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Education 2285

10 May 2022

The Cold War and California Liberals: The History of Latin American Studies in the United States and at Bowdoin College

The end of World War Two ushered in a dynamic and transcendent period in the history of American higher education. The signing of the GI Bill increased accessibility and affordability by opening the doors of colleges and universities to thousands of servicemembers. Postwar college students changed the culture of their campuses by viewing college education as a path to individual uplift and wealth accumulation. The focus of public institutions shifted to graduate programs, scientific research, and technological development as a result of expanded funding from the federal government. This financial partnership aligned the goals of the federal government with the goals of academics and researchers, creating a military-university-industrial complex as the country entered the Cold War. The changes of this period expand beyond the scope of higher education and American society, influencing American Cold War policy in Latin America. Following World War II, American colleges adapted to meet the needs of a country negotiating newfound international power and an accelerating economy by recommitting to the foundations of capitalism through curriculum on individual, economic, and geopolitical levels.

The GI Bill, signed by President Roosevelt in June of 1944, set the stage for the changes in higher education that would follow. The bill was designed to avoid a substantial increase in unemployment as servicemembers returned home and aid in transitioning the wartime economy to peacetime without sacrificing growth. It offered returning veterans “a year of education for 90

days' service, plus one month for each month of active duty, for a maximum of 48 months".¹

Initially, supporters of the bill expected eight to ten percent of veterans to take advantage of the program. By 1950, the participation rate was double that prediction.² These new students came to colleges and universities with a vision for the future in line with economist John Kenneth Galbraith, who wrote in *The Affluent Society* in 1958 that post-WWII economic changes had "generated unprecedented affluence in the United States".³ As historian John Thelin observes, incoming GIs opted for studies in "employable fields" such as "business administration or engineering" over more traditional choices.⁴ Servicemembers who had fought valiantly overseas now came to American colleges looking to cash-in on the opportunities they had earned – to take part in the growing economy, to live in the booming suburbs and fill their homes with the latest and greatest appliances, and to build comfortable and happy lives for their families. Thus, social changes following World War II were reflected in a growing culture of affluence on college campuses.

In 1945, Vannevar Bush published *Science, the Endless Frontier*, a report that outlined the potential of public colleges and universities to position themselves at the forefront of scientific research. The report came after a series of significant wartime technological advances, notably the atomic bomb, that were facilitated by universities.⁵ The federal government responded by increasing investment in university research by 900 percent between 1945 and 1965.⁶ A university's prestige quickly became associated with the strength of its graduate

¹ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, Third Edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 263.

² *Ibid.*

³ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, in *John Kenneth Galbraith: The Affluent Society and Other Writings, 1952-1967*, ed. James K. Galbraith (New York: Library of America, 2010), 475.

⁴ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 266.

⁵ Charles Dorn, *For the Common Good: A New History of Higher Education in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 191.

⁶ *Ibid.*

programs and its production of high-level scientific and technological research. The financial and status incentives to pursue research compelled many public colleges and universities to cast aside their focus on holistic undergraduate education and instead pour resources into graduate research programs. Two events further intensified universities' capitalistic pursuits. Economic recession in the 1970s caused the federal government to withdraw funding from public research universities and forced those universities to rely more heavily on private donations.⁷ The Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, which permitted institutions of higher education to retain intellectual property rights to their research, opened the door to the private sector for colleges and universities.⁸ Private financial incentives from donors and industry further motivated universities to develop research programs and technology to be marketed for monetary gain, and the pursuit of larger and larger endowments quickly became the norm.⁹ A closer financial relationship between the federal government and public institutions of higher education following World War II encouraged those institutions to pursue financial gain through scientific research and technological development.

Internationally, the United States entered an ideological struggle with the Soviet Union following World War II. The Cold War, which pitted American capitalism against Soviet communism, would define U.S. international relations for a half-century. Though the conflict never manifested in an armed struggle between the two superpowers, a series of proxy wars across the globe amplified tension and had major political, social, and economic ramifications for the countries caught in the crossfire. Latin America became a crucial site of conflict, with socialist governments elected in Guatemala in 1950 and Chile in 1970, and communists and

⁷ Dorn, *For the Common Good*, 192.

⁸ Dorn, 193.

⁹ *Ibid.*

socialists taking power by revolution in Cuba in 1959 and in Nicaragua in 1979. Cold War priorities in the region and the strength of the military-university-industrial complex invigorated the field of Latin American Studies. Scholars at American colleges and universities were encouraged to expand the field of study and established programs across the country. An exploration of the history of Latin American Studies provides a nuanced look at how the entrenchment of capitalism appealed to the common interests of higher education and the federal government following World War II.

Part I: Latin American Studies in the United States

The history of the field of Latin American Studies is tied directly to the history of U.S. intervention in Latin America. The interest of U.S. scholars in Latin America following World War II was a continuation of studies dating back to 1898 and U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.¹⁰ The perspective of academics prior to World War II mirrored the motivation behind U.S. intervention. Notably, the idea that it was the “white man’s burden” to civilize the backward countries of Latin America with American imperialism.¹¹ Early studies of Latin America constituted a form of “historical tourism” in which scholars took what they pleased from the host country and left behind the rest.¹²

Following World War II, Cold War interests in the region expanded and shifted the focus of scholarship. The expansion is reflected in the growth of area studies programs in U.S. universities. In the early 1950s, there were 29 area studies programs and by the end of the 1960s,

¹⁰ Mark T. Berger, “Civilising the South: The US Rise to Hegemony in the Americas and the Roots of ‘Latin American Studies’ 1898-1945,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 12, no. 1 (1993): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3338811>.

¹¹ Berger, 4.

¹² Shelly Jarrett Bromberg, “No Tours Beyond This Point: From Service to Civic Learning in Latin American Studies,” *Journal of Latinos and Education* 7, no. 1 (December 26, 2007): 62–78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348430701693408>.

there were more than 100 language or area studies programs.¹³ Title VI of the National Defense Education Act, signed by President Eisenhower in 1958, stimulated this growth.¹⁴ Beyond direct financial support of Latin American Studies programs, the federal government influenced the direction and scope of research in the region. In a similar way as before World War II, the direction of scholarly research mirrored the justification for political and military intervention. During the Cold War, this justification was modernization theory, which held that “industrialization and economic growth, and/or the value orientations associated with them, were the engines of social and political progress”.¹⁵ Additionally, historians and academics collaborated directly with the government to produce scholarly works that would corroborate and justify the government’s account of its involvement in the region. For example, historian Arthur P. Whitaker at UPenn was an imperialist who headed the Latin American unit of the State Department and served on JFK’s Latin American task force.¹⁶ Following the U.S.-backed coup of democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala, Whittaker oversaw a project defending the coup as a “deterrent to a communist takeover”.¹⁷ The project was made possible by the CIA, who helped Whittaker and his researcher seize 50,000 documents from the Guatemalan Communist Party.¹⁸ At Stanford, historian John J. Johnson published a thesis in 1964 asserting that professionalized Latin American militaries would “stand by constitutions and enhance democratic life”, a perspective that likely encouraged U.S. military intervention.¹⁹ Johnson’s

¹³ Ronald H. Chilcote, “The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States,” *Latin American Perspectives* 45, no. 4 (July 1, 2018): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X18779017>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ David L. Szanton, ed., *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 33.

¹⁶ Chilcote, “The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States,” 8.

¹⁷ Chilcote, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Chilcote, “The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States,” 12.

thesis was discredited after a series of U.S. backed military coups.²⁰ The U.S. Army began a counterinsurgency study in 1964 with the help of American University that was stopped after being denounced by the Chilean Senate.²¹ Early academic scholarship and university programs in Latin American Studies were funded in part by the U.S. government, served government interests, and often justified U.S. military intervention and hegemony in the region. This intervention, and its accompanying scholarship, sought to preserve and capitalism at any cost.

Inspired by growing awareness of the devastation and violence cause by U.S. intervention in Latin America, scholars began a conscious move away from U.S.-centric studies in the mid-1960s. A group of anti-imperialist historians studying at Stanford and University of California who, as historian Ronald Chilcote writes, “did not want their work to be co-opted to serve U.S. political and economic interests”, led this change.²² These scholars formed the North American Congress on Latin America and the Latin American Studies Association in 1966, both of which hoped for change in the region.²³ Two notable schools of study were developed during this wave of liberal scholarship. The dependency approach accepted the idea of economic determinism advocated by modernization theorists, but ran in the opposite direction. For the school of dependency theory, capitalism was the cause of underdevelopment, not the antidote. Introduced by Latin Americans and foreign Latin Americanists, dependency theorists “called for a broad inter-disciplinary perspective to explain the major themes of Latin American reality: economic underdevelopment, social inequality, political instability, and authoritarianism”.²⁴ The Pan-Americanist approach was created by UC Berkeley history professor Herbert Eugene Bolton, and

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Chilcote, “The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States,” 13.

²² Chilcote, 23.

²³ Chilcote, 26.

²⁴ Szanton, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 13.

emphasized “a greater America beyond the United States and Pan-Americanism over Anglo-Saxonism”.²⁵ Though Bolton’s theory has been less influential than dependency theory, its creation marked a move away from a U.S.-centric and white supremacist perspective, and Bolton is considered one of the founders of Latin American studies for his work developing an undergraduate course and overseeing hundreds of graduate dissertations.²⁶ The creation of dependency theory and Pan-Americanism marked a shift away from government collaboration and imperialism, and towards a more inclusive and empowering study of Latin America.

State officials who expected complicity and justification from Latin American scholars were displeased by liberal developments in the field and sought to stop them. While studying labor in Chile, Stanford student and member of the liberal circle Donald Bray was told to not interview leftist leaders. In a classroom session, Bray allowed his students to openly discuss “subversive” political topics and was joined at his next class by CIA agents.²⁷ University of Pennsylvania economist Scott Nearing spoke out against imperialism and was fired for being a radical.²⁸ Government resistance to growing academic dissent for American foreign policy in Latin America reveals the close ties between Latin American scholars and interventionist Cold War policy in the years following World War II. The creation of the journal *Latin American Perspectives* in 1974 was a turning point for Latin American Studies, because it provided academics with a platform for leftist and Marxist perspectives.²⁹

The present and future of Latin American studies rests largely on the platform established by these early anti-imperialists from California. Current scholars have emphasized the

²⁵ Chilcote, “The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States,” 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Chilcote, “The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States,” 19.

²⁸ Chilcote, 9.

²⁹ Chilcote, 30.

importance of service learning, and centering Latin American perspectives.³⁰ In “Re-Visioning Latin American Studies”, Alvarez et.al. outline their vision for the discipline, which concerns five key realms, including power-sensitive dialogue, highlighting subaltern perspectives, engaging Latin Americans, and interdisciplinary inquiry. Most importantly, they emphasize that Latin America is now “a perspective of study, not an object of study”.³¹ These principles are a far cry from expansion of the field spurred on the by the Cold War, which centered American interests and perspectives at the cost of lives and liberty in the region. There is a great body of work to be done to fully deconstruct the legacy of the Cold War on Latin American Studies programs, but the vision outlined by Alvarez is an exceptional first step.

The history of Latin American studies is inextricably tied to U.S. intervention in the region. This trend was amplified during the Cold War, as government funded academics published scholarly works justifying and advocating for military intervention and modernization theory. Perspectives turned as awareness of the disastrous effects of U.S. involvement grew. Despite government resistance, liberal and anti-imperialist scholars joined together to reclaim and recenter Latin American Studies for the benefit of Latin Americans. Examining the creation of a Latin American studies program at an American college may be useful for the study of its history. Though Bowdoin College, as a small private institution, was not a part of the military-university-industrial complex nor its Cold War agenda, its development of a Latin American studies program provides insight into the complicated history of the academic discipline.

³⁰ Bromberg, “No Tours Beyond This Point.”

³¹ Sonia E. Alvarez, Arturo Arias, and Charles R. Hale, “Re-Visioning Latin American Studies,” *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 2 (2011): 232, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1360.2011.01097.x>.

Part II: Latin American Studies at Bowdoin College

Bowdoin College was a small private institution established in 1794 in the town of Brunswick, at that time in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, now Maine. From its humble beginnings, Bowdoin established itself as an elite liberal arts college, dedicated to a classical curriculum in Latin, Greek, philosophy, European history, then adding courses in the natural sciences and geology throughout the early 20th century. Like other private undergraduate institutions, Bowdoin was largely shut out of the wave of federal funding for graduate research in science and technology that accompanied the signing of the GI Bill and the end of World War II. Therefore, Bowdoin's primary incentive to expand the curriculum to include area studies was competition with other colleges and universities, rather than pressure from the federal government as a result of the military-university-industrial complex and its Cold War aspirations.

Prior to the first course offering in Latin American studies at Bowdoin, there was institutional resistance to the implementation of area studies at the college. The 1956 Report of the Committee on Self-Study was titled "The Conservative Tradition in Education at Bowdoin College".³² The report recognized the importance of "the relationship of the United States to Canada and to Latin America" as "no less significant areas for consideration" for new courses, but emphasized that Bowdoin's reach as an undergraduate liberal arts institution was limited in scope and those studies would not fit into an already crowded curriculum.³³ In the self-study, the administration recognized the importance of area studies, but found that its value was not sufficient to be included in the college curriculum. Though still early in the evolution of Latin

³² "The Conservative Tradition in Education at Bowdoin College: Report of the Committee on Self-Study", September 1956, A01.29.01 Vol 2, Bowdoin College Self-Study Reports, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

³³ "The Conservative Tradition in Education at Bowdoin College: Report of the Committee on Self-Study", 44.

American studies in the United States, the attitude of Bowdoin's self-study reveals that college administrators saw a study of the region limited in value outside of the context of the military-university-industrial complex and the associated government pressure.

The hesitance to establish area studies courses at Bowdoin would appear again in 1963 during considerations for the first Latin American history course at the college. The proposal for a course in Latin American history was brought before the institution's Curriculum and Educational Policy (CEP) Committee that year.³⁴ Though the history department wished to secure a Latin American specialist, newly hired professor Daniel Levine was selected to instruct the proposed course.³⁵ The CEP Committee voted to recommend that the faculty not approve the proposal for the course. The committee asserted that the new course would take attention away from senior seminars, Professor Levine was not a specialist, and the college should approach area studies through fields other than history and with a more deliberate procedure.³⁶ The CEP Committee was overruled by the faculty in a 34-24 vote. Though delayed, History 23 was eventually approved for the spring semester of 1966.³⁷

The initial resistance to the course from the CEP Committee reflected the same sentiment towards Latin American studies as the 1956 Self-Study Report. Notably, that an introduction to Latin America was not valuable enough to overcome the potential drawback of a lack of an expert in the faculty nor the desire of the administration to focus attention on senior seminars. Though the faculty overruled the CEP Committee, it appears that in the absence of U.S. state department pressure to study Latin America, Bowdoin was slow to recognize the field's value.

³⁴ Minutes of the CEP Committee Oct 22, 1953 – May 16, 1966, 15 April 1963, A01.07.04 Vol 1, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Minutes of the CEP Committee Oct 22, 1953 – May 16, 1966, 1965, A01.07.04 Vol 1, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

After “History of Latin America” was taught in the spring of 1966, no Latin American studies courses were at Bowdoin until the spring of 1970, when the Economics Department offered a course on “Problems of Economic Growth in Underdeveloped Areas” which included but did not focus on Latin America.³⁸ Infrequent appearances of Latin American studies in the college curriculum continued until the mid-1970s, when the Senior Center programs brought a new spark of interest.

The creation of the Senior Center at Bowdoin ran parallel to the construction of Cole’s Tower complex. The college intended the Senior Center to provide seniors with exclusive living space and high-level seminars. Some Senior Center seminars focused on Latin American studies and showcased the interdisciplinary potential of the discipline, bringing Bowdoin’s offerings in line with the liberal, holistic approach first initiated by California historians in the 1960s. In the fall of 1975, Professor Helen K. McLin taught “Feminism in Latin America”, a course which faculty evaluators (whose identities are ultimately unclear) praised as “vital” and “a frontier area”.³⁹ In the spring of 1978, Professors Caffery, Gordon, and Waldson taught “Women in Historical Perspective: Germany, the U.S., and Latin America”. The course sought to demonstrate that “that use of American or European models of women’s liberation are not necessarily valid for other parts of the world”.⁴⁰ In the spring of 1979, Professors Turner and Waldron taught “Introduction to Latin American Culture”, which centered “an interdisciplinary approach to a foreign culture” and five themes: race relations, social revolution, imperialism,

³⁸ Bowdoin College Course Catalogue, 1970, A06.03.01 Vol 25, College Catalogue, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

³⁹ McLin, Helen K., “Feminism in Latin America”, 1975-1976, Box 4 Folder 20, Senior Center Program Records and Publications 1957-1979, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴⁰ Cafferty, Gordon and Waldon “Women in Historical Perspective: Germany, the U.S. and Latin America”, 1977-1978, Box 5 Folder 19, Senior Center Program Records and Publications 1957-1979, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

urban poverty, and rural development.⁴¹ The Senior Center seminars marked a distinct shift in Bowdoin's approach to Latin American studies. They differed from the first history courses offered by the college by centering Latin American voices and using feminism and Women's Studies to frame a study of the region. The interdisciplinary seminars embraced the liberal perspective of Latin American studies while rejecting the Cold War geopolitical lens impressed upon the discipline by the government. The emphasis on feminist and anti-imperialist studies set a striking, ambitious standard for the future of Latin American studies at Bowdoin.

Despite this progress, the Latin American studies program at Bowdoin went through more growing pains before the faculty approved the establishment of a major. In 1992, Spanish Professor John Turner wrote a letter to President of the College Robert C. Edwards about the state of the Latin American Studies program at the college.⁴² By that time, the college offered an interdisciplinary minor in Latin American studies, but all of the courses were cross-listed, and there was no official "department".⁴³ In his letter, Professor Turner explained his growing concern with the lack of Latin American scholars outside of the fields of history and language and a shortage of funding for the program as the number of Latin American students enrolled in the college grew.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, due to limitations on recent records in Bowdoin's Special Collections and Archives, it is unclear if and how Mills responded to Professor Turner. However, given the time interval between Turner's letter and the establishment of the major, it appears the college administration was again slow to act on initiatives for Latin American studies.

⁴¹ Turner, John and Waldron, Kathy, "Introduction to Latin American Culture", 1978-1979, Box 5 Folder 65, Senior Center Program Records and Publications 1957-1979, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴² John H. Turner to Robert C. Edwards, 1992, Box 18, Folder 14, Robert C. Edwards Administrative Records, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴³ Bowdoin College Course Catalogue, 1992-1993, A06.03.01 Vol 16, College Catalogue, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴⁴ John J. Turner to Robert C. Edwards, 1992.

The Latin American Studies major and department were established at Bowdoin for the 1999-2000 school year.⁴⁵ During its first full academic year, the department offered eleven courses taken by 231 students. By 2011, the department, according to its newsletter, described its academic program as casting “a wide net around ‘Latin America’ including Central and South America, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Latino/a communities”.⁴⁶ This broad scope of study and engaged faculty have facilitated the department’s growth over two decades.⁴⁷ Enrollments and the number of faculty contributing to the program doubled in its first ten years, and the number of courses offer by the department tripled.^{48,49} The modern iteration of the Latin American History class first taught in 1966 has evolved substantially; it is now taught by an Argentinian immigrant and features content centering feminism, LGBTQ+ studies, Marxism, anti-imperialism and popular culture. The rapid growth of the Latin American Studies department is testimony to the value of a broad, interdisciplinary approach to the study of the region, and viewing Latin America as a perspective, not an object, of study.

Though the history of Latin American Studies at Bowdoin is much different than the history of the discipline as a whole and its development at larger public institutions because Bowdoin did not participate in the military-university-industrial complex, a study of it reveals nuances not evident in a macro-level history of the discipline. The college’s reluctance to add a Latin American history course to the curriculum may reflect the administration’s myopic view of the discipline. In the absence of financial or political pressure from the government, the

⁴⁵ “L.A.S. Noticias”, June 2009, Latin American Studies Program: Records, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴⁶ “L.A.S. Noticias”, July 2011, Latin American Studies Program: Records, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴⁷ “L.A.S. Noticias”, June 2010, Latin American Studies Program: Records, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

⁴⁸ “L.A.S. Noticias”, June 2009.

⁴⁹ “L.A.S. Noticias”, June 2010.

administration did not see the value of a Latin American studies course, and perhaps had little exposure to Latin American politics and culture given the college's location in Maine. It was not until the Senior Center seminars of the 1970s that the college made major step towards a holistic and interdisciplinary study of Latin America. The Latin American seminars taught in the 1970s adopted the liberal perspective of the California historians who established the Latin American Studies Association in 1966, and set the stage for the establishment of a tremendously successful department in 2000.⁵⁰

Conclusion

World War Two changed American high education comprehensively. For individuals, the signing of the GI Bill meant increased affordability and access to institutions of higher learning. For institutions, a transformed financial relationship with the federal government led to greater monetary incentives for graduate programs, scientific research, and technological development.⁵¹ Geopolitically, the beginning of the Cold War created a military-university-industrial complex that directed scientific and academic research toward national defense. These macro-level changes impacted the day-to-day lives of college students by ushering in a culture of affluence and individual aspiration, shifting resources to graduate programs at the cost of undergraduate study, and redefining curriculum via a newfound national interest in the political development of Latin America.⁵² Following World War Two, American colleges adapted to meet the needs of a country negotiating newfound international power and an accelerating economy by recommitting to the foundations of capitalism through curriculum on individual, economic, and geopolitical

⁵⁰ Chilcote, "The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States," 26.

⁵¹ Dorn, *For the Common Good*, 191.

⁵² Dorn, 178.

levels. Exploring these developments is crucial to a holistic and comprehensive study of the history of higher education.

Following World War Two, the threat of socialist governments taking power in Latin America intensified state department interest in the region. Committed to containing the spread of communism, the military-university-industrial complex encouraged scholars to explore the region from the perspective of national defense. Notably, modernization theory, which held that capitalism and its value systems were the answer to the problems of underdevelopment.⁵³ Imperialist and U.S.-centric academics established Latin American studies departments across the country, and collaborated closely with the U.S. state department and its execution of Cold War policy.⁵⁴ As the Cold War progressed, liberal scholars based in California became disillusioned with the traditional approach to Latin American studies and revolutionized the field with Marxist, pan-Americanist, and dependency theory perspectives.⁵⁵ The liberal approach is crucial to the current and future study of Latin America.

Bowdoin, as a private, undergraduate institution, was not drawn into the military-university-industrial complex, and thus the development of Latin American Studies took an alternative route. During the beginning of the Cold War, the administration of the college saw little need for Latin American Studies, and asserted that it was not the responsibility of a small, liberal arts school to provide instruction in area studies.⁵⁶ Though courses focusing on the region were taught occasionally, Bowdoin may have been slow to recognize the value of Latin American Studies in the absence of government financial incentives. This changed in 1975,

⁵³ Szanton, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 33.

⁵⁴ Chilcote, "The Cold War and the Transformation of Latin American Studies in the United States," 12.

⁵⁵ Szanton, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 13.

⁵⁶ "The Conservative Tradition in Education at Bowdoin College: Report of the Committee on Self-Study", September 1956, A01.29.01 Vol 2, Bowdoin College Self-Study Reports, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections and Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.

when seminars embraced the liberal perspective introduced by the California historians a decade earlier, and brought an interdisciplinary, liberal approach to Latin American Studies at Bowdoin.⁵⁷ These seminars set an ambitious and important precedent for the discipline. After more growing pains and hesitancy from the administration over the next two decades, a Latin American Studies department at Bowdoin was established in 2000 and has enjoyed tremendous success.

Though the broad history of Latin American Studies in the United States centers the relationship between the government and universities, the story of the discipline at Bowdoin reveals a different though equally important path. The relationship between national trends and the accounts of individual institutions are vital to the history of Latin American studies and will define the discipline's future.

⁵⁷ McLin, Helen K., "Feminism in Latin America", 1975-1976, Box 4 Folder 20, Senior Center Program Records and Publications 1957-1979, George J. Mitchell Dept. of Special Collections & Archives, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.