LATIN AMERICAN

LINKAGE PROGRAM

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# Introduction

The Linkage Program or Linkages, as it is also commonly called, officially began in 1993, when five YLS students traveled to Santiago, Chile. In 2019, five YLS students went to Argentina, five went to Chile, and two went to Brazil, where they were hosted by students from our seven Latin American partner universities.[[1]](#footnote-1) Each leg of the program lasts three to four weeks. Occasionally, YLS students combine the Linkage Program with an internship at an NGO or other institution in Latin America in order to spend the greater part of summer in the southern hemisphere or other part of the world. The Linkage Program and all the other Latin American Legal Studies programs at YLS are fruits of the friendships and collaboration between YLS faculty and Latin American legal scholars that developed during the democratic transitions in the region that took place in the mid-1980s through the early 1990s. The objectives are two-fold. On one side, the academic objective is to give participants an intensive behind-the-scenes look at the legal system and legal education in the host country, and how those systems interrelate and connect. On the other, the goal is to create conditions for discussion and debate that might yield lasting friendships and professional relationships.

## The Linkage Exchange Program Timetable

The applications to the program are only due on January 18, 2023, but interested students are encouraged to submit draft applications earlier (over the Thanksgiving recess is a very good time). This gives the coordinator information that is useful in planning activities at the law school during the visit of the South American students that align with the applicant’s interests and gives the applicant the opportunity to receive feedback on their application from the coordinator before the application goes to the faculty directors who make the selection. The Latin American participants spend the first three and a half weeks of the spring semester at YLS during which time the YLS participants act as hosts by attending the presentations the South Americans give on Friday afternoons and making an effort to get to know them outside the classrooms too. After the South Americans return home, YLS students in the program are expected to read up on the countries they will visit and take care of the administrative requirements in a timely fashion so their summer stipends can be processed and disbursed. The Argentine and Chilean legs of the program begin in mid-May and finish in early June. The Brazil program takes place in early August. The precise dates will vary slightly in function of the participants’ exam and summer job schedules.

## Funding

The Linkages program covers travel costs and provides a stipend for daily expenses. YLS directly buys the participants’ airplane tickets and reimburses students for fixed but variable expenses like vaccinations or visas. In addition, prior to their trip, participants receive a daily stipend for meals and incidentals that includes funds for ground transportation to and from airports. This stipend counts against the total amount of Summer Public Interest Funding that students are allowed. Because the stipend is under $50/day, it generally does not affect the remuneration for regular public interest summer jobs.

## Program Requirements

Eligible applicants to the Linkages program must be currently enrolled in the law school and proficient in either Spanish or Portuguese. In addition, the students are expected to attain elementary knowledge of the legal and political structures of the country they are to visit. For this the program coordinator can provide reading material and arrange meetings with Latin American students and scholars.

Program participants are also expected to write short response papers to background reading before the South American legs of the exchange and make short presentations at our partner schools to initiate discussion of a topic that interests them. If giving a presentation is not feasible because of external factors, the students are expected to write and submit a short digest of their experience and observations.

The university requires all students undertaking university-sponsored international travel to attend a travel clinic at Yale Health and fill out an assumption of risk waiver. The university also requires students to [register their travel](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/) and urge them to avail themselves of the resources of [International SOS Global Travel Assistance](https://ogc.yale.edu/erm/ISOS).

# The New Haven Leg of the Linkages Exchange

## Hosting

Just as the YLS students who participate in the program are hosted by Latin American law students at our partner universities, the Latin American students who come to YLS in January 2020 will be hosted by YLS students. Ideally all the participants in the Linkages program host Latin American students but of course certain circumstances sometimes prevent YLS students from hosting (the grad student dorms, for example, prohibit it). For everyone else, hosting a student from Latin America is highly recommended and is less of a time commitment than most people imagine. The program keeps the Latin American students very busy and their excitement for the opportunity to experience life at Yale brightens the halls and makes winter more bearable. During the week, the Latin American participants eat their meals at one of the university’s dining halls. The law school reimburses hosts for reasonable expenses related to hosting – spare keys, extra groceries, and so on. We try to pair hosts with guests based on country, interests, personality, and lifestyle or dietary preferences, but even with perfect information sometimes imperfect matches are made, in which case it makes sense to switch people around and, on very rare occasions when the arrangement has proven uncomfortable for either the guest or the host, that is what we have done.

## Events at the Law School

Most of the Latin Americans’ time at the law school is spent reading and sitting in on classes, and YLS students are encouraged to invite the guests to come to their classes for a taste of cold-calling. The vast majority of faculty welcome the Linkages students in their classes and support the program, but the guests should nevertheless be introduced to the professor before sitting in on their class as a matter of courtesy and in case there are circumstances that disallow it (such as the confidentiality requirements of clinics). The Linkages program coordinator also arranges separate meetings between the Latin American students as a group and various faculty members, the Dean, and students involved in clinics and journals. On Friday evenings the Latin American students take turns giving short presentations over dinner on their research or relevant current developments in their countries. The program of extra activities and meetings for the 2020 YLS program is here.

## Events outside the Law School

Social activities are very important. The Latin American students will spend a lot of time together and bond as a group, but the more interaction they have with YLS students the more rewarding the program will be for everyone. There will be a welcome and/or a farewell dinner at the home of the faculty directors, Professor Markovits, and we also organize one or two other social outings, like going to see a play at the Yale Rep or a hockey game. Again, the golden rule of education applies here as well – the more you put into the experience, the more you gain from it.

## Side or Field Trips

The South American students often take advantage of Linkages to do some extra travel. Their preferred destinations for weekend trips are Boston, New York, and DC. Sometimes we are able to organize special activities (e.g., private tours of the Supreme Court) through the network of former Linkages students working in those cities. We also organize a visit to New York to observe hearings at the Second District Court of Appeals, meet with human rights lawyers in an NGO, and young lawyers in Latin America practices at a major law firm at the end of the YLS program. YLS students are also encouraged to do some sightseeing when they go to South America, though neither funding nor coordination for such trips is provided by the law school.

# The South American Legs

While the YLS Linkages students will observe a few classes in their host country, the emphasis is put on meetings with law professors, judges, and lawyers. Usually there are only one or two formal meetings or activities per day to give the participants time for their individual interests. Because there are two partner schools in Chile and one is a large public university, the Chilean program tends to be more structured than in Argentina, where the partner is a relatively small private university. The programming varies significantly from one host institution to another and from year to year. Much of the programming is delegated to the Latin American students who go to the US (which constitutes an additional reason for spending time for the guests in January and February). There are usually a couple high profile meetings (meetings with Supreme Court justices are becoming common), so bringing some business casual attire is advised, but most of the other meetings are less formal ones with law professors at the host institutions or lawyers working in areas of interest to the participants. The program coordinators do their best to tailor the programs to the specific interests of the participants, but unexpected surprises, such as being interviewed on a left-wing radio show or learning how to staff supply lines for barricades during a student strike, are also common.

## Health and Safety

However low, the risks of falling victim to illness, crime, or accidents while travelling in South America must be considered. If you travel outside the urban centers where our partner universities are located, for example, you may want to consider a vaccination for scarlet fever. You should never leave belongings unattended in public spaces, travel alone at night, or trust offers of help from strangers, especially in places like airports.

In order to minimize these risks and enable the program coordinators to respond as quickly as possible in case you require assistance, Yale has contracted the services of International SOS Global Travel Assistance. Information about the services is and instructions on requesting an individualized pre-departure briefing is [here](https://ogc.yale.edu/erm/ISOS). All participants must also [register their travel](https://world-toolkit.yale.edu/), and are strongly encouraged to download the [ISOS ID Card](https://ogc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/isos_yale_card_12042018.pdf) and [ISOS assistance app to their smartphone](https://www.internationalsos.com/assistance-app).

# Applying to the Program

To apply to the program, submit to the program coordinator (bradley.hayes@yale.edu) a statement of interest, a current resume, and a law school transcript (1Ls need not include a transcript). The deadline is January 18, 2023. The statement of interest should not exceed 850 words and briefly address the following questions:

Generally:

What is your primary motivation for applying to the Linkage Program? What previous experience abroad do you have?

More specifically:

Are there specific issues relevant in Argentina, Brazil, or Chile that interest you? How might participating in the program assist you reach academic, professional, and/or personal goals? How do you think you might contribute to making the program, both the U.S. and South American legs, more rewarding for the other participants?

Some basic information:

What is your preferred country and how strong is that preference? How well do you speak Spanish or Portuguese? How many academic commitments outside of classes (i.e., clinics, journals, T.A., R.A., etc.) do you estimate you will have next semester?

Do not hesitate to contact the program coordinator, bradley.hayes@yale.edu, with any doubts or questions.

# Next Steps

1. Schedule a language assessment with the program coordinator. These assessments are conducted in Spanish or Portuguese and take around 15 minutes. You will be asked to explain how you learned the language and what topics relevant to Latin America interest you most.
2. Look for events and opportunities to learn more about the Latin American civil law tradition and political history.
3. Consider submitting a draft of your statement of interest to the program coordinator well before the deadline in order to receive comments and advice for revision before submitting the final application to the faculty directors.
1. Our partner schools are the Universidad Diego Portales and Universidad de Chile in Santiago, Universidad de Palermo in Buenos Aires, Universidade de São Paulo, Fundação Getulio Vargas – São Paulo, FGV – Rio de Janeiro, and Universidade do Estado de Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)