

# THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE TEACHING OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

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All too frequently, national associations pay scant heed to professional activity below the university level, seeming to forget that schools and colleges are the foundation for their future success. Aware of this, the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) appointed its first committee on teaching Latin American studies on all levels in 1973. The committee, working closely with the steering committee of the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs, (CLASP), sought some means of building bridges of mutual help and understanding between teachers and professors of Latin American studies. In these efforts, two specific needs and one rather obvious fact became apparent. The needs were for some means of updating and improving the quality of teacher training for those teaching Latin American content and for the development of instructional materials that met the high standards of both Latin American scholars and professional educators. The obvious fact was that the average Latin Americanist had little understanding of the current school classroom and the problems confronting and opportunities available to the classroom teacher. To compound these, it was clear that the study of Latin America as a world culture area was diminishing. Such conditions, once recognized, cried out for action on the part of LASA/CLASP.

It was proposed that teachers, Latin Americanists, and educators be brought together to confront these conditions at a meeting that would be national in scope, as LASA and CLASP are national. Preliminary investigations of possible funding sources began—public and private. Discussions with the six National Defense Education Act Latin American centers were held at the Fifth National Meeting of LASA in San Francisco. LASA also publicly placed its imprimatur on such activity with the CLASP session on the Teaching of Latin American Studies, the first such pedagogical session ever held at a LASA meeting.

Out of all this came the first national seminar on the teaching of Latin American studies. Made possible by a grant from the Tinker Foundation of New York, this two week session, 27 August—8 July 1975, brought together sixty teachers/participants from throughout the United States and twenty-five faculty of Latin Americanists and professional educators. The seminar was predicated on the basic premise that these three groups had much to give and much to learn from each other. The seminar had the full cooperation of the NDEA Latin American centers. The centers at the Universities of New Mexico, Texas, Florida,

California at Los Angeles, Wisconsin, and Tulane University, each of which has an ongoing outreach program in the schools, shared the results of their activities. In addition, they underwrote the costs of sending their directors and/or curriculum coordinators to the seminar, where they served without remuneration.

The primary goal was to have Latin American studies assume its proper place in the school curriculum. To achieve this goal, the seminar concentrated on teacher training and the development of valid curriculum materials. It was designed to:

1. Focus national attention on the study of Latin America as a major world culture area;
2. Increase the range of curriculum choices offered to school and community-college students;
3. Provide, through the association or commercial publication, teaching materials acceptable to teachers, educators, and professional Latin Americanists—sound content and sound pedagogy;
4. Establish a national network or cadre of teachers to provide in-service teacher training and support in their respective geographical areas as well as nationally;
5. Obtain expanded school-district commitment to innovation, experimentation, and evaluation in the area of Latin American studies; and,
6. Train teachers in the art of producing Latin American studies teaching materials themselves.

The University of New Mexico proved to be the ideal site for such an initial seminar. New Mexico's own cross-cultural history and the continuing survival and coexistence of three great strains—the indigenous, the Hispanic, and the northwestern European—made it an appropriate choice for an educational endeavor dedicated to the clarification of values and the elimination of cultural stereotypes. Such an environment made possible considerable cultural immersion for the participants, and the university itself made available to the seminar its vast physical and human resources.

Each of the six NDEA centers chose six participants, designating one as a resource teacher. The remaining twenty-four were chosen from "open" candidates nominated by the regional Latin American associations, the CLASP steering committee, the LASA executive council, and the LASA membership. Each of these potential participants was asked to document his/her dedication to the teaching of Latin American studies. In addition, each had to have the application/questionnaire countersigned by an appropriate school official indicating the commitment of the school district to support the improvement and expansion of Latin American studies. The breakdown of participants by teaching level was as follows:

Resource teachers	6
Elementary teachers	8
Middle/junior high teachers	11
High school	20

Community college	5
College/university	6
Consultant/supervisor	4
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	60

Participants make up the core of any seminar and, as such, greatly determine its ultimate degree of success. The mix of national seminar participants was extraordinary. The full spectrum of the educational world seemed to be present— young, middle aged, and old; inexperienced and experienced; traditional and innovative; bachelors-degree holders and doctorates; radical, liberal, and conservative; quiet, earnest introverts and active, volatile extroverts; Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chicanos, Anglos, and variations between.

In an effort to provide some common ground, participants were sent three texts to read before going to Albuquerque: E. Bradford Burns, *Latin America, A Concise Interpretive History*; Charles Wagley, *Latin American Tradition*; and Kempton Webb, *Geography of Latin America*. To illustrate the types of instructional materials that teachers themselves might develop, a kit<sup>1</sup> of such materials was given to each participant at the beginning of the seminar. One of its major functions was to be a catalyst for participants to begin to develop instructional materials. Another purpose was to give to the busy teacher an easy, quick resource of Latin American materials for the classroom.

Briefly stated, the seminar included: (1) Lecture/discussions on Latin American content, led by Latin Americanists for the entire group (professional educators attended); (2) preparation of appropriate instructional materials for the teaching of that content, under the direction of teachers and professional educators with participants divided according to grade level—elementary, middle/junior high, high school, and college (Latin Americanists were present as resource persons); (3) evenings devoted to media presentations supporting the content of the day; and (4) an overnight field trip to nearby historic areas.

The seminar was organized around two themes: Cultural ecology (week 1) and symbols and symbolizing (week 2). The following concepts were reflected in all instructional material relating to content of week 1: (1) The recognition of stereotyped views of foreign peoples; (2) the common humanity of people amidst cultural and environmental diversities in Latin America; (3) the cultural diversities possible in different environments and the same environments and cultural similarities in different environments; (4) the recognition of the different features of leadership choices, family arrangements, and religious alternatives in Latin American cultures; and (5) the intrinsic worth of Latin American cultures and their contribution to the richness of human thought and life. During week 2, contents of all instructional materials related to: (1) Words and symbols misform as well as inform; no two things are identical; statements that seem to talk about “a people” as if there were one entity must obviously be qualified; terms such as “Indo-American” conceal differences as well as reveal group likeness; (2) no one thing stays the same; culture contact and changes in ecological forms create changes internally and externally derived for each culture; (3) it is not possible to

tell all about anything; (4) the same word or symbol may be used to represent different realities, while similar events or experiences and symbols are sometimes represented by different names (e. g., the cross of the Maya and early Europeans); (5) statements of opinion are often confused with statements of fact and sources of statements should be considered in terms of the experience behind the symbols; and (6) language and culture and symbols and culture are interrelated.

The program for the first week had been designed to update participants' knowledge of Latin America and give them a common base from which to work, although there was a strong pedagogical component to prepare participants for the production of instructional materials; the second week was, to a great degree, given over to the development of instructional materials by the participants themselves (see appendix). Professor Marshall Nason planned and directed an educational field trip for the weekend of 2–3 August. The first stop was at El Rancho de las Golondrinas, a reconstruction of an early Spanish colonial ranch. The Old Cienega Village Museum, operated by the Colonial New Mexico Historical Foundation, was opened especially for the seminar tour. Mr. Joseph Baca, state supervisor of social studies for New Mexico, came down from Santa Fe to act as one of the guides. Other stops were made at Chimayo, to visit the Ortega weaving shop, and Taos Pueblo. After an overnight in Taos and a visit to El Rancho de Taos, participants walked through Bandelier National Monument, site of early cave dwellers. The balance of the day was spent in Santa Fe with participants free to wander about the colonial city as they chose.

Participants were offered the option of taking the seminar for graduate credit; each had to meet admission requirements and pay all necessary fees. In the end, six participants chose this option: Two elementary teachers, one middle school teacher, two high school teachers, and one community college teacher.

A major goal of the seminar was to train teachers in the art of producing Latin American teaching materials themselves. A corollary was to provide valid teaching materials through *LASA* or commercial publication. The seminar seems to have been successful in the first and will be able to achieve the second. Many of the participants presented completed materials prior to the conclusion of the seminar; several other projects are still in production. The twenty-nine submitted at this writing have been divided according to potential use: (1) Publishable—after validation by Latin Americanists, checking possible copyright problems and field testing where needed; (2) publishable by means of *Newsletter*—for materials that are valuable but not totally unique; (3) dissemination through workshops—for projects that are best used by producers in their own workshops; and (4) ideosyncratic—those projects particularly designed to meet the specific needs of the producer. The inventory made thus far indicates there is sufficient material for putting together a publication on cartoons and their use in the classroom, one on simulations (value sheets), and, possibly, one, in looseleaf form, to include many of the remaining materials. Eight papers that were previously commissioned were distributed to participants at the seminar for critiquing. These papers, revised, along with some of the lectures presented at the seminar (all sessions were recorded), are to be published as a handbook for teachers.

Teacher training by teachers themselves constituted a principal purpose of the seminar. Thirty-three participants reported that they were planning to conduct workshops on seminar activities. Such workshops varied from those for local teachers, to one for the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATSP), to a six-week institute at Northwestern University. In addition, twenty-nine participants planned to make special reports to local administrators, supervisors, faculty, students; local colleges and universities; state commissioners and agencies; and professional organizations such as LASA, Council of Social Studies, AATSP, etc. Such reports are of particular importance in increasing the range of curriculum choices in the schools. Enthusiastic reports, along with the kit, papers, books, and other handouts, should encourage even the reluctant official to consider expanding Latin American offerings at his school.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the seminar was the focusing of national attention on the study of Latin America as a major world culture area. Those who attended formed the nucleus of a national network dedicated to the improvement and expansion of the teaching of Latin American studies. This network will be held together and expanded through a quarterly *Newsletter* that will report new teaching techniques, materials, book reviews, bibliographies, grants, etc.<sup>2</sup> The interaction of Latin Americanists, educators, and teachers begun at the seminar will continue by means of this network. Through the efforts of CLASP, each participant will have nearby Latin Americanists available for use as resource persons.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 1

<i>Seminar Element</i>	<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not Useful</i>	<i>Have Not Read or Heard</i>
Textbook	91%	3%	6%
Kit	69%	19%	11%
Handouts	74%	6%	20%
Papers 1	79%	1%	20%
Papers 2	42%	26%	31%
Media	73%	13%	19%
Field trip	86%	8%	5%
Content sessions			
Week 1	82%	9%	8%
Pedagogy	63%	19%	18%
Lectures			
Art & Architecture/ Black Legend	83%	13%	4%
Brazilian & Spanish Literature	33%	56%	10%
Advertising/Public Library Resource	47%	31%	22%

On the final day of the seminar, participants filled out a comprehensive evaluation form that requested their reactions to the various components of the program. Participants were encouraged to make a critical assessment of the seminar and ample space was left for comment. Evaluation data (by percentage) are summarized in the tables. Analysis reveals that the majority found most elements of the seminar to be useful. The exceptions were those lectures that fell at the end of the second week, when participants were impatient to be working on their special projects. To a majority of those responding, the content sessions seem to have been most useful. Of perhaps more significance was the growth in skills for instructional techniques and materials development. At the beginning of the seminar, 19 percent felt very inadequate (table 4); by the end, not a single participant fell in this category. Forty percent had perceived themselves as being very adequate in these skills prior to the seminar, but by the end almost three fourths (73 percent) of the participants placed themselves in this group. This confirms the findings of table 2 in which an overwhelming majority (84 percent) were pleased or more so with the instructional materials sessions. Finally, table 3 confirms the success of the seminar in bringing Latin Americanists, professional educators, and teachers together. Fifty-six percent found this success to be beyond their expectations, while only 2 percent felt uncertain, and no one thought it fell below their expectations. This to a great degree proves the validity of the premise on which the seminar was based—that the three groups have much to learn from each other and should be brought into an environment conducive to dialogue and interaction. The seminar provided just that.

TABLE 2

*Instructional Materials Sessions*

Extremely pleased	17%
Pleased	67%
Uncertain	10%
Displeased	4%

TABLE 3

*To what degree has the Seminar succeeded in its goal of bringing Latin Americanists, professional educators, and teachers together for meaningful dialogue and interaction?*

Beyond my expectations	56%
About what I expected	29%
To some degree	6%
Uncertain	2%
Below my expectations	
Not at all	
No comment	6%

TABLE 4

	<i>Very In-adequate</i>	<i>Adequate</i>	<i>Very Adequate</i>	<i>No Comment</i>
How adequate was your knowledge of Latin America prior to attending this seminar?	21%	37%	38%	4%
How adequate is your knowledge of Latin America now?	2%	37%	56%	4%
How adequate were your skills for instructional techniques and materials development for Latin American studies prior to attending the seminar?	19%	37%	40%	4%
How adequate <i>now</i> ?	—	23%	73%	4%

TABLE 5

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No Comment</i>
Are you willing to act as a resource person for teachers in your geographic area?	92%	2%	6%
Are you willing to share with others through the seminar <i>Newsletter</i> your progress in the use of and development of instructional materials?	96%	—	4%

Evaluation of the seminar is to be ongoing. At the end of every three months, for at least one year, participants will be asked by mail how they are sharing seminar ideas and materials with other teachers; how much Latin American content is being taught in their classrooms; what instructional materials are being used; what new materials they have developed; and what special needs they might have. This information will be incorporated into the quarterly *Newsletter* to be sent to all seminar participants, faculty, and others who might choose to become a part of the seminar network.

The seminar, from every vantage point, was a success. Its major achievement, however, was the acceptance by a nationwide professional organization (LASA) of its responsibility to teachers in the schools. LASA gained as much from this endeavor as it gave. It is unfortunate that no evaluation was made by the Latin Americanists at the seminar, for their interaction with teachers was revealing, enlightening, and compelling. As participants perhaps gained most from association with each other, so the Latin Americanists probably gained most from

interaction with the participants—those energetic, bright, innovative, creative teachers. Without doubt, university teaching will feel the impact of this particular chemistry. It may be hoped that now that LASA/CLASP have established this dialogue, communication among Latin Americanists, educators, and teachers will continue and expand in both formal and informal patterns. The seminar and its expansion through publication will improve and extend the teaching of Latin American studies in the schools, colleges, and universities as it has opened new vistas for scores of professionals and, through them, thousands of students.

## APPENDIX

### PROGRAM: WEEK ONE—CULTURAL ECOLOGY

Monday, 28 July 1975

Morning: <i>Content*</i>	<i>John Aragon</i> (Cultural Awareness Center), University of New Mexico	Cross-cultural enrichment
	<i>Kempton Webb</i> (Geography), Columbia University	Latin American ecology—how it is changing
Afternoon: <i>Instructional Materials</i>	<i>Miriam Williford</i> (History), Winthrop College	Issued kit of instructional materials with brief explanation of function of kit
	<i>J. Doyle Casteel</i> (Education), University of Florida	Value clarification in teaching Latin American studies
Evening: <i>Media</i>	<i>Joedd Price</i> (History), University of Delaware	Slide shows: "Why Study Latin America," "Stereotypes—Latin Americans and the People of the United States," "Making Your Own Slides for Classroom Use"
	<i>Miriam Williford</i>	Filmstrip/cassette presentation: "The Valley of Oaxaca"

Tuesday, 29 July 1975

Morning: <i>Instructional Materials</i>	<i>Charlotte Crabtree</i> (Curriculum Specialist), UCLA	Teaching strategies
	<i>William Carter</i> (Anthropology, Director of NDEA Center), University of Florida	The concept of culture

\*One-third of each *Content* session was reserved for discussion and questions from participants.



Afternoon: *William Carter* The concept of culture  
 Content *Barbara Kantz*, (Participant) Filmstrips, produced by Kantz  
 and Robert Levine

Evening:  
 Free

Wednesday, 30 July 1975

Morning: *Sabine Ulibarri* (Spanish), The Spanish woman  
 Instructional New Mexico  
 Materials  
*Gemma Morris* (LMC), New Use of the Learning  
 Mexico; *Robert Doxtator* (Educa- Materials Center  
 tion), New Mexico  
*Edward Glabb*, University of Brief explanations of activities  
 Texas; *John Hawkins*, UCLA; and materials developed by  
*J. Doyle Casteel*; NDEA centers in outreach pro-  
*Richard Greenleaf* (History, grams  
 Director of NDEA Center),  
 Tulane University

Afternoon: *E. Bradford Burns* (History), The use of film in the class-  
 Instructional UCLA room, using "The Critic," "The  
 Materials Wall," "The Land Burns"

Evening: *E. Bradford Burns* "Blood of the Condor"  
 Media

Thursday, 31 July 1975

Morning: *Johannes Wilbert* (Anthro- Model of enculturation  
 Content pology, Director of NDEA  
 Center), UCLA

*Carlos Cortes* (History), Univer- The filmmaker—how and why  
 sity of California at Riverside

*J. Doyle Casteel* Concept teaching

Afternoon: Elementary: *Polly Timberlake* Participants divided according  
 Workshops and *Doris Vincent*; to levels, each working with a  
 Middle/Junior High: *Sandra resource teacher*  
*Macis*; High School: Social  
 Studies—*Lenore Pardee*,  
 Spanish—*Julia*  
*Mellenbruch*;  
 College: *Jacyra Abreu*

*Latin American Research Review*

Resource faculty were assigned to help each workshop group. Other resource faculty were available to assist individuals or workshop groups in developing instructional materials. Resource faculty included: *Kempton Webb, Joedd Price, Charlotte Crabtree, J. Doyle Casteel, Edward Glabb, John Hawkins, E. Bradford Burns, Richard Greenleaf, Felicity Trueblood, Johannes Wilbert, and William Glade.*

Evening:  
*Free*

*Friday, 1 August 1975*

Morning: <i>Content</i>	<i>William Glade (Economics, Director of NDEA Center), University of Texas</i>	Cross-sectional view of Latin American economics
	Interaction panel: <i>Kempton Webb—Geography; E. Bradford Burns—History; William Glade—Economics; Johannes Wilbert—Anthropology</i>	Summarized the week's content on cultural ecology and responded to questions raised by participants
Afternoon: <i>Instructional Materials</i>	<i>J. Doyle Casteel</i>	Teaching behaviors
Evening: <i>Workshops</i>	<i>Marshall Nason (Director of NDEA Center), University of New Mexico; Ambrosio Ortega, University of New Mexico</i>	Field trip orientation

PROGRAM: WEEK TWO—SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIZING

*Monday, 4 August 1975*

Morning: <i>Content, Workshops</i>	<i>Shirley Heath (Anthropology), Winthrop College</i>	Introduction to the symbols and symbolizing process
	Resource faculty included: <i>Shirley Heath; J. Doyle Casteel; Clark Gill, Education, Texas; Thomas La Belle, Curriculum Development, UCLA; Edward Glabb; Felicity Trueblood; Richard Greenleaf; Steven Stein; Doris Turner; Carl Deal; Michael Riley, Director of NDEA Center, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee; Eugenio Chang-Rodriguez, History, Queens College of CUNY; Philip Taylor, Political Science, Houston; Donald Robertson, Art History, Tulane</i>	
Afternoon: <i>Instructional Materials</i>	<i>Donald Robertson</i>	Symbols in art and architecture, illustrated by slides

Evening: Film on the Mexican Revolution, "Memorias de un Mexicano"

Tuesday, 5 August 1975

Morning: *Richard Greenleaf* "The Black Legend"  
Content

Afternoon: Workshops and individual  
*Workshop* work on projects

Evening:  
*Free*

Wednesday, 6 August 1975

Morning: *Doris Turner* (Portuguese), Symbols in two Afro-Brazilian  
Content Kent State literary works: *Jubiabá* and  
*Sortilégio*

*Dinko Cvitanovic* (Spanish), Symbolism in Spanish  
University of New Mexico American Literature

Workshops and work on  
individual projects

Afternoon: Work on projects

Evening: *Steven Stein* (Ethnomusicology), Slide presentation on Latin  
SUNY at Stony Brook American popular culture,  
advertising

Thursday, 7 August 1975

Morning: *Steven Stein* Latin American music

*Carl Deal* (Librarian), Sources for selection of current  
University of Illinois materials on Latin America

Work on projects

Afternoon: Work on projects

Evening:  
*Free*

*Latin American Research Review*

*Friday, 8 August 1975*

Morning:	Presentations by workshop groups of instructional materials developed within group	
Afternoon:	<i>Shirley Heath</i>	A synopsis of the seminar's work
	<i>Erika v.C. Bruce</i>	Greetings from the Tinker Foundation
	<i>Miriam Williford</i>	Evaluations
Evening: Closing Ceremonies	<i>Miriam Williford</i>	Closing remarks emphasizing the network established
	<i>Felicity Trueblood</i> <i>Miriam Williford</i> <i>Marshall Nason</i>	Awarding of certificates
	Reception	

Since the program was planned in advance, without prior knowledge of the interests and capabilities of participants, every effort was made to meet specific needs or desires without destroying the fabric of the seminar structure. Therefore, the following optional meetings were set up:

*Thursday, 31 July 1975*

<i>Kempton Webb, E. Bradford Burns, Carlos Cortes, Johannes Wilbert</i>	Informal discussion between panel of Latin Americanists and participants
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*Friday, 1 August 1975*

<i>J. Doyle Casteel</i>	Teaching behaviors workshop
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*Wednesday, 6 August 1975*

<i>J. Doyle Casteel</i>	Technical teaching skills
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*Thursday, 7 August 1975*

<i>Miriam Williford</i>	Workshop on conference planning
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*Friday, 8 August 1975*

Latin Americanists and interested participants	Discussion of Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Latin American concerns
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## NOTES

1. The kit was designed by Shirley Heath and Miriam Williford of Winthrop College. Each kit contained a game; codices; instructions for making codices, potato stamps, pottery; costume designs; design cards; and a resource notebook. The notebook included fifteen activities for grades 1–6, thirteen for grades 7–12; materials on use of kit contents, costumes, Maya numeral system, city planning, houses, tools, etc.; and a section of adapted primary sources. Annotated bibliographies for teachers and students were also included. A few kits are available for purchase at \$50 each. Interested persons may contact M. Williford, Box 5102, WCS, Rock Hill, S.C. 29733.
2. All who would like to become a part of this network—school teacher, college or university professor, anyone interested in the teaching of Latin American Studies—are welcome. Simply write to the author at the address given above. Please send information concerning instructional techniques or materials developed, particular interests, or requests for possible inclusion in the *Newsletter*. If funds permit, the *Newsletter* will be sent to all interested persons.
3. Each potential participant was asked on the questionnaire/application to list the name and address of the Latin American center/program within easy reach of his school. The CLASP steering committee is trying to assist those who did not have any affiliation.