Latin American Studies is the newer of the two Spanish programs offered in UMD’s Department of World Languages and Cultures. Students in this program take courses in Spanish language through the advanced level before taking an interdisciplinary set of courses to intensify their study of Latin America. Our students apply their linguistic and interdisciplinary skills to a wide variety of local, regional, national, or international career choices.

Why UMD

The capstone course for Latin American Studies majors is SPAN 3097, a course that gives students credit for their fieldwork with a Spanish-speaking community abroad or right here in Minnesota. Students can meet this requirement in one of two ways:

1. Study Abroad: Students cultivate the ability to articulate a keen understanding of the role of race, class, gender, sustainability, and human rights as they pertain to Spanish-speaking North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Our students have chosen to study abroad in Belize, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru, and many other Latin American countries. For more information, please visit UMD Study Abroad.

2. Internship in Minnesota: The internship program is designed to place students in direct contact with state and private organizations serving the Latino community in Minnesota. Students gain experience working directly with an agency of their choice, including the Chicano Latino Affairs Council (a state government office), Centro Cultural Chicano (a social services organization), Latino Economic Center (a non-profit organization), El Colegio (a Spanish immersion public high school), El Jardín (a Spanish immersion academy for children, ages 3 mos. to 5 yrs.), among others.

Acquired Skills

The BA in Latin American Studies fosters the development of cross-cultural competency and broader world perspectives through the study of history, cultural production and texts of Spanish-speaking communities and cultures, and their concomitant inherent diversity. This major presupposes the acquisition of Spanish language in order to carry out coursework in the study, analysis and understanding of literary texts and cultural products from Latin America, and United States Latino communities. It prepares students for graduate or professional school programs such as law, or for work in government, in education or with agencies and businesses having international ties.

Career Possibilities

Graduates can utilize their intercultural competency, language proficiency and critical thinking skills in a variety of careers and experiences: working in the Peace Corps, Human Resources, NGOs, Cultural Consulting, Government work in the US and abroad, AmeriCorps, teaching abroad as well as in the US; continuing studies in professional programs such as Law, or attending graduate school in Linguistics, Museum Studies, Latin American Studies, Government and Public Policy and Education.
Scholarships

CLA is proud to be able to offer over 90 alumni and donor funded scholarships to our students each year. In total over $190,000 is awarded out to CLA majors and some minors as well. Each department facilitates the process for their specific scholarships and students are also encouraged to apply for CLA-wide scholarships offered to students in any field. World Languages and Cultures departmental scholarships:

- Alayne and Charles Berkins Scholarship
- Angela Marinelli Scholarship
- Frances A. Knobloch Scholarship

Student Clubs

The UMD Club de Español (Spanish Club) is a student-run organization that plans events where students (and faculty) can connect and celebrate their love of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures. Recent events include a bonfire in Bagley Nature Area, a holiday goodie decorating party, yoga in Spanish, among others. The club has also hosted fundraisers such as Mock-arita miércoles. The club’s leadership team organizes student volunteering with the Spanish immersion program at Lowell Elementary School.

Faculty Highlights

Our faculty are nationally and internationally known scholars who publish on the literature, cinema, social realities and diversity of the Spanish-speaking world. Recent publications pertain to identity and intersectionality as they relate to race, gender and language use; social media and indigeneity, among others. Our faculty secure prestigious grants to travel to conduct interviews, research in archives and have first-hand contact with the subjects they investigate. We connect with our community through events such as the World Languages and Cultures Film Series, in which we have shown and discussed cinematic works such as Ixcanul, the first film every produced in the Kaqchikel language (which is in the Mayan family language group).