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The 29th Annual Conference on the Americas

An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Conference

Sponsored by:

The Americas Council, University System of Georgia
University of North Georgia; University of Georgia
Georgia State University Perimeter College; Georgia Gwinnett College

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS



Conference Hosted by:
University of North Georgia
Mike Cottrell College of Business &
College of Arts & Letters

Conference Venue:
University of North Georgia - Dahlonega Campus
Mike Cottrell College of Business, 82 College Circle,
Dahlonega, GA 30597

Friday & Saturday, February 20 & 21

2026

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

Special Session

Where is Home for Me? Hispanic and Filipino Student Artists at the *Home/Casa* Art Exhibition

Chairs: Dr. Ana Pozzi Harris and Mr. Kyle Murphy, University of North Georgia

Student Panel: Ms. Jazlin Lugo, Ms. Daniela Bayardo Nassar, Ms. Evelyn Magaña, Ms. Arely Marquez, Ms. Katelyn Aquino, Ms. Sara Courtney, Ms. Denise Gomez-del Rio

UNG student artists of Hispanic and Filipino descent participating in the exhibition *Home| Casa: A Celebration of Multiple Belonging* will discuss their artworks in a public presentation. They will speak in front of their paintings, digital works, photographs, and craft pieces currently on view in the Library and Technology Center at UNG Dahlonega—just a short walk from the Cottrell Center. The student artists will share the ideas and experiences that inform their creative practice. Some artists will reflect on their motivations for engaging directly with Latin American history and politics, while others will discuss works that explore personal themes grounded in their cultural heritage. The exhibition *Home|Casa* explores belonging, or identity, as well as hybridity, ambiguity, and transition, by considering an expanded concept of home. Student artists were invited to consider the following: is home a place, a person, a feeling, a group, a way of being? Do we gravitate between multiple “homes” or spaces of multiple belonging? *Home|Casa* was produced as part of the course *Exhibition Practicum* and was funded by the UNG Center for Student Leadership & Engagement. This collaborative project between faculty and staff demonstrates UNG’s academic and institutional commitment to Hispanic, Latinx, multiethnic, and multicultural students.

Session 1A: Regional Economics and Trade Issues

Can Guyana avoid the Resource Paradox? A review of the country’s efforts to transform its natural resource wealth into long-term sustainable growth

Dr. Donna Danns

University of North Georgia

With growth rates averaging 47 percent between 2022 and 2024, Guyana has been dubbed one of the world’s fastest-growing economies due to its burgeoning oil sector. However, this newfound wealth brings with it the risk of the "Resource Paradox," where rapid economic growth driven by natural resources often leads to social inequality, environmental degradation, and governance challenges. This presentation explores Guyana’s strategies to avoid this paradox and leverage its natural resource wealth for long-term, sustainable development. It critically reviews the country's efforts in economic diversification, institutional reforms, and the implementation of policies aimed at ensuring that the benefits of its natural resources translate into broad-based prosperity. By analyzing both the successes and shortcomings of these initiatives, the presentation assesses the potential for Guyana to create a balanced and resilient economy that can thrive beyond its oil reserves and oil wealth. Through this lens, key questions are examined: Can Guyana transform its oil-driven economy into a diversified, inclusive, and environmentally responsible

growth model? What lessons can be drawn from other resource-rich countries that have faced similar challenges? The presentation offers insights into how Guyana can navigate the complexities of managing its natural resource wealth while fostering sustainable development for future generations.

The Impact of Credit Information Reforms: Evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean

Dr. Kamilah Williams

University of North Georgia

This paper examines how reforms to credit information systems have influenced credit market outcomes in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past two decades. Many countries in the region have implemented institutional changes aimed at expanding the scope, quality, and accessibility of borrower information—such as the introduction of positive data reporting, the development of credit scoring models, and the integration of non-bank data sources. Using a panel dataset of reform adoption and macro-financial indicators from 2000–2019, the effects of these reforms on credit access, credit risk, and the composition of lending are examined. Employing a staggered difference-in-differences framework with staggered implementation, reforms that increase the depth and breadth of credit information are found to be associated with higher credit to the private sector and lower non-performing loan ratios. Stronger effects are found in countries with existing higher financial inclusion initiatives and stronger regulatory enforcement. These findings suggest that enhancing information sharing infrastructure can mitigate adverse selection and moral hazard, improve credit allocation efficiency, and support more inclusive financial development in emerging economies.

The Geometry of Latin American Trade

Dr. Cristian Harris

University of North Georgia

This paper evaluates the impact of United States-China competition on Latin America. Although this competition manifests in many areas including security, investment, finance, and geopolitics, the goal of this paper is to examine the trade patterns, composition, and balances (imbalances to be more precise) of Latin America with the United States and China. I suggest that contrary to claims of a “new triangular relationship” between the United States, China, and Latin America (Dussel Peters 2025), the most accurate geometric shape illustrating Latin America’s trade today is a more multiple sided shape resembling a pentagon or hexagon.

Session 1B: Language and Linguistics I

Complexities of Language Teaching in Uruguay’s Public Schools: A Fulbrighter’s Experience

Prof. Barbara Hall

Perimeter College/Georgia State University

Universal public school education in the teaching of English comes in various forms and applications: face-to-face accredited teacher, student-teacher, remote learning with Ceibal Ingles, and the GodParents Project in rural schools. Accompanying this nationwide initiative since 2010, challenges arise, and yet strong leadership, governmental support, and a national desire to be a bilingual country have proved to set Uruguay as a model for language teaching and language learning. As a two-time U.S. Fulbright Scholar to Uruguay in 2009 and in 2025, I have traveled around most of the provinces of Uruguay, both observing

and working in 20+ classes and with nearly 1000 teachers of English. I have witnessed the hardships, challenges, and small victories of regular people, advancing public education. Mostly, the Uruguayan government has invested in the public education of language teaching of English (and also 12 other languages taught in public schools) by way of laptop per student, remote teaching by Ceibal, the GodParents project, and innovative teaching materials (free English books for all students/all grades). As a one-of-a-kind platform here in Uruguay, the Ceibal Ingles program connects students and teachers through videoconferencing, offering classes taught by remote teachers and supplemented by local teachers in the classroom, with the goal of universalizing English language teaching and promoting cultural exchange. In this presentation, I will give an overview of the complexities of Uruguay's English language program and comment how one country's model of bilingualism pays off in terms of economic growth and multi-culturalism. *Note: I would be happy to be part of a panel, but because of writing this while I am here in Uruguay, I have not been able to connect with anyone to make that happen.

Sociolinguistic Footprints of Asian Languages Across Latin America and the Caribbean

Mr. Eric Kendrick

Georgia State University - Perimeter College

Asian migration to Latin America and the Caribbean during the 19th and 20th centuries created enduring linguistic imprints that reflect complex histories of labor, trade, and cultural exchange. This presentation examines how East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian communities have influenced language and linguistic practices across Spanish-, Portuguese-, French-, English-, and Dutch-speaking regions of the Americas. Foundational themes include language contact and borrowing, identity and heritage preservation, and comparative dynamics between Asian linguistic contributions and dominant European colonial languages. The discussion begins with East Asian influences, focusing on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean diasporas. Chinese migration to Peru, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, and Cuba introduced lexical borrowings related to food, commerce, and daily life, while Chinese pidgins and creole varieties emerged in Cuba. Japanese communities in Brazil and Peru contributed cultural terminology and fostered bilingualism, whereas Korean migration, though smaller, shaped modern linguistic landscapes through business and popular culture. South Asian linguistic impact is explored through Indo-Caribbean communities in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. Bhojpuri and Hindi terms permeate local creoles, particularly in religious and culinary domains, reflecting the legacy of indentured labor systems. Southeast Asian influence, though more localized, is evident in Suriname, where Javanese loanwords persist in Sranan Tongo and Dutch Creole, alongside cultural-linguistic retention in kinship and cuisine. By situating these influences within broader sociolinguistic frameworks, this presentation highlights how migration and identity shape multilingual ecologies. It argues that Asian linguistic contributions, often overshadowed by European colonial languages, offer critical insights into contact linguistics, heritage maintenance, and cultural hybridity in the Americas. This study invites scholars to reconsider the linguistic map of Latin America and the Caribbean through the lens of Asian diasporic presence.

Grammatical convergence of Spanish and English by simultaneous bilingual children in Georgia (USA)

Dr. Daniel Smith

Clemson University

The speech of Spanish English simultaneous bilingual children shows patterns of English influencing Spanish and Spanish influencing English. This study analyzes the speech patterns of three simultaneous bilingual siblings, ages 11, 8 and 5. All three siblings heard both Spanish and English from birth and

continuously until now at home and all three use both at home. The younger two siblings began English-only schooling from the age of 5 and the oldest at age 6. Differences in the Spanish and English speech patterns between the three siblings are examined, showing that the oldest, even after being in school the longest, uses more Spanish compared to English than the two younger siblings. Given the dominant status of English in the larger society and at school, however, English is more frequently used with more standard grammatical patterns by all three siblings as compared to Spanish. But even with the more dominant status of English and more standard English patterns, a few notable non-standard English patterns persist in the speech of all three siblings, specifically in the use of subject and object pronouns, very likely due to influence from Spanish. These speech patterns are analyzed from the perspective of Myers-Scotton's (2002) references to 'grammatical convergence' in bilingual sentences. In comparison, phonological influence from each language on the other is almost zero. Analysis of these patterns is compared to other studies of Spanish English bilingual children, including De Houwer (1990, 2005) and Silva-Corvalán (2014). Based on the data from other studies and observation of Spanish bilingual patterns in the larger community of the home of the three siblings in northeast Georgia, conclusions are made as to how long these non-standard patterns may be expected to persist in the English of simultaneous Spanish English bilinguals.

Syntactic shift in the Andes: an apparent-time analysis of predicate constituent order variation in Quechua-Spanish Bilinguals

Dr. Sarah Hubbel

University of North Georgia

The primary objective of the present study is to examine variation in the order of object (O) and verb (V) constituents in Quechua and Andean Spanish through an apparent time analysis to determine the diachronic trajectory of predicate constituent order variation in each language. In the predicate, Andean Spanish and Quechua exhibit mirror-image ordering typologies—Andean Spanish is a VO-dominant language and Quechua an OV-dominant language. However, as a result of contact with Quechua, Andean Spanish exhibits higher rates of non-dominant OV order (17-28%) than non-contact varieties, like Rio Platense Spanish (6.9%) (Klee 1996; Muntendam 2009; Muysken 1984; Ocampo 1995; Ocampo & Klee 1995). Similarly, predicate constituent order is widely variable in Quechua, with non-dominant VO order rates ranging from 10.8% to 85.1% (Kalt & Geary 2021; Sánchez 2003). This syntactic variation is further governed by various social factors (e.g. socioeconomic status) and linguistic factors (e.g., information structure) in both languages. In the present study, 45 individuals (34 Quechua-Spanish bilinguals, 11 Spanish monolinguals) from Cusco, Peru completed a semi-structured Sociolinguistic Interview in their native language(s), and all instances of OV and VO order were documented. Through an apparent time analysis, I observe a significant negative correlation between VO frequency and age in both languages, meaning younger generations employ VO order more than older generations in both Andean Spanish and Quechua. I interpret these trends as evidence of a generational change in progress characterized by two concurrent processes: (i) syntactic ordering tendencies of Andean Spanish are approximating those of the Spanish prescriptive norm and (ii) the syntactic ordering tendencies of Quechua are approximating those of Andean Spanish. The displacement of OV in favor of VO in Quechua constitutes a major typological shift that may carry linguistic implications like the reconfiguration of other syntactic domains (e.g., noun phrase) or loss of case-marking.

Session 1 C: Pen Pals, 2.0: Building Multicultural Knowledge through Virtual Exchange Partnerships

Panelists:

Mrs. Stephanie Langston, Georgia State University Perimeter College

Dr. Deborah Manson, Georgia State University, Perimeter College

Dr. David Yenerall, Georgia State University

This session addresses “Teaching paradigms: Interdisciplinary and Inter-cultural Perspectives” through a discussion of Virtual Exchange at Georgia State University’s Perimeter College broadly, along with more specific examples of virtual exchange projects in practice, in both English Composition and Spanish language classes. The presenters share details of their formal partnership with a university in Honduras, which enables greater support and fosters a sense of community among virtual exchange practitioners.

In April 2025, a delegation from Georgia State University traveled to Honduras to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation between GSU and la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) to expand upon existing COIL/ Virtual Exchange partnerships between the two institutions. David Yenerall, Stephanie Langston, Kathy Dolan, and Deborah Manson will discuss teaching practices and collaborations between GSU and UPNFM, as well as partnerships with other institutions in the Americas. As Perimeter College’s Faculty Associate for International Initiatives, David Yenerall will outline key features of a virtual exchange, along with the benefits for students and faculty. Stephanie Langston, Principal Lecturer of Spanish, and Deborah Manson, Professor of English, will share course projects across multiple disciplines that have connected their students with classmates in Honduras. Kathy Dolan will share her Collaborative Online International Learning research. Through virtual exchange partnerships and projects, students at both institutions gain cultural exposure and an opportunity to practice their language skills. These projects spanned diverse fields—English, Spanish, and astronomy—and leveraged Virtual Exchange as a powerful tool for developing 21st-century competencies, including digital collaboration, intercultural awareness, and professional communication. Some projects incorporated synchronous Zoom sessions to build both language proficiency and intercultural competency. During these sessions, extralinguistic communication played a crucial role in supporting second-language comprehension. In addition to conversational language practice, these exchanges introduced students to specific-purpose language. Additionally, students used language as a vehicle for conveying cultural practices. The world is interconnected, and students need to be able to navigate that world not only through informal social media channels, but also through effective professional communication in online spaces. They need a broader understanding of how people in other countries study, work, and communicate, and virtual exchange is one way to provide this exposure.

Poster Presentations

Efficacy of pro-bono genetics and neurology clinics in an under-resourced Caribbean nation

Mr. Trey Orndorff

AU/UGA Medical Partnership

Background: Due to geographic isolation, small population sizes, and socioeconomic disparities, many Caribbean nations lack services for managing people with genetic disorders. It is unclear how an annual medical genetics clinic might affect communities in Caribbean nations. Methods: Over 10 years, we organized pro-bono medical genetics and neurology clinics 1-2 times annually. More than 250 consultations for over 180 individuals were offered after referral by local physicians. Follow-up visits were encouraged. Consented clinical samples were shared with collaborating laboratories under protocols permitting result return. Pro-bono analyses included genome sequencing (GS), exome sequencing (ES), microarrays, repeat expansion panels (for ataxia, chorea, and FXS), epigenetic methylation profiling, metabolomic profiling, and karyotyping. Consultation notes were provided to referring physicians for each patient. Results: Completed ES of 60 individuals facilitated diagnosis for 25 patients at a rate of approximately 40%, similar to reported rates in well-resourced countries. Genes with causative variants identified by ES include COL5A1, ASPM, SYNJ1, PHF8, NIPBL, ALG13, NALCN, KMT2A, TUBG1, SATB2, PAH, MECP2, EFNB1, DMAP1, KAT6B, PKD1, RFX7, and RAF1. CNV analysis of ES allowed 3 additional diagnoses. Down syndrome was confirmed in 20 other individuals by karyotype, microarray, ES CNV analysis, or methylation profiling. Repeat expansion testing confirmed Huntington disease in two extended families and identified spinocerebellar ataxia 3 (SCA3) in two other families. An additional 62 probands that had clinical consultation await analysis by ES or GS. Conclusions: Despite limited availability, the occasional visits and formal consultation notes from geneticists or neurologists benefitted local physicians, patients, families, and the community. Although non-systematically obtained, parents, patients, and consulting physicians unanimously expressed appreciation for our efforts.

Session 2A: Arts, Language and Literature I

The Deportation of the Caribbean Diasporas from the United States

Prof. George Danns

University of North Georgia

Caribbean Citizens who migrate to other countries constitute the Caribbean diasporas. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) reported that as many Caribbean people live abroad as in their countries of origin. The top seven destination regions of Caribbean migrants are North America, the Caribbean, South America, Central America, Western Europe, Southern Europe, and Northern Europe. Poverty and broader economic instability have contributed to migration, as individuals seek improved living conditions in higher-income countries. Other push factors contributing to migration from the region have included a series of devastating hurricanes, earthquakes, tropical storms, floods, and droughts, which have displaced populations and forced people to leave their homes. The United States is the main destination country for migrants from the region. For most Caribbean countries, more than half of their emigrants settle in the United States with numbers exceeding seventy percent or more for The Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica. Recent change in the Administration of the United States however is leading to the deportations of the Caribbean diasporas mainly to their homelands but also to third countries. The history of the United States has been characterized by xenophobic and racist policies towards categories of immigrants utilizing immigration laws. Currently, criminal laws are also being combined leading to what has been called “cimmigration system that fused criminal and immigration law” resulting in the punitive ensnarement of employers, workers, families, children, and communities. Arbitrary detention, incarceration and deportation of immigrants sending some to third countries is an emergent reality. This paper interrogates how such policies impact migrants from the Caribbean region. And the preparedness of their home countries to receive the unplanned return of their diasporas.

Oil and economic migration in Guyana: Exploring lived experiences and public perceptions of Venezuelans and “others” in the media sphere

Dr. Carolyn Walcott

Clayton State University

Guyana has emerged as one a major global oil producer following the initial discovery of vast crude oil reserves offshore the small South American country in 2015. Oil discoveries and production are the most significant development in the post-colonial evolution of the former British colony that has experienced economic deprivation for decades. Among the key features of Guyana’s burgeoning economy are increased investor interests mainly from the Global North (the United States, Canada, and Europe) which coincides with mass cross-border movement of Venezuelans seeking refuge from political and economic crisis. In addition to Venezuelan migrants, Guyana is also now home to other nationalities including Cubans, Haitians and other Caribbean nationals who now occupy jobs within various sectors including construction, hospitality, and oil and gas. Our qualitative framing analysis of Guyanese newspaper coverage (2020-2024) of Venezuelan migrants in Guyana reveals the salience of economic opportunism, while focus group discussions with migrants illustrate the tensions they navigate, based primarily on the language barrier, as they settle in Guyana. We utilized Framing theory to highlight media representation of Venezuelan migrants and Dual Market Labor theory to underscore their role within Guyana’s growing labor force. Media coverage of migratory crises and framing effects on public perceptions have occupied scholarly attention for decades. Several studies (see Lecheler & Vliegthart, (2015); Lecheler Bos & Vliegthart (2015); Amores & Arcila, 2019; Benczes & Sagvari, 2022; Liu, 2023; Scardigno, Guagnano &

Pagliarulo, 2024) highlight the impact of media representation on how migrants are perceived by citizens of receiving nations. To explore how frames influence public perceptions in relation to migrants in Guyana, this study also incorporates a survey analysis of Guyanese citizens to identify how they construct and respond to the shifts in the labor market in the context of increasing inward migration.

Explaining Latin America Migration, 1960-2025: An Empirical Application of Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach

Dr. Clemente Quiñones-Reyes
Georgia Gwinnett College

This paper aims to apply Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach to explaining migration. For this, the author introduces a multiple regression model whose independent variables include indices from the V-Dem project tapping such capabilities. These capabilities are complemented with two dimensions taken from Mathias Czaika & Constantin Reinprecht's Taxonomy (Czaika and Reinprecht 2022). The outcome variable is Latin American net migration. Migration is conceived as part of broader processes of social transformation and development (de-Haas 2021). Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities captures these broader processes of social transformation and development, as it includes not only the abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment.

U.S Foreign Policy and Its Likely Impact on the Polarization of Latin America and the Caribbean

Prof. Sabella Abidde
Alabama State University

The 2023 United Nations Development Program Human Development Report (UNDP-HDR) suggests that globally, polarization is steadily rising, driven by economic inequality, the fragmentation of institutions, social discrimination, apathy, and political extremism. The report went on to infer that "Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is the region in which polarization has increased the most in the last 20 years." In recent years, there was hope that things would improve – propelled by the increasing interconnectedness of the political and economic system, the ever effective role of grassroots movements, indigenous groups, feminist movements, the activism of the younger generation, a new cadre of leadership in many countries, and the genuine efforts by a group of individuals and organizations to recenter the LAC region. Essentially, therefore, not all is doom and gloom for the two regions. After all, this was a region that was a bastion of military coup d'état, Big Men Politics, and extreme political violence. The foresight and resilience of the people made those three political scourges a thing of the past. However, the current worldview, posture, and pronouncements emanating from the White House (under President Donald Trump) is likely to aggravate current conditions because, as many have alleged, his policies are deemed impulsive, irrational, and transactional and does not promote steadiness, accountability, and the strengthening of institutions, international law, and the guardrails that have, for the most part, sustained the global system since the end of the Cold War in 1945. Essentially, therefore, Donald Trump's policies vis-à-vis immigration, trade and tariff policies, educational and cultural exchange, and institutional cooperation may be detrimental to the region. The purpose of this presentation is threefold: First, to understand the underlying reasons for the polarization of the LAC countries; secondly, to understand the likely impact and implications of President Trump's foreign and domestic policy on the area; and finally, to proffer policies that are likely to benefit and uplift the LAC region.

Session 2B: Migration and Immigration Issues in the Americas

Racial trauma and the Vietnam War: a visual culture context for Luis Jiménez's Tank-Spirit of Chicago (1968)

Dr. Ana Pozzi Harris

University of North Georgia

Luis Jiménez's Tank-Spirit of Chicago, a fiberglass polychrome sculpture he created while living in New York in 1968, represents a significant departure from his earlier work. Previously, Jiménez had portrayed blonde, blue-eyed women in sexualized, stereotyped, and dehumanized ways. In Tank-Spirit of Chicago, however, his focus shifts to Brown and Black figures—both male and female—forming a morbid pile of prostrate, inert bodies lying atop a “tank” shaped like a hot dog. This mysterious work, which has received limited scholarly attention, invites interpretation through the lens of 1960s visual culture. I propose that the Black and Brown bodies in the sculpture communicate “racial trauma”—that is, race-based traumatic stress arising from emotional injury caused by racial bias, discrimination, and violence. Although Jiménez stated that his work from this period broadly reflected his opposition to the Vietnam War, the imagery in Tank-Spirit of Chicago also conveys empathy with the traumatic experiences of racial minorities. Drawing on visual sources widely circulated during the 1960s—such as photographs, news coverage, and television commercials—I argue that the collapsed and slumped figures evoke mass media depictions of Black and Puerto Rican communities in New York and Chicago. At the same time, the work reflects the repression experienced by young protesters during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where Hubert Humphrey's nomination extinguished hopes for a Vietnam Peace Plank. The brutality these protesters suffered at the hands of police deepened their sense of defeat. Viewed in this context, Tank-Spirit of Chicago marks a pivotal moment in Jiménez's career—when his broad critique of white culture evolved into an empathetic engagement with the plight of racial minorities, a concern that would define his later work.

From Matehuala to Lake Alfred: a Tale of Immigration and Legacy

Dr. Gordon McNeer

University of North Georgia

My maternal grandfather, John H. Evans was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1875. He was the first-born of a family that had immigrated to the United States from Nantyglo, Wales, in the early 1870s. My maternal grandmother, Artemisa Ramonet de Evans, was born in Sonora, Mexico, in 1880. They met and were married in Matehuala, Mexico, in 1902. This is their story. The Evans family chose to immigrate to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the 1870s due to hard times in their native Nantyglo, Wales. The mining industry was failing, and they were barely surviving. My grandfather John was too slight to work in the mines in Pittsburgh. He only had an eighth-grade education, but he was able to find employment with the Mexican Crude Rubber Company. The company sent him to Matehuala to investigate the caucho industry, and there he met and married my grandmother Artemisa. They prospered until the year 1910 when the Mexican Revolution broke out, and they were forced to leave Mexico for California and later the home office in Detroit where John was reassigned to develop citrus in Central Florida. La Casa de los abuelos was built in 1923 on the side of a dirt road in Lake Alfred, Florida. It was one of the most imposing structures in Lake Alfred at the time. During the early years los abuelos raised three boys and a girl with one bathroom. Many souls lived and died in this house. I have been its lover / guardian since the passing of my mother Artemisa in 1996. My love for the Spanish language stems from my love of my grandmother

Artemisa. This love has been sheltered in La casa de los abuelos for these many years. Recently, it has been necessary to move the house as the once dirt road is to become a four-lane divided highway. Largely through the efforts of Fernando Valverde, poets from 17 countries petitioned for the survival of the Casa de los abuelos, and the County agreed to support the move from the road to the lake where it will hopefully continue its life as a cultural liaison with poets from Spain and Latin America. The John H. Evans Residence is now on the United States Registry of Historic Homes. I am known professionally as a poet and translator of poetry. Recently, my peers from Spain and Mexico honored me with this surprise edition of *Poemas Mexicanos* which was first presented in the Casa Museo Lopez Velarde in Mexico City. I would like to read you a few poems from this collection graciously translated for ALCORCE Librería by Fernando Valverde and Nieves García Prados. Walking Toward Lake Alfred The Road In Search of Ramonet.

Horror and Capitalism in Puerto Rico - Gabino Iglesias' House of Bone and Rain

Dr. Dorian Lee Jackson
Kennesaw State University

This paper will examine how Gabino Iglesias' *House of Bone and Rain* (2024) blends a gritty crime narrative of vengeance and narco-trafficking with Caribbean folk horror to create a contemporary critique of the socio-political climate in Puerto Rico. In analyzing the impending hurricane presented in the novel, there will also be a discussion of the menacing influence of U.S. interests on the island in the Post-Maria context. The triple death space of the drug trade, hurricane, and monsters will be analyzed through the lens of Sayak Valencia's concepts of extreme violence and economic border spaces related to narco-trafficking, as developed in *Gore Capitalism* (2018). Here, Valencia explains how the bloodshed and violence deriving from illicit economic activities such the drug trade obeys the logic of capitalism, with bodies and death becoming an important means of exchange within this structure. Similarly, the destruction and breakdown of social order in relation to the drug trade, and later the hurricane, will be examined using Mark Fisher's concept of *Capitalist Realism* (2009), regarding environments containing a failed neoliberal state. The analysis will show that these breakdowns in the socio-political order are only partial, because this destruction does not fully dismantle the state nor does it represent a destruction of capitalism and its influence on the state. Instead, business steps in through privatization to ensure the continued functioning of the state, always in favor of outside enterprise.

Devil's Island: The Long Shadow of Film Makers' Paradise

Dr. Shane Emplincourt
University of North Georgia

Abstract "Devil's Island: The Long Shadow of Film Makers' Paradise" This essay examines and analyzes film makers' long fascination with one of South America's most infamous colonial legacies: Devil's Island. Located off the coast of French Guiana—just eleven kilometers from today's Kourou's geo-strategic Space Centre—the former penal colony once symbolized the farthest reach of punishment and exile. Immortalized by the wrongful imprisonment of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1894–1899), the site quickly entered global consciousness and, soon after the birth of cinema, became one of its earliest political subjects in Georges Méliès's *L'Affaire Dreyfus, à l'île du diable* (1899). Tracing the island's cinematic evolution, this study examines how film makers appropriated and mythologized Devil's Island from the 1920s, 30s, and 40s to the 1970s and post-2000. Beginning with an oblique reference in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), the narrative of imprisonment, suffering, and redemption matured through films such as *Condemned* (1929), *Devil's Island* (1939), *Strange Cargo* (1940), and culminated in *Papillon* (1973) and

its remake in 2017. By situating these representations within colonial history and the aesthetics of captivity, this essay reveals how films transformed a real site of human misery into a recurring metaphor for resistance, endurance, and higher moral consciousness on screen. And its legacy is still casting a long shadow.

Session 2 C: Teaching Paradigms I

Science in Action: How Rising 4th and 5th Graders Learn and Use Science in a Summer Program

Dr. Max Vazquez Dominguez
University of North Georgia

In this presentation, we analyze how rising 4th and 5th grade students learn and use science concepts during an intensive 15-day summer enrichment program focused on culturally sustaining science instruction. As part of the Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies in Science for English Language Learners project funded by the National Science Foundation, this program engages emerging bilingual students (English/Spanish) in hands-on, inquiry-based explorations of physical science topics—sound and forces (4th grade) and electricity and electromagnetism (5th grade). Using student work samples, pre- and post-assessments, and classroom observations, we examine how students construct scientific understanding and apply it through engineering challenges and multimodal representations. Our analysis highlights the ways students’ language resources, collaboration, and problem-solving approaches evolve across the program. In addition, we discuss how culturally and linguistically responsive practices, implemented by preservice teachers trained in a companion science methods course, support students’ conceptual growth and engagement in authentic science practices. Project faculty and teacher educators will share key findings, examples of student learning, and implications for designing equitable summer science experiences for multilingual learners.

Introducing Freshman Student to International Cultural and Professional Considerations

Dr. Jorge Ivan Rodriguez-Devora, Dr. Sonia Garcia and Dr. David E. Stooksbury
University of Georgia

During the Fall 2025 semester, students from the University of Georgia (UGA) partnered with peers from the University of Guadalajara (UdG) to develop engineering design projects aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 16 students from UGA are members of a one credit hour First Year Odyssey Seminar (FYOS). All first-year students at UGA are required to take a FYOS. The students for UdG are registered in an optional class as part of their advanced high-school curriculum named Global Citizens. We will report on initial successes and challenges. This project builds on prior cohorts’ assessments of student projects addressing global and local needs, including: (a) the design of a solar-powered study table for energy-limited contexts, (b) the development of a stroke prevention and awareness kit, (c) sustainable solutions for water harvesting and storage, and (d) the promotion of hands-on STEM activities for K–5 students through the creation of a practical teaching manual. Data from these projects highlighted students’ growing ability to frame problems in relation to sustainability, adapt solutions to user needs, and consider the cultural dimensions of technology adoption.

Qué drama ser migrante!: Drama as Dialogue and Pedagogical Praxis

Prof. Ericka H. Parra

Valdosta State University

Qué drama ser migrante!: Drama as Dialogue and Pedagogical Praxis Recent U.S. immigration policies have intensified fear and uncertainty within Latinx communities. In response to this sociopolitical context, this presentation discusses how literary drama function as a space for dialogue and pedagogical praxis. I argue that theater, particularly Hispano-American and Latinx drama, offers a dialogic space that fosters solidarity, ethical reflection, and creative coexistence. Drawing on the principles of Soka Education, which emphasize dialogue-based learning, ethical leadership, and respect for the dignity of life, this presentation examines drama texts as pedagogical tools that invite collective meaning-making. Dialogue is understood not merely as conversation but as praxis, enabling learners to critically engage lived experiences of migration while cultivating empathy and responsibility toward others. This approach is further informed by Freirean pedagogy, in which dialogue functions as a transformative act linking reflection and action. Through close readings of selected Hispano-American and Latinx plays, including *El buen vecino* and works by playwrights such as Juan Mayorga (1965) and recent texts, this study explores how dramatic dialogue stages moments of inclusion and exclusion across everyday encounters. Characters negotiate bureaucratic obstacles such as passport acquisition, confront tensions between neighbors, and articulate fears related to surveillance, belonging, and legal status within shared social spaces. In educational settings, drama creates participatory environments where students engage ethical dilemmas through embodied dialogue, rehearsing modes of coexistence grounded in mutual recognition. By centering creative coexistence between humanity and society, this presentation demonstrates how drama supports dialogue-based learning that promotes leadership development, ethical awareness, and global citizenship. Ultimately, the purpose contributes to Latinx literary studies and critical pedagogy by positioning drama as a vital educational site where dialogue becomes a transformative practice in times of migratory crisis. It highlights drama's capacity to humanize migration narratives, challenge exclusionary discourses, and cultivate solidarities essential for humanistic education.

Session 2 D Latin American Studies: Theories, Philosophy and Cultures

Backlash to Law and Reform in Latin America during the Pink Tide Era: A Perspective from Self-Determination Theory

Dr. Ronnie Grant

University of North Georgia

This paper presents a novel theory from the field of psychology, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), to explain backlash to law and public policy. SDT is a theory of motivation grounded in human psychological needs. Though individuals and state actors have engaged in backlash since time immemorial in response to changing laws, policies, or social practices, the term "backlash" has become one of the buzzwords in today's politics. Nonetheless, few studies have engaged the topic from a psychological perspective. From the lens of SDT, this paper will examine how externally imposed economic and public law in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s thwarted the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness of the region's citizens, thereby producing backlash in the 2000s and beyond. To explore these backlash relationships from the perspective of SDT, this paper studies the presidential discourse of eight ideologically diverse Latin American presidents from this period. The paper concludes that the observed backlash manifests itself as oppositional defiance to reforms in the form of voting for Pink Tide presidents

and the compensatory behavior of dichotomous thinking that characterizes Pink Tide era presidential discourse around "neoliberalism" and "social justice." The idea of social justice--the satisfaction of basic needs, the establishment of equality of opportunity and meritocracy, and intra-societal solidarity--is presented in Latin American presidential discourse as the solution to the region's economic challenges regarding poverty and economic disparity, whilst the reforms in question that are circumscribed in the term "neoliberalism" are presented as the cause of these challenges.

Toward a Theology of Post-Liberation

Dr. Alfredo Poggi

University of North Georgia

This presentation proposes a theology of post-liberation that seeks to move beyond the limits of classical liberation theology while preserving its prophetic and intellectual legacy, one of the most important theological and philosophical movements in Latin America. Building on the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff, this proposal examines how Pope Francis, and now Pope Leo XIV, have renewed the liberative vision of the Church by shifting its center from political praxis to Trinitarian communion and mercy. Through their teachings, liberation is reinterpreted not merely as social emancipation but as participation in divine life, where justice and contemplation converge. This paper argues that post-liberation theology opens a new horizon for global Christian thought, one rooted in the spiritual depth of Latin American experience and oriented toward a theology of communion, fraternity, and hope.

The Price of Sovereignty: An Evolution of Criminal Jurisdiction in “Indian Country”

Dr. Fred Knowles

Valdosta State University

This paper examines the evolution of Criminal Jurisdiction in what is termed “Indian Country” in the United States. “Indian Country”, in this context, is defined as that part of the United States that is under the legal authority of federally recognized Tribes and Nations. That is to say, those territories that are delineated by treaties for the continued occupation and control by Native American Tribal entities; in short, Reservations. The conflict between Native American and Westernized concepts of justice and the unclear partitions between state, federal and tribal authority have created a “checkerboarding” pattern of authority of reservations in which criminal authority is arguable and contentious. We will examine a genealogy of legal cases and statutory measures that have defined the present state of Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country.

Domestic Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: Cultural Responses

Prof. Brenda Gill

Alabama State University

Ms. Nyla Clark-Smith

Alabama State University

Domestic Violence (DV) continues to be pervasive in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries. Research suggests that women and girls are disproportionately the victims (about 82%).^[1] The impact on women and girls is well-documented, including homicides, suicides, femicide, physical and/or sexual violence, and incapacity among women, as well as several other adverse health outcomes in several LAC countries.^[2] The focus on DV against women in the regions is timely, given that the areas rank fifth globally for the highest rates of IPV. In 2024, approximately 3,828 women were victims of femicide or other forms of gender-related violent death. This is a rate of at least 11 gender-related violent deaths of women every

day, a combined total of 1,254 over the past five years in the regions under consideration.^[iii] The intent of this presentation is to pinpoint the role of culture in the acceptance, continuance, reduction, and cessation of this social problem. The presentation will explore and highlight some of the cultural factors that facilitate or impede women's experiences with DV. This presentation draws on two family violence theories to help explain the persistence of DV and to answer pertinent questions: What are the cultural responses to DV in LAC countries? How can we explain why the DV problem persists? How can highlighting the countries' cultural responses stimulate further action? The chapter culminates with suggestions that may be useful for combating DV in both locations.

Roundtable Discussions: Peer Mentoring

Sponsoring faculty: Dr. Efren Velazquez, University of North Georgia

Students: Ms. Angela Aguirre, Ms. Albany Zavarce Angulo, Mr. Juan Hernandez, Ms. Jacqueline Romagoza, Ms. Magdalena Villalobos Barajas, Ms. Lesly Zuniga.

University of North Georgia.

Peer Mentor Program and Student Success: Hispanic student peer mentors share their experience serving as mentors and discussing the importance of having a peer mentor program for Hispanic freshmen.

To reach the moonshot of becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution within the next decade, the University of North Georgia must grow their Hispanic student population substantially through recruitment and retention efforts. A group of UNG professors and staff members proposed, and received some funding, to create a mentorship program to enhance retention efforts on the UNG-Gainesville campus, which has a high Hispanic student population. The program went through a pilot phase in the fall 2025 semester, where Hispanic peer mentors were hired to work with a few Hispanic freshmen. Additionally, the peer mentors participated in leadership meetings during the academic year, encouraged them to participate in community engagement events, and are encouraged to mentor high school students through partnership with the GRACIAS program. During the spring 2026 semester, the program will be recruiting a significant number of Hispanic freshmen during the spring 2026 and assign them a peer mentor. Peer mentor and student leadership programs positively influence wellbeing, social involvement, academics, and retention. Additionally, Hispanic students need even greater connectedness with peers to be successful in their first year, and the proposed programs will increase sense of belonging and awareness of cultural resources available. Additionally, the program supports UNG's mission and vision, and align with student success moonshots Hispanic Strategic Initiatives, First Gen, Workforce Development, and Leadership Foundry. The proposed panel will include the Hispanic peer mentors so they may discuss their experience in the program and why such programs are important for Hispanic student success.

Session 3A: Geographic, Agricultural and Environmental Issues

The Argentine Antarctic Program and Its International Collaborations

Dr. Georgeta Connor

Georgia Gwinnett College

Argentina's scientific activities started at the beginning of the twentieth century when an Argentinian, José María Sobral, joined the Swedish South Polar Expedition (1901–1904), which wintered two years in Antarctica. In 1903, the Meteorological and Geomagnetic Observatory was established on Laurie Island, South Orkney Islands. Since then, the observatory has been the location of the Orcadas Station, the oldest Argentine station in the Antarctic and the first permanent facility south of 60 degrees South latitude. The Argentine Antarctic Program is composed of several organizations forming the highest levels of the National Government. Created in 1951, the Argentine Antarctic Institute – under the authority of the National Antarctic Directorate – is the first organization in the world to be exclusively devoted to Antarctic research. Argentina was one of the twelve original signatories of the Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959. The purpose of the Argentine Antarctic Program, coordinated by the Argentine Antarctic Institute, is to support, strengthen, and increase the Argentine sovereign claims over the portion of the Antarctic continent and surrounding seas between 25 and 74 degrees West longitude and between 60 and 90 degrees South latitude, at the South Pole. According to the National Antarctic Policy, the scientific priorities were set to investigate, understand, and preserve natural resources, to protect the environment, and to maintain the historical monuments. The Argentine Antarctic Institute is divided into scientific departments grouped into three major areas: Life sciences, Earth sciences, and Ocean and Atmospheric sciences. Moreover, the country has solidified its role in the region by fostering broad international collaborations, with a focus on scientific research and environmental protection under the Antarctic Treaty System. By examining archival records, this study explores Argentina's scientific concern for the Antarctic region, developing distinct research departments as well as an interest in international collaboration. Key Words: Argentina, Antarctica, research departments, observatory stations, international collaboration

Trends in East Pacific Hurricanes from 1975-2025

Dr. Jamie Mitchem

University of North Georgia (IESA)

Hurricanes in the East Pacific have not been studied as thoroughly as those in the Atlantic Basin or typhoons in the Western Pacific. This presentation will analyze East Pacific hurricanes from 1975-2025. These hurricanes can make landfall on the Pacific coast of Mexico from Puerto Escondido northward to Cabo San Lucas and the Baja Peninsula causing extensive flooding, mudslides, storm surge, and wind damage. Hurricane Otis was a recent example that devastated Acapulco after rapid intensification to Category 5 on the Saffir- Simpson scale. East Pacific hurricanes can occasionally cross into the Central Pacific where they can pose a threat to Hawaii. This study focuses on those hurricanes that have struck western Mexico since 1975 to see if the frequency, intensity, seasonality, or damages caused by them exhibit trends and what might be causing any changes. The goal is to enhance preparedness to improve mitigation to reduce losses from future hurricanes in Mexico.

Cleansing Soils, Replacing Plastics, Feeding the Planet: The South Georgia Hemp Pilot

Dr. Lilia Lizama

Maya Heritage Center

Dr. Rocio Palomares

Harvest Fresh Farms, LLC

Globally, industrial hemp (*Cannabis sativa* L.) is re-emerging as a versatile, mission-critical crop in a world seeking climate resilience, soil health renewal, and plastic substitution. From soil remediation efforts in Europe and Asia to biodegradable fiber composites in North America and Africa, hemp holds potential for regenerative agriculture and circular bioeconomy innovation. In this presentation, we introduce a novel field pilot: a 5–10-acre operation in South Georgia, a joint venture between Maya Heritage Center and Harvest Fresh Farms, LLC, situated on land previously under strict herbicide restrictions (FOMA 2.0). We document the design and implementation of a purpose-built hemp decortication/processing system (“hemp-machine”) tailored for remedial cropping and downstream material streams. We will present initial soil-health results showing removal or sequestration of persistent herbicide residues, quantified via soil-test analytics and conforming to state Agricultural Commission standards. Simultaneously, we demonstrate how harvested hemp is diverted into multiple value streams—fiber for compostable bioplastic replacements, hurd for agricultural insulation, and fines/dust for soil amendments—thereby closing the loop between remediation and production. Our research also assesses the substitution potential: how hemp-based biocomposites can supplant single-use plastics with faster-decay, renewable materials. We further discuss regulatory pathways for hemp-derived by-products and their processors, including cultivars best suited for dual remediation & material capture, and extension strategies to transition portions of the acreage to healthy organic food production. Replication in Indigenous communities, employment creation, reducing negative migration, and establishing new circular local economies. Through this initiative, we deliver planet-scale benefits: enhanced soil recovery, carbon capture, reduced plastic waste, and rural economic revitalization. Explanation that revenue from hemp-based products can support nonprofit cultural programs—e.g., revitalizing Mayan language, culture, and knowledge systems, strengthening Indigenous territories through intercultural education, appropriate technology, biocultural heritage, and regenerative economics in Central America. Attendees will gain insights into an integrated remediation-to-renewables model and practical steps for replicating it in other regions worldwide.

Master Planning, Cultural Preservation, and Sustainable Agriculture: Advancing the Maya Heritage Center and the Virtual Mesoamerican Polytechnic Institute

Dr. Lilia Lizama, Maya Heritage Center

Eng. Laureano Gonzalez, Maya Heritage Center

The Maya Heritage Center, in collaboration with two University of Georgia capstone teams, is creating a comprehensive plan that tackles cultural revitalization, educational access, and food security issues in rural Yucatán Peninsula communities. Addressing long-standing regional disparities, decreasing agricultural productivity, and rising food prices, the project blends site planning with practical, repeatable agricultural solutions rooted in Maya heritage. The civil and environmental engineering capstone team is developing a comprehensive master plan for the Maya Heritage Center that supports future growth, community involvement, and the creation of the Virtual Mesoamerican Polytechnic Institute. This plan outlines the spatial, infrastructural, and organizational framework for providing training, cultural programming, and community-based learning opportunities. The Virtual Institute aims to connect students and educators with accessible technical education while enhancing cultural identity and regional resilience. Meanwhile, the mechanical engineering capstone team is designing an affordable vertical farming and automatic

irrigation system to combat food insecurity and scarce agricultural resources in rural areas. The project combines traditional Maya agricultural knowledge with modern small-scale hydroponic methods, resulting in a modular, easy-to-maintain system that uses minimal water, reduces environmental impact, and enables year-round cultivation of native crops. This system also contributes to community resilience, reduces resource use, and creates locally relevant educational materials, allowing teachers and students to learn both modern and ancestral agricultural practices. Together, these coordinated efforts advance the mission of the Maya Heritage Center by promoting cultural preservation, increasing local access to sustainable food production, fostering a model of sustainable development grounded in Mesoamerican heritage, and creating pathways for community learning and economic opportunity throughout the region.

Session 3B: Religion, Culture and Identity

Religion and Anti-Colonialism: Liberation Theology in One Hundred Years of Solitude

Ms. Anna Mathis

University of North Georgia

In this literary study, I examine Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* through multiple lenses, all of which coincide with one another: postcolonialism and liberation theology. This is a study of Márquez's novel, focusing on the role of religion (both Catholic Christian and indigenous mystic beliefs) in fostering sentiments of righteous anticolonialism and resistance to similar forces. Primarily, this study of anti-colonial religious aspects in the novel is conducted by examining character design. I argue that Marquez writes characters not to be Christ figures, but to be a collective, fragmented Christ-like community. This implementation of the fragmented Christ figure, along with mirrors of many Biblical stories, establishes a certain righteousness to the resistance of Macondo against government corruption, violence, and what borders on colonialism, even in a society that is clearly post-colonial. Further, the town of Macondo serves as a microcosm for Colombia and Latin America at large, acting as both a reflection and a warning. Overall, there is much to discuss in terms of the novel, but what I find prevalent is Marquez's use of Biblical imagery, mirroring, and design all to establish these ideas. Rooted in the real-world sentiments and movements in favor of anticolonialism and peace, Marquez's novel is not just magical realism; more than that, I argue that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a righteous reflection on past and potential colonial acts, even in societies that are the product of such events. Magical realism may be incorporated as a tool, but the overarching "magic" in the novel revolves around God, saints, and Christ-like imagery, more than the Euro-centric term Magical realism. In this fact lies the crux of this novel: Both belief in God and belief in humans, both human flaw/struggle and religion, combine rather than coexist to create the message Marquez seemingly wants to send: that the oppressed, the colonized, and the victims of violence are righteous in their attempts to achieve peace and/or sovereignty. That is, the offspring of colonialism still are not safe from its negative effects; colonialism is thus immoral, or rather unrighteous.

Peruvian Culture And Identity Through Gastronomy

Mr. David Park

University of North Georgia

This research paper aims to showcase the cultural diversity by explaining the origins of modern-day Peruvian gastronomy. Using historical and culinary sources, this paper will showcase Peruvian gastronomy in history from the pre-Columbian period of the indigenous peoples of the Andes to the modern-day Peruvian state of the 21st century. The gastronomy of Perú has not only been enriched through the mixing

of Indigenous, European, and African cultures during the colonial period, either willingly or as a means of cultural resistance, but also by other major cultures; in this case, the Chinese and Japanese immigrants that arrived during the 19th and 20th centuries to Perú. Furthermore, this paper aims to not only showcase the diversity of cultures through Peruvian gastronomy but also show how this unique blend of cultures has shaped a unique and strong identity; a culture which in a time of major globalization aims to forge its own path by both accepting and resisting modern influences.

Writing Through Rupture: Nuns' Writings in 18th-Century Santiago de Chile

Ms. Elyse Conley
Pennsylvania State

Scholars of colonialism have begun interrogating the intimate as a site of institutional surveillance and control in comparative contexts. I argue that spirituality and religious expression are intimate practices that can serve as both a site of refuge and colonial control. Two cases from nuns in Chile offer insights into the affective possibilities for White women in a colonial system that valued purity and morality above all else, even in times of rupture. This study focuses on two cases from late colonial Santiago de Chile. The first case is that of Sor Josefa de los Dolores Peña y Lillo (1739-1823), a white veil nun in the convent of the Dominicas de Santa Rosa de Lima. Sor Dolores left behind a remarkably intact epistolary exchange between her and her confessor from 1763-1769. The second case is that of Sor Tadea de San Joaquín (1754-1827), a Carmelite nun in the convent of San Rafael, who composed a poem about a flood that occurred in 1783. Sor Josefa's letters illuminate everyday emotional struggles and internal spiritual battles, while Sor Tadea's poem offers a public-facing reflection on disruptive experience. What, then, do two nuns—the veritable pinnacle of White feminine virtue in the colonial world—have to say about their experiences, their environments, and their desires? Between these two nuns' writings alongside other primary sources such as maps and convent records, this study explores embodied experiences of physical, emotive, and spiritual rupture. I explore how these events opened opportunities for inflexible institutions to adapt, and how they were reflective of gendered navigations of (im)mobility. These two cases invite analysis of the reflexive gaze of religion, exploring what these nuns chose to write in these highly-moderated and performative, but also intimate pieces. Both women ultimately reaffirm rather than challenge the hierarchies that shaped their world.

Session 3 C: Crafting and Contesting Identities in the Americas through ecclesiastical, legal, and popular memory sources

Carabalies in Cuba: From the Bight of Biafra to the Bay of Havana

Dr. Matt Childs
University of South Carolina

Drawing upon archival sources from Cuban and Spanish archives, my paper asks: How did the culture, history, and identity that Africans brought with them to Cuba influence their experiences under enslavement during the 18th and 19th centuries? Focusing on Africans broadly identified as Carabali reflective of their place of origin in Calabar (present day southeastern Nigeria and Cameroon), I demonstrate that Africans continued to identify with their "Old World" African origins by creating associational and fraternal ties with other Africans who shared a similar ethnicity and homeland. These

associations formed through the auspices and supervision of the Catholic Church as lay brotherhoods and became known in Cuba as *cabildos de nación*. By the mid 18th century there existed at least 5 Carabali *cabildos*, and as the importation of slaves increased from the 1760s to the 1860s more organizations continued to form. My paper analyzes how the activities and functions of the Carabali *cabildos* ranging from hosting meetings and gatherings, providing housing, performing religious practices and rituals, and having a membership that united slave and free Africans, and men and women served to transfer and transform African Diasporic cultures on the other side of the Atlantic.

Crafting Legal Claims in a Colonial Divorce Court

Dr. Alexander Wisnoski

University of North Georgia

The ecclesiastical courts of Latin America were busy sites of litigation, especially in the urban centers of the early colonial period. This robust activity combined with the rigorous record-keeping has led to significant attention by scholars of these colonial societies. Within this rich scholarship, historians have shown how this legal apparatus proved to be a particularly fruitful venue for the marginalized peoples of colonial society to address their concerns. Following this lead, my research looks specifically to cases of *divorcio* in Lima's ecclesiastical tribunal. In addition to highlighting the robust legal activity of aggrieved wives, I aim to show how their strategic claims straddled addressing their most urgent needs and concerns while still appealing to Catholic ideologies that would persuade the court.

From Haiti to Oklahoma: Memory and the Black Revolutionary Tradition

Dr. Erica Johnson

Francis Marion University

The Haitian Revolution took place in France's most profitable colony in the Caribbean between 1791 and 1804. In recent decades, scholars have traced the influence of the Haitian Revolution in the eastern United States through the late nineteenth century. However, Oklahoma's Black history demonstrates the need to expand the temporal and geographic scope of the historiography into the turn of the twentieth century and west of the Mississippi River. Oklahoma's Black educational history offers one way to examine the influence of the Haitian Revolution and its legacies from the 1890s to the 1960s. Black Oklahomans chose names for some of its educational institutions with connections to Haiti, showing their identification with a larger Black revolutionary tradition. This paper examines how Black Oklahomans embraced the memory of the Haitian Revolution and the symbol of Haiti in forging their own identity in Oklahoma's first half century of statehood.

Session 3 D Gender, Health and Social Realities

Where the “First World” Falls Behind: An Intersectional Comparative Study of Discourse Surrounding Violence Against Women in the US and Mexico

Ms. Brianna Litz

University of North Georgia

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a global threat exhibiting high rates in both the US and Mexico. While the US has sufficient resources to address this issue, in recent years, discourse has not shown progress. Comparatively, Mexico has seen progressive discourse and the development of advanced preventative policies despite its relative lack of resources. Both countries have similar political and economic structures and a history of patriarchal values, but the US is hindered by the limited incorporation of intersectionality and collectivism. Additionally, much of current research fails to include a South-to-North perspective. By filling this gap, this study introduces individualism as an explanatory factor as to why US discourse has become stagnant. Mexico, a strongly collectivist country, continues to progress as discourse often includes an intersectional perspective emphasizing all victims and pushing for systemic change. To analyze the differences between individualist and collectivist rhetoric, this essay compares discourse from movements, media reporting, and legislation. Through the application of an intersectional feminist framework with a constructivist-Marxist lens, this study concludes that collectivism in Mexico supports an intersectional approach that pushes for effective policy changes. In the US, individualism often lacks acknowledgment of intersectional victims, weakening the plea for change. This analysis concludes that the US would benefit from a collectivist and intersectional approach to push for more effective policies to combat the issue of VAW.

Influenza Burden and Seasonality in Guatemala: Insight from VICO Surveillance, 2008–2018

Dr. Sadaf Jehangir

University of Georgia

Influenza virus is a significant contributor to respiratory disease burden in Guatemala. Assessing the burden and seasonal pattern of influenza virus across different parts of Guatemala is essential for guiding national influenza vaccination policy as influenza seasonality in tropical regions like Guatemala remains less predictable than temperate countries. Methods: To characterize influenza seasonality, we estimated a 5-day moving average of the absolute weekly counts of positive influenza tests from patients hospitalized for respiratory infections at surveillance sites in Guatemala at the National Hospital of Cuilapa (Santa Rosa) from 2007–2018 and Western Regional Hospital (Quetzaltenango) from 2009–2018. Nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs were collected for respiratory pathogen detection using real-time reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR). Specimen collection and testing were performed only when ordered by the evaluating physician. Results: Among 10,955 acute respiratory infection hospitalizations, viral PCR testing was performed on 10,678 case-patients. Influenza A was detected in 671 (6.3%) and influenza B in 156 (1.5%) patients. Influenza was most prevalent among individuals aged 15 years and older. Among viral pathogens, influenza A predominated in those aged 15–64 years (8.7%) and in adults aged ≥ 65 years (8.5%). Using the 5-day moving average absolute weekly counts, influenza A peaks were observed in the first quarter of the year during the late dry season; however, these peaks did not occur consistently across the study period and were present only in some years. Influenza B showed a single spike in 2010 and had a low overall burden. For both influenza A and B, Santa Rosa and Quetzaltenango exhibited similar seasonal trends. Conclusion: Influenza A

demonstrated late dry season peaks in several years, whereas influenza B showed no detectable seasonality. Overall, influenza contributed substantially to the hospitalization burden in Guatemala.

Improving Spanish-Language Access to Women’s Heart Health Resources Through UX and Engagement Analysis.

Ms. Aidan Pavlich

University of North Georgia

Spanish-speaking women in the United States face persistent barriers to accessing cardiovascular health information, including limited availability of culturally aligned medical Spanish, low visibility of translated resources, and distrust of healthcare systems. This project presents a mixed-methods analysis conducted in collaboration with WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving heart health outcomes for women. The research evaluates the feasibility and impact of expanding Spanish-language access to WomenHeart’s educational materials, with a focus on the Virtual Red Bag of Courage (RBoC) program. Using UX research methods, including vocabulary preference surveys and perceived formality ratings, this study examines how Spanish-speaking women interpret medical terminology related to heart disease. Findings demonstrate a strong preference for familiar, low-formality terms (e.g., presión alta, derrame cerebral, ataque al corazón) over highly clinical equivalents, particularly in emotionally supportive or patient-facing contexts. Engagement analysis of bilingual PDFs further reveals that while English-language materials receive significantly higher reach, Spanish-speaking users engage with available Spanish materials at nearly equivalent rates once accessed, indicating a visibility gap rather than a lack of interest. A content gap review identified high-impact English-only resources and informed a set of evidence-based, capacity-conscious recommendations, including targeted translation of priority materials, improved Spanish-language discoverability, mobile-first communication strategies, and strengthened community partnerships. Collectively, this research highlights how data-driven language strategy and UX-informed design can significantly enhance accessibility and trust in nonprofit health communication, offering a scalable model for improving health equity without requiring full program expansion.

Realismo social y marginalidad en *La vendedora de rosas* (1998)

Mr. Christopher Easterbrook

Clemson University

La vendedora de rosas (1998), dirigida por Víctor Gaviria, es un drama colombiano que busca retratar las duras vidas de los niños en situación de calle de Medellín y ofrece una voz a los marginados de la sociedad. Este ensayo argumenta que la película representa, a través de recursos fílmicos como el uso de locaciones reales, la iluminación en clave baja y la cámara en mano, la pobreza extrema, el consumo de drogas y el abuso doméstico que enfrentan los niños en su entorno cotidiano. Gaviria, conocido por su estilo neorrealista, incorpora características propias de este movimiento cinematográfico: actores no profesionales, escenarios auténticos y una narrativa centrada en la vida de los sectores populares. Estos elementos refuerzan la autenticidad de la historia y acercan a la audiencia a la crudeza de la realidad urbana. En el contexto del cine colombiano de finales de los años noventa, esta apuesta estética resultaba innovadora, pues contrastaba con producciones más comerciales, convirtiendo a Gaviria en un pionero en la representación de la marginalidad desde un realismo social radical. En conjunto con estos elementos, la película logra un impacto que provoca reflexión social sobre la marginalidad infantil y la indiferencia social.

Session 4 A Research-Related Teaching Challenges & Opportunities

Research-Related Teaching Challenges & Opportunities

Dr. Melany Chambers
Oglethorpe University

Teaching research at the undergraduate level at US colleges and universities requires both theoretical and practical applications as part of the pedagogical approach. Studies (e.g., Harland, 2016; Pfeffer, 2012; Smith 2015) show that students learn best by being engaged in data gathering techniques, including observations, interviews, and surveys, to help grow a deeper appreciation for the research process. Moreover, courses such as research methods, intercultural communication, and diaspora engagement stimulate not merely research, but also allow students to explore issues beyond the Global North. This panel brings together educators from both the global north and south, whose positionality as Latin American and Caribbean scholars stimulates deep student engagement. This panel discusses some of the challenges and opportunities for enhancing student appreciation for the value of developing research-related skills. This is an interdisciplinary panel that explores varied pedagogical approaches to teaching communication and media, migration and tourism studies research, respectively. Panelists will share their unique perspectives and provide the audience with insights into their research agenda, while sharing strategies that shape their teaching and scholarship.

Communication and Media: Research-Related Teaching Challenges & Opportunities

Dr. Carolyn Walcott,
Clayton State University

Instruction in communication research methods equips students to interrogate their own media practices while understanding how theoretical frameworks shape processes of media production. The pedagogy prioritizes core competencies, including the articulation of research problems, formulation of research questions, engagement with scholarly literature, and selection of appropriate data-collection strategies prior to analysis. Successive student projects, across introductory and applied courses, demonstrate increased analytical sophistication and contextual relevance. The integration of culturally grounded learning environments deepens inquiry into audience interpretation and patterns of media production and consumption. These outcomes are further reinforced through experiential learning, which underscores the pedagogical value of synthesizing empirical results with practice-based insights in communication research education.

Migration studies: Research-Related Teaching Challenges & Opportunities

Dr. Coreen Jacobs-Chester
University of Guyana

Research in migration studies examines how mobility, displacement, and settlement shape social structures, cultural identities, and policy environments across diverse contexts. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes the integration of theoretical frameworks with empirical inquiry to analyze migration as a multidimensional process influenced by economics, governance, history, and lived experience. Core areas of investigation include migrants' agency, transnational networks, patterns of adaptation and belonging, and the impacts of migration on both origin and destination societies. Increasingly, culturally grounded and interdisciplinary approaches illuminate how narratives, representation, and power relations inform public discourse and institutional responses to migration. These perspectives are further strengthened

through qualitative and participatory research practices, which foreground migrants' voices and situate evidence within broader geopolitical realities, thereby advancing a more nuanced and ethically informed understanding of human mobility.

Tourism: Research-Related Teaching Challenges & Opportunities

Dr. Coleen Patterson,
University of Guyana

Research in tourism and development examines how travel, heritage economies, and place-making practices influence social transformation, environmental sustainability, and economic opportunity across varied geographic contexts. Contemporary scholarship integrates theoretical perspectives with empirical inquiry to analyze tourism as a multidimensional development process shaped by governance structures, cultural values, market dynamics, and community agency. Core areas of investigation include livelihoods and local participation, the negotiation of identity and representation, and the distribution of benefits and risks within tourism-dependent societies. Increasingly, interdisciplinary and culturally grounded approaches reveal how narratives of destination development intersect with power relations, policy discourse, and sustainability agendas. These perspectives are further strengthened through qualitative and participatory methodologies that foreground community voices and situate evidence within broader political-economic realities, thereby advancing a more nuanced and ethically informed understanding of tourism's role in development.

Session 4 B: How culture and narrative shape identity, belonging, and social meaning across the Americas

Language, Culture and the Miskito Identity in Nicaragua

Prof. Maguire Maria Jose
University of North Georgia

This paper examines the role of language and cultural practices in the construction of the Miskito identity and visibility within the Nicaraguan nation-state. Historically, the Miskito people have occupied a distinct cultural, linguistic and territorial position along Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast, shaped by colonial encounters, relative autonomy, and ongoing tensions with national projects. This historical background is essential for understanding Miskito cultural expression. Focusing on language use along everyday cultural practices such as traditions, food, dance, and religious life, the paper explores how these elements function as markers of collective identity and as form of social visibility. Rather than treating culture as a folkloric tradition, the analysis highlights how these practices are preserved and reshaped in response to historical exclusion and their place within the Nicaraguan nation. By situating the Miskito cultural practices within broader debates about nationhood and cultural diversity in Nicaragua, this paper argues that language and culture are central to expressing a distinct identity within the broader national framework. Within the context of Nicaragua's national history, the presentation shows how language and everyday traditions help maintain a distinct Miskito identity. Through practices such as food, dance and religious expressions, and community life, the Miskito make their own cultural presence visible while sustaining traditions over time.

Integrando personajes hispanos de ficción para enseñar lengua y cultura

Dr. Luis Mora

Georgia Gwinnett College

En esta ponencia se explora el impacto de los personajes hispanos de ficción en la cultura y los medios contemporáneos, proponiendo estrategias para integrarlos eficazmente en la enseñanza del español. A través de ejemplos clave del cine y la televisión, se analiza cómo estos personajes no solo son un espejo de valores y realidades sociales, sino que también funcionan como excelentes vehículos pedagógicos para enseñar gramática y vocabulario en contexto. El objetivo es demostrar cómo las narrativas de ficción pueden motivar a los estudiantes, facilitar su comprensión lingüística y crear una conexión genuina con la cultura hispana. Al final, se expondrán herramientas prácticas para enriquecer las clases con recursos auténticos y culturalmente relevantes.

Taiwanese and Chinese Immigration to Argentina: A Historical Overview

Prof. Nicolas Hu

University of North Georgia

This presentation provides an overview of Taiwanese and Chinese immigration to Argentina, from the early twentieth century through the 2020s. Drawing on the presenter's own experience as a Taiwanese immigrant to Argentina, alongside journal articles, demographic estimates, and Argentine government sources, it examines four key phases of this migration history: the early and limited Chinese arrivals (1914–1949), the entrepreneurial Taiwanese wave of the 1960s–1990s, the large-scale migration from mainland China beginning in the 1980s, and the consolidation of these communities into Argentina's commercial and cultural fabric in the 2000s and beyond. The presentation will highlight how Taiwanese and Chinese migrants transformed economic and urban landscapes—most visibly through the expansion of Chinese-owned neighborhood supermarkets, the formation of Buenos Aires' Barrio Chino, and the establishment of various religious and cultural institutions. At the same time, it analyzes how these groups have navigated structural invisibility in national statistics, persistent stereotyping under the label “chinos,” and the consequences of recurring economic crises for settlement and re-migration. The goal of this presentation aims to situate Taiwanese and Chinese immigration within broader debates on multiculturalism, race, and Argentina's evolving demographic identity.

Pachucos in Atlanta during the 1960s

Dr. Andres Hajar

Georgia Gwinnett College

This paper examines the influence Pachucos had in the larger local and national civil rights movement. There is no literature examining this group locally, but there is a significant number of authors examining it at the national level. These authors have reached the consensus that Pachucos are part of the larger Civil Rights movement. For example, they zoot suit riots in California, but especially in LA during the 1960s and their participation in the Chicano movement nationally.

Session 4 C: Arts, Language and Culture

Alfredo da Silva and the Potosino Landscape in Flux

Mr. Tomas Curcio
University of Florida

In 1964, Argentine art critic Ernesto Ramallo labeled Bolivian artist Alfredo da Silva a mystery. In 2025, da Silva largely remains a mystery within academic art history. Born and raised in Potosí, Bolivia, da Silva would go on to study at the Potosí Academy of Fine Arts. Through the late 1950s and into the early 1970s, as he exhibited in South America and the United States of America, da Silva became regarded for his abstract expressionist oil paintings that were interpreted within exhibition catalogues and contemporary writings as engaging with the landscape of the Andes. As a figure under-discussed in scholarship relating to Bolivian modern art and Andean abstraction writ large, this paper brings clarity to this period of da Silva's work for which he was most known for. Additionally, this paper engages with this concept of abstracting Potosí, placing emphasis on what it means to abstract a landscape that has been besieged with colonial violence and systematic extraction. Through researching exhibition catalogues, news writing, and academic writing on Andean abstraction, this paper puts forward new understandings of Alfredo da Silva's act of abstracting a city that has faced such direct and epistemological violence.

Generational Trauma and Healing in Lorraine Ávila's short story "Mi'ja"

Ms. Yasmin Paiva de Siqueira
The University of Georgia

Regarding Dominican Republic literature, Diego Ubiera argues that despite the efforts to deny the complexity of race in the country, authors have challenged the dominant Eurocentric narrative regarding the DR's past to give voice to other "representations of dominicanidad" (488) and debunk the "black denial" discourses present in public life (85). Taking this racial context into account, the objective of this analysis is to demonstrate how the short story "Mi'ja", part of the book *Malcriada* (2019) written by the American author with Dominican roots, Lorraine Ávila, walks the reader through the process of trauma and healing of its main character, Sarai Magdalena Martínez. Not only is it possible to have access to the physical and psychological abuses she endured during a 17-year period, but also to the three generations of women who were victims of gender, sexual and racial violences. Therefore, the intertwining of their stories and the collective trauma portrayed in "Mi'ja" exemplify how women's subjugation in patriarchal, misogynistic and racist societies affects both their personal growth and their capacity to relate to others. Hence, this short story conveys a lifetime of physical and psychological abuses which have scarred generations of women. Having to deal with oppression, they have suffered not only in the hands of men, but also through the discourses and actions of other women. In the midst of these hardships, the protagonist guides the reader through her traumas and her efforts to both heal herself and understand the complexities of her own identity. Considering this approach, this analysis will consider Marisel Moreno's (2012), Pierre Bourdieu's (1989) and Gerda Lerner's (1986) view on patriarchy; the "Theory of the Rhizome" developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri (1980); the "Theory of the Mangrove" coined by Odile Ferly (2012); and the "Theory of (Re)birth" by Odette Casamayor-Cisneros (2022).

Language, Culture, and Learning Styles: Examining the Impact of Chocoan Cultural Identities on English Learning Dynamics

Mr. Jonny Lopez

University of Florida

The purpose of this research is to develop a distinctive group-based approach that examines the interrelation among the English language, cultural identity, and learning styles to identify culture-related factors that directly and indirectly support English learning among Afro-Colombians in Chocó, Colombia. While learning languages is a universal practice often linked to culture, this research project emphasizes the acquisition process in relation to the linguistic goals and the specific cultural traits of the target population. I employed a range of data collection instruments, including focus groups, conversational interviews, co-teaching sessions with local professors, surveys, and ethnographic observations. Ninety-five individuals participated in this project, including university professors, students, local cultural leaders, and community members with diverse educational backgrounds. The only common factor among them was their origin, as they were born and raised in Chocó, Colombia. Given that Colombia has a test-based education system, this study draws on the tension between enjoyable and efficient learning approaches, positioning the English language as the central focus and their cultural identities as the starting point. The findings show that while students and community members find behaviorist and cognitivist approaches more effective, they perceive constructivist and social learning theories as more engaging. Local professors argue that constructivist approaches are more suitable, particularly when supported by social networks and the internet. They also suggest that curricula should be contextualized and aligned with specific community-based cultural features, without discarding existing national linguistic patterns and curricular norms. The results of this study enabled me to propose an alternative English learning approach informed by the cultural characteristics of the population. This approach aims to make English learning enjoyable and effective because English proficiency ensures that Chocoans have better job opportunities and access to scholarships both nationally and internationally.

Session 4 D: Teaching Paradigms II

Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Learning through Structured Reflection: The Cuba Experience

Dr. Maria Navarro

University of Georgia

Study abroad programs are recognized as high-impact educational practices, yet their transformative potential depends on intentional design that fosters reflection, integration, and intercultural engagement. This presentation examines a pedagogical approach implemented during two consecutive study abroad programs in Cuba (2023-2024), designed to deepen student learning through structured visual and narrative reflection. Cuba offers a unique context for interdisciplinary exploration, where historical, political, economic, and environmental realities intersect in ways that challenge conventional perspectives. Students engaged with issues such as food security, sustainability, public health, and cultural resilience while navigating the complexities of Cuban society. They visited farms, cultural institutions, and community organizations, gaining firsthand exposure to adaptive strategies in agriculture, responses to economic constraints, and practices that sustain social cohesion. These experiences provided fertile ground for critical analysis of global challenges through a local lens. The methodology centered on a multi-step reflective process. Students maintained journals, captured photographs, and developed narratives to

represent the impact of their experiences. These artifacts were shared in small groups and later in full-class sessions, culminating in a public presentation. This collaborative structure encouraged dialogue, negotiation of meaning, and collective interpretation, while providing opportunities for public demonstration of competence. The process supported integrative learning by linking disciplinary knowledge with lived experience and fostering intercultural communication. Students articulated growth across multiple dimensions: academic and professional development, intercultural competence, and heightened awareness of social, economic, and environmental issues. The reflective process also revealed nuanced insights into Cuban realities, including resilience in the face of economic hardship and community-based approaches to sustainability. This study contributes to ongoing dialogue on interdisciplinary and intercultural teaching paradigms by illustrating how structured reflection can enhance the educational impact of study abroad programs. Recommendations will be offered for incorporating similar methodologies into short-term international experiences to promote deep learning and global awareness.

Encounters of Languages, Cultures, and Identities: Code-switching among HBCU Students in a Study Abroad Program in Costa Rica

Dr. Irina Tedrick

University of South Carolina Sumter

The purpose of this study was to examine the immersion experiences of Black and African American students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) who participated in a previous study abroad program in Costa Rica as it pertained to the languages, cultures, and identities they encountered. My cross-cultural narrative inquiry methodology (He, 2003, 2006, 2010; Phillion & He, 2008; Phillion et al., 2009; Sharma & Phillion, 2021) along with my data collection methods, interview, and artifacts enabled me to showcase my participants' stories. This chapter describes the emerging themes from the participants' narratives that I collected and presented in the previous chapter. My study builds upon a wide array of theories related to languages (Bakhtin, 1981; Chomsky, 1957 1986; Delpit, 2008; Krashen, 1981), cultures (Banks, 2006; Banks & McGee Banks, 2013; Baldwin, 1955; Hall, 1992; Dimitriadis, 2012) and identities (Appaya, 1996; Du Bois, 1903; He, 2003, 2006; Phillion, 2008; Baszile, 2006a; West, 2017). My theoretical framework synthesizes Bakhtin's (1981) idea of chronotope and study abroad literature (Akomolafe, 2000; Ali, 2015; Pipitone, 2018; Wick, 2011) to better explore language, culture, and identity immersion experiences of my Black and African American HBCU students in Costa Rica. Additionally, I have documented the interactions between languages, cultures, and identities within the context of the HBCU student perspectives. My research also relies on curriculum theories (Ayers, 1995; Dewey, 1938; Pinar, 2007; Schubert, 1986) to situate my findings within Curriculum Studies as well as the domain of education. My literature review expands upon the works of HBCU study abroad program researchers as Akomolafe, (2000); Ali, (2015); Brux & Fry, (2010); Pipitone, (2018); Ranney, 130 (2013); Wick, (2011) and Willis, (2012). Additionally, I applied the idea of chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981) and my New Dimension extension theory to guide my analysis. The concept of chronotope (Bakhtin, 1981) inspired my interest towards the language-discourse in Bakhtin's studies. The concept of chronotope points this study towards the travel discourse, where "travel [being] is used as a metaphor" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 373). Chronotope of the travel is relevant because it generates sentiments consistent with the participants' stories and, ultimately, the themes emerging from this study. The thematic findings from this study are listed in the following order: (1) HBCUs as a Special Place for Solidifying Black Identity; (2) "My Mom Had Baked My Financial Advisor Cookies": Barriers to Study Abroad; (3) Languages: Encounter of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Standard English, and Spanish; (4) Cultures: Encounter of Black, African American, and Costa Rican Cultures; (5) Identities: "A Rose That Grew from a Crack in the Concrete"; and (6) Pura Vida

as New Dimension. These findings illustrate the intertwined nature of languages, cultures, and identities enhanced by immersion experiences abroad

The Impact of Place Attachment in the Socioscientific Reasoning of Puerto Rican Students After Evaluating Socioscientific Issues

Dr. Lorraine Ramirez Villarin
University of North Georgia

Socioscientific issues (SSI) are excellent tools to foster the development of higher order thinking skills leading to socioscientific reasoning (SSR) while educating about real-world scenarios with connections to science. These versatile narratives can be suited to relevant topics making science instruction more meaningful. Learning involves affective and motivational components like culture and sense of place which impact the way an individual thinks and acts. Informal reasoning might trigger a premature response or interfere with judgement when a student feels identified with a situation or setting. Therefore, this study assessed variations in SSR considering place-attachment as students negotiated with local and foreign environmental SSI. For this quasi-experimental study, around 100 Puerto Rican high school students enrolled in Earth science, Biology, and Environmental science participated. The research questions involved finding the extent of place-attachment students had to their island, whether there was a correlation between SSR and place-attachment, and measuring changes in SSR and its dimensions between the pretest and posttests and across local versus foreign environmental scenarios. Quantitative and qualitative analyses assessed whether place-attachment played a role in students' reasoning and decision-making skills. Giving this Spanish-speaking population of Americans an opportunity to explore SSI allowed them to become aware of what goes on in and outside their community while promoting evaluation and argumentation skills among students.

How Study Away Experience Affects Perspectives and Approach to Medical School

Dr. Amy Baldwin
Ms. Soren Mais

UGA School of Medicine and Augusta University / University of Georgia Medical Partnership

Pre-health students gain firsthand experience in healthcare systems within an international context through the University of Georgia's Health in Belize Program. This unique opportunity allows students to shadow local clinicians, attend guest lectures, engage with rural medical volunteers, and discuss various healthcare topics with peers. Selected students participate in a 3-week program in country, after participating in preparatory sessions before travel. These experiences allow for interactive and intimate experiences at various locations, mainly in San Ignacio. The guest lectures from Belizean government officials, nurses, and other medical personnel provide the background for an understanding of healthcare in Belize. Access to rural communities, as well as personal and financial barriers to healthcare are discussed and directly observed, which provide a more comprehensive understanding of Belizean healthcare. Students create journal entries (written or recorded) on day-to-day experiences, promoting reflection and deeper understanding of their learning experiences and allowing comparison of healthcare in areas which they would like to practice in the future. In this session, perspectives will be shared on how the experience of a pre-health study away in Belize shapes the approach and experience to medical school programming. We are immensely grateful to the Belizean people for their generosity, compassion, and willingness to share their knowledge and experiences, contributing to the development of healthcare professionals.

Roundtable Discussions: Active Learning

Sponsoring faculty: Drs. Tamara Spike, Erin Bush, and Alexander Wisnoski, University of North Georgia

Students: Mr. Sergio Monterroso-Ortega, Ms. Sara Courtney, Mr. Joshua Martin, Mr. Jackson Carne, Ms. Cara Allen, Ms. Angelica Rivera
University of North Georgia.

Perspectives on Active Learning in the History of the Americas Classroom

Active Learning/Active Pedagogy is defined in many ways but is broadly agreed to be a learner-centered approach to teaching that involves students in “doing things and thinking about what they are doing” in ways that often make students and teachers “co-creators” of their learning environment. (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p2) Common active learning practices include interactive lectures, case study analyses, role-playing, experiential learning, peer teaching, flipped lessons, problem-based learning, visual-based learning, collaborative learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and game-based learning. This roundtable will center student voices and ideas about the experience and value of active learning. Each of the students on the panel has recently been enrolled in one or more classrooms centered in active learning pedagogy. They will share their experiences, idea, challenges, and takeaways from the active learning classroom. Faculty members will be present and participate as well in secondary roles.

Session 5A: Arts, Music and Culture

Popular Culture as Activism: Responding to Act 22 and Gentrification in Puerto Rico

Dr. Nerisha Padilla Cruz
Perimeter College-Georgia State University

Since the Individual Investors Act was approved in Puerto Rico in 2012, a measure that grants tax exemptions to foreign investors who reside on the island for at least 183 days, the pressure on local communities, the privatization of natural resources, and residential displacement have increased significantly. In response to this reality, artists and media creators have used their platforms to expose the issue and promote social awareness. The purpose of this paper is to examine how popular culture in Puerto Rico has become a key space for denunciation and resistance in the face of the social consequences of Act 22 and the accelerated process of gentrification on the island. To explore this, the paper focuses on the influence of artists such as Bad Bunny in bringing visibility to these issues. Through an analysis of his work—including the documentary “El apagón- Aquí vive gente” (2022) and the album *Debí tirar más fotos* (2025)—we observe how he uses his platform to denounce the loss of beach access, the appropriation of coastal lands, and the inequalities intensified by the arrival of foreign investors. His discourse resonates with community struggles such as the protests in Rincón, where residents and activists mobilized to stop construction projects that threatened public access to the coast and marine ecosystems. It also aligns with the political artwork of local artist Garvin Sierra, who uses his Instagram page called Taller Gráfico to critique displacement, colonial dispossession, and the impact of Act 22. Together, these examples demonstrate how popular culture not only denounces the effects of Act 22 but also inspires and amplifies community movements seeking to defend the territory and ensure the continuity of local communities.

A Case Study of *Preludio 11* (Kurt Maetzig, 1963), a Cuban-East German Co-production

Dr. Magdalena Matuskova

Clemson University

Preludio 11 (Kurt Maetzig, 1963) was the first co-production between the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) and East Germany's state film studio DEFA, and one of only three co-productions between Cuba and the socialist bloc in the 1960s. *Preludio 11* was agreed upon soon after the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961), which loosely inspired its story, and shot during the Cuban Missile Crisis in fall 1962. This adventure-spy film, set in post-1959 Cuba, was a project of socialist internationalism and solidarity. It aimed to support Cuba's struggle against U.S. imperialism and reassure the Cuban population that the Revolution would not be defeated. From its inception, *Preludio 11* was highly politicized, and later subject to intense scrutiny after the filming. I argue that although both countries were socialist and their militant narratives initially appeared aligned, they held different understandings of the Cuban Revolution and divergent expectations for its cinematic representation. These conflicting agendas shaped the film's narrative and censorship process. Archival sources from the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, especially Erhard Kranz's report for the East German Film Approval Commission (*Argumentation zum Film Preludio 11*) and Cuban director Roberto Fandiño's notes on cuts requested by ICAIC, reveal conflicting interpretations of ideological messaging and character portrayal. Correspondence between ICAIC's executive director Alfredo Guevara and East German Deputy Minister of Culture Hans Rodenbert further illustrate how were these tensions negotiated. Ultimately, the parties settled on a post-production compromise, creating a version acceptable for exhibition in both countries. Nevertheless, as I will demonstrate, the failure to meet ICAIC's expectations led to political fallout and post-premiere reckoning. This essay draws on primary research in the Bundesarchiv (Berlin) and the Cuban Cinemateca (Havana).

Solitude / Soledad in Mercedes Sosa, The "Voice" of Latin America

Dr. Rudyard Alcocer

U of Tennessee / Knoxville

This presentation, linked to a book-length project pertaining to the notion of soledad in Latin American intellectual and popular thought, explores this notion in the music and life of the Argentine singer, Mercedes Sosa (1935-2009). Commonly referred to as the "Voice" of Latin America, Sosa was one of the major proponents of the *nueva canción* in the region, a musical style with leftist ideological leanings. In taking the side of the marginalized and oppressed, Sosa was friendly with socialist regimes throughout the Americas but also a frequent target of conservative regimes. This presentation explores these dynamics in specific relation to soledad, which is usually translated into English as either loneliness or solitude; the word, in fact, can mean either or both of these, but is not limited to these definitions. Soledad, moreover, accrued broad, hemispheric importance as a cultural metaphor for Latin America, especially from the vantage point of leftist intellectuals and artists, of whom Sosa was but one example. To what extent does Sosa's understanding and deployment of soledad align with or depart from other usages within the Latin American intellectual tradition? In what ways do her songs challenge or expand our understanding of soledad? Further, how does her music challenge our understanding of the meaning of "Latin America"? Key words: Mercedes Sosa, solitude, soledad, Latin America, Argentina, music, *nueva canción*.

English Proficiency and the Success of Latino Musicians during and post COVID 19-Era in the United States

Dr. Ying Zhen
Wesleyan College

This paper explores and compares the factors that affect the economic success of Latino Musicians in terms of hourly wage during and post the Covid 19 era, using data from the 2021 and 2023 American Community Survey, where musicians are defined as those who make their living from income derived from music-making: musicians and singers, music directors and composers, namely.

The 2021 data reveal the importance of education and union membership on hourly wage for Latino musicians; however, English proficiency's effect on hourly wage is minimal and there is no interaction effect between English proficiency and union on earnings. The same pattern applies to 2023. Quantile regression approach is adopted to examine the effects of English proficiency's effects across the entire earnings distribution. The 2021 data shows that the relative importance of English proficiency is greater at the upper tier of the earnings distribution for Latino male musicians with a union membership: fluency in English is associated with a 3% increase in hourly wage for Latino male unionized musicians at the 50th hourly wage percentile, while such a premium is 26% for those at the 75th hourly wage percentile. This pattern does not apply to Latino female musicians. For Latino female musicians, educational attainment would contribute to their earnings, while marriage plays a negative role. However, the 2023 data show the relative importance of English proficiency is lower at the lower tier of the earnings distribution for Latino musicians with a union membership: fluency in English is associated with a 5.6% decrease in hourly wage for Latino unionized musicians at the 25th hourly wage percentile, while there are no interaction effects for median and upper tiers. Latino male unionized musicians at the 50th hourly wage percentile, fluency in English will increase their hourly wage by 36.6%. JEL Codes: I26, Z13, B40, O3, J82. Key Words: Musicians, Covid-Era, English proficiency, labor union

Session 5 B Arts, Language and Literature II

Jorge Luis Borges' Vibrant Materials

Dr. Derek Beaudry
University of North Georgia

Critics have long noted an affinity for philosophical idealism in the work of Jorge Luis Borges. Though idealism has several variants, they share the belief that “something mental (the mind, spirit, reason, will) is the ultimate foundation of all reality” (Guyer and Horstmann). This idealist current is evidenced, in part, by the putative fantastical, unreal, or irreal nature of Borges' work. Yet, several critics have argued that this characterization overlooks a strain of literary realism in the author's fiction. In this presentation, I expand on this line of inquiry and claim that Borges does not simply write off the material world; rather, a number of stories depict the material world as exerting its own agency or vital force quite independent from the mental realm. At the same time, this quality does not assert the primacy of matter, but rather demonstrates a more complex ontology in which language, mind and materiality are interrelated. Not only does this reading complicate the image of Borges as idealist fabulist, but the attunement to material vitality in Borges' fiction invites us to reconsider notions such as relationality, agency, and responsibility in a world in which human and nonhuman forces are irreducibly entangled. In this way, this presentation also participates in broader efforts to rethink realism and materialism in the Latin Americanist humanities in the wake of the linguistic and cultural turns.

Fiction as Mirror: Social Commentary from Los cuentos de Eva Luna

Prof. Eric Kartchner

Georgia Southern University

This paper explores Isabel Allende's *Los cuentos de Eva Luna* as a lens for examining social issues in contemporary U.S. society. Through close readings of selected stories, the analysis highlights Allende's commentary on imperialism, economic inequality, gender oppression, and the transformative power of storytelling. These themes, rooted in Latin American experience, resonate strongly with U.S. debates about foreign policy, corporate greed, gender justice, and the struggle for marginalized voices to reclaim identity. The paper argues that her cuentos transcend regional boundaries, offering U.S. readers a critique of their own society and a call to embrace storytelling as a means of resistance, empathy, and cultural renewal.

Towards a Regenerative Cosmopolitanism: The Body, the Local and the World in 21st Century Bolivian Literature

Dr. Zoya Khan

University of South Alabama

This paper explores the relationship between ecology and cosmopolitanism in contemporary Bolivian literature. The paper will read two short stories by Liliana Colanzi, "La ola" and "Nuestro mundo muerto" to probe the connections between ecofeminism and an embodied cosmopolitanism. Through my discussion of the two texts, I will debate Hector Hoyos' formulation of a Latin American cosmopolitanism, oriented towards death and decay. Though a timely corrective to the reigning Eurocentric model of cosmopolitanism, Hoyos's intent to infuse world literature with a renewed emphasis on materiality tacitly upholds a male-centric notion of world literature, evidenced by the almost exclusive attention to male writers in his work. The texts I analyze here are examples of a spate of recent Bolivian narratives that envision a generative rather than a degenerative cosmopolitanism. These ecofeminist narratives propose a planetary paradigm foregrounding the connections between multiple knowledges, the convergence between biology and culture, and the intrinsic heterogeneity of the relations humans establish with their natural habitats.

Modernidad inquietante: lo nuevo extraño y las fracturas del imaginario boliviano en El horizonte del grito, de Maximiliano Barrientos

Dr. Jaime Salinas Zabalaga

University of North Georgia

This paper examines Maximiliano Barrientos' *El horizonte del grito* (2022) through the critical lens of New Weird literature and horror theory to explore the enduring contradictions of Bolivian modernity. Moving beyond the realist paradigm that has long defined national literary discourse, Barrientos mobilizes elements of strangeness, monstrosity, and the uncanny to expose the dissonances underlying modernization and capitalist acceleration in Bolivia's contemporary experience. Drawing on Mark Fisher's reflections on the weird and the eerie as symptoms of late-capitalist malaise, I argue that Barrientos' narrative enacts a critique of neoliberal subjectivity and the ideological exhaustion of progress. In dialogue with Mabel Moraña's theorization of the monster as a figure of political and cultural excess, *El horizonte del grito* reimagines monstrosity not as an external threat but as the embodiment of social trauma—the spectral remainder of colonial and extractivist violence haunting the national unconscious. J. Greenaway's horror theory further illuminates how Barrientos situates fear,

decay, and mutation as epistemological tools for confronting historical amnesia and systemic collapse within the postcolonial condition. Through this interdisciplinary framework, I contend that the “new weird” in Barrientos functions not merely as a genre gesture but as a mode of historical cognition: a way of articulating what official narratives cannot name. By weaving speculative tropes with realist fragments, *El horizonte del grito* stages a confrontation with the ontological instability of Bolivian modernity and reveals how horror and the weird enable renewed critical engagements with memory, affect, and the ruins of progress.

Session 5C: Language and Linguistics II

The panel topic is Documenting Semantics in Indigenous Languages; each presentations focuses on results of a documentation project in a different language. We hope to highlight the importance of semantics in language documentation, which is often neglected but has been shown to directly benefit language revitalization efforts (e.g., Johnson, 2024). The panelists are Seaira Lett, Casen Stiber, and Britton Hare.

Documenting temporal expression in Chuj and why it matters

Ms. Seaira Lett

University of Georgia

This project aims to expand the documentation of temporal expression in Chuj, a Mayan language spoke in Guatemala. Chuj is spoken by around 90,000 people, but the San Sebastián Coatán (SSC) variety, particularly understudied, has only 26,000 speakers. UNESCO classifies Chuj as vulnerable to endangerment (Moseley 2010), demonstrating the urgency of this research. Recent work on Mayan languages has called into question whether they possess tense marking (e.g., Carolan 2015; Stout 2019; Bešlin 2022). In Carolan’s (2015) tensed analysis of Chuj, she points out a remoteness distinction seen in the markers *x* and \emptyset , which she analyzes as recent and remote past perfectives, respectively. My data from SSC Chuj, collected via acceptability judgement tasks (Bochnak & Matthewson 2015), confirms that these markers encode a remoteness distinction but points toward a tenseless analysis of Chuj’s aspect markers. I will expand on my previous work by presenting a more fine-grained analysis of these two markers, and discuss the significance of this work for language revitalization efforts. Linguists such as Johnson (2024) have emphasized the importance of semantic fieldwork for language revitalization, as it allows for the creation of more precise pedagogical materials. I will demonstrate that these markers do not encode tense information, since they are compatible with past and future temporal reference. Next, they are able to express readings associated with both perfect aspects, such as anterior and experiential readings, and perfective aspect, such as narrative progression (Bertrand et al. 2022). This project expands knowledge on Chuj and on the diversity of remoteness marking and systems of tense, aspect, and modality cross-linguistically. Remoteness markers have been shown to exhibit different behavior across languages, and Chuj presents an additional example of what remoteness may look like (Cable 2013; Mucha 2017; Chamorro 2020; a. o.).

Documenting the Semantic Variation of Navajo Pluractionality

Mr. Britton Hare

University of Georgia

Pluractionality, the grammatical encoding of event plurality, has been widely attested across indigenous

languages of the Americas, but its semantic structure remains under documented in many languages where it plays a central role in verbal meaning (Mattiola, 2020). Navajo (Diné Bizaad) is exemplary with respect to pluractionality; its complex, polysynthetic verb system allows for multiple, distinct strategies for deriving plural events, including numbered verb stems, the repetitive aspect, the distributive prefix *da-*, the seriative prefix *hi-*, and the usitative/iterative modes (Young & Morgan, 1987; Smith, 1996). These examples demonstrate how adding the distributive prefix changes the meaning of a verb: Navajo (Na-Dené, Athabaskan) (Yazzie et al., 2000) 'Ashiiké yázhí bil naashné boy.PL little 3O-with 1SG.S-play 'I play with the little boys (collectively)' 'Ashiiké yázhí bil ndaashné boy.PL little 3O-with da-1SG.S-play 'I play with the little boys (with each of >2, in a distributive sense)' Despite the richness of this system, no unified semantic account details how these morphemes' denotations differ or how speakers interpret them across contexts. This paper aims to fill this gap by documenting strategies using a formal semantic analysis that models how events are structured and counted (Lasersohn, 1995). Using Cusic's (1981) typology of pluractional markers, I formalize distinctions among temporal, participant-based, and location-based plural events. This work synthesizes existing sources (Young & Morgan, 1987, 1992) with original data collected using contextual acceptability judgments and translation tasks with collective, distributive, and repetitive plural readings. By providing the first unified semantic account of pluractional morphology in Navajo, I demonstrate the complexity of documenting the semantics of polysynthetic languages. This paper models how semantic fieldwork can contribute to language revitalization by clarifying subtle meaning distinctions not captured through morphosyntactic description alone. These distinctions can then inform teaching materials that explicitly show learners when to use each form.

Plurality in Salvadoran Nawat

Mr. Casen Stiber

University of Georgia

Nawat (Uto-Aztecan) is the last remaining indigenous language of El Salvador. It is classified by UNESCO as critically endangered, and a recent estimate places the number of native speakers at less than 100 (Endangered Languages Project, 2025). Few publications about the current state of Nawat are available, with accessible literature limited to a formal grammar (Campbell, 1985), an instructional grammar (King, 2011), a dictionary (Pérez & Martínez, 2023), and a handful of pedagogical materials designed for child learners (Cortez, 2014; King, 2005; Lemus, 2014). I am researching the most widely spoken dialect, found in Santo Domingo de Guzmán, Sonsonate. Based on preliminary fieldwork, I examine this dialect's system of nominal plurality and hypothesize a phenomenon unmentioned in previous literature. Nawat displays three nominal pluralization strategies: (i) reduplication of the initial syllable, (ii) suffixation, and (iii) both (Pérez & Martínez, 2023). Based on original data gathered through elicitation, I investigate how these strategies, while semantically similar, are not fully interchangeable. Strategy (iii) occurs uniquely—but not obligatorily—with nouns denoting adult humans (1a), and intriguingly, also appears with the noun for 'dog' but not for 'child' (1b-1c), suggesting an animacy hierarchy ranking dogs above human children. 1. (a) *nawi sij~siwat-ket* (b) *nawi peh~pelu-met* (c) *nawi gunet* four PL~woman- PL four PL~dog-PL four child 'four women' 'four dogs' 'four children.' Plural marking is generally optional when a plural determiner is present, indicating a preference for encoding plurality only once per noun phrase. This pattern extends across utterances, with plural marking often omitted in repeated references. This phenomenon is undescribed in current literature, urging a more detailed investigation of complex sentences with multiple noun phrases per referent.

Session 5D: Culture and Policy

Plagues as Punishment - Samanta Schweblin's Continuation of Cultural Latin American Narratives

Ms. Emma Wilson
Furman University

Infection is possible to ignore, to leave in the margins of our consciousness, but so much of society is built around its mitigation—our gardens are soaked in insecticide, manufacturers adhere to strict standards, houses are fortified against termites. Pestilence has been a central image in Latin America's cultural history. Bartolome de Las Casas, for example, used a plague of ants as a code punishment for the slavery perpetuated by Europeans in colonial times. Esteban Echeverría provides an allegory of Argentinian body-politics as an unsanitary slaughterhouse contaminated both by an epidemic of yellow fever (Uparela, 2018) and political otherness in the 19th century. Clarice Lispector chronicles an existential crisis due to the death of a pestilent cockroach in her novel *La Pasión de G.H.* In the following presentation, I am going to analyze *Distancia de Rescate* (2014) by Samanta Schweblin, perhaps one of the most important narratives on plagues and pestilence in Latin America from recent years. Narrated as an ominous and feverish dialogue between the protagonist, Amanda, and David—a little boy that has been mentally and physically affected by agrochemicals—the novel reads like a horror story: a shattered testimony on how the chemicals used to treat fields of soy not only destroy the insects they target, but the surrounding human community as well. As I will show, Schweblin's narrative opens not only to larger contextual issues—functioning as a symbol for capitalism, extractivism, and ecological catastrophe—but conditions the very form of the novel as the narrative follows how these pesticides invade and distort the characters' identities: their bodies, minds, consciousnesses, and spiritual existence.

Colombia's comparative defense

Mr. Nicolas Zamudio
University of North Georgia

The presentation is a short overview of Colombia's defense policies. Taking into account its international environment, national objectives, the decision-making process, recurring issues, the future of Colombian defense, and recent changes that have repositioned Colombia in the Latin American stage. This presentation seeks to understand Colombia's approach to the defense of its territory, citizens, and borders from the myriad of threats it faces, as it also understands that current events represent a break from the past and a movement towards a country less aligned with traditional Western powers.

The impact of national environmental governance policies on indigenous communities: A case study of the Ecuadorian Amazon

Ms. Nilofer Bharwani
Kennesaw State University

What is the impact of incorporating indigenous principles into national environmental policies? Ecuador is the first country in the world to recognize the rights of nature and its well-being within its constitution (Asamblea Nacional Ecuador, 2008), a significant step toward including indigenous principles within national policies (Berros, 2015). However, the Ecuadorian government has been criticized for utilizing this constitutional rhetoric to nationalize indigenous lands and justify resource extraction from the Amazon (CESR, 1994, Gómez-Barris, 2017). Resource mining provides funding for social welfare

projects, allowing the government to improve its citizens' well-being, but extraction also exacerbates the impact of climate change upon indigenous communities (CESR, 1994, Gómez-Barris, 2017; Ruckert et al., 2017). This dissertation explores the following question: given the impact of climate change on Ecuador, how does the incorporation of indigenous climate adaptation practices into national environmental policies impact Amazonian indigenous communities? Few studies examine the link between the national policies and the structures of support used by indigenous communities to adapt to climate change (Bol & van Nierkerk, 2024; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2019). Through a focused qualitative exploration of the meaning of nature and well-being for the Amazonian Kichwa along with an analysis of Ecuadorian policies, my dissertation examines the disconnect between national environmental governance policies and indigenous community-based practices. This dissertation is based on fieldwork, observations, and interviews with indigenous community members, scholars, and organizational leaders regarding environmental policies, juxtaposed with a critical discursive analysis of national policy documents. My study documents and analyzes the impact of the underlying linkages and gaps between national environmental policies and the practices used by indigenous communities to adapt to climate change.

Exploring Agroecological Communication Through the Slow Food Farms Model

Ms. Laura Beatriz Montes de Oca Vazquez

University of Georgia

Dr. Maria Navarro

University of Georgia

Slow Food Farms (SFF) represent a growing agroecological and social model, aiming to protect and strengthen traditional, indigenous, and small farms as bastions of food security and sovereignty. Adapting the SFF model in the US, and across the Americas, presents both opportunities and challenges. The transition to agroecological practices requires not only changes in farming techniques but also a comprehensive educational and community strategy that involves farmers, organizational leaders, consumers, and educators. In 2018, Cuba was one of the pioneers of the SSF network, leading efforts to integrate Slow Food principles into local agricultural practices. The lessons from Cuba inform our comparative study of adaptation in the US and offer insights for strengthening agroecological transitions across the Americas. This study uses a comparative lens to examine how the SFF model is interpreted, adapted, and co-created by farmers, chapter leaders, educators, and community organizers. By focusing on communication, leadership, and practice within Slow Food networks, the project explores how agroecological principles move from global frameworks to context-specific, community-driven action. Using a qualitative, comparative case study design, the research draws on semi-structured interviews with participants from Cuba and the US, as well as attendees and organizers of the Terra Madre Americas 2025 meeting. This approach highlights how local actors translate the SFF model into their environments, what kinds of knowledge and communication practices support that process, and how agroecological values are taught, shared, and sustained across regions. Early themes indicate that SFF's adaptation depends on local ecology, culture, capacity, and leadership, serving as both a food initiative and a learning space. Findings will contribute to scholarship on agroecology, community-based education, and sustainability communication, while offering practical insights for practitioners seeking to strengthen participatory food systems by linking lessons from Cuba and the US to broader efforts across the Americas.