



NOTICIAS

A newsletter of the Program in Latin American and Iberian Studies

Late last Winter, as we were purchasing tickets and reserving hotel rooms for the two keynote speakers of our second International Graduate Student Conference “Borders, Power, Transgression,” COVID struck. Months later, we are still living in bleak, almost surreal times. Yet, in the midst of this climate of uncertainty and loss, I feel privileged to be directing this program, and have many things for which to be thankful. In LAIS we did not stop and continued to accomplish many things.

The conference has been postponed to Spring 2021. The advisory board and I are devising creative ways in which to hold it virtually, perhaps incorporating undergraduates. Tertulias moved to Zoom with great turnouts that reached international audiences, and one was even featured on the HFA website (see the article [here](#)). More recently, we held a very warm and well attended Zoom welcome reception for our new graduate students. And lastly, given the cancellation of in-person events, we have even been able to save a little money, which we can devote to new initiatives. One was our call for “Tertulias in the time of COVID”, which has already attracted excellent proposals, as you will see advertised in this newsletter. We still have room for two more events, so if you have an idea for a tertulia, please send in your application soon! See here for details.

At the same time, LAIS continues to grow. The demand for undergraduate courses has been growing exponentially. For the first time ever, and thanks to the support of Dean Majewski, LAIS has been able to offer our core lower-division undergraduate course, LAIS 10, twice a year in two consecutive years, and with three teaching assistants, rather than the usual two. This means that more financial support has been available for our graduate students. I want to thank Emily Engel for serving as an instructor for this course over the past two years with such exemplary dedication.

Last but not least, with your help, we have been building up a database of our graduate alumni, with the idea of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the submission of the first LAIS MA theses — a reminder that LAIS is the oldest and largest “area studies” program at UCSB.

In short, we have good reasons to be proud of our program. None of this could have been accomplished without a team of dedicated faculty, students, staff, and the enthusiasm of the ever growing LAIS community. I wish to thank, in particular, the efficient work of our academic coordinator, Lisa McAllister, who was responsible for putting together this newsletter with the help of graduate student Saran Zamir. I also thank Juan Pablo Lupi, who generously dedicated his time to serve as the Director of Graduate Students last year, and co-organizer of the student conference in the absence of Juan Cobo, who is back from his well deserved leave on the East Coast.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, rebaptized as “Noticias”, as it used to be not so long ago, and please keep sending us your news! And don’t forget to share our affiliates’ achievements by spreading this Noticias newsletter widely and liking the LAIS Facebook page ([@LAISUCSB](#)).



Cecilia Méndez

LAIS Director

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