

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES**  
SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE  
Summer Stipends  
Latin American Studies

# National Endowment for the Humanities

## Division of Research Programs

### Excerpt from a Successful Application

This excerpt from a summer stipends application is provided as an example of a funded proposal. It will give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. It is not intended to serve as a model. Every application is different, depending on the requirements of the project, the stage of the research, the resources required, and the situation of the applicant. This sample includes only the narrative and the bibliography; it does not include the résumé or letters of recommendation.

Additional examples of funded applications can be found on the Division of Research section of the NEH website: <http://www.neh.gov/howeare/divisions/Research/index.html>

**Project Title:** Ambivalent Federalists: Argentina's Littoral Provinces from 1810 to 1829

**Project Director:** Sujay Rao, Gustavus Adolphus College

**Result:** “Arbiters of Change: Provincial Elites and the Origins of Federalism in Argentina’s Littoral, 1814-1820,” *The Americas* 64:4 (April 2008): 511-546.

## PURPOSE

My research aims to reexamine the place of provincial politicians in Argentina's history from independence in 1810 to 1829. Despite some bitter disagreements, existing schools of historical research on this subject share two lines of thinking. First, they argue that provincial politicians steadfastly opposed authorities based in the national capital, Buenos Aires. Second, they contend that provincial politicians mobilized Argentina's lower classes.

I contend that the opposition between the provinces and Buenos Aires has been overstated during these two decades. Moreover, I argue that provincial politicians defended colonial social hierarchies, preempting the development of genuinely popular movements. Argentina's provincial politicians embraced a moderate brand of federalism, seeking a slightly more privileged place in national politics while inhibiting political change within their provinces. I argue that a fresh understanding of Argentina's provincial politicians can help explain the country's troubled history in subsequent decades. Furthermore, an understanding of Argentine federalism helps reveal how nominally republican revolutions throughout the Americas resulted in radically different regimes in places such as the United States, Mexico, and Argentina. In particular, the Argentine experience highlights the dangers of applying research based on Mexico or the Andes to the rest of Latin America.

## BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of independence, aspiring national leaders in cities such as Mexico City, Bogotá, Lima, and Buenos Aires unexpectedly found their standing challenged from the hinterlands of the capital cities. Challenges from provincial politicians plagued efforts to consolidate national states in Latin America for much of the nineteenth century. Provincial politicians in Argentina gradually embraced federalism, denying Buenos Aires's right to rule in the name of all. Though the conflict continued until 1862, by 1829 it was clear that provincial politicians had gained a permanent place in national politics. Argentina would be a federal state of some sort.

Scholars have been divided, at times bitterly, over how to interpret the actions of provincial politicians. To some, such as the renowned historian Tulio Halperin-Donghi, the provincial politicians were upstarts, rustic landowners who pushed aside the urban elites of the colonial era. According to Halperin, these landowners proved incapable of anything beyond refusing allegiance to Buenos Aires. Other historians, such as Emilio Ravignani and Jose Carlos Chiaramonte, have painted a more sympathetic portrait of provincial politicians, arguing that they fought for a more equitable distribution of economic and political resources. Other historians sympathetic to the federalists, such as Ariel de la Fuente, contend that, in fighting against Buenos Aires, provincial politicians acted as the champions of the lower classes, a point Halperin would be all too eager to concede.

These divisions stem in part from the limits of our knowledge. While research on Argentina's provinces has expanded rapidly over the past decade, studies based on work in provincial archives are still relatively rare, particularly for the first two decades after independence. These studies are essential in understanding provincial politicians on their own terms.

## OVERALL PROJECT

My work examines the attitudes and actions of provincial politicians in Argentina's strategic littoral region – the provinces of Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, and Corrientes – from independence in 1810 to the triumph of (an ill-defined) federalism in 1829. Historians agree that the littoral proved especially fertile ground for federalism. The federalist movement in Argentina gained one of its first footholds here. Furthermore, it was politicians from the littoral who handed Buenos Aires its most serious defeats in Argentina's civil wars. Politicians from the littoral clearly played an important role in shaping the Argentine state.

Convinced of the region's importance, I focused research for my doctoral dissertation on the provincial archives of the littoral. Evidence from the archives convinced me that existing

schools of thought could not explain the origins and nature of federalism in the littoral. In particular, my research highlights two limitations in existing scholarship. First, evidence from the provincial archives reveals the survival of the urban elites of the littoral and their continuing membership in social networks that linked the provinces to Buenos Aires. Second, my research reveals that provincial governments, even under the federalists, defended colonial social hierarchies and strictly limited popular participation.

Provincial politicians were not rustic challengers to the colonial elite. In fact, many were the children of officials who had been dispatched from Buenos Aires during the colonial era. Many of these politicians attended secondary schools in Buenos Aires. Some of the most gifted continued their studies at South America's greatest universities alongside the future leaders of Argentina's independence movement. Several held political office in Buenos Aires after independence; others married into the city's wealthiest families. These kinds of social connections tended to moderate conflict between the provinces and Buenos Aires. Correspondence in the archives reveals that, far from offering relentless opposition, federalist politicians routinely cooperated with authorities in Buenos Aires, seeking only modest concessions. In fact, conflicts between nominally federalist provinces were far more common than conflicts between the provinces and Buenos Aires.

As scions of the colonial elite, provincial politicians in the littoral showed little enthusiasm for mobilizing the populace. Moreover, they faced far less popular pressure than their counterparts in Mexico and the Andes. The 60,000 inhabitants of the littoral, spread over a vast area, possessed neither the structure of autonomous villages nor the historic network of village chiefs that provided much of the potential for popular participation elsewhere. Furthermore, the Catholic Church, another source of popular mobilization in Mexico, held relatively little power in Argentina. Though ordinary people often expressed frustration with elite control, and were far from passive, they faced formidable obstacles to popular mobilization in Argentina. Provincial politicians successfully preserved traditional forms behind a republican façade, informally limiting suffrage, for example, by applying colonial standards.

Based on my research in the provincial archives, I contend that provincial politicians embraced a moderate form of federalism. In particular, they sought to cast off old arrangements selectively. While seeking a portion of the power formerly exercised by Buenos Aires, they fought to preempt political change within their own provinces.

## CURRENT PROJECT

I am seeking support from the NEH for the portion of my project focusing on ties between provincial governments and the national congress in Buenos Aires during the 1820s. The national congress that emerged by 1824 represented one of the most serious efforts to centralize power in Buenos Aires. Scholars invariably attribute its failure, which led to the de facto triumph of federalism in 1829, to violent opposition from provincial politicians. Yet my research demonstrates that politicians in the littoral cooperated with the congress, seeking its support against neighboring provinces and negotiating for modest concessions. Opposition to the congress mounted only because of a combination of circumstances including a failed war against Brazil, factional disputes within Buenos Aires, and conflicts over political patronage. A study of the relationship between the provinces and the national congress shows that, in the eyes of many provincial politicians, federalism was negotiable.

This portion of the project represents Chapter 4 of what will eventually be a five-chapter book manuscript examining Argentine federalism in the littoral from 1810 to 1829. I have already completed drafts of Chapters 1 and 2. The tentative outline for the manuscript is as follows:

Chapter 1: The Littoral in the Late Colonial Period Chapter 2: The Origins of Federalism in the Littoral Chapter 3: Federalist Government in the Provinces Chapter 4: The Provinces and the National Congress Chapter 5: The Triumph of Federalism

## WORK PLAN

I intend to complete my project in June-July 2007. My time will be divided roughly in half:

I will use the first 4 weeks to carry out additional research in the Argentine national archives. I am proficient in Spanish and have long worked almost exclusively with Spanish-language documents. My efforts will focus on the correspondence regarding the littoral provinces in the 1820s. This amounts to roughly 6 bundles of documents, each containing several hundred pages of correspondence between provincial politicians and their counterparts in Buenos Aires, much of it private or confidential. These documents have been underutilized because of the longstanding assumption that provincial politicians simply opposed the national government. This correspondence will further my efforts to reveal tensions within the federalist movement, to highlight areas of cooperation with the national authorities, and to pinpoint provincial politicians' actual concerns about national authority.

I will use the remaining 4 weeks to draft a chapter-length paper on the relationship between the littoral provinces and the national congress drawing on both my previous research and my new research in the national archives. This work will be carried out at my home institution in Minnesota.

## CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

My work on the nature of Argentine federalism from 1810 to 1829 makes two important contributions to scholarship on Argentina, Latin America, and the Americas. First, understanding the nature of federalist regimes in the Argentine provinces helps explain Argentina's subsequent history of political unrest. The survival of traditional forms of authority in the provinces ensured that federalist regimes never would be truly popular. Since the vast majority of Argentina's people viewed governments with contempt, factional revolts could succeed fairly easily. This led to chronic instability for much of the nineteenth century. Argentine social and political dynamics did not change until a more genuinely popular movement, Peronism, came along in the twentieth century. We can only understand Argentina's troubled history before 1945 if we recognize the limits of Argentine federalism.

Second, understanding Argentine federalism helps correct interpretations of Latin American history based largely on the experience of Mexico and the Andes. Since roughly half of all published work on Latin America focuses on Mexico alone, its experience has disproportionate impact on how historians view the entire region – indeed recent histories of Argentina and Peru explicitly invoke Mexican “models.” While parts of Latin America do show similarities to Mexico's social and political landscape, many others presented far fewer opportunities for mass mobilization. We cannot generalize from the experience of Mexico any more than we can from the experience of the United States. In order to understand the varying outcomes of republican movements in the Americas, we must understand the experience of places such as Argentina.

## INTENDED AUDIENCE AND RESULTS

The intended audience for my project consists of scholars of Argentina, Latin America, and republican movements in the Americas as a whole.

I hope to disseminate the results of my research in four ways. First, I plan to complete an article for publication in an academic journal in the field of Latin American history or Latin American studies. Second, while in Buenos Aires, I will discuss my research with colleagues at the University of Buenos Aires's Instituto Ravignani, one of the country's leading historical research institutes. Third, I will present my research at conferences of Latin Americanists in the United States hosted by organizations such as the Midwest Association of Latin American Studies and the North Central Council of Latin Americanists. Fourth, I will use the article I prepare as the draft of the fourth chapter of my book manuscript, helping move the project towards completion during the following two years.

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