

# La Compañera



Latin American Studies Program Newsletter  
Monday, April 22, 2013; Spring 2013 Issue 1

## *Milanés-Soria: Virgilio Piñera o el poder de la ficción*

On Friday, April 12, 2013, Cuban literary critic and editor, Modesto Milanés-Soria gave a talk in the Weitz Center about acclaimed Cuban writer Virgilio Piñera (1912-1979). Piñera is a very influential, but enigmatic writer from Cuba. He is one of the most important Cuban writers, comparable to authors such as Alejo Carpentier, José Martí, and Jorge Luis Borges. However, unlike many Cuban writers, his writings have themes that combine absurdity, nonsense, disaster, escape, and manipulation.

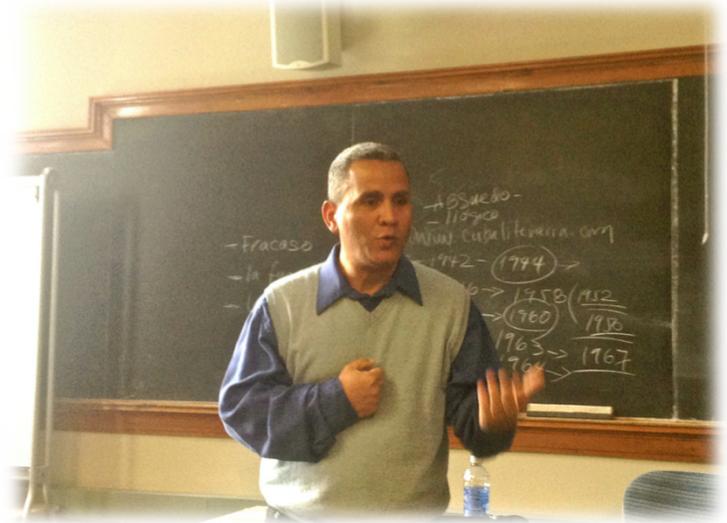
Milanés-Soria's talk centered around three questions: Who is Virgilio Piñera? Where do we place him in the context of all of Cuban literature? And finally: Is he a good representation of Cuban literature?

Milanés-Soria emphasized three aspect of Virgilio Piñera's writings which make his works a good representation of Cuban literature. Piñera is able to find a strong union with Cuban identity through: 1) The use of colloquial language which helps reveal the heroism and culture of Cuban society 2) His use of humor in the midst of tragic events in the plot 3) His perspective on events that challenge conventional optimism.

Some of the author's most important books include *La carne de René*(1952), *Presiones y Diamantes* (1967), and *Las pequeñas maniobras* (1963).

Students who attended the talk stated that it was informative and interesting, giving them insight into a whole sphere of literature they either knew nothing or very little about.

The event was organized by the Spanish department and the Latin American Studies program. The event was well-received and an audience of about 30 people, made of students, faculty, and community members attended.



**Modesto Milanés-Soria gave a talk in the Weitz Center about the legacy of a famous Cuban writer**



# Introducing New Latin American Studies Majors/Concentrators

Anna is a sophomore from Eugene, Oregon. She just declared her major in Latin American Studies this month. During the week Anna volunteers for HealthFinders where she teaches an exercise and nutrition class in Spanish to a group of Latina women. She has traveled to several Latin American countries and this generated an interest in Latin America early on.

## Anna Persmark '15

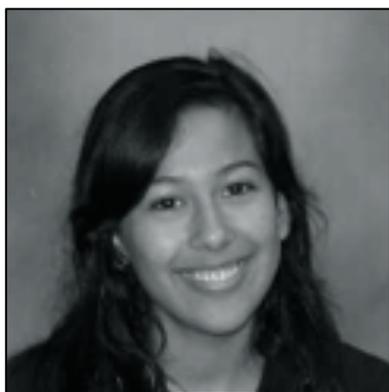


Her favorite course thus far has been Intro to Latin American Literature. "Silvia was a fantastic professor, and I have rarely enjoyed both the material, my classmates, the assignments and the professor so much. The course spanned pre-Colombian works through the twentieth century, and I loved the broad range," she stated.

When Anna first started thinking about majors, she considered the Spanish major. However she realized that although she loved literature, she wanted to study the intersections between culture, history, and literature, so Latin American Studies seemed like a good fit. The flexibility it offers in terms of courses was also appealing and she was drawn to the multi-disciplinary approach. She is happy with her decision because it allows her to pursue all her passions in one major.

A special experience she has had in her major was bonding with her Intro to Latin American Literature class watching movies based on the works they were reading. "It made the process so much more enjoyable to have a good group to share it with," she stated.

## Daniela Williams-Condor '14



Daniela is a junior Spanish major from Gainesville, Florida. She just declared a concentration in Latin American Studies this year.

Her travels and experiences in Nicaragua, Mexico, Peru, and Brazil made her familiar with the Latin American region. These past two summers she interned at NGOs in Guatemala and Ecuador which sparked many observations and questions about this region that she wants to study and understand more in depth.

Daniela's favorite course thus far is Issues in Latin America. It allowed her to gain a sound foundation for the historical and contemporary issues and problems in the region. She enjoyed the diverse selection of readings and topics, especially the topics of Pentecostalism and the Evangelical Movements in Latin America, Femicide in Ciudad Juarez, and Indigenous movements and politics in the region. "I loved the book *Fordlandia* by Greg Grandin, which was presented at last year's Foro. Most of all, I appreciated Prof. Lopez's passion and enthusiasm for the course."

Although, she does not have any specific career plans, she hopes to live and work in Buenos Aires for at least a year after graduation. "I am really drawn to the city's art and literary scene, and would love to have the opportunity to experience it first-hand," she stated. Daniela eventually plans to continue on to graduate school, but hopefully at a university somewhere in Latin America.

# Reflections on Summer Volunteering in Latin America:

## Tyler Gebauer '13



This past summer Tyler Gebauer '13 worked at an organization called CEDESOL, which stands for Centro de Desarrollo en Energia Solar in Cochabamba, Bolivia. This organization builds and distributes solar ovens and ecological cookers primarily in rural areas, where most people burn wood for cooking and heat.

As a volunteer, he was able to participate in most aspects of CEDESOL's operation, but most of his time was spent analyzing data collected from interviews with patrons. He also distributed stoves, made coffee with an ecological wood stove, and helped with interviews. He traveled with CEDESOL to other cities in Bolivia, such as Sucre and Potosi, as well as little villages, such as Sotomayor, while distributing and checking up on the ovens.

Towards the end of his trip he traveled to a small village in Southern Bolivia. During the day he joined his co-workers in walking around to houses that had CEDESOL's ecological cookers and conducting interviews. The group of volunteers fixed some cookers.

One of Tyler's most memorable experiences was conducting interviews because they were all in Quechua, where he and other workers were usually offered food by their hosts. "I really enjoyed getting a taste of rural cuisine there," he says.

By the end of the program Tyler felt that the people who were best equipped to solve Bolivia's problems were the people of Bolivia, not any group of volunteers. His experience with CEDESOL helped him learn about the importance of activism within local communities. "It's not just because it's polite or the right thing to do, but because it's necessary for any lasting positive change," he states.

## Elayne Teska '14



Elayne Teska '14 traveled to Ecuador and Peru this past summer. She did volunteer work related to education development where she actively took part in teaching, mentoring, and building curriculums while also seeing and understanding the cultural differences and limitations within the school systems.

In Ecuador, she worked in the street markets. Specifically, she worked with boys and girls up to age 16 who sold fresh produce for a living to help their families survive. She and other volunteers taught them basic motor skills, proper hygiene, group cooperation, positive play, and conventional education such as English, Math, Reading, and Writing. In Peru, she worked as a school teacher for grades 3-9.

Elayne reflects on one of her most memorable experiences volunteering: "One boy would continually give me a hard time...as he would not pay attention, make jokes and be disruptive to the other children. I saw progress throughout the term when I was working with him but the last couple of days in particular I saw him take an interest in the games we would play. He was attentive while sitting outside where there were a plethora of distractions. He turned in his homework and he was happy with everything he had accomplished. Although he reverted back to his old ways a few times during this week, he learned that he could be a good student and feel positively about his work. This sense of self accomplishment with his studies left me satisfied that his hard work and positivity could make him happy."

From this experience, Elayne learned she wants to pursue a career in child development. She wants her future career to focus on children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds or children suffering in the classroom due to some mental disability.

# Foro Latinoamericano 2013

## Hugo Chávez's Venezuela and Beyond

◆ April 26-27, 2013 ◆



**Javier Corrales**  
Professor of Political  
Science at Amherst  
College



**Miguel Tinker Salas**  
Professor of History and  
Chicano/Latino Studies  
at Pomona College



**Sujatha Fernandes**  
Associate Professor of Sociology at  
Queens College and the Graduate  
Center, City of New York

The *Foro Latinoamericano* 2013 examines the Venezuela of Hugo Chávez. After thirteen years as president, no single figure has transformed Venezuela more than the architect of what is called the “Bolivarian Revolution.” After losing his battle to cancer, Venezuelans and observers have been forced to imagine what will come after Chávez. Our guest speakers will discuss how the Bolivarian Revolution has been characterized by outsiders and Venezuelan society, how Chávez has projected his plans for Venezuela to the world, and how the country’s society and culture have changed. Our speakers will explore what we might expect from a post-Chávez Venezuela. Members of the public are invited to attend all events.

### *Schedule*

Friday, April 26 (Boliou 104)

5:00pm **Welcome**

**Miguel Tinker-Salas**

*“Beyond Chávez: Unraveling the Enigma of Venezuela”*

\*DINNER AND LUNCH FOR  
INVITED GUESTS ONLY

Saturday, April 27 (Library Athenaeum)

9:30am **Sujatha Fernandes**

*“Radio Bemba in an Age of Electronic Media:  
The Dynamics of Popular Communication in  
Chávez’s Venezuela”*

10:30am **Javier Corrales**

*“From ALBA to Damascus:  
Explaining Chávez’s Foreign Policy”*

# An Alumnus in DC: Cameron Combs '12



*La Compañera* caught up with recent alumnus, Cameron Combs '12. Cameron is originally from Bozeman, Montana. He has been working in Washington D.C. at the Inter-American Dialogue since he graduated in June 2012 with a degree in Latin American Studies.

The Inter-American Dialogue is a think tank/policy forum dedicated to Latin American issues. Specifically, it generates new policy ideas and proposals for action, and gets these ideas and proposals to government and private decision makers. The Dialogue conducts its work throughout the

hemisphere. Cameron works for the organization's president as a Program Assistant. His responsibilities are split between writing, researching and editing articles, event planning, grant and expense reporting, and making sure his boss is prepared for interviews and his other obligations.

At Carleton, Cameron studied abroad his junior year in Brazil and returned there his senior year for Carleton's winter break Brazil program. He really enjoyed both experiences.

When asked for advice for current majors/concentrators, Cameron recommended having broad exposure to different countries and themes within the region. "Writing and researching is a large component of my job, so I appreciate having selected a major that allowed me to enhance those skills," he says. "For young people in the field, Spanish fluency is simply assumed and a working knowledge of Portuguese is also increasingly common. The Latin American Studies major was ahead of the curve by emphasizing both my language skills as well as my merits as a researcher."

Cameron also emphasizes doing well in classes to help transition out of Carleton. "Internships and fellowships are key to finding a job. I would very highly recommend going to the Career Center as an underclassman for help in this regard. There are all sorts of fields that incorporate Latin America as well as professors and alumni that can help give you direction," he stated.

\*In the future, *La Compañera* will catch up with other alumni to inquire into their careers and how they are applying the skills learned through the Latin American Studies major/concentration in their respective fields.

# The Price of Privatization and the Trade-offs of Free Trade:

Labor Violations in Colombia on the One Year Anniversary of the Free Trade Agreement Anniversary



Witness for Peace is excited to host Sohely Rua Castañeda, the Secretary of Women and Labor for Colombia's National Union School.

A voice from the labor sector in the deadliest country in the world for trade unionists is especially significant on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Despite the Obama--Santos Labor Action Plan, an April 2011 prerequisite to the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement implemented on May 15, 2012 that was meant to ensure protections for Colombian workers before the implementation of the free trade agreement, 29 trade unionists have been murdered since 2011 and over 300 new death threats have been received. Furthermore, there is still 95% impunity for cases of violence against trade unionists. The FTA is particularly harmful to women, who remain one of the most vulnerable groups in Colombia's labor sector and face lower wages, discrimination and largely informal employment that provides no protections or benefits.

Join Witness for Peace Upper Midwest in welcoming Sohely Rua Castañeda and hearing her first-hand testimony of the struggle for labor justice for women in Columbia.

**Thursday, May 2**  
**12-1pm**  
**Leighton 305**



## James C. Scott visits Carleton's Mexican Revolution class

On April 15, Professor James C. Scott of Yale University met with Carleton students to discuss peasant resistance, rebellion, and anarchism in Professor Andrew Fisher's course on the Mexican Revolution. In anticipation of the visit, the students read a brief excerpt from Scott's latest book (*Two Cheers for Anarchism*) alongside articles on the influence of anarchist thought among Mexico's peasantry and industrial working class in the years preceding the outbreak of the Revolution.