

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STUDIES



It was politics that initially interested Thomas Laffay. Then, he spent time studying and traveling in Cuba and Central America. Those experiences whetted his appetite to learn about the entire region. Fortunately, the Latin American and Caribbean Studies (LACS) major offered him a unique opportunity to do just that.

"The LACS classes I've taken have all been great. The introductory course piqued my interest, but the ones that really stand out are those that I took during my semester in Cuba. That experience was phenomenal. It really opened up a whole new world for me. As a result, I ended up volunteering at a remote orphanage in rural Nicaragua the summer before my sophomore year."

Thomas found himself involved in something called the Pulsera Project – a nonprofit organization that connects the Los Quinchos orphanage with a growing network of high school and college students in the U.S. "The kids in the orphanage weave bracelets – pulseras in Spanish – and the students stateside sell them to raise funds for the orphanage." He and another student from the College documented their experiences in a film about the project, which later premiered at the College.

To complement his studies, Thomas participated in Model Organization of American

States, and served as a Spanish interpreter at a rural medical clinic near Charleston.

Through the LACS courses, and outside reading recommended by his professors, Thomas has devoured information about the politics of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. He's read the poetry of Jose Marti as well as the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. "The LACS program has really been intellectually invigorating for me. And all my professors have been amazing."

Thomas' experiences in Latin America, and his studies, have made him appreciate the "culture of revolution." In Nicaragua, he says, he senses "an earnest desire for change, a yearning to develop as an environmentally appropriate, functioning democracy." It won't be surprising to some day learn that Thomas is using the background from his LACS major to accurately portray aspects of this socio-political dynamic on video. Watch for it.

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

Our program integrates coursework and research in the languages, literature, history, politics, art and culture of Latin America and the Caribbean. The professors who teach in this program represent a similar range of expertise. In order to provide students with an intensive experience, LACS majors are required to study abroad in one of the many College of Charleston programs – at Latin American or Caribbean universities affiliated with the College, or in approved independent programs. Our program has exchange agreements with some of the best-known universities and research institutions in Latin America. The agreements enable our students to live and study in a Latin American or Caribbean country, where they benefit from dynamic intellectual interchange, and joint research, conference and publications opportunities.

Facts

All LACS majors take an additional year of foreign language.

All LACS majors spend a summer or a semester in a study or internship abroad program.

Our program is one of the few in the U.S. that enables students to study for a semester in Cuba.

Opportunities

We offer unique courses such as Contemporary Hispanic Caribbean Theatre

Students can complement and enhance their coursework with tutorials, independent studies or internships.

This program also administers the Model Organization of American States experience.