

## From San Francisco to Washington Looking Ahead to LASA2013

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The 2013 LASA Congress, to be held in Washington, DC marks the first time that the Congress will be held on an annual basis. The location in the U.S. capital promises to add to what we hope will be a stimulating debate on the Congress theme *Towards a New Social Contract?*

**Towards a New Social Contract?** During the first decade of the 21st century, income inequality declined in most Latin American countries, even as it rose in many other parts of the world. Our Congress theme aims to shed new light on this important trend, examining its social, economic, cultural, and political determinants and exploring the prospects for a new social contract in the region. Since the 1990s, various reforms have expanded educational opportunities, increased minimum wages, introduced new social assistance programs, incorporated new political actors (such as indigenous coalitions), and broadened access to health care and social security coverage. Are these trends sustainable, or are they subject to reversal once economic growth rates decline? In what ways are they related to the spread of left-leaning governments in the region, and how do governments vary in the types of social contracts and development strategies they promote? Are once-marginalized groups becoming empowered to defend new forms of social citizenship, and are more privileged groups accepting these expanded rights? Do new social contracts produce corresponding changes in social consciousness and popular culture, and if so, how are these related to emerging technologies, communication strategies, forms of cultural expression, and patterns of political mobilization? How do literature, film, television, art, and historiography adapt to new realities by transforming historical representations and giving voice to new popular subjects? Our Congress will provide the opportunity to

engage in extensive interdisciplinary discussions of this conjuncture in its historical, economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions.

The Congress theme *Towards a New Social Contract?* can only be explored successfully by an interdisciplinary approach. Interdisciplinarity is one of the central goals of LASA. This means having disciplinary fields interact with one another and not just be in close proximity. Achieving this will require a conscious effort on the part of panel organizers and participants to foster reflection among disciplines and to bring together scholars and activists from a wide range of disciplines and endeavors.

Track chairs have been selected for the 2013 Congress. As in recent years, panel proposals will receive priority over individual proposals. Past experience shows that favoring panel proposals results in more coherent panels and fewer no-shows.

Pre-Congress workshops have been very successful, and the 2013 Congress program will continue these workshops with themes including "Migration and Immigration," "Data Sets and Political Institutions," "Introduction to the Resources of the Library of Congress" (on site), and "The Future of Literature and Cultural Studies." The two workshops on academic publishing sponsored by LARR will continue in 2013.

**Congress location:** Washington, DC, is home to the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution's world-famous museums, the National Archives, and major governmental and cultural institutions. The DC Metro provides efficient travel within DC, so Congress participants will have easy access to the Smithsonian and

other sites of interest. The Congress hotel, Marriott Wardman Park, will be convenient for both participants and their families because it is located adjacent to the Adams Morgan/Woodley Park Metro stop and very close to the National Zoo. The Smithsonian, free and open to the public 364 days a year, includes the National Gallery of Art, The Hirshhorn Sculpture Museum, the American Indian Museum, African Art Museum, Air and Space Museum, the National Zoo, as well as many other museums and resources such as the Vietnam Memorial. In addition to the national museums and monuments, Washington is also home to institutions such as the Phillips Gallery, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Folger Shakespeare Library, the Kennedy Center, and a vibrant theater scene. Old-town Alexandria is accessible by Metro, and other historic landmarks such as Mt. Vernon are nearby. Washington has excellent air, train, and bus systems linking it to other national and international destinations.

The 2013 Congress *Towards a New Social Contract?* can be an important experience for participants and the communities these participants serve. We look forward to your suggestions and participation and to a dynamic and meaningful Congress. Please remember that given LASA's new annual conference schedule, the deadline for submitting paper and panel proposals for LASA 2013 in Washington is coming up very shortly—September 1, 2012. ■