

Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies

2023 Our news



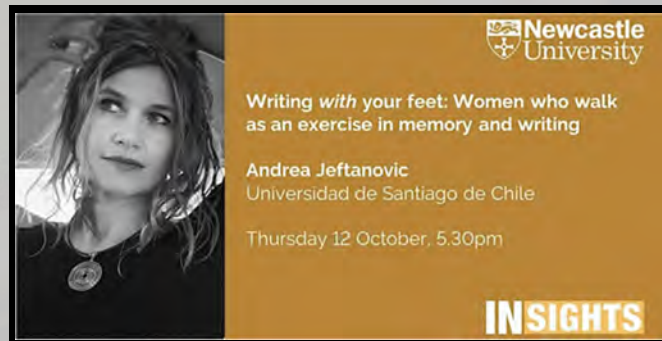
Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies (SPLAS) at Newcastle is ranked 9 (out of 34 departments) in the country by the Times Good University Guide 2024. We are a team of 20 colleagues committed to working with you in the development of your language and academic skills to explore the diverse cultures and societies of Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

Our teaching and research delivers our core values on equality, diversity and inclusion. We believe students are co-creators of their learning process.

¡Hola! Olá! This academic year is packed with exciting activities, distinguished invited lectures and several exhibitions. We are honoured to host Chilean writer **Andrea Jeftanovic** who will deliver the talk ‘Writing with your feet: women who walk as an exercise in memory and writing’. The recent feminist marches across Latin America, protesting against femicide and/or demanding the rights to sexual diversity and reproductive autonomy, encourage us to think about the relationship between women, memory and public space. In this talk, award-winning Chilean writer Andrea Jeftanovic reflects on emblematic walks that have been led by women, from the era of military dictatorship to the present day. Walking implies facing the spectral presence of the past. Jeftanovic will share her own experience as an author who leaves the house to write with her feet about issues that are as personal as they are collective.

The talk will be introduced by Dr. Philippa Page.

All our events are free and open to all, but pre-booking is required. To reserve your place go to Insights Public Lectures or telephone our booking voicemail line 0191 208 6136.



Newcastle University

Writing *with* your feet: Women who walk as an exercise in memory and writing

Andrea Jeftanovic
Universidad de Santiago de Chile

Thursday 12 October, 5.30pm

INSIGHTS

Engaging students and the wider community through art and activism. Students Voice!



Exhibitions form an integral part of our engagement and learning experience. We regularly bring talented artists and exhibit their work connecting artwork with the cultural content in the modules we teach. Our students Ren and Emily share their experiences participating in a community mural activity.



Throughout my time in higher education, I have always had a great interest in the relationship between culture productions, the search for identity, and socio-political issues. So when I heard about the opportunity to spend a week with two prominent figures in the Peruvian popular culture scene, Alfredo Villar and Yefferson Huamán, I jumped at the chance.



Before my interview for the position, I decided to do some research about what the word 'Chicha' meant, and I discovered that it is both a drink and a genre of music. There is a ritualistic method to drinking Chicha and normally it is shared during festivities and feasts. The act begins with only one cup, and then the host shares out the others and everyone sprinkles some on the ground as an offering to Pacha Mama (Mother Earth) and their ancestors before drinking. Women have a very important role in this ritual, as they are the ones who spend days fermenting the ingredients and making the final product. This shared activity is something which builds community and contributes to the Peruvian collective identity. I also learned that Chicha music is a genre characterised by surf rock melodies, electric guitars, and synthesisers. It can be compared with a few artists from the same era: Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso from the Brazilian Tropicália movement, and The Beach Boys from the USA.

I expanded on my knowledge of the genre through talking to Alfredo over the course of a week and attending his talk with Yefferson. Alfredo Villar is considered a living encyclopaedia of music and I was pleasantly surprised with his knowledge on Mancunian music (my home city), but what impressed me the most was the depth of his expertise on the genre of Chicha.

Community is the centre of Chicha: the art is created on the walls of homes and shops, the message of the art embodies the feelings of the people, children are often incorporated into the murals, and the art form celebrates the Peruvian national identity through symbolism and iconography. The work placement ended with a collaborative project, painting a wall mural for DiverCity hub, a multi-faith community centre. Yefferson, with the help of the local children, sketched out greetings in four different languages and encouraged the children to colour them in with neon pigments and sprays. A huge part of Chicha is the mixing of cultures and styles, so to have the words from the Geordie lexicon sit alongside Mandarin and Spanish was a perfect example of community building.

I learnt so much over the course of the week and I am incredibly grateful to Yefferson, Alfredo, and SML for allowing me to be a part of this project. The intersection between art, popular culture, and identity is intrinsic, but definitely something worth exploring.



Engaging students and the wider community through art and activism.



Throughout the past two weeks I have had the privilege of completing a work placement position as Exhibition Support to the Neón Chicha Exhibition, offered by the School of Modern Languages and the JobsOC team in the Careers Service Department at Newcastle University. The principal objective of the placement was to provide continuous support to the actualization of the exhibition, an artistic collaboration between the SML, Yefferson Huamán and Alfredo Villar, two celebrated Peruvian popular culture artists.

The placement encompassed a range of practical, organisational, and communicative responsibilities including assisting in the assembly and dismantling of the exhibition art, interpreting the dialogue between the artists and the visitors who attended the Neón Chicha talk, and helping to conduct the mural workshop, the focal activity of the collaborative project.

Through numerous conversations with both Yefferson and Alfredo, I was able to actively learn about the emergence of Peruvian Chicha culture and the diffusion of its occupancy from the rural highlands of the Peruvian landscape to the urban metropolis of the country's capital, Lima. Whilst the initial origin of the word 'Chicha' is a widely debated topic, it is said to have emanated from the traditional fermented corn beverage of the Indigenous Andean populations of Latin America. The term encompasses a plethora of definitions and is used generally to refer to a variety of cultural productions, both artistic and musical, of a native Peruvian population.

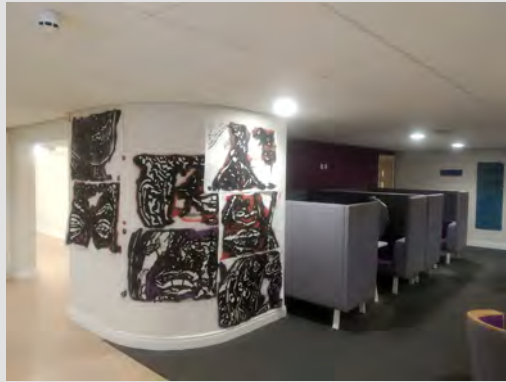
Art is intrinsic to our cultural identity and heritage. It is a form of expression that gives a visual and physical dimension to social and individual thought, allowing for the transposition of the urban experience into an artistic composition. The visual aesthetics and visibility of urban art inspire mobilization and collective awareness on local, national, and global levels. Moreover, the accessibility of its locality strengthens the notion that urban art knows no social boundary. That is to say that anyone, regardless of their social and/or cultural identity can view and interpret the art according to their own individual lived experience. Thus, encouraging a real sense of community as people can identify with the artistic message. In the context of Peru, the transpiration of Chicha art throughout the urban setting represents the contribution of a new migrant population to a redefined national cultural identity.

The importance of community was at the forefront of our collaboration project with DiverCity Hub, a multi-faith community centre near the centre of Newcastle. The objective was to construct a small mural on the walls of the DiverCity Hub building, creating a space for a collective artistic composition based on individual cultural expression and identity. The two central ideas of the mural were to exhibit a visual agglomeration of idiomatic expressions and words that represented the language identity of those who participated in the mural workshops, and to imprint the stencilled designs of the participants on the neighbouring section of the wall. With the help of Yefferson, the chosen words and phrases were outlined in archetypal Chicha calligraphy and then painted by the community, and those helping to run the activity, in neon colours. The result was a spectacular visual display of colour and an intercultural and verbal synthesis of both individual and collective identities. It was a great success!

(Emily Belton, BA Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, Stage

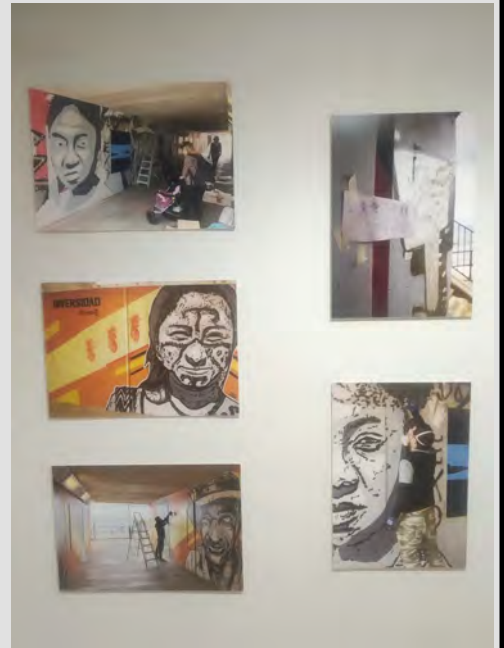
DJLU (@juega siempre) La Diversidad Cultural de Colombia

The SML Beehive Exhibition Space Level 2 featured the exhibition DJLU (@juegasiempre) La Diversidad Cultural de Colombia from November 2022 to January 2023. Curated by Alba Griffin, Laura Pinzon and Alexandra Young, the exhibition presented the outcome of a recent visit to the North East from renowned Colombian street artist, DJLU/ Juegasiempre, who paid homage to Colombia's social diversity through portraits of important community leaders.



Charting the progress of the mural, the exhibition sheds light on the specific production process of street art, including the encounters that took place with members of the public and the development of the work, from preparing the walls to sketching outlines, stenciling and adding the final touches. This project

was supported by Newcastle University's CLACS, Institute for Creative Arts Practice and SML, as well as the Society for Latin American Studies (SLAS).



New colleague! Marián Hernández Villada



Hello! I am Marián Hernández Villada, a new member of the School of Modern Languages, and I have been asked to write a few words about myself and my approach to learning and teaching. Students benefit from

having intrinsic (rather than only extrinsic) motivation to learn, and I think that involving them in the learning process at different stages can be a good way to work towards achieving this goal. I like to make my students feel empowered, supported, and cared about. I feel that they feel most empowered when they are giving the right tools for their growth and development, to be used both independently and in the classroom. I am interested in collaborative learning and teaching, and I like to nurture an atmosphere of open dialogue where students and colleagues feel that their contributions are valued, and their voices heard. The only thing I like better than teaching is learning. Since numerous studies have demonstrated the cognitive benefits of laughter, and its positive impact on learning, whenever possible I try to combine a bit of humour with academic rigour in my lessons; I have also noticed that students are more likely to fully engage in lessons when they feel happy and relaxed.

I hope to be an inspiration to my students, and to show them the numerous possibilities offered by a knowledge of foreign languages. There are many exciting jobs which I have been lucky to have, for example: liaison interpreter and public relations at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics; public relations in Tokyo; import-export manager in a Catalan company trading with China; TV and cinema translator for several dubbing studios in Barcelona; technical translator from Spanish, French and Italian into English (including the translation of a book for the NGO Action contre la faim); and teacher of Spanish language, culture and translation at all levels, from primary and secondary school to college and higher education.

My two great passions are languages and art, both highly creative endeavours, and in 2016 I had the privilege to have my work exhibited at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead. Now and then, instead of curling up with a book, messing about with paint, or going out for a nice walk in nature, I can be found engaging in slightly out-of-character activities, such as sky jumping over Lake Taupō in New Zealand, or bungee jumping for charity. I am really looking forward to our adventures. Here is to all our future discoveries!

Multilingualism and rap in the Yucatán peninsula. A report by Dr. Josep Cru

On January 9, 2023, the Linguapax 2022 Award was presented to the ADN Maya collective. Pat Boy, leader and co-founder of ADN Maya together with Tania Jiménez, received the award from Josep Cru, representative of Linguapax International and lecturer in Spanish and Sociolinguistics (Newcastle University). The event took place in the theatre of the city of Felipe Carrillo Puerto in the state of Quintana Roo (Mexico) and featured musical performances by rappers Pat Boy, along with DJ Rakalkú, Yaalen K'uj, Ixi'im ko'olel and Armando Mazun, the latter two participants in the fourth ADN Maya recording. The band Hum Batz opened the ceremony with traditional Mayan music.

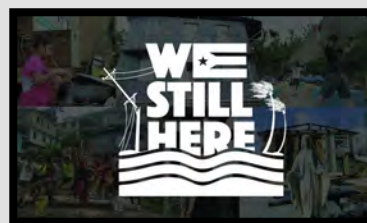
The Linguapax International jury has especially valued ADN Maya's work with children and young people through programmes such as Rap Ich Máaya T'aan (Rap in Maya) and Festival Ko'one'ex K'aay Rap Ich Máaya (Festival Let's Sing Rap in Maya). These programmes have become a space to strengthen the skills of young creators in indigenous languages and employ a methodology that promotes the practice of Yucatec Maya in community workshops through improvisation and rhyme. The training and professionalisation efforts of other Maya youth, which has turned ADN Maya into a hotbed of rappers with influence throughout the Yucatan Peninsula, have also been positively considered by the jury. Finally, community outreach and collaborative work with local media outlets that promote the use of Maya, such as Radio Xhnka, Radio Xepet and Radio Yúuyum, have also been praised.



The Linguapax award recognises the efforts of individuals, groups or associations from different fields and areas of knowledge that work towards linguistic and cultural revitalisation and reclamation. The purpose of this award is to identify, value and disseminate successful actions and good practices from around the world that serve as a reference and example to other groups and individuals. This occasion marked the first time that the award was presented in Mexico.

Caribbean Cinema at Newcastle by Dr. Dunja Fehimovic

In semester I of 2022-23, Dr Dunja Fehimović organised three public events on Caribbean cinema. Developing on her fieldwork and research on the recent boom of the Dominican film industry, on 26 October Dunja organised the UK premiere of *Santo Domingo Waltz*, followed by an in-person Q&A with the director, Tatiana Fernández Geara. The documentary focuses on three teenage boys at a ballet school taking place at community-run arts venue, Star and Shadow, Dunja's second event (15 November) related directly to her current research project, which uses film to examine how coloniality and ecology intersect in Cuba, the port from Newcastle University's Global Fund, and School of Modern Here and *Aguirre for Whom?* was followed by a discussion, via Zoom, with representatives from the communities who produced them to examine environmental justice, coloniality, and the role of creative media in community activism. Consecutive interpreting from Spanish into English was provided by Tingting Qiu, a student on MA Translation & Interpreting. Finally, Dunja continued to run the Caribbean Film Forum, an online platform and event series co-founded with Professor Mary Leonard (Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayaguez) during the pandemic; on 14 December, she co-presented a conversation with author and environmental activist Joan Cambridge, anthropologist-filmmaker Jeremy Peretz, and film festival founder Romola Lucas on film, ethnography and environment in contemporary Guyana. The event was livestreamed, but recordings of the whole series of events are available via the Caribbean Film Forum Facebook page.



Consul of Portugal's visit to the School of Modern Languages by Conceição Pereira

The 27th of February 2023 we had the pleasure, and the honour, of welcoming the General Consul of Portugal in Manchester to the School of Modern Languages.

We started the day with a meeting with the Portuguese team, Professor Jens Hentschke, and lecturers Fernando Beleza, Conceição Pereira and Loiana Leal and had the opportunity of discussing the relevance of Portuguese language in the world and in our school.



After that, we had lunch with the Heads of School and SPLAS, and other colleagues from the section, as well as students that have

relevant roles in SML, followed by a meeting with students' representatives from all levels, including masters. The Consul talked about the relevance of knowing languages and gave examples about it in politics and how being able to communicate in the language of others can make a difference, even if everyone can speak English. The students shared their reasons for having chosen Portuguese as one of their degree languages, what they enjoy more about learning the language of Camões, what they like to read, the songs they listen to, and also what they are researching about the Portuguese Speaking World.

The visit finished with a walk in Newcastle, following the path of Eça de Queirós, the most important Portuguese writer of the 19th century, that was a consul in Newcastle from 1874 to 1879.



Visit to Fragata Bartolomeu Dias by Conceição Pereira

The 22nd of March 2023, three members of the Portuguese Team, together with ten students, from 1st year to Masters, visited Fragata Bartolomeu Dias, that had a short stay at Newcastle. Students had dinner with the crew and had the chance of talking in Portuguese (and English) with them and get to know how life aboard a war ship is. They had also the opportunity of having a guided tour and so get to know the ship. Professor Jens Hentschke, and lecturers Fernando Beleza and Conceição Pereira, together with Dinis de Sousa, the conductor of Royal Northern Sinfonia, the military attaché from the Portuguese Embassy in London and the ship's captain, had dinner in his quarters. It was very pleasant meal and conversation followed by a guided tour to the ship. We all had a great time and are thankful for this once in a lifetime opportunity.



Best Student of Portuguese in the UK

This award celebrates the merit of students from the Portuguese Education Network in the United Kingdom and Channel Islands, at all levels of education: primary, secondary and higher education, has been awarded to students from Newcastle University from 2018 to 2023.

The proposal is made by the student's Portuguese teacher and sent to the Coordination of Portuguese Teaching in the United Kingdom, and includes a text written by the student, selected by the Portuguese lecturer, and a report with the student's profile and academic achievements. So, every year two written pieces are sent (beginners and final year) and one or two students each year, since 2018, have won a prize with different types of essays.





Memory Studies Association Conference (July 2023)

In July 2023, as part of the Memory Studies Association annual conference, we hosted the plenary session ‘Voces de la democracia/Democracy of voices’ in partnership with the Argentine Embassy in the United Kingdom. The event brought together six voices in a powerful choral account of how human rights activism and the memory of dictatorship continue to resonate in Argentina and shape current political debate. These voices included: His Excellency, Ambassador Javier Figueroa; Alejandra Naftal, a survivor and the former director of the ESMA Museum and Site of Memory; filmmaker Liliana Furió, a founding member of the Historias Desobedientes collective; writer Félix Bruzzone, the son of disappeared parents; human right lawyer and writer Monica Zwaig, the daughter of political exiles in France; Newcastle University lecturer María Zubelzu sharing her experiences of growing up under dictatorship. The encounter was introduced and curated by Dr Philippa Page and Dr Cecilia Sosa as part of a research project that looks at the contemporary imaginaries of the dictatorship in Argentina as part of our portfolio of education and research activities focusing on social justice. Our Modern Languages Students played a key role in this event welcoming the delegates, helping coordinate the session, translating texts and reading translations.



Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón, who worked to convert the cause of human rights into a matter of extraterritorial judicial action when he issued an international arrest warrant in October 1998 to detain the former Chilean head of state Augusto Pinochet, also participated in the MSA Conference. Finally, the programme also included a Memory Tour conducted by Jorge Catalá and Antony Jones (grandson of Spanish exiled writer Manuel Chaves Nogales) discovering the links between the North East of England and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies

School of Modern Languages Old Library Building
Newcastle University

Phone: +44191 2087441

E-mail: Jorge.catala-carrasco@ncl.ac.uk

Spanish and Portuguese languages in the world

- ⇒ There are **493m native speakers of Spanish** in the world. If you add L2 learners, the figure is 591m.
- ⇒ More than 24m students took Spanish as a foreign language in 2020.
- ⇒ There are **250m native speakers of Portuguese** in the world. And 24m more take it as L2, making the total figure 274m.

