

## Among the Best of Books

### UNH professor's work honored by Foreign Affairs

Friday, January 13, 2017



When [Daniel Chávez](#) began the process of researching and writing “Nicaragua and the Politics of Utopia,” he never imagined the reaction his work would receive.

The book, which Chávez describes as an intellectual and political history of the 20th century in Nicaragua, was not only reviewed by [Foreign Affairs](#) but has been named in the magazine’s [The Best Books of 2016](#) feature.

Chávez, who is an assistant professor of Latin American and Latino studies in the department of languages, literatures and cultures, says he felt “enormous satisfaction and a good deal of disbelief” learning his book was deemed one of the best of the past year.



DANIEL CHÁVEZ

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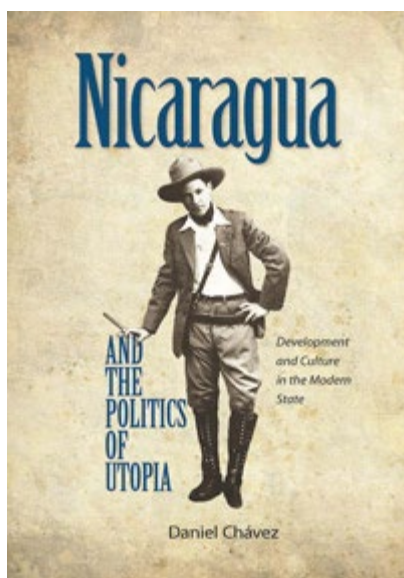
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“It seemed a bit unreal my work was featured in one of the journals I regularly read and have always admired,” he explains.

Examining three periods in Nicaragua’s fast-paced history, “Nicaragua and the Politics of Utopia” traces the main ideas that shaped social views.

“This is one of the many surprising facts about Nicaraguan history, how much writers of literature have been able to effect change, for good and for bad, in the history of their country,” Chávez says. “I don’t think there is any other nation in the Americas where a group of poets, or the practice of writing poetry, had so much influence in the transformation of a society.”

Chávez explains he spent five years conducting research for his book, including traveling to Nicaragua to review texts only available there. Immersing himself in such materials as “presidential addresses, constitutions, campaign speeches, newspaper articles, novels, films, poems, photographs and commercial advertising was a real challenge but, at the same time, a joy,” he explains.



CHÁVEZ'S ACCLAIMED BOOK

Learning his book had been honored in Foreign Affairs, Chávez reacted by reaching out to his students and colleagues at UNH to share the news.

“I wanted to thank them for their comments and encouragement and tell them I felt accompanied and supported by them through the years and that we have done this together,” he says.

In the humanities, he says, “We have the opportunity to collaborate and grow collectively if one

can find and cultivate the right team and if we learn to give and receive constructive and sincere criticism.

At UNH, he adds, “I feel very fortunate to have great colleagues and a great institution backing me up. I want to keep researching and writing on Latin American culture and politics, and this is a great boost to my ongoing projects.”

## *Chavez will discuss “Nicaragua and the Politics of Utopia” as part of the Center for Humanities First Monday Series on March 6.*

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