

ISSUE 2 · FALL 2022

NEWSLETTER

University of Akron Modern Languages Department

NEWS TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

Another Fall semester in the books and what a busy semester it was if the length of this Newsletter is any indication!

As always, if you have news you'd like to feature in the newsletter, please do not hesitate to share. Details on how to submit materials for the newsletter are found at the end of this publication.

Happy Holidays!



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A Letter from the Interim Chair

DR. MARY BIDDINGER

Dear Colleagues,

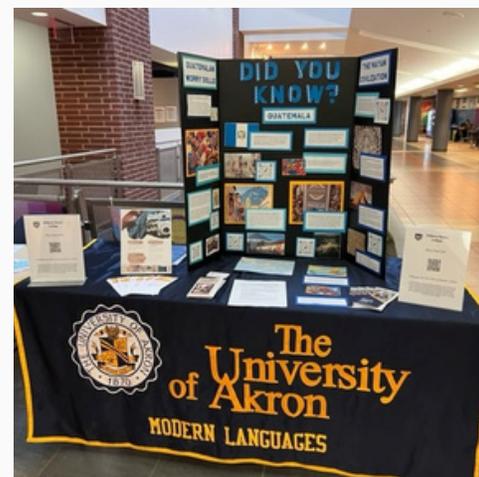
Thank you for a wonderful fall semester in the department of Modern Languages. In the past months we have seen increased student foot traffic in the department, and much lively conversation between colleagues at the tea (and chocolate) station. It has been a pleasure working with you as interim chair, and learning more about this vibrant department along the way.

A major highlight of the fall 2022 semester was the implementation of two cultural programs to engage with our campus community and raise awareness about the important role of the Department of Modern Languages. We offered a Dia de los Muertos celebration to correspond with Day of the Dead, and an educational end of semester activity inviting students, faculty, and staff to create their own worry dolls while learning more about Guatemalan culture.

Both of these events, hosted in the Jean Hower Taber Student Union, had robust, enthusiastic turnout. I was brought to tears by the beautiful displays, and by watching Modern Languages faculty interact with students, who were eager to learn and create. Much gratitude to our Assistant Chair, Distinguished Professor Dr. Zanetta, for championing and organizing these two successful events. I also want to send thanks to Administrative Assistant Theresa Procopio for her outstanding work with our displays and other materials, and to Lisa Craig in BCAS Communication and Marketing for superb coverage of the events.

As the semester comes to a close, I want to send my best wishes to all of you, and my excitement for the new year to come.

Sincerely,
Mary B.





Japanese Program Awarded Grant

BY YOKO KUROKAWA

Our Japanese program was awarded a Japanese Teaching Material Purchase Grant by the Japan Foundation in October. With this grant, our program was allowed to purchase up to \$500 in teaching materials.

We were able to purchase textbooks for Beginning Japanese and Intermediate Japanese, manga books, picture books, Japanese syllable cards, Japanese-Language Proficiency Test prep books, and teachers reference books. We are very excited to provide our students with authentic learning materials.



Ancient Greek Readings Group Started This Fall

BY SCOTT KEISTER

The ancient Greek reading group meets every Tuesday at 8:30 AM in 117B Olin. Students are slowly working their way through Greek grammar while also discussing various cultural and mythological topics as they arise. We will soon begin reading Book I of the Iliad along with passages from other authors.

Students are encouraged to contact Mr. Keister at keistes@uakron.edu if interested.





STUDY ABROAD IS BACK!

DISSTA: The Spanish Experience

BY KIRSTIN POLEN DE CAMPI

DISSTA: The Spanish Experience is a one-month immersion learning experience spent living and studying in Spain. The program is centered for four weeks, May 27, 2023 - June 24, 2023, in the city of Valladolid.

The classes are held in the Miguel Delibes campus which is only 10 minutes outside of downtown Valladolid. Students will get to travel to Penafel, Avila, Burgos, Segovia, Salamanca and Santander.

Italy: Summer 2023

BY SCOTT KEISTER

Latin students will be traveling to Italy in the summer of 2023. We will begin our tour in Florence, where we will see some of the greatest pieces of Renaissance art, including Michaelangelo's statue of David.

From Florence we will travel to Rome, where we will visit many of the most significant sites of ancient Roman civilization, including the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Roman Forum, the Vatican and the Circus Maximus. Before departing Italy, we will travel to the ancient city of Pompeii and the villa of Oplontis, both buried by the volcano Vesuvius in 79 A.D.

Le Mans: Study Abroad in France

BY DR. MARIA ADAMOWICZ-HARIASZ & HARRISON GRAHAM

"I have always wanted to study abroad, ever since I was in middle school. I decided on studying abroad in France mainly because I want to work on improving my French and I want to further immerse myself in its culture and history.

As a curious person and a History major, immersing myself in a new environment such as this is key to my development as scholar and as a person. I want to come out of this experience being able to speak French with a newfound confidence and I want to see the world and its people in a new light. I am planning on taking some French courses and some History courses while abroad.

I am really excited to see the differences and similarities between my classes here in the United States and the ones I'll be taking in France. I think speaking another language is a life skill no matter if that language is something you frequently use or not. It helps a person perceive others and think in a new way. One of my life goals is to become fluent in another language and I am hoping to make some progress with that by furthering my study of French.

See you in class."

Harrison is a History major, and a French minor. He will be senior next academic year. He's going to study during the Spring '23 at the Le Mans University, in Le Mans, France, with which we have a formal agreement, and where we've been sending the UA students for the last 10 years.



Spanish Students Demonstrate Strong Commitment to Volunteering and Community Outreach.

BY DR. ALEXIS ORTIZ

Students of Advanced Conversational Spanish and Hispanic Culture engaged remarkably in a variety of volunteering activities this semester where they put their Spanish language skills to the test in helping others. The following students worked online with the Oaxaca Learning Center, a non-profit institution in Mexico that seeks to assist children and young adults in their academic journeys in Mexico. They were asked to share their experiences working with young students from Mexico, and what they learned from it throughout months of volunteering.

Students also volunteered their time and energy channeling their Spanish skills for other settings and activities to support their communities and people seeking to improve their understanding of the English language.

“The ability to speak another language such as Spanish provides opportunities to connect with and help people I would not be able to communicate with otherwise. From speaking to the Oaxacan student weekly, I learned how privileged I am to be able to speak English and live in the United States. He would always tell me how important it is to speak English to get a good job and be considered ‘educated’ in their society. My ability to speak Spanish and volunteer with the Oaxaca Learning Center is helping him in pursuing this goal.”

- Megan Swope, 5TH Year Undergrad, Spanish & Engineering

To see the full document of student testimonials, please [click here](#).

“

I learned that the world is a big place, there is a lot to learn from different people in different languages.

”

-Joshua Pachancha

WHAT AN EVENTFUL SEMESTER!



EXPLORING AFRICA

Students from Dr. Adamowicz's French classes participated in the Exploring Africa event, organized by the Undergraduate Student Government, on September 12th and 14th in Student Union. Besides learning about cultures from North, East, West and Southern Africa, they chatted in French with students from francophone countries (Ivory Coast, Mali, and Gabon) who are currently studying at the University of Akron.



DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

On November 2, The Department of Modern Languages displayed a Día de los Muertos altar at the Student Union. Students were invited to experience what a typical Día de los Muertos altar looks like and learned about the symbology behind it. The Spanish faculty also led a group craft which allowed students to create their own calavera (skull).



GUATEMALAN WORRY DOLLS

With Finals week looming right around the corner, the Spanish Faculty figured what better time to introduce students to the tradition of making Worry Dolls! The indigenous people of Guatemala created Worry Dolls many generations ago as a remedy for worrying! On November 30, students were able to create their own worry dolls and learn about the Guatemalan culture in the process.



FACULTY PRESENTATIONS



On October 21, 2022, Dr. Zanetta presented a paper at the XXXI Congreso Internacional de Literatura y Estudios Hispánicos Virtual. In her presentation, titled “El mensaje ecofeminista en Tierra Finita de Mariola Olcina Alvarado e Isidro Jiménez Gómez,” Dr. Zanetta analyzed the symbolism of the short-animated film *Tierra Finita* (2021) applying ecofeminist and feminist theories as her theoretical framework.



Dr. Biddinger is wrapping up her first year as Interim Chair of the departments of English and Modern Languages. Among her activities this past semester, Biddinger served on a panel titled “Moving Past Influence” with two of her graduate creative writing students from Cleveland State University. Biddinger’s advice for moving past influence was to not only read contemporaries in American poetry, but also works of literature in translation (or in their original languages).

Biddinger shared thoughts on being inspired by writers such as Charles Baudelaire and Vasko Popa, and how these authors have had a lasting influence on her creative work. Additionally, Biddinger took a virtual trip to Italy this semester, as she lectured via Zoom to a class titled “Publishing Practicum: From Literary Acquisitions to Book Publicity” at the American University of Rome. In this class visit she shared her experiences of working as poetry and poetics editor at the University of Akron Press, and answered questions from the students and instructor.



FACULTY PRESENTATIONS (cont'd)



On Tuesday, November 29, Dr. Ortiz hosted a virtual lecture for his Hispanic Culture students with honored guest Dr. Gloria Vergara. Her lecture focused on the work and life of prominent Mexican poet Dolores Castro (1923-2022).

Dr. Gloria Vergara is an internationally renowned scholar in the field of literary studies and a poet.

She was also a close friend late poet Dolores Castro. She joined students of Hispanic Culture to talk about her relationship with the late writer and the importance of her work in the landscape of Mexican literary studies.

Throughout the lecture, students had the opportunity to learn about Dolores Castro and converse in Spanish about her poetry and the deeper aspects and meaning of her poetic universe and contributions to the Mexican literary canon with Dr. Vergara.



Dolores Castro (1923 - 2003)



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



"Megan Ryan is a senior majoring in Geology with a minor in French. She will be pursuing her Master's in Geology at Texas A&M." (Uakron Geosciences)

Megan finished her French minor requirements in Spring 2021 and was a remarkable student. We wish Megan all the best with her graduate studies at Texas A&M!

Want to submit material for the Newsletter?

You can do so by scanning the QR code below for the submission form or e-mailing Theresa at tmp77@uakron.edu



Stay Connected

