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DEPARTMENT OF
**World Languages
& Cultures**

أهلاً 你好 Bonjour Hallo Χαῖρε שלום Hola Ciao Salve Hello!

Fall 2017 Newsletter



PC: Grace McGuirk

Left: Conference attendees enjoy a student presentation

Below: Elon student, Laura Clarkson, participates in discussion



PC: Patti Burns

Conference on Languages & Cultures Makes a Triumphant Return

The Undergraduate Conference on Languages and Cultures (UCLC) was held in Carlton Commons on Saturday, September 23, for the second year in a row, and it was a great success. The daylong conference, which seeks to inspire and motivate undergraduate students to pursue research, study abroad opportunities, internships, and future careers in foreign languages, brought together faculty and students from Elon, Guilford College, and Wake Forest University. This year the conference explored the idea of “No Limits in the French- and Spanish-Speaking World.”

The event offered undergraduate students studying French and Spanish the unique opportunity to present their research early in their academic career during the morning’s concurrent French/Spanish student research panels.

The panels were followed by a poster session open to students studying all languages, which included presenters studying French, German, and Hebrew. Following the poster session, all attendees enjoyed a catered lunch and a presentation by Professor Maria Bobroff of Guilford College, who shared her research on Québécois and Vietnamese cultures. After lunch, the conference concluded with two parallel French and Spanish alumni panels that allowed undergraduate students to see what a career involving French/Spanish languages and cultures might look like.

The UCLC was generously funded by Elon’s Fund for Excellence and organized by French lecturer Patti Burns. Prof. Burns, along with the rest of the Department of World Languages and Cultures, hopes to make the conference a staple event each fall semester with plans to grow the number of languages offered for future years.



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WLC Welcomes Xuanzi Zhang, Chinese Teaching Fellow



One of the newest members of our department is Xuanzi Zhang, ALEX Foundation Fellow and visiting professor of Chinese. Prof. Zhang was born and raised in mainland China and went on to receive an M.A. in Chinese Linguistics from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2013. After graduation, she engaged in teaching Chinese as a second language in Hong Kong for 3 years. At Elon, she currently teaches CHN 376: Business Chinese and assists with CHN 121 and 221, Elementary and Intermediate Chinese. She also assists with cultural events in the Chinese program, such as the Chinese Language Table and the Lunar New Year Celebration.

Her academic interests include second language acquisition, as well as Chinese linguistics and literature. She values the experience of teaching at Elon, and she is eager to share her expertise and perspectives with the Elon community.

Sharing Knowledge: Faculty Research Series

For the past three years, Mina Garcia, Associate Professor of Spanish, has been planning panels for Elon faculty and staff to aid them in the publication process and promote active learning. In the last year, Pamela Winfield, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, joined the project as co-chair. Prof. Garcia believes it is very important to create a community to talk about research since many faculty members are going through the same experiences. Why go through it alone when there is knowledge that can be shared?

Each semester, there are two research events. The format is typically a panel presentation of information about the research process followed by a question and answer session. Last year, for example, a retired editor from the Chicago University Press talked about book proposals and the most common recurring errors. On November 15, the Research Series hosted a panel discussion titled “Finding the Right Fit for Your Scholarship.” There, Toddie Peters, Professor of Religious Studies, spoke about her book publication experiences, advice on whether to hire a book agent, and the importance of focusing on a personal path to scholarship.

Karen Yokley, Associate Professor of Mathematics, provided insight concerning scholarly impact and impact factor rankings. She discussed acceptance rates for journals and identifying the right journal for a scholar’s research topic. Lastly, Betty Garrison, Business Research Librarian, defined so-called predatory publishers as scam opportunists who charge fees to publish quickly and offer none of the expected publisher services like peer-review or archiving for preservation.



From left: Toddie Peters, Betty Garrison, Karen Yokley, and Mina Garcia at the Nov. 15 panel



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First WLC 373 Cohort Presents on Interculturalism

In fall 2016, the department began piloting a new course (WLC 371-372-373) to deepen study abroad experiences for all of our majors and minors. Taught by one instructor, the course spans three semesters. One semester hour prepares students for a semester in another culture and takes place during the second half of the semester *prior to* study abroad; the second semester hour connects online with students *during* their study abroad to develop their awareness of cultural differences, the reasons for them, and how to handle them successfully; and a two semester hour course meets on campus during the semester *following* the experience abroad.

In this last semester, students who have studied in a variety of locations and languages reflect on what they have learned about other cultural norms, personal cultural assumptions, strategies to improve interactions with others, and how their

experience in another culture can be leveraged to respond to the interests of graduate schools and future employers.

Thus, fall 2017 marks the successful completion of our very first cohort to complete the third of the 3-part course (WLC 373: Processing Your Semester Abroad) with Associate Professor Donna Van Bodegraven. Students presented engaging final projects that encompassed personal experiences living in another country and research on cultural connections. Some topics included comparative perspectives on sexuality, food, and nationalist movements. Senior Kiera Ervin, who studied in Santiago de los Caballeros in the Dominican Republic, talked about African contributions to Carnival in the Dominican Republic and Mardi Gras in Louisiana, noting that both involved “a breaking free from the norm.” Congratulations to our first cohort!



PC: Julia Needham

Students, faculty, and staff gathered in Carlton while Becca Surprenant presented her research comparing typical food of Sevilla with that of the U.S. South.



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Students Discuss “What it Means to be Muslim on a College Campus”



PC: Shereen Elgamal

Elon's Arabic Language Organization (ALO) organized an engaging panel on November 8 as part of SGA's Inclusivity Week. Grace Landsberg, ALO President, moderated the discussion and Misbah Chhotani, Noor Irshaidat, Abdullah Kamal, and Mariatu Okonofua shared their perspectives as Muslim students at Elon, while Ayah Khalifa shared about her experience at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). While many audience members had already taken classes on Islam, the Middle East, and/or Arabic language, the discussion aimed to offer students the personal experiences and first-hand accounts of their Muslim peers.

The consensus among panelists was that indirect bias, rather than outright bigotry, is sometimes present in initial interactions with peers, faculty, and staff. They agreed that generalizations about Muslims, while not directly aimed at them, still made them feel unwelcome in classroom discussions of politics, religion, and culture. The students also talked about multiple first interactions that left them feeling lonely or misunderstood. Noor Irshaidat, for example, described how she had to start her residency at Elon in a single room because potential roommates would not respond to her messages, possibly because of her unfamiliar name or different background.

Ayah Khalifa discussed her experience wearing the Islamic headcover and how she felt intimidated at the start since she was the only female student wearing hijab at UNCG. This feeling gradually subsided as she started to notice other female students wearing hijab, which made her feel an increased connection with the campus community. Additionally, Misbah Chhotani shared that once people learn about her and her faith traditions, they get to know her for who she is and make an effort to connect through shared interests. Further, Abdullah Kamal explained that true friends do listen and try to accommodate each other.

Panelists agreed that faith and ethnic background have no bearing on a person's choice to commit violent acts. They all spoke about facing a frequent need to defend Islam in academic and social settings. Mariatu Okonofua explained how a constant need to explain and defend one's values and beliefs can be overwhelming, and that taking the time to calmly and reasonably discuss religion, culture, and misunderstandings of the two is always most effective. Noor Irshaidat said, “For some reason, every time I hear about a violent attack now, I cross my fingers and pray that the attacker does not have a Muslim or an Arab name.” The students agreed that their actions are far more effective than their words in clearing misunderstandings about their faith tradition and disproving inaccurate perceptions of it.

Elon students expressed satisfaction with the inclusive atmosphere that the Truitt Center provides and praised the role of Shane Atkinson, Elon's Muslim Coordinator, as he works to bring Muslim students together, support them, and arrange events for them to celebrate major holidays and remain engaged with the Elon community.

Concluding remarks spoke to the power of knowledge and encouraged the audience to explore diversity, ask questions, and engage others to reach their own conclusions.



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Witness for Peace Lecture: “The View from Honduras”

Witness for Peace is an independent, grassroots organization that intends to “change U.S. policies and corporate practices which contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America.” Promoting the Witness for Peace message, Honduran feminist activist Neesa Medina spoke on Elon’s campus on October 20th. The lecture, which took place in Holt Chapel, touched on the dangers and difficulties that Honduran women face on a daily basis, often without adequate media coverage. Medina also explained how U.S. armed weapons perpetuate more crime and poverty in Honduras and push Hondurans to immigrate illegally to the United States.



Special Courses in the Department – Winter 2018

LAT 170: Meet the Romans

Who were the Romans? What did they eat, think, believe? Did they feel emotions like ours, care about city planning, or worry about the environment? To answer these questions and many more, students in this mixed level Latin course will work with the professor to develop a personalized syllabus based on their own goals and intellectual interests. Our time in class will be spent working together and in peer cohorts on tasks and projects that help deepen our learning about the language and culture of the ancient Romans. No pre-requisites. Cross-listed with LAT 270 and LAT 370.



SPN 340: Limitless Language – Spanish Dialects

This course, taught in Spanish, allows students to explore the wide world of Spanish dialectology, cultivating a greater awareness and understanding of the linguistic variation that occurs in the Spanish language. Class activities encourage students to draw on their existing knowledge and examine their beliefs about dialect in both Spanish and English, honing their observation skills by experiencing music, film, and other mediums through the lens of regional variation. Additional benefits of learning about dialects include improved comprehension and communication in real-world contexts for nonnative speakers.





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Special Courses in the Department – Spring 2018



FRE 370: Cultural Shifts in France Through Music

In this course, students will explore a specific topic related to France and the Francophone World via musical, literacy, historical, cultural, and socio-

political texts, as well as film and media clips. Their study will culminate in the group composition and public performance of original music with lyrics in French. Enrolled students are expected to take an active role in the final production, either as musicians, composers, technical support, or by taking on other necessary duties. No prior musical or production experience is required.

SPN 371: Spain is Different



Even though we talk about one Spain, the truth is that this country offers great variety; from its landscape to the vast number of languages spoken there. In this course we will study what makes Spain different and how its image has been changing in recent decades due to immigration and economic challenges that have been causing discontent and protests across this nation. We will use news articles, songs, films, documentaries, literary works, as well as TV and radio programs to explore the passionate contradictions that this popular country raises.

GER 170: Beginning Business German



This course teaches basic professional usage of German, providing a foundation for students preparing for internships, business trips, or entry-level positions with German companies in the USA or Europe. Like all German courses at Elon, this course develops student's abilities in reading, writing, listening, speaking, cultural competence, and critical thinking via authentic texts, videos, and group work.



SPN 352: Detective Fiction

Throughout the world, people enjoy the adventures of detectives who work tirelessly to solve crimes and bring responsible parties to justice. What happens, however, when these stories take place in societies where justice is rarely served? What is the role of the detective in these societies? This course seeks answers through analyses of detective fiction materials (novels, short stories, comics, and films) from Cuba, México, Chile, and other Latin American countries. Its main objective is to familiarize students with the structural flaws that affect contemporary Latin American societies and to identify how culture reflects upon them.



Study Abroad Spotlight: Greek Sculpture Face-to-Face

In summer 2017, through the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA), Zach Gianelle (Classical Studies '17) had the opportunity to learn about and explore historical sites and artifacts of Ancient Greece. He shared the following reflection:

“The program I was involved with was focused on Ancient Greek sculpture, lasting a little less than three weeks in Athens with excursions both to the islands of Naxos, Paros, Mykonos, Delos and Thera (Santorini) and to the Peloponnese (including Delphi, Olympia, and Corinth). Each of these locations offered archeological dig sites, museums, and/or monuments for our group to observe. We paid special attention to sculpture and architecture, discussing statuary, grave reliefs, and friezes from many periods of Ancient Greece. Our discussions were most frequently led by our professor, but he had invited a variety of Classical scholars to present on works which they had studied at great length, providing a more diverse range of opinions for the group.

In addition to lectures, each of us was assigned a particular monument to present on, all of which were spread throughout the course of the program and were intentionally controversial works. For example, I presented on the frieze of the “Aemilius Paullus Monument,” a victory pillar originally dedicated by the Greeks, but repurposed to praise the Roman



Zach poses with Greek columns in Olympia

general Aemilius Paullus for his defeat of the Greek king Perseus, and a monument whose stylistic origins have been (and still are) seriously debated. We were able to research our topics in the American School's vast Classical library, which (enigmatic as the scheme of the building might be) is filled to the brim with scholarship both recent and ancient.

The intention of the seminar was, in part, to bring together a group of people from a variety of backgrounds to discuss sculpture. Myself and a few other students were Classical philologists (students focusing on ancient language and literature as opposed to art and archeology), and others were art and physical therapy students. Considering the interdisciplinary nature of Classics, the variety of backgrounds contributed interestingly to our discussions, with one sculpting student pointing out techniques used to create certain monuments, while the philologists offered alternate interpretations of inscriptions. With new and diverse eyes on these works of art, much more can be said about their manufacture, origin, style, etc.

When we were not preparing our presentations or participating in lectures and trips to museums, we had time on our hands to explore modern Greece. We did not miss out on the Santorini sunsets, the beautifully blue Aegean Sea, or the many delicious restaurants to be found throughout Greece!”

Scholarships for Students:

[Lunsford-Ihrle Travel Grant](#): Dedicated to financial support of students studying abroad.

[Romer Grant for Professional Development](#): Devoted to helping students fund language enrichment experiences. Examples include (but are not limited to) professional conferences, books/materials, and registration for internationally recognized examinations such as Goethe Institute exams and the DELF (Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française).



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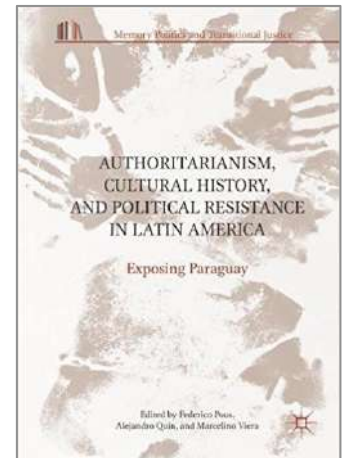
Faculty Highlights

Federico Pous

**Assistant Professor
of Spanish**



Congratulations to Federico Pous on his newly published book! *Exposing Paraguay* examines Paraguayan culture within the field of Latin American Studies, presenting a variety of perspectives that include visual, literary, cultural, and gender studies as well as sociological and political theory. Co-edited by Pous, Alejandro Quin, and Marcelino Viera, these original essays reflect upon authoritarianism, the tensions between art, political resistance, and the struggle for collective memory. Together, they propose a literary framing that flips traditional scripts, which portray Paraguay as an exception in Latin American history; instead they interrogate Latin American Studies from a Paraguayan perspective.



Patti Burns received her M.A. in French translation from the Institute for Applied Linguistics at Kent State University and then worked as a translation project manager before joining Elon Faculty in 2014. A rare native North Carolinian, Burns loves connecting with students and finding multiple paths to link their interests with French: dance, art, religion, sports, history, film, music, and of course, food! Her students frequently comment on the welcoming learning environment where they learn not just how to conjugate verbs, but also how to see the world from someone else's perspective, and how that empowers them to build bridges and community. Prof. Burns has put her project management skills to good use at Elon.

She has tended to adventurous logistics of WT courses in France, Spain, and Morocco and has also organized the Undergraduate Conference on Languages and Cultures, interdisciplinary film festivals, and events for National French Week. Additionally, Prof. Burns collaborates with colleagues on joint classes for students from various French levels to learn from each other and from amazing alumni who engage students virtually. She is looking forward to the spring, when—in addition to teaching a pilot curriculum in French II and a course on Francophone Youth—she will host a film festival to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the revolutionary events of May '68 in France.

Patti Burns Lecturer in French



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