

SPANISH, PORTUGUESE AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

2026 OUR NEWS



Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies (SPLAS) at Newcastle is ranked 13 (out of 32 departments) in the country by the Times Good University Guide 2026. 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.

¡VAMOS!

¡Hola! Olá! This academic year has been packed with exciting activities, events and several exhibitions. But we would like to start by congratulating our colleague Jorge Català Carrasco who has been awarded the 2026 SRUK/CERU Merit Award in recognition of his internationally renowned contributions to Spanish and Latin American cultural studies. He says:

"I am truly honoured to receive this award, and I would like to thank all SRUK/CERU members for making this society such an inclusive and inspiring space for interdisciplinary research and intellectual curiosity. I am especially honoured because this is the first time the award has been presented to a Humanities researcher, a field that contributes decisively to addressing some of today's most pressing societal challenges.

Our societies are currently experiencing multilayered crises, and meaningful solutions will necessarily emerge through collective interdisciplinary collaboration between STEM and non-STEM disciplines. Within this shared process of inquiry, Humanities scholars play a vital role in reminding us of the complexities of what it means to be human: by creating narratives that help explain scientific discoveries, uncovering new forms of knowledge, and developing concepts and critical frameworks to be explored and tested."



Society of
Spanish Researchers
in the United Kingdom

IMPACT
RANKINGS 2022



A VISIT BY THE PERUVIAN AMBASSADOR TO CELEBRATE OUR PERUVIAN COMMUNITY AND RESEARCH BY GIULIANA BOREA

Ambassador Ignacio Higuera Hare and the Head of Cultural, Educational, and Press Affairs, Miss Irina Encarnación visited Newcastle for the opening of Listening to the Voices of the Rivers. This exhibition brought together extraordinary Amazonian indigenous artists who explore the profound connections between rivers, ecosystems, Indigenous knowledge, and cultural memory and was curated by Dr Giuliana Borea, Senior Lecturer from the School of Modern Languages, Dr Jamille Pinheiro Artist Harry Pinedo, Dr Giuliana Borea, Dr Muge Satar, Professor Nigel Harkness, Ambassador Ignacio Higuera Hare and Miss Irina Encarnación Dias and Dr Harriet Sutcliffe.

During his visit to Newcastle, the Ambassador and Cultural Officer visited our campus and met with Professor Nigel Harkness, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Professor Chris Whitehead, Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Global. They explored a landscape of different pathways for collaboration between Peruvian institutions and Newcastle University.

This gathering also provided an opportunity to bring together Peruvian students and researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines who work on Peru or are of Peruvian origin, showcasing the diversity of projects and institutional collaborations currently underway. These projects span fields from

marine science and microbial diversity to the arts and the teaching of Quechua. Dr Nick Morgan,

Director of the Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean (CLAC), and Dr Giuliana Borea, Director of Impact and Engagement in SML, presented the work of CLAC and SML, and highlighted the warm and collaborative atmosphere that shaped the event.#



Artist Harry Pinedo, Dr Giuliana Borea, Dr Muge Satar, Professor Nigel Harkness, Ambassador Ignacio Higuera Hare and Miss Irina Encarnación Dias and Dr Harriet



Professor Nigel Harkness, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Newcastle University, said:

“We are delighted to have hosted Ambassador Higuera Hare and to explore new opportunities for collaboration with Peru. This visit underscores the importance of international partnerships in tackling shared global challenges, from climate change to cultural resilience. By engaging with Amazonian Indigenous art and knowledge in Newcastle, we reaffirm our commitment to connecting research, creativity, and community on a global scale.” (<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sml/news>)

THE RANKINGS 2022

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE RIVERS

Listening to the Voices of the Rivers is an exhibition and community art program that explores the vital role rivers play in sustaining communities and ecosystems. Drawing on Amazonian Indigenous philosophies and practices, the exhibition connects to initiatives

in the North East of England on healthy rivers and rainforest curricula, addressing ecological sustainability, Indigenous knowledge, and community participation. The exhibition fosters a deeper understanding of the global climate crisis and will coincide with COP30 in the Brazilian Amazon as it advocates for collective responsibility, by encouraging people of all ages to reflect on their role in shaping a sustainable future.

Curated by Dr Giuliana Borea, Dr Jamille Pinheiro Dias and Dr Harriet Sutcliffe, the exhibition brings together the powerful work of artists from Peru and Brazil — Rember Yahuarcani (Uitoto), Harry Pinedo / Inin Metsa (Shipibo), Cordelia Sánchez / Pesin Kate (Shipibo), Brus Rubio Churay (Murui and Bora), Danna Gaviota (Kukama), Denilson Baniwa (Baniwa), Lilly Baniwa (Baniwa), Gustavo Caboco (Wapichana), Tayná Sateré (Sateré-Mawe)— whose paintings, videos, drawings, and photographs show the entanglements between humans, animals, plants, rivers, and ancestral beings, confront extractivism, and foreground water as a



source of life, continuity, and care. Alongside them, UK-based artist duo Zoe Walker & Neil Bromwich will work with school groups on a participatory project that explores the ghost rivers hidden beneath the streets of Newcastle.

This project is a collaboration between Newcastle Contemporary Art, Newcastle University (NU Centre for Water and CLAC), University of London's School of Advanced Study, and the Amazonart Project.

This exhibition provides Newcastle University students with firsthand exposure to Indigenous perspectives, art, activism, and ecological challenges, enriching their academic experience. The exhibition and the visit of two Indigenous artists create unique learning opportunities for our students. Particularly, the project contributes to education strategies in integrating Indigenous perspectives into diverse modules that focus on indigenous art, ontologies, rights, environmental justice enriching SML, HaSS and Newcastle's global, decolonised and diversified curriculum.

Dr Giuliana Borea is the module leader of Latin American Art, LAS4007. In this module, students learn about key moments of Latin American art, focus on a specific topic -this year is about Indigenous art and activism – and organise a curatorial project. Our former student in Modern Languages and Business Studies, Dominic Ayscough, says:

"Latin American Art introduced me to inspiring art and artists I would not have encountered otherwise, and it was really rewarding to collaborate with classmates and create an exhibition we could all be proud of. I am excited to bring these new perspectives and skills into the working world."

MEET OUR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS:

MARÍA BELÉN RIVEIRO

Hi! Hola a todos y todas. My name is María Belén Riveiro. I am a Sociologist from Argentina, and I was awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship to conduct research on print culture and cultures of democracy at the School of Modern Languages.

One of my favourite features of the SML building is that it has an exhibition space called The Beehive that provides us with an unconventional means to share some of the findings of our research. Earlier this year I accepted the challenge to translate my project into an art exhibition that is titled “Books & Democracy.” It provides a glimpse into book production during the 1980s in Argentina from the viewpoint of a small publishing house, Ada Korn Editora, funded during the democratic transition after the 1976 military dictatorship, and directed by a female publisher.

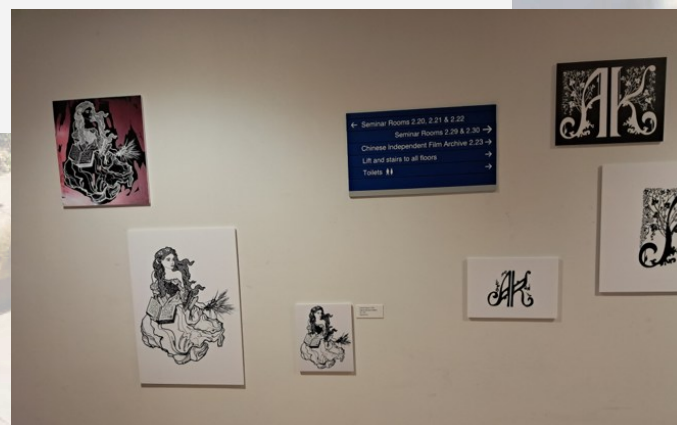
You are all invited to visit the exhibition, and I'd love to offer you 3 roads to navigate it.

INSTRUCTIONS TO VISIT THE EXHIBITION “BOOKS & DEMOCRACY”

The Beehive (2nd floor, Old Library Building)

1. COMPARE THE BOOK COVERS AND GET AN INTRODUCTION INTO THE HISTORY OF ARGENTINE LITERARY TRADITIONS
2. DISCOVER THE PROCESS OF DESIGNING A LOGO FOR A SNEAK PEEK OF THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF BOOK PRODUCTION
3. CHECK THE CURVED WALL FOR A GLIMPSE INTO THE BACKSTAGE OF RESEARCH

I hope that the publishing houses that populate the map of the city of Buenos Aires even against all odds (given the economic crisis that the statistics portray) spire us to embrace a “ladylike willingness to break the mould,” as Ada Korn described one of Mirta Botta’s short stories.



MEET OUR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS:

DANILO BARAÚNA



My name is Danilo Baraúna, and I am a queer academic researcher, lecturer, independent curator, and visual artist. Over the years, I have worked in universities, primary and secondary education, and the cultural and creative sector, developing art projects both as an institutional and an independent curator. My interdisciplinary research concerns the fields of queer studies (ecological, decolonial, and affective approaches) and artists' moving image theory and criticism, with a particular interest in LGBTQIAPN+ art and cultural production from the Brazilian Amazon. I am currently a British Academy International Fellow at the School of Modern Languages, developing the research project titled 'From queer ecology towards haunted aesthetics: disorientation, care and futurities in the LGBTQIAPN+ artists' moving image from the Brazilian Amazon', or simply 'Amazônia EcoQueer'.

This research examines how films and videos produced by LGBTQIAPN+ artists from the Brazilian Amazon imagine queer ecological futures for the region amidst the current environmental crisis. A key aspect of the project is fostering creative collaborations between queer and trans artists and curators, with an emphasis on exploring the intersections of gender and sexuality with environmental justice, climate change, and environmental racism in the Amazon. This is materialized, for example, through a collective exhibition and a series of film screenings (to be held in Brazil and the UK in 2025–2026) in partnership with initiatives such as the Amazonart Project and external institutions such as the Federal University of Pará (Brazilian Amazon) and Newcastle Contemporary Art. The films and videos included in this research were mostly produced post-COVID-19 pandemic and span a variety of more specific discussions around queer autobiography and the entanglements of human and non-human worlds, the challenging of colonial legacies in the urban Amazon, and a contestation of the idea of 'sustainable futures' through Black and Indigenous perspectives. For example, the accompanying image is a still from the film *The Island of Self Contemplation* (2020), by Allyster Fagundes, which shows the metaphorical transmutation of artists' bodies into Amazonian mythical creatures aiming to disorientate modes of conviviality between humans and non-human beings. Furthermore, the project explores how these queer ecological relationships foster queer modes of conviviality that can teach us to establish more affectively-driven connections with nature and the environment.

Instagram: @amazoniaecoqueer

MEET OUR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS: NICOLÁS VILLARROEL

Dr Nicolás Villarroel (he/him) is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Modern Languages at Newcastle University, funded by the Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (Chile). His research lies at the intersection of memory, discourse, and affect and emotion studies. His projects have focused on how Chilean society remembers the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990), considering different generational and ideological positions. Before moving to Newcastle, Nicolás completed his PhD at the Australian National University, where he explored how emotions shape Chilean exiles' memories of the dictatorship. His current project examines how the Chilean far right uses humour on social media to bolster revisionist narratives of the dictatorial past and reframe human rights discourse in Chile. Nicolás has worked on various projects at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, and Nottingham Trent University. His research has been published in *Memory Studies* and in edited volumes published by Brill and Bloomsbury.



DR DUNJA FEHIMOVIC: '(DE) COLONIAL ECOLOGIES IN 21ST-CENTURY INSULAR HISPANIC CARIBBEAN FILM'

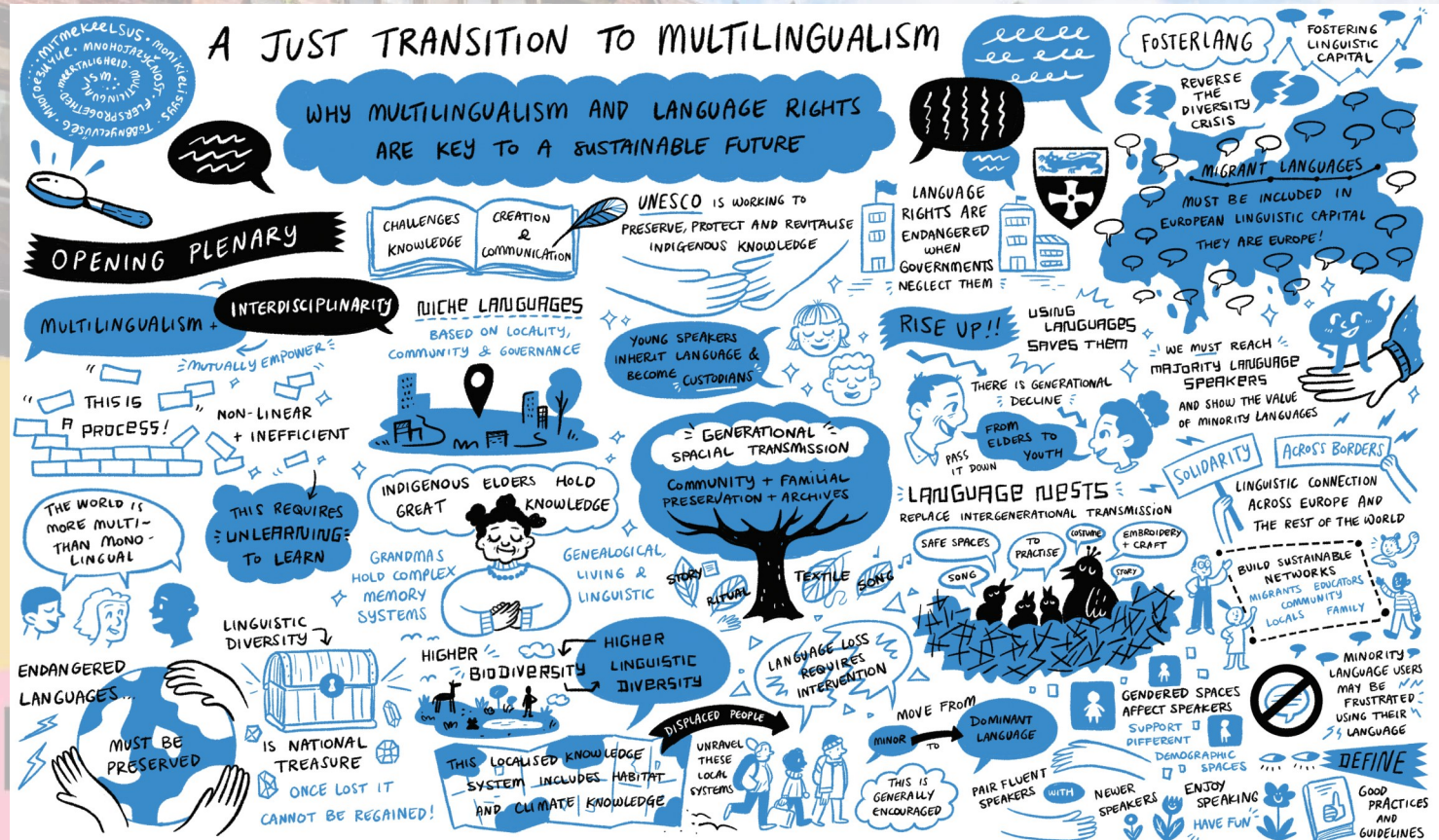
Community cinema and environmental justice The Caribbean has been identified by the UN Secretary-General as "ground zero for the global climate emergency." Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Dr Dunja Fehimović's Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research project nevertheless takes a longer and broader view. Focussing on the Spanish-speaking Caribbean islands of Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, it investigates the ongoing and long-term impacts of colonialism -coloniality -, and the complex, broader network of relationships between and among humans and non-human nature – ecology – via film.

'(De)colonial Ecologies in 21st-century insular Hispanic Caribbean film' understands film not just as a medium, but also as a practice that both represents and affects how people navigate environmental and social challenges. With community environmental organisation Casa Pueblo as her local project partner, Dunja has been researching community cinema as a response to the natural, economic, and political forces that are displacing Puerto Ricans from their archipelago. This has taken two main forms:

1. The co-production with members of the Adjuntas community of a participatory documentary about locals' resistance to displacement. *El llamado de la montaña: Historias de resistencia desde Adjuntas* (The Call of the Mountain: Stories of Resistance from Adjuntas) is currently in post-production, and will hopefully premiere in Puerto Rico later this year!
2. The organisation of the First Gathering on Community Cinema in Puerto Rico, where filmmakers, academics, and members of grassroots organizations gathered to identify common challenges and shared strategies for this kind of creative and community-centred work. These findings have been published in an open-access report and circulated by independent Puerto Rican news network, 9 millones.

Dunja's project is showing how, in the contemporary colonial context of Puerto Rico, community film can function to document, strengthen and inspire grassroots self-governance initiatives that have been crucial for disaster recovery (for example, in the wake of the 2017 category 5 Hurricane Maria) and for the development of decolonial, sustainable and community-centred ways of life. In the face of austerity, extractivism and green-washing policies into which locals have very limited input, it harnesses participatory research, creative practice, and intercultural communication to articulate and amplify local knowledges and practices for the development of a just transition.

A JUST TRANSITION TO MULTILINGUALISM: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY SYMPOSIUM



On 18th March 2026, Newcastle University hosted the symposium “A Just Transition to Multilingualism”. The event gathered scholars from disciplines ranging from engineering to applied linguistics to explore what an equitable, sustainable and reparative future for all might look through the lenses of multi- and translanguaging, and intercultural communication. Though it is impossible to ascertain with absolute precision, it is estimated that approximately 65% of the world's population live in more than one language. It is, indeed, more common to live a multilingual life than to live a monolingual one. Multilingual and intercultural daily existence is of course nothing new, but increased mobility through globalisation and migration, along with the proliferation of transnational communication channels and digital networks, have drawn attention to the many ways in which people navigate the edges, interstices, hierarchies and tensions of an intricately contoured linguistic terrain on a daily basis, whether they are aware of this or not. At every scale, societies are structured by hierarchies of linguistic privilege that stifle the possibility of envisioning a just, equitable and accountable future that respects the many grammars and literacies through which people choose to express themselves. The year 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, signed in Barcelona in 1996. In 2022, the United Nations declared the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) renewing the focus on multilingualism as a vehicle for epistemic and linguistic diversity.

THE MULTILINGUAL CHOIR

Founded in 2019 under the guidance of Patricia Oliart and Afra Jurkiewicz at the School of Modern Languages, the Multilingual Choir has grown into a vibrant, inclusive space that visibly reflects and celebrates Newcastle University's global community. Bringing together members from over ten nationalities, diverse gender identities, and ages spanning from 20 to over 60, the choir embraces linguistic and cultural diversity through a repertoire of songs performed in more than a dozen languages, with Spanish and Portuguese featuring prominently. Shaped collaboratively through members' suggestions, this repertoire engages with themes such as environmental responsibility, peace, spiritual values across cultures, memory, and social justice, allowing participants to connect music-making with shared ethical and social concerns.

Led by Colombian musician Juan Loaiza, the choir has grown from strength to strength since its creation, becoming a unique gathering of students, lecturers, and members of the wider community. Apart from our weekly rehearsals, we perform live three or four times a year in different venues around Newcastle (e.g. Star and Shadow, Discovery Festival, Whitley Bay Community Carnival, World Water Day at Black Swan bar, Bar Loco Open Mic nights, Multilingual Library in Gateshead). These performances have allowed us to increase the motivation among participants to improve and expand our repertoire, to see firsthand the impact and engagement of our singing on the audience, for instance, raising awareness about linguistic diversity, and to reach out to potential new members.

In short, the Multilingual Choir is a musical journey around the world. We clap, dance, and perform songs in myriad languages (e.g. Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, Romani, Xhosa, Aymara, among others), celebrating linguistic and cultural diversity through the power of music



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