Greg Landau, a Latin American studies instructor at City College of San Francisco, recently learned that he has been nominated for two Grammy awards this year. These two nominations, added to the five he’s received in the past, total seven nominations.

The first nomination is for work he did with a group from Veracruz, Mexico – Los Cojolites – a traditional music group. He produced and recorded the record both in San Francisco and Veracruz. The second nomination is for a record titled “Systema Bomb”, recorded with Hector Perez. It features electronic versions of the music of Veracruz.

A 15-year member of the City College faculty, he was drawn to the music of Veracruz, Mexico many years ago. “It’s always interested me because the music of Veracruz is one of the most exciting and rhythmic of Mexican music forms,” said Landau. “This music was lost for a couple of generations. With the Internet and quick dissemination of information, it has spread around the world. For a while, young people in Veracruz had turned their back on it and now they’re getting back into it.”

“I was influenced by Gilberto Gutierrez in the early 1990s when he came to work at the Exploratorium. I worked with him and learned about the music and style. I connected to it because of the poetry and the different African and Spanish musical influences.”

In his classroom at City College, Landau often has guests in the classes to add a visual and personal perspective for students. “The focus of my classes is to have students look at Latin American history through culture, music and art. I show the connections between the arts and politics. Living in Nicaragua during the 80s, I was part of that movement, so it’s important to me that students understand the many facets that make up Latin American studies.”

Landau’s success in the arts industry goes beyond music. The son of a documentary filmmaker, Landau has traveled the world working on documentary films. More recently he has served as music supervisor on 12 films. Part of his teaching helps him in this role because he’s able to listen to a lot of music and stay up on all the latest trends, which is what is required of a music supervisor – to know what is available and link the music to the picture, making the music evoke emotion and linking it to current events.

With so much experience and success in his field, Landau continues to teach at City College of San Francisco. “I think City College is a unique institution. It provides an opportunity for a diverse group of people to expand their educational horizons. It’s always inspiring for me
to see the students with their busy lives and families take classes and stay focused. Many of them go on to do great things and others make themselves better people and expand their knowledge,” said Landau.

“I tell my students I got my Ph.D. when I was 44. My message to them is keep going. Don’t ever lose your dream.”