

All Peer Responses From LAS 101 Spring 2020

1/22/20 ([Sam Goldfarb's post on machismo](#))

I'm glad that someone wrote one of their posts on Dr. Wertheimer's guest lecture! I couldn't decide exactly to conclude and your post helped me synthesize my ideas. I definitely agree with you that Dr. Wertheimer made a strong case about the unprecedented legal push against VAW in Guatemala, which is a very positive change. However, one of the things that concerns me (as Frannie mentioned) is that there isn't a fundamental change in attitude among machistas (obviously not all Guatemalan men are machistas!). This was illustrated by Dr. Wertheimer's stories of multiple men telling him that it would be better to kill their wives than to beat them, or discussing which part of a woman's body would be the best for beating her without getting caught. The lecture brought to mind a high school history class in which my teacher asked the male students if they were feminists. Some said yes, others said maybe, and a few said they weren't but were afraid of getting in trouble for treating women unequally. Machismo shares this range of attitudes: some men think beating women is okay, some aren't sure, and some don't. Legislation is a good first step to controlling VAW, I just hope a broader anti-machista mindset follows. In the meantime, the fact that there are people (including men) fighting to make change and passing legislation is enough to keep me optimistic.

1/29/20 ([Elsa Conklin's Eva Perón post](#))

I also wrote about Evita's legacy, but I think what you found is really interesting because it's pretty different than what I came across. I bet there is a lot more about her that we don't know and won't learn in class. There are so many conflicting stories that she'd make for an interesting paper topic. How did you reconcile for yourself the conflict between her feminism and her subservience to the patriarchy? I got a sense that her impact on Argentina was huge so I wonder which side of that Argentinians focus on today.

1/29/20 ([Frannie Espositos' La Malinche post](#))

La Malinche was such a fascinating figure! She really gave me a lot of insight into the complexity of society before the colonizers and why some indigenous people would help them. I feel like we often learn of the indigenous tribes as though they were all one mass under the same empire, but in reality there was a complex society with inter-tribe relations not unlike those between different countries today. La Malinche's story also connected well to the Andrés Reséndez lecture on slavery: it helps to explain why so many indigenous people bought into the

systems of slavery imposed by the Iberians, and why some even became slavers themselves. Even though she came down on the wrong side of history in many ways, I can understand and respect La Malinche's choices. She's a really important figure to study, both because of her impact and because of the unique perspective she had.

1/29/20 ([Mary Elizabeth Campbell's Susan Rice post](#))

Like Will, I wasn't able to see Susan Rice's lecture, so I'm very glad you wrote about it! Examples of foreign-policy-gone-wrong are incredibly common in Latin America, as we've seen with the 1954 coup, the Bay of Pigs, and US support of dictators such as Ubico and Trujillo. One example of foreign policy that we looked at in this class was the contrast between intervention in Guatemala and aid to Bolivia, both to prevent communist scares. I know that the choice to send aid to Bolivia was a peaceful solution. I wonder if controlling another country's politics is every justified though? What did/do you think Susan Rice would have to say about when to intervene and when to stay out?

1/29/20 ([James Hardy's Andrés Reséndez Lecture post](#))

I agree, Andrés Reséndez's lecture was very informative. All the points you mentioned are strong ones too. One thing that I noticed in his lecture was a blurring of the line between the United States and what we typically consider "Latin America." For instance, the Pueblo Revolt occurred in what is currently a part of New Mexico, the Mormons in the US were some of the biggest traders of indigenous slaves, and the Comanches (a primarily US-based tribe) were also heavily involved in slave raids and both sold and owned slaves. These details pushed me to think of the history of the US and Latin America: before they were colonized, the "borders" if you will were totally different; a lot of tribal territory overlapped the two. Areas of the United States were also colonized by Iberians. Today, much of the US is Spanish-speaking, and there is a huge immigrant population coming from various American countries to the South. I wonder whether it could be argued that the US (or at least portions of it) is a part of Latin America? If so, is there merit in studying the US as a part of Latin America in addition to as its own country?

3/21/20 ([Nirmal Singletary's post on "Un Violador En Tu Camino"](#))

Hey Nirmal, I read and linked an article very similar to this one on my site, but I was happy to see you writing a more extensive blog post on the topic! Three things come to mind reading your

post. First, the power of this chant, originating in Latin America, is a counterexample to the idea of Latin America as a “forgotten continent” lacking influence on the rest of the world. Second, and similarly, it shows that while there may be issues, Latin Americans themselves are in no way “backward” in their sense of rights. Thirdly, I wonder how this can be put into conversation with Dr. Wetheimer’s lecture: how much have things actually improved?

3/22/20 ([Cynthia Rodriguez’s post on “Un Día Sin Mujeres”](#))

Thank you for posting about this! Machismo and femicide are things we have touched on briefly in this class, but I don’t think we’ve had an adequate sense of the very real impact that they have today. I’m glad you helped bring some more humane awareness by sharing the hashtags so people can stay informed in real time. I also appreciated hearing about the economic power that the protesting women hold! A lot of the media I see portrays Latin American women as passive and/or powerless victims, which is clearly not true. They CAN force positive changes – and they have. I think you might be interested in connecting this to Nirmal’s post on “Un Violador en Tu Camino” as well, which shows the international influence Latin American women activists have. Hopefully these high-profile protests not only bring attention to the issues Latin American women face, but also celebrate their strength and garner more international support!

3/22/20 ([Jorge Torres Villalva’s post on Afro-Latinidad](#))

It’s funny that I came across your post just after reading “Brazil’s Color Bind”, etc. for next class, because that definitely influences my thinking on this. I see lots of parallels to Brazil in your observations of Mexico. Clearly black Mexicans have been excluded from much of society. It also appears that part of the issue, like in Brazil, is the racism that comes from invisibility and lack of conversation. After a quick internet search, I found that Mexico is the “most ethnically diverse” of all Latin American countries, so I would imagine that, also like Brazil, there is celebration of diversity and racial harmony without actual acknowledgement of the issues. Would you say that is true based on your research, or am I reading into things too much? I’m curious how this issue changes in relation to immigration. My high school mentor was a Guatemalan immigrant, and she often told me that she was white in Guatemala, but here she is a person of color for the first time and it’s caused her to think pretty deeply about her identity. I wonder if this is a common experience of immigrants; a colorizing that’s sort-of the opposite of whitewashing? Anyway, race and ethnicity both in Latin America and then internationally is definitely something I would like to learn more about!

4/14/20 ([James Hardy's Mir Yarfitz lecture post](#))

I didn't get to go to this lecture, so it was interesting to read about it here. The fact that Argentina had such a strong connection to Jewish migration under Pinochet, and then such a strong Nazi connection under Perón is intriguing; I'd like to explore those dynamics further. In terms of the sex work issue, I'm curious about native Argentinitians' position. It seems like Yarfitz primarily discussed different Jewish immigrant factions and their opinions, but there had to be some drive from native Argentinian's that impacted the government's decision to regulate working conditions rather than eliminating prostitution. As a follow up, because I was very curious, prostitution is legal in Argentina today. It is also legal in every Latin American country this source mentioned. I'm curious as to whether this is more connected to machismo or to the feminist debate cited in your post. Thoughts? (Source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/countries-where-prostitution-is-legal/>)

4/14/20 ([Cameron Anderson's post on Mr. Biswas](#))

I love this! I haven't completely finished the book yet, but I'll be very interested to see what happens with the other characters (especially Shama and the kids) as well as Mr. Biswas. To me, Shama has been a figure of resilience throughout the book, though in a very different way. She doesn't want to change things or leave a legacy in the same way as Mr. Biswas does, but holding on to her dignity when faced with a mixture of Mr. Biswas and her gender requires a lot of resilience as well. Her story says a lot about the contradictions and complexities lived by women in overtly sexist conditions.

4/14/20 ([Walker Imwalle's post on the Brazilian Revolution](#))

Since you asked a question on whether this was a revolution, I'll leave my thoughts on that. I don't think a revolution always brings good things. I don't think that it's explicitly a regime change; it could be the leadup to a regime change, the response to one, or the regime change itself. Most importantly, I don't think a revolution is always successful. Because the Brazilian situation was brought on by social change and by a popular movement, I do think it could be classified as a revolution. I would argue, though, using the quote you had earlier, that Vargas did not bring the revolution, he was brought in by the revolution. There was a revolutionary

movement, but when Vargas was elected to power, he stalled and essentially overturned it—because of Vargas, the attempted revolution failed.

4/14/20 ([Frannie Espositos' Babel post](#))

One of the most interesting things you brought up was the disproportionate impact of the events and how it relates to communication. I agree completely that emotion is used as a method of communication (and often misunderstood) but I'm curious to hear your thoughts on how the level of impact also relates to language and how language relates to hegemony. I think that language and power are inextricably linked, and this movie does a fantastic job of showing that. Because of the power of America (and previously Britain), there are more English speakers. A greater effort is made to understand and speak English: for instance Amelia must learn to speak English; the bus conductor speaks English; the Americans don't learn Arabic to help them out in their situation. In fact, they don't need to. The Americans have access to their language when they are in crisis. And they get the closest thing to a happy ending in the movie, while characters whose communication isn't privileged face greater suffering.

4/21/20 ([Kieran Casey's narcotrafficking post](#))

This is an interesting post, particularly in the context of the opioid crisis. While I definitely agree that the drug trafficking issue is unfortunately unavoidable in a talk about US/Latin American relations, most illegal opiates actually arrive in the US via the Middle East and Asia. The US is struggling with opium more than any other drug at the moment. I sometimes wonder why we're still so laser-focused on Latin America when we think about drug trafficking. That said, it is true that cartel leaders like Pablo Escobar had a lot of exposure and Hollywood certainly capitalized on it. I'm not sure whether that's the only reason, or whether immigration goals or other factors play in, but I'm very curious to hear others' thoughts, so if anyone sees this and wants to reply, please do so! (Source: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/ondcp/global-heroin-market>)

4/21/20 ([Will Yeo's Biswas post](#))

The parallel you draw between the book and immigration is an interesting one. I definitely see Mr. Biswas as a migrant in the sense that he moves from one place to another many times throughout the book. I think this connection is especially strong in the move to the estate at Shorthills and then the retreat. Shorthills had a lot of classic pull factors for Mr. Biswas, such as

economic promise. However, it didn't work out too well, and Mr. Biswas ended up fleeing due to a number of push factors, such as economic hardship, lack of freedom, and instability/chaos. Despite his migration inside of Trinidad, I think the fact that Mr. Biswas never tried to leave the country, despite having a motive, an invitation, and an example in his former editor, is really telling for US readers today. The decision to uproot your whole family and leave your country is not one people take lightly, and they'll endure a lot of hardship before they do that.