Learning Goals of the Latin American and Latino Studies Major
Brandeis University

The Latin American and Latino Studies (LALS) Program at Brandeis offers an interdisciplinary major and minor. The program draws on faculty in nine departments in the school of Arts and Sciences as well as in the Heller School and International Business School. Although individual classes might emphasize local and regional studies, the LALS major and minor moves beyond a particular area to view communities and regions as embedded within global processes.

The deep commitment of faculty in LALS to a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Latin America and Latinos is evidenced in the range of courses available and the distribution requirements. This structure enables students to appreciate the subject matter in its rich social, economic, political, cultural, and historical implications, encouraging students to develop methodological flexibility. While embracing such intellectual breadth, the LALS 100 seminar required of all majors, and the fact that many students focus on one or two departments in completing the major promotes depth in at least one disciplinary approach.

LALS majors must take nine courses within the major, of which no more than four can be within the same department (thus ensuring disciplinary breadth). The courses must include LALS 100 (an upper level, writing intensive seminar), the colonial or modern history survey course, a course in Latin American politics and a course in Latin American or Latino literature or cultural studies. Other course offerings in these disciplines and in anthropology, economics and fine arts round out the major’s offerings.

The learning goals for students completing the LALS major are threefold: knowledge about the region of Latin America and Latinos in the United States; core skills that can be used in graduate study or in a variety of professions; and critical awareness and engagement as the basis for social justice and global citizenship.

Knowledge: Students completing the major in LALS will come away with a strong understanding of:

- the history and current circumstances of Latin America and the peoples living there;
- the history and current circumstances of Latinos living in the US or elsewhere outside of the geographic boundaries of Latin America;
- the hemispheric and global connections between Latin America, Latinos and other places and peoples;
- one or more languages spoken in Latin America (not including English).
Core Skills: The LALS major also emphasizes core skills in data collection, critical thinking and communication. LALS majors will be well prepared to:

- conduct scholarly or professional research applying different critical methods, such as textual analysis and fieldwork, using primary and secondary sources;
- evaluate information and cultural artifacts critically, with particular attention to examining taken-for-granted assumptions about U.S. Latinos and/or Latin America;
- generate original, informed ideas and insights about Latin America and U.S. Latinos, expressed in a variety of written and oral formats, such as traditional, web-based, visual and other media.

Critical Awareness and Engagement (Social Justice) The LALS curriculum provides graduates with the knowledge and perspectives needed to participate as informed citizens in a global society. The exposure to a variety of cultural traditions and social formations gives LALS majors a grounded view of global process. The possibility of curricular or extra-curricular experiential learning components, such as community engaged courses working with Latinos in Waltham, field study in relation to a thesis, internships, and more, also provides tools and opportunities for those committed to Brandeis's ideal of learning in service of social justice.

Upon Graduating: A Brandeis student with a LALS major will be prepared to:

- pursue graduate study and a scholarly career in Latin American studies or in one of the disciplines represented in the program;
- pursue professional training and a range of careers including healthcare, government, business, law, journalism, education, arts, and non-governmental work in local and international settings.