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International Translation Day, photo courtesy of Dr. Bobby Hobgood

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UNC CHARLOTTE
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Department of Languages & Culture Studies



Dr. Ann Gonzalez: Department Chair

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This semester we looked different. After renovations all summer long, our fourth floor ended up with so many new offices I lost count, two new classroom/conference rooms, a new main office, a refurbished break room, new furniture for adjuncts, and a beautiful new space for our recently approved Confucius Institute. The dust had barely settled when long-time French colleague, Dr. Michèle Bissière, won the Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence, starting our semester off on a high note. We have ended the semester on an equally high note with the arrival of our Chinese and U.S. Directors who plan to have the Confucius Institute fully operational by Spring. In between, we hosted a number of events: International Translation Day, a week of “Germany Making Choices,” a workshop on Arabic calligraphy, and a Romani (Gypsy) music ensemble. We participated in the library’s exhibition on the Bracero program, the Office of International Programs’ International Festival and Study Abroad Fair, and multiple recruiting opportunities. In addition, we offered students a series of workshops on “How to Study a Foreign Language”; we hosted film screenings with participation of the film directors, weekly conversation tables in various languages, and a new Arabic Film Club. Our Spanish Club participated in Day of the Dead activities by building an altar in honor of composer and long-time academic, Dr. Walter S. Hartley, the father of our very own Business Services Coordinator, Carol Hartley.

In terms of curriculum we proposed a new Honors Program across the languages, a Certificate for German Engineering; new courses in Service Learning and Internships across the languages, new graduate and undergraduate courses online, and new face-to-face Elementary Spanish classes. We have also begun to offer courses in interpretation on a regular basis. We successfully recruited for a new Spring Break program to Argentina as well as our continuing programs to Germany, France, Italy, and Japan, and we have partnered with the College of Arts + Architecture to offer a Summer in Rome. In the midst of all these extra-curricular, study abroad, and curricular initiatives, we taught 277 sections to over 4,000 students in ten languages, which is what we do best and what our students appreciate the most. I want to end by welcoming our new faculty: Drs. Chris Mellinger, David Dalton, and Paloma Fernández in Spanish, Dr. Phil Kaffen in Japanese, Noha Ghali in Arabic, and Dr. Yongling Gorke and Ms. Monica Ji, our Co-Directors of the Confucius Institute. We also welcome a new group of MA Fellows this year. I want to congratulate our Coordinator of Italian, Dr. Daniela dal Pra, for completing her Ph.D. this semester. Last but not least, we are sad to see Ryan McCallum go, but wish him well in his new job in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. I wish everyone a happy holiday season and look forward to a busy and successful spring semester 2018.

Noha Ghali: Arabic Lecturer

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Noha Ghali is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies program at the University of New Mexico. Her work has focused on topics related to education, second language literacy, second language acquisition, and research methodologies in education. Noha Ghali's dissertation focuses on the social and academic challenges international Muslim students face in U.S. higher education within a globalized context. Prior to coming to UNC Charlotte, Noha taught Arabic at the University of Oklahoma, Middlebury Arabic School, the University of New Mexico, and Central New Mexico Community College. At UNC Charlotte, Noha teaches a wide range of Arabic courses, advises students, and organizes extracurricular events such as the Arabic film club or the calligraphy workshop.



Calligraphy Workshop

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For centuries, calligraphers have documented civilization while at the same time appealing to our sense of artistic beauty. This practice continues in languages and cultures worldwide through a small percentage of the world's population who has chosen the preservation of such an important art form as their mission.

UNC Charlotte students, faculty, and staff explored the art of calligraphy as it appears in Arabic language and culture during a workshop organized by Noha Ghali. The workshop represented the first among other initiatives to promote Arabic language and culture throughout the UNC Charlotte community. It was led by Professor Muhammad Habib, an Assistant Teaching Professor at Georgetown University. Professor Habib studied the art of Arabic calligraphy at the Calligraphy Institute in Cairo and has given workshops on Arabic calligraphy at universities around the country.



More than 50 students, faculty, and staff attended the hands-on workshop during which Professor Habib explained the history and art of Arabic Calligraphy while also demonstrating his expertise. Brett Strahm, Assistant Director for the University Center for Academic Excellence (UCAE) for Tutorial Services, was one of the attendees. He had no knowledge of Arabic language or of Arabic calligraphy prior to the event. He was surprised by the complexity and challenge of writing in this way, as well as the number of forms. Strahm noted that the experience opened his thoughts about Arabic language and culture, and that he looks forward to the next workshop.

Interview with Dr. Michèle Bissière, Winner of the Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence 2017

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French Major Stacey Brown met this year's winner of the Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence, Dr. Michèle Bissière.

Stacey: I would like to talk to you about your beginnings as a teacher and how you have achieved the level of excellence, which was awarded with the Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence.

Dr. Bissière: I've always wanted to teach since my childhood, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to teach. For a while, I thought I'd be a physical education teacher, but then I also loved languages and eventually I decided to become a language teacher--an English teacher. I was happy as a teacher, but I also wanted to live abroad and continue learning. I was fortunate to participate in several exchanges, and one of these exchanges eventually brought me to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where I earned my PhD and I learned a lot about teaching.



Stacey: Do awards inspire you to continue excelling at your work?

Dr. Bissière: Definitely. I see awards as only the beginning, not a stopping point. When I walked into my class the first time this semester, knowing I was a finalist for the Bank of America Award for Teaching Excellence, I was still wondering how to live up to the expectations and how to keep improving.

Stacey: What do you think makes a good teacher?

Dr. Bissière: I think first of all, a good teacher needs to know the content of what they teach really well. What has helped me is having learned other languages. Knowing the grammar of other languages helps me understand what the difficulties are that arise while teaching and learning. Then of course, I think you need passion for what you do. Hopefully, you'll be able to transmit that passion to your students. Being very organized, yet flexible to take advantage of what the students already know is important, too. It makes for a better class. Ultimately, it is about constant improvement. I'm always surprised to see how much time I spend in preparation for a class. I always go back and reread and reconsider the ways I teach a class.

Stacey: I know that one of your passions is teaching French language and culture through film.

Dr. Bissière: Yes, I started using film early on in my career, and I've used film ever since in all of my language courses. I've found that if you use a film you can review all the vocabulary and grammar and the students can express a lot. It's amazing how much they can actually say. I also think that for students, it's fun to watch a film, but it is also a great way to see how people really speak, the gestures they make, or how they live. And that's why I gradually started writing my own textbooks, *Sequences*.

Stacey: Could you talk more about your textbooks, as I understand you have just published a new one?

Dr. Bissière: I used Dr. Singerman's, the co-author of my latest book, previous textbooks in class and I volunteered to teach one of his manuscripts and give him feedback. So this time, he approached me and asked if I would like to collaborate on the new project. And here it is: *Le Cinéma français contemporain. Manuel de classe*.

Student highlights

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Intercambio Project

15 UNC Charlotte students of Spanish and 15 students of English from Mexico's *Proyecto 100.000* came together to practice and refine their language speaking skills. The Intercambio project facilitates the exchange, requiring the participants to communicate with each other three times prior to the arrival of the students from Mexico—any interactions on behalf of UNC Charlotte students has to be in Spanish, while interactions from Proyecto students has to be in English. The goal of the program is to allow for language acquisition for both parties and to promote a cultural exchange.

Día de los Muertos

On October 29th, the Club de Español Para Amigos (CEPA) collaborated with the International Club to celebrate Día de los Muertos and create an altar at the Levine Museum of the New South. The altar was presented by the students, and commemorated Carol Hartley's late father, who was a composer. The students were also able to paint faces at the museum for children and adults in the traditional sugar skull style reminiscent of Día de los Muertos.

A Trip to Washington, D.C.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. was the destination for a group of 23 UNC Charlotte German majors. Accompanied by German faculty, they spent three days exploring the capital in the company of distinguished Professor Emerita Dr. Susan Cernyak-Spatz. During a tour of the museum, Dr. Spatz—a Holocaust survivor—shared her survival story with the participating German majors giving them a very personal insight into German Jewish history. In addition, the excursion took the participants to the National Mall, the Library of Congress, and numerous museums. This excursion was made possible with the gracious help of UNC Charlotte German alumnus Frank Johnson, whose scholarship paid for travel, room, and board.

Japanese Reading Club

Due to a demand for more reading opportunities outside of the Japanese classroom, the Japanese Reading Club was established. Mondays at 5:00 PM, members of the club come together to read Japanese books. Although not all students can join the meetings due to the difficulties in obtaining reading material, the club has recently received a grant from the Japan Foundation and has corresponded with Atkins Library in regards to the possibility of adding funded Japanese reading materials to their collections so that any student can reach them at any time and enjoy Japanese reading.

Interpreting Workshop

In November, Spanish students led by Dr. Christopher Mellinger collaborated with Montclair Elementary for an interpreting opportunity as the beginning of what is hopefully a lasting partnership. Students attended a workshop hosted by Dr. Christopher Mellinger as an introduction to translation and then attended parent-teacher conferences at Montclair Elementary School. During the workshop, Dr. Christopher Mellinger went over strategies for people who are new to translating and interpreting and then prepped students for the event. During the actual parent teacher conferences, students were paired with a teacher and translated the conferences alongside their partner.

Logan Lampkins: J.LIVE.TALK 2017

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Logan Lampkins, a double Major in Japanese Studies and International Studies, won the Silver Award in Category III (advanced-mid to advanced-high level speaking proficiency) at [J.LIVE.TALK 2017](#) on November 5, 2017 at George Washington University. J.LIVE (Japanese Learning Inspired Vision and Engagement) Talk is a college-level Japanese language speech competition that emphasizes a comprehensive range of learned communication skills. Unlike a traditional speech contest, this competition will evaluate the dynamism, vision and level of engagement of each participant's presentation, which can include audio-visual materials, audience interaction, and other innovations that enhance his or her talk in a manner similar to the TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) talks. Logan was chosen from a group of nine finalists. The top awards include a chance to study abroad in Japan, as well as cash prizes.

“ I am a senior at UNC Charlotte. I am currently set to graduate early with a double major in Japanese and International Studies. In high school, I registered for a Japanese class after my interest was sparked by a Japanese hiragana writing tutorial I found online. This small interest eventually turned into a passion and I decided to study abroad for a year to fully immerse myself in the language and culture. Now, I am pursuing a career in translation and interpretation. Learning Japanese has been one of my most rewarding experiences so far, and I aspire to further develop my Japanese skills. ”

Chance Williams: Italian Scholarship

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Chance Williams is the first UNC Charlotte recipient of the Italian Language at the Leonardo Da Vinci School scholarship, funded by the Casa della Cultura Italiana. The scholarship covers both room and board as well as tuition. Williams, a UNC Charlotte graduate student in Spanish with a focus on translation, spent five weeks in Italy in May and June 2017. He was recognized at a special ceremony at UNC Charlotte this Fall by the Board of the Casa della Cultura Italiana of North Carolina. The event included Claudio Carpano, the Honorary Consul of Italy. During the event, Williams reported on his successful experience while in Milan to the Board, to Dr. Ann Gonzalez, Chair of the Department of Languages and Culture Studies, and to his teachers of Italian, Dr. Daniela dal Pra and Mariateresa Rains. The event was hosted by the Department and refreshments were provided by the UNC Charlotte Italian Club.



The Department Celebrates “Germany Making Choices”

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It was election time in Germany and so German Weeks, an initiative sponsored by the German Embassy to the U.S., returned to the Department to explore the German election system. The weeklong series of events revolved around German elections, politics, and history and included a film screening, a gallery-walk around the Department showcasing political ads in Germany, podium discussions, and ultimately a live broadcast party on Election Day. The main guest was Dr. Torben Lütjen, a German political scientist. He offered insight into the political process and the dynamics of this year's German election. The week concluded with a visit and small group discussion with the Minister and Head of Political Affairs at the German Embassy in Washington, D.C., Helga Barth.

Lacho Drom to Charlotte: A 1000 Years Journey of the Romany People

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In October, ensemble Zingaresca brought to campus a narrative on the underrepresented Romany culture (or “Gypsy,” as they are often incorrectly called) and a colorful, epic concert. The performance featured a variety of musical instruments - seven-string Russian guitar, Arabic oud, Indian percussions, flamenco guitar. The musicians introduced various styles and historical layers of the Romany music to more than 150 students, from its Indian roots to the performances in Turkish taverns, from the fiery flamenco, French Gypsy jazz to Russian romances. “The Romany culture has been uncovered to me in the most spectacular way imaginable, through music and history. The performance was more than likely a novel experience for everybody in the auditorium and has brought a noteworthy piece of cultural and geographic diversity to our university,” says Joshua, a UNC Charlotte student. He continues, “from learning about the diverse styles of music produced from the far western reaches of Europe to the vast landscape of Russia to gaining knowledge about the distinctive musical instruments of the nomadic Romany people to finally seeing all of this culture, art, and history brought together in beautifully inspiring and emotional pieces of music, the whole experience was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gain an exclusive insight into a relatively unknown world culture with a tremendous impact on musical art as we know it today.” That’s just one of the reactions to the event. Naturally, we’d like to see more of this! The event was sponsored by the Chancellor's Diversity Fund.



International Translation Day

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The ability to translate is most certainly a skill and art worthy of celebrating. Such was the case on September 29th as the Department celebrated its Second Annual International Translation Day. If the enthusiasm of organizers and participants is any indicator of its success, then this event will become a tradition every September!

More than 45 undergraduate and graduate students participated in this year's event, which Prof. Aura Lawson-Alonso organized in the format of a one-day conference. The day began with an Open House for Juniors, Seniors, and Bachelor's Degree Holders, during which time faculty from a number of departments and programs shared opportunities to develop translation skills through the Translating and Translation Studies Programs and the Latin American Studies Graduate Program. Throughout the day, attendees chose from among eight concurrent sessions on a range of topics which included readings of literature in translation, translation workshops, and roundtable discussions. Among them, Professors Mary LaMarca and Bianca Potrykus led a workshop on multilingual poetry. Central to

the workshop was a reading of the German poem "Der Panther" (The Panther) by Rainer Maria Rilke in seven languages: Italian, Japanese, French, German, Polish, Spanish, and Finnish. German Lecturer Susanne Gomoluch, who was both a participant and presenter during the day, observed, "... listening to so many languages at once greatly stimulated my senses. For example, I had never heard a reading of a Japanese poem, and it was so beautiful. I have heard a Japanese translation, but never the original. It was fun to listen to languages I don't understand. The experience gave me wings."

Sessions also included presenters from outside of UNC Charlotte. Among them, Instructor Garrett Fisher of Western Carolina University, and a UNC Charlotte graduate, drew attention to problematic or "tricky" translations. Professional translators like Veronica Diquez of Quick Click Translation offered workshops on interpretation. Graduate student in Spanish, Myron McKenzie Claeys, enjoyed sharing his love of translation with his classmates and professors. He was impressed by the variety of languages represented at this year's celebration, including Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, and Finnish. He encourages other students to attend next year's celebration, noting the opportunity to deepen your understanding of the beauty of language and the complexities of translation.



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