Established in 1962, the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies (CLAIS) serves as the central hub for intellectual exchange and collaborations in Latin America, Spain, and Portugal. The council works to strengthen exchange and innovation through a broad array of courses, cultural events, scholarly lectures, international conferences, and academic research. More than forty-five Yale faculty conduct research and teach courses with substantial Latin American content. Recent years have seen increased collaboration between Latin Americanists in Yale’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the professional schools in the areas of forestry and environmental studies, global health, nursing, medicine, law, and human rights.

CLAIS offers an undergraduate major in Latin American Studies and a Graduate Certificate of Concentration in Latin American and Iberian Studies for graduate and professional students at Yale. CLAIS offers travel fellowships to undergraduate and graduate students, hosts eminent visiting scholars, and supports faculty research and curriculum development. CLAIS also sponsors an intensive Nahuatl language course in the summer and supports the development of new resources for language teaching in Spanish, Portuguese, and Nahuatl. CLAIS promotes linkages with other U.S., Latin American, and Iberian institutions to bolster cooperation and understanding of these interconnected regions.

“My experience in El Salvador made me appreciate the importance of the quality and strength of a country’s democracy for a successful post-conflict development.”

NICOLAS JIMENEZ, GRACE HOPPER COLLEGE ’19

“I like studying Latin American issues for personal reasons related to my heritage, as well as because I wish to one day be well versed enough to confidently educate those who have been wrongly informed of the realities of a culturally rich, diverse, and massive region.”

COLUM O’CONNOR, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN COLLEGE ’18
Latin American Library Collection

The Latin American Collection at Yale University is one of the foremost collections in the United States, containing a wealth of research material and offering a variety of research opportunities for Latin American Studies. The collecting policy is to acquire the important editorial production in the fields of the humanities and social sciences published in South America, Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Within this policy of developing a general, area wide collection, special strengths have resulted from the acquisition of important collections during the past 100 years.

Other collections of major importance at Yale are those representing Argentina, Chile, Cuba and Central America. Argentina is comprehensively represented, especially in early twentieth-century publications. The collections of Carlos A. Tornquist and Davis Curtis DeForest form the basis of Yale’s Argentine holdings. The material donated by Tornquist had a strong emphasis on literature, history, oratory, law and sociology. The Chilean collection contains a respectable number of works on Chilean history and literature, covering the period from 1875 to the present. In the late 1960’s and 1970’s, a successful systematic effort was made to build up the Chilean collection.

Currently, the collection comprises over 535,000 printed volumes in Spanish, Portuguese and indigenous languages. This includes monographs, serials, newspapers and government documents, and is growing at the rate of 5,000 volumes a year. It has subscriptions to more than 3,000 Latin American periodicals and monographic series. In addition to printed matter the collection is rich in manuscript material, and it contains a newspaper microfilm collection of 20,000 reels, as well as such non-book materials as photographs, documentary and feature films, and maps.

CLAIS 2020 GOALS

- Establish CLAIS funds to sponsor student research projects and internships in Latin America
- Support faculty scholars to Yale from Latin America with a sponsored series
- Build a comprehensive Yale network of Latin American activities
- Create a database to include grant offerings and all activities related to the region in Yale College, Yale’s Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and all Yale’s professional schools
- Create a joint initiative between peer institutions to host eminent Latin American & Iberian scholars as part of a signature annual conference
- Expand Latin American Studies Library Collection

Latin America Snapshot

- Students from Region 193
- Scholars from Region 136
- Alumni in Region 809
- Yale College International Experiences 158
- Faculty Research Projects 165+
- Fall 2017 Courses Offered 70+
- 2017 Language and Literature Courses Offered 59
- Number of Student Applications for Research Projects in the Region 588
- Amount of Funding Requested for Research Projects in the Region $3.425M

CLAIS 2020

CLAIS is actively seeking endowment support to strengthen its partnerships with Yale College and Yale’s professional schools, and to further its programmatic offerings to build a strong network of research and scholarly exchanges.

Yale’s world class Latin Americanist and Iberianist faculty have written award-winning books and articles on how hurricanes have shaped the history and cultures of the Caribbean basin; how Latin American governments can effectively fight poverty in their countries; and on why South American political parties buy votes – and how vote-buying can give way to more transparent campaigns. They have used archeological evidence to explain trade networks in the pre-Hispanic Andes and mythology in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica. Our PhD students will be pushing back the boundaries of knowledge in the next generation. Our masters and professional school students are addressing crucial needs in areas of health, welfare, law, and the environment, from Chile to Mexico.

“2017 marks 55 years since the council’s establishment. It gives me great pleasure to remember all of our wonderful work sponsoring student and faculty research; hosting renowned speakers and conferences; and being a vital part of the Yale community. Our work is not done, and we are eager to embark on a new journey to further our network that connects Yale with Latin America and Latin America to Yale.”

SUSAN STOKES,
CHAIR, COUNCIL ON LATIN AMERICAN AND IBERIAN STUDIES
JOHN S. SADEN PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Program Activities

CLAIS organizes and sponsors numerous lectures, symposia, conferences, and film festivals. The Latin & Iberian Film Festival is one of the most popular events at the council as it brings together the entire Yale and Greater New Haven community. Promoting cultural awareness and understanding, LIFY invites filmmakers, actors, and producers to converse with students and the audience. CLAIS also partners with schools at Yale to host conferences and special series related to Latin America. The School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) and the Law School are strong partners with regular speaker events, including the Latin American Series at the Law School and an annual conference with the International Society of Tropical Foresters at F&ES.

“Latin America is my home and will continue to be for the rest of my life, and because I love it so very much, I feel like it is my moral responsibility to learn from its many facets and contribute my knowledge to its development in whichever way I can.”

MICHAELA BULLARD, GRACE HOPPER COLLEGE ‘19

In 2016-17, CLAIS inaugurated one of its newest signature programs, the Cuba Initiative. Supported by Yale’s MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, CLAIS organized a number of activities to highlight Cuban history, culture, and society last year. The cornerstone of the CLAIS Cuba Initiative was an undergraduate course that included a two-week class trip to Cuba. Yale has also appointed Dr. Reinaldo Funes-Monzote, Professor of History at the University of Havana, as the Henry Hart Rice Family Foundation Visiting Professor. His research is dedicated mainly to the Cuban and Caribbean Environmental History, with several academic articles and chapters in collective books about these issues. Dr. Funes-Monzote facilitated much of the two-week class trip to Cuba and continues to be a resource to students. The Cuba Initiative will continue this year and plans for the next trip to Cuba in March 2018 are currently underway.

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CLAIS in 2020

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