PROPOSAL for Graduate Certificate Program in Latin American Studies

CLAS is one of the oldest and strongest area studies programs in the country, and a designated National Resource Center for Latin America by the U.S. Department of Education. We serve as a resource for faculty and students in departments and disciplines across campus. For more information on the program see www.vanderbilt.edu/clas.

The Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) has offered graduate certificates since the early 1980s; we reinvigorated the program over the last ten years. Since 2005, the LAS Graduate Certificate program has graduated 66 students, and currently has 19 students enrolled from anthropology, history, political science, sociology, and Spanish and Portuguese.

The Center for Latin American Studies Graduate Certificate seeks to equip students with a broad, interdisciplinary view of Latin America. The program allows students enrolled in a post-baccalaureate-degree program to document their specialization in Latin America and their language proficiency as well as to extend their studies beyond their disciplinary specialization. Students completing the certificate must fulfill the following requirements:

1. take at least 12 credit hours of interrelated graduate-level coursework in Latin American Studies as listed in the Graduate School Catalog, with at least 6 credit hours coming from outside the student’s home discipline. No more than 6 credit hours of specifically-named courses required for the primary degree may be applied toward the Certificate. The courses must form an intellectually cohesive whole. Independent study courses must include a research paper in order to qualify for credit hours.

2. demonstrate conversational or reading proficiency in Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous Latin American language. Proficiency will be demonstrated by an oral examination administered by a Vanderbilt Professor or Lecturer (not a graduate student) following ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) guidelines and resulting in a rating of at least “intermediate-mid.”

3. participate in a minimum of five extracurricular activities sponsored by CLAS. A short paper reflecting on the insights gained from participating has to be submitted to the Associate Director of CLAS.

Students wishing to enroll must complete an “Intent to Enroll” form, which must be signed by the student, the director of the LAS Certificate Program, and the director of the Graduate Program (DGS) for the degree program in which the student is enrolled. A signed copy of the form has to be submitted to the Graduate School (richard.hoover@vanderbilt.edu) and to the University Registrar’s Office (university.registrar@vanderbilt.edu).

CLAS Associate Director Helena Simonett will manage the Certificate program, enroll students, monitor their progress, and certify their fulfillment of the requirements.
COMPARABLE PROGRAMS AT OTHER SCHOOLS

FIU LACC Graduate Certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies:
1. A total of 15 graduated credit hours with a grade of B or better. Courses must be selected from the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Approved Course List or be approved by the LACC Certificate Advisor. Courses may include those within the student’s major, but must also be selected from at least two disciplines outside the student’s major.
2. Each student is required to demonstrate proficiency in either Spanish or Portuguese, or in another regional language such as French, Haitian Creole, or Dutch when justified by research interests and the approval of the graduate director.

Pittsburgh CLAS Certificate in Latin American Studies:
1. Proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese or an Amerindian language of the region -- Ordinarily interpreted as a level of language proficiency equivalent to three years of college work. The student should be able to carry out research in the field and to easily converse with native speakers. Proficiency may have been attained through class work or informal education. Proficiency will be determined through an exam conducted by a faculty member of the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures or Linguistics.
2. TWO (2) courses in the student’s major department and FOUR (4) courses in at least two departments or schools outside the student's major -- Graduate students who are registered in a department or school in which Latin American area studies courses are not offered can complete the Latin American Certificate by taking 6 Latin American area courses in at least three separate schools/departments.
3. Interdisciplinary Research Paper in the Field of Latin American Studies -- The research paper should show interdisciplinary competence in the field of Latin American Studies; it should not be a narrow essay, circumscribed in scope to the limits of the candidate's major.

UF CLAS Graduate Certificate in Latin American Studies:
The Graduate Certificate in Latin American Studies requires 12–15 credit hours of Latin American area studies courses. The Certificate is available to M.A./M.S./PhD. students in the Colleges of Agricultural and Life Sciences; Business Administration; Design, Construction and Planning; Education; Fine Arts; Journalism and Communications; and Liberal Arts and Sciences.

12 credit hours of Latin American coursework are distributed as follows:
-3 credit hours of LAS 6938 Graduate Seminar in Latin American Studies
-6 credit hours of Latin American coursework within the major department (to the extent possible)
-At least 3 credit hours of Latin American coursework in at least one department outside the major
-Thesis or dissertation on a Latin American Studies topic
Graduate Certificate students are required to have intermediate-high proficiency in Spanish, Portuguese, or Haitian Creole. Language courses at the 3000 level or higher count toward the Certificate.
The Latin American Studies program offers interdisciplinary graduate instruction in Latin American studies in cooperation with the Departments of Anthropology, Economics, History, History of Art, Political Science, Sociology, and Spanish and Portuguese. Affiliated faculty from other schools, including Peabody College (education and human development), Vanderbilt Law School, Owen School (management), School of Medicine, and School of Nursing also participate in the program. Students work toward an M.A. in Latin American studies, a master’s or doctoral degree in one of the related programs with a minor in Latin American studies, or a certificate in Latin American studies.

Candidates for the M.A. in Latin American studies choose a thesis (24 hours and thesis) or non-thesis (33 hours) option. Each option includes Latin American Studies 290. While students may spend part of their third or fourth semester doing research in Latin America, subject to approval by the program, the dean of the College of Arts and Science, and the Graduate School, the candidate for the master’s degree must complete four semesters of graduate study as a full-time student. Master’s degree candidates are expected to demonstrate language ability in Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous Latin American language; this means advanced ability in one of the three languages and intermediate ability in another.

Students combining a master’s degree from a related discipline with a minor in Latin American studies select area courses as their minor and knowledge of either Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous Latin American language. Doctoral candidates with a minor in Latin American studies must have a reading and speaking competence in either Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous Latin American language, and a technical reading knowledge of another. The doctoral minor consists of not less than 15 hours, selected from area courses in two disciplines.

A certificate in Latin American studies is awarded with either the M.A. or Ph.D. degree upon fulfillment of the following requirements: completion of (1) completion of at least 15 hours of course work across two or more disciplines and demonstration of language competence, 12 semester hours of interrelated graduate-level coursework in Latin American Studies as listed in the Graduate School Catalog, with at least 6 hours coming from outside the student’s home discipline; (2) demonstrated language competency in Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous Latin American language; and (3) attendance at a minimum of five academic events.

A joint master of arts and master of business administration degree program is available. Students apply both to Owen Graduate School of Management and the Latin American Studies program. Successful applicants must be accepted both by the Owen School and the Graduate School. The first year of study is devoted to the M.B.A. program (30 hours), the second to coursework in Latin American studies (24 hours), and the final year is divided between M.B.A. studies and the writing of the master’s thesis for the M.A. degree. Interested students should contact the Latin American Studies program.
### I. Mission Statement

The Center for Latin American Studies Graduate Certificate seeks to equip students with a broad, interdisciplinary view of Latin America. The program allows students enrolled in a post-baccalaureate-degree program to document their specialization in Latin America and their language proficiency as well as to extend their studies beyond their disciplinary specialization.

### II. Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to do research on Latin America in various disciplines of the social sciences and humanities using a wide range of scholarly resources. By extending their studies beyond their disciplinary specialization, they will become familiar with different disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches and resources that address the complexities and diversity of Latin America.
2. Students will demonstrate proficiency in one language of Latin America (Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous language).

3. Students will broaden their knowledge of Latin America beyond their disciplinary specialization by participating in a minimum of five extracurricular activities sponsored by CLAS.

III. Assessment Measures (Please provide rubrics or assessment tools if used)

Assessment Measure(s) for Student Learning Outcome 1

Students are required to take at least 12 credit hours of interrelated graduate-level coursework in Latin American Studies as listed in the Graduate School Catalog, with at least 6 credit hours coming from outside the student’s home discipline. No more than 6 credit hours of specifically-named courses required for the primary degree may be applied toward the Certificate. The courses must form an intellectually cohesive whole. Independent study courses must include a research paper in order to qualify for credit hours. Final projects or papers will be evaluated by external faculty reviewers, all of them experts on Latin America. The scores will be determined on the basis of a quantitative rubric adapted from Linda Suskie (2004), Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide. Students must receive a score of 80% or better.

Assessment Measure(s) for Student Learning Outcome 2

Students’ oral proficiency in one language of Latin America (Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous language) will be tested, using ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) proficiency guidelines.

Assessment Measure(s) for Student Learning Outcome 3

Students are required to reflect on the insights gained from participating in five CLAS-sponsored extracurricular events by writing a short paper that will be reviewed by the Associate Director of CLAS.
SUPERIOR
Speakers at the Superior level are able to communicate in the language with accuracy and fluency in order to participate fully and effectively in conversations on a variety of topics in formal and informal settings from both concrete and abstract perspectives. They discuss their interests and special fields of competence, explain complex matters in detail, and provide lengthy and coherent narrations, all with ease, fluency, and accuracy. They explain their opinions on a number of topics of importance to them, such as social and political issues, and provide structured argument to support their opinions. They are able to construct and develop hypotheses to explore alternative possibilities. When appropriate, they use extended discourse without unnaturally lengthy hesitation to make their point, even when engaged in abstract elaborations. Such discourse, while coherent, may still be influenced by the Superior speakers’ own language patterns, rather than those of the target language.

Superior speakers command a variety of interactive and discourse strategies, such as turn-taking and separating main ideas from supporting information through the use of syntactic and lexical devices, as well as intonational features such as pitch, stress and tone. They demonstrate virtually no pattern of error in the use of basic structures. However, they may make sporadic errors, particularly in low-frequency structures and in some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal speech and writing. Such errors, if they do occur, do not distract the native interlocutor or interfere with communication.

ADVANCED HIGH
Speakers at the Advanced-High level perform all Advanced-level tasks with linguistic ease, confidence and competence. They are able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in all time frames. In addition, Advanced-High speakers handle the tasks pertaining to the Superior level but cannot sustain performance at that level across a variety of topics. They can provide a structured argument to support their opinions, and they may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. They can discuss some topics abstractly, especially those relating to their particular interests and special fields of expertise, but in general, they are more comfortable discussing a variety of topics concretely.

Advanced-High speakers may demonstrate a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms or for limitations in vocabulary by the confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing, circumlocution, and illustration. They use precise vocabulary and intonation to express meaning and often show great fluency and ease of speech. However, when called on to perform the complex tasks associated with the Superior level over a variety of topics, their language will at times break down or prove inadequate, or they may avoid the task altogether, for example, by resorting to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis.

ADVANCED MID
Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse.

Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or an unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar. Communicative strategies such as circumlocution or rephrasing are often employed for this purpose. The speech of Advanced-Mid speakers performing Advanced-level tasks is marked by substantial flow. Their vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature, except in the case of a particular area of specialization or interest. Dominant language discourse structures tend to recede, although discourse may still reflect the oral paragraph structure of their own language rather than that of the target language.

Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. They are readily understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the quality and/or quantity of their speech will generally decline. Advanced-Mid speakers are often able to state an opinion or cite conditions; however, they lack the ability to consistently provide a structured argument in extended discourse. Advanced-Mid speakers may use a number of delaying strategies, resort to narration, description, explanation or anecdote, or simply attempt to avoid the linguistic demands of Superior-level tasks.
ADVANCED LOW
Speakers at the Advanced-Low level are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance.

Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained. Communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution may be employed in such instances. In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph. Structure of the dominant language is still evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of the speaker’s own language rather than that of the target language.

While the language of Advanced-Low speakers may be marked by substantial, albeit irregular flow, it is typically somewhat strained and tentative, with noticeable self-correction and a certain ‘grammatical roughness.’ The vocabulary of Advanced-Low speakers is primarily generic in nature.

Advanced-Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion, and it can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may be achieved through repetition and restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

INTERMEDIATE MID
Speakers at the Intermediate-Mid level are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging.

Intermediate-Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies, such as circumlocution.

Intermediate-Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to make utterances of sentence length and some strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. Because of inaccuracies in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, misunderstandings can occur, but Intermediate-Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

INTERMEDIATE LOW
Speakers at the Intermediate-Low level are able to handle successfully a limited number of uncomplicated communicative tasks by creating with the language in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to some of the concrete exchanges and predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture. These topics
relate to basic personal information covering, for example, self and family, some daily activities and personal preferences, as well as to some immediate needs, such as ordering food and making simple purchases. At the Intermediate-Low level, speakers are primarily reactive and struggle to answer direct questions or requests for information, but they are also able to ask a few appropriate questions.

Intermediate-Low speakers express personal meaning by combining and recombining into short statements what they know and what they hear from their interlocutors. Their utterances are often filled with hesitancy and inaccuracies as they search for appropriate linguistic forms and vocabulary while attempting to give form to the message. Their speech is characterized by frequent pauses, ineffective reformulations and self-corrections. Their pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax are strongly influenced by their first language but, in spite of frequent misunderstandings that require repetition or rephrasing, Intermediate-Low speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors, particularly by those accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

NOVICE HIGH
Speakers at the Novice-High level are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs. Novice-High speakers respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions when asked to do so.

Novice-High speakers are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes incomplete sentences in the present, may be hesitant or inaccurate. On the other hand, since these utterances are frequently only expansions of learned material and stock phrases, they may sometimes appear surprisingly fluent and accurate. These speakers' first language may strongly influence their pronunciation, as well as their vocabulary and syntax when they attempt to personalize their utterances. Frequent misunderstandings may arise but, with repetition or rephrasing, Novice-High speakers can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors used to non-natives. When called on to handle simply a variety of topics and perform functions pertaining to the Intermediate level, a Novice-High speaker can sometimes respond in intelligible sentences, but will not be able to sustain sentence level discourse.

NOVICE MID
Speakers at the Novice-Mid level communicate minimally and with difficulty by using a number of isolated words and memorized phrases limited by the particular context in which the language has been learned. When responding to direct questions, they may utter only two or three words at a time or an occasional stock answer. They pause frequently as they search for simple vocabulary or attempt to recycle their own and their interlocutor’s words. Because of hesitations, lack of vocabulary, inaccuracy, or failure to respond appropriately, Novice-Mid speakers may be understood with great difficulty even by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives. When called on to handle topics by performing functions associated with the Intermediate level, they frequently resort to repetition, words from their native language, or silence.

NOVICE LOW
Speakers at the Novice-Low level have no real functional ability and, because of their pronunciation, they may be unintelligible. Given adequate time and familiar cues, they may be able to exchange greetings, give their identity, and name a number of familiar objects from their immediate environment. They are unable to perform functions or handle topics pertaining to the Intermediate level, and cannot therefore participate in a true conversational exchange.
Dear Jonathan,

I write to report that CGE has approved the proposed revision of the Latin American Studies graduate certificate program. While the new proposal lowers requirements by 3 credit hours, it maintains rigor by requiring that 6 credit hours must be above and beyond other requirements, and a distribution of courses outside the home discipline. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Betsey

Betsey A. Robinson
Chair, Committee on Graduate Education
Associate Professor and Acting Chair, History of Art