

The Student Journal of Latin American Studies: Avenue for Student Research

by STEVE KARSON and NICHOLAS WOODWARD

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SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2008, THE *Student Journal of Latin American Studies* (*SJoLAS*) has provided an outlet for student research on topics relating to Latin America.

The journal is dedicated to publishing original research from students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels from across the globe. It stands out as one of the few venues for students to bring a fresh perspective to themes new and old and to make valuable contributions to the canon of existing knowledge, despite being confronted with limited avenues for presenting their work.

In the spring of 2008, a group of students at the University of Texas at Austin met to discuss the formation of a student-led and -run journal to showcase original research from students about Latin America. After a period of exploration into the academic publishing community, the students began to organize and garner support for a journal that would be unique in its focus. Thanks in large part to support from the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies and the College of Liberal Arts, the first edition of the journal was released in print and online in the spring of 2009.

As the only student-operated journal of its kind, *SJoLAS* has relied on the dedicated efforts of undergraduate and graduate students across a broad range of disciplines, from the social sciences such

as sociology and anthropology to art history, economics, and even social work. The staff of the journal comprises teams of editors who carefully review article submissions and shepherd the chosen researchers through a rigorous process of revision, contributing insight and recommendations based on their own fields. These talented and hard-working students bring their respective knowledge and abilities into the collaboration that makes the journal truly interdisciplinary.

The process of review is the most involved phase of the editorial board's work. In the fall of each year, the editing staff puts out a call for submissions to universities and Latin American Studies centers across the world. In previous years the journal has had anywhere from 10–50 submissions by the December deadline. The editorial board reviews the original round of submissions and makes a short list of articles that demonstrate insight and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on Latin America.

From this short list, experts are chosen as readers for each article, depending on the subject of the submission. Often, readers are recruited from the University of Texas, which has a wealth of Latin Americanist faculty. Given the diverse subject matter of the submissions, however, the journal also recruits readers from institutions nationwide. For a previous submission on criminology, for which UT has no department, the journal contacted the Criminal Justice Department at the University of Houston–Downtown, which supplied two faculty readers.

Readers like these review the work to make sure it is of sound quality; this is the most instructive part of the publication process, given the level of expertise of reader feedback to the authors.

If the article is reviewed positively, we then communicate the readers' concerns, questions, and comments to the author, who has one month to make the appropriate changes. After a final round of revisions, the authors are provided with proofs, and they finalize their publication with *SJofLAS*.

To date *SJofLAS* has published two editions and completed work on the third in May 2012. The articles published in the first two editions reflect the breadth in both the Latin American themes covered and the backgrounds of the published authors. Women's rights in rural Guatemala, interethnic relations in seventeenth-century Chile, the economics of fair trade in modern-day Peru, and architecture in postrevolutionary Cuba are just some of the topics discussed. The student authors of these articles and others pursue study in their respective disciplines at academic institutions across the United States, England, and even Japan. They represent a broad spectrum of scholars from around the world who also cross gender, racial, and ethnic lines.

The third edition will continue the journal's mission of collecting and promoting original research related to Latin America from a wide range of academic fields. As with previous editions, it will be placed in the UT Digital Repository for long-term access online. Shortly after publication, *SJofLAS* editors will begin work on the next edition, with the goals of expanding the call for submissions, including more reviewers to bring in new perspectives, and, finally, increasing readership and efforts to promote academic research by students.

As editors of the journal, we appreciate the opportunities afforded by our proximity to the University of Texas at Austin and its faculty and staff. More important, we appreciate the research itself. Although we publish only a small fraction of the articles submitted, we have seen an impressive variety of research and have witnessed the thriving interest in Latin America. There exists a dearth of support for young Latin Americanists, and we hope to continue providing an avenue for their participation in the years to come. ☀

If you are interested in becoming a reader or submitting to the *Student Journal of Latin American Studies*, please contact us with questions or submissions at SJofLAS@gmail.com.

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Student Journal of Latin American Studies online.



The editorial team at work (left to right): Steve Karson, Nicholas Woodward, Affonso Reis, and Matthew Drews. Not pictured: Allison Ramirez and Corinna Jay.