



**ELON**  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF  
**World Languages  
& Cultures**

أهلاً 你好 Bonjour Hallo Χαλῶν שְׁלוֹם Hola Ciao Salve Hello!

## Fall 2016 newsletter

We welcome all languages and cultures in our newly-renovated engagement space in 1<sup>st</sup> floor Carlton



**Big news!**  
We now offer  
**STUDENT GRANTS**  
for travel and  
professional development

*Thank you* to all alumni, faculty, staff, students, and friends who have generously donated to our department. You have enabled us to begin offering two student grants in support of study abroad and professional development in languages & cultures. They are intended to help full-time students in their endeavors to become more thoughtful and knowledgeable global citizens.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Hispanic Film Series



We are delighted to share that the theme of this year's Hispanic Film Series was “**Filming Human Rights Issues in Spain and Latin America**,” co-organized by Professors Mayte de Lama, Ketevan Kupatadze, Federico Pous, and Nicole Triche. Our films were specially selected to raise awareness of human rights violations, including social injustice, modern day slavery, and the plight of indigenous people around the world. Films in the series have included *Ixcánul, Volcano* (2015), an award-winning Guatemalan film about two strong indigenous Mayan women who are mother and daughter, *339 Amín Abel Hasbun. Memory of a Crime* (2014), about the murder of a student activist and his family in the Dominican Republic, and *The Travel Agent* (2015), which follows 58 year-old Cuban travel agent, Lourdes, as she pursues a chance to visit family in the United States. The series aims to spark dialogue among faculty, staff, students, and the general public at Elon about complex, important issues. We are grateful for support from Pragda, the School of Communications, Peace & Conflict Studies, Sigma Delta Pi, El Centro, the College of Arts & Sciences, Spain-USA foundation, and the Secretary of State for Culture of Spain.

The *Lunsford-Ihrle Travel Grant* has been established in honor of faculty emeriti Dr. Ernest Lunsford and Dr. Maureen Ihrle, and it is dedicated to supporting students with study abroad opportunities. The *Romer Grant for Professional Development* honors faculty emerita, Dr. Jane Romer, and it is devoted to helping students fund language enrichment experiences in the United States. Examples include professional conferences, books & materials, and registration for internationally recognized examinations such as Goethe Institute exams and diplomas awarded by the French Ministry of Education.

For more information, please visit our dept. website: [www.elon.edu/languages](http://www.elon.edu/languages)



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## Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival



Around 30 students and professors came together on September 28<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. The festival always falls on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar when the moon is supposed to be at its fullest in the year. The name “Mid-Autumn Festival” comes from the fact that August is the middle of the three autumn months in the lunar calendar. The festival is one of the four official holidays celebrated in China, and people celebrate it by honoring the moon and reunion of family and friends, giving thanks for the harvest, and praying for good futures. Many Asian countries also celebrate this holiday. Our visiting scholar, Kelly Zhang, discussed Mid-Autumn traditions such as the lighting and carrying of lanterns, and she told of the beautiful legends related to the festival.

Attendees sampled various Chinese snacks, including mooncakes. Mooncakes are typically round pastries filled with lotus or red bean paste, and they are often given as gifts to family members. These pastries are so synonymous with the Mid-Autumn Festival that the celebration is alternatively called “Mooncake Festival.” Chinese professor, Binnan Gao, led a discussion about living and studying in China. Topics ranged from study abroad experiences to growing up in China as a Westerner. Student, Kenneth Liu Yu, also shared why learning Chinese is especially important for him as a Chinese heritage learner. This event was co-sponsored in partnership with the Global Education Center, Asian Studies, and the College of Arts & Sciences.

## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Binnan Gao



Binnan Gao received her Ph.D. in second language acquisition from the University of Iowa in 2009 and joined the Elon faculty as a Chinese professor in 2014. Originally from Harbin, China, in its northern province of Heilongjiang, she is passionate about teaching the Chinese language & culture through films to Elon students.

When she is not engaging students in her classroom, she researches second language reading and writing, second language acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, and heritage learners. She is one of the finest professors Elon has seen, and the Department of World Languages and Cultures could not be happier to have her. We are honored to have her in our faculty spotlight.



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## Alumni Panel on Languages & Cultures

On October 21, during Elon's Homecoming, the department hosted our first Alumni Panel for students studying or interested in world languages & cultures. The panel included (from left to right): Quiqui Lang Hilgartner '10, a Spanish major who is currently teaching Spanish at Elon while pursuing her Ph.D. in Spanish and Jewish Studies at the Univ. of Virginia; Shanna Van Beek '12, an international studies and English double major who learned Arabic at Elon, studied in Egypt in 2010, received a Fulbright grant to teach English in Bahrain from 2012-2013, and is a current study abroad advisor in the Global Education Center; and Eliza Brinkley '15, a French and English double major who had just returned from a year of living and teaching English in Haiti. Our graduates spoke to students about how their professional and personal lives have been greatly impacted by their language studies and intercultural experiences. They shared tips and perspectives followed by an engaging Q&A. We plan to make this an annual tradition!



## Family Weekend

Faculty members from the Department of World Languages and Cultures were pleased to host dozens of families in the newly renovated engaged learning spaces of Carlton for Family Weekend. The Open House on Saturday, September 3, offered families the chance to get to know students' professors in person.

Professors provide so much more than syllabi and lessons! They can turn into life-long friends, as was seen with several families visiting Hebrew instructor, Boaz Abraham-Katz, who had taught their children at the B'nai Shalom Day School in Greensboro. Some parents even came to see more than one professor within our department, such as the proud parents of an alumna, who had taken French with Prof. Sophie Adamson, and of a younger sibling who is currently learning Chinese with Prof. Binnan Gao.

In the words of one parent: "We really enjoyed attending Family Weekend with our daughter who is a first-year student. We loved meeting her new friends and their families. One of the highlights was meeting her professors. They knew our daughter by name and obviously had a relationship with her." Until next year, families!

## Senior Spotlight: Josh Glover



Senior Josh Glover, our head student assistant, came back from a semester in Costa Rica with a deep sense of fulfillment. His Spanish language skills had enabled him to learn more deeply about the Costa Rican culture, especially from his host family who did not speak any English.

Upon his return, his intercultural competency also greatly helped in his internship at the Brookings Institution with the Latin American Initiative, where he helped organize events with Spanish-only speakers. Josh looks forward to another enriching experience when he travels to Peru with 26 students and Professors Ricardo Mendoza and Mary Wise Terbeck for the 2017 Winter Term course, *Peru: The Living Heritage of the Andes*.

Josh says, "Knowing other languages opens up a lot of professional opportunities and allows you to interact with a broader segment of the population, even here in Alamance County." His advice for students learning a language? Practice. He encourages a lot of interaction in the target language, writing, reading, and study abroad!



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## Elon's First Undergraduate French Conference

On Saturday, Sept. 24, Elon hosted students, faculty and staff from Elon and regional universities at its first Undergraduate Conference on Languages and Cultures (UCLC). Students, faculty, and staff from Elon, Wake Forest University, UNC-Greensboro, UNC-Chapel Hill and N.C. State University gathered for the day-long conference exploring "Perspectives Sur le Monde Français et Francophone" (Perspectives on the French and Francophone World).

During morning and afternoon panels as well as a poster session, students from each university presented both finished work and works in progress. Their research in French was on topics that ranged from the depiction of sexual violence in medieval fabliaux to the narrative voices of contemporary French graphic novels. During lunch, Dr. Michael Garval of N.C. State University gave the plenary lecture, "L'anatomie de la célébrité culinaire: le chef et ses mains," describing the rise in stature of the position of chef to its current celebrity status.

The final conference event was a Professionalization Panel during which two Elon alumnae, Christina Peterson '10 and Margaret (Maggie) Liston '16, talked about their own personal and professional journeys related to engagement with foreign languages and cultures.



Panelists (from left) Anna Taylor from UNC-Chapel Hill and Nicole Ackman and Nat Bashir from Elon



Christina Peterson '10 and Maggie Liston '16 (who joined via Skype from Paris) offered advice to students on how to connect their studies of languages & cultures to their professional future.

They reminded students that deep knowledge of another language and culture is always viewed positively by potential employers (whether or not the language is a prerequisite for the position) because it demonstrates open-mindedness, an ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and a willingness to engage with difference.

French professors Adamson, Burns, Choplin, and Glasco hope that the conference will become an annual event and expand to include panels in additional languages. Seeing and hearing advanced students present their research early in their college careers can be a true motivator for first year students like conference attendee Elizabeth McFarland, who commented: "I'm grateful to the presenters for their willingness to speak in front of their audience in a second language, and for showing me that it is possible to get to that point myself one day. I'm jealous of their fluency in the language and their ability to understand questions and answer them in French. Attending this conference has given me a goal to work towards and has furthered my love for French culture and language."

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Click below to check us out on Facebook:



[Dept. of World Languages & Cultures](#)

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### *My Study Abroad in Amman, Jordan*



Cal Patrick is one of our wonderful WLC student assistants. A junior at Elon University, his passions involve languages, friends, and getting to know people of all cultures. Fluent in 4 languages and wanting to travel the world, Cal looks forward to returning to the Middle East at the next opportunity he gets.



### *Giving*

If you would like to give to the Department of World Languages and Cultures, you may do so through Elon's website:  
[www.elon.edu/giving](http://www.elon.edu/giving)



I never strived to have a “normal” Elon study abroad experience. While many of my peers are currently spending a semester abroad in their junior year, I travelled as a sophomore, hoping to do another semester abroad as a senior. Most of my peers coordinated with their friends to go as a group and experience the beautiful beaches, food and nightlife of cities such as Barcelona, Florence, and Buenos Aires. Many of my peers chose places like Dublin or London because of the linguistic familiarity. Let me clarify, these are all valid and respectable motives for choosing a specific location, but they weren't my priority. For me, in order to properly learn and grow, studying abroad through Elon University could not be a vacation. For that reason, I chose to study Arabic in Amman, Jordan.

I am an International Studies major, and frankly I got sick of secondary source information about the Middle East. Everyone seems to have an opinion on the “Middle East” (which consists of over fifteen ethnically diverse nations) and its “Muslims” (Middle Eastern nations only make up about a fifth of worldwide Muslims), but very few want to encourage a two-way dialogue or actually experience life in someone else's shoes. Of course, I knew there would be wild reactions from the people around me and that there would be certain luxuries that I could no longer expect. For example, hot showers in Jordan are a limited, precious commodity. However, through these impoverished people, I felt a deeper sense of community and faith than I ever had in my life. Jordanians looked after and cared for me more passionately than any other society. I received numerous random acts of kindness from taxi drivers, street vendors, and other people that Americans often perceive as a nuisance in society. I was invited to Friday service at the mosque by people I barely knew, despite that I am Christian.

I recognize that I never would've chosen Jordan if not for my experience with Arabic at Elon University. I took Arabic 121, 122, and 221 with Professor Shereen El-Gamal, and she is now my academic advisor. She made learning Arabic fun and sparked my interest in the culture by having the Arabic Language Organization to her home and place of worship. Therefore, throughout my deeply introspective journey, I had one explicit goal: to learn Arabic. Once again I quickly realized that we Americans simplify “Arabic,” in which we include a huge spectrum of colloquial dialects that actually vary greatly. I spent around four hours in class every weekday studying Modern Standard Arabic, which is the Arabic I had studied in Professor El-Gamal's classes, and then I took another class three times a week on Jordanian Colloquial Arabic. Since the Jordanian dialect was more useful on a daily basis, I also learned so much while conversing with taxi drivers and Jordanian college students. I wholeheartedly believe that one can never truly appreciate a culture without being able to experience it through their lens, which is their language. I know I made serious progress in learning Arabic, and that continues to be a goal for me.

Spending a semester in Jordan is, above all, an incredibly humanistic experience. There are undeniably vast differences in daily lifestyle, diet, romance, language, etc. but when I actually talked to Jordanians and we tackled these differences, they began to seem less enormous. Anyone thinking about this program needs to honestly embrace, without pretense, the inevitable discomfort, difficulty and eventual enlightenment that come from choosing a place like Amman, Jordan.