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# In Memoriam: Hernán Vidal (1937-2014)

For many decades, well beyond my years at the University of Minnesota, Hernán Vidal was my teacher, my mentor, my friend, somebody I greatly admired not only for his deep knowledge of Latin American history and culture, but for his unrelenting passion, his profound and unshakable political convictions, and his rare and unwavering sense of ethics. Many times during my career I consulted with him and always received wise advice about how to proceed in personal and professional situations, advice that I not always followed, but that illuminated my way more than he ever knew. In difficult times, his phone calls arrived almost daily, wherever I was, at dinner time, to make sure that I would be there to answer them, and the talks with him were always warm, discrete, and reassuring. Without many words, he communicated his faith in my work, his understanding and support, his presence and his friendship. Hernán's pedagogy reached many people, but the stature of his professional example belongs to the academic world as a whole. He helped countless people during the time of the dictatorships in the Southern Cone, using his influence, his *savoir faire*, his money, to create opportunities for students and colleagues he often did not even know, and I am sure that the doors he generously opened made the difference, in many cases, between life and death. He perceived changes in the profession, in politics, in history, well before they happened, and searched tirelessly for answers, theories, intuitions, analyses, that could shed light and inspire action and solidarity in all of us. His critical thinking proliferated in countless books, editions, lectures, and projects that pushed the boundaries of our profession and challenged all of us to be better not just for us, but for the objectives

that we defined ahead and for the ideas we believed in. He was the author of indispensable books on Colonial Latin American literature and culture, on contemporary politics, critical theory and canonical and non-canonical works that we continue to analyze following many of his intuitions and suggestions. But his most important contribution was, for me, his journey among us, his search, his contagious enthusiasm for the life of culture, for the culture of politics, for the possibilities to work together for a better world in which both material and spiritual dimensions could meet productively, as they did in his work.

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