

# LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES!

## Letter from the Director:



Another eventful year is coming to a close. In the fall, Robert Neustadt was at the helm, until taking his well-deserved sabbatical in the spring. I took over in January. Reflecting Bob's artistic and musical interests and the broad range of themes and perspectives encompassed by Latin American Studies, the fall was filled with music performances as well as talks on topics ranging from ancient Oaxaca to labor organizing in Cold War Mexico.

In the spring, under my directorship, LAS turned its attention to the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. The biggest event of the spring was a performance by the Minerva Tapia Dance troupe - a bi-national group that travelled from Tijuana/San Diego to perform "cuerpitos fronterizos" (borderline bodies). Thanks, especially, go to Irene Matthews for discovering the troupe and arranging their performance at the Orpheum and a dance workshop the next day.

LAS also hosted a spring borderlands film series, with a group of documentaries and feature films on themes such as immigration, race, labor, gender, violence, women's rights, and the Columbian drug trade; and on an expansive definition of the territorial borderlands stretching from Columbia to New York State.

I want especially to thank Emma Canning, our student coordinator, who admirably coped with two directors while making the film series, talks, performances, and newsletter all come together. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.

Eric Meeks  
LAS Director

**2009 Newsletter of the Latin American Studies Committee  
Northern Arizona University  
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## LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PRESENTED:

# FALL 2009

### LITERATURA Y MÚSICA HISPANA A TRAVÉS DE LA HISTORIA



Our first event proved to be a beautiful one. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of January *el poeta de la guitarra*, world famous classical concert guitarist Francesc de Paula Soler, performed a wide array of songs from Latin America, Spain, and North America in the style of jazz, swing, bebop, classical, and contemporary. The two hour set was both classically beautiful and innovative as he played everything from sixteenth century Spanish music to American country music.

### CHIAPAS MEDIA PROJECT PROMEDIOS



On October 8<sup>th</sup> Alexandra Halkin, Founding Director/International Coordinator of Chiapas Media Project/ Promedios presented several films illustrating the struggles of indigenous Southern Mexican communities. This award winning, bi-national partnership provides video equipment, computers and training to enable *campesino* communities in Southern Mexico to create their own media. Those in attendance experienced a unique view into the perspectives and daily lives of marginalized Mexican people through the films

*(Chiapas continued)*

*The Land Belongs to Those Who Work It, The Other Campaign: Indigenous Voices from the North, Images of the Repression (2006 Conflict in Oaxaca), and Paying the Price: Migrant Workers in the Toxic Fields of Sinaloa.*

**BRAZILIAN  
WORLD MUSIC  
DUO: CAJI AND  
SALOMÈ**



Acoustic Brazilian jazz artists CAJI & SALOMÈ performed October 12<sup>th</sup> in Ashurst Hall. CAJI & SALOMÈ performed a dynamic combination of Brazilian and African rhythms and music from Portugal, Cuba, South America and France. Their pulsating rhythms and creative, passionate musical expression brought an exciting multi-cultural event and

inspired attendees, community members, professors, and children to get up and dance. The musical concert included a discussion of Brazilian music, politics and culture in between sets. The lively evening was brought to us thanks to the Center for International Education, Latin American Studies, the Department of Philosophy, and the College of Arts and Letters.

**The US/Mexico  
Border Region; Its  
Complexities and  
Dynamics via four  
Border Ballads**



A full house in Liberal Arts Room 135 enjoyed a performance and lecture on border ballads by “Pepe” Villarino on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Dr. José

“Pepe” Villarino is Professor Emeritus of the Department of Chicana/Chicano Studies at San Diego State University, one of the founders of the Department of Mexican American Studies at San Diego State University, an NAU alumni, author, and a social activist.

The audience participated in sing-alongs. “Pepe” presented informative texts and contexts illustrating the complexities of border culture and regions in both the U.S and Mexico.

**VICENTE  
LOMBARDO  
TOLEDANO:  
COMBATANT IN  
THE COLD WAR**



October 28<sup>th</sup> Dr. Daniela Spencer, Senior Research Professor from the Centro

*(Toledano continued)*

de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (Center for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology) in Mexico City, an authority on the Mexican left and Cold War history in Latin America, presented a detailed talk on the more covert aspects of the career of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who consolidated Mexico's labor movement after its social revolution in 1910, and later became Latin America's most powerful labor leader. She read her recent discoveries of long-censored documents in Russian and East European archives and shed fascinating light on Latin America's centrality to the Cold War.

### **Investigations at Cerro Jazmin: A Study of Mixteca Alta, Oaxaca, Mexico.**



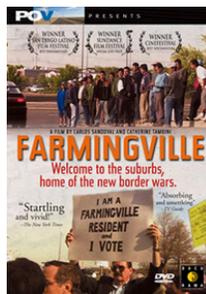
Spring '09 ended with a presentation by one of our own professors, Verónica Pérez Rodríguez, Assistant Professor of Anthropology. Professor Rodríguez presented the results of the first field season of her archaeological research project at the ancient site of Cerro Jazmin in southern Mexico. The talk discussed the goals of this National Science Foundation funded archaeological research project, the intricacies of conducting field research in Mexico, the preliminary results of the study, and what these suggest about ancient

urbanism, its environmental impact and its potential for offering alternative models for sustainable urbanism and agricultural production in the Mexican highlands today.

# Spring 2009

## **Borderlands Film Series:**

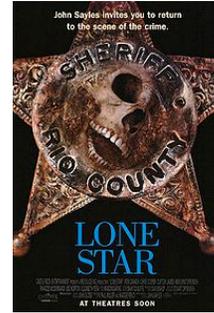
Every other Thursday, Latin American Studies hosted either a PBS Point of View documentary or a full feature length film illustrating the complex, rich, and interesting histories and cultures of the lives of those who live in border regions. Before the films Latin American Studies director Eric Meeks provided context and background, and afterwards opened the floor to discussion by the audience. The films and documentaries featured were:



### **“Farmingville”**

“The shocking hate-based attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers catapult a small Long Island town into national

headlines, unmasking a new front line in the border wars.” –pbs.org



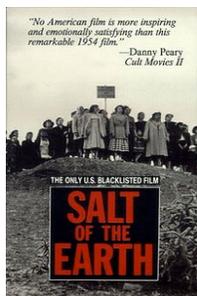
“LONE STAR” is an American mystery film written and directed by John Sayles and set in a small, diverse Texas border town. It features Chris Cooper, Elizabeth Peña, Kris Kristofferson and Matthew McConaughey and deals with a sheriff’s investigation into who murdered one of his predecessors.

(Borderlands continued)



**“Maquilapolis”**

Just over the border in Mexico is an area peppered with *maquiladoras*: massive factories owned by the world's largest multinational corporations. Carmen and Lourdes work at *maquiladoras* in Tijuana, where each day they confront labor violations, environmental devastation and urban chaos. –PBS



**“Salt of the Earth”**

(1954) is an American drama written by Michael Wilson, directed by Herbert J. Biberman and

produced by Paul Jarrico. All had been blacklisted by the Hollywood establishment due to their involvement in socialist politics. The film centers on a long and difficult strike led by Mexican-American and Anglo miners against the Empire Zinc Company. The film shows how the miners, the company, and the police, react during the strike.



**“Señorita Extraviada”** gives voice to the families who want the world to know that their daughters did not deserve the fate of violence and murder, and that the murderers are still at large. The film also poses questions about corruption, the disposability of young women, and the

cheapening of life in a town where poverty and globalized capital create a chaotic environment of lawlessness and brutality.-PBS



**“Maria Full of Grace”** Narrates the story of a bright, spirited 17-year old, Maria Alvarez. She is offered a lucrative job of becoming a drug “mule”. Far from the uneventful trip she is promised, Maria is transported into the risky and ruthless world of international drug trafficking. Her mission becomes one of determination and survival and she finally emerges with the grace that will carry her forward into a new life. -newline.com

Y lo màs grande:

***Cuerpos Fronterizos//Borderland Bodies***



**Minerva Tapia Dance Group:**

On Friday March 27<sup>th</sup> at the local Orpheum Theater, packed to the rafters with community members and university and dance students, The Minerva Tapia Dance Group performed four unique and beautiful dances. These choreographic works illustrate themes that emerge from encounters between Mexico and North and South America: in transit, at the borders, and in multiple concepts of what we mean when we think of the term "bodies." The Minerva Tapia Group of Contemporary Dance offers an aesthetic that joins together a trained eye with technical expertise and an enduring commitment to dance -- a perspective that carefully balances dance art, narrative choreography, and a novel re-imagination of important social contexts. The program for Flagstaff focused on the powerful works of "Borderline Bodies" or "Cuerpos Fronterizos"

# Professor Accomplishments



**Dr. Susan Deeds. Professor of History**

During the 2008-2009 academic year, Susan Deeds published an article: "Missions as Transactional and Transitional Crossroads: A Case from Nueva Vizcaya," in Pete Dimas, ed., *Provincias Internas: Continuing Frontiers* (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 2008), 25-51. She gave the keynote address, "Deconstructing RMCLAS," at the Rocky Mountain Council of Latin American Studies meeting held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in April 2009. She also commented on panels on Indian slavery and Jesuit conversion efforts in colonial Spanish America at the Southern Historical Association meeting in New Orleans in October 2008 and the American Historical Association meeting in January 2009, respectively. She has been invited to give a lecture at

Carleton College in late April: "Cultural Transformations and the Evolution of Ethnic Identities in the Sierra Madre Occidental of Northern Mexico." In June she will participate in a conference on "The Great Death: Disease, Environment, Genetics, and the Transformation of Mexican Colonial Society," sponsored by the Center for United States Mexico Studies at the University of California, San Diego. In July, she will give a paper at the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Congress of Americanists in Mexico City.

## **Dr. Eric Meeks. Associate Professor of History.**

Eric Meeks was the interim director of Latin American Studies in the spring, 2009. His book, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona*, won a Southwest Book Award from the Border Regional Libraries Association and was a finalist for the Public History Award from the National Council on Public History. In June, Dr. Meeks will be leading a session at a National Endowment for the Humanities seminar in Tucson

entitled 'Nature and History at the Nation's Edge: A Field Institute in Environmental and Borderlands History.'

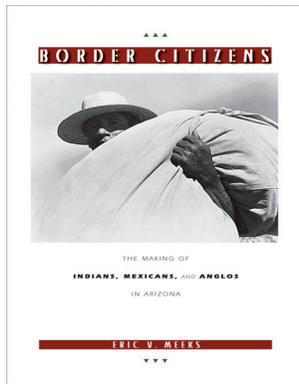


Image of: *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona*

### **Dr. Robert Neustadt Professor of Spanish**



During Fall 2008, Dr. Neustadt directed the Latin American Studies program at NAU. He gave two invited lectures on Chilean political art in Toronto, Canada, the first as part of *The Salvador Allende Arts Festival for Peace* and the second at the University of Toronto. He published the essay "Tocando los huesos del trauma

colonial en la novela *Manchay Puytu de Néstor Taboada Terán*" in the collection *Intersecciones: Abordajes de lo popular en América Latina* (Ed. Zulema Moret). During Spring semester 2009, Bob taught as a visiting professor in Puntarenas, Costa Rica as part of the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC). During this time he and his family experienced earthquakes, extreme heat, torrential rains and Latin American bureaucracy. He also swam with barracudas, all in the name of NAU's core mission of furthering International Education.

### **Dr. Irene Matthews, Associate Professor of English**

This year Dr. Irene Matthews has an essay entitled "Waters of Paradise" appearing in The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing and Hygiene from Antiquity through the Renaissance; eds. Cynthia Kosso and Anne Scott; Brill Publishers, March 2009. The essay deals with comparative water use, utilitarian and aesthetic, in Southern Spain and Mexico City in the sixteenth century.

She also participated in the VIII Congreso Internacional de Literatura Hispánica, held in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, 9 - 12th March, 2009, with a presentation entitled "Frente al frente de la guerra," using interview material

with military women from El Salvador in 1989.

Dr. Matthews invited and hosted the Minerva Tapia Dance Group from Tijuana, 26-29 March 2009. The group gave a performance entitled “Cuerpitos fronterizos/Borderline Bodies” at the Orpheum Theater on 27 March, to a capacity audience; and a Master class at Coconino Community College Dance Studio on 28 March, also to capacity.

Their visit was a great pleasure and a great success.



**For more information about Latin American Studies, our professors, the gamut of classes you can take, and what we're up to visit: [WWW.CAL.NAU.EDU/LAS](http://WWW.CAL.NAU.EDU/LAS)**