

## The College of Arts and Sciences & The Latin American Studies Program Sponsors UofL's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Study Abroad Program in Panama



# Comminos

Thirty seven students headed to Panamá City in May of 2003 to participate in UofL's 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish Immersion Program with Professors Rhonda Buchanan, Program Director, and Lisa Wagner, Assistant Director. Twenty seven of these students received scholarship support from a number of sources, including the Lewis Scholar Awards, the Lewis Education Fund, and the Modern Languages Fund. At UofL's new campus in Panama City, students studied Spanish language, conversation, and composition classes, taught by Professors Buchanan and Wagner, and a Panamanian culture class, taught by a local professor, Ricardo Acosta, who spoke about national customs, food, music, literature, history, politics, racial diversity, linguistic

expressions, and much more. We also enjoyed the weekly Latin dance classes, taught by Carlos Díaz, a very enthusiastic and patient local instructor. Students and faculty alike tried to maintain a delicate balance between keeping up with classes and the many planned activities arranged for us by our local director, María Alejandra Quintero, such as, excursions to the Panama Canal, the Presidential Palace, Isla Taboga, and our most exciting adventure, a canoe ride to visit the Emberá Indian tribe in the Gamboa Rainforest. In their final reports to Mr. and Mrs. Richard and Constance Lewis, the twenty 2003 Lewis Scholars commented on their experiences with much enthusiasm and gratitude, stating, for example: "I learned more during the month that I was in

Panama than I could have ever, ever learned here in Louisville" (Latrice Shannon); The structure of the program was very effective for first time study abroad participants because it provided the leadership and connections to make me feel safe while being abroad for the first time" (Sean Deskins); "My study abroad experience in Panama helped me achieve a new sense of independence and strength" (Amanda Scheldorf); "This month-long trip was indeed the best month of my life. This trip expanded my horizons and made me realize what this world has to offer" (Nathan Bird). "One expedition that sticks out most in my mind was the day we spent with the indigenous people in Gamboa. The canoe ride to their village was like something you would see at an IMAX show. I will always remember seeing how they lived plainly and contently without the spoils of modern technology" (Ryan McKinley).

Please visit "Channing Slate's Most Excellent Adventure in Panama," posted on the LAS webpage to see more images of the 2003 Program in Panama.

At the  
Presidential Palace



## UofL's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Study Abroad Program in Panama

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Study Abroad Program in Panama, May 13, 2004 to June 14, 2004, students will have the opportunity to earn six credit hours from two of the following courses: Spanish 321, taught by Program Director, Dr. Lisa Wagner, Spanish 523, taught by Assistant Program Director, Dr. Manuel Medina, and

Modern Languages 313/551, a Panamanian culture course taught by a local Panamanian Instructor, Mr. Ricardo Acosta. These courses fulfill requirements for the Latin American Studies minor and the Spanish major and minor. By popular demand, weekly Latin dance classes will be offered as well by Carlos Díaz. Students will

enjoy many of the same excursions and activities that were offered to the 2003 program participants, including a boat trip to Isla Taboga and a final weekend at the fabulous Decameron Beach Resort. Please contact Dr. Lisa Wagner (lcwagn01@gwise.louisville.edu) for more information, or visit the LAS website.

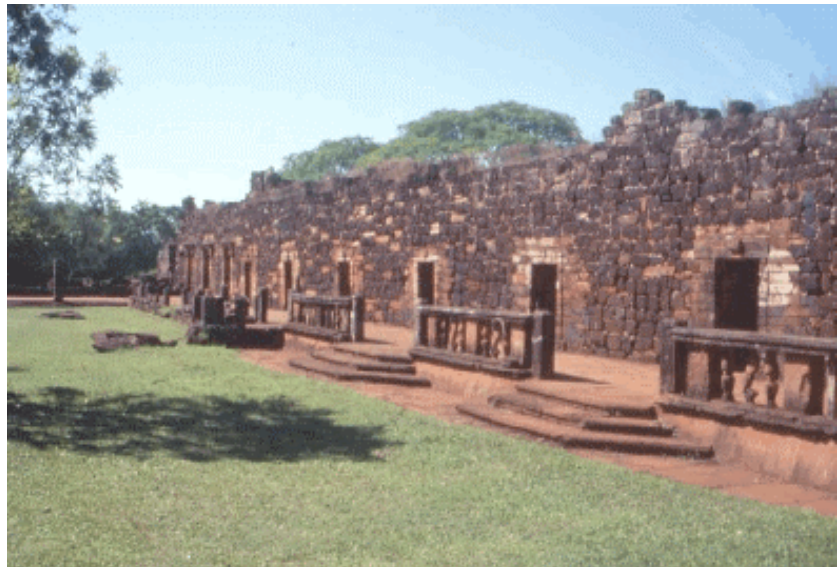
## Three UofL Faculty Members Travel to Latin America as Lewis Fellows

### Professor Julie Winkler Travels to Cuba

Thanks in large part to the generosity of Richard and Constance Lewis and a Modern Languages Fund grant, I was able to travel to Cuba in December 2002 to January 2003. In Havana, I visited museums and saw the play *Casa vieja* by the Cuban playwright Abelardo Estorino, as well as a couple of Latin American films from an Annual Film Festival. My stay coincided with the New Year, which is the date Cuba celebrates the triumph of the Revolution. I was able to celebrate New Years Eve in style, spending it with friends, going from house to house, eating, drinking, and dancing in each one, a true *Año Nuevo a la cubana*. The highlight of the trip, however, was just before Christmas, when I traveled to the other side of the island, to Santiago de Cuba, considered the cradle of the Revolution (and perhaps not so coincidentally, home of Fidel Castro). This part of Cuba is where one most discerns the African influence, which I was able to delve into more deeply by visiting small museums called "House of Culture" and "House of Religion." I even got my cards read by a *santera*, many of whose predictions about my future and comments about my past and present were pretty close to the mark! I also visited the shrine to the Virgin of Charity in Cobre, the sacred spot just outside Santiago where the *mulata* virgin is said to have appeared. The atmosphere of Santiago de Cuba is very unique – music, landscape, culture, racial makeup – and I am extremely happy to have had the chance to go there. Every trip I take to Cuba enables me to get a better feel for the country, its people, its politics, and its difficult relationship with the United States. And every time I gather more information to use in my classes and research, I get a bit closer to feeling like I can speak with some authority on the subject.

### Professor Manuel Medina Travels to Brazil and Argentina

I am thankful to Richard and Constance Lewis for the great opportunity to conduct field research as a Lewis Fellow. In December 2003, I traveled to Brazil and Argentina to study the role of the Jesuit order in the establishment of Latin America. I visited a few of the most prominent Jesuit missions in northeastern Argentina and southern Brazil and followed the traces left by the Colonial empire. I am currently working on an article in which I analyze how the social, political, economic, and cultural practices expressed within the present urban context derive from the presence of the Catholic Church and the Spanish Empire from Colonial times to Independence. Particularly, I examine how social scientists and fiction writers have contested or challenged the official discourses prevalent in Argentina since late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The pictures and video footage that I gathered during my trip have proven very useful for teaching the Introduction to Latin American Studies class this semester, and I look forward to continuing to use this material in the two classes I will teach next semester.



### Professor Rhonda Buchanan Travels to Argentina

During three weeks in July and August of 2003, I traveled to Argentina, spending the first week in Buenos Aires in the home of the Argentine writer Ana María Shua, whose works I have studied and translated. While in Buenos Aires, I presented a paper at the Second International Conference on Jewish Culture, Literature and Art, organized by the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina). From the capital city, I traveled to Córdoba to visit Perla Suez, the author of a trilogy of novels I am translating. The highlight of my Argentine trip was a journey I made with Perla and her husband Roberto to the province of Entre Ríos, where her grandparents settled at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and where the author spent the first fifteen years of her life. I visited her hometown of Basavilbaso and the surrounding Jewish colonies, and took photographs of many places and images that appear in her novels, such as her childhood house, the train station, the Jewish synagogues and cemeteries, the rice fields, the meat-packing factory along the Río Uruguay, and the dirt roads that turn to mud when it rains, which is often. I met many wonderful people during this trip, in particular, Raúl and Alicia Schinder, friends of the Suez's who live in the city of Concordia. One night the Schinder's invited friends to their house to meet us and eat knishes, *muchos knishes*, and I had the opportunity to ask one of them, an agronomist with a degree from Texas A&M, everything I needed to know about the cultivation of rice, which is important to the second novel of the trilogy. Another highlight of my trip was a visit to Salto, Uruguay, the birthplace of Horacio Quiroga whose stories I have taught for many years in my classes. Salto is across the river from Concordia, and I was thrilled when the Schinders invited us to spend the day in that beautiful city and I was able to add a Uruguayan stamp to my passport. Unfortunately there is not enough space in this newsletter to relate all the wonderful experiences I had during this trip, nor to express the extent of my gratitude to Richard and Constance Lewis whose generosity made this dream a reality.

## Latin American Studies Sponsored Events—Fall 2003

### Mexican Activist Speaks about NAFTA

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, The Latin American Studies Program, along with the Department of Anthropology and The Kentucky Interfaith Taskforce on Latin America and the Caribbean (KITLAC), sponsored a timely and provocative public lecture by Marco Antonio Torres, an activist from the Center for Labor Research and Union Consultation in Mexico City. He spoke in Ekstrom Auditorium to a group of eighty about the consequences of liberalizing trade in the Americas over the past decade and for the future. Pointing out that the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (the FTAA or ALCA) is expected to extend and expand the impact of NAFTA, Torres took a hard look at some of the impacts to-date of the trade treaty on the Mexican people and their country's economy. Nikki Thanos translated for Torres and described grassroots organizing in opposition to the FTAA. Thanos, author of *Trouble in Paradise: Globalization and Environmental Crises in Latin American*, works with Witness for Peace in Mexico City.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Latin American Studies Heritage Lecture Presented by Cuban Writer, Dr. Gustavo Pérez Firmat

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Latin American Studies Heritage Lecture, "So Near Yet So Foreign, Cuba in the American Imagination," was presented by the renowned Cuban writer, Dr. Gustavo Pérez Firmat, the David Feinson Professor of Humanities at Columbia University, on October 23, 2003 in Ekstrom Library Auditorium. A poet, fiction writer, and scholar, Pérez Firmat is the author of numerous books of literary and cultural criticism, such as *The Cuban Condition*, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way*, and *My Own Private Cuba*, among others. He has also published collections of poetry in English and Spanish, *Carolina Cuban*, *Equivocaciones*, and *Bilingual Blues*, a novel, *Anything But Love*; and a memoir, *Next Year In Cuba*, translated into Spanish as *El año que viene estamos en Cuba*. In his lecture, Dr. Pérez Firmat incorporated examples from Cuban and North American popular culture, such as the "I Love Lucy" show, album covers, tourist brochures, and advertisements, to illustrate the promotion of Cuba as an island paradise, a phenomenon he terms "soft exoticism." In addition, Dr. Pérez Firmat spoke to the students of Dr. Rhonda Buchanan's Cultural and Literary Perspectives of Modern Latin American class and Dr. Mary Makris's Hispanic Poetry class. His campus visit was sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program, the Modern Languages Fund, the Lewis Education Fund, the Liberal Studies Program, and the Commonwealth Center for the Humanities and Society. The reception and book signing which followed was sponsored by Bellarmine University's Veritas Society, with food provided by Louisville's new Cuban restaurant, Mambo. Anyone interested in learning more about the author may visit his website at: [www.gustavoperezfirmat.com](http://www.gustavoperezfirmat.com).

### Destination Cuba: The IX Latin American Film Festival

The IX Latin American Film Festival, organized by the Spanish Division of Classical and Modern Languages, has grown immensely since its first edition back in 1996. This festival, which is sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program, the Lewis Educational Fund, the Modern Language Fund and the International Center, provides an opportunity to show Latin American films on campus. This Fall, in conjunction with the Liberal Studies Project on Cuban Culture, we presented five of Cuba's most recent successful films: *Miel para Oshun (Honey for Oshun)*, *Adorables mentiras (Adorable Lies)*, *Si me entendieras (If you Only Understood)*, *Nada más (Nothing More)*, and the animated film *Vampiros en la Habana (Vampires in Havana)*. As usual, local experts introduced each showing to make the story more accessible to an American audience. The event continues to bring together the UofL community, the local community, and the area's Latino population. Professors Manuel Medina and Julie Winkler are organizing the X<sup>th</sup> edition of the festival for Spring 2004, which will present Argentine films and movies about the experience of growing old in Latin America. Please, look for details in the festival website: [www.louisville.edu/a-s/cml/filmfestival/](http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/cml/filmfestival/)

### Living La Vida Loca Celebrates Hispanic Culture

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Living La Vida Loca Festival, co-sponsored by Classical and Modern Languages, Latin American Studies, the International Center, and the Latin American Club of Louisville, drew the largest crowd yet, not only from the university community, but from local high schools and the community at large. Mounted on November 3<sup>rd</sup> under the direction of Dr. Manuel Medina, this year's festival featured a performance of Spanish dance by company members of Louisville's Ballet Español, salsa lessons by the Puerto Rican professional dance instructor Héctor Falú-Mendoza, and a luncheon buffet of *empanadas* and *arroz con pollo*, provided by the Latin American Club and The Mayan Gypsy Restaurant. Also featured were altars set up by The Latin American Studies Program, students of Spanish, and the Latin American Club of Louisville in commemoration of the *Día de los Muertos*. Two of the altars honored recently deceased UofL faculty members David Hershberg (Professor Emeritus in Classical and Modern Languages) and Arno Spatola (Professor of Chemistry), and another altar, erected by Dr. Rhonda Buchanan's Spanish 404 class, honored Celia Cruz, la Reina de la Salsa. The event enjoyed broad coverage in local media, including a splashy cover story in the Metro section of the Courier-Journal ("Hispanic culture in the spotlight," November 4, 2003) and in Hoy en las Américas (November 7, 2003).

### Constance Garvey Completes a Latin American Studies Internship

As a student in the Latin American Studies Program, senior Constance Garvey will receive three hours of credit for her internship with the Sister Cities Program of Louisville this Fall, which fulfills the requirement for the Latin American Studies minor. By the end of the semester, she will have volunteered twice that amount of time because her experience has given her a commitment to the organization. Comments Garvey, "It's a really neat program that Louisville is lucky to be a part of. Sister Cities facilitates exchanges for students and faculty from throughout the Louisville community." As an intern, Garvey designed a fall newsletter for the organization and a new brochure, and also updated some of their graphics. They are tasks she is happy to perform because she has benefited greatly from the experience of assisting the organization's director, Paige Pearman. Garvey says of her supervisor: "This is a professional experience with someone committed to her job and willing to put as much into it as it takes. It is a good example of how to run a successful not-for-profit and really make a difference in the community and the Sister City communities." Sister Cities of Louisville ([www.sclouc.org](http://www.sclouc.org)) currently has six Sister Cities, including two in Latin America: Quito, Ecuador and La Plata, Argentina.

**LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE**

Latin American Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Gardiner Hall 304  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY 40292

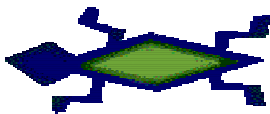
Phone: (502)-852-2034 or (502) 852-0502  
Fax: 502-852-8885  
rhondabuchanan@louisville.edu

[www.louisville.edu/a-s/cml/las](http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/cml/las)



## *Desde la encrucijada/From the Crossroads*

¡Saludos amigos! This Fall the Latin American Studies Program has been injected with a strong dose of Cuban culture thanks to the campus visits of four renowned Cuban writers and artists, and the IX Latin American Film Festival: "Destination Cuba." The special guest lecturer for the Annual Latin American Studies Heritage Lecture this year was Dr. Gustavo Pérez Firmat, a writer whose critical prose and creative writing centers on the problem of Cuban exile and identity. As part of the Liberal Studies Project, the Department of Classical and Modern Languages hosted three Cuban scholars who team taught "Cuban Literature, Culture, and Film" with Dr. Julie Winkler. Students pursuing the Latin American Studies minor had the opportunity to interact with these distinguished guests personally in Dr. Winkler's class, as well as in Dr. Manuel Medina's



Introduction to Latin American Studies class, my class on Cultural and Literary Perspectives of Modern Latin America and other Spanish classes, and in classes taught in the Departments of History, Anthropology, Fine Arts, Political Sciences, and in the Honor's and Liberal Studies Programs. The first Visiting Liberal Scholar was Ramón Alejandro, an internationally acclaimed Cuban painter who resides in Miami. During his three-week stay, he delighted students with his lectures on Cuban art and tales about his own artistic career. Cristina García, the second invited scholar, gave a fascinating public talk in which she read excerpts from her novels *Dreaming in Cuban*, *The Agüero Sisters*, and *Monkey Hunting*. Orlando González Esteva, a Miami-based poet, whose passion for literature and Cuban music is infectious, was the third Visiting Liberal Studies Scholar. In Miami he and his wife Mara host a weekly radio show "Cuba es su música," and perform in musical shows they produce. Professor González Esteva revealed his many talents in the classroom and during his public lec-

ture "Portrait of Cuban Poetry and Music," an informative presentation which educated the audience about the rich contribution of Cuban music throughout the world and, on a personal level, the significant role which music has played in his life and work. And now that the semester is nearly over, if anyone is nostalgic for Cuban music and food, I highly recommend that you visit Louisville's new Cuban restaurant *Mambo* (363-1160), which provided delicious food for the receptions in honor of our Cuban visitors. ¡Qué rico! Please read the newsletter and visit our website to learn about other exciting activities the Latin American Studies Program sponsored in the Summer and Fall of 2003.

*Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo,  
Rhonda Buchanan,  
Director of Latin American Studies*

