

2010-2011 Annual PILAS Report

By Andrew Tillman and Catriona McAllister, Co-Presidents

2010-11 PILAS Committee

This year's committee included eight members: Catriona McAllister and Andrew Tillman (Co-Presidents), Lucy Bell (Secretary), Stella Krepp (Treasurer), Katy Critchfield and Joey Whitfield (Social Events Coordinators), Juan Pablo Scarfi (Keynote Organiser), and Cara Levey (Past President). With the exception of Dr Levey from the University of Leeds all members were based at the University of Cambridge. As expected of a PILAS Committee, they came from a variety of disciplines, including the social sciences, cultural studies and history.

2011 PILAS Conference

This year's conference was held on the 27-29th June. The general theme was "Legacies of the Past, Challenges of the Present: Inequality and Marginality in Latin America." Engagement with the theme was optional because we, like recent committees, believe that the conference should be an inclusive event in which postgraduates can present on any aspect of their research.

The conference had an excellent turnout with 95 attendees, 54 of whom presented papers in the conference's 19 panels. We should note that numbers were slightly down from 2010, but this decrease in attendance was due, for the most part, to an unusual number of last minute cancellations.¹

The conference also included two keynote addresses, a pre-conference keynote address entitled "From Nonsynchronism to 'Posthegemony': A Brief History of Contemporary Latin American Space through Film" by Dr Geoffrey Kantaris (University of Cambridge) and a conference keynote address entitled "Race, Nation, Mestizaje and Genomics in Latin America" by Professor Peter Wade (University of Manchester).

We also organized events both before and after the conference. During the first day three documentary shorts were screened, including *Hair Expectations* by the student filmmaker Ana Paula Figueiredo (University of Manchester). After panels ended we arranged punting on the River Cam.

Finally, as in past years, PILAS sponsored many social events to compliment the academic activities. A wine reception was held on the first day and a free dinner and party was held at

¹ Two past presidents confirmed that the number of last minute cancellations we received was unusual.

Lucy Cavendish College on the second day of the conference. The party was particularly memorable due to a wonderful display of salsa dancing skills by Professor Wade.

The general ethos of the PILAS Conference is a supportive and stimulating *encuentro* in which postgraduates can connect both academically and socially. As we received a great deal of positive feedback from attendees – many of them expressing how much they enjoyed meeting fellow Latin Americanists and hearing the presentations of their colleagues – we believe the 2011 PILAS Conference was a success.

Additional PILAS Activities

In an effort to make PILAS socially and academically more active we initiated a new autumn event. Working together with the Latin Americanists of the British Library, we held on 19th November an afternoon session at the BL on “Resources for Research on Latin America: the British Library and Beyond.” 26 PILAS members attended, learning how to make the most of the British Library’s collection for their own area of research, and also met fellow postgraduates from other universities. The presentation given and resources compiled by Dr Aquiles Alencar-Brayner can now be found on our website. It is our hope that future PILAS committees continue to hold an autumn event, whether it be at the British Library or elsewhere.

As in past years, we also hosted the PILAS@SLAS Lunch for postgraduates attending the annual SLAS Conference. Held on the first day of the conference its primary goal was to provide a social space in which postgraduates could meet and get to know one another. A brief workshop on presentation skills was also offered and led by Cambridge PhD candidates Catriona McAllister and Dan Carter. In total 27 students attended.

Finally, we continued to maintain, update and develop the website, adding to the resources section and – in a moment of technological bravery – including a twitter account on the webpage. It is our hope that future committees will make use of twitter, especially since it can encourage dialogue and the sharing of news among postgraduates.

2011 Annual General Meeting and Elections

The AGM and Elections – held on the last day of the conference – were chaired by Catriona McAllister and Andrew Tillman and attended by 23 PILAS members. After a summary of the year’s events and an overview of the financial health of PILAS, the floor was opened to questions, concerns and ideas regarding the future of PILAS. Many matters were discussed, including collecting and sharing the email addresses of conference participants, providing biographies of panelists, and establishing regional and university PILAS representatives. The desirability and feasibility of such ideas should be considered by future PILAS committees.

With regards to elections, a call for bids for the 2011-12 Committee was announced via email and posted on our website six weeks prior to the deadline for proposals. We received one formal bid from a group of students at the University of Oxford. Offering a thoughtful proposal to run PILAS, the Oxford bid was voted on and approved unanimously.

Accordingly, the 2011-12 PILAS Committee and Conference will be at the University of Oxford. To maintain continuity between committees, both Catriona McAllister and Andrew Tillman will serve as Past Presidents, an advisory role established in 2009. We congratulate the new president, María Mancilla García, and wish her and the new committee the best of luck in running PILAS next year!

Agradecimientos

Finally, we would like to express our thanks and gratitude to:

...everyone at Cambridge, including our committee, the Centre of Latin American Studies, panel chairs, David Lehmann and Julie Coimbra, for helping to facilitate such a successful 2011 conference.

...Christy Palmer for her skilled technical support throughout the year.

...the SLAS Committee for their continued strong support of PILAS.

...and all PILAS members for making our community so vibrant and diverse!