The Latin American Studies Program engages a thriving community of scholars, students, alumni, and local residents who work together to foster understanding and recognition of a complex set of cultures from Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and South America. Given the historically strong connections between these regions and the United States, studying the former offers significant insights into understanding the latter. The number of students majoring in Latin American Studies has been growing steadily every year.

The Latin American studies curriculum integrates the perspectives of several academic departments at the College to promote an interdisciplinary exploration of the region's scholarship. Students typically begin with courses offered in anthropology, history, music, Romance languages, or sociology. In addition, majors fulfill a four-course concentration in a specific discipline, theme, or area, often including an independent study project. Competence in Spanish (or another appropriate language spoken in these countries, such as French or Portuguese) is required. Most majors participate in a study away program in Latin America, and funds for additional on-site research are available on a competitive basis. Familiarity with the region is also enhanced through frequent concerts, theme dinners, film screenings, symposia, service learning projects, debates, and teach-ins organized by various student organizations, faculty, and community associations.

The Major
The Latin American Studies major consists of nine courses, including the following: a 2000-level survey of cultural production conducted in one of the languages spoken in the region, other than English; a 2000-level course in the social sciences (i.e., anthropology, economics, or sociology) focused on Latin America; a 2000-level course in colonial or modern Latin American history; four additional courses centered on a particular geographic region (the Caribbean, Andean region, Mesoamerica, Southern Cone, etc.) or theme (colonization, indigenous cultures, globalization, gender relations, the arts, etc.); a Latin American studies course outside the student’s area of concentration; and an advanced independent study, honors project, or a 3000-level seminar approved for Latin American studies credit and completed in the senior year. The four-course concentration will be selected by each student in consultation with the Latin American studies faculty. A maximum of three courses from off-campus study programs may count toward the major with the approval of the administering committee.

The Minor
The minor consists of five courses, including Modern Latin American History; at least one course beyond Bowdoin's intermediate level in Spanish; and three additional courses focused on Latin America, two of which must be outside the student’s major department.

Independent Study and Honors
Advanced students are encouraged to pursue an independent study project, which is done in close consultation with a member of the faculty. Students contemplating honors candidacy should possess a record of distinction in their courses, a well-focused research proposal, and a high measure of motivation and scholarly maturity. The faculty recommends that such students complete two semesters of independent study in preparing papers for honors consideration.

Research Grants
Latin American Studies research grants are intended to increase understanding and awareness of the region among sophomores and juniors majoring in any academic discipline. The grants support student research in Latin America and the Caribbean that contributes to a subsequent independent study or honors project. The on-site research can be conducted during the summer months, between semesters, or be used to extend study away experiences. Recipients will spend three to four weeks in the region and, upon their return, write a two-page report summarizing their research and results. During the following semester, these results will be used as the basis for conducting an independent study or honors project under the direction of a faculty member. Students who have received research grants have traveled widely throughout the region.

Off-Campus Study
The Latin American Studies faculty encourages all of its students to include a period of study abroad, usually during the junior year, in their academic plan. Bowdoin recommends a wide range of excellent programs in Latin America. Options include a semester program in Cuernavaca, Mexico, or a study/travel semester visiting Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua through Augsburg College; a semester or full-year program in Buenos Aires, Argentina, through the Institute for the International Education of Students, focusing on language, art, architecture and design, humanities, and social science; a summer or semester program in Costa Rica, through the Organization for Tropical Studies, focusing on ecology and biology, complemented by a strong foundation in the social, political, economic, and scientific aspects of resource management; a School for International Training gender and development program in Jamaica with homestays in Kingston and rural villages; and semester or year-long study programs at universities in Santiago, Valparaiso, or Concepción, Chile, through Middlebury College, the School for International Training, or the Cooperating Programs in the Americas administered by Butler University. Interested students should seek the advice of a program faculty member early in the sophomore year to select a study away program and choose courses that complement the offerings available at Bowdoin.

From Chile to Mexico, Bowdoin students have studied a wide variety of topics such as health care accessibility in Nicaragua; the social experiences of women domestic workers in Lima, Peru, and their representation in film and fiction; the Chilean pension system; the ecology of the marine snail Tegula atra; and Caribbean cultural identity in the context of globalization. Awards are made on the basis of the candidate’s academic record and competence in the language spoken in the target country, the quality and feasibility of the project described in the proposal, the project’s relevance to the student’s educational program, and the faculty mentor’s recommendation. Grants cannot be used to support language training or study away programs.
Latin American Studies

Honors Projects

Recent honors projects completed in the Latin American Studies Program include:

- Tejido de Arcoíris: Memoria, Imaginación e Identidad Mapuche en la Poesía de Chihualaf, Huinoa y Antín
- "De Coreano a Coreguyao": The Korean-Paraguayan Community, 1964–2005
- A Long Road to Democracy: How Middle Class Politicization and Political Reform Transformed Mexico’s One Party State
- Imaginar el Campo: Visiones Sobre el Paisaje Latinoamericano en Sarmiento y Carpenter
- The Paradox of Pinochet’s Rule: Patriarchal Ideology and Women in the Work Force
- Fusionando dos Mundos: El Diálogo con la Oralidad en Dos Novelas de Toni Morrison y Gabriel García Márquez

Stephen Meardon, assistant professor of economics, B.A. (Bowdoin), M.A., Ph.D. (Duke), specializes in history of economic thought, international trade, and United States-Latin America commercial policy.

Krista E. Van Vleet, associate professor of anthropology, B.S. (Beloit), M.A., Ph.D. (Michigan), specializes in kinship, sexuality, and gender, and religion and narrative in Latin America, particularly the Andes.


Susan E. Wegner, associate professor of art history, A.B. (Wisconsin–Madison), A.M., Ph.D. (Bryn Mawr), specializes in Italian Renaissance and Baroque art and Pre-Columbian art.

Allen Wells, Roger Howell Jr. Professor of History, A.B. (SUNY–Binghamton), B.A., M.A. (SUNY–Story Brook), focuses on modern Mexican history, especially the Yucatán, and teaches a range of courses in colonial and modern Latin American history.

Eugenia Wheelwright, visiting lecturer in Romance languages, B.A. (Yale), M.A. (Washington), teaches Spanish language.

Nathaniel T. Wheelwright, professor of biology, B.S. (Yale), Ph.D. (Washington), teaches about environment and society in Latin America.

Carolyn Wolfenzon, assistant professor of Romance languages, B.A. (Universidad de Lima, Peru), M.A. (Colorado), Ph.D. (Cornell), specializes in the historical novel and narrative representation in Latin America, especially the Southern Cone, the Andean Region, and Cuba.

Enrique Yepes, associate professor of Romance languages, B.A. (Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana), Ph.D. (Rutgers), specializes in contemporary poetry, short story, and cultural studies in Latin America.

After Bowdoin

Students of Latin American studies choose many different career paths. Recent graduates can be found working throughout the United States and Latin America in education and various areas of public policy and service. Many go on to pursue advanced degrees and are now working in law, business, health care, and Latin American scholarship.

Faculty

The Latin American Studies Program is administered by the Latin American Studies Committee. The program faculty is drawn from many departments at Bowdoin, and includes the following:

Michael Birnbaum Quintero, assistant professor of music, B.A. (New School for Social Research), M.A., Ph.D. (New York University), specializes in Afro-diasporic music, cultural policy, music and social movements, music cosmopolitanisms, and music and violence.

Margaret Boyle, assistant professor of Romance languages, B.A. (Reed College), M.A., Ph.D. (Emory), specializes in early modern women’s literary and cultural history in Spain and Latin America, comedy history and performance, early modern Spanish narrative, feminist theory and gender studies, convent literature and epistolary, history of women’s incarceration and hospitalization, and early modern gardens and environmental justice.


Elena M. Cueto-Asín, associate professor of Romance languages, B.A. (Universidad Complutense, Madrid), M.A., Ph.D. (Purdue), specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish literature and culture, with emphasis on theater and film.


Marcos Lopez, assistant professor of sociology, B.A., M.A., Ph.D. (University of California–Santa Cruz), specializes in labor, immigration and immigrant communities, race/ethnicity, political economy, agriculture, and United States/Mexico borderlands.

For more information about Bowdoin, please write or call: Dean of Admissions
Bowdoin College, 5000 College Station
Brunswick, ME 04011-8441
207-725-3100
bowdoin.edu/admissions/bowdoin.edu

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