Cristina: My name is Cristina Venegas, and I am Professor of Film and Media studies at the University of California Santa Barbara. It is Friday, March 24th, 2017, and I'm here in Chicago at the Fairmont Hotel at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference.

We are interviewing Professor Ana Lopez, who works in the Department of Communication at Tulane University where she is also Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Director of the Cuban and Caribbean Studies Institute. Professor Lopez is well known for her wide ranging publications on Latin American cinema and culture addressing historical and industrial trajectories, early cinema and modernity, genres, musicals, melodrama in film and television, Cuban cinema, and other national and transnational cinematic cultures, and most recently, an important call for new research with an intermedial framework in Latin American mediascapes. It's a thrill to do this and an honor.

Ana: The honor's all mine.

Cristina: And I wanted to start with some initial questions about how you became a film scholar and what prompted you, what interested you in making the decision early on.

Ana: Well, it was an interesting trajectory. I mean, back when I was an undergraduate, we didn't have the kind of tight curricular requirements that are common now for undergraduate degrees. You know, distributional requirements or core curriculum. It was sort of like, take English 101 and then move on and do whatever. So I took courses all over the place.

Began as a pre-med, that didn't work out after organic chemistry, and started taking accounting courses because they were easy. I was also taking philosophy courses because I was enjoying them. So I very gradually build up and before I realized it, it's like, "Oh, I'm going to major in Accounting. That's really weird." Because I was taking all these philosophy courses and among the offerings in the philosophy department were film courses.

That was one place that taught film. So I took a course in '30s cinema, the Depression cinema, and loved it. Then there was a second course on third world cinema stuff. Politically radical filmmaking, I think it was. I watched Memories of Underdevelopment in that class for the first time. It's a Cuban film, as you know, from the '60s that is very significant, not only for Cuban cinema, but particularly for me as an exile. Right?

So after working as an accountant for a couple of years after I graduated, I was like, okay. I'm either going to go to grad school for comp lit or for film. So I looked up what was happening in the field, and comp lit was kind of, at that particular point, kind of moribund, but it was the high point of Screen and Screen theory. It was like, “Okay! Off to grad school I go!”

Cristina: That's amazing that we have that in film in common as an instigator.

Ana: As an instigator.
Cristina: It's a great ... It continues to be a great instigator.

Ana: I know, I know.

Cristina: So what training did you have that preceded that first teaching job, then?

Ana: None. Zero. Zilch. I ended up going to the University of Iowa for complicated reasons. I was in New York and never thought I would leave New York, but all of a sudden Iowa made me an offer I couldn't resist. And I was ... Mary Ann Doane had just graduated. Mimi White had just graduated. Phil Rosen. It was sort of like I was seeing all these names that were doing really exciting work. I was like, "Okay, I going to do Feminist Film Theory too."

So I arrive at Iowa with that project, and I had a teaching fellowship from day one. So the first day in the classroom, I was like, “I have never done this...” And I'm about two years older than they are. And they're all blonde, because they were. I actually wrote out very neat lecture notes that began with, "My name is Ana Lopez," because I thought I was going to forget! It was trial by error.

Cristina: Wow, so what about your-

Ana: Trial by fire.

Cristina: ... first faculty job?

Ana: My first faculty job is my current job. I landed at Tulane and have managed to make myself over in different ways at the university. So it was a very small Communication department; it has grown since. I was the only film faculty, and my job was to start a film component for the department.

Cristina: So then what you had studied in, what you had written your dissertation in, did not necessarily-

Ana: It did not apply.

Cristina: It did not apply, which is fascinating.

Ana: Totally. The training at Iowa in terms of the field was very broad. I never really took a course on Latin American film or on Latin American almost anything. There were very few offerings at Iowa at the time. So I was self-taught in Latin America, but not in film, so I could teach anything, I felt, in film.

Tulane also was a particularly good fit for me, which I didn't even realize at the time, because of the strength of the Latin American Studies program. The Stone Center for Latin American Studies is huge. And at the time it was ... I didn't need a lot of film people around to feel comfortable with what I was doing, but I needed a lot of Latin Americanists, because I wasn't comfortable with my knowledge there. So that has
continued to be a really nice balance, and of course there are other film faculty now and stuff.

Cristina: When you started publishing your work, your first publications ... Can you describe that situation?

Ana: Well, like most grad students you publish a seminar paper, right? So my first publication was on Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* of all things. I don't think I published anything on Latin America until almost the end of my graduate career because I published on early film theory, and then I wrote something on telenovelas that got published in *Wide Angle*. I think that was my second or my third article. So it was a strange kind of trajectory. But now, for many years, what I did for research was what I did for research, and what I taught were different things.

Cristina: Yeah, okay.

Ana: Which is not unusual.

Cristina: Which is not unusual-

Ana: Or at least it wasn't back then.

Cristina: Yeah, I mean, it seems like every department sort of defines ... has a way of defining how you go about ... what you choose to do.

Ana: I think the expectations were different. I mean, I think that I arrived at that department knowing it was small and they need a building, and then I was going to contribute to that growth. And I didn't have the expectation that I would get to teach my research every year. My sense of junior faculty now is that they do have that expectation, and if you ask them to teach four new courses their first year, they freak out.

Cristina: Yeah, and in some cases very directed types of positions. Yeah. What's also really interesting about your own trajectory is just the sheer range of topics that you've taken on over the years.

Ana: Because it's been many years, Cristina!

Cristina: Well, no, I know it's been many years, but it's still ... 

Ana: There's something to be said about longevity!

Cristina: I know. I know. But there's still this great, meaty and wonderful range of topics which I know continue to expand, but we'll get to that.

Ana: Well, the thing is that, my dissertation was in New Latin American Cinema, and then there came a point where I was like, "Okay, I'm done with that." Then the field changed over the years, and once new regulations, federal regulations, were put in place about
doing human research, research with humans, I decided I was going to work on dead filmmakers because I didn't want to go through the approval processes. So that kind of set me into the past. I don't remember if you were there at that film festival in Havana, where for the first time they brought out all the old films from the '40s and '30s, '40s and 50s?

Cristina: No, no, no, no, I was not there.

Ana: That was monumental. That was monumental because up until then, that was the cinema that was denied, that was rejected, that was complicit with the powers-that-be, and all of a sudden I watched all these films and they were amazing, right? Ninon Sevilla was there, and she fell off the stage dancing.

Cristina: Oh my god.

Ana: No, it was one of these breakthrough moments where I've got to work with this stuff.

Cristina: Ninon Sevilla was a big star of musicals and melodramas and only recently passed away.

Ana: Did she pass away?

Cristina: Yes.

Ana: Oh, I missed that.

Cristina: Like last yeah.

Ana: Oh, she was awesome. So anyway that was a very exciting moment when I discovered this whole universe of Mexican films, Argentine films that had to be understood in a different context. So that's how that shift happened, right? And if you remember the '80s, I mean, out of the excitement of the new Latin American cinema, all of a sudden in the '80s there are all these debates about whether it's dead or not.

Cristina: Yeah, I remember those.

Ana: There's a move towards more mainstream filmmaking and looking for audiences. To those of us coming from the ebullience of new Latin American cinema, it was like a little sad. I mean, it was a little disappointing. You didn't want to work on those films because you were too close to them, and you didn't know what to say about them. So for me intellectually, the move towards the past was very productive.

Cristina: Yeah, that's a very key ... I think it still continues to be a very important topic, what the relationship is to those films. I mean, I think about that, especially because what we were watching when we were starting to do this, were those films.

Ana: I know, I know.
Cristina: And so there was a very strong relationship.

Ana: Yeah, and it's actually ... I was talking to Catherine Benamou, another one of our Latin American film colleagues, just yesterday, and she's working on the '80s, and I said, "Why?" So we had this conversation about how we were too close to those films back then and just too buoyed up by other issues and this was disappointing. We weren't able to understand the processes that were going on socially in Latin America.

Cristina: So you mentioned that at Tulane there was the Stone Center, the very strong emphasis on Latin American Studies, which is incredible. Personally, I've experienced it; it is incredible. So how did that also, in terms of the contribution to your own scholarship, to your own work, what were you reading? What were you coming into contact with in those early years that also propelled you in terms of the work that you were doing or the work that you were developing and the research?

Ana: Well, I was in this very lively community of Latin Americanists. I still am. So it wasn't ... I don't know that I can point to attacks, but it was like the literature people were doing really interesting stuff. I don't know, the move towards more cultural studies-like work. So Canclini, Nestor Garcia Canclini. Monsivais, right? I met them. We brought them to the Stone Center. They read my work. It was just very, very productive, informative.

But also social scientists, we have great strengths in social sciences. So I all of a sudden learned how to appreciate a lot of social scientific work that I wasn't appreciative of before having come through the ranks in film studies and just very aligned with high theory, for lack of a better word. That kind of gave my work a different kind of grounding, and if anything, I think I've gone from ... I don't know that I quote theory anymore at all. I've moved from that towards a more histori...
particularly the my own work has developed, but just throughout the region, you can see it from a distance in a different way. I remember that at a very early LASA in Guadalajara, we had a pre-conference symposium on Latin American film, and I argued, this is in the '90s, that the Mexican cinema was profoundly transnational. I was almost lynched by the Mexicans, right? Saying, "No, no, no, no, no. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about Mexican cinema because it's Mexican cinema."

I'm going, "No, you got to look at it from where I'm looking at it. I'm not seeing just the nationalist forces because I can see other things that are happening there and just not ignoring ... You're not ignoring it; you're just not framing it. You're using those ways, those things, to frame the discussion. You're framing a discussion only from within." Right? So I think that's an advantage. It's also a disadvantage because you become ... I have become the specialist of nothing. I'm not a Mexicanist, I'm not a Southern Cone person-

Cristina: I understand that.

Ana: I'm barely Cuban. And just Latin America, something which some would argue doesn't exist.

Cristina: I know. Yes. So you also then wrote, and I don't know if it was before or after that conference in Guadalajara, the piece on traveling filmmakers-

Ana: It was after.

Cristina: Where which we argue for precisely these kinds of really important languages.

Ana: No, I think I've been arguing that point since in almost everything I write just out of willfulness!

Cristina: That speaks a little bit to the opposite. Because you have done work and presented work and collaborated trans-nationally. You just published a book that was published in Cuba that also frames that book within the context of writing about Latin America within Cuba, or within Latin America, and outside of it. But what is the difference? How do you then write when you're thinking about Latin American cinema from Latin America, from these multi perspectives, and from these multilingual perspectives because you have this multilingual perspective?

Ana: I mean, I think what happens to film scholars that are nation based is that they always privilege the national, right? Because those are the resources they have at their disposal. And to that degree the work that's been done in archives and the detailed work on certain historical processes and periods can only be done by someone there. I mean, you have to be on location, so to speak.

So what happens to film scholars often who are working at the level of the nation and the level of a national cinema, is that even when they move a little bit outside of that and they begin to think of their relationship to other countries in the continent, they
work from what I would call more a comparative perspective, rather than a transnational perspective. So there's less emphasis on the movement of films and bodies across borders than there is...

“And look this happened in Mexico, and this happened in Argentina. This happened in Brazil, and this happened in Argentina.” It's more comparative rather than truly transnational.

Cristina: Right. Yes. Absolutely. I think you've also contributed to some ... and there's another aspect of this contribution is all these translations that you've done. You've translated Mexican cinema from Spanish to English. You've translated other ... I mean, there's several texts that you have translated, but you've also published encyclopedic entries.

Ana: Many.

Cristina: Many encyclopedic entries.

Ana: That was a crazy project. Never again. Do not do an encyclopedia.

Cristina: Yeah, I was going to ask, because you've done-

Ana: Don't ask me what prompted me.

Cristina: You've done different kinds work related to encyclopedic text that were both that large compilation of Latin American culture but also specifically encyclopedic things.

Ana: And that's how I got into silent cinema actually, so those encyclopedia entries that I wrote for ... I don't even remember the name of it, but it was Anthony Slide, one of the Anthony Slide collections that got me, just sort of like, a little, you know, hormiguita, like a little ant into that field.

Cristina: You wrote the amazing piece on early cinema and modernity in Latin America, which I think received a prize from SCMS Katherine Singer Kovacs essay award, and it's an often quoted essay, beautiful essay. And I think it also has inspired and connected with a lot of other silent film histories.

Ana: It's been fascinating to me how that essay really resonated with a new generation of scholars that the work of whom we're beginning to see come out now in book form. Like Laura Isabel Serna, and Rielle Navitski, even Nick Poppe. I mean it really resonated with him. I don't know if it's because it kind of brought into ... It highlighted the salience of films that we hadn't really talked about in English language scholarship: A. and that they existed, and B, that we could talk about them.

But also it connected to how silent cinema was being talked about in the West, in the North, whatever geographical direction you want to go outside of Latin America. And did again what I think I do best, which is looking at the period as a whole in as many parts of the continent as I could address in one essay, and that I had information about. So that too allowed me then to postulate the way the cinema had worked in different ways that wasn't just tied to say Mexican cinema and the revolution, or tango and...
Argentina, but could really articulate larger arguments about modernity in Latin America.

Cristina: And you’re messing in a little bit the way in which the scholarship resonates with students and as you’re ... Through the 80s and 90s, what is the cultural community like then for developing this work here in the States within this field and then beyond? But what is that cultural community that you’re coming out of? And how important is that for you for that evolution?

Ana: It was an interesting process. I mean I have been fortunate that the field of Latin American Film Studies per se became more professional in this period. Who was writing about Latin American film early on? Critics, magazine critics. So you had publications and every once in a while something in Film Quarterly ... but Sight and Sound, Cineaste, politically motivated stuff and Jump Cut. So that began to evolve, and you begin to see the Academy, in a sense, paying attention to Latin American film in different ways.

I was very fortunate that ... My department still doesn’t have a graduate program, but I was very fortunate that through the Stone Center and through Spanish and Portuguese at Tulane I was able to recruit grad students that we’re extraordinarily significant for me because precisely at the point where I think an associate professor begins to feel a little stale, like "Have I had all the thoughts I was going to have?" I began to get these grad students who were constantly challenging me, who were constantly making me read new stuff, pushing me forward for whom I felt the responsibility to be very au courant and to remain linked to the field broadly so I could push them in certain directions. And it’s been very rewarding to see, my “children”, as I call them, and the “children” they’re developing, right? When I think back Laura Podalsky, who’s now at the Ohio State University, was my first grad student, and she became full professor before I did! I love her.

Cristina: Wow. You were doing all these other things. The program building, not just what you mentioned before in terms of the Communication Department at Tulane, bringing in new faculty, but also the Cuban and Caribbean Studies ...

Ana: Cuban and Caribbean Studies Institute, which I took over ... it had just started in the late 90s, and I took it over in 2000. So at the time when it was first created, I'm not exactly sure what the motivation was. It was a person that created it that wasn't even a Cubanist, although he thought he was. And basically what it was doing, primarily, was a lot of study abroad, because that was right after the regulations had changed we were able to bring student groups to Cuba in a somewhat large and very vague manner. It was always ... it was just a Cuban Studies Institute.

And when I took it over I changed the title, believing that Cuba-only institutes or centers develop a certain kind of political line that was anathema to me, that I felt we needed to consider Cuba and its Caribbean context and not to ignore the other forces that define Cuba. In other words to deny Cuba its exceptionalism and to see what would come out of that. Of course we focus a lot more on Cuba than we do on the rest of the Caribbean. It is the largest island. It is also the most salient, and I’m Cuban. For lots of reasons we
do. Every once in a while we go, "Okay we've done three Cuban things. Time to bring in the rest of the Caribbean somehow." But when we organize conferences it's always with a trans-Caribbean focus.

But yeah, no. We've done a lot over the years and organized symposia, conferences; speakers come and go; there's always a revolving door. So yeah. That's been fun.

Cristina: Until you mentioned that the regulations change and so you were able to do these Cuba abroad programs, the summer programs ... I mean, those are enormous work, enormous contribution, and it forces you into creating different kinds of links with Cuba.

Ana: Yeah, which is great.

Cristina: Which is great. And they've been going on for quite a while.

Ana: Yeah, we had to stop them in 2004 when Bush changed the regulations. So at that point we started a semester program in Cuba, well after Katrina. We started a semester program in Cuba which is still going strong today. I mean, Tulane's not that large, so when we sent, on a program between four and eight students that's a significant percentage of students that are choosing to go to Cuba in terms of students who have really good Spanish, who have very good records, academic records, and who are going to direct enroll at the University of Havana and take courses in Cuban Spanish, which is a challenge as you know.

The summer programs continue, and actually we have had programs abroad in Cuba for almost all of the schools at the University. We have the regular kind of liberal arts summer program which I run, but we also have a program in public health for grad students, and this year we're starting a component of that for undergraduates in public health, because we have an undergraduate health program. Right now, my colleague Carolina Caballero, who's the Associate Director of the center is on a plane on her way to Cuba with students in historical preservation for Spring Break, a short program. We've done programs for the law school, and the creation of markets and market regulations after the opening up. So it's actually very lively.

We've also begun to, and this has been very exciting for me, to bring students to do graduate work at Tulane directly from Cuba.

Cristina: Very exciting.

Ana: Totally exciting. We have now four. One just finished her MA in Latin American Studies. I've got a doctoral student in Spanish and Portuguese, one in History, and one in an Aging Studies Interdisciplinary PhD program.

Cristina: So this is really fascinating because it's something that comes out ... I mean, yes, you're Cuban, but it's also something that comes out of this peculiar political dynamic that ... But also that you're particularly suited for developing at a place like Tulane, and it's part of the Caribbean in New Orleans.
Ana: Right. Right.

Cristina: And I assume it has contributed a great deal to your own work in a broad way-

Ana: It has contributed a great deal to my own relationship to Cuba-

Cristina: Right-

Ana: In very significant ways because sometimes I feel like I spend half my time in Cuba doing things that I wouldn't normally do when I go to Cuba to do my own research and when I go to Cuba for the festival. I mean that's like vacation. All of a sudden when I mean Cuba with the kids is a completely different way of living and knowing Cuba. I mean again, it's the coincidence of place and interest. I don't know that I've could have developed these programs anywhere else but Tulane in terms of the support of the Stone Center, where there is such a large community that having several Cubanists is not an issue or some Carribeanists. It's not an issue to gather that group together. It's fine because there are as many Southern Cone people and Mexicanists. I mean there's about a hundred affiliated faculty with the Stone Center, so it's huge across the university.

Cristina: And so how has it been to sort of develop an intellectual community within Cuba? Maybe that's my own personal question.

Ana: First of all, the Cuban way of doing research in terms of actual work is very different, and as you know ... I mean in Latin America as a whole, style of writing, academic writing, is very different. I don't write ... I write essays, what we consider academic essays in English, but the Cubans write essays. They write ensayos. So to the degree that I'm even saying I don't cite film theory very much anymore in my work, a Cuban will not be ... If you're reading a Cuban essay, you shouldn't be surprised if all of a sudden the middle of a discussion about film exhibition, you can get quoted Nietzsche or Schopenhauer or Kant, because they're pulling ... I mean they're building different kinds of arguments that are more personal rather than evidence-based. No footnotes, not surprising.

So I've worked a lot with Cuban colleagues, and obviously I love bringing Cuban scholars to the States, but there's difficulties in putting their work in the context of American work. I find difficult sometimes. Also, translation is a challenge of that kind of work, because you read something in Spanish, an ensayos, an essay of this kind, and it sounds amazing. It sounds deep. It sounds like this is huge, and then you translate it, and I don't get it anymore. It loses a textural beauty of the ensayos that the language gives it, and English is so concrete and to the point, that you lose that baroque sense of linguistic exuberance.

Cristina: Yeah, that's absolutely true.

Ana: Yeah. Having said that, I mean we have so many colleagues in Cuba who do wonderful stuff, who've done amazing work and not only in terms of film but in terms of intellectual life in general. Juan Antonio Garcia Borrero's blog is an example of it. We
have been sponsors of that blog for several years now and I’m very happy with that. But he's one of those who quote Nietzsche in a blog entry.

Cristina: He'll quote a lot of people.

Ana: He'll quote a lot of people! But it's interesting because it's one of the first real substantive blogs to come out of Cuba, and it's film based. Well it's celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

Cristina: He's consistent.

Ana: Yeah consistent. Absolute consistency. So it's become this archive of thought on Cuban film, and it's fascinating to read chronologically the entries to see how the thinking of, not only Juan Antonio, but also those who comment upon the blog entries has evolved over the years, and then different kinds of topics that get addressed over the years. So that's been that's been exciting. That's been very exciting.

Cristina: So just to continue on maybe along these lines, is about two, three years ago there was a piece I think in Cinema Journal calling for more work focused on, utilizing an intermedial framework ... which obviously has been developed in other places more seriously, I guess, than in our areas here ... and I think you're doing work along these lines related to radio-

Ana: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Cristina: And to different kinds of media relations. How difficult is it to do this work, for one? How does doing this work redefine this kind of transnational ... because I think part of the question with transnational attention to work and transnational frameworks is also that it's difficult to do that kind of transnational research. And so what are some of those challenges? And then we're adding to that this kind of trans-medial focus.

Ana: I think that ... Well first to address the transnational, too often we use transnational, innocently, blindly. We use it like a commonsensical category. We know what it means without actually using it critically, so I don't think you can talk about the transnational without having put the national in question ... that you need to use the transnational to question the national. What Andrew Higson calls “limiting imagination of the national”. What the transnational allows us to do is to challenge those limits. It's difficult work because, as you know having worked in archives and with cinematecas and filmtecas and what have you, you could spend your whole life digging through these places and not produce what you need.

So the intermedial then comes into play for me as a result of ... Well I'll tell you the genealogy of this. Several years ago, many many years ago, I'm not a decade but close to a decade, there was an anthology that Dolores Tierney and Victoria Ruetalo put together on exploitation cinema, and I didn't want to work on anything contemporary but they wanted something from me, so I suggested as a challenge or a research project for myself that I would look at early sound cinema, in Mexico, which was a period of
great experimentation because nobody knew what to do with sound cinema and what models to develop that were ... and the pressure then was that the models had to be both nationalist in some way, because the desire was to produce a Mexican national cinema, obviously spoken in Spanish, but also what were the aesthetic models that were experimented with. Eisenstein had just been there. There was a lot of artistic revolution.

So it turns out that the films I ended up being able to get my hands on, the difficulties of the research, and that I was able to focus on, first of all were all made by foreigners. So it was Juan Orol, Ramon Peón, and Che Bohr. The three filmmakers that I decided I can focus on. And I called them, and they really were early exploitation people in many ways. The films they made were just trying to find hooks through which to gather audiences. For Orol it was tears. Che Bohr was music, and Peón I don’t know. I never quite figured him out.

But watching these early films, I noticed just almost by happenstance, that you could hear radio. You could see radios. There were radios on the sets, in living rooms. All of a sudden you have an insert of a family listening to a radio, or a radio program that motivates a part of the narrative, or Juan Orol, who was a radio announcer himself, who introduces the film like a radio announcer.

So I tuck that away somewhere in the back of my mind, and then it popped up again as these things tend to do. So I started doing more research into the relationship between early sound and radio, and one of the fascinating things is that ... and this surprised me. I don’t know why, because I know that everything in Latin America always has a differential chronology, but it surprised me greatly to discover that although Latin America experimented with radio very early on, as early as anywhere else, and the first transmissions were in the teens and stuff, radio did not really develop very quickly as a national mass medium. It took much longer than in the United States. So in the United States when sound arrived in say ’27, radio was already very well established. So sound in the cinema was not a novelty ... It was a novelty, but audiences were already acoustically trained. They knew how to listen, and they knew how to be listeners. In Latin America it happened simultaneously.

So what I’ve been able to trace, what I’ve been on what I’m trying to argue, is that these two in a sense competing technologies, competing for audiences, different audiences but the same audience, the same mass audience, a national audience. Often in Latin America, as everywhere else, same financial interest-controlled parts of both, radio as well as the cinema, and they competed with each other but they also complemented each other. And they also worked together to train spectators, to train audiences in how to listen.

And in the context of Latin America, of course, it becomes so much more complex when you stop to think that over half, if not 80, 90 percent, of the films that the continent watched, were not in Spanish. They were in English. They were only really available if you read, but if you didn't you couldn't listen. But radio was always in Spanish. So then I think that conjunction just really helps to develop what would become the studio period in Latin American filmmaking.
So that's been fun, but it is a challenge to research radio. Latin American radio has been well researched, so there's that body of literature. We know what we know about Latin American film. It's a question of putting them together and then because I like to do textual analysis ... I like to do textual work that's what I'm interested in more than tracing financial interests in common or that kind of stuff. But then it's also finding the radio in the films, re-watching films that you've seen many times and all of a sudden discovery, "There is a radio," like there's a big radio scene in Santa.

Cristina: Yes.

Ana: But I'd forgotten because I had wasn't paying attention to it. Radio is huge for [Spanish – needs clarification - 00:41:42] but it never occurred to me until I watched it again. So it's been years because I've had to re-watch a lot of films and just find the traces of this and trying to figure out how to put it together.

But beyond my own project ... I mean I think it's really productive to think about these intermedial relations because film was never alone. Film has always been part of a larger media scape. So I think that we do the field a disservice when we ignore those potential relationships and points of contact with other media. It makes it harder, but if it weren't harder what would be the fun? That's a challenge!

Cristina: Yes. What would be the fun? And we have had a lot of fun. Curatorial work ... So now that you’re saying your re-watching films a lot, you've done a fair amount of curatorial work. Not everyone does curatorial work, but how important has ... What has have been the function, one the function of any kind of curatorial work that you've done, early on or now, and has that been crucial? I guess for-

Ana: I think early on it was, because we saw very little Latin American films. So whatever I could put together in terms of film series on campus, or for whatever organization, or organize something in this museum or that museum, or for that film festival it was a way of putting the films out there with the hope to some degree that people would begin to understand what I was so excited about and what I was trying to... what I was trying to say, firmly believing that the more people saw films from Latin America the better my work would go over. Within Tulane, because of the Stone Center and the large community of Latin Americanists, the films were always well received, so I've done film series’ a lot at Tulane.

I think that work has begun to not matter as much in terms of programming for like film series on campus or that kind of programming because so much is available on the internet. I mean Netflix has kind of taken over that curatorial function that we used to play with whatever algorithm they use and with whatever limitations in terms of what countries you can watch certain things in. But I'm even finding that my students now protest at screenings-
Ana: To come to the screenings! Yeah. And God forbid that you ask them to go to the library and take out a DVD. If they miss a screening they want you to upload it somewhere so that they can watch it in their dorm room because that’s how they watch films. That’s how they watch films.

Now having said that, I just worked with the River Run Festival in North Carolina, which is next weekend, because they’re doing an homage to Cuba, and they wanted to show not just contemporary stuff but a span of films. And they show still in 35, so it was not only the films that I would want to see again, but finding copies in 35. So the choices are a little odd, skewed because of that. But that’s just that’s the last thing I've done. it’s going to happen this coming weekend.

I’m going to introduce Soy Cuba, [Spanish – needs clarification – sounds like the title of two more films 00:45:24].

Cristina: Oh good.

Ana: Yeah.

Cristina: So who were the people for you when you were starting out? Were there people who were really influential here or elsewhere? Here meaning in the US or elsewhere.

Ana: You know, in grad school ... well the University of Iowa back then had two pillars which is Rick Altman and Dudley Andrew. Dudley had just published the major film theories, or was about to publish the major film theories anyway. Rick of course was doing all that path-breaking work on the musical. So there were a bunch of students who are working with Rick, a bunch of students who work primarily with Dudley. The difference between the two of them was interesting because if you worked with Rick, it was presumed you would do something with film sound.

If you work with Dudley nobody knew what you were going to do because nobody wanted really to do what phenomenology at that that particular point, not in that particular way of Dudley's, and it was decades before affect theory. And Dudley was not interested in disciples. He was interested in people doing new and exciting work. Both Dudley and Rick were at the peak of their careers in a sense, so they were always gone. They were always doing Fulbrights, visitings, Guggenheims, and we had a steady stream of visitors. So my first year in grad school I had neither one of them. It was Bordwell and Thompson. Bordwell and Thompson were the two main faculty members. So I got the whole formalist thing over. Yeah, I got that. And then that continued over the years, over the five years I was there, so that we had Jacques Aumont. We had Elsaesser. We had … I mean anybody who was anybody in terms of film studies came through, so my field of references, my field of influence is much larger than it should be if you think about going to film school at a place like Iowa.

There were not very many Latin Americanist at Iowa, but I worked closely with a historian who later became President of LASA, Charles Hale, who's at Texas. I think he's
still at Texas. And subsequently when I got involved more with other people working in Latin American and Latin American film, there was the work of Julianne Burton, who took me under her wing in many ways. She was already well on her way in terms of her own career and was in the process, as I was writing my dissertation, of publishing those two key anthologies. And she took me under her wing. She said, "You need to give me this chapter." And it's like, "Okay, here. Whatever. Thank you." So she was very generous. She was very, very generous with me, and we started organizing things together, like a symposium in Cuba at one point during a film festival.

And I kind of followed her lead in terms of trying to ... one of the things that distinguish her early work, which I think is very important, was this very clear attempt to give voice to Latin American filmmakers and theorists, and that was very important at the time because so many people where approaching Latin America with an extractive mentality, rather than a collaborative one. So that was very, very significant for me at the time.

Cristina: Your piece on La Batalla de Chile is in one of those collections.

Ana: Yeah. I've got-

Cristina: Which is an amazing piece.

Ana: That and something on [Spanish – needs clarification (film title) 00:49:28].

Cristina: I recently assigned that piece-

Ana: Oh god-

Cristina: On the Battle of Chile because I had them watching the Battle of Chile. I think it really hits ... It's a beautiful analysis of this film-

Ana: Thank you-

Cristina: Which is an amazing film.

Ana: It is an amazing film, and it's a complicated film because you could take it at face value, in many ways as, it's just a documentary about what was going on in a particularly troublesome moment of Chilean history. But I think the process through which they came up with that documentary structure, with the structure of the film, is so much more intentional than what the film leads you to believe on the surface. So it's a fascinating film, but I think Guzman is probably one of Latin America's greatest documentarists.

Cristina: Is amazing. Yeah.

Ana: He's amazing. Nostalgia por la luz is just amazing.
Cristina: But you've continued writing on the documentary. There was a piece, at which I loved in, the Trace ... something about the Trace?

Ana: *Poetics of the Trace*.

Cristina: *Poetics of the Trace*. Brazilian?

Ana: Yeah, I talked about-

Cristina: This is in this new collection of Documentary in Latin America-

Ana: In the new collection that Vinicius ... Right. That Vinicius Navarro edited, co-edited.

Yeah, because the documentary has changed, right? Just like the cinema in general, I mean there's been a move away from very explicit political denunciation towards more the politics of the individual, the politics of subjectivity, the politics of affect, and the politics of relationships that cut across age differences, class differences. And I love the work of [inaudible – needs clarification – Spanish name 00:51:19], so Santiago had to be there. And then I found these other films which, they're kind of documentary, but they border on other things, right? They're genre-bending films that I thought were really interesting to explore.

Just kind of you go with intuition and these things. But my interests continue to be varied. Perhaps this is why I write essays, and I don't write books? Because I can't hold on to a thought for that long!

Cristina: Understood. A couple of things maybe more related to the field as a whole, and that is perhaps your own take on not just ... well perhaps just how the field is changing or has changed ... has evolved ... but your own work in the context of that field and how it has changed ... your own engagement with the broader field.

Ana: I think-

Cristina: That's a big question. It's hard.

Ana: It's a big question, but by field do you mean Latin American film studies or film studies?

Cristina: Film and media studies.

Ana: Film and media studies. It's been an explosion. I mean as you see from just walking around the conference and the size of the conference program which is like a Bible. There's 20 simultaneous panels at this conference. Five days, right? There're many people now that are involved doing fascinating work and sometimes very specialized work. So you have very discrete research into small things, not that they're not important, not that that work is not significant, but you rarely have the grand theorizing that used to happen. The amazing re-positionings of the field. You have very discrete work going on in smaller areas. And because of the broadening of what used to be SCS...
into SCMS, you also have a much broader array of media that are being interrogated rather than just cinema.

But in general, I find that we continue with that, what has been called a turn to history continues to hold sway in interesting ways, in very productive ways, because there is so much more archival work being done now that didn't really used to happen. There's always been archival Hollywood work, but now we see archival work going on in different parts of the world by English language scholars, not just the nationals who've always done that. So I find that's really amazingly productive because things are much more complicated in these mediascapes than we sometimes imagine them to be, and those complications are what emerges out of this digging through. The Illustrated Press, for example, or what have you, exhibition records. What we study has grown even within film studies, never mind the other media. What we look at as part of film studies has expanded tremendously.

Cristina: And were there key debates going on in the field that sort of molded and changed your work?

Ana: Well I think this so-called turn to history as I indicated before.

Cristina: And earlier or?

Ana: Earlier, earlier. I mean 20 years ago. The other day.

As I indicated before, I went into grad school just I was going to be like Mary Ann Doane, and I was going to do High Theory, Feminist Film Theory, and actually this was Dudley's doing. Dudley just looked at me and said, "You know, I just graduated a bunch of people doing this stuff. You've got to do something that's your own. How about this Latin American thing?" And that was like a throwaway line, but I said, "Oh, I'll look into it. I'll see." So that's a little disappointing you brought me here to study Feminist Film Theory, and now you want me to do something else and you can't teach it to me. It's like, "Thanks." It turned out for the best.

But through that process ... I mean really reading all the new historiographies that were being produced at the time, and the very detailed archival work, and somebody like Doug Gomery and Bobby Allen were doing, and both of them came to Iowa to teach was very influential for me. It wasn't something I could reproduce easily and certainly not something I could reproduce right away, but it sat there and formed a lot of what I subsequently did.

Cristina: What do you think is going on sort of at the university level? And also you've been able to see the university at these levels ... but what do you feel the university, the future of the university level study, and scholarship, scholarship abroad ... All of these things seem to be-

Ana: Well we live in uncertain times to say the least, not just at the level of the university, but nationally and internationally, so I'm not going to pretend to be a guru of any kind, but
the pressures on higher education are quite significant in terms of what has evolved over the last decades ... terms of accountability, at a level that we were not accustomed to have ... and the accrediting agencies trying to forestall ... feels like we're talking about the production code or the Paramount decision, right? Because the accrediting agencies, fearful of federal regulation, have become more intensely regulative in their practices, and the kinds of demands that they make of universities now, particularly for assessment purposes, are insane. Fifteen years ago this did not exist, right? And some are worse than others. We happen to belong to SACS, which is a Southern Association of schools and colleges which is intense. So I’ve been very involved in that because of my role as Associate Provost at the University, and I see the effect of that, right? I mean we have to create new positions at the university to account to the regulators. And faculty don’t see that, but if we’re not accredited, you won’t have your job. It won’t matter if you have tenure or not, right? So those kinds of pressures have been very significant.

Now in terms of film studies and or media studies, I think we’re seeing more and more departments and programs being called Media as opposed to just Film, rightly so. I don’t know how many people consume film in film form anymore, so not to recognize that I think is silly. But it does diffuse, I think, some of the work ... I don’t know that some of the work that was done 30 years ago could be done today. But then again, I mean, times change.

Cristina: Well, I just want to say thank you-

Ana: Oh, thank you-

Cristina: I mean, I think this conversation could go on for another two hours, but over a different context.

Ana: Glass of wine maybe?

Cristina: But, you’ve been doing such exciting work and continue to do exciting work, which I think has been tremendously influential.

Ana: Thank you.

Cristina: To myself, to other scholars.

Ana: Thank you. I really appreciate that.

Cristina: I just thank you for sharing all of that.

Ana: Thanks.