

## FEATURED ESSAYS

### **MUST AREA STUDIES BE SO DARN INTERDISCIPLINARY? A REPORT ON THE TITLE VI ASIAN GLOBALIZATION & LATIN AMERICA PROJECT AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

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#### **Mission of the Project**

The Asian Globalization and Latin America Project (AGLA) is a unique, integrative trans-regional program at Florida International University (FIU) that enhances Asian studies through collaborations with other area studies programs. It has been funded in part by a Department of Education Title VI grant (1999-2002) for the development of curriculum supporting a new certificate program and the enhancement of language instruction and study abroad opportunities for FIU students. The seed for the project was the visit of Ronan Pereira, formerly of the University of Brasilia, in October 1999 for lectures on Japanese Cults in Brazil and the role of Asian Studies in Latin American universities in fall 1998.

AGLA at FIU aims to strengthen the interaction between area studies in order to address new challenges in international programs by linking two major regional studies centers: the Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC), which has long been designated a National Resource Center, and the rapidly growing Institute for Asian Studies (IAS) that has implemented a new BA program. The project has focused on establishing or examining points of intersection between the regions of Asia and Latin America by analyzing issues such as: diaspora and migration patterns, cultural and national identity, trade and political economy, systems of education and reform, environmental and labor issues, and internet commerce and technology, with an emphasis on contemporary society as part of a comprehensive investigation of the significance of globalization.

The AGLA project has promoted the integration of a variety of disciplines focusing on trans-regionality, such as International Relations, Economics, History and Religious Studies. This has been particularly important for the creation of the AGLA certificate program, which has provided students with the opportunity to learn about the two regions

through diverse approaches. Also, lectures and workshops sponsored by the Project have enabled faculty and students at FIU to deepen their knowledge about Asia and Latin America through the experience and knowledge of recognized scholars and professionals.

Some of the high points have been workshops on comparative literature, global economics, Asian ethnicity, social development, and inter-regional commerce; in addition to events ranging from the performance of Japanese-Brazilian dance, the participation of Asian Studies in the Tigers of Asian trade show in Miami Beach and a symposium on China's relations with Latin American countries sponsored by LACC. The presence of visiting scholars Masaru Tamamoto and Andre Gunder Frank as well as lectures by Peter Smith, Karen Yamashita, and Ivan Schulman, among others, have been particularly stimulating. In addition, Dale Olsen gave a fascinating demonstration of shakuhachi in comparison with flutes indigenous to Latin America. In November 2001, we had a demonstration of Butoh dance by a performer from Nicaragua and a lecture by a speaker from Brazil—even as another Brazilian expert on Japanese dance had to cancel her travel plans.

### **Methodological Question**

The intriguing question of “Why must Area Studies be So Darn Interdisciplinary?” became the theme for several workshops and research efforts, and is an important topic as IAS develops, largely through interdisciplinary and other kinds of collaborative programming. The appeal of “area studies” is that it enables scholars and students to look beyond the horizons of their discipline and engage in broader kinds of inquiry. Interdisciplinarity allows specialists to deepen their understanding of the larger cultural and economic context of the region on which their work focuses.

But the question arises, Can we, or do we really want, to forego our disciplinary base? The FIU trans-regional Asian/Latin America Project demonstrates that specialists seeking to cross borders can explore other options for accomplishing this goal. These include transcending barriers of region and culture while remaining within a disciplinary method. Prime examples are studies of Chinese and Japanese ethnicity in Latin American cultures, social and economic development issues in a comparative or global context, and Asian influences on Latin American literature, film, religion, and thought.

One way of looking at this issue is to consider the following global situation. For many decades there was a saying that when the U.S. sneezed (or had an economic or political crisis) Latin America caught a cold. For the past couple of decades the same analogy was used in the case of Japan and its regional neighbors in Southeast Asia. By the 1990s it became clear that there was a broader context, because when Japan sneezed mightily in 1997 the cold was caught as far away as Brazil.

### **Project Themes**

The AGLA Project has focused on several main themes in developing new curriculum and supporting faculty research that reflect a comparison of the relation between increasingly interactive regions in the context of globalization:

- 1) **Ethnic Identity**, including the function of the Japanese communities in Brazil and Peru and the Chinese in Cuba and Panama, as well as Japanese-Latin Americans (*Nikkei*) returning to the homeland as laborers (*dekasegi*).



Japanese Torii Gate in Liberdade, São Paulo



Japanese Nikkei from Peru

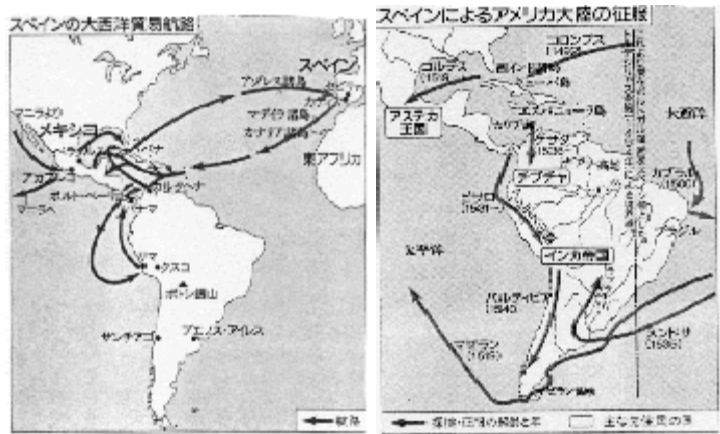
**2) Comparative Literature and Thought**, such as the influence of Asian culture on Latin American literature, philosophy, and film, especially figures like Octavio Paz, Jorge Borges, and Jose Marti, and comparisons of "magical realism" in the respective literary traditions.



"Guided by his pale hand a silkworm is his brush, that formed upon the paper the black chrysalis of a mysterious hieroglyph whence, like flower, sprung a magnificent thought with wings of flying gold: subtle and mysterious flame in the lamp of the ideogram."

-Jose Juan Tablada, 1920

- 3) **Linguistics and Bilingualism**, how languages and styles of language pedagogy and heritage language retention reflect issues of cultural interaction and social identity.
- 4) **Social and Political Issues**, including development, security, governance, labor, drug trafficking, medical ethics, environmental concerns, human rights, and related topics dealing with China in Latin America.
- 5) **Trade and Economics**, such as the effect of a global economy on both regions and, in particular, the impact of the 1997 Asian financial crisis on Latin American economic development.
- 6) **Area Studies**, including studies of world regions and international issues as conducted in universities and institutes in Asian and Latin American countries, in order to understand how the academic leaders of each area understand the other.



Maps appearing in a Japanese textbook about Latin American Studies

**Faculty Development**

The Faculty Development portion of AGLA has been especially successful in supporting the research projects and course planning of numerous faculty members. The project has, for example, led Steven Heine, director of the Institute for Asian Studies as well as the AGLA project, to travel to Mexico, Panama, and Brazil for research on Chinese and Japanese ethnic communities. He has also become familiar with the

status of Latin American studies in Japanese universities, and interdisciplinary area studies in the context of worldwide academics. At the same time, Eduardo Gamarra, director of LACC, attended a conference in Japan for the first time and presented a paper dealing with "Asians and the Andes."

Several other Asianists had an opportunity to learn about Latin America. For example, Alan Gummerson of the department of Economics, traveled to a Mercosur conference and workshop sponsored in part by the FIU Center for International Business Education and Research. More significantly, a number of Latin Americanists became involved with Asian Studies. For example, Theodore Young, associate director of AGLA, infused a course on Brazilian Film with examples of cinema created to reflect Japanese cultural identity. He also helped organize workshops led by Jeff Lesser on Asian identity issues in Brazil, and by Dain Borges representing the University of California at San Diego project on Pacific Rim-Latin American studies.

Erik Camayd-Freixas in the department of Modern Languages gave two lectures related to the AGLA program. One was on "Magical Realism: A Trans-Pacific Perspective" and the other was on "The Tao of Mexican Poetry." Camayd is presently editing a collection of essays entitled "Orientalism and Identity in Latin America." He defines Orientalism as "influences and perceptions of primarily the Far East, but also the Middle East, in the Latin American tradition."

Alfred Lopez of the English department received an invitation from two prestigious literary organizations in India to visit their country for the purpose of presenting papers at their annual conference. AGLA support helped him develop his current book project, an edited collection of essays to be entitled "Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader."

Tori Arpad of Visual Arts has traveled to Japan and Korea for exhibitions, and has organized a major exhibit of East Asian artists in venues throughout Miami that has stirred the entire arts community.

For several years Maida Watson of Modern Languages has contributed to the AGLA Project by organizing the Annual Seminar on Asian Influences on the Hispanic Canon. The Seminar helps faculty and students analyze the literary and cultural relationship between Asia and Latin America. She also helped organize the first study abroad program to Japan in summer 2001 that was directed by Japanese instructor Asuka Haraguchi and Randall Martin of the Business School. Watson traveled to Peru to explore contacts between universities from that country and FIU,

and to Panama to plan a joint course on relations between Asia and the Hispanic world.

Catherine Marsicek, the Latin America and Caribbean Information Center Librarian, supported the Asian Globalization and Latin America initiative by developing a research guide to selected library resources, entitled "Asians in Latin America: A Guide to Resources." This annotated finding aid guides users to key works regarding the field, including reference works, books, journal articles, electronic databases, government documents and Internet Resources. With over 1000 entries of major works and articles discussing the history and the influences of Asians in Latin America, this is a major contribution to facilitate research in the field. Visit this website at: <http://www.fiu.edu/~asian/global/index.htm>.

### **Curriculum Enhancement**

One of the main aims of the AGLA project has been to create and infuse courses with Asian and Latin America material. The Project stimulated faculty in the field of Latin America to infuse courses with Asian content.

Alfred Lopez, English, developed an infused course combining Latin American and Asian studies. The course is a survey of literatures known collectively as "magical realism."

Damian Fernandez, International Relations, infused the course "Development and Third World". The empirical basis for the course is a comparative study of Latin America and Asia on specific issues of development.

Erik Camayd-Freixas, Modern Languages, created a new course, "Eastern Thought and Latin American Literature: The Age of Octavio Paz." He also infused one course, "Introduction to Spanish American Literature," which is a survey course of Spanish American literature from its origins to the contemporary period. Ana Roca, Modern Languages, created a course on "Bilingualism and Heritage Language Learning" in Asian and Spanish ethnic communities, and Joan Torres-Pou, Modern Languages, has developed a new course that focuses on Asian-Hispanic literature, especially in the context of the Philippines.

Orlando Garcia, School of Music, infused the course "Music of the Americas" with information regarding Asian cultures in different parts of Latin America, including Brazil and Colombia

Douglas Kincaid, Sociology and Anthropology Department and Vice Provost for International Studies, infused the course "Comparative

Sociology” that is organized around comparisons of cultures, societies, and nation states. Using the core sub-fields of sociology—including socialization, deviance, race and ethnicity, gender, religion, and social change—the course emphasizes contrasts and similarities among Latin American and Asian countries to illustrate the insights to be gained from careful comparison. Another theme of the course is the contemporary impact of globalization. Guillermo Grenier, Sociology and Anthropology Department, also infused the course on “Comparative Sociology” which is organized around three interrelated themes: the historical development of societies, comparison of cultures and world regions, and the impact of globalization on societies.

As for the Asian faculty, Steven Heine, Religious Studies and History, infused a course on “Meditation and Mystical Traditions” with material on Octavio Paz and Jorge Borges, and Umbandah and Mayan ritual, and also created a course on Asian Religions in the Americas; Alan Gummerson, Economics, infused the course “Comparative Economic Systems,” which compares the development policies in East Asia and Latin America; and Anjana Mishra, International Relations, infused the course “World Prospects and Issues” with Latin America content.

The following is a complete list of courses that were created for the AGLA project in humanities, social sciences and professions that are part of the new AGLA certificate program.

Modern Languages: “Eastern Thought and Latin American Literature,” on the influence of Asian philosophy and culture on magical realism in Latin America.

Modern Languages: “Japanese Culture and Calligraphy,” on the history and practice of Japanese calligraphy in comparative context.

Modern Languages: “Asia in 19th Century Hispanic Literature,” on Asian influences in Hispanic writers, especially in the Philippines.

Modern Languages: “Eastern Thought and Latin American Literature: The Age of Octavio Paz,” on Asian influences on Latin American literature and thought.

Modern Languages: “Bilingualism and Heritage Language,” Asian and Latin American influences on North American pedagogy.

Religious Studies: “Asian Religions in the Americas,” Asian religious movements in North and South America.

Religious Studies: “Sacred Space, Sacred Travels,” on pilgrimage sites and practices in Asian and Latin American locales.



Sociology: “Globalization and Society,” on how developing countries in both regions are affected by globalization.

Sociology/Anthropology: “Labor Movements in Developing Countries,” the history of labor movements in the development of Asia and Latin America.

The infused courses include:

Economics: “Comparative Economic Systems,” compares the developmental policies of Asia and Latin America.

Education: “Art Education,” how this field is conducted in Asia and Latin America.

English: “Literature and International Relations,” deals with classic examples of fiction that highlights issues in Asian comparative politics and society.

English: “Comparative Post-colonialism,” comparison of literature in Asian countries with Latin America literature.

History: “Special Topics: International Drug Control,” theories and policies related to drug control.

International Relations: “Japan and the US,” discusses the relations between the two countries.

International Relations: “Development and the Third World,” compares Latin America and Asia on issues of development.

International Relations: “World Prospects and Issues,” deals with political and economic issues of East Asia in comparative perspectives.

Modern Languages: “Spanish American Culture,” to include Asian influences.

Modern Languages: “Brazilian Film,” to focus on the impact of the Japanese ethnic community.

Music: “Music of Asia,” deals with different varieties of rhythms and styles of Asia.

Music: “Music of the Americas,” deals with Asian music in Latin America cultures.

Religious Studies: “World Religions,” Examines the origins, teachings, and practices of selected world religions.

Religious Studies: “Meditation and Mystical Traditions,” deals with the mystics of different religions in both regions.

Sociology/Anthropology: “Comparative Sociology,” on the effects of regional integration programs.

**Lectures and Workshops**

The following is a brief description of some of the main workshops supported by the Project.

**LASA 2000**

In a collaboration with the Japan Consul General's Office and the FIU Latin America and Caribbean Center, the Institute for Asian Studies sponsored a panel at the meeting of the Latin American Studies Association held in Miami in March 2000. Professors Shoji Nishijima, Nobuaki Haraguchi, and Neantro Saavedra-Rivano came from Japan as featured speakers dealing with the way Japanese economists study the region of Latin America. The discussants were Peter Smith of University of California at San Diego and FIU's Eduardo Gamarra, director of LACC.

**Global Ethics**

A major event of the AGLA Project dealt with comparative medical ethics. Professor William LaFleur of the University of Pennsylvania, discussed the ethical implications of abortion and organ transplants in Japan. LaFleur presented the Asian perspective, and Chris Gudorf of FIU, who specializes in Latin American perspectives, developed comparative themes. Both speakers examined the view of ethical choices in medical technology in countries where medical techniques are influenced by indigenous, non-Western sources as well as Western medicine.

**Area Studies**

Several of the main speakers examined the role of area studies and trans-regional programs in relation to the process of globalization. Dain Borges and Peter Smith, both of University of California at San Diego, spoke on the four-year program at UCSD on studies of the Pacific Rim in relation to Latin America. Richard Baum of UCLA described Asian and Asian-American studies on his campus, and also gave a lecture on relations between China and Taiwan.

**Latin America Area Studies in Japan**

In another conjunction with the office of the Japanese Consul in Miami, Professor Akio Hosono of Tsubuka University in Japan led a faculty workshop on trans-regional studies. Hosono is the leading Japanese scholar of Latin American studies, particularly economics and trade relations. He examined trends both before and after the Asian economic crisis of 1997.

**Asian Literary Influences**

One of the main AGLA events are the Panels on Asian Influences on the Hispanic Canon. There have been already a total of five Panels. In

the Panels, there were lectures and workshops in Spanish and in English, dealing with Asian influences in Latin American Literature.

The III Annual Panel featured a workshop by Linda Ehrlich, who discussed the image of Orpheus in film as a symbol of transcendence. Also, Chiyoko Kawakami lectured on the image of ghosts in Japanese literature and modern urbanization.

The IV Annual Panel on Asian Influences on the Hispanic Literary Canon featured Karen Yamashita of the University of California at Santa Cruz, doing a reading from her latest book on Japanese-Brazilians (Nikkei) entitled *Circle K Cycles*. Yamashita is the noted author of *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* and *Brazil Maru*. Other speakers included Ivan Schulman, emeritus at the University of Florida, who is a specialist on Cuban literature, and Maria Carmen Simon Palmer of the Universidad Nacional a la Distancia who deals with Orientalist themes. The V Annual Panel on Asian Influences on the Hispanic Cannon also featured Maria Carmen Simon Palmer "17th Century Spanish Perceptions of Japanese Eating Habits."

#### **Oxford University Conference**

An Oxford University Symposium was held on Asian and Latin American trade, economic and political relations. This featured FIU faculty members Mohammed Farouk, Paul Kowert, Mohiaddin Mesbahi, and William Walker.

#### **China and Latin America**

This panel was sponsored in conjunction with the Latin American and Caribbean Center. It dealt with the international trade and politics between China and Latin America, which has attracted increasing attention. Feature guest speakers included: Bud Cole, National Defense University; Dave Finkelstein, Center for Naval Intelligence; Linda Robinson, Harvard University; Jack Sweeney, Strategic Forecasting; Cynthia Watson, National Defense University.

#### **Visitors from Kanda University**

Several visitors from FIU student exchange partner, Kanda University of International Studies located just outside Tokyo, came to FIU to present lectures. Kazuei Tokado, a specialist in Spanish and Latin America political economy, was among the visitors and gave a workshop for FIU faculty.

#### **Asian Ethnicities**

Several lecturers discussed the role of Asian ethnicity and ethnic identity in the Latin America social context. Kathleen Lopez of the

University of Michigan discussed her sociological research on the Chinese community in Cuba, and Jeff Lesser of Emory University examined Japanese as well as Jewish and Arab identity issues in Brazil.

#### **Music Festival**

Orlando Garcia produced the New Music Miami Festival in spring 2002, which contained a representation of composers from Japan as well as other parts of Asia and Latin America. The event featured contemporary chamber, solo, and electro-acoustic music and included concerts, panels, and forums. Fredrick Kaufman, Director of the School of Music, presented a world premiere of “Kaminarimon” (“Thundergate”), which consisted of a composition for Taiko drums and Flamenco dance.

#### **Ongoing Research Activities**

The AGLA Project has spawned a variety of ongoing research activities conducted by FIU faculty.

*Bilingualism and Heritage Languages:* based on Ana Roca’s studies of Asian languages in comparison to Spanish.

*“Magical Realism” in Asian and Latin America Literature:* Erik Camayd-Freixas is editing a book on the subject.

*Asian Ethnic Identity in Latin America.* Maida Watson is developing a faculty development trip to Panama, in connection with the College of Business.

*Trans-Regional Political Economy.* This project involves a combination of faculty in International Relations, Economics and Business.

*Asian and Latin America Musicology.* Fred Kaufman, director of the School of Music, is composing a Taiko and Flamenco piece to be previewed at the FIU Music Festival in November 2002.

*Asian influence on Spanish-American writers.* Juan Torres-Pou is researching the influence of Asia in 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish and Spanish-American writers and pre-independence Spanish-Philippine literature.

Furthermore, several graduate students have developed research projects. These include Tatiana Mackliff in the field of International Development Education. She is working on ethnicity studies, with a particular focus on Japanese-Peruvians dating back to 1899. In this period, the first group of Japanese immigrants arrived in Callao to work as contract laborers on sugar plantations in the coastal region of Peru. Interestingly, after a period of 100 years, history reversed itself and Peruvians of Japanese descent became the source of low-cost labor in the flourishing economy of

Asia. Mackliff conducted a complete study in the city of Miami. For complete transcripts of revealing interviews visit: [www.fiu.edu/-mackliff](http://www.fiu.edu/-mackliff).”

Also, Erin Westin completed a MA thesis on the spread of Mahikari, a recent Japanese New Religions movement, to the island of Martinique and the questions of adaptation in the Caribbean setting. Isabel Morales, as part of her MA research on Cuban religiosity, did fieldwork in the Chinese and Japanese communities in Havana.

### **Future Prospects**

By the completion of the AGLA Project grant cycle the Institute for Asian Studies housed two flourishing certificate programs and implemented a new B.A. degree. The program also entered into collaboration with Florida Atlantic University and Miami-Dade Community College for a Title VI funded project, the South Florida Consortium for Asian Arts and Culture. Another partner in the Consortium is the prestigious Morikami Japanese Museum and Gardens in Delray Beach. Asian Studies and the Morikami are involved in several joint efforts including establishing a new database on Japanese migration to the Americas, developing new interlibrary loan policies, and most importantly, working toward the creation of a Japanese garden and culture center on the FIU campus.

These linkages are part of a larger network of statewide institutional connections called “JapaNet.” To launch this network in November 2002 a meeting of the Southern Japan Seminar will be held at FIU to coincide with Japan Night at the Music Festival. This event will feature the composition by Fred Kaufman, who did research during his first trip to Japan, along with other performances. The weekend will include a workshop at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens.