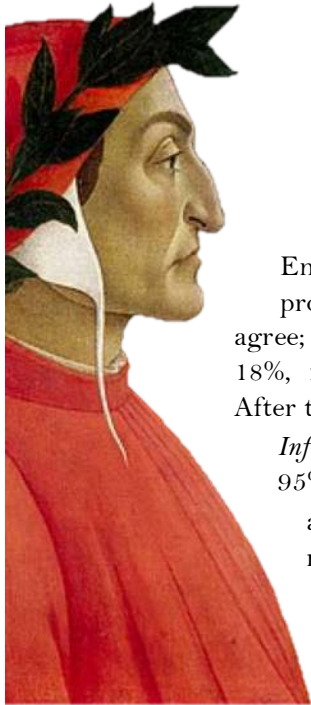




Winter & Spring 2018

Teaching and Learning with Video Games: A Tale of Two Dante's

Brandon Essary, Assistant Professor of Italian



End-of-semester survey. To the 1st prompt: 75% of students strongly agree; 20% agree. To the 2nd: 67% and 18%, respectively. But, agree to what? After two iterations of "COR 463: Dante's *Inferno*: Poetry and Video Games," 95% of students agree with "I learned actively through a variety of mediums, teaching approaches, and in-class leadership opportunities." And 82% agree with "I learned more about Dante and his poetry by studying it alongside a video game than [with] the text by itself or alongside traditional, written scholarly sources."

COR 463 is a course that countervails the one-sided and inaccurate literary criticism of the video game *Dante's Inferno*, released by Electronic Arts (EA) in 2010. Many critics fail to see that the game offers countless parallels to Dante Alighieri's medieval masterpiece, *Inferno*, the first canticle of his *Divine Comedy*. From characters' names and infernal guardians to level design and direct citation of the poem itself, the game offers to students an interactive medium through which to explore innumerable aspects of the original poem.

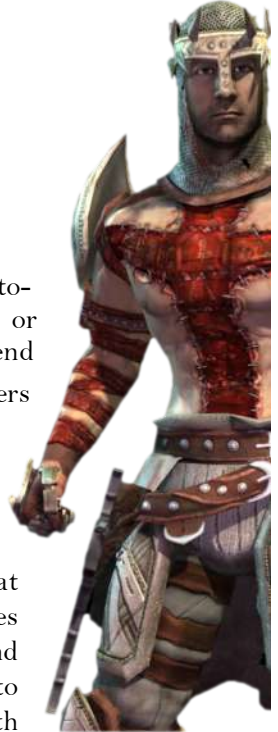


Prof. Essary in his teaching element. Photo credit: Julia Needham

Many students come into the class auto-identifying as people who "can't do" or "don't understand" literature. By the end of the course, the game, they say, offers them a thought-provoking, radically different, parallel story that acts as a key to unlocking the words, sounds and imagery of Dante's poem. Their responses echo what scholars in literacy studies (James Gee), education (Kurt Squire), and English (Harry Brown) tell us to expect from thoughtful teaching with

good games. Games are pedagogical machines with powerful teaching and learning principles built into them. They are *de facto* sources of learning for people of all ages about a wide range of serious, often academic subjects. They can, and should, fit into the repertoire of traditional educational mediums: books, film, art, theater, and music.

With the help and support of Elon's Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, I've had the opportunity to engage students with one of my favorite books in an unprecedented way. The results are positive, and one finds nothing less than the power of video games to breathe *New Life* into an ancient medium. I couldn't put it better than my student: "[The approach] leads me to believe that literature, which is my favorite medium, won't completely die out due to its ability to live on through video games."



Winter Term 2019 in Italy

Dante's Inferno: From Poetry to Video Games

Apply for rolling admission by September 3, 2018!

Click [here](#) for more info.



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Snapshots of the Semester!

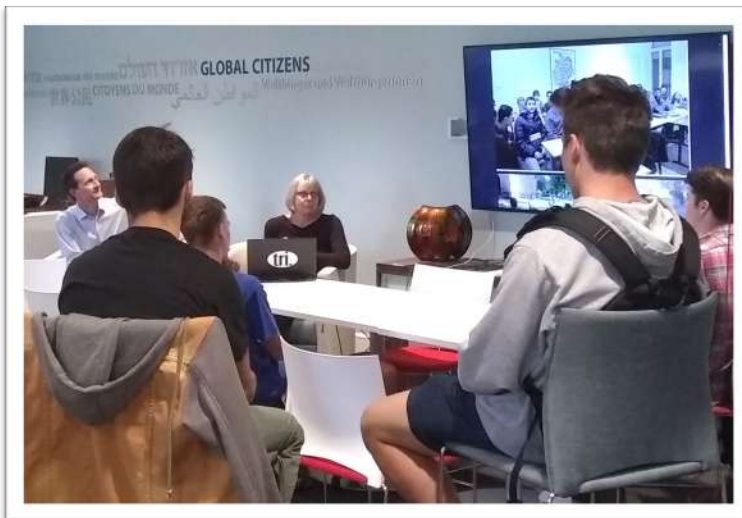


Springtime and warm weather finally arrived at Elon, letting the azaleas around Carlton blossom! Photo credit: Julia Needham

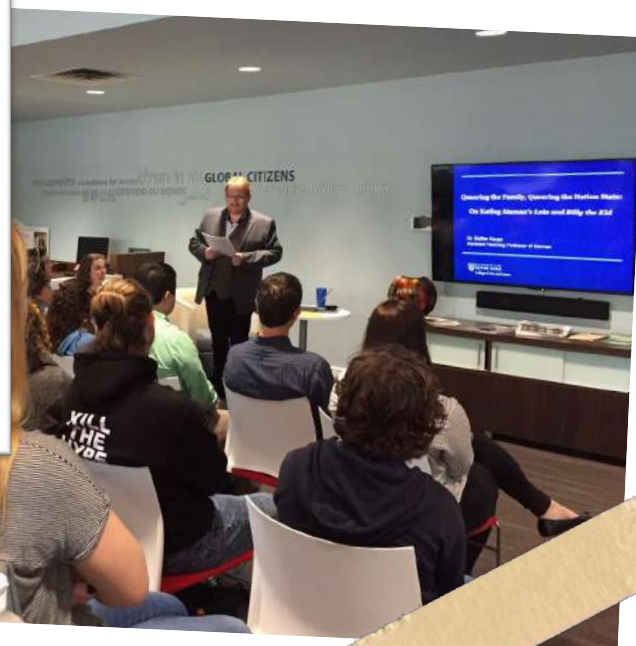


Students participated in a trivia game on Chinese history and culture, hosted by Maria Santana-Garces (bottom-left) and Irisgzal Cheong (bottom-right) at this year's Lantern Festival. Photo credit: Binnan Gao





Above: Dr. Hanne Heckmann, director of the AJT Heidelberg study abroad program, shared her experiences with refugees in Heidelberg.



Right: Dr. Steffen Kaupp (University of Notre Dame) spoke about Kutluğ Ataman's film Lola und Bilidikid and how ethnic, sexual and national identity intersect with family. Photo credit: Sophie Adamson



*Hebrew students celebrated the end of the year with custom T-shirts ("I speak Hebrew. What's your superpower?") at Prof. Boaz Avraham-Katz's house. (Left: HEB 122, Above: HEB 271/371 and some 122 students)
Photo credit: Helene Avraham-Katz*



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Congratulations to all honor society inductees!



Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society

Delta Phi Alpha German Honor Society



This semester, the German Studies program established Elon's chapter of Delta Phi Alpha, the National German Honor Society. Nineteen students were inducted in the inaugural ceremony!

Pi Delta Phi French Honor Society





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German Club Starts New Traditions

Throughout the spring, German Club hosted many new cultural events, including a very successful chocolate tasting in February. Club organizer Maddy Wetterhall praised the event, saying, "German chocolate alone is delicious, but the experience of sharing it with other people who are passionate about Germany and the German culture made the German Club chocolate tasting even better."

German Club also held its first *Kaffeeklatsch* (a social gathering over coffee) for advanced German speakers in Elon's community, including faculty, staff, and students. Anna Zwingelberg, another organizing club member, said, "The *Kaffeeklatsch* brought students studying German together with professors who teach or happen to know German. This was really exciting because we were able to practice our language skills outside the classroom and in a casual and less structured setting. It was also great to meet additional faculty at Elon who also share an interest in German and to be able to practice our German with new people." The German Club will be continuing these festivities next year, hoping to start some new traditions at Elon.



German speakers gather at The Oak House for the first Kaffeeklatsch hosted by German Club

Interested in teaching Spanish?



Elon's major in Spanish with teacher licensure prepares candidates to teach Spanish in grades K-12. Upon successful completion of the program and all licensure requirements, graduates are eligible for a North Carolina K-12 Spanish teaching license.

Our graduates have gone on to teach in schools all over the United States and are leaders in their field. One of our former graduates is currently serving on the board of FLANC (the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina) and this year's candidate received a Fulbright to teach English in Spain!

Click [here](#) for more info on K-12 teaching licensure.



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New Course Highlights:

Sarah Glasco's "Cultural Shifts in France through Music"



This spring, Prof. Sarah Glasco continued to teach the "Cultural Shifts" course, in which students explore a topic related to the Francophone World via musical, literary, historical, cultural and socio-political texts as well as film and media clips. This semester, students explored and analyzed the civil unrest

of May 1968 in France. The class culminated in an original group composition and variety show performance at Taphouse on May 2 (pictured right). The main mission of "Cultural Shifts" is for students to study a micro-moment in French history and get to know it intimately through a creative application of their new knowledge.

When asked about her favorite part of the course, Prof. Glasco said, "The entire course is exhilarating. The creative process is fun and fascinating and I *love* facilitating this, guiding them while being careful to not steal their thunder. This is *their* vision, and then witnessing that vision come to fruition and audience reaction is utterly amazing. It is only then that they realize the impact of their knowledge and performance."

This class is an example of how collaborations across disciplines and partnerships in the local community can occur, as the class may actively collaborate with students and faculty from communications, art, music, religious studies, and many other departments. The course also has definitive global implications of the stories that students construct and tell in this class through their public performance. All said, the course considers and benefits from a "real-world" audience through its influence on students' perception of the May 1968 events and on their self-image as scholars and citizens.





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New Course Highlights:

“Detective Fiction” with Pablo Celis-Castillo



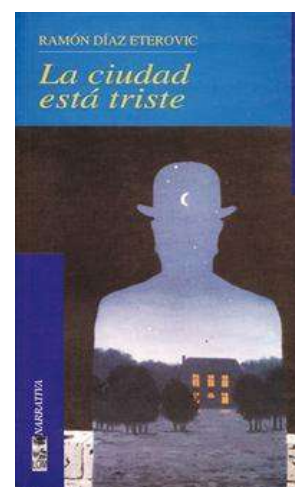
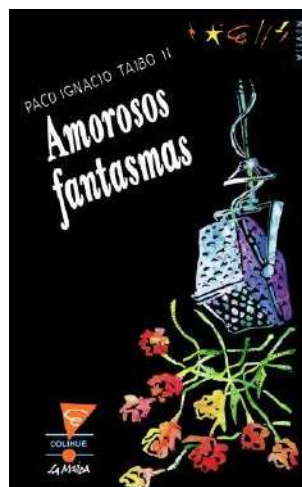
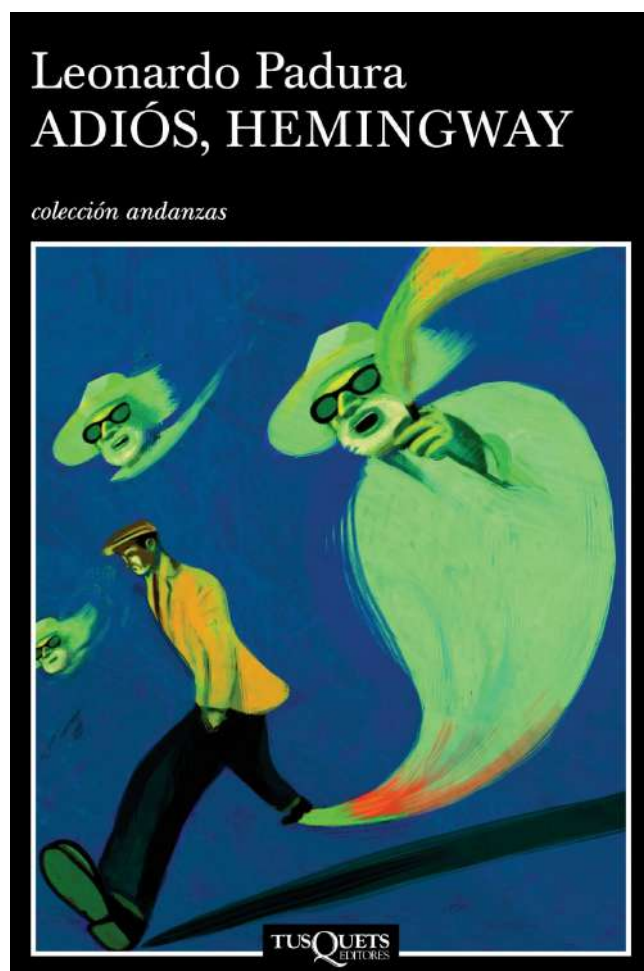
Detective fiction is one of the most popular literary genres in the world. Audiences throughout the globe find delight following less-than-perfect detectives in their pursuit of truth and justice. What happens, however, if the societies where these narrations take place, as in Latin

America, do not provide the necessary conditions to attain justice? Prof. Pablo Celis-Castillo's new SPN352 course seeks to answer these questions through the extensive analysis of selected cultural products from Latin America belonging to the literary tradition known as “hard-boiled.”

Prof. Celis-Castillo says, “I decided to teach this course because I am a fan of detective fiction. Throughout the years, I have read and watched several great novels and films from Latin America that are part of this genre and I wanted to share these fascinating works with my students. I also wanted to discuss how these cultural materials reflect upon the social characteristics of the region.”

Although connected to different and specific historical contexts, all the cultural products discussed in the course articulate pointed critiques and show the moral, legal, and social shortcomings of the societies where they take place. The course's main goal is to identify, discuss, and problematize the critical messages that these narratives articulate; and to contextualize them accordingly. Furthermore, the course also aims to allow students to introduce themselves in Latin America's current social and political debates.

Images right: A sample of hard-boiled detective stories discussed in SPN 352





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Faculty Spotlight: Mina Garcia



Prof. Mina Garcia is an active teacher-scholar. Her primary research interests are Early Modern Spanish literature, transatlantic studies in literature, the role of theater in the expansion of the Spanish empire, the representation of the *Other* in Early Modern Spain and, a topic very close to her heart, the representations

of witchcraft and sorcery in literature. This was the topic of her first monograph: *Magia, Hechicería y Brujería: Entre La Celestina y Cervantes*.

Dr. Garcia loves to teach on the topics of her research and to have her teaching inspire further research. She is particularly excited to teach SPN 455: *Religion, Idolatry and Conquest: From Medieval Spain to the New World* based on the research for her upcoming monograph. This book, *Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire*, will be published with UP of Colorado in the Fall of 2018. Additionally, she is

currently working on a collaborative edited volume entitled *Social Justice in Spanish Golden Age Theater*, in which the editors study how adaptation of classical theater was used as a tool for achieving social justice in Early Modern Spain, and how the modern adaptations of those plays serve the same cause today.

Outside Elon University, Dr. Garcia serves on two executive boards, the Association of Hispanic Classical Theater and BRIDGES, a professional development program for women in higher education.

Photo right: Students participate in live marathon reading, arranged by Prof. Garcia, of Sor Juana by Octavio Paz



Senior Spotlight: Maddy Wetterhall and Mitchell Bergens



Madeline “Maddy” Wetterhall and Mitchell Bergens, the recipients of this year’s Marsilius von Inghen Award for Excellence in German Studies, are two of our outstanding graduating seniors.

Maddy Wetterhall, graduating with a major in Biology and a minor in German Studies, will spend 2018-19 as a Fulbright English teaching assistant in Germany. Maddy, who plans to go to medical school after her year in Germany, developed a passion for teaching and service while in Heidelberg her junior year, where she worked with Middle Eastern refugees and volunteered at a local hospital. Mitchell Bergens, a senior majoring in Theatrical Design & Production with minors in German Studies and International Studies, has been accepted to the master’s degree program in International Affairs at George Washington University. Mitchell, who also has an offer to help with the production of *Wicked*, will begin his graduate studies in January 2019.



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Study Abroad Spotlight: Whitney Miller on the Holocaust Journey Program

This past January Term, I had the amazing opportunity to study abroad on the Holocaust Journey. Professors Richard Lee and Boaz Avraham-Katz led the trip. We travelled to Amsterdam, Berlin, Krakow, Warsaw, Prague, and Nuremberg. At each of the locations, we visited Holocaust sites and memorials. These excursions focused on so much more than just the camps. We visited sites such as the Anne Frank House, Courtroom 600 and Jewish ghettos. Places such as these revealed that the Holocaust involved so many more people than just those in the camps. There were struggles everywhere. While it was, at times, an emotionally challenging experience, it forced me to view aspects of life through a new perspective.

In each city, we went on different cultural tours. We tried a variety of foods and wandered the cities in our free time, trying to soak up as much of the experience as possible. This allowed me to increase my cultural awareness and further my learning in how to communicate cross-culturally.

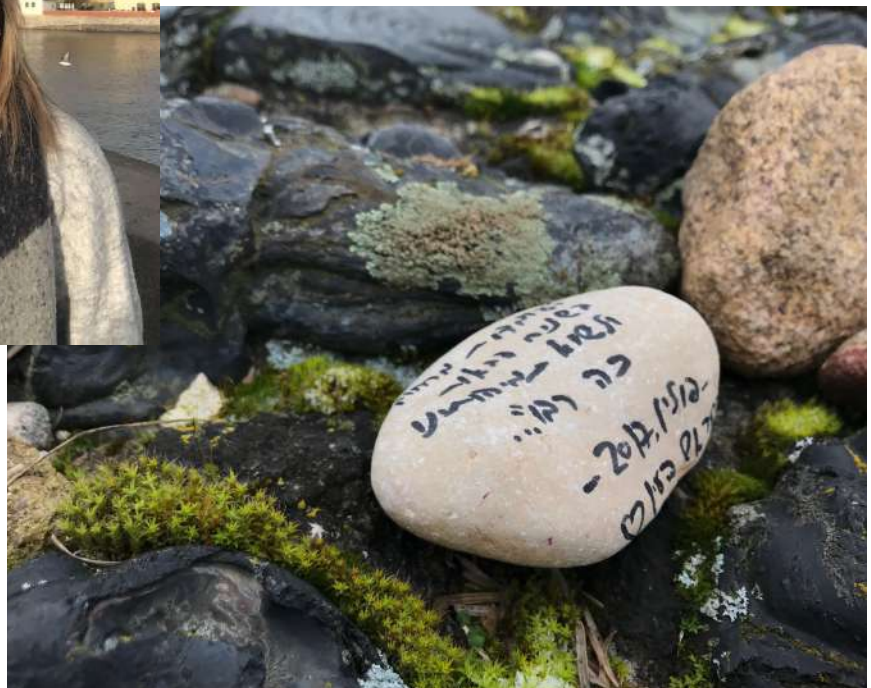
While the trip was not always easy and could be very emotional, it was so rewarding. It was an experience of a lifetime. Whether walking through Treblinka or looking at the piles of lost possessions displayed in Auschwitz, each experience was entirely unique and impactful. Everyone recognizes the Holocaust as an incredibly tragic time in history. However, the true level of tragedy cannot be fully comprehended until it is seen firsthand, visiting sites and hearing the accounts of those who experienced it. My eyes were opened. I had always had an interest in the history of the Holocaust. But after travelling, I realized I had such a small amount of knowledge on the topic. It is so important to remember what happened and to continue to pass on the memories and lessons.



Above: Whitney Miller and Prof. Boaz Avraham-Katz in Amsterdam.

Right: A stone left in remembrance at the Treblinka Memorial site. The words are a line from Israeli poet Natan Alterman's "Little Red Riding Hood," translating to: "and the years to come stand at a distance and in vain are our many wonderings."

Photo credit: Whitney Miller





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Study Abroad Spotlight: Montpellier, France

“My study abroad experience in Montpellier, France, was full of **growth, experiences, and reassurance**. I felt I grew as person and global student, and grew towards my future self. I had many experiences that I never thought I’d have all in one semester. And I was reassured that even as I was enjoying myself, I would be coming home with knowledge that I could share with my family.”

- Brandon Reynolds ‘19



Photo left: Brandon Reynolds at Parc Monceau during a weekend excursion to Paris

Travel and Professional Development Scholarships for Students:

Lunsford-Ihrle Travel Grant, which is dedicated to supporting students with studies abroad.

Romer Grant for Professional Development, which is devoted to helping students fund language enrichment experiences in the United States, such as professional conferences, registration for internationally recognized examinations such as Goethe Institute exams, and many others.



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Contributors

Pablo Celis-Castillo, Brandon Essary, Mina Garcia, Sarah Glasco, Kristin Lange, Whitney Miller, Julia Needham, April Post, Brandon Reynolds