

WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

FALL 2020 NEWSLETTER
ELON UNIVERSITY



Above photos are from the Hispanic Heritage Month Kickoff, hosted by El Centro. Traditional dances were performed by Wepa, a local Colombian dance group.

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Italian in a Virtual World

by Cassidy Beal

Dr. Brandon Essary started his journey combining video games and Italian Studies with his Core capstone course COR 463: Dante's Inferno, which combined studying the medieval poem with the 2010 video game of the same name. From there, Dr. Essary found inspiration from his friend and colleague Dr. Simone Bregni at St. Louis University who taught the first intensive language course for gamers.

ITL 179: Intensive Italian for Gamers merges together ITL 121 and 122 content and incorporates video games like Assassin's Creed, Uncharted 4, Detroit: Become Human, and so many more. Mondays and Wednesdays are spent learning vocabulary and practicing speech while Fridays – the best days – are reserved for gaming in Italian.



Video games allow for a greater immersion into a language, with a natural way of learning. Rather than only studying from a book, the students are engaged, piecing together sentences from context clues and with the occasional help from Dr. Essary.

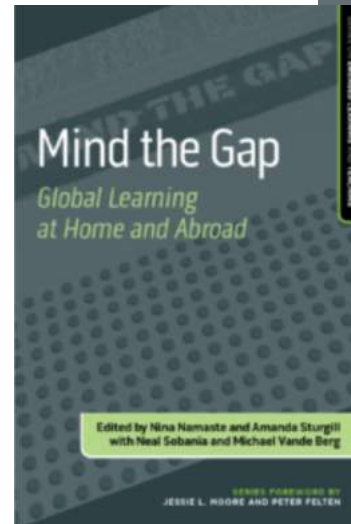
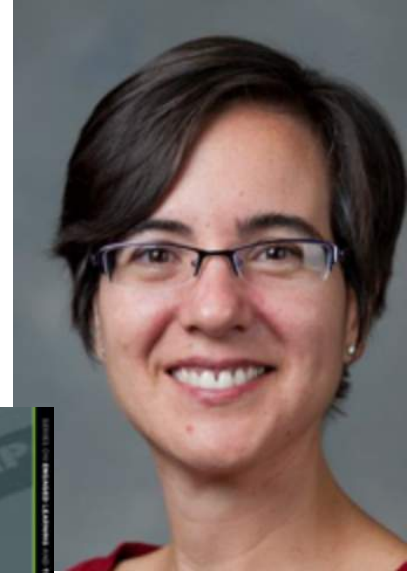
Luis Muller, '22, said he always felt like he would never be able to learn another language, but this course provides him with a new kind of language learning experience that he gets excited about.



by Elli Knowlton

Nina Namaste and Amanda Sturgill have recently co-edited and released their book *Mind the Gap*, which focuses on integrating global learning in all aspects of higher education. Additionally, Dr. Sarah Glasco, associate professor of French, co-authored one of the chapters in *Mind the Gap*. The book resulted from the Center for Engaged Learning "Global Learning Research Seminar", which fostered research about higher-impact international and domestic study away experiences. Using a collection of multi-institutional research about global learning, *Mind the Gap* seeks to explore how higher education can expand global learning and make it more holistic.

Spanish professor Nina Namaste has explained that the message of the book is that global learning can happen in any context, as long as there is an intentional effort to spread out global learning to all aspects of higher education. For example, *Mind the Gap* discusses how pre-departure orientations could enable students to build an intentional focus on their prior knowledge and experiences, which could then help students learn in a different environment.



Studying abroad is more than just traveling to a different country. Global learning while studying abroad involves immersing oneself in a new culture, learning the native language, listening to local communities, and reflecting on one's own cultural differences. It is important to know that global learning is not limited to studying abroad, and that it can also take place on campus and within an institution's home country. Nina Namaste is excited about the release of *Mind the Gap* and continues to study the characteristics of global learning.

French Cuisine and Culture

written by Anna Van Jura

This semester, French professor Patti Burns led a virtual course titled French Cuisine and Culture. In this course, Prof. Burns utilized cuisine as a lens to study French culture to better understand French identity. This extends past solely learning language skills, as students foster the four skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking to better understand French culture. Each class began with small breakout rooms of 2-3 students that targeted prompts in French related to student life. These prompts had a deliberately positive undertone in order to strengthen the community within the course and build trust. Prof. Burns noted that these prompts quickly brought everyone together and by mid-term, "students frequently compared [the] course to a close-knit family." Following these breakout rooms, the class ranged from unpacking scholarly and/or cultural texts to writing workshops over individual research projects on various regions of France. These texts connected food to medicine, health, economics, politics, transportation, art, literature, science, architecture and virtually every fiber of French identity in order to fully encompass the breadth of French food culture.

One particular thing that stuck out to me about the course was how it was tailored based on student needs and learning thus far. Prof. Burns realized a few weeks before the end of the semester that everyone in the class was feeling emotionally challenged by the increase in COVID cases and high alert levels. So, she planned a an in-person outdoor meal a few blocks from campus to have something for the class to look forward to, where everyone wore masks and was socially distant. This meal was instead from an American perspective, in which they discussed American food traditions, Thanksgiving rituals, and spent time comparing the American cuisine and culture to that which they have learned of France. "It was the first time we had ever seen each other in person, and yet strangely, it was like reuniting with old friends" said Prof. Burns.



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Junior Communications Design major with minors in French and Digital Art, Meredith Hertweck, was a member of this course. In a discussion about the course, Hertweck said that one of the course's most notable aspects was how they "went beyond food itself and saw how culinary culture affected other aspects of France and Francophone countries". This was apparent in how Prof. Burns discussed the use of texts that covered nearly every aspect of French identity. Another student, Chase Guray—a first-year Political Science and Policy Studies major with minors in French and Leadership Studies— and Sarah Rusthoven—a sophomore Communications major with minors in French and Art—both said that this was their favorite that they had taken because of how Prof. Burns integrated relatable content surrounding French cuisine into the engaging course. Additionally, the support and trust that this course fostered allowed students to be extremely comfortable talking with one another in a different language, which can often be daunting in other courses. Overall, the reviews for this course were undeniably positive and the students all noted how the interesting subject made them love the French language even more, thus facilitating their learning of the subject matter.

After interviewing Prof. Burns and a few of the student participants in the French Cuisine and Culture course, it was abundantly obvious how this class was more than simply an academic requirement, but was also a personal journey that became a close-knit family. It is truly inspiring to see how Prof. Burns strategically used the difficult online platform in order to have the best outcome for students, and despite remote learning, students were able to gain just as much French learning, group trust, and intercultural growth as they would in an in-person scenario. Additionally, the attention to the unpredictable nature of the semester and student needs makes this course an ultimate highlight for the World Languages and Cultures Department. Thank you, Prof. Burns and students, for allowing us a glimpse into this course!



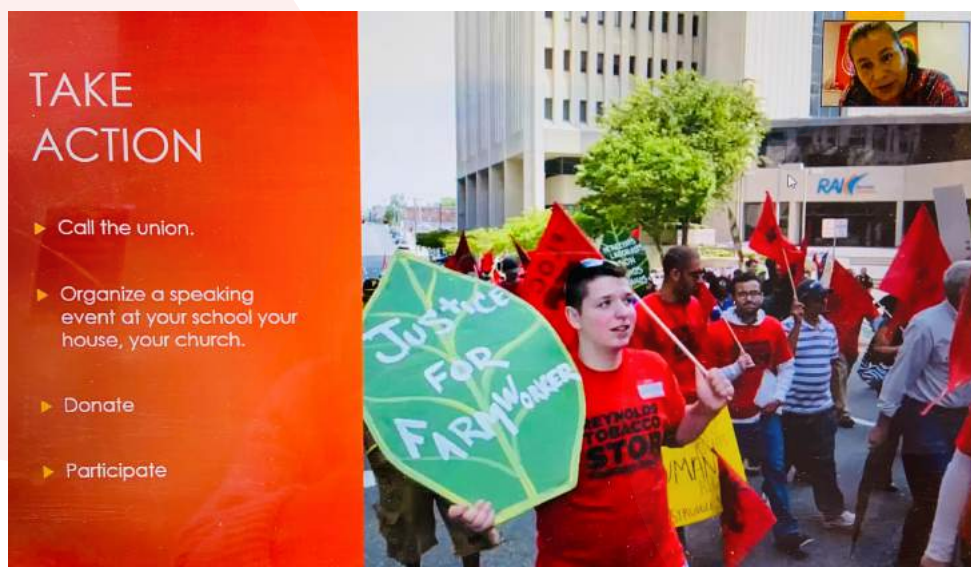
PANDEMIC, CRISIS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE SYMPOSIUM

by Elli Knowlton

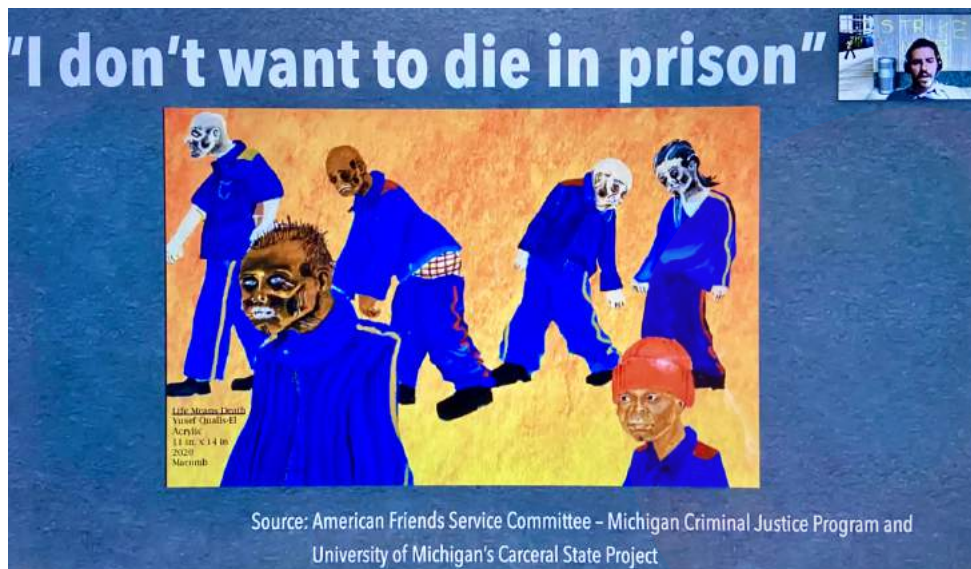
This Fall semester, Spanish department faculty members Juan Leal Ugalde, Pablo Celis-Castillo, and Federico Pous organized *The Pandemic, Crisis, and Social Justice Symposium*. This symposium was a series of four virtual discussions that covered some of the most urgent social justice issues related to the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences in global society. The symposium explored how COVID-19 has impacted different communities in the United States and Latin America, including immigrant workers in rural North Carolina, inmates in the prison industrial complex, the indigenous people of Central America, and social justice organizations in Portland, Oregon.

While the coronavirus has enhanced the challenges faced by these communities, it has also provoked resiliency and social justice movements to combat the challenges.

The first symposium “Temporary Migrant Workers and Contemporary Struggles in the Fields of North Carolina” was led by Leticia Zavala, former vice president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC). FLOC has been working for more than 50 years to pursue social justice for domestic, undocumented, and migrant farmworkers in the United States, and it has been internationally recognized for its struggle to defend the rights of immigrant farmworkers. Leticia Zavala discussed the dangerous conditions and strict regulations that farm workers endure while working, and how FLOC works to push more responsibility onto big farming corporations so that farmworkers are better supported.



The second symposium “Prison Abolition in Times of Pandemia” was led by Dr. Alejo Stark, founding member of the project Rustbelt Abolition Radio that creates podcasts about prisoners and prisons in the U.S. and the world. Dr. Stark discussed how the pandemic raises the question of safety in the incarceration system, and he also explored prison abolition as an evolving social movement. The main idea of the discussion was that U.S. prisons confuse security with safety. Many inmates are not safe from the health risks associated with prisons, especially when these risks are being exacerbated by the pandemic.



The third symposium, "Remembering Berta Cáceres and the Struggles of Indigenous People in Honduras" was led by Emily Rhyne, director of Witness for Peace Southeast (WFP). She was accompanied by Dr. Meghan Krausch, a public sociologist whose work is related to environmental conflicts in Honduras, and Dunia Sanchez Dominguez, member of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH).

In the webinar, they discussed the case of Berta Cáceres, a feminist leader and environmental defender, who was killed in 2016 after opposing a hydroelectric project in Honduras. With portions of the discussion in Spanish, they described the ongoing struggles of indigenous communities in Honduras and how the coronavirus has negatively impacted Latin America.



Spanish professors Juan Leal Ugalde and Federico Pous speaking with Emily Rhyne (top right), Dr. Meghan Krausch (middle left), and Dunia Sanchez Dominguez (middle right) on Zoom.

The fourth and final symposium “Notes from Portland: Mutual Aid in Pandemic and Protest” was led by Dr. Magalí Rabasa, Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies at Lewis & Clark College and author of *The Book in Movement: Autonomous Politics and the Lettered City Underground* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019). As an activist herself, she discussed her experiences with community-based projects and social movements in Portland, which has become one of the most pivotal cities since the reemergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement. She described a brief history of Oregon, including the strong presence of ANTIFA and ICE protests in Portland and how the state historically used to have its borders closed to African Americans seeking to settle. Dr. Magalí Rabasa expressed how police abolition is a “horizon”, and that it dares people to imagine something that seems unimaginable.



The Pandemic, Crisis, and Social Justice Symposium encouraged students and faculty to take part in learning about the challenges being faced by different communities in the United States and Latin America. It provided a safe space for questions and it emphasized the importance of listening to other communities.

**Pandemic, Crisis
and
Social Justice Symposium**

W 09-30, 4 pm
Leticia Zavala
Temporary Farmworkers
in North Carolina
[ZoomLink](#)

T 10-06, 4 pm
Alejo Stark
Abolition Movements
and the US Prison
System
[ZoomLink](#)

W 10-14, 4 pm
Emily Rhyne and
Heidy Alachán
Indigenous Struggles
in Central America
[ZoomLink](#)

M 11-16, 7 pm
Magali Rabasa
Autonomy and
Mutual Aid in Portland
[ZoomLink](#)

Free Webinars for the Elon Community

The Pandemic, Crisis, and Social Justice Symposium is presented by the Department of World Languages and Cultures; the Latin American Studies Program; the Peace and Conflict Studies Program; El Centro; the International and Global Studies Program; and the Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies Program. For questions, please contact: jlealugalde@elon.edu; fpous@elon.edu; pceliscastillo@elon.edu

Building a German Community

Perspectives from Participants: Cassidy Beal



Dr. Kristin Lange and Dr. Scott Windham believe strongly in creating a German-speaking community here at Elon. To help cultivate this, they have established an annual combined class with students from the lower-level and higher-level German classes.

The course starts with a brief introduction of the professors and how they came to Elon before the students break out into small groups to get to know the other students in the different classes. It is relaxed and informal; the questions range from the reason for taking German to favorite German films, books, or classes. This gives the advanced students a chance to show off what they've learned and inspire the beginner students.

Maxine Rieder, '23, says she enjoys learning from the higher-level students and gains confidence knowing that soon she'll be able to speak more proficiently. Jo Deal, '24, and Brenden Antrosiglio, '23, enjoys looking back and revisiting what it was like to first learn German. "It feels like a community," Jo says.

As the class wraps up their get-together, Drs. Lange and Windham showcase the courses available for the next couple of years to entice further language learning, as well as reminding students about study abroad and internship opportunities such as Reutlingen's dual degree in Business or Berlin's study abroad exchange for the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters.

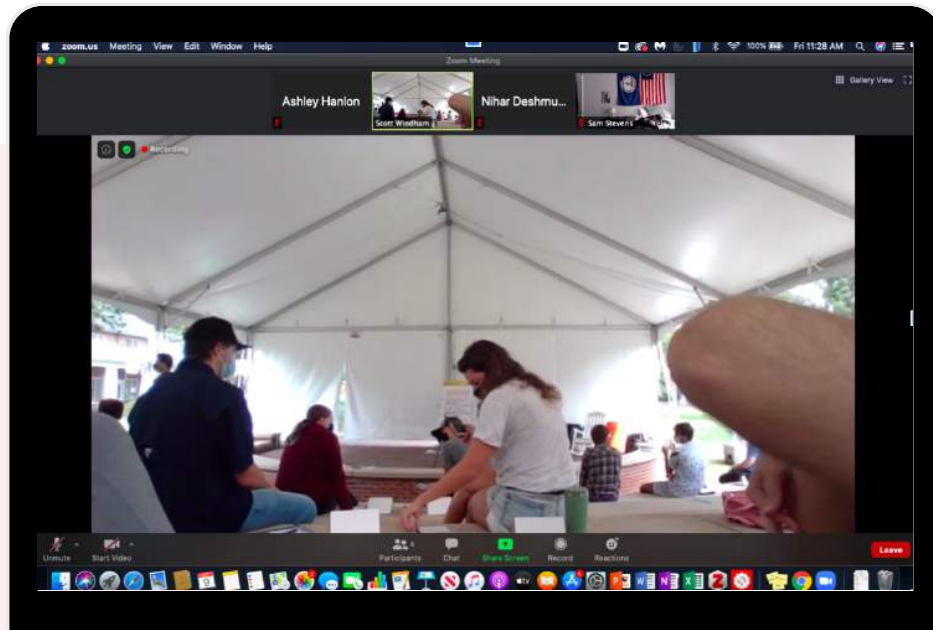
by Cassidy Beal



Building a German Community

Perspectives from Participants: Ashley Hanlon

On October 10, 2020, COVID-19 remained a pressing threat to Elon's campus, taking a particular toll on student's learning and mental health. As a creative solution to the problem, two German professors, Professor Windham and Professor Lange, had an idea to increase positive communication while mitigating transmission of the virus. They proposed to combine their respective classes into an outdoor classroom by Lindner Hall. One of the more notable aspects surrounding the coronavirus is the fact that the probability of contracting the virus diminishes greatly when outside. Outdoor learning has been a successful way to benefit students on a variety of levels. When placed outside, students seemed more attentive and understanding of course materials, overall class participation increased, and positive attitudes grew. Compared to the usual 15-20 students zooming into class every day, only 3 students were unable to join the class in person for other predetermined reasons. This allowed for optimum engagement in both courses. As a language class in particular, face to face communication promotes stronger cognitive abilities and develops happier and more effective relationships in a cooperative environment.



Not only did students get to meet another German professor, but Dr. Lange's class consisted of German 121 and 122 students; whereas Dr. Windham was teaching 221 and 222 students. By combining these two classes together, students were able to communicate with a variety of levels which posed an interesting learning curve. One student, Julia Smith, exclaimed that "it was nice to be outside and interact with other levels of German students." The differing language levels pushed both the beginner as well as the more advanced students' understanding of the language. Furthermore, Dr. Lange and Dr. Windham took this opportunity to have the students use each other's perspectives and experiences as a resource to plan for future courses and potential study abroad. In the end, most if not all students preferred the combined outdoor setting over the online version. One student, Lachlan McLennan, expressed his opinion on the experience: "[I] definitely like the outdoor more on a decent day; I enjoyed meeting other students in the different levels. It was a good change to the usual zoom classes."

by Ashley Hanlon

Arabic Student Alumni

Where are they now ...

by Ashley Hanlon

Arabic Alumni: Nicole Molinaro

Nicole Molinaro, a successful 2015 Elon graduate, recognized her Arabic studies for both her professional and personal growth. Since graduating from Elon, she has held numerous positions before entering into the Law program at Georgetown University. Such positions include: Program Assistant at PILPG, Executive Project Manager at Prime Advocacy, and Client Services Manager at 9Seven Consulting. Although Nicole is not currently using the language in a direct way, the cultural knowledge she gained as a Middle East Studies major, through both study abroad and fulfilling classes, has been essential to her work in a number of different legal internships, at both the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) and in her current position as an extern for the Guantanamo Bay defense team at the Military Commissions Defense Organization. Reflecting on her entire journey at Elon, Nicole identified the professors, the experiential education teams, and her extracurricular advisors as the top three resources she found most beneficial. Reflecting on her experience with the Department of World Languages and Cultures, she described her top highlights:

“Honestly, Prof. Elgamal was such a crucial part of both my Elon experience and my experience with the Department of World Languages and Cultures, she is involved in all of them! The opportunity to have dinner at her house with her family and the Arabic Language Organization was always a highlight for me each semester. Our Arabic classes became close-knit, and I developed some of my closest relationships with my classmates. And finally, when we finished the full range of Arabic classes that were offered at Elon, Prof. Elgamal took time to create independent study programs so that we could continue our studies. My Elon experience wouldn't have been the same without her!”

*Where are
they now ...*

Arabic Alumni: Benjamin Lutz

Distinguished 2017 Elon Alum, Benjamin Lutz, went directly into a Master's program at the University of Bradford in England where he studied Middle East Security Politics and Peace and Conflict Studies after his graduation from Elon. Since graduating, Benjamin has worked for Mediators Beyond Borders International (MBBI) as a Writing Synergist. Currently, he serves as the Director of Communications and Operations for MBBI. In order to stay on top of his Arabic language skills, Benjamin takes part in an Arabic Language Discussion group and continues to take classes. Furthermore, Benjamin has founded his own non profit organization in August of 2020 called Al Fusaic, which is a multimedia mosaic of MENA resources and utilizes a lot of Arabic. Benjamin uses his Arabic language abilities for both personal and professional growth. From all five of his impressive study abroad experiences, he has managed to maintain a connection with every single one of his homestay families.

From his time here at Elon, Benjamin identified three resources he found the most beneficial. Firstly, the NIFO, of which he was the recipient of the Critical Language Scholarship for Arabic twice, was twice a finalist for a research Fulbright, and was also nominated for the Truman. The NIFO "was absolutely instrumental in preparing me for all these awards as well as the importance of resilience for those I did not receive." Secondly, the GEC. Considering he had studied abroad five times during his undergraduate studies (3 summers, 1 semester, and 1 winter term), the GEC was the most consistent source of help throughout all of these abroad experiences. Lastly, the SPDC was instrumental in his professional growth connecting him to opportunities on the Elon Job Network, Career Fairs, and the College2Career programs as he charted his post-Elon plans.

Reflecting on his time at the World Languages and Cultures department, three highlights came to mind for Ben: the ALO, the Model Arab League, and being a Tutor and TA. In his own words, Ben reflected:

"The ALO was my favorite club at Elon by far. Not only did Dr. Elgamal cook the BEST koshari and hummus, but I was able to deepen my appreciation and understanding of the Arabic language and culture. I loved being engaged in this club all four years and it was my greatest joy to enhance and maintain the list of links on the ALO blog. I became the president of ALO my senior year. Also in my senior year, largely via the ALO (and Model UN group), Elon sent a team of 16 students to compete in the Model Arab League and we shined! It was so incredible combining ALO and MUN (of which I was both president). Dr. Elgamal chaperoned us, connecting with other professors focusing on Arabic and MENA work across the country. By my final year at Elon, I was the Arabic tutor and TA for all of the scheduled Arabic classes. It was the best to help Dr. Elgamal teach Arabic as well as to tutor the students in the classes. I really enjoyed connecting with each student on why they chose to learn Arabic and it made my role as president much easier as I knew every Elon student taking Arabic!"



Where are they now ...

Arabic Alumni:

Mark Berlin



Mark Berlin, a 2014 Elon graduate, has continued to use his language skills and continued his Arabic studies in all three of his postgraduate degrees. After completing a Masters in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from Hebrew University, Mark got an additional Masters Degree in Arab Studies from Georgetown University. Currently, he is working towards a PhD in Political Science from George Washington University. Arabic is a major part of Mark's PhD research. So far in his program, he has managed to analyze hundreds of pages of newspapers, interviews, and reports published by armed groups in Arabic. By analyzing Arabic primary sources, he has been able to explore why and how these groups' discourse change over time. Without his knowledge of Arabic, this type of research would be impossible. Reflecting on his entire journey at Elon, Mark described the following as the most beneficial resources that he credits for his success:

"For me, the most important resource at Elon was always Professor Elgamal. From advising on study abroad locations in the Middle East to spending numerous hours teaching Arabic and writing dozens of recommendation letters, Professor Elgamal has been a pillar of support, a willing sounding board for ideas and career paths, and like a second mother to me. Her dedication to students' success is unparalleled and she is an incredible resource for Elon students."

Additional highlights from Mark's experience with the Department of World Languages and Cultures include his 2013 January Term trip to China on top of his Arabic language study.

Where are
they now ...

Arabic Alumni: Jordan Thomas

Jordan Thomas, currently a Consultant for the State & Local Government at Guidehouse, and 2014 Elon graduate is another successful Arabic student. Since his graduation, Jordan has held the following positions: Graduate Fellow for the Financial Security Program at the Aspen Institute, Special Assistant & Project Administrator for the Executive Office at the Urban Institute, Legislative Officer at the Office of Congressional Affairs for the U.S. Department of Labor for the Obama Administration Appointee, White House Intern for the Office of Cabinet Affairs also during the Obama Administration in the Executive Office of the President, and in 2014 Jordan was a Corps Member and a 7th Grade Math Teacher for Teach For America. Recently, Jordan has received his Masters in Public Policy & Management from the Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School of Public Policy & Management. Although Jordan is not actively using Arabic in his day to day life, he does stay sharp by reviewing old notes and practicing on his own, exemplifying his dedication to the language.

When asked to reflect on his entire journey at Elon, there were three resources that Jordan highlighted to be most beneficial: the Office of National Fellowships, his Arabic III course, and the Center for Race, Ethnicity, & Diversity Education. Jordan says the course *Applying to National & International Fellowships* was truly transformational as it allowed him to think about crafting his experiences in the form of a personal narrative. The next summer, Jordan was fortunate enough to receive a full scholarship to study public policy and international affairs at Princeton University throughout a seven-week program. Five years later, he applied to graduate school at Carnegie Mellon and received a full scholarship with a stipend. Jordan heavily emphasized that he would not have been able to craft as strong of a narrative had it not been for the National & International Fellowships course.

Arabic III was an important course for Jordan. While he says that he was not very gifted in Arabic, it really taught him how to push himself further than he thought was possible. Although Jordan had a few difficult courses at Elon before Arabic III, none of the courses really forced him to study in the way this course did. On a side note, he still uses the trick that Professor Elgamal taught her students about breathing through their mouths instead of yawning when they are sleepy; which he says comes in handy a lot living in DC. Finally, Jordan had some notable highlights from his time with the Center for Race, Ethnicity, & Diversity Education:

"At the time, Director Leon Williams invited a group of young men to participate in a bi-weekly meeting with him where we talked about what it was like to be a man on Elon's campus. This group was really important to me because it offered fellowship, brotherhood, and reflection, which was so important for me given how difficult it can be to be a person of color on Elon's campus. To date, some of the people that I met during those meetings have grown to become some of my closest friends and we've continued to try and push ourselves to reflect on our goals in life. I appreciate the Multicultural Center for providing a safe space on Elon's campus and Leon for encouraging a group of young men to bond on their experiences at the university."

Additional highlights from Jordan's experience with the Department of World Languages and Cultures were the cooking lessons Prof. Elgamal held, his study abroad experience, and just being able to enroll in Arabic with a professor who took the time to get to know all of her students and cared about their growth as people as well as in the course. The aforementioned (pre-COVID) cooking sessions Prof. Elgamal conducted, gave Jordan more insight into the culture with the added bonus of learning how to make several amazing Egyptian dishes. And finally, while at Elon, he had the opportunity to study abroad in Turkey and Greece during a winter term session. This opportunity opened up his eyes to different cultures and allowed him to learn more about two beautiful countries.

Guest Speaker - José Balado

by Elli Knowlton

In the fall semester of 2020, Assistant Professor of Spanish Pablo Celis-Castillo invited José Balado to be a Zoom guest speaker in his SPN 376 Cinematic Reflections on Latin America: Political Cinema course. Balado is the director of DOCUPERU, a non-profit organization that seeks to empower marginalized communities in Peru and other Latin American countries by providing them with access to the resources and technology needed to make short documentary films. The DOCUPERU team travels across Peru and works with members of historically disenfranchised communities to produce films that share a story, and many of them have won various awards. DOCUPERU believes that the skills and tools used to produce documentaries can also be used to cultivate expression and empowerment among others. During the discussion, Balado emphasized the importance of community when working with other people to create documentaries. He described the work of DOCUPERU as “trabajo humano,” which includes working with people, understanding their experience, and building a human connection. He also explained that his favorite part of working with DOCUPERU is the experiences of traveling, learning to adapt, and meeting new people.



Balado expressed how the communities that DOCUPERU works with are incredibly strong and resilient, and that the people are problem solvers who are determined to fight for their rights. Giving people the opportunity to share their story is a way to empower their voices and strengthen their fight, and DOCUPERU uses the power of documentaries to give people this opportunity. This fall, students in SPN 376 Cinematic Reflections on Latin America: Political Cinema watched three DOCUPERU short films; *Santuario* (2013), *Mujeres isla* (2015) and *Soq Tiempo* (2010). These films connected to the course content because they helped students develop a better understanding of different cultural and historical realities, and they also helped students practice analyzing and interpreting films.



Final bow at the Hispanic Heritage Month Kickoff.



ELLI
KNOWLTON



ANNA
VAN JURA

Student Authors



THOMAS
MATACONIS



CASSIDY
BEAL



ASHLEY
HANLON



