

SOUTHLAND GEOGRAPHIC NOTES



Los Angeles Geographical Society Newsletter

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Coming Up!

October 5th, 2007: Walking the Camino De Santiago: Northern Spain -- Jean Christensen

"In 2002 I began a two week journey walking the 'Camino de Santiago' in Northern Spain I completed the other two weeks in 2003. I began my walk from Pamplona, Spain and completed the walk in Santiago, Spain. The presentation will be on the diverse physical geography of the Basque region and Glacia in addition to a brief history of the pilgrimage". -- Jean Christensen

Free public lectures on geographical topics are offered once a month from September through May (except for January). Invited guests, featuring students & faculty, present research topics, travelogues, & other interesting geographical topics from the U.S. & around the world. Lectures are usually held on the first Friday of each month at 8:00 PM in Franklin Hall, Room 101, at Los Angeles City College, 855 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

President's Column

Hello everyone. We have had a successful program this year with many great speakers and an exciting student presentation program in May. The program went on with great help from the Council. I couldn't make many of the meetings due to personal difficulties. Lorna Karagiozov, my partner of 23 years and LAGS Secretary suffered a brain hemorrhage related to some tumors back in February 2007. We fought the good fight in and out of hospitals for the next five months until she died at home in hospice care on July 14 (Bastille Day.) This has been a great loss for me and LAGS. She was scheduled to write articles for the newsletter which is one reason we haven't had many newsletters this year.

We will be having an election at the end of the year in which there will be some changes for LAGS. I have been President of LAGS for four years which is a record long tenure in the history of the organization. Julienne Gard has been Vice President for the past three years. We both feel that for the healthy future of LAGS we should step down and let other board members or councilors run for these positions. We wish to remain in the council to help whoever takes over these positions. We will also need a new Secretary. It will be good for LAGS to have new people in new positions with new energy.

We have a great program planned for the coming year. We will have presentations on Spain, California climate, New Orleans, Bosnia, Peru and Northern Ireland. We will also have the Banquet again at Taix in December and the student presentations in May. See the event schedule in this newsletter.

We should have another newsletter coming out in November for the election and to announce the banquet. Sign up early for the banquet. It may sell out. We also need volunteers for board positions and the Council. Please contact us to help. Kris Jones

Student Presentation Night May 4th, 2007

In keeping with the tradition of featuring the work of local college and university students at the season's last meeting, the May meeting was a mini-symposium of presentations and posters that covered a wide variety of geographical topics. The research was original and thought provoking. In addition, most of the presentations had a local dimension that stimulated audience interest. We thank all the students for an outstanding evening of presentations and posters. Below is a sampling of a few of the research presentations and posters:

Presentations:

Brian Dunbar from California State University, Northridge described his graduate research examining the occupational and residential patterns of Zapotec immigrants from Oaxaca, Mexico. One part of his research involved one-on-one interviews with Zapotec immigrants, which was obviously challenging given the nature of the topic and the wariness of the subjects. His conclusion was that while the occupational situation improved at an average rate, there was little evidence of upward residential mobility.

Jamie Stern, an undergraduate student from the University of Southern California, presented her research on the Bark Beetle infestation in the San Bernardino Forest. The initial beetle infestation produced substantial tree damage, killing one third of the trees in the San Bernardino National Forest. When the Grand Prix Fire and the Old Fire raced through the forest later that year, the dead and damaged trees acted as a prime fuel source that increased the wildfire hazard dramatically. Ms. Stern showed maps that depicted both the infested and fire affected areas. Unsurprisingly, the map of infestation matched that of fire damage. Ms. Stern concluded that a small problem could develop into a massive life threatening situation.

Cameran Ashraf, a graduate student at California State University, Fullerton presented a research proposal that aims at analyzing the effectiveness of policy on decreasing light pollution in our night skies. In his presentation he detailed the health, economic, environmental, and legal reasons why light management policies are needed. For example, animals that use the stars or the night sky or even the position of the horizon as a navigational aid are confused by skies that are almost as bright as day, and are adversely affected. The serious consequences of light pollution have led certain cities around the country and the globe to adopt policies to curb light pollution. Mr. Ashraf is planning research to compare the light policies of two cities to examine how effectively they are able to reduce light pollution.

Gina Goodhill, an undergraduate student at the University of Southern California, presented her

research on a 2000 outbreak of a destructive and invasive seaweed in San Diego. When unchecked, the seaweed, *Caulerpa taxifolia*, has done serious damage, threatening natural biodiversity, decreasing recreational activities, and harming commercial fishing. In the Mediterranean Sea, this seaweed has covered 30,000 acres of ocean floor. The City of San Diego aggressively fought the invasive seaweed and through a variety of measures was eventually able to declare it eradicated. Ms. Goodhill concluded with an examination of whether the methods successfully used to fight the invasive seaweed in San Diego can be extended to other invasive species threatening California waters, such as the Northern pike and the Quagga mussel.

Mario Landa, a graduate student at California State University, Fullerton, presented his research on deforestation in Mexico's important tropical rainforest. His research examined a complex set of factors that included Spanish colonization, the region's current socio-economic conditions, and local and national policies in order to assess why deforestation is taking place. Mr. Landa reviewed some of the current and continuing impacts of deforestation, a problem that will probably only grow more urgent given the issues of social dissent and neoliberal policies that complicate it.

Posters:

Cesar Espinosa, a graduate student at California State University, Long Beach presented a web-based GIS application that provided users with the ability to perform spatial analyses of features of interest. His research is part of a project at Cal State Long Beach that is funded by the Department of Defense to aid in advancing logistics procedures. The utility of this application was instantly apparent as users zoomed in and out of the application, adding layers of information, and measuring distance.

Rachel Yukimura, an undergraduate student at the University of Southern California, presented a poster that compared human and elephant damages to woody vegetation in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem in Kenya. In her study, she assessed the damage to trees in an Acacia woodland on a ranch near Amboseli. The results of her study were very interesting: only 10% of all individuals of dominant woody species were impacted by humans, compared to 53% of individuals of dominant woody species that were impacted by elephants. The conclusion was that humans and elephants can dramatically change the habitats they live in by changing the composition of its woody vegetation.

**September Lecture:
Boldly Going Where No Geographer Has
Gone Before: The Martian Classroom**
By Dr. Christine Rodrigue, California State
University, Long Beach
Lecture report by Zia Salim

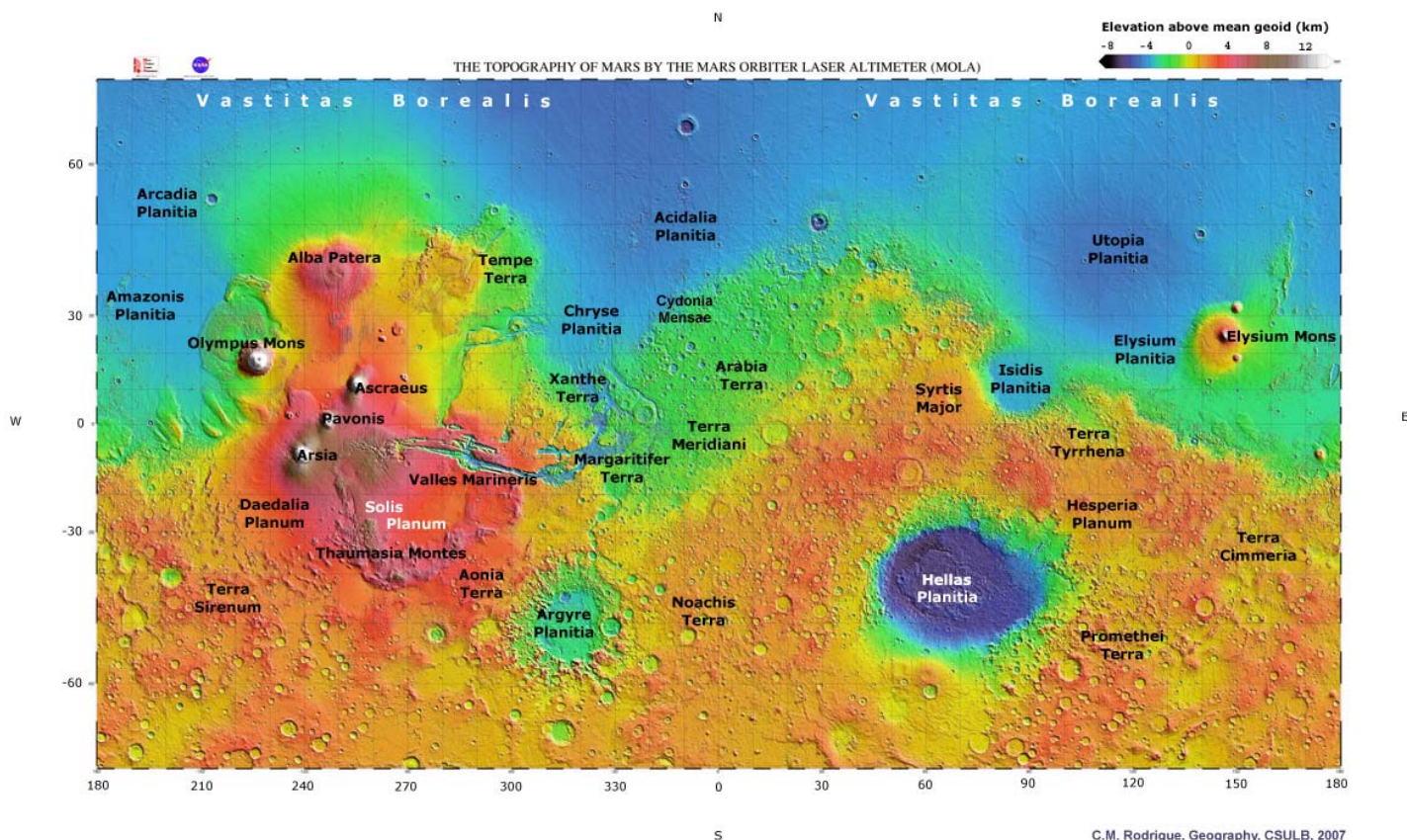
The Los Angeles Geographical Society kicked off the 2007-2008 season with an out-of-this-world lecture by Dr. Christine Rodrigue on September 7th.

Dr. Rodrigue began with a description of the connection of geography to the study of Mars. Geography's four traditions can be extended to apply to the study of Mars, especially the regional tradition, which focuses on the description of certain areas or regions in order to differentiate them from other areas or regions. This areography of Mars, which can be thought of as its regional "geography" or the differentiation of physical areas on the Martian surface, was a central theme of the presentation.

From early human endeavors to study and map the "canals" of Mars to modern flybys by advanced satellites, we have been fascinated by the Red Planet. The Mars Global Surveyor, launched in 1996, carried on board an instrument known as the Mars Orbiter Laser Altimeter (MOLA), which produced a map that is the most accurate global topographic map of any planet in the solar system. Dr. Rodrigue referred to this topographic map (shown below) as she guided the audience through many of the impressive physical features that distinguish the Martian landscape.

Interestingly, familiar geographical descriptors are inappropriate to use when describing features on Mars because the use of these terms implies terrestrial or earth-based processes. Our knowledge of Mars is not great enough for us to conclude that Martian features that resemble Earth features have been caused by the same processes. Thus, scientists have come up with a whole new vocabulary to describe Martian landscapes. For example, new terms as Vastitas, Planum, and Vallis are used to describe extensive plains, plateaus, and valleys, respectively.

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The general dichotomy of the Martian landscape is its division between the old, rough, cratered southern highlands which cover two thirds of the planet and the low, smooth, northern lowlands which cover the remaining third. Some researchers have postulated that the northern lowlands are actually ocean floors, but the maddening nature of the planet is such that some parts of this “oceans of water on Mars” theory disagree with observed features related to the types of rocks found in the highlands. Mars’ southern highlands are pocked with craters and show signs of erosion and deposition. They are also home to higher elevation areas, including the Martian volcanoes.

Dr. Rodrigue mentioned many different types of Martian features. A few of the more amazing physical features included:

Hellas Planitia: A huge impact basin, about 1,400 miles across and 5 miles deep relative to the surrounding countryside. It can be seen toward the lower right of the MOLA map.

Valles Marineris: A great canyon, about 2,500 miles long and 120 miles wide. This rift system winds its way from the Tharsis bulge into the northern highlands and is replete with chasmata (deep, steep-sided depressions). It has an east-west orientation and can be seen in the middle left of the MOLA map.

Olympus Mons: the tallest known volcano and mountain in the entire solar system, this behemoth soars 16 miles into the Martian sky – about three times the elevation of Mount Everest. Olympus Mons is ringed or edged by a cliff with 4 mile high walls. The area underneath this shield volcano could cover the entire state of Arizona! On the MOLA map, Olympus Mons is the large peak to the northwest of Valles Marineris.

In addition to showing the diversity and utterly impressive nature of Martian landscapes, Dr. Rodrigue’s presentation also connected the topic to geography in a clear manner. When a manned mission to Mars is planned, NASA would do well to have a geographer on the crew!

2006 Scholarship Presentation May 4th, 2007

An important event that takes place at the last meeting of the season is the awarding of scholarships to outstanding local students. The Los Angeles Geographical Society funds a maximum of two McKnight Clemons scholarships for community college students and two Logan scholarships for upper division students. These scholarships are based on merit, not financial need, and are intended to encourage talented students to continue their training and studies in geography and to foster interest in geography. The applicant pool this year was especially rich and thus four scholarships were awarded. We thank all the applicants and congratulate the scholarship winners!

The 2006 recipients are:

McKnight-Clemons Scholarships

Bianca Bazil (Los Angeles City College)

Yumi Takano (El Camino College)

Logan Scholarships

Charlotte Greene – CSU Fullerton

Marina Jordan-Viola – USC



Annual Meeting of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers October 17-20, 2007

This is the regional association for geographers on the West Coast. This year’s annual meeting is being held at the Hilton on West Ocean Boulevard in downtown Long Beach and hosted by California State University, Long Beach.

Field trips include: ecological diversity in the Palos Verdes, a brush fire tour of the Santa Monica Mountains, a tour of the Mission of San Juan Capistrano, and much more.

Conference highlights will include: an opening reception, Cambodian dinner, papers, posters, and maps, and a banquet. More information can be found at the meeting’s website at Cal State Long Beach:

<http://www.csulb.edu/depts/geography/apcg/>



**Los Angeles Geographical
Society
55th Annual Program
Fall 2007-Spring 2008**

Free Public Lecture Series

*Los Angeles City College, 855 N. Vermont Ave, Los Angeles, CA
First Friday of the month (unless otherwise indicated), 8-9 pm, Franklin Hall, Room 101
Check: www.lageographic.org for directions and other information.*

FALL 2006	SPRING 2007
<p>September 7 <i>Boldly Going Where No Geographer Has Gone Before: The Martian Classroom</i> <i>Dr. Chrys Rodrigue</i> Cal State Long Beach</p>	<p>February 1 <i>Bosnia, Slovenia, Croatia</i> <i>Matt Ebner</i> El Camino College</p>
<p>October 5 <i>Walking the Camino De Santiago: Northern Spain</i> <i>Jean Christensen</i></p>	<p>March 7 <i>Peru : From the Amazon to the Andes</i> <i>Cristy Brenner</i> Saddleback College</p>
<p>November 2 <i>California Climate Change: Past, Present & Future</i> <i>Jeff Brown</i></p>	<p>April 4 <i>Wall Murals of Belfast Northern Ireland</i> <i>Irene Naesse</i> Orange Coast College</p>
<p>December 7 <i>Annual Banquet at Taix Restaurant</i> <i>New Orleans: Post Katrina Recovery</i> <i>Dr. Stephen Mulherin</i> Cal State Los Angeles</p>	<p>May 9 <i>Student Presentations and Posters from California Colleges and Universities</i></p>



Los Angeles Geographical Society

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Dr. Richard F. Logan Scholarships
McKnight-Clemons Scholarships
Free Monthly Public Lectures
Local Field Trips

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Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting

The Association of American Geographers held its annual meeting in San Francisco last April. The meeting was exceptionally well attended, with more than 6,700 geographers from 58 countries registered. There were 4,700 presentations – far too many to be manageable by any normal human being! The keynote address was by UCLA's Pulitzer Prize-winning geographer Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *Collapse*. I asked a couple of local students about their impressions of the conference and San Francisco.

Q: What did you get out of going to the AAG meeting?

KP: Many of the sessions I attended were very engaging, and opened my eyes to ways in which I could develop my own thesis research. The program was overwhelming – there were so many presentations I wanted to go to, but could not due to scheduling conflicts.

ML: With so many speakers and so many sessions, it was difficult to decide what session to see.

Q: What about Downtown San Francisco as a venue?

KP: Intentionally or not, the conference committee could not have chosen a better area to visualize the effects of urban redevelopment. I did not realize this when I explored the city and ventured into the Tenderloin district, which the conference hotel borders. The Hilton where the conference was held is itself an urban redevelopment initiative and it was interesting to walk about two city blocks down to see the difference in the urban landscape.

Q: Now that you've been to one of these meetings, would you go again?

ML: (It's) exactly what I wanted to see. A burgeoning group of people from around the world there to share their knowledge, ideas, research, and most importantly to have fun. Now that I know how much fun and vital this conference is, only my student debts will keep me from going to the AAG 2008 meeting in Boston.

-with thanks to CSUF graduate students Mario Landa & Kim Pham.