

Mexico Perspectives: Research Activity at King's. PhD Student Showcase

Panel 1: Arts and Humanities

Name and Department	Title and Abstract
<p>Dr. Italia Boliver</p> <p>Department of Spanish, Portuguese & Latin American Studies</p>	<p>The concept of the figura has fascinated critics in their study of not only Rayuela (1963) but of the entire Cortázar body of work. For many, the figura has proved to be mysterious and indecipherable. Others have successfully identified some of its constitutive parts such as 'reciprocity' and 'resonance'.</p> <p>In Rayuela, the author, Julio Cortázar, explicitly extends an invitation to the reader to 'trazar imaginativamente [las líneas] que [cierran] la figura' (Cortázar 1996, 383). He suggests that in the novel there are already present 'ciertas líneas' that carry 'una incitación' for the reader to complete the figura. Cortázar stresses that 'las líneas ausentes son las más importantes' (Cortázar 1996, 386). Taking this as a basis, we can affirm that the figura is the result of a collaboration between Cortázar and the reader. Not only this, the figura is something unfinished, a 'work in progress' that depends on the creative abilities of the reader (read here as 'intentionality'). This means that the figura is an element of interpretation and therefore we can say that in Rayuela there is not one but many figuras.</p> <p>This thesis is an attempt to complete one of the figuras of Rayuela by firstly identifying the lines that are already present, and secondly, by finding the missing ones. This is done by looking into the 'clues' of the novel and into Cortázar's ideas and beliefs about reality (what I call 'crystallization').</p> <p>My reading of Rayuela has revealed a Neo-Plastic figura that is formed out of resonances, tensions and intersections between opposite elements in the novel, mirroring Piet Mondrian's use of the grid. This finding shows that Cortázar had an anachronistic taste for the modernist avant-gardes, while revealing remarkable similarities between Cortázar's 'crystallization' and Mondrian's aesthetic and metaphysical ideas.</p>
<p>Claudio García Ehrenfeld</p> <p>Department of Classics</p>	<p>Lucian's <i>Hermotimus</i>. Essays about Satire and Philosophy in Greek Literature of the Roman Empire</p> <p>Lucian of Samosata was a Syrian author writing in Greek and a contemporary of the emperor Marcus Aurelius. During the Renaissance Lucian became one of the most read authors and ultimately was a source of inspiration for Vasco the Quiroga and other conquistadors of the New Spain. Even though Lucian was read as a moralist, little has been mentioned about his 'sceptic' and nihilistic side, which can also be traced back to at least the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Among Lucian's dialogues, the <i>Hermotimus or about the Philosophical Sects</i> stands out as the longest and the most philosophical dialogue. In this presentation I will talk about the coherence between the comic and a philosophic mode of discourse in this text, and about why this coherence can be relevant to contemporary philosophy and literature.</p>
<p>Rogelio Leal Benavides</p> <p>China Institute</p>	<p>Learning from China through contemporary Confucian discourse</p> <p>China's cultural traditions have substantial effects in its modern cultural, economic, political, and social practices. This research project intends to evaluate and analyse the rhetoric in contemporary Confucian discourse towards the (re)establishment of a civil religion in China. The recent achievements in China's <i>status quo</i> are partly due to the retention and adaptation of ancient Confucian principles (circa 2500 years ago). In the twentieth century, China had major transformations; these gave way to advancements in contemporary modes of governance and socio-political matters. As a result, Mexico can use these experiences to reassess its domestic problems and achieve similar developments to successfully overcome the challenges of the twenty-first century. Therefore, using China as a role model, Mexico can produce a more effective and efficient system of governance to fulfil the basic needs of its people.</p>

Panel 2: Social Sciences

Name and Department	Title and Abstract
<p>Áxel Germán Elías Jiménez</p> <p>Institute of North American Studies</p>	<p>Mega-events and Social Movements in Latin America</p> <p>'There have been seven mega-events in Latin America from 1930-2014 and in at least three there have been protests or critique prior to their celebration. These reactions have been taken as a response to economic shifts such as the implementation of neoliberalism; however, there have been other reasons to oppose. In this paper I will argue that mega-events have been an ideal scenario to discuss national identities given the international interests, and that the feel-good discourse around these has contrasted with the perception of the population which has caused them to protest. By historicising the opposition and critique of mega-events in Latin America we can give voice to the people beyond the interpretation of established mega-event structures which we already know.</p>
<p>Paulina Guerrero Gutiérrez</p> <p>Department of Education and Professional Studies</p>	<p>Situated Biology Learning and Motivation in Zapoteca Indigenous Communities</p> <p>Biology and Environmental education are increasingly important disciplines to be taught in rural settings, where it is frequent for impoverished indigenous communities to hold ownership of invaluable natural resources. However, the Mexican national curriculum pays little attention to students' differences in culture, customs, beliefs, epistemologies, and economic backgrounds, thus marginalising indigenous communities. New ways of teaching that take differences into account are one way of advancing towards a socially just educational system, which promotes scientifically literate people that can understand and participate in a science-permeated world. This research explores the usefulness of situated learning, a context-based pedagogical approach, for teaching science in Mexican indigenous contexts.</p>
<p>José Ricardo Gutiérrez Vargas</p> <p>Spanish, Portuguese & Latin American Studies</p>	<p>The Pietás of the femicide and their visual biographies: passages of memory, citizenship and political action</p> <p>Using the allegory of La Pietá, as an evocation of mourning (traverspiel), I approach to the images of the mothers of the victims of feminicidio in Mexico. These are not just images of women who weep for a loss, cradling their daughters' portraits, but "sensory burials" that allow us to witness an evocation of grief. These visual forms also help in the process of regaining a memory that triggers a political action (citizenship) and justice.</p>

Panel 3: Science and Technology

Name and Department	Title and Abstract
<p>Emmeline Lagunes Córdoba</p> <p>Health Services & Population Research</p>	<p>Military psychiatry in Mexico</p> <p>Military psychiatry in Mexico is a relatively new field of study that even though has produced interesting results, is still inexperienced and lacking of sufficient and well-designed studies. Recent literature review suggest that the Mexican military service does not put the same level of importance to psychiatry compared with Europe or US, in fact it would appear research studies are actually decreasing. This seems to be contradictory to the current Drugs War that the country is fighting, in which Mexican military has had a leading role. The Drugs along with the current political condition that Mexico is facing, should be incentives to develop more studies focused on the mental consequences produced from exposure to armed conflict in both military and civil population.</p>
<p>Teresa Álvarez Cisneros</p> <p>Social Science, Health & Medicine</p>	<p>Examining the Effects of the Seguro Popular (Sp) on Disability Related to Diabetes and Obesity in Older Adults: A Quantitative Analysis Of The Mexican Health And Ageing Study (Mhas)</p> <p>Mexico has an increasing proportion of older adults, chronic diseases and social inequalities; factors related to disability. Recent research has shown that even if the richer tend to have higher incidence of diabetes and obesity, disability related to these diseases is greater among the poorer individuals. Policies like the Seguro Popular could be able to mitigate this incidence by providing adequate treatment; nevertheless it would probably increase years lived with disability to the already ill.</p>
<p>Enrique Martínez Miranda</p> <p>Department of Informatics</p>	<p>Reinforcement Learning and Finance</p> <p>The use of techniques such as the high-frequency trading (HFT) in current financial markets make the participants to rapidly analyse all the available information, generally stored as large databases. Machine Learning, a subfield of Computer Science that is based on models and methods from statistics, computational complexity, artificial intelligence and control theory, has as primary focus to develop computationally efficient algorithms for inferring good predictive models from large databases and thus is a natural candidate to solve problems arising in the HFT. The proposed topic of research aims to propose the use of novel algorithms for the solution of this kind of problems and searching for efficient implementations across several databases.</p>