

THE AMBASSADOR

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Notes from the Chair



A view from San Juan

Dear Students, Alumni, and Friends of the Department of World Languages and Cultures:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the spring newsletter of our department. Inside you'll find short articles about many of the outstanding people, programs, and activities that make the Department of World Languages and Cultures unique, dynamic, and forward moving.

With a wide array of courses and extracurricular activities, our department continues to demonstrate our strong commitment to engaging our students with the richness and complexity of the languages and cultures we offer. As usual, we are proud to showcase the research, service and achievements of our remarkable students and faculty. In addition, this newsletter features two additional sections. The first is the interview of Dr. Habib Zanzana by our graduate assistant and editor of this newsletter, Laura Freedman. The second includes some reflections from our current Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTA) about their experiences in our institution during this academic year.

Asian Studies New Year and Festival

Read about how students, faculty and staff celebrated the Asian New Year on pg. 10.

Advanced Japanese Students Translate Temple Signs

Learn about how our Advanced Japanese students translated signs for a temple in Nagano, Japan on pg. 11.

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ESL tutors share their experiences on pgs. 11-12.

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We thank our students, faculty and FLTAs once again for sharing their inspiring journeys with us. They are full of energy and passion. Thanks also to Hannah Jackson, Director of the Language Learning Center, and Laura Freedman for editing this issue. Finally, thanks to our secretary, JoAnne Jurkiewicz, for keeping us on track and grounded, and the community for being present and showing interest in our activities. You all make our department possible!

Dr. Yamile Silva
Chair

Elementary Arabic Students Visit Israel and Palestine Through Intersession Theology Course

By: Elisabeth Johnson

Elementary Arabic students Joseph Barry and Elisabeth Johnson participated in the Intersession theology course "Christianity in the Middle East." The students spent ten days in Israel and Palestine and had the opportunity to visit and interact with several Arabic-speaking communities. They attended several masses in Arabic and shared meals with local Palestinians in their homes. Elisabeth and Joe are pictured here at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron with the faculty and other students of the class.



Faculty Spotlight: Habib Zanzana (Continues on pg. 4)

By: Laura Freedman

Habib Zanzana, Ph.D., was named Full Professor this semester. Full Professors are defined by their dedication to teaching, service to the community and scholarship.

For about 25 years, Dr. Zanzana has shared his love of learning and languages with the students of the University of Scranton. This semester, Dr. Zanzana is teaching a variety of courses, including World Literature, Arabic 102 and a reader centered on the art of translation. Throughout the semester, students in Dr. Zanzana's reader will translate a variety of documents, such as divorce decrees, birth certificates and poetry.

Interpreting and translating has been at the center of some of Dr. Zanzana's service to the Scranton community. Dr. Zanzana has worked as an interpreter and translator for the Scranton Police Department and court system. He has even worked with immigration lawyers to help translate documents.



At the University, Dr. Zanzana serves as a mentor to junior faculty, helping newly hired professors navigate the University and understand how to meet the expectations of their job. Dr. Zanzana has also served on the Fulbright committee, both at the University and on the national level.

When it comes to selecting new research topics, Dr. Zanzana focuses on topics that he's passionate about. As a result, much of his research centers on social justice and human rights. Dr. Zanzana's most recent article focuses on the issue of immigration in Italy through the eyes of a novelist. Through Italian literature, Dr. Zanzana looks into the clash of civilization in Italy and the clash of culture in contemporary Italy. Another article focuses on Dulcinea del Toboso, a character in Don Quixote who exists only in Quixote's imagination. Ultimately, Dr. Zanzana's article focuses on the construction of Dulcinea as a figment of Quixote's imagination.

Dr. Zanzana is also interested in taking his research in a new direction. Prior to becoming a professor at the University of Scranton, Dr. Zanzana wrote and staged puppet shows in Arabic and Spanish. He would then have language students build, paint and dress the puppets and perform his shows as a way to learn language. Combining his love for puppeteering and teaching, Dr. Zanzana published research in The British Journal about the pedagogy and methodology of teaching language with puppets.

In the future, Dr. Zanzana hopes to write a book about domestic abuse in world cinema. Ultimately, the book would focus on ways women are abused in society, the laws in place against abuse, and how film portrays this reality. After evaluating these areas, Dr. Zanzana will decide whether the film accurately represents what happens in society, whether the women in the film are just objects of men's desire or independent characters, and whether the women are able to break free of the abuse they face.

In March, Dr. Zanzana and Arabic Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Khadiga AboBakr will host an event centered on women in the Arab world and their participation in social and political life. The presentation will touch on Arab Spring, how Arab women participate in social and political life, and the progress women have made so far in the fight for their rights.

FLTA Reflections (Continues on pgs. 5-8)



Provost Jeff Gingerich hosted our 2019-2020 Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants. (From left to right: Dr. Jeff Gingerich, Clara Fabbri, Lukas Rackow, Alessandra Abate, Khadiga AboBakr, Hsiang-Ling (Charlize) Wang, Sarah Romero, Dr. Yamile Silva and Dr. Ann Pang-White)

Hsiang-Ling (Charlize) Wang

This is my second semester teaching at the University of Scranton; however, I realize how quickly time flies. Admittedly, this is the best stage of my life and the best job I've ever experienced. Teaching is my full-time work; moreover, the University provides a great number of activities so that I can actively engage with faculty development workshops, intercultural activities, entertainment shows, and so on. Undoubtedly, one of the most incredible characteristics of the learning environment is the great cultural diversity. The university invites a lot of students and teachers who come from all over the world to host cultural events including Explore Colombia, Italian Carnival and the Hijab. The focus of these events is the development of a deeper understanding of different cultures. As a participant, these activities are really insightful and

profound.

Furthermore, when it comes to my Chinese-language classes, I am very thankful to the Department for encouraging and assisting me in many ways. I believe enhancing the language and culture comprehensibility via technology is one of the best ways to encourage students' motivation and interaction. I received support from the Chair of the Department, Dr. Yamile Silva. As a result, there are more up-to-date learning resources available for the Chinese classes.

To conclude, I have a strong passion for teaching and enjoy working in the World Languages and Cultures Department. I cannot wait to create more meaningful and great memories with other foreign language instructors and students. I will definitely contribute more to the community and teaching!

Clara Fabbri

Hi, everyone! My name is Clara Fabbri and I am the French FLTA for this academic year. I have been in Scranton for six months now and I have learned and grown a lot. The University of Scranton is a great college that is very dedicated to teaching languages, and I have felt strongly supported in teaching my language and my culture to the students. This was a brand new experience for me as it was my first time

teaching an entire class; I was an individual teacher. This experience has taught me that the stereotypes about Americans are wrong. I felt my students were deeply involved and interested throughout the semester eager to learn about something different and a new culture. As I am very fond of French culture (classic French snob!), I tried to keep them interested by making my students listen to French music every week and planning French Movie Nights. I honestly think I have learned more than them this semester! I have learned about the way I wanted to share my language and my culture, but also what kind of teacher I want to be.

Alessandra Abate

Ciao a tutti! I'm Alessandra Abate, the first-ever Italian Fulbright Teaching Assistant at the University of Scranton. It has been an honor and a pleasure teaching my language and sharing my culture with the learning community of this lovely city. So far, my favorite moments have been the cultural events I had the chance to host just because it is a more relaxed environment and students get to know the culture without the pressure of the classroom. I hosted an Italian game night during the fall semester, where students and faculty members played typical Italian board games such as Monopoli, Guess Who, and Pictionary, as well as traditional games with Sicilian cards. It was a fun night and a chance for students to network with other students learning Italian in other classes.

This semester, I hosted a Carnival event, where I showed Carnival's traditions in different regions of Italy. From the elegant masks of Venice to the controversial "Battle of the Oranges" in Ivrea, I covered the most popular Carnivals in Italy. Students learned about the typical food cooked and eaten during the festivity, the importance of masks, and some of the most important characters in Commedia dell'Arte, a folkloristic genre of Italian theater famous all over Europe from the 16th to the 18th century. Students and faculty members came together to pick a mask and decorate it according to their taste and creativity while listening to Italian pop music. We had typical food and drinks during the event, such as tiramisù, chiacchiere (angel wings), pistachio butter, and Italian sodas. Once again, it was an opportunity for students to learn something new and get crafty at the same time.



Students, faculty and staff made their own masks at Abate's Il Carneval event

Other initiatives I organized include the Italian Movie Nights, both during the fall and spring semesters. The movies I picked ranged a variety of topics, including immigration, the mafia, and homosexuality. From a more academic perspective, my favorite teaching moment was when I brought my father and sister to class and my students interviewed them. It is such a rare occasion that students get to interact with native speakers other than their teacher and I could see they were excited about experiencing this. Studying a foreign language is so much more than just being able to carry a conversation in Italian and that's why I want my students to experience as much authenticity as they can while I am here.

Khadiga AboBakr

I have to admit that I was a bit worried about coming to the United States because I did not know how people would treat me since I wear a Hijab. However, I was welcomed by almost everyone on campus and off campus as well. People were smiling, nodding, or saying good morning whenever they saw me. Therefore, it did not take me long to feel at home.

Having been here for almost six months, I've realized that movies will never be enough for you to know about a country and its people. I have always loved American movies and I used to watch at least a movie



Earlier in the semester, AboBakr hosted an event entitled "The Hijab." During the event, students, faculty, and staff learned more about hijabs and had the chance to try one on themselves.

every day which helped me learn a lot about the culture here in the States. Yet these six months of being here have been worth tons and tons of movies. I now know that no matter how many movies you watch about a country, they can never equal being immersed within that community.

One of the things that I've learned is the huge number of misconceptions that people might have adopted about American families and society. I myself had a few misconceptions as well that soon vanished when I became a part of the community here in Scranton, and I will make sure to pass on the knowledge of these misconceptions. When I go back to Egypt, I believe it is my duty as a cultural ambassador to reform those beliefs that people have about Americans.

Since being a cultural ambassador is considered a two-way road, I am trying to do the same when it comes to my culture. It is totally normal that people adopt stereotypes about those they do not know based on what the media shares or the stories or news they have heard. People are likely to form generalizations or misconceptions. This is where I along with the rest of the FLTA Fulbrighters try to eliminate those stereotypes and to work together towards a much better understanding of other cultures because when you understand a person's culture, you start to respect others' lives, choices, and beliefs.

That is why I try to share Egyptian as well as Arab culture with my classes because in order for you to learn a language, you have to first get to know the culture of the people who speak the language. Some of my students have never visited any of the Arab countries before. Yet, I make sure to include culture in my classes so they have a better learning experience of the language and the culture simultaneously. In class, they get to know what we do, how we do it, and why we do things as Egyptians. They get to clarify things they might have wondered about or reevaluate those things they might have mistakenly thought.

That is why my cultural event was about the Hijab! It is because I wanted to promote cross-cultural and religious understanding that goes beyond the boundaries that might have been set due to a lack of awareness. The more you know people, the more respect you will be willing to offer, and that is eventually dedicated to humanity which we all belong to!

Sarah Romero

Teaching at the University of Scranton has been one of the best experiences of my life. Even though I had taught Spanish for a while, I remember being extremely nervous before coming here because I sent a lot of emails to Dr. Silva and Dr. Ugarte with lots of questions about the students, the classes, the materials, and so on. Both of them told me not to worry and kindly explained how everything worked. Once I got here, I realized that they were right.

To begin with, The World Languages and Cultures Department has an awesome multicultural team of professors and collaborators. I would like to highlight the kindness and welcoming vibe of everyone here as well as their attentiveness and willingness to help.

I love how hardworking and receptive my students are to learning not only about the language itself but also about cultural facts and current issues surrounding the Hispanic culture. They are participative, collaborative, and always aim for the best grades. Although it is at times challenging, in particular when it comes to preparing the classes and selecting material, I enjoy teaching a lot, and I myself have learned much about my language and other Spanish-speaking countries.

Furthermore, I never thought I was going to meet so many people from Colombia here! So, when the time came to plan an event about my country, I united a small team of fellow Colombians, some of whom were students of mine, and we hosted a small fair/scavenger hunt with five tables that showed different aspects of the country such as general facts, regions, tourism, carnivals, food, and games. It was amazing to bring a little bit of my home here and to be able to share that with over 60 people.

I have also learned a lot about American ways and culture. I honestly thought that people were going to be cold and distant, but I am happily surprised that they are friendly and thoughtful. Moreover, despite having no expectations at all about the food here, I have to say that I love the food from the cafeteria!

Overall, I strongly believe that this experience has helped me grow both professionally and personally. It has given me the chance to learn firsthand about a culture that I had only known through books and movies, and that definitely has much more to it than I had ever imagined. I can definitely say that I am a better teacher now and I will be forever grateful to have been part of the University of Scranton.

Lukas Rackow

My time teaching at the University of Scranton has been a formative experience for me. When I came to Scranton, I didn't know what would await me. Though I had some experience in the field of teaching English as a foreign language, I had never taught German before and would have to work mainly without help, since the department currently has no German professor. All this made me a little bit nervous in the beginning.

But soon after arriving at the University this feeling wore off, especially because the people at the Department of World Languages and Cultures and the university community were incredibly welcoming and helpful. After a couple of weeks, I really got used to teaching German and it has been a lot of fun

since then not the least because the students have been very committed and motivated to learning about the language and culture of Germany.

Since German is generally considered to be a language that is harder to learn than others and the class begins at eight in the morning – which has probably been a deterrent for some students interested in the language – the group has always been small. But that has not been much of a problem because it enabled me to design more student-centered classes and to encourage communication in the classroom.

One of my personal highlights is the almost weekly “Kaffeklatsch” conversation hour at the Northern Lights Café downtown, in which I meet students outside of the classroom to speak German in a more relaxed atmosphere. Another highlight was the German Lantern Festival, where the students built their own lanterns. It was great fun and a lot of students participated.

I really enjoy working at the University of Scranton and I am grateful to the department, the university and Fulbright for the opportunity to develop personally and professionally.

Faculty Scholarship (Continues on pg. 9)

Dr. Virginia Picchiatti

Dr. Virginia Picchiatti, Professor of Italian, is on sabbatical working on her book, which examines the literary representation of the experiences of Italian youth under Fascism during World War Two. In March, she will present her paper, “The I in We: Literary Representations of Jewish Italian Youth in the Italian Shoah,” at the Conference of the Northeast Modern Language Association in Boston, MA.





Dr. Yamile Silva

Dr. Silva's book chapter "Space, land and territory in Gerónimo de Ypori's relation (1580)" will be published in *Colonial Latin American Literature in Transition Series*, volume 1 (1492-1800) published by Cambridge University Press. Her review of the book *Nobles de papel. Identidades oscilantes y genealogías borrosas en los descendientes de la realeza inca* by Rocío Quispe-Agnoli (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2016. pp. 264) will appear in *Revista de Estudio de Género y Sexualidades* (Michigan State University Press) 46. 1-2 (Summer 2020). Her presentation "Abigail Mejía: cronista de viajes" was accepted to be presented in the conference *Redes trasatlánticas. Re-presentar y reconocer: Cinco siglos de iniciativas y aportes por parte de las mujeres hispánicas* organized by Asociación de Estudios de Género y Sexualidades (AEGS), March 18-20, 2020. Also, her talk "La Sonrisa del Paisaje de Abigail Mejía: la escritura del viaje como proyecto cultural"

will be presented in *LASA (Latin American Studies Association)* in May 13-16, 2020. Guadalajara, Mexico. Dr. Silva's annotated edition *La sonrisa del paisaje: Diarios de Abigail Mejía (1895-1941)* is due out April 1st, 2020 (Santo Domingo: Ministerio de Cultura de la República Dominicana, pp. 155). Silva has been invited as the keynote speaker by the International Book Festival of Santo Domingo organized by the Culture Ministry (Dominican Republic) in April 23, 2020. Santo Domingo's longstanding celebration of literature is the largest and most important book fair in the Caribbean.

Dr. Marzia Caporale

Dr. Marzia Caporale presented a paper at the Studies in French Cinema International Conference at King's College in London, England in June 2012. Her paper was titled "Strategies of Resistance Re-gendering Greek Tragedy and The War Hero(ine) in Denis Villeneuve's Film *Incendies*." The film by québécois director Denis Villeneuve was nominated for an Academy Award as best foreign film in 2011. It is a poignant commentary on the atrocities of war and on the devastating effects of ethnic conflicts in the Middle East, seen through the eyes of a female survivor and her children. Additionally, Dr.

Caporale continued to work on Karin Albou, a prominent Franco-Algerian director whose work explores issues of ethnicity, gender, and religion. Albou's second feature film, *The Wedding Song* was nominated for six awards and won Best Film, Best Depiction, and Best Director at the 10th edition of the International *Images* Film Festival. Caporale's article "Women (mis)reading Religious Texts in Karin Albou's films *La petite Jérusalem* and *Le chant des mariées*" was published in the latest issue of *Women in French Studies* (2013), a special volume dedicated to women and readership.



Asian Studies New Year Festival and Workshop

By: **Minori Koga and Charlize Wang**

Students, faculty, and staff celebrated the Asian New Year on Wednesday, February 12, at the Asian Studies New Year Festival and Workshop. The event kicked off at 6 P.M. in Brennan Hall 509. At the event, Japanese students sang Coldplay's "Yellow" in Japanese. Advanced Japanese students translated the song. One of the intermediate students introduced the Japanese New Year. After that, Japanese Professor Minori Koga held an origami workshop. Participants completed two types of origami: "Jumping Mt. Fuji" and "Valentine's Day Heart Card."

Chinese Instructor Charlize also presented the Chinese New Year (CNY) during the event. In her presentation, Charlize explained the origins, history, traditions and the modern way of celebrating CNY. She also shared the meaning of certain Chinese characters, such as "福" (fú; fortune) and "年年有余" (nián nián yǒu yú; abundance year after year). These characters play paramount roles in Chinese culture, and the audience was able to both read and interpret the meaning of these important words by the end of the event. Audience members were also able to learn the similarities and differences between CNY and Christmas.



Professor Wang introduced the Chinese New Year at the event.



Advanced Japanese students singing a translated version of Coldplay's "Yellow."



A completed "Valentine's Day Heart Card."

Advanced Japanese Students Translate Temple Signs

By: **Minori Koga**



Daihoji's statue of the Virgin Mary.

This semester, Advanced Japanese students translated Japanese signs into English for Daihoji temple in Nagano, Japan. One of Japanese instructor Minori Koga's old friends is a monk at the temple and asked her to help translate some of the signs because the temple has had a lot of foreign tourists lately. In Japanese, honorific expressions are used for signs. While these expressions are really hard to learn, the Advanced Japanese students did a great job taking on the challenge of translating them for the temple.

Daihoji is a Buddhist temple, but it is also famous for its statue of the Virgin Mary. During the Edo era, Christianity was banned in Japan. People called "Kakure Kirishitan" (hidden Christian) claimed this statue.

Tutors Reflect on ESL Experiences (Continues on pg. 12)

Crysta O'Donnell

I would describe my experience working with ESL students in the LLC as enriching and beneficial to both myself and my students. In addition to ESL, I tutor Spanish, so most of the ESL students I teach are from Spanish-speaking countries; however, I have had some students whose native language I am not familiar with, but we make it work. Over the few semesters that I have been here, I've enhanced my way of teaching by studying the material myself. I also prefer to ask the students what it is they would like to learn or improve since it better helps me in aiding their knowledge. The most memorable moment from my time tutoring ESL students would be when they finally understand a concept, and they feel confident in using it outside of the LLC. I find this memorable because I get to see my students learn, grow, and be happy when doing so. When I reflect on my time with them, I think, "Wow, I helped them get to where they are now!" It makes me feel good being able to help others with language.



Crysta O'Donnell '22 tutoring an ESL student.

Rachel Weber

My name is Rachel Weber, and it is my third year working at the LLC, and it is my favorite place to be on campus! I have tutored students in ESL every semester since I've been here, and it is so fun and rewarding. I also have learned so much more about my own language in the process. The students that I work with sometimes ask me advanced questions that require further research, which helps me learn more about English and I can pass on that information. Tutoring has definitely changed my perspective on a few things. First off, having conversations with them I am able to put myself in their shoes and learn about what it's like to have English as a second language. Along the way I have also learned so much about other countries such as Ecuador, Korea, Colombia, and Taiwan. The most rewarding thing about teaching ESL is seeing my students grow over time in their language ability and using the new words, grammar, etc. that I have taught them.



Paola Santa Rosario '22 tutoring an ESL student from Mexico.

conversations from my time being a tutor are the ones when I have gotten to learn about my students' lives and cultures. My students have so many different experiences of the world, and so many stories to tell. I love being able to connect with them in that way.

Social Media



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Melissa Agostinho

My time as an ESL tutor has been so rewarding. Knowing how to communicate in English is pretty much detrimental to feeling included in society here in the U.S. So being able to provide a service where people can learn this skill for free is invaluable. I have taught everything from basic grammar rules, to conversation skills, to preparation for English exams like the TOEFL, to writing emails, and preparing for job interviews. I am currently working with a young mom from India. But in the past I have worked with people of all ages from all around the world, including Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Saudi Arabia. My students teach me more about their worlds and their perspectives than I could ever teach them about mine. My most memorable