity, violence, and corporeality. The event included a curated series of short films from Colombia, Uruguay, and Mexico; a screening of the 2013 film Halley and a question-and-answer session with its director, Sebastián Hofmann; and several panels and workshops with film programers and academics from institutions including Borough of Manhattan Community College/CUNY, Brooklyn College/CUNY, CUNY Graduate Center, Fairfield University, Fordham University, NYU, Princeton University, SUNY/Purchase, SUNY/Stony Brook, and Wesleyan University.

Photo (Left): Prof. Cynthia Vich (Far Left) and Prof. Paul Julian Smith (Far Right) at Encrucijadas

Queer Seminar: Cherrie Moraga

The second annual Fordham Queer Seminar was held on March 25 at Rose Hill. The seminar included a lunch with the poet, playwright, scholar, and critic Cherrie Moraga to discuss her book A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness. Moraga is artist-in-residence and professor at Stanford University, and her work focuses on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, situated in the contentious physical and political geographies of the US southwest, and the complex disciplinary geographies of Latina/o Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender Studies, and American Studies. The event, organized by Carl Fischer and supported by LALSI along with the Gender and Sexuality Working Group, Comparative Literature, and Theater, was one of a series of gender and sexuality-related events held at Fordham throughout the month of March. Students and professors sat in a circle in Bepler Commons to listen to a poetry reading by Moraga and then discuss her book.
Empowerment, Humanitarian Aid, and the Normalization of US-Cuba Relations

Introduction by Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé
Director, Latin American and Latino Studies Institute
Thursday, February 26, 12:00-2:00 p.m.
Bateman Room, Fordham Law School

On behalf of the Latin American and Latino Studies Institute I would like to welcome you to today’s panel on the current, on-going process of normalization of US-Cuba’s relations which features three extraordinary speakers: Prof. Margaret Crahan of Columbia University, the director of Columbia’s Cuba Program, the scholar Prof. Sujatha Fernandes who has written extensively on the relationship between Cuban popular culture and the state, and acclaimed Cuban-American novelist, translator and journalist Achy Obejas. I would like to welcome them and welcome all of you as well to this event and thank especially the officials from the Cuban Mission to the United Nations who are with us today, for their presence. I would also like to thank all the people who have helped us promote the event: the American Studies Program, the Comparative Literature Program, the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, the International Humanitarian Studies Institute, the Fordham College Dean’s Office at Lincoln Center and at Rose Hill, Dean Luz Lenis and Dean Milton Bravo in particular, the International Studies Student Club, and our very efficient crew at the Latin American and Latino Studies Institute, Sandra Arnold and Isaac Tercero.

Today’s panel is part of a class that I am currently teaching on the development of the Cuban revolution in history, literature and film and one of the events sponsored by our upcoming Spring Study-Tour in Havana at the renowned Cuban cultural institute, Casa de las Americas, with which we have a long-standing relationship.

It occurs of course at a moment that we can only call historic, a moment that has been in the making for over 50 years and which some of us thought we might never see. On December 17, symbolically enough the day of San Lázaro or Saint Lazarus, a very potent symbol of coming out of darkness, illness and constraints, indeed of resurrection in Cuban popular culture, Presidents Obama and Castro simultaneously announced the normalization of diplomatic ties between Cuba and the United States, severed in January of 1961 during the first years of the revolution and sustained over the next 50 years by a Cold-War rhetoric and tensions that far outlived the Cold War.

In his speech President Obama proposed this new opening not only as a break with a policy that has failed to produce the intended result of regime change, but also as a rupture with a more recent American foreign policy that recommended that states with which our government is in intractable conflict must, in his words, be “push[ed] to collapse” in order to be rebuilt from their ashes. Instead of this recent foreign policy, Pres. Obama proposed a new policy of constructive engagement, of people-to-people engagement, as he called it, whose aim is to empower Cubans, to “unleash”, as he said, “the potential of 11 million Cubans” to create a more democratic and prosperous social and economic system. Addressing the Cuban people directly and quoting from Cuban patriot and author José Martí, Pres. Obama told the Cuban audience that “freedom was the ability to be honest,” that is, in Martí’s language, the ability to be “síncero,” to be true to oneself, and alluding to the ubiquitous phrase during Cuba’s so-called “special period” of economic scarcity of the 1990s, he added: “no es fácil” [it ain’t easy]. Quoting thus from Martí and from Cuban popular speech, President Obama seemed to be signaling both the economic and political trying times of the special period and Cubans’ famous resourcefulness during it, their ability to “inventar” or “resolver,” as it is known locally, to create something out of nothing, to make do. His policy, he seemed to assert, was aimed not at resolving Cuba’s current or historic political and economic difficulties but at making it easier for Cubans to continue to be creative in “hard times.”

Pres. Raúl Castro, on the other hand, framed the new policy not as a rupture or a policy change of the Cuban government but as a continuation. Mediating between the past and the future, the old and the new, ideological principle and economic pragmatism, he called it simply an “actualización” or updating of the Cuban “economic model in order to build a prosperous and sustainable socialism.” Still it is inevitable not to hear the echoes of the language of the internet and of our contemporary practices of dealing with the old, what computer specialists call curiously the “legacy” version of programs in Pres. Castro’s proposal. Not a reversal or a correction (rectificación), this current change in Cuba policy is in his words an actualización, an update.

Gone in both of the presidents’ speeches and policy proposals is that commercial/military metaphor or paradigm that has for so long ruled and determined the identity of both Cubans and Americans, what the Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez has called that “belicista” or warlike guiding metaphor that has repeatedly asked the citizens of both countries to close ranks and to construct their identity in an adversarial way, to subordinate, that is, other differences to the national struggle with an external enemy.

Given this historic shift and our upcoming study tour in Havana, we have invited a group of distinguished scholars, cultural activists and artists to discuss the possibilities and potential of this important paradigm change in the lives of Cubans, Cuban-Americans, Americans, Latinos, and Latin Americans. What might the impact of this shift be in the lives of Cubans in the island and the diaspora? How might Cubans in the island, given their famous resourcefulness, utilize this moment? How might it impact their relationship with the Cuban diaspora in the United States and abroad? How might that in turn affect the relationship of diasporic Cubans with other Latinos in the United States? How might waning of the commercial/military metaphor that has for so long governed Cuban national identity impact that other analogous metaphor that prescribes Cuban-American identity as exceptional vis-à-vis other Latino migrants? How might this shift in policy change American politics internally and externally? And finally and especially, if we as Americans are a crucially important part of the policy shift proposed by Presidents Obama and Castro, if such change is premised, that is, on people-to-people engagement, how might we as Americans utilize this moment to engage with Cubans and contribute in a manner that is both productive and ethical?

As I have said, we have invited a group of extraordinary scholars, cultural activists and artists to discuss these issues with us, scholars who have long been researching and considering these issues. Dr. Margaret E. Crahan is Director of the Cuba Program at the Institute of Latin American Studies at Columbia University. She has been the Henry R. Luce Professor of Religion, Power and Political Process at Occidental College, and is currently the Vice President of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights. Dr. Sujatha Fernandes is Associate Professor of Sociology at Queens College, CUNY, and author of Cuba Represent!: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures, which combines social theory and political economy with in-depth, engaged ethnography to explore cultural agency in post-Soviet Cuba through the arts and artists' relationship to the state. And the acclaimed Cuban-American writer Achy Obejas, author of We Came All the Way from Cuba so You Could Dress Like This?, Memory Mambo, Days of Awe, and Ruins, novels which explore the inextricable interconnection of multiple Cuban and Latin American diasporas with their home countries and issues of gender and sexual identities. She is also the brilliant translator into Spanish of Junot Díaz’s The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, La breve y maravillosa historia de Oscar Wao, and a journalist and blogger of renown both in Cuba and the United States. Help me give them a warm welcome.
On April 21, Prof. Doris Sommer, the Ira and Jewell Williams Jr. Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, and author of classic books of Latin American literary criticism such as *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* and *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas*, led a master workshop on cultural Agency and public humanities, based on her latest book, *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* (Duke UP), and on her work as Director of the Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard. Prof. Sommer introduced her work on the effects of the humanities and art on the social world at a time of great skepticism about the efficacy of the humanities and art by way of a reading of Kant’s concept of the disinterested, open-ended nature of aesthetic judgment. Following Hannah Arendt’s reading of Kant, which proposes that the Enlightenment philosopher never wrote a treatise on political philosophy because his *Third Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* contains in an indirect way his views on civic development, Prof. Sommer argues that aesthetic judgment, unlike other more regulated forms of knowledge, promotes the disinterested, goal-free, innovative exploration which is needed today to meet our current contemporary civic challenges. Training in aesthetic judgment, she asserted, will result in innovative engagement with the world and encourage solutions to some of the most intractable problems of our contemporary life which are cultural. As an example of an innovative aesthetic approach to contemporary social problems, Prof. Sommer offered the case of Bogotá, then one of the most dangerous cities in the world, whose mayor Antanas Mockus reconstructed its citizens sense of civic belonging through a series of government-sponsored projects that utilized artists and encouraged citizens to see themselves as creative subjects.

After this introduction, Prof. Sommer gave a hands-on workshop on techniques that promote creative literacy among students which drew from the work of the *cartoneras* in Peru, cultural workers who have made it possible for Lima’s many very poor cardboard pickers to become producers themselves of beautiful and affordable artisanal cardboard books for a mass reading public, the work of the public *lectores* or readers in Caribbean and New York tobacco factories whose eclectic and challenging readings promoted reflection on social issues while the workers labored, and the performative pedagogy of Brazilian playwright and theater director Augusto Boal which seeks to engage people in solving their own local problems by performing them. Much was learned by all and much fun was had by everyone as the accompanying photos show.

Li Yun Alvarado with her doctoral dissertation committee members, Elisabeth Frost (Far Left), Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé (Right), and Shoni Enelow (Far Right), at the successful completion of her dissertation on Feminism, Empire, and NYC Latino Poetics

Congratulations Class of 2015!

Nicole Ellis, FCRH
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