

CONFERENCE AGENDA

CONTEMPLATING THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: REGIONAL AND GLOBAL STUDIES IN CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

University of California, San Diego
May 12-13, 2016

Higher education in America has yet to develop a coherent means of analyzing and explaining fundamental trends in the international arena of the twenty-first century.

On the one side are “area studies” programs designed to forge holistic approaches to historical, cultural, political and economic developments in specific world regions (e.g. China, Africa, and Latin America). These were the primary drivers of U.S. international education from the 1940s through the 1990s. They required interdisciplinary perspectives on societal issues as well as language training and extensive field work in the region. In recent years these approaches seem to have fallen out of fashion--as evidenced by declines in student enrollments, university support, government funding, and media attention.

On the other side are newer approaches to “global studies” that eschew culturalist assumptions in favor of quantitative models focusing on processes of “globalization”—trends that affect societal and political realities in all (or most) parts of the world. The stress here is on the interconnectedness of international trends and events, not on the specific characteristics of geographical and/or cultural regions. Partly because of its novelty, this approach now seems to be on the rise.

Question: Are these approaches antithetical? Is this a zero-sum situation? Or can they be brought together in synergistic ways? If so, what might be the most suitable models for the organization of international studies in twentieth-century universities?

To explore these issues, the Latin American Studies program at UC San Diego has organized a day-long conference on May 13, 2016. Panels will focus not only on Latin America but on other world regions as well.

Co-sponsoring institutions include UCSD’s Division of Social Sciences, the Division of Arts and Humanities, the Department of Political Science, and the Graduate School for Global Policy and Strategy. Conference participants are from UCSD unless identified otherwise.

May 13: Panels and Discussions (Malamud Room, Institute of the Americas Complex, UC San Diego)

Morning: The Futures of Area Studies

9:00-9:15 Welcome: Peter Smith and Philip G. Roeder

9:15-10:00 Who Defines World Areas? How and Why?

Chair: Peter Smith

Kamala Visweswaran
Cristina Rivera-Garza
Pedro Pérez Herrero (Alcalá de Henares)

10:00-10:45 The State of Asian Studies

Chair: Tai Ming Cheung

Richard Madsen

Comments: Sarah Schneewind
Todd Henry

10:45-11:30 The State of Latin American Studies

Chair: Melissa Floca

Nancy Postero
David Mares

11:30-12:15 The State of South Asian and Southeast Asian Studies

Chair: Kamala Visweswaran

Pradeep Chhibber
Jodi Blanco

LUNCH BREAK

Afternoon: Reflections and Debates

Chair: Peter Smith

2:00-2:45 The Global Approach: Economic Dimensions

Marc-Andreas Muendler

2:45-3:30 The Global Approach: Political Dimensions

Barbara Walter

3:30-5:00 Alternative Structures for International Studies

Chair: Clark Gibson

Pradeep Chhibber (UC Berkeley)

Carlos Torres (UCLA)

Peter Cowhey