

Report from the LASA2017 Program Chairs

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LASA2017 in Lima promises to be an exciting and intellectually rigorous conference. After the high point of submissions for the 50th anniversary conference in New York City, the submission rate returned to the usual levels for LASA2017. For last year's conference, there were 2,307 individual paper proposals and 1,341 panel proposals submitted. In comparison, the year before that, for LASA2015 in Puerto Rico, there were 1,732 individual paper proposals and 917 panel proposals submitted. For LASA2017 we received 1,751 individual paper proposals and 972 panel proposals. While there were thus fewer proposals overall this year than for LASA2016, there was an increase relative to the submission rate for LASA2015.

The quality of submissions was excellent, and this made the task of acceptance a difficult one, given that this year we returned to the usual three-day conference format, which significantly reduced the number of slots available. Nevertheless, 87 percent of panels and individual papers were accepted. The selection process followed the usual procedure outlined here: <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/eng/congress/selectionpaper.asp>. The track chairs evaluated all the proposals submitted to their tracks and ranked them based on three criteria: significance and/or appeal to the field and scholars in related fields, clarity and coherence of the proposal, and compliance with submission instructions. The LASA Secretariat then calculated the number of panels per track which could be accepted based on the space available and the percent of proposals received by that track. For example, the AGR track received 5 percent of the total number of proposals submitted for LASA2017; therefore, 5 percent of the total panel capacity for LASA2017 was allocated to the AGR track. As there were 600 time slots available over

three days, this meant that 30 panels could be accepted in the AGR track (5 percent of 600). The top 30 panels submitted to the AGR track as ranked by the track chairs were therefore accepted in that track.

We are especially indebted to the track chairs, who volunteer their time and expertise to evaluate the submissions to each of the thematic tracks to which they are assigned. Track chairs are selected based on their expertise in the field, and in cases where there is an organized section that corresponds to a track, in consultation with the section leadership. The work of the track chairs is absolutely crucial to the success of LASA. They work diligently and impartially to rank numerous submissions. As program co-chairs we are extremely grateful for their service. We also appreciate all the members of LASA who devoted time and energy to crafting excellent individual paper or panel proposals. It is intellectually invigorating to look at the preliminary program for LASA2017 and observe all the exciting and innovative work that is being carried out under the umbrella of Latin American studies. We look forward to three days of vigorous intellectual exchange, political debate, and collegial dialogue.

We were especially pleased that there was so much interest in LASA2017 from colleagues based in Latin America, as the conference is being hosted by one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in Latin America, the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. More than 66 percent of all proposals for LASA2017 came from Latin America and other non-U.S. regions. A similar percentage of papers and panels accepted, approximately 64 percent, came from outside the United States. This is fitting for an organization that is becoming more and more international, with the majority of its membership in Latin America.

In addition to geographic diversity, the submissions for LASA2017 reflect the diverse intellectual interests of our members. For example, these are the thematic tracks that received the largest number of submissions (including individual papers and panel proposals): Culture, Power, and Political Subjectivities; History and Historiography; Literature and Culture; Afro-Latin/Indigenous Peoples; and Genders and Feminisms. The broad appeal of these tracks and the scholarly fields to which they correspond reflects the diverse range of disciplines and areas of inquiry, both established and emergent, which are represented in LASA, as well as the centrality of interdisciplinary work to our membership.

The Program Committee is committed to ensuring that all these different constituencies feel valued and represented in the conference, as is reflected in the varied presidential sessions and special events that will be featured during LASA2017. We want to particularly highlight the two presidential sessions that are being organized by the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú: "Desafíos contemporáneos de la democracia en América Latina" and "PUCP y la educación superior en la región." These sessions address timely and relevant questions for Latin America today: the role of institutions of higher education and the democratic deficits evident throughout the region. Another presidential session organized in collaboration with the Central America Section, "Tierra y soberanía de los pueblos: Memoria histórica, educación, justicia y libertad en Honduras," will address the perilous work of human rights activists in Central America, who are increasingly targeted by the state as they seek to defend the rights of indigenous peoples. Last, but certainly not least, in response to the results of the presidential

election in the United States, which will likely lead to greater targeting of Latin American immigrants, in collaboration with the Latino Studies Section, we have added a closing ceremony to the program that will allow participants in LASA2017 to debate the crucial issues facing Latino immigrants (and other vulnerable groups) in the United States.

The theme of LASA2017, *diálogos de saberes*, is an ever more urgent task today as so many seek to build walls rather than dialogue. This Congress, as other LASA Congresses have done before it for the past 50 years, will model the kinds of equitable transnational collaboration and mutual respect that are key principles of this association. We will continue working on putting together the best possible conference and will be back in touch with you soon with further updates. ■