

2014 MLA Convention Hispanic Urban Studies Roundtable
devoted to discussing the contributions of the “spatial turn” to recent Latin American, Spanish, U.S. Latino, and Chicano cultural criticism and the future of Hispanic urban theory and pedagogy.

Thursday, 9 January
Erie, Sheraton Chicago
5:15–6:30 p.m.

Participants: Malcolm Alan Compitello, Univ. of Arizona; Cecilia Enjuto-Rangel, Univ. of Oregon; Matthew I. Feinberg, Oberlin Coll.; Benjamin Fraser, Coll. of Charleston; Amanda Holmes, McGill Univ.; Marcy Ellen Schwartz, Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick; Víctor Valle, California Polytechnic State Univ.

Presiding: Susan Larson, Univ. of Kentucky

In his book *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. City* (2000) Mike Davis explains what he calls the “Latinization” of America as something caused by Latino demographic growth impacting the design of major cities, their potential for political and social change and new claims on the cultural imaginary. This position, if taken to heart, weakens some currently-existing divisions between Latin American, American and Latino Studies. The same can be said of Spain’s cities, which have been inexorably changed by the arrival of people from Latin American countries who bring with them different ways of thinking about and inhabiting urban space. The purposes of this roundtable are the following: 1) to assess what exactly “the spatial turn” and Urban Studies look like within Hispanic Studies as a discipline; 2) to talk about where they are going; and 3) to have a conversation about how they invite us to rethink some of the boundaries between Latin American, US Latino, Chicano and Peninsular Spanish studies.

Questions for discussion will include the following:

- What do the “spatial turn” and Urban Studies contribute to our knowledge of Hispanic culture?
- What exactly are the “politics of space” in our respective subdisciplines?
- Who are the urban theorists whose concepts stem from their being situated in the Hispanic world? In other words, what does a Hispanist need to take into account when using urban theories from outside of the field (or, how does one deal with the issue of what Edward Said called “traveling theory”)?
- What would undergraduate and graduate courses on the “global Hispanic city” look like?
- How does an Urban Studies approach benefit students in their understanding of Hispanic culture? How does it help accomplish departmental or university-wide learning objectives for second-language acquisition and/or cultural literacy? How does one teach interdisciplinary Hispanic Urban Studies across the curriculum?
- How does one teach courses in this field in a way that respects the particularities of different cultural groups while simultaneously acknowledging the coming together of these groups to form diverse Spanish-speaking urban communities?
- Do we need to adjust or update some of our working assumptions about the relationship of the nonurban to the urban or the concept of the “global city” to reflect recent political and economic changes, drawing on recent research in the Social Sciences?