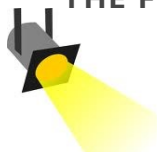




# Origins

THE FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



## Instructor Spotlight: Maria Masud

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“Human Rights, Social Justice and Memory in Latin America” is a Focal Point Seminar I teach for the Latin American and Latino Studies Department. The course introduces students to the recent history of Latin America in relation to cycles of political and social repression: the “dirty war” in Argentina, the military dictatorship in Chile, and the civil wars in Central America among others. I see this course as an introduction to students of a history they have never heard of, nor imagined. This history has generated a vast documentation of books, articles, films and personal testimonies that call desperately for justice, e.g., the mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Truth Commissions in Chile and Guatemala. In this course, diverse sources seek to explain how those repressive forces overthrew democratically elected governments, and the short and long term consequences of these actions for the civil society.

My biggest satisfaction in teaching the course is seeing students develop a consciousness and understanding of the atrocities and injustice that have been committed in Latin America. Some in the name of democracy and freedom, economic prosperity and even God. Students critically analyze and dissect the horrors these actions entail. It is hard to imagine that close to



30,000 people, mostly young, were disappeared by the military in Argentina during the “dirty war” period (1976-1983). Equally terrifying is the fact, that during those seven years, close to five hundred babies were born in captivity, and hundreds of others were taken from their parents and given to friends of the military for a “proper upbringing,” and their parents were disappeared. In Guatemala, over 200,000 indigenous peoples were killed and/or disappeared during more than forty years of military repression (1954-1998). The class discusses and analyzes these events with the support of a variety of reading materials,

from a scholarly text, *Memory Quest* by Elizabeth A. Waites, to plays by Ana Castillo, *Psst...I Have Something To Tell You...*, and Ariel Dorfman, *Death and The Maiden*, as well as several films: *When The Mountains Tremble*, *Obstinate Memory*, *The Lost Steps* and others.

I feel that the students benefit from the different perspectives that address the process of repression and the aftermath the populations studied have experienced as they discuss the assigned materials. The students have an opportunity to understand the difficult task of writing about past events that continue to be part of the present in the daily lives of these communities. Most importantly, they will also be able to understand memories as a subjective process related to the active role of the participants who give meaning to those historical events, framed in relations of power, and to question: who remembers, and what and how they remember.

— Maria D. Masud  
Lecturer

Dept. of Modern Languages

### Important Date!

Friday, May 29: Chicago Quarter Best Practices, Lincoln Park Student Center 120. Check-in begins at 9:15; the last breakout session ends at 1:15.

## From the Director

One more pitch to encourage you to register for the Chicago Quarter Best Practices conference if you haven't already. Best Practices is Friday, May 29, at the Lincoln Park Student Center, with check-in starting at 9:15 and sessions running until 1:15. (Lunch is provided!) If you're a Chicago Quarter instructor, attendance is expected; if you've not taught Chicago Quarter but are considering proposing a section, please register to attend as our guest. This year's breakout sessions will include:

- Jason Martin (Communication) will share the impressive ways he has incorporated mobile apps and maps into his Discover Chicago course.
- Mary Bridget Kustusich (Physics) will share her research on creating community in the classroom and apply it to teaching Chicago Quarter classes.
- Phil Funk (Biology), along with Staff Professional Erin Sella and CQM Rachel Batshon, will share lessons learned teaching Chicago Quarter for the first time last fall.
- Izabela Grobelna from the Chicago Cultural Alliance will share the CCA's many contacts with Chicago community groups, contacts that could be used in planning Chicago Quarter visits and speakers.
- Two sessions by Jen O'Brien from TLA: “Learning to Learn” and an updated encore appearance of last year's popular “Activities for Active Reflection.”

- A panel on integrating the elements of Chicago Quarter by a team honored this past year for doing it well: Phil Meyers (Political Science), Staff Professional Michelle Johnson & CQM Dylan Plachta.
- A session on the importance of resilience and grit for new college students by Toni Fitzpatrick & Ziena Miller from New Student & Family Engagement.
- Toni & Ziena will also present a session for faculty on the new look of Common Hour.
- Similarly, Melissa Markley (Marketing), Leah Bryant (Communication) & Matt Ragas (Communication) will present sessions designed for Staff Professionals and CQMs on engaging students in the classroom. (Faculty may attend too.)
- I will share a simple and profound exercise I learned at this year's national First-Year Experience conference: a final reflection assignment called the Six-Word Memoir.

If you haven't responded yet to the Outlook invitation, please do so ASAP. If you can't find the invitation, please email Maria Hernandez at [mhernand@depaul.edu](mailto:mhernand@depaul.edu).

It was a pleasure to meet with several Focal Point Seminar faculty May 8 at our Faculty Chat. As always, I learned from our faculty and I think that many were able to help each other with issues unique to teaching Focal Points.

— Doug Long