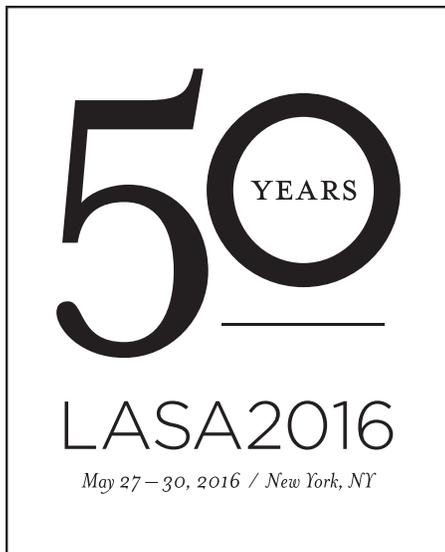


## LASA at 50

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In 1966, the first Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian, and Latin American Peoples met in Havana, Cuba. The military overthrew the democratic government of Arturo Illia in Argentina. Enrique Peña Nieto was born in Atlacomulco, Mexico. The first issue of *Marcha* was published in Montevideo, Uruguay. Somoza's National Guard brutally attacked Sandinista and Social Christian students in Managua. In New York City, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made his first public speech on the Vietnam War. And at this tumultuous moment, LASA was born.

Fifty years have now passed since LASA officially incorporated and held its first Congress. The decade leading up to 1966 had witnessed the rise of area studies in the United States in the context of the Cold War and the perceived deficit of knowledge of the unaligned so-called Third World. We are now living in a dramatically changed region, one with expanded democratic rights alongside intractable inequality, with advancing environmental degradation and heightened political awareness, and all

within a realigned and ever-shifting global political and economic order. Intellectual challenges to the area studies paradigm in our post-Cold War world have made it necessary to rethink the organization of knowledge about Latin America and the region's place in the world. In sum, it is time to reflect on the last half century and debate the future of our region.

We are honored and thrilled that Gil Joseph asked us to serve as program co-chairs for LASA2016 in New York City. This Congress represents a great opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary accomplishments of the people who created, nurtured, and contributed so much to this association. It also is a chance to examine—with a critical, analytical eye—the way we think about Latin American studies in the context of our changing world. We hope to organize this anniversary meeting in a way that honors the perennial fields of study that remain relevant year in and year out but also introduces new thematic tracks that contribute to a thoughtful and constructive rethinking of Latin American studies.

We expect that LASA2016 will be the largest conference in the history of the association. We are proud and deeply grateful for the work of a wonderful group of colleagues from North, Central, and South America, the Caribbean, and Europe who have volunteered to serve as track chairs.

These 39 thematic tracks are truly the backbone of the Congress, and we have approached the enterprise of organizing the conference into “tracks” by emphasizing both continuity and the importance of being intellectually creative and flexible. First, in conversation with the track chairs, we updated some of the tracks to bring them better into line with new

developments in important areas of knowledge. These revised tracks include Genders, Feminisms, and Sexualities; Methods, Politics, and Practices of Research; Migration, Borders, and Diasporas; Public Health; (Un)rule of Law and Citizenship Rights; Art, Architecture, and Visual Culture; and Pedagogy and the Politics of Education.

We added new tracks that respond to the emergence of exciting fields of study and, in some cases, inquire into the meaning, scope, political implications, and future possibilities of the field of Latin American studies itself. These new tracks include Social and Digital Media; Area Studies: Critical and Historical Analysis; Social Innovation; South-South/Transregional Interactions; Energy, Commodities, and Development; Latin@ Art and Culture; and Latino Politics, Media, and Society.

Track chairs will be responsible for scoring all proposals submitted to them using the following criteria: (1) significance and appeal for the field and scholars in related fields, (2) clarity and coherence in the presentation of theme or argument, and (3) compliance with submission instructions. The co-chairs of each track may also organize at least one highlighted LASA panel or workshop, which ideally would include some particularly noteworthy presenters and address topics that connect the track with the overall theme of the Congress.

LASA often receives numerous individual submissions that, while frequently of excellent quality, are difficult to assemble into coherent panels. Young colleagues in Latin America and the Caribbean often have to submit individual paper proposals because they have not yet developed professional networks. To address this issue, LASA will implement an online

paper-matching system that will allow individuals to connect with others working on similar topics.

In addition to panels made up of paper submissions accepted as part of the thematic tracks, the Congress will also include special panels that take stock of some of the most important developments in Latin American studies today and reflect on the past 50 years. Some of these panels will reach across generations to engage the

very youngest, budding scholars and at the same time benefit from the wisdom and experience of seasoned scholars, activists, journalists, and others who have been eyewitnesses to and participants in these first 50 years of LASA's history. The city of New York itself—in so many ways, a Latin American city—will loom large in the planning of this conference. We are planning events that highlight and stimulate discussion on dimensions of this global city such as its Latin American

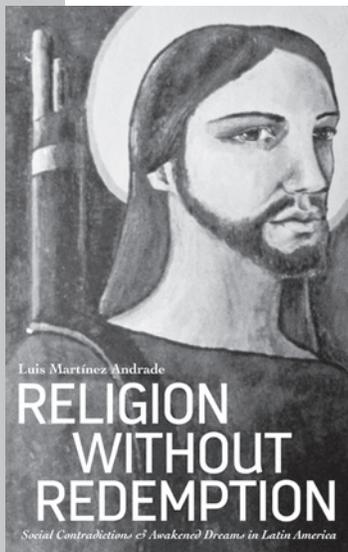
immigration and its debt to Latin American intellectual production. While these plans are not yet concrete enough to publish in this *Forum*, we ask that you stay tuned for exciting news in the months to come. ■

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