

LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

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The Wilson Center

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars was created by an act of the U.S. Congress in 1968 as a “living memorial” to the twenty-eighth president of the United States. Its aims are to support advanced research and writing on national and international issues by scholars and practitioners from all over the world, and to bring together the realms of scholarship and of public affairs, which Wilson himself combined.

The Latin American Program was established early in 1977. Its main purposes are to foster research and discussion of high quality on Latin American and inter-American topics, and to facilitate the exchange of ideas among persons working on the region from the perspectives of governments, international organizations, the media, business, labor, foundations, churches, and the professions, as well as the academic world. The Program aims, moreover, to serve as a bridge between North Americans and Latin Americans of diverse backgrounds, and as a means for helping to assure that opinion leaders in the United States focus more fruitfully on Latin America and the Caribbean.

To pursue these aims, the Program sponsors a broad range of scholarly activities as well as many efforts to reach out beyond the academic community. In all these undertakings (summarized below), the Program strives to assure that diverse viewpoints—from men and women with varying national, professional, disciplinary, methodological, and political perspectives—are presented, and that complex issues are illuminated through the confrontation of different analyses.

Scope and Substantive Focus

The Program seeks to encourage excellent work on Latin America in the social sciences and the humanities. It is open to participation by persons working on a wide variety of subjects. The Program is postdoctoral. Graduate students from Latin America and the United States are eligible for a special summer intern program, in which nine persons have participated so far.

To help assure some degree of programmatic coherence and cumulation, the Program—with the advice of its Academic Council—has given particular attention to several broad themes, including: the relations between cultural traditions and political institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean; the nature and dynamics of authoritarian rule in Latin America, as well as the prospects for democratic resurgence in the region; the relation between the international system and domestic political and economic choices in the Western Hemisphere; alternative approaches to development; and the evolution of U.S. relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. None of these topics is narrowly defined, nor do they exclude other interesting issues from the Program's agenda, but they do structure a set of concerns shared by the Program's staff and council and by many of its fellows, guest scholars, and other participants.

Academic Activities

The Program's scholarly purposes are advanced primarily by bringing researchers to the Center to work on their individual projects; by organizing colloquia, workshops, and conferences on questions at the frontier of academic investigation; and by sponsoring service activities in the interest of Latin American studies as a whole.

About six scholars come to the Center each year as fellows for periods of four to twelve months, together with two or three guest scholars, ordinarily appointed for less than four months. Fellows, for whom full financial support usually is provided, are selected through an open, international competition. During its first five years, participants in the Program have included fifty-two fellows and guest scholars from sixteen countries. Novelists, poets, journalists, public officials, politicians, and business executives have joined outstanding historians, political scientists, sociologists, economists, and anthropologists to make the Program uniquely exciting.

In addition to supporting the individual work of its fellows and guest scholars, the Program organizes about forty academically oriented meetings each year. Most are colloquia—usually a two-hour late afternoon meeting involving a prepared paper, a designated discussant, and a specially invited audience; some are more informal exchanges; and a few are carefully prepared workshops or conferences, usually extending for two or three days, at which leading specialists present commissioned papers for critical review.

In addition to its individual workshops, the Program has from time to time chosen themes of particular breadth and importance for a sustained "core seminar." During 1978, the Program organized six seminar sessions with prepared papers on "Political and Economic Choices

in the Contemporary Caribbean''; the eventual result of these sessions was a *Headline Series* monograph by Virginia R. and Jorge I. Domínguez, published by the Foreign Policy Association. From 1979 to 1981, the Program emphasized a series of three international conferences on "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy in Latin America and Latin Europe." A major symposium volume is now being edited for publication by the three codirectors of that project: academic council members Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead. The Center has also hosted or cosponsored a number of conferences for which the initiative and funding has been external, but for which the Program has provided its facilities, staff services, and access to the Washington community's resources.

The Program has undertaken several other activities to serve the community of academic Latin Americanists. It undertook the preparation and publication of the *Scholars' Guide to the Resources of Washington D.C. for Latin American and Caribbean Studies* (Michael Grow, editor), a comprehensive guide to sources and organizations. It initiated and co-sponsored (with Yale University) Louis W. Goodman's monograph on "Latin American Studies: National Needs and Opportunities," submitted to the President's Commission on Foreign Language and Area Studies in 1979. In 1981, the Program co-organized (with the Latin American Studies Association, LASA) a conference on "Latin American Studies in the 1980s." The Goodman essay, the results of the LASA conference, and papers from other colloquia and workshops held at the Center have been widely distributed without charge in the Program's series of working papers.

Communicating More Broadly

The Program has worked steadily to communicate the results of scholarly research to broader audiences. An annual conference for senior editors, sponsored jointly with the Tinker Foundation, brings together high-level journalists from newspapers and magazines across the country with top specialists in Latin America from academia, government, business, and the media to discuss the issues experts think likely to be significant in Latin America during the next two to three years. Journalists, many of them identified through the editors' conferences, are also regularly included in the Program's workshops and colloquia.

A monthly series of dinner meetings for congressional staff members provides specially prepared background presentations to key people on Capitol Hill, not only those working directly on foreign affairs but others dealing with agriculture, budget, commerce, defense, etc. A third series, chaired by Nicolás Ardito Barletta—head of the World Bank's Western Hemisphere division—focuses on economic issues for the

benefit of senior officials from corporations and international organizations. Two or three times a year, in addition, the Program sponsors evening dialogue dinner meetings for invited audiences representing a cross section of U.S. opinion leaders.

In addition to all these series, the Program's "outreach efforts" include collaboration with National Public Radio and with the Longhorn Radio Network on radio programs (a half dozen of which had been produced by August 1981), a special series of lectures for the broader Washington community in the Smithsonian Institution's Resident Associate Series, and periodic clusters of articles for the *Wilson Quarterly*.

The Program's commitment to outreach includes two additional formats. Beginning in 1980—with support from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and the U.S. International Communications Agency—the Program began an experimental series of policy dialogues, bringing together key persons from the United States and particular Latin American countries for a structured but broad-ranged and informal exchange of views. The first meetings, focussing on Venezuela, featured the participation of several current and former members of that country's cabinet and congress, as well as leading business, political, academic, and media figures from all over the United States. Further dialogues with Venezuelans and with leaders from the Caribbean are being undertaken.

In mid-1981, the Program launched a new project to enhance public understanding in the United States of U.S.-Caribbean relations. This effort, the first systematic and focussed effort by the Program to convey diverse perspectives about a particular issue to a range of different publics, will involve a series of one-day conferences on the Caribbean with leaders from churches, local and state governments, secondary education officials, and others, as well as special efforts to bring Caribbean materials to the attention of the media.

Academic Council

Programmatic guidance and evaluation, as well as the fellowship review and recommendation process, are in the hands of a nine-member Academic Council, composed of distinguished scholars from many countries and disciplines. As of the end of 1981, the council's members were Albert O. Hirschman, Institute for Advanced Study, Chairman; Fernando Henrique Cardoso, CEBRAP, São Paulo; William Glade, University of Texas; Juan Linz, Yale University; Leslie Manigat, Universidad Simón Bolívar, Caracas; Guillermo O'Donnell, CEDES, Buenos Aires; Olga Pellicer de Brody, CIDE, Mexico City; Thomas Skidmore, University of Wisconsin; and Mario Vargas Llosa, Lima. Former members of the original council are Ricardo Ffrench-Davis of CIEPLAN, Santiago; Philippe Schmitter of the University of Chicago; and Karen Spalding of

the University of Delaware. The Council meets annually for two days, and individual members participate in Program functions throughout the year.

Support

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