

LINGUA FRANCA

*Newsletter of University of Mary Washington
Modern Languages and Literatures*

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Chair Update

By: Dr. Marcel Rotter

It’s been an active year as we reincorporate our events into our schedules. I was very happy to be a part of our first UMW Abroad trip since 2020. With nine students and two faculty members, we spent Spring Break in Poland to explore the multifaceted and often painful history of this Eastern-European country. We visited significant cultural sites such as the Wawel Castle in Cracow, but also places of former rich Jewish life and worship. We saw the remains of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Auschwitz death camp where so many lives came to an end. The trip had a great impact on many students. Some found the names of relatives that perished in the Holocaust in the Book of Names in Auschwitz. Others were amazed by the vastness of the former Jewish neighborhood that had been destroyed and replaced with modern office buildings after World War II.

What made the trip especially memorable was the historical parallels students could draw to the war in neighboring Ukraine. The solidarity of the Polish people with their next-door country was visible everywhere. Every streetcar and bus in Warsaw was decorated with Polish and Ukrainian flags. A historic building in Cracow’s Main Market Square was covered in one huge Ukrainian flag. While we did not encounter refugees on the streets, we could see some in our hotel. Our visit to the Jewish Community Center in Cracow was canceled as they had just taken in 50 Ukrainian refugees. We completely understood. One of our students, Katriel Lee, met a Ukrainian woman on our flight from Munich to Warsaw:

“On this flight, I was sitting next to a young woman in her early twenties, it didn't take long for her to start asking me questions about the U.S and the immigration process. She shared with me that she was in the process of fleeing Ukraine, due to the recent Russian invasion, on her way to the Polish Embassy in Warsaw. We talked all throughout the flight about how she was forced to leave her family in Ukraine and her final hope was to seek refuge in the United States. Although I was not able to help her as much as I would have liked, meeting her was extremely impactful.”



UMW Abroad Group at an outdoor theater in Łazienki palace, Warsaw

While all members of our group had seen a lot of different sights, it will take some time to unpack the impressions and information. As Katriel Lee concludes in her travel blog:

“... meeting this woman on my flight allowed me to further sympathize with what the citizens of Ukraine are going through. Given that this is such a prevalent topic I feel that it will alter the way in which I process the events on this trip. This flight gave me the perspective I needed to see the ways the invasion will impact my time in Poland.”

Department Events

World Language Olympics

On October 4th, students and faculty of the seven languages taught in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures gathered in Jefferson square to compete against one another for our first annual World Language Olympics. The tournament encouraged friendly competition between our world languages of Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish. We created a series of competitive cultural games as well as some physical games, such as Jeopardy, fill the water bucket, Pin Tac Toe, and more. In the end, Arabic took home the World Language Olympics trophy (Gold Medal), Chinese took second (Silver), and Spanish took third (bronze). It was a great afternoon highlighting our shared love of language and a willingness to let loose and have fun!



Team Spanish cheering on their teammates during the World Language Olympics

José Donoso en y a través de sus materiales de archivo" by Dr. Maria Laura Bocaz

On November Dr. María Laura Bocaz was invited to give a talk at the Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). The talk entitled “José Donoso en y a través de sus materiales de archivo” focused on Chilean writer José Donoso’s writing materials, and included a presentation of a part of the sixth chapter of Bocaz’s book manuscript José Donoso escritor de El lugar sin límites. The talk was broadcasted live at the Youtube channel of the Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas (IIFL Streaming), and is currently available in youtube.

Latino Identities Month Discussion Panel

In October, as part of the celebration of Latino Identities Month, we hosted a Panel Discussion & Tribute for ELL Teachers from Fredericksburg City Public Schools. Ms. Ana María Johnson (UMW Class of 2016), Mr. Thomas Johnson (UMW Class of 2008), and Ms. Elizabeth Domínguez talked about their work as ELL teachers, shared how they have served the Latino community, as well as the challenges they face in their classrooms. Following a vivid Q&A with attendees, Professor María Laura Bocaz and LSA President, Gwendolyn Harrison honored and thank them for their contribution to education and the Latino communities in Fredericksburg.



Professor Bocaz and Dean of the College of Education Peter Kelly honoring ELL Teachers

Scholarships

Beloved French professor establishes scholarship through her estate

Juliette Breffort Blessing came to Mary Washington in 1957 to share her worldly knowledge of all things French, including language, theater, and cultural history. Former students remember her



Juliette Breffort

flair for fashion, her wonderful accent, and her expert and often life-changing advice and guidance.

Dr. Blessing retired from Mary Washington in 1992 after 35 years of teaching, and she was awarded the title of Professor Emerita of Modern Foreign Languages.

She lived in Washington, D.C., until her passing in 2020 at the age of 94.

Always thinking of ways to help and advance students, Dr. Blessing included arrangements in her will to create a scholarship at Mary Washington.

The UMW Board of Visitors recently approved the new Juliette Breffort Blessing Scholarship for French Study, which will support study abroad opportunities for a junior or senior majoring in the French language.

Other Scholarships in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

Elizabeth Baylor Neatrour '54 and Mary Ellen Stephenson Memorial Scholarship in French



For rising juniors or seniors with a declared major in French. Students may also use this scholarship for study abroad in countries where French is the predominant language.

Fita Rivas Scholarship in Spanish - Total average award budget

For rising juniors or seniors with a declared major in Spanish and who are planning to continue their studies in graduate school.

Grace Cutler Hamilton Scholarship for French Study

This scholarship supports semester or year-long international study in France. The scholarship is open to French majors or to any student who is interested in furthering their facility in French and experiencing French culture. Special consideration is given to students with demonstrated financial need.

Student Projects

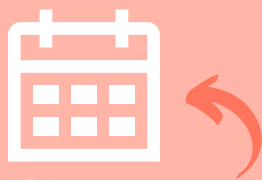
"El feminismo chicano" by Abigail Slaughter

Spanish major and Journalism/Latin American Studies minor Abigail Slaughter '22 completed an independent study on Chicana Feminism in the fall 2021 semester under the supervision of Professor Delgado-Poust. In her blog, "El feminismo chicano," Abby examines the history of the Chicana Feminist movement, its main objectives and obstacles, the role of religion in Chicano culture, as well as the importance of intersectionality in any analysis of this political and social movement. The project is the culmination of her exploration of the struggle for social, political, and economic equality of Chicana women that continues to this day.

Given her interest in (and her own experiences with) journalism, Abby also researched the ways in which Chicana Feminist academics and journalists/writers disseminated their experiences with patriarchal oppression and communicated to their readers the need for social reforms that would improve the lives of Chicana women.

Her blog also includes interviews with the president of UMW's Latino Student Association as well as an interview with a Spanish professor from Gustavus Adolphus College whose scholarly research focuses on Intercultural Studies between Mexico and the United States and popular Latino culture in the U.S. To learn more about the Chicana Feminist movement and to see Abby's impressive project, please check out her blog [here](#).

Events Calendar



See future events [here!](#)

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