**Place and Displacement. LACS396 Capstone, 2013**

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*Place has become a powerful metaphor to convey a sense of personal belonging, though the notion of place goes far beyond physical or geographical location. Environment, conservation, politics, religion, myth, personal and group identity, and even violence and disease define place and have become important elements of identity construction across Latin America and Caribbean societies. During the term, we considered how the portability of these cultural features allows for the redefinition of place and belonging in multiple locations.*

**Personal & Community Identity.** Faced with a larger society that does not incorporate them very actively into public life, members of Lexington’s Latino immigrant community – many of them undocumented – have resorted to creative alternate forms of negotiating place and identity within Lexington as a whole. Transnational tools aid this community in confronting the problematic topography that often accompanies being an immigrant in the United States.

**Politics.** Immigration policy in the U.S. generally ignores the potential economic benefits of our large Latino immigrant population, and is based on vague arguments about the economic damage immigrants cause. The immigration policies we have developed over recent decades often lead to more economic harm than good, for both the economy in general and for the Latino immigrant population.

**Violence.** Since 2006, Los Zetas and the Sinaloa Cartels have caused a horrific amount of violence in Mexico, leading to changes in towns and music, manipulation of the media, effects on women and children, and the displacement of people.

**Conservation.** Ecuador’s Yasuní National Park can be examined as a model for shaping the future of land conservation and indigenous policies of countries within the Amazon. Presently, many Amazonian countries’ historical dependence on the extraction industry has necessitated the adoption of harmful environmental policies that have consequently displaced the indigenous groups living within the rainforest, threatening their sovereignty and even their existence.

**Myth.** The success of the young and vibrant Society of Jesus, esteemed not only among the indigenous peoples of the colonial Americas but also with the Catholic monarchies of Europe, resulted in their unpopularity among the “enlightened despots” of the Old World, such as the powerful marquis de Pombal in Portugal. The Jesuits’ oft controversial missionary activity, and the obstacle they presented to colonial development at the expense of the Tupi-Guarani, fueled fires of suspicion against the Order within the Spanish and Portuguese courts, contributed to the ultimate expulsion of the order from the Americas in 1767, after which the majority of their missionary work was undone and the Guarani were forced to relocate from the Jesuit reductions.

**Religion.** The Jewish Diaspora in Argentina is a small but strong community that has developed an insular but evolving identity in the face of persistent anti-Semitism, unsupportive government policies, and the reverberating effects of the Holocaust, all while in search of a place of its own.

**Disease.** Chagas disease burden in Latin America has decreased in the past 20 years, but the persistence of the Chagas vector and the limited treatment options for the disease represent a global health threat. This threat will lead to new political and social challenges in the United States where upwards of 300,000 individuals are living with Chagas disease, and must be followed with policies for treatment and prevention.

**Environment.** Anthropologic movements within Brazil have traditionally been due to economic imbalances between regions, boom and bust cycles of natural commodities, frontier settlement, industrialization and climate patterns. However, current climate change models suggest an unprecedented number of displaced people from region of Brazil due to increasingly common and severe droughts.