My colleague in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Professor Monique Lemaître, retired in May and I am pleased to accept the invitation to write a brief summary of her many scholarly achievements.

Dr. Lemaître has published five books and some twenty articles in the most renowned journals in her field in the United States and Latin America, as well as a variety of chapters in book compilations, including three she has co-edited or edited.

Monique Lemaître’s first book, a revision of her 1974 dissertation written at the University of Pittsburgh, was published in 1976 by U.N.A.M. [Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México]. This book analyzed the poetry and poetics of the Mexican writer Octavio Paz (1914-98), who received the Nobel Prize in 1990. Lemaître’s study analyzes the poetic praxis and theory of Paz’s work, uncovering the various cultural, spiritual and geographic characteristics of his poetry, and contextualizing Paz within the literary movements of the 20th Century.

Monique Lemaître’s literary criticism has also focused on the topic of women’s liberation in Latin America, a topic of great scholarly and personal conviction. Her study, *Skármeta, una narrativa de la liberación* (Santiago: Pehuén, 1991), was inspired by Skármeta’s realistic and lyrical depiction of a key event of the Sandinista Revolution in the late seventies. In *Skármeta, una narrativa de la liberación* she is particularly interested in analyzing how the Chilean author’s novels and short stories suggest ways of reinvigorating the fight for women’s liberation in Latin American societies. Lemaître’s reading stresses the need for male participation in the process for equal rights in the continent, following Skármeta’s own implications in his fiction.

Lemaître’s testimonial account of Mexican activist Elvira Carrillo Puerto in *Elvira Carrillo Puerto: la Monja Roja del Mayo* (Monterey: Ediciones Castillo, 1998) drew praise from the celebrated writer Elena Poniatowska. In the prologue to the first edition, Poniatowska wrote that Elvira Carrillo Puerto was a logical subject for Lemaître because both women valued social activism and demonstrated unusual degrees of devotion to their causes. Professor Lemaître’s interest in testimonial literature has carried over into the classroom where her courses on the topic have been highly regarded by students.

Lemaître’s publications include a collection of twelve of her essays, published as *Texturas. Ensayos de crítica literaria* (Mexico City: Editorial Oasis, 1986), as well as a recent book, *Viaje a Trlice* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 2001), which is a tour de force. In *Texturas*, she incorporates two studies of César Vallejo’s *Trlice’s* poems, which appear as the building blocks for his larger work. *Trlice* was the second book of poems by Vallejo (1892-1938) and some of them are among his least accessible. Dr. Lemaître’s learned interpretation of each of the seventy-seven poems in Vallejo’s opus is a model of good scholarship. Her analysis is both a thorough exercise in hermeneutics and a beautiful homage to the great Peruvian poet.

Dr. Lemaître’s scholarly work has focused on a variety of canonical writers of Latin America, exhibiting a wide range of theoretical approaches and interests. She has analyzed the work of Roberto Fernández Retamar (Cuba), Angeles Mastretta (Mexico), Isabel Allende (Chile), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Julio Cortázar (Argentina), Elena Garro (Mexico), Roque Dalton (El Salvador), Elena Poniatowska (Mexico), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia) and Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina). She has also written about the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo.

Although Professor Lemaître has retired from the classroom, she remains an active literary critic. She is currently preparing a book-length analysis of the literary style of the famous Comunicados [official bulletins] of Subcomandante Marcos, leader of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional [Zapatista Army for National Liberation] in Chiapas, Mexico, a fascinating subject, as the ideologies of the signifier and the signified collide and/or are complemented in Marcos’s discourse.

The faculty associates of the Center and colleagues in Foreign Languages and Literatures wish Professor Lemaître great success in scholarly studies as well as a peaceful, rewarding and long retirement.

Eloy E. Merino is Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures.
To Our Readers …

By Michael J. Gonzales

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Encuentros and I have been asked to write a few lines. The Center’s newsletter has attempted to summarize (and therefore chronicle) our principal programs and accomplishments. Reading through past issues I recall many interesting and sometimes fascinating talks, seminars, concerts, conferences, and collaborations. Since we are the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, we’ve tried to strike a balance by inviting to campus distinguished Latino writers, such as Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Tino Villanueva, and Luis Rodriguez (a couple of times), as well as authorities on Latin American Studies. Here the list is long and includes scholars like Tulio Halperín, John Coatsworth, Walter LaFeber, Mary Miller, Jorge Klor de Alva, and writers Elena Poniatowska, Antonio Skármeta and Sergio Ramírez. The Center has also provided a forum for its faculty associates to discuss their research, and Encuentros has regularly featured summaries of NIU faculty research projects, especially those funded by the Center.

We’ve managed to support, however modestly, numerous research projects by faculty associates and graduate students, and occasionally even undergraduates. These mini-grants have served as seed money for projects that eventually developed into major research projects, such as Winifred Creamer’s work on Caral, Peru, the oldest urban site in pre-Colombian America. Center grants have also allowed Gregory Schmidt to collect data on electoral results in Peru on a timely basis, and Samuel Amaral to put the finishing touches on his monograph on Argentine agrarian history. Grants to graduate student have allowed them to gather data essential to their masters theses and dissertations.

The Center’s sponsorship of concerts by Mexican ensembles Los Folkloristas and Tlen Huican on several occasions have exposed the campus to the beauty and spirit of Latin American music. The recent concert by the Spanish Gypsy Flamenco troop Taller de Compás delighted everyone, including local Spaniards who accepted performers’ invitation to dance. The Center’s sponsorship of plays, recitals, work shops, and student conferences, have also contributed to campus intellectual and cultural life.

This issue on Encuentros features a brief tribute to Monique Lemaître who retired in May from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Monique’s name appears frequently in past newsletters. She has contributed articles on her research, speakers (some of whom, such as Elena Poniatowska, she helped bring to campus), and interviews with important visitors. This issue reprints an interview Monique did for us with the Mexican novelist Gustavo Sainz, who the Center brought to campus as a visiting professor in 1991. Monique’s many contributions to the Center and to Encuentros are deeply appreciated.

Michael J. Gonzales is Director of the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, and Presidential Research Professor.
Interview with Gustavo Sainz

By Monique Lamaitre

In 1991 the Center nominated Gustavo Sainz, one of Latin America’s leading novelists, to be NIU’s first distinguished visiting professor under a program established by former Vice President and Provost Kendall Baker. Professor Sainz spent Spring semester of 1991 teaching a graduate seminar on the work of Carlos Fuentes, his close friend, and a lecture course on Chicano literature. Sainz presented a public lecture on campus on April 2, 1991 which included an extensive reading from his novel, La sala de la serpiente (Long Live the Serpent!). The following interview was conducted by Professor Lamaitre and first published in the Center’s newsletter in 1991.

ML: Much of your literary production deals with the coming of age of Mexican lower middle class urban males in the late 50s and early 60s. You have said in other interviews that your generation was one of the last to have grown up with Mexican music, Mexican films, and Mexican journalism, and yet, the inter-text of several of your novels does show a pervasive U.S. influence, the influence of both the “Beat” and the “Hippie” generations. Could you elaborate on this phenomenon and how it might be linked to your early interest in Chicano literature?

GS: As a man of the 20th century, I can’t deny my North Americanization no matter how hard I may try to hold a critical and defensive point of view. But, if I have been influenced by the Beat Generation and probably even by the hippies, others, such as the existentialists and the New French novelists, have also had an impact upon me, have influenced the Italian neo-realists, the British angry young men, the German 63 group, the Viennese School, the North American post-modernists, Kurosawa’s films, the Greek and Latin classics, Latin American culture, and who knows how many more structures and trends, without, however, postponing or setting aside Mexico and every Mexican, the unreachable within Mexico’s reality and concept, and the undefinable of what is Mexican. Perhaps that is why one of the recurrent topics of my narrative is the colored human being, which might also be referred to as the topic of the split personality within a culture which is itself split, the topic of a divided self in a divided, multi-parcelled world. This is where Chicano literature enters the picture, not only as a novelty production in the contemporary literary market, but also the topic of death, the topic of the imaginary autobiography, of Mexico and what is Mexican, or the States and the Anglo, and in a more critical, almost neurotic manner, the problem of language, how and for whom to write. Among its many other objectives, to write in the language of the exploiters in order to precisely, despire, and bring forth certain questions...

ML: One of your most recent novels, Macho en llamas (Boy Aflame) ends with a prayer directed to the two volcanoes which overlook Mexico City, the Popocatepetl and the Ixtaccihuatl, also known as the “Kneeling Warrior” and the “Sleeping Woman” and to all they symbolize. I am aware that your father was an accomplished mountain climber, and that you often accompanied him in his expeditions, but I seem to detect a growing trend in your literature towards the indigenous deep roots of every Mexican. One of the problems of our Latino students centrally factures that of finding their own identity. Did you go through a similar struggle, and how do you explain the prevalent trend, not only among many artists and intellectuals in Mexico today, but also among the common people to return to their roots, to rescue that part of themselves which they have forgotten or that they now are trying to reclaim?

GS: You stress the fact that this is another topic, the “roots topic” perhaps because we are beginning to be aware of the tremendous disinformation in which we live, of the brutal disinformation to which politicians and the military subject us. The feeling of bewilderment which invades us when, for instance, the currency is devalued in Latin America. Why? How did we arrive at this situation? Then we would like to think in historical terms but we have no knowledge of our history, it is unknown to us, and it is difficult to pinpoint the fundamental textbooks that we should read. Well, this is the feeling, if we are to generalize, which is more common among large groups of the population.

ML: Could you tell us something about your novel which is about to come out and was written, I believe, during your year at the University of Iowa, where you were a member of the Writer’s Workshop? Its title was one of the several titles you had envisioned for your first novel, Guapo, wasn’t it?

GS: Yes, it is titled A la sala de la serpiente (Long Live the Serpent!), and my editors say that it will be on the bookstore shelves on March 18, 1991. But the curious thing, among many others which surrounded this book, is that when I was writing it in 1988, as I was referring to events that had taken place 20 years before, I looked through my diaries and found that in 1964 I was already describing this novel with blinding precision in regards to its general structure and content. This implies a nearly absurd situation because of its apparent unreality which could approximately be described as follows: A 24-year old novelist who knows in an intense and precise manner not only that he wants to be a writer, but the number of books that he will write during his life, how they will be titled, what style and structural peculiarities they will have, and so on. You might think that I am fantasizing, fictionalizing, but no, the alarming, the unsettling thing about it is, precisely, that I am not.

ML: There are many questions which will remain unasked and unanswered given the limits of this interview, but since you are teaching a graduate seminar on the prominent Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, and since your great admiration for his works is well known, could you say something about the importance of Carlos Fuentes in world literature today?

GS: Carlos Fuentes’ first books taught me that literary work is a perpetual scandal. They taught me to see, as if reading them fitted me with a special set of spectacles. With him I learned that writing fiction is always an ability to imagine and approach things, a remorse of habitus, a suspicion of ideological greed, a voracity for signs and an enthusiasm for others. He taught me that writing fiction is the only way to support a kind of insupportable intolerance of oneself and of the present, of everything, finally, that is me, what I think is me, and of what I know or think I know. He taught me to have a degree of certainty about the necessity of modifying it all, and also the certainty that this can be accomplished through imagination, hardship, and crisis. He taught me that the writer’s job is to commit himself not simply to revealing himself as he is, but to treating time, images, and things in their fragility, vibrancy, and provisional aspect. He taught me that language is neither fetish nor tautology but life itself, relationships and risks, error and anxiety, rigor and trauma of habit. He also taught me that what I write—and my life at the edge of this exercise—should leave a small opening so that something distinct may filter through, something of which I am unaware, of which neither he nor I am aware, or of which we are insufficiently aware.

And thus it was that I came, desperately covetous, upon Cambio de piel (Change of Skin), an eccentric space based upon the destruction of geocentric and anthropocentric illusions permanently transforming themselves... A literary genre where there is no rule of law mandating that the aesthetic conviction of which a work partakes forms its character. ... A language organ which is capable of vitality from the very moment in which it assimilates all the data of experience,... A procedure that leads anew to the sources of that mythical knowledge which Levy Strauss set forth in the operation of the bicouleur: whether on the intellectual plane or, above all, on the practical, technical plane... A field of action where we are given the possibility of ordering the disorder (the truly tragic and comic in the jungle of culturally acquired data) of our life... A narrative limit that implies a genre in crisis or that returns the art of the novel to all the possibilities of fiction.

Monique Lamaitre recently retired Professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

JIMMY SANTIAGO BACA

In 1994 the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies hosted talented poet, novelist, and screenwriter Jimmy Santiago Baca. Mr. Baca read from his novel, recited poetry, discussed his film “Blood in...Blood out...” and interacted with students over a three day period.

Mr. Baca is pictured with Professor Gonzales.

SANDRA CISNERSOS

In 1993 the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies hosted acclaimed writer Sandra Cisneros. Ms. Cisneros read from her short stories, discussed her recent novel, and met with students.

Ms. Cisneros is shown with Professor Gonzales.

Encuentros 2004 3
Faculty Publications and Activities

Karen Carrier
Assistant Professor, Literacy Education

Publications


Papers Presented
(2003) “Combining Language and Content Objectives to Support English Language Learners,” presented at the Twenty-Seventh Annual Statewide Conference for Teachers of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students, Oakbrook, IL.

Professional Activities
Led in-service workshops for teachers at Rochelle and DeKalb schools on how to work more effectively with students who are English language learners.

Louise Ciallella
Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Publications


Papers Presented

Winifred Creamer
Professor, Anthropology

Publications


Professional Accomplishments
National Science Foundation Grant No. 0211020
REU Supplement to NSF Grant No. 0211020

Lectures

Ibis Gómez-Vega
Associate Professor, English

Publications


Michael J. Gonzales
Presidential Research Professor, History, and Director of the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies

Publications

Papers Presented


Professional Accomplishments
Elected to the Nominating Committee of the American Historical Association, 2003-2005.
Elected to the Board of Editors of the Hispanic American Historical Review for a six-year term, 2005.

Peter Gutiérrez
Associate Professor, Psychology

Publications


To page 5
From page 4  “Suicide Risk Screening in an Urban High School.” Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior. (With Robin Watkins and Dale Collum)  

(forthcoming) “Appropriateness of the Multi-Attitude Suicide Tendency Scale for Non-White Individuals.” Assessment. 11, no. 1, 73-84. (With Augustine Osman, Beverly A. Kopper, and Francisco X. Barrios)  


(2003) “The Relationship between Exposure to Adolescent Suicide and Subsequent Suicide Risk.” Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior. 33, no. 1, 21-32. (With Robin L. Watkins)  

Papers Presented:  


Professional Activities:  

Named Consulting Editor and Editorial Board member of the journal Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior.

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Anne Hanley  
Assistant Professor, History  

Publications:  


Papers Presented:  


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Frances Jaeger  
Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures  

Publications:  

(forthcoming) “Introducción a ‘Rosa María Britton.’” In Juanamaria Cordones-Cook and Juana María Mercedes Jaramillo (eds.), mujeres en escena. Medellín: La Universidad de Antioquia Editorial.  


Papers Presented:  


Professional Activities:  

Participant in the NEH Summer Seminar “Critical Approaches to Hispanic Poetry at the Turn of the 21st Century” at University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, June-July 2003.

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Jorge Jeria  
Professor, Counseling, Adult and Health Education  

Publications:  


Papers Presented:  


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Jeff Kowalski  
Professor and Head of Art History Division  

Publications:  


Papers Presented:  


Professional Activities:  


To page 6

Encuentros 2004 5
Center Supported Graduate Student Research

The Democratic Regime of the Americas: Emerging Norms and Constraints in a Shifting Context
By David Goldberg

In 1980 no fewer than eighteen countries in the Western Hemisphere were ruled by repressive military or civilian regimes. Two decades later, with the notable exception of Cuba, virtually every country in the hemisphere has shifted to a minimally acceptable standard of procedural democracy. The Organization of American States (OAS) in concert with the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, and a variety of human rights and electoral oversight organizations have taken center stage in efforts to promote procedural democracy in the hemisphere.

This dramatic transformation of politics in the hemisphere occurred because of a combination of domestic and international causes. On the domestic front, alternatives to democracy have been almost entirely discarded. From the right, military and authoritarian rule have been characterized by extreme human rights abuses, a culture of fear and suspicion, and the inability to manage the economy. As a result of these failures, the military has been widely discredited as a viable political alternative. From the left, the fall of the Soviet Union weakened support for Marxist guerrilla groups as well as Communist Parties throughout the region.

At this historic juncture, the Organization of American States began to promote democracy more aggressively. Resolution 1080 of the OAS General Assembly supported democracy by calling for an emergency meeting of foreign ministers whenever democracy was threatened in the hemisphere.

The first application of Resolution 1080 occurred in the aftermath of the military coup that overthrew Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991. Nevertheless, the impetus for solving that crisis largely stemmed from U.S. concerns about Haitian immigration, as opposed to the restoration of democracy.

The second application of Resolution 1080 occurred in April, 1992 when Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori initiated an auto-golpe or self-coup. In the early 1990s, the Peruvian government was battling a brutal Maoist insurgency (Sendero Luminoso) as well as a failing economy. Fujimori’s suspension of the constitution and dismissal of the legislature was almost universally supported at home but condemned by Peru’s neighbors. In response to international pressure, Fujimori agreed to elections for a new constituent assembly. Without this crisis, many observers believe that Fujimori would not have had elections.

Less than a year after Fujimori’s auto-golpe, Guatemalan President Jorge Serrano attempted a similar maneuver but with far different results. Strong opposition from all sectors of civil society, disapproval from the military, and the strong opposition of the OAS forced Serrano’s resignation.

In 2000, President Fujimori returned to the regional spotlight with an unconstitutional and deeply polarizing bid for a third term. This attempt was greeted coolly by the OAS and most Latin American countries. Some states were reluctant to take a strong stand, however, because democracy had not been technically interrupted. Although a permanent OAS observer mission was dispatched to Lima, Resolution 1080 was not invoked. Fujimori’s government collapsed due to the exposure of corruption at the highest levels and the loss of political and popular support.

In September, 2001, the OAS adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The Charter expanded the definition of threats to democracy to include internal challenges such as those posed by Fujimori and Serrano. Threats now included any “alteration” in the constitutional framework of a nation that undermined democracy. The Charter threatened offending executives with immediate suspension of OAS membership. The Charter represented the culmination of a decade of efforts by the OAS and other actors to protect and defend procedural democracy in the Western Hemisphere.

In April 2002, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez was temporarily displaced in a coup only to be returned to power two days later. In the interim, condemnation of the interruption of democratic rule was virtually unanimous; with the notable exception of the United States. The strong regional response indicated the widespread support of procedural democracy.

In 2004, events in Haiti and Venezuela posed new test cases to the emerging “Democratic Regime of the Americas.” In Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide led left forces under murky circumstances following growing international pressure. U.S. support for Aristide’s resignation highlights the decisive role the U.S. plays in influencing regime change.

In Venezuela, attempts to force a referendum on the rule of President Hugo Chávez have overcome a series of obstacles. Although neither political party has the power to enforce its will, the status quo seems tenable for the remainder of Chávez’s term. The regime’s ability to find a democratic solution to the crisis will test its legitimacy.

David Goldberg is an Assistant Professor in Political Science at University of Wisconsin-Rock County. He completed his dissertation in the Department of Political Science in 2002.

from pg. 5

Guadalupe Luna
Professor, College of Law

Publications


Papers Presented

Gregory D. Schmidt
Professor, Political Science

Publications


Eloy E. Merino
Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Publications


Papers Presented

2003 “José Antonio en el discurso político de la falange contemporánea,” presented at IV Congreso de la Asociación Alemana de Hispanistas, University of Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany.

Eloy E. Merino
Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures

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Papers Presented

2003 “José Antonio en el discurso político de la falange contemporánea,” presented at IV Congreso de la Asociación Alemana de Hispanistas, University of Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany.

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Eloy E. Merino
Assistant Professor, Foreign Languages and Literatures

Publications
CLLAS Activities

Robert Marcelin Memorial Scholarship

The Robert Marcelin Memorial Scholarship was endowed by employees of Ameritech Corporation, led by Ms. Alison Thomson, to honor Mr. Marcelin, a co-worker, friend and graduate of Northern Illinois University who died at a young age. The scholarship is awarded annually to an outstanding student of Latino heritage.

Pictured below are, left to right, Professor Gonzales, 2003 Marcelin Award winner Judy Villanueva, and Ms. Alison Thomson.

CLLAS Research and Travel Awards

Grants Awarded for FY 2004

• Eric Digman (Political Science) – To study the effect of administrative and political decentralization on municipal governance in Bolivia.
• Maria A. Vetter (Adult Education) – To explore modes of adult and political education among the Chilean working class during the presidency of Salvadore Allende (1970-1973).
Addressing the Health Care Needs of Northern Illinois’ Latinos

By Michael J. Gonzales and John R. Alexander

In August, 2003, the Center received a second grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education aimed at increasing the number of Latino health care professionals in the region. The strategy involves the creation of health care clubs in six regional high schools where students receive instruction on the medical needs of their community, career opportunities in health care, and university programs in health care. Students also develop service projects designed to alleviate a health care problem in their community through instruction and demonstration. The Center also enjoys the collaboration of three area community colleges (Kiswaukee, Rock Valley, and Waubonsee) which provide the setting and faculty for periodic workshops pertinent to Latino health care issues.

Illinois hospital administrators, county health care directors, and others have identified the shortage of Latino health care professionals as a major problem. Poor communication between Spanish-speaking patients and English-speaking staff results in inadequate service. A 2002 survey of 16 regional hospitals and county health departments conducted by the Center found no Latino health educators or physical therapists, one Latino dietitian, and only 37 nurses. As a result, healthcare providers frequently rely upon bi-lingual family members, volunteers, and paid interpreters to serve the Spanish-speaking community. Poor communication can result in inadequate or inappropriate care.

Unfortunately, inadequate numbers of Latinos graduate with health care degrees from Illinois colleges and universities. For example, Latinos constituted only 5.8 percent of those receiving health care degrees in 2001, although they comprise nearly 20 percent of the population. The Center’s grant takes a step toward closing this gap. All participating students graduating from high school this year will be attending college, and a majority will major in health care programs. The Center intends to continue the program, pending the approval of its current grant application.