

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI  
INSTITUTE for ADVANCED  
STUDY of the AMERICAS

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**December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017**

Presented by the Distinguished Fellows of the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas, Felicia Casanova, Samantha Chaitram, and Ernesto Fundora, under the guidance of Dr. Sallie Hughes and Dr. Felicia Knaul, the *LAC Digest* provides a bi-weekly snapshot of academic literature must-reads: new research articles and other publications recently released on Latin America and the Caribbean with the potential to shape future research and understandings of the Americas. A broad range of disciplines and perspectives are included in each edition. The selections are picked after a comprehensive review of new articles from dozens of publications and of new releases from publishing houses and university presses. *Click to see a list of publications reviewed.*

*Nota Bene: UM Faculty, please send us your just-published articles or upcoming books so we can feature them in the LAC Digest. Please email the information to [Ernesto Fundora](#).*

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## RESEARCH ARTICLES

JARED A. ABBOTT, HILLEL DAVID SOIFER AND MATTHIAS VOM HAU. “**Transforming the Nation? The Bolivarian Education Reform in Venezuela.**” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 49 (2017): 885-916.

This article discusses attempts to transform national ideology and identity in Venezuela through education reform. The central government has revised public school curricula to include Bolivarian nationalism. These ideological changes are being contested by, among others, educators who are key to successful implementation. The article reveals the intra-state tensions that may challenge successful transformation of school systems as sites for cultivation of new national loyalties, findings which could be relevant far beyond Venezuela’s borders.

***Abstract:** The Chávez government introduced a “Bolivarian” national curriculum to promote radically different understandings of Venezuelan history and identity. We place the fate of this reform initiative within the broader study of state formation and nationalism. Scholars have long identified mass schooling as the key institution for socializing citizens and cultivating national loyalties, and many states have attempted to alter the nationalist content of schooling with these ends in mind. Venezuela constitutes an ideal case for identifying the specific conditions under which transformations of official national ideologies do and do not gain broader resonance. Using evidence derived from textbook analysis and semi-structured interviews with educational officials and teachers in Caracas, we highlight a new argument, showing that intrastate tensions between the central government and teachers, heightened by a well-established cultural machinery and by teachers’ increasing exclusion from the Chavista political coalition, explain the limited success in government efforts to implement Bolivarian nationalism through the school curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Venezuela; education; nationalism; Chavismo.

**DOI:** 10.1017/S0022216X17000402

LISA M. VAUGHN ET AL. “Latinos Unidos por la Salud: The Process of Developing an Immigrant Community Research Team.” *Collaborations: A Journal of Community-Based Research and Practice* 1.1 (2017): 1-24.

This article can be regarded as a tool to better understand how to engage in community-based participatory research with the Latino immigrant population of the U.S. Understanding the community’s social determinants of health and reaching these communities can be challenging, but incorporating members of the community into the study proves to be beneficial for the research and to improve health outcomes. The research makes a great case for how using this bold approach in the medical and biomedical fields can achieve effective community-academic research partnerships.

***Abstract:** The tremendous Latino growth combined with the challenges of living in a nontraditional migration area make Latinos, particularly those who are undocumented, a “difficult-to-reach” and understudied population in research. We describe the development and practice of an immigrant community research team created to investigate and improve research quality regarding health-related needs, beliefs, and behaviors of recent Latino immigrants living in Cincinnati, Ohio. Our community research team, Latinos Unidos por la Salud (LU-Salud), is composed of Latino immigrant community members and academic researchers working in a health research partnership. The community team members are considered “co-researchers” since LU-Salud was designed within a community-based participatory research framework where we engaged in shared decision making at each phase of the research process from design, data collection, and interpretation of findings to dissemination. The co-researcher approach promoted shared decision-making and community empowerment throughout the research process with our community members providing expertise about the “what” (Latino immigrant health-related beliefs and behaviors, questionnaire content, interpretation of data) and the “why” (to obtain perspectives from Latino immigrants who typically don’t engage with academics) and our academic members bringing expertise about the “how” (research design and methods, grant funding).*

**Keywords:** co-researchers; community-based participatory research; Latino immigrant health; community research team.

**URL:** <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/collaborations/vol1/iss1/2>

**DANIELA ISSA. “Reification and the Human Commodity: Theorizing Modern Slavery in Brazil.” *Latin American Perspectives* 44.6 (2017): 90-106.**

This article offers an innovative theoretical lens on modern slavery in Brazil based upon György Lukács’ conceptualization of reification. This perspective conceptualizes the phenomenon as a process of objectification in which, “whether workers are lured into or resign themselves to slave labor, they become human commodities.” This process of objectification is especially visible in what the article’s author defines as “The Reified Logic of the Debt,” as well as in changes made to Brazilian law that define what constitutes “slave labor” and add criteria aiming to protect workers’ health and human dignity. Researchers working on issues of Law and Social Justice will find this article useful, since its understanding of modern slavery through Lukács’ concept of reification explains how workers are reduced to human commodities in Brazil’s rural sector in general and the Amazon region in particular.

**Abstract:** *Modern slavery in Brazil exemplifies the culmination of reification as theorized by György Lukács, characterized by the commodification and dehumanization of labor and the extreme objectification of workers, who become “human commodities” in the capitalist system—“commodities” that produce other commodities. The concept of reification was incorporated into the 2003 Brazilian law on slave labor, where equating a human being with a thing in the performance of labor is a crime regardless of whether a worker is confined.*

**Keywords:** reification; modern slavery; slave labor; objectification; commodification of labor; Brazil.

**URL:** <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X17727480>

MARCOS MENDOZA ET AL. “The Patagonian Imaginary: Natural Resources and Global Capitalism at the Far End of the World.” *Journal of Latin American Geography* 16.2 (2017): 93-116.

Featuring one of the most environmentally profound areas of the world, this article discusses the transitional regimes of representational value that impact Southern Andean Patagonia within green development. In a collaborative effort, multiple researchers in the region examine the process by which Patagonia has become an eco-region whose reality is negotiated through competing forces. The authors highlight and question the constant state of construction within regional territorial imaginaries that impact Southern Andean communities and natural resource management.

***Abstract:** This paper examines how Southern Andean Patagonia has been increasingly incorporated within networks of global capital since the 1990s. Once defined by military violence against indigenous societies, white settler colonialism, and livestock farming, this remote region has become an iconic center for green development in Latin America. This article develops the argument that a regional territorial imaginary —grounded in a history of borderland geopolitics— has facilitated this recent shift towards green development across the resource domains of land conservation, hydropower, and forestry. The discussion addresses the different ways in which forests, waterways, and protected areas (public and private) have been integrated into a hegemonic vision promoting eco-regionalism among state, corporate, and civil society actors. This analysis thus contributes to scholarship on global capitalism, natural resource governance, and green development in Latin America by developing the concept of the regional territorial imaginary to describe these dynamics. This analytic highlights how processes of capitalist specialization and regionalization occur through the open-ended consolidation of master images that build upon spatial histories, transnational regimes of representational value, and political struggles among diverse actors.*

**Keywords:** Regional territorial imaginary; green development; global capitalism; Patagonia.

**DOI:** 10.1353/lag.2017.0023

**DIEGO ALONSO. “Borges y la escritura de la historia. Tres tesis en torno a ‘Tema del traidor y del héroe.’” *Latin American Literary Review* 44.88 (2017): 51-58.**

This article proposes a new approach to understanding Jorge Luis Borges’ short story “Tema del traidor y del héroe” through the analysis of the connections between fiction and history. The three theses presented highlight the contribution of Borges to “a historical criticism that not only indicates a substantial difference with idealism, but also points against the assumptions of historicism.” According to Alonso, in Borges’ literature the fictionalization of the past does not contradict its veracity. Borges’ use of anachronism annuls the historical distance between historical facts and the fictionalization of that very past, and consequently displays a different form of intelligibility. What makes this article significant in the vast bibliography about Jorge Luis Borges is that it demonstrates the importance of the articulation of regimes of temporality and the redefinition of causality in Borges’ narrative by means of a particular understanding of the dynamics between fiction and history.

***Abstract:** Fundado sobre principios de la hermenéutica crítica (Ricoeur), este análisis del cuento de Jorge L. Borges, “Tema del traidor y del héroe” (1944), se concentra en la relación de la ficción con el pasado y sus implicaciones para la historia. La contribución de la ficción se hace visible en uno de los pasos de la operación historiográfica, a saber, la narración o puesta en relato de la investigación. Contrariamente a una lectura escéptica de la obra de Borges se subraya aquí la contribución de la trama narrativa en la articulación de los regímenes de temporalidad y la redefinición de modos de causalidad que resultan operativos en el saber histórico. A la vez, si bien de manera marginal, se destaca la relevancia que adquieren la memoria y el olvido dentro de esta discusión.*

**Keywords:** Jorge L. Borges; “Tema del traidor y del héroe”; ficción; historia; regímenes de temporalidad; anacronismo.

**URL:** [https://lalronline.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/lalr\\_88\\_2017\\_complete.pdf](https://lalronline.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/lalr_88_2017_complete.pdf)

MARÍA CLEMENCIA RAMÍREZ. “Las conversaciones de paz en Colombia y el reconocimiento de los cultivadores de coca como víctimas y sujetos de derechos diferenciados.” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Latino-Américaines et Caraïbes* 42.3 (2017): 350-374.

The complex process of peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) is analyzed in this article from the perspective of its impact in the *campesinos cocaleros* (coca growers). Situated at the crossroad of the conflict, this segment of the rural Colombian population has been double victimized: the Government recognizes them as victims of the armed conflict and they see themselves as victims of drug trafficking. Through an approach that examines the ways in which coca growers identify themselves, the article’s author explores how the politics of differentiated inclusion necessarily involves a further discussion of social insertion, citizenship and interculturality, especially from the standpoint of a social group like the coca growers, whose identity is first and foremost linked to the land they inhabit.

*Abstract:* In this article I argue that the conduct of the war on drugs in Colombia has been influenced by the discourse of truth, reconciliation, and reparation at the core of the peace negotiations with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The government’s recognition of peasant coca growers (*campesinos cocaleros*) as victims of the conflict is one example of this influence, and another is the *cocaleros*’ own appropriation of the discourse of reparation to frame their struggle for decriminalization as a demand for recognition by the state as political subjects with special rights. This demand brings up two points. First, *campesinos cocaleros* consider themselves victims of both the armed conflict and widespread drug trafficking in the rural areas where they live and work. Second, although, unlike Colombia’s indigenous and Afro-descended populations, they share no identifying ethnic identity, they identify as a culturally diverse social and political group, whose rights and survival must be defended based on another defining characteristic: their rootedness on the land. I argue that this defense goes beyond the exercise of the politics of identity to the exercise of the politics of differentiated inclusion, which entails the redefinition of citizenship and the setting up of actions based on principles of interculturality.



**Keywords:** Citizenship; coca growers; cultural rights; politics of inclusion; peace negotiations; Catatumbo; Putumayo.

**URL:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/08263663.2017.1379135>

## OPINION AND JOURNALISTIC ARTICLES

ÁNGEL “MONXO” LÓPEZ SANTIAGO. “**Decolonize the Caribbean.**” *Nacla Report on the Americas*. Oct. 19, 2017.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria wreaked havoc and left the Caribbean islands with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Those islands most affected by the 2017 hurricane season are not independent states, such as the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. In thinking about recovery and reconstruction, Ángel López Santiago suggests that we must think about how to decolonize the Caribbean. The hurricanes only exacerbated the volatile economic and physical infrastructure on the islands, which laid the foundation for catastrophic devastation, a situation brought about by years of colonialism. The author calls for sovereignty in the areas of food, energy, land, and trade with the diasporas playing a fundamental role in the processes.

*In lieu of an abstract, an excerpt: The hurricanes have blown away decades of legal and international maneuvers and ruses, local constitutions, and moves towards autonomy and integration and administrative reclassifications —leaving exposed a simple colonial truth. The hurricanes have shown that the Caribbean islands, regardless of title, as all colonies throughout history, exist to serve the colonial masters, and not the other way around. The Caribbean is in need of food sovereignty, energy sovereignty, and land sovereignty. As it is today, decision-making about each of these key elements of life and livelihood has been determined from without. Instead of sovereignty, to decolonize the Caribbean, we must speak and write about sovereignties.*

**Keywords:** Caribbean; hurricanes; decolonization; sovereignty; diaspora.

**URL:** <https://nacla.org/news/2017/10/19/decolonize-caribbean>

**GARY CLYDE HUFBAUER. “Can Trump terminate NAFTA?” *Peterson Institute for International Economics*. Oct. 10, 2017.**

Withdrawing the United States from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was one of President Trump’s campaign promises as he called it the “worst trade agreement in history.” But can the President legally withdraw the United States from the agreement? Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Senior Fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, examines the question: “Can the president withdraw the United States from the agreement, and rewrite US commercial relations with Mexico and Canada, without the assent of Congress and the courts?” The article provides an insightful analysis of the legal issues at hand.

*In lieu of an abstract, an excerpt: Article 2205 of the NAFTA agreement enables any party to withdraw: “A Party may withdraw from this Agreement six months after it provides written notice of withdrawal to the other Parties. If a Party withdraws, the Agreement shall remain in force for the remaining Parties.” The legal question: Can the president alone withdraw, or does he require the consent of Congress to invoke Article 2205? Of course, notice of withdrawal is not the same as withdrawing, since the notice could be rescinded within the six-month period (or rescinded at a later date if the president stipulates that withdrawal is not effective until, for example, January 1, 2019). Given Trump’s penchant for dramatic gestures, he could use the notice as a negotiating tactic. But if the president does issue a notice, the legal question will be front and center.*

**Keywords:** NAFTA; Trump; trade agreement; withdraw; legality.

**URL:** <https://piie.com/blogs/trade-investment-policy-watch/can-trump-terminate-nafta>

## BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS



MANUELA LAVINAS PICQ. *Vernacular Sovereignities: Indigenous Women Challenging World Politics*. Tucson: Arizona University Press, 2018. 232 p. (Forthcoming)

Hardcover 9780816537358

Ebook 9780816538249

*More on this book:*

<https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/vernacular-sovereignities>

Manuela Lavinás Picq, a scholar and journalist, is a Professor of International Relations at Universidad San Francisco de Quito in Ecuador and a Visiting Professor at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Her book *Vernacular Sovereignities: Indigenous Women Challenging World Politics* will soon be published by Arizona University Press. Dr. Picq received her doctoral degree in International Studies from the University of Miami and was the recipient of the 2004 Barrett Prize for best dissertation on a Latin American topic.

According to Arizona University Press, “In *Vernacular Sovereignities*, Manuela Lavinás Picq shows that Indigenous women have long been dynamic political actors who have partaken in international politics and have shaped state practices carrying different forms of resistance. Her research on Ecuador shows that although Kichwa women face overlapping oppressions from socioeconomic exclusions to sexual violence, they are achieving rights unparalleled in the world. Picq argues that Indigenous women are among the important forces reshaping states in Latin America. She offers empirical research that shows the significance of Indigenous women in international politics and the sophistication of their activism. Indigenous women strategically use international norms to shape legal authority locally, defying Western practices of authority as they build what the author calls vernacular sovereignties. Weaving feminist perspectives with Indigenous studies, this interdisciplinary work expands conceptual debates on state sovereignty.”