

LALS UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM: AREAS OF EMPHASIS

1. Transnationalisms, Migrations, and Displacement

This area of emphasis focuses on the analytical concepts of transnationalisms, migrations, and displacement. Transnationalisms is a concept that refers to the myriad cross-border cultural, social, economic, and political flows that link Latin American and Latina/o communities across the Américas. Migrations capture the south-north, south-south, international and intranational mobility of peoples, communities, cultures, and ideas. Displacement reminds us that population movements are often forced, and linked to processes of social, economic, cultural, legal, and/or political coercion. Informed by a set of human rights standards that have been constitutive in the formation of Latin American and Latina/o communities—freedom of movement on the one hand, and the right to not migrate on the other—courses in this area of emphasis will help students understand the dynamic social cartographies of the Américas and beyond.

2. Intersectionality, Identities, and Inequalities

As an analytic and theory informed by feminist and ethnic studies scholarship, intersectionality is the primary conceptual and theoretical framework in this area of emphasis. Research foregrounding the Américas region underscores how structural inequalities at multiple levels (local, national, regional, transnational, and global) shape the identities and experiences of groups and individuals. Of particular interest in this area are the ways in which various regimes, from colonial to post-neoliberal, have informed identities and inequalities, and how their subjects—namely, slaves, workers, migrants, women, youth, and racialized groups (to list just a handful)—have negotiated and contested these interlocking systems. Courses in this area seek to illuminate the interconnected dimensions of identity categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, ability, age) as well as the mutually related structures of inequalities that rely upon and reproduce these intersecting categories.

3. Collective Action, Social Movements, and Social Change

This area of emphasis explores how communities come together to influence political, cultural, economic, and social structures and institutions. It draws attention to the significance of grassroots activism, political/civic engagement, and social change projects at local, national, regional, and international levels, as well as the transnational dynamics that link diverse social movements across the Américas. The development and deployment of politicized collective identities, the structural conditions that enable and constrain social movement mobilization, the cultural and political influences on social movements' strategic choices, and the ways that governments and other institutional actors respond to movements and their demands are illuminated by transnational and comparative approaches. Further, by covering a wide variety of contemporary and historical struggles—feminist, labor, indigenous, youth, immigrant rights, land reform, ecological, decolonial, human rights, revolutionary movements, and many others—courses in this area of emphasis highlight the impetus for social change in the region.

4. Culture, Power, and Knowledge

This area of emphasis focuses on the analysis of contested symbols, meanings, aesthetics, and representations. It interrogates the relationship between asymmetries of power, definitions of culture, markers of difference, and the construction of knowledge claims. “Culture, Power, and Knowledge” places emphasis on how these key words and ideas are historically located, produced, mediated, contested, and made accessible through various technologies and to multiple publics. It examines the role of power in shaping the construction, circulation, and commercialization of various cultural expressions, media images, and forms of knowledge; and how these constitute viable political subjectivities and social imaginaries. Courses in this area focus on the politics of representation and the tensions and re-articulations of cultural work and claims to authenticity, while connecting theoretical approaches to broader social, political, historical, and contemporary transformations in the Américas.