

WINTER & SPRING 2021

NOTICIAS

The newsletter of the Latin American & Iberian Studies Program at UC Santa Barbara

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Letter from the Director

This year, the last of my tenure as director, was very special for LAIS. We celebrated the 40th anniversary of the first Master's theses submitted to the program in 1980, when it was still "Hispanic Civilizations." The program, though, is older than that, as we discovered in digging through its history. As it happens, the first MA theses were presented in the 1970s, while our first BAs were minted in the 1950s! I invite everyone to read more about LAIS history and the alumni reunion we held last Spring to celebrate our 40th + anniversary in a special issue of Noticias, coming soon!

Also in Spring, we held other major events, such as the Second International Graduate Student Conference "Borders, Power and Transgression," and a *tertulia* on the political situation of Colombia.

The latter was conducted in Spanish, with simultaneous English translation, in keeping with the linguistic diversity policy that I have encouraged since the beginning of my tenure. The Borders conference also included novelties, such as a keynote panel in the form of a conversation, hosted by LAIS graduate students themselves. Undergraduates from UCSB and other campuses also participated in the graduate conference, in a panel set up for the winners of an undergraduate essay competition—the first of its kind in LAIS—which we launched to encourage further student involvement and participation in the program, both from within and beyond UCSB.



Letter from the Director

Back in Winter, we held two special events a propós the virtual visit to campus of author Isabel Wilkerson. In one tertulia, faculty offered a critical appraisal of her book *Caste*, the Origins of our Discontents from the lens of India, the US and Latin America. In addition, Wilkerson herself offered a closed seminar to UCSB graduate and undergraduate students specialized in Latin America, which was possible thanks to our partnership with Arts & Lectures, who invited her to campus for their lecture series “Race to Justice.”

In short, many good things happened in LAIS in the past two quarters, product of our collective efforts. It was rewarding to witness their impact on and beyond campus. Several of our events were featured on the Humanities and Fine Arts (HFA) website. And, whereas COVID deprived us from face to face contact, the videoconference format brought with it its own rewards, such as enabling more international speakers and audiences.



We also worked hard outside the public eye. LAIS continued working in partnership with the Centers for Middle East Studies, East Asia Studies, and the Orfalea Global Studies Center to consolidate the AreaGlobal Studies Institute Initiative (AGI), pushed forward by Social Sciences Dean, and LAIS faculty affiliate, Charles Hale. Likewise, LAIS Vice-Director Juan Cobo worked intensely with student assistant Long Hoang to create a brand new LAIS website, which is easier to navigate and administer, thank you Juan and Long!

I leave the directorship proud of the past three years' accomplishments, and thankful to the colleagues, students, and staff who co-authored them. To Mayra, Asencios, Whitney Ater, Elena Báez, Loida Chan, Carol Flores, Lisa McAllister, Tyler McMullen, Teresa Salinas, and Iryna Zdanovich: thank you, I will miss you all! LAIS Vice-director and Director of Graduate Studies, Juan Cobo, and Acting Director of Graduate Studies, Juan Pablo Lupi, were especially generous friends and co-workers. Thanks to Kai Thaler and Pilar Ramírez, for wonderful tertulias, and to all the members of the advisory board, who provided insightful advice and saved me from committing some mistakes. As one of our final acts, we approved the affiliation to LAIS of Allison Caplan, María Lumbreras, Víctor Consoli, and Marisol Ramos, whom I warmly welcome! My words of gratitude go as well to our students in the program, with whom I always keep learning, and of whose achievements I don't cease to be proud of. This year, one of our own, Marlene Torres Magaña, won the very competitive campus fellowship GOF (Graduate Opportunity Fellowships). Way to go, Marlene!

Last but not least, I wish to extend my warmest welcome and wishes of success to the new LAIS Director, Aline Ferreira, and Vice-director, André Corrêa de Sá, knowing I leave LAIS in excellent hands!

I hope you enjoy this Winter-Spring newsletter, to which student assistant Amy Houser has dedicated many hours of creativity and hard work—thanks Amy !



Prof. Juan Pablo Lupi , Acting LAIS Director of Graduate Studies (2019-2020)



Prof. Juan Cobo, LAIS Vice Director and Director of Graduate Studies

Student Highlights

INTERVIEW WITH LEE LEAL-RAMIREZ

Lee Leal-Ramirez is a LAIS undergraduate student who is currently working on a digitalization project with the Colombian non-profit, Neogranadina, led by Professor Juan Cobo Betancourt.

What motivated you to study Latin America?

Growing up in Southern California, I felt that there was a perception that Latin America is a place people emigrate from out of need, not a place that makes important global contributions or has its own successes. Majoring in LAIS has allowed me to better understand the realities of Latin America, so that I can develop and share my own informed opinion.

Why do you believe it's important to study Latin America?

Studying Latin American helps to improve the perception the region has. Additionally, knowledge surrounding Latin America is culturally relevant in the US given the significant Latinx population. Latin America is often described as a homogenous mass despite the fact that it's a huge region with many different countries and cultures.

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Knowledge surrounding Latin America is culturally relevant in the US given the significant Latinx population. ”

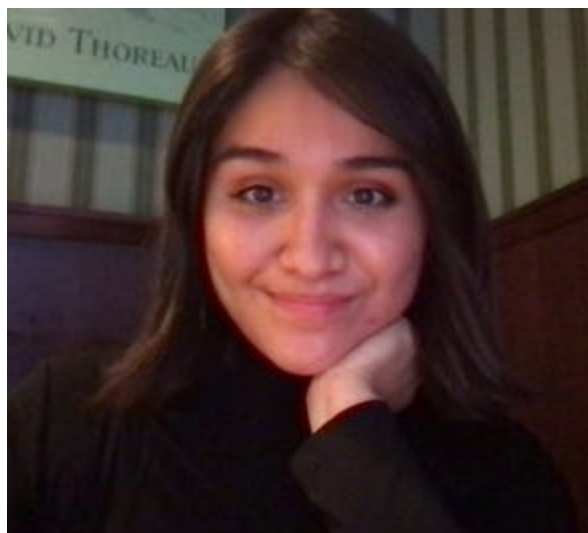
Please tell us a little about your work with Professor Juan Cobo and the non-profit Neogranadina? For example, what motivated you to get involved in this project, how did you get involved, what are you doing with it, and what have you gained/learned?

Neogranadina is a Colombian non-profit organization that works to digitize archives that would otherwise be hard to get. Normally someone would have to pay money or give personal info to access this information. This non-profit is making it available to everyone for free.



Congratulations to LAIS Graduate Student Marlene Torres Magaña (above) on receiving a Graduate Opportunity Fellowship for the 2021-2022 academic year!

Marlene is currently working on her research project entitled, *Historietas, Nacionalismo Mexicano, y Cultura: The Construction and Promotion of a Mexican National Identity during the Twentieth Century*. Her research focuses on how the Mexican state used comic books to form ideas of Mexican identity while excluding indigenous and Afro-Mexican identities and cultures. She examines the history and impact of anti-indigenous and anti-black racism in Mexico.



Student Highlights

INTERVIEW WITH LEE LEAL-RAMIREZ

I wanted to get involved with a non-profit that works in Latin America, and Professor Méndez pointed me towards this opportunity. My job is to correct spelling errors and sort out minor inconsistencies. It's nothing too major, which helps me stay calm and not stressed.



I enjoy the little summaries that come to light in the process, they're like little bits of gossip and I can always ask questions if I feel unsure. I've truly learned that you can connect with people from all over the world if you ask questions.

How is LAIS influencing your career trajectory and what are your current career goals?

Before majoring in LAIS and thinking critically about my future, I wanted to be an intellectual property lawyer. I think my options are more open now. I'd like to work for Imagen, a non-profit that works to reward people who make the image of Latinx better in the media. Law is still roaming around, but rather as a lawyer for Imagen.

What has been the most valuable part of your experience as a LAIS student so far?

I've been able to connect with and learn from LAIS alumni and the greater LAIS community who have established their careers. It seems that a lot of people have majored in LAIS and gone on to to make something of themselves quite impressively.

What advice do you have for other LAIS undergraduate students?

Be excited. Approach every class with the idea that it is a wealth of knowledge you are super lucky to get. Make connections and ask questions. For other first generation students like me, you may feel pressured to go into a specific career that your parents chose, but you shouldn't worry about that. If you are confident that this is what you want to leave, then go for it.

Any interests beyond academia that you would like others to know about?

I enjoy listening to podcasts in Spanish, which help me with my language skills, in particular I like the podcast *Mujer Vestida*. I also enjoy riding on my brother's motorcycle and hiking. One of my favorite hikes is Monserate Mountain in my home town of San Diego.



Monserate Mountain, San Diego, CA

Student Highlights

INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER AMADOR

LAIS Graduate Student Jennifer Amador discusses her research interests and shares her prospective career goals in this interview.

What motivated you to study Latin America?

My interest in studying Latin America stems from a few sources of inspiration: familial ties, personal interest and course work, specifically Spanish literature and language. As the oldest of three children to Mexican immigrants, I always felt a strong connection to my family and to Mexico. I remember taking a few literature courses here as an undergraduate with Professor Silvia Bermúdez and Professor Juan Pablo Lupi and being amazed at the topics of women in literature in South America. I was also fascinated by magical realism in the Caribbean. It was even more exciting that I could talk about all the topics with my family and they knew what I was referring to! These courses lead to deeper conversations that wouldn't have occurred had I not enrolled in the courses. While literature was my first academic exposure to Latin America, I felt that it wasn't right to just focus on literature so I decided that Latin American & Iberian Studies major could encompass all of my interest since it offered an interdisciplinary approach.



Why do you believe it is important to study Latin America?

Many times Latin America is referred to as a homogenous idea when it's not. In the United States, the term often places everyone in the same group and leads to harmful generalizations. I think it's important to study Latin America or Latin American issues because we are all connected. As scholars and as citizens we need to see what is occurring in other countries to have a deeper understanding of how actions in one place affect another or analyze the history to understand why countries are in certain states of being today. We are not isolated from each other.

What are you currently researching/or planning to research, and why is it important to you?

I am currently researching motivations to study abroad with Spanish heritage speakers. Spanish heritage speakers are those who learned Spanish at home with family and/or have heritage ties to Spanish speaking countries. As an alumni of Study Abroad (Universidad de Carlos III, Madrid, Spain 2015) I noticed that many of my friends who would have qualified for Study Abroad programs did not apply and instead were living vicariously through me. As Latinx enrollment in higher education is increasing we need to see what motivates these students, who have different linguistics needs than a second language learner in order to increase participation rates and support them academically. Research often highlights the barriers and while that is something we should be aware of, as researchers and university staff, we need to look beyond that and look at why students enrolled in the first place.

Student Highlights

INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER AMADOR

How is LAIS influencing your career trajectory and what are your current career goals?

I have always pictured myself working with students and families in a university role. As a graduate student I had the opportunity to teach Elementary Spanish 1 +2, at UCSB which opened up a whole new world. I never thought I would be teaching Spanish to beginners in Spanish starting day one! After taking some courses in the field of language acquisition, teaching methodologies and second language learning, I have considered being a professor. It doesn't feel like a stretch. I've been looking at PhD programs that focus on higher education and the Latinx community so I am excited about that!

What has been the most valuable part of your experience as a LAIS student so far? What advice do you have for current or future LAIS MA students?

I would say my most valuable experience has been teaching.

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I have really learned a lot about myself as an educator. I really enjoy being able to connect with students through Spanish and being able to share my culture with them.

”

One recommendation I have to current and future students is to not be hard on yourself when you are in class with PhD students. I know I would feel overwhelmed and often felt behind. It's okay! We are all in different stages in our programs and have different ideas and experiences to contribute to the discussion. Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for help.

Any interests beyond academia that you would like others to know about?

I love traveling! I like traveling abroad and in California. Most of my life has been spent in Southern California so I am trying to explore as much as I can both locally and internationally! Places I have visited abroad are London, Lisbon, various cities in Spain, Rome, Pisa, British Victoria and various cities in Mexico. You can say I caught the travel bug during my time abroad. I try to collect souvenir pins from each destination and put them up on my board. COVID has placed my travel plans on hold but once it is safe to travel again, I can't wait to start planning my next trip.



Universidad Carlos III, Madrid, Spain

Staff Highlights

LAIS is grateful for the wonderful staff our students and faculty work with.

INTERVIEW WITH IRYNA ZDANOVICH

Iryna Zdanovich, Financial and Academic Services Manager for PASC, tells us what she likes best about her work!

What do you like most about your job?

What I like best about my job is the financial aspect of things. I love working with data, analyzing, developing, and revising action plans to improve efficiencies, providing insights and feedback to process improvements. I love working on budget forecasting and reporting with my wonderful financial team. I've always enjoyed puzzles and I love discovering new Excel or UCPath features, which is always evolving and it's fun to continue exploring these programs and their full capabilities.

The Academic side is an entirely different world with its own policies and procedures but is also fun. I am choosing to enjoy every aspect of it.

What has been the most rewarding part so far?

I love the personal progress and lifelong learning within my job. To know, to be just a little bit more sophisticated every day is my motivation. I love the interactions with employees on all different levels of the organization and across all functional areas. I have been fortunate to receive an opportunity for career growth in my prior positions at the Phelps Administrative Support Center (PASC). I have attended multiple trainings which not only strengthened my skills, but I gained the knowledge and also met other outstanding professionals.

I enjoy working collaboratively with the PASC management team, the financial/academic, and the advising unit. I love being a part of a team to plan future goals and develop "best practices" to address our customers' needs.



Huge congratulations to LAIS Subject Librarian Marisol Ramos (above) for receiving a grant from the Librarians Association of the University of California to support her work translating *Gazing at the Puerto Rican Anthropological Landscape: The Native's Look Far and Wide*. Learn more [here](#).



Staff Highlights

INTERVIEW WITH IRYNA ZDANOVICH

Is there anything you have learned in this position you would like to share?

This year has been unique and challenging for me due to remote work. I am very grateful for having a dedicated team that I could rely on. I appreciate my co-workers and management team for their support and constant communication and collaboration.

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This unique time has reemphasized for me the importance of teamwork, collaboration and flexibility. We were able to meet and/or exceed our goals because everyone leaned in, listened and learned together.

”

Do you have any interests or hobbies you'd like to share with the LAIS community?

"Without new experiences, something inside of us sleeps. The sleeper must awaken."

-Frank Herbert.



Horsetail Falls, Yosemite , CA

I love traveling, exploring new places, and learning new things. It helps me to recharge, energize my spirit, inspires me, and that simply makes me feel happy. A few weeks ago, I was stunned by the legendary “Firefall” which happens when the sun hits Yosemite’s Horsetail Fall at just the right angle, creating the illusion that the waterfall is on fire. It was breathtaking!

I love California for fantastic weather and spectacular nature (the ocean, mountains, varieties of National parks). Hiking is one of my favorite hobbies. The fresh air and sun, aerobic walking, and up-close exposure to mountainsides and the ocean help me reduce the physical and mental stress during these challenging times.

INTERVIEW WITH CAROL FLORES

In this interview, Carol Flores, PASC Student Services Manager, discusses her work and tells us about her hobbies.

Staff Highlights

INTERVIEW WITH CAROL FLORES



What do you like the most about your job?

I enjoy the varied tasks and duties that my position performs. Working with the curriculum allows me to work with all five of our departments/programs and heading Student Support Services allows me to help support both faculty and students. Some might find it odd, but I particularly enjoy analyzing and implementing University policies and procedures.

What has been the most rewarding part so far?

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is to help resolve issues. Whether the issue is related to curriculum, faculty or student matters. I enjoy supporting my staff and working as a team to consult and help resolve complicated issues.

Is there anything you have learned in this position that you would like to share?

The most challenging aspect of my position is working with the curriculum of five different departments/programs. This is associated with who teaches each class, if any classes will be cross-listed with other courses on campus, what the enrollment max should be and the cost associated with each class in order for us to stay on budget. The curriculum guides a lot of what we do and this includes the hiring of lecturers and graduate students and the Scheduling of Classes for our respective areas. Above all, I love working with both undergraduate and graduate students when I have an opportunity to do so.

Do you have any interests or hobbies you'd like to share with the LAIS community?

My primary hobby is sewing. I can pretty much make anything from a dress, to a bathing suit, pants, replace a zipper, etc. I love working with fabric and I have a sewing machine and serger. I've been teaching my adult daughters how to sew as well (Alexis is 25 and Kaleigh is 21). The second hobby that I love to do with my husband is gardening. We plant tomatoes, various herbs, tomatillos and have a variety of fruit trees in our backyard.



Faculty Highlights

LAIS Faculty Grants and Fellowships

Congratulations to Dr. Emiko Saldívar, professors Erika Arenas Velázquez, San Juanita García, Alicia Boswell and Miroslava Chavez-García for receiving major grants and fellowships!



Dr. Emiko Saldívar (Anthropology) and Professors Erika Arenas Velázquez (Sociology) and San Juanita García (Chicano Studies) have been awarded the 2021 UCSB Migration Initiative grant to support the research project, “UndocuAging in Times of COVID-19: Stress, Mental Health, and Resistant Strategies among Community Organizers & Older Mexican Undocumented Migrants”

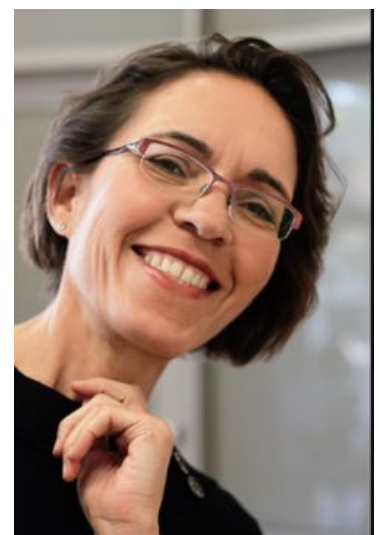


Professor Alicia Boswell (History of Art and Architecture) has been awarded the Hellman Family Fellowship grant to fund her fieldwork project “Regalia in the Ancient Moche World & Initial Survey of Archaeological Sites in Piura, Peru”.



Pair of earflares with condors, Moche, Perú, 3rd-8th CE, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Professor Miroslava Chavez-García (History) has been awarded a UCHRI grant to fund the California Eugenics Legacies Project which takes a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to understand the continuing impact of eugenics on Latinx people in California.



Faculty Highlights

LAIS Faculty Publications and Creative Work

LAIS faculty have been busy publishing in the last few months.



Professor Eloi Grasset (Spanish and Portuguese) has published a new book, *La Trama Mortal: Pere Gimferrer y la política de la literatura (1962-1985)*.

More information on Professor Grasset's new book can be found [here](#).

Professor William Robinson (Sociology) has published his new book, *The Global Police State*. Learn more about Professor Robinson's publications [here](#).



Professor Emeritus Carlos Morton (Theater and Dance) has produced a new radionovela, *Frontera Sin Fin*, which is playing on the radio in Honduras! His play tells the story of those forced to flee their homes in Central America and sheds light upon the issues of violence, poverty and exclusion. Listen to the radionovela [here](#).

LAIS Director Professor Cecilia Méndez (History) published the chapter "The Paths of Terrorism in Peru" in *The Cambridge History of Terrorism*, edited by Richard English. Learn more about her publication [here](#).



Faculty Highlights

LAIS Faculty in the News

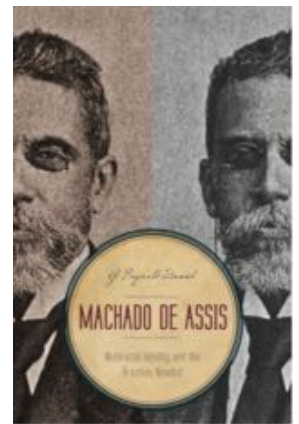
LAIS faculty are often a part of important conversations across the globe. Here are spotlights of their recent interventions!

In *Popular Archaeology*, **Dr. Anabel Ford** (Anthropology) and colleagues talk about their work revealing the complexity of the ancient Maya settlement at El Pilar. Read the article [here](#).



Dr. Ford at El Pilar

Professor **G. Reginald Daniel's** (Sociology) book, *Machado de Assis: Multiracial Identity and the Brazilian Novelist* (2012), featured in the *New York Review of Books* as part of an article on the Brazilian writer Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis. Read the article [here](#) (account needed).



LAIS Vice Director and Director of Graduate Studies **Juan Cobo Betancourt** was interviewed by Ecuadorian station *Radio Voz Andina* about his work with the nonprofit Neogranadina to digitize historical documents. Listen to the interview [here](#).



LAIS Director **Cecilia Méndez** was interviewed by different media outlets about the Peruvian presidential elections, among them [La República](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [The Conversation](#), and the German public radio. Her declarations to the Peruvian radio station [Ideele Radio](#) were echoed by [The Guardian](#), [The LA Times](#), and [The Washington Post](#), among other media.



See more LAIS Faculty achievements at <https://lais.ucsb.edu/announcements-news/>

Learn more about LAIS Faculty Affiliates at <https://lais.ucsb.edu/affiliates/>.

Looking Back

Here's a snapshot of the conferences, tertulias and celebrations that LAIS organized over Winter and Spring!

LAIS Tertulias in the Time of COVID, 2020-2021 | February 2021 | "Race and Caste in Latin America, India and the USA: A Global Conversation"

On February 2nd, 2021, LAIS Director Professor **Cecilia Méndez** (History) was joined by Professor **Terrance Wooten** (Black Studies) and Professor **Utathya Chattopadhyaya** (History) for a lively discussion about Isabel Wilkerson's book *Caste: The origins of our Discontents*. In this roundtable, the three UCSB scholars provided their take on caste, race, and Isabel Wilkerson's contributions to these crucial questions as they pertain to the US, India, Nazi Germany and the Latin American and Iberian world.

This event was featured in the Humanities and Fine Arts news, read more [here](#).



LAIS Grad Recruitment Day

On March 8th, LAIS hosted the first ever virtual recruitment day and welcomed potential graduate students. The event boasted an exciting program of events beginning with an warm greeting from LAIS Director Cecilia Méndez and Vice Director Juan Cobo Betancourt, with introductions to the PASC staff. This was followed by a presentation from LAIS subject librarian Marisol Ramos, and a lunch with current LAIS graduate students. In the afternoon, two faculty panels were held. The first one, "Languages, Culture and History" featured professors Eric Campbell (Linguistics), Cristina Venegas (Film and Media Studies), Juan Pablo Lupi (Spanish and Portuguese/Comparative Literature), and Evelyne Laurent-Perault (History). The second panel, "Social Sciences and Media" was led by professors Inés Casillas (Chicano/a Studies), William Robinson (Sociology), Erika Arenas Velásquez (Sociology) and John Foran (Sociology). The exciting event ended with a pleasant mixer in which the prospective students, current graduate students and affiliated faculty shared ideas, experiences and advice.



Looking Back

International Graduate Student Conference: Borders, Power and Transgression



The Second LAIS International Graduate Student Conference: "Borders, Power and Transgression" took place on April 7th-9th 2021. Graduate students from UCSB and across the United States and the globe discussed "borders" as a broad and fluid concept, encompassing not only geographical or political boundaries, but also questions of gender, race, ethnicity, discursive practices and, more broadly, notions like limit, frontier, division and critique. The conference highlighted three outstanding keynote presentations from different disciplinary perspectives. The first one, "Crafting Borders," featured Professor Emeritus **Christine Hünefeldt** (History, UC San Diego) in conversation with LAIS graduate students **Marlene Torres Magaña** and **Emma Zamora García**.

The second day, Professor **Melissa Wright** (Geography, Pennsylvania State University), discussed "Border Thinking and Living La Vida Fronteriza", introduced by Dean of Social Sciences **Charles Hale**. The final keynote lecture, was presented by UCSB alumnus **Kai Medeiros**, J.D. (Staff Attorney, American Bar Association, Immigration Justice Project, San Diego) entitled "Assessing the Damage: Reflections on the Trump Administration's Dismantling of the U.S. Asylum System" and received an especially impressive turnout. This conference elicited attention from various departments on campus and was featured, with an interview from Director Méndez, on the HFA site. Find the interview [here](#)



LAIS End of Year Awards and Celebration

On May 28th LAIS invited students, faculty, staff and the greater LAIS community to celebrate the academic year's achievements. LAIS undergraduate major **América del Rosario López Martín** received the 2020-2021 Award for Exemplary Academic Performance and **Professor Juan Cobo Betancourt** received the 2021 Award for Exemplary Mentorship to LAIS Undergraduate and Graduate Students. The event highlighted the incredible achievements and hard work of all the students, faculty and staff. The LAIS program congratulates the class of 2021 and thanks LAIS faculty and staff for all their efforts in support of the program!



LAIS End Of Year Celebration

Looking Back

LAIS Tertulias in the Time of COVID, 2020-2021 | June 2021 | "Social Mobilization and State Violence in Colombia"

On June 3rd, LAIS hosted a lively and informative discussion on the recent and ongoing protests in Colombia and the violations of human rights by the Colombian state. The conversation was organized and moderated by UCSB History graduate student, **Pilar Ramírez Restrepo** with panelists Dr. **Mauricio Archila**, professor at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, **Yuly P. Campiño**, Master's in Human Rights (CU Boulder) and attorney, **Alejandra Sánchez Z.**, a student activist at Universidad Pontificia Javeriana (Colombia), and **Manuel F. Vallecilla**, History doctoral student at the Universidad Iberoamericana (Mexico). The *tertulia* was held in Spanish with simultaneous English translation. Panelists discussed the history and current experience of state violence in Colombia, as well as the role of students and youth in the ongoing protests and the government's responses to it. These students, activists and scholars o highlighted issues at stake from different regional, disciplinary, and generational points of view.



Coming Up: A Special Edition of *Noticias!*

During Spring 2021, LAIS welcomed back graduate alumni in celebration of the 40th+ anniversary of the first Master's thesis presented to the LAIS program. The event featured career panels and mixers, providing an opportunity for current LAIS students and alumni to foster connections and reflect upon the influence of LAIS in their lives. In order to commemorate this landmark celebration, we are preparing a special edition of *Noticias*, please stay tuned!



LAIS Alumni Reunion

To support the ongoing research of our current LAIS students, please donate [here!](#)