

later and greet them as if they were family. Who could ask for a better in-house ambassador? We owe her many of our more visible initiatives, such as the Alumni Forum, this annual newsletter itself (in its 7th year), guest speakers, film festivals, etc. Though she worked behind the scenes, we do not forget that her support and ideas are an indispensable factor in the success of the Department. We will miss you.

Editor's Note: I am humbly and gratefully touched by these kind words. I too will miss the wonderfully warm, welcoming, and intellectually stimulating WLC Department. -LC

Becoming a Woman

This fall Dr. Michèle Bacholle, a CSU Professor in French and Women's Studies at Eastern, envisioned and organized the "Becoming a Woman" project, an ambitious, multi-faceted collaborative initiative that presented, questioned and discussed what it means to be a woman in today's world.

Dr. Bacholle is a world-renowned researcher in French literature and a specialist in Nobel Laureate Annie Ernaux. Regarded as one of France's most important 20th century authors, Ernaux examines and uncovers the lives, decisions, and experiences of ordinary women. Inspired by the questions and discourse generated by Ernaux's work and her founding of the *Annie Ernaux International Studies* journal, Bacholle was interested in bringing to Eastern a conversation about what it means to be or become a woman.

The "Becoming a Woman" project featured a variety of events throughout the fall semester that engaged a wide array of contributions. An exhibition at the Art Gallery in the Fine Arts Instructional Center (FAIC), titled "Becoming a Woman": *Reflections around Annie Ernaux*, was one of the project's signature events. For this special exhibition, Julia Wintner, the Art Gallery Director at the time, brought together contemporary artists whose works resonate with Ernaux's themes of gender identity, women's rights, and the expectations society places on women. The exhibition was on view from early October through late November and served as a backdrop and centering space for "Becoming a Woman" events.



Opening reception for the special exhibition, "[Becoming a Woman](#)": [Reflections around Annie Ernaux](#).



Panel discussion following the premier of [Voices of Women at Eastern](#).

While the exhibition provided a space to observe and reflect on visual artists' interpretations of womanhood, Dr. Bacholle was also interested in capturing the voices and perspectives of women at Eastern. To that end, she partnered with Brian Day, Professor of Directing and Film at Eastern, to create a documentary film. Starting in the Spring of 2025, women across campus shared their thoughts, through self-recorded testimonials, about what womanhood or the process of becoming a woman meant to them. Brian Day then wove together those diverse perspectives into one cohesive film called the [Voices of Women at Eastern](#). This special film premiered on campus on October 23 and was followed by a [panel](#)

[discussion](#). The panelists – Dr. Cara Bergstrom-Lynch, Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of Women's and Gender Studies program; Dr. Fatma Pakdil, Professor of Business Administration; Dr. Theresa Severance, Professor of Sociology

and Criminology; Dr. Kemesha A Wilmot, Dean of Students; Shaheera Khan, an Eastern alumna; and Emily Jones, Student Ambassador for the Intercultural Center – shared their perspectives on the film and addressed the main theme from their own and their discipline’s perspective. The thoughtful and reflective dialogue illuminated the layered and varied, but also shared, sense of womanhood.

In addition to the local production of the documentary film, the “Becoming a Woman” project also featured the screening and discussion of two women-centered films: *Girlhood* (2014), where Céline Sciamma, through the coming-of-age of a black teenage girl, questions race, class, and gender roles in French “banlieues,” and *Four Daughters* (2023), an award-winning documentary film by Tunisian director Kaouther Ben Hania about the lives of a mother and her four daughters, two of whom left to join Daesh (Islamic) fighters. Dr. Nicole Krassas, Professor of Political Science at Eastern, led the latter’s Q & A discussion that followed. Both film screenings were made possible with a [JEDI grant](#).

Anchoring the “Becoming a Woman” project to Annie Ernaux’s work, Dr. Bacholle, in collaboration with Afarin Rahmanifar, Professor of Art and Art History, invited [Blanche Șerban](#), a local painter and the creator of *The Abortionist’s Studio* (based on Ernaux’s *Happening*), for a guest lecture in October.



Staged reading of Annie Ernaux’s [Happening](#).

The capstone event of the “Becoming a Woman” project was a [theatrical reading](#) of *Happening* (2001), Annie Ernaux’s tale of her illegal abortion in France in the 1960s. The dramatized round-robin reading was purposefully staged with minimal set features so that Ernaux’s words could take center stage. The cast, encompassing the voices of six students and Drs. Kristen Morgan and Alycia Bright-Holland, were co-directed by Zoe Calhoun, a senior Theater major, and Dr. Bacholle. This one-time theatrical reading was possible only thanks to the special use granted by Dan Simon, director of [Seven Stories Press](#), who was also invited for a guest lecture in one of Dr. Raouf Mama’s classes. A conversation on possible internship opportunities for English students at Seven Stories Press is ongoing.

Through its myriad events and creative projects, Dr. Bacholle’s imaginative and ambitious “Becoming a Woman” project, spurred dialogue/s and conversation/s on campus and within the wider community about the multiple layers of womanhood. Similar to the work of Annie Ernaux, the “Becoming a Woman” project helped the Eastern community ask, consider and contemplate what it feels like to be a woman, how women are represented, what challenges women face, what sense of community or ‘sisterhood’ exists, and much more.

Hispanic Heritage Month

By Jearlin Gerodias, OLAS member

During this academic year, 2025-2026, the WLC Department hosted several events celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month, including Mesa de Español (every Thursday), Explora Español, and a Festival de Cine, which was co-sponsored by the Organization of Latin American Students ([OLAS](#)).



Festival de Cine, fall 2025.

When I walked through the doors of Webb 110 on October 2, I was excited to experience the Festival de Cine event that I had helped prepare behind the scenes. There was a variety of films genres on the playlist. First, there was a film

called *Vale* (2016), a short film directed by Alejandro Amenábar as a long-form beer advertisement. It is a story of friends, romantic interests, and language barriers. After watching a film in a language other than English for the first time in a while, I focused on the characters' body language and their tone of voice. This film felt intimate and made me feel more connected to my friends. The second film was *Made in America* (2020), the film I was most excited about seeing. It is a heartbreaking story of two young women who work in a garment factory. The film expertly captured the closeness and connection between girlhood friends and the powerlessness of garment workers. We watched several more short films, including *Café Solo* (2017), *Algún Día* (2025), *DeBí TiRAR Más FOToS* (2025), *Los Domingos No Se Trabaja* (2023), *La Ventana Abierta* (2014), and *Luchador* (2015), each had their own feel and message. Overall, I enjoyed this peek into Latino cinema and the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with my peers.

High School Spanish Students Visit Eastern



Bacon Academy students race around campus to complete a Spanish-language scavenger hunt.

This year, Eastern welcomed two groups of high school Spanish students to campus as part of its [Eastern Early College](#) (EEC) program, an initiative in which high school students can earn college credit for their high school course work. Bacon Academy, located in Colchester, visited in the fall and Woodstock Academy in the spring.

Dr. Nancy Armstrong, an adjunct Spanish professor at Eastern and former middle school Spanish teacher, serves as WLC Department's liaison for EEC Spanish courses. She explains, "My role is to coordinate programs between participating high schools and Eastern Spanish classes. These students receive credit for SPA 210 and 211, Intermediate Spanish I and II. The on-site visits help to spur interest in continuing the study of Spanish at the college level."

The EEC visits included tours of campus, presentations about academics and student life, as well as a Spanish-language scavenger hunt, a visit to the World Languages and Cultures Department and lunch at Hurley Hall, with a special menu provided by Chartwells. The EEC program, across disciplines, is coordinated by Chris Drewry, Eastern's director of co-curricular academic programming.

Dr. Armstrong believes in the importance of near-peer interaction and so current Spanish majors or minors serve as group leaders as the visiting high school students try to *"Buscar el lugar en la biblioteca que se llama Colecciones Caribeñas en el tercer piso de la biblioteca. Buscar un libro en español."* as part of the scavenger hunt.

Madison Pajak, a junior double majoring in Spanish and Health Sciences, led a group of Bacon Academy students this fall. She commented, "I think that campus activities like the scavenger hunt are so important for high school students when it comes to making a decision about college. I could see it was beneficial for them to be able to navigate around campus while having a student guide with them so that they could ask me questions about my experiences on campus. I wish that I would have had the chance to visit a college campus as a high school student. If I had had a similar experience, it would have been extremely helpful in guiding my understanding of college life."

French Horror Films: A Feminist Perspective

By Gabi de los Reyes, French Tutor

Dominique Carlini Versini (Université de Durham), Emma Flynn (Université de Glasgow) et Michèle Bacholle, professeure à Eastern, ont discuté dans [un podcast](#) de l'horreur au cinéma



et de la possibilité offerte par le genre d'exercer une puissance féministe, en particulier par la « body horror ». Dr. Flynn a évoqué son amour de l'horreur et du sous-genre de la vengeance qu'elle apprécie depuis son enfance. En revanche, Prof. Bacholle a découvert le genre par accident et juste récemment. Avec l'hôtesse du podcast, elles ont mentionné des cinéastes comme Coralie Fargeat, Céline Sciamma et Julia Ducournau. Mon impression du podcast est très bonne. Il a réussi à maintenir mon attention parce que j'adore ce genre. J'aime aussi que les films ont un grand rôle sociétal, et tout le monde dans le podcast parlait de l'importance des films et disait que les réalisatrices peuvent changer les points de vue sur les femmes.

Project-based Learning in SPA 222: Spanish In & Through Social Media

By Professor Glorimarie Peña Alicea, with a contribution by Almi Morales, Spanish minor

SPA 222: *Spanish In & Through Social Media* provides students with an opportunity to learn how to navigate the Spanish digital world. Through assignments such as creating memes using the subjunctive, reflecting on their digital identity and footprint, using AI responsibly, and exploring different social media platforms and resources, students gain digital competency, reinforce their digital skills, and review *while* they learn new concepts in Spanish. Instead of requiring a final exam, this course applies project-based learning and focuses on a communicative approach.

Students exercise agency over their learning process by working on a final project that combines digital media and the Spanish language. Some students choose to write essays about social media, while others create projects using social media content or trends as a vehicle to demonstrate the knowledge they have acquired during the semester and during their time at Eastern. Some of these projects are deeply personal, rooted in their identities, passions, hobbies, internet trends, and majors.

The project of one student, Almi Morales, from the fall 2025 class is a great example of how students can combine social media trends with their disciplines of study. Instead of stressing over memorization, students engage in these projects, improve their Spanish and digital skills, and finish the course with a more defined digital identity.

My final project for SPA 222 had one goal: Do something that connects the world of Spanish to the Eastern community. After pondering how I could connect with the community, I realized what my idea should be: a "day-in-the-life" video. My video project would feature my Spanish classes and my Theatre rehearsal process for a stage production. I chose to film on a Wednesday because it consisted of the classes I wanted to film, a theatre class, and a rehearsal. In the video, I chose to do a voiceover to help clarify and smooth out the details. I talked about my everyday Wednesday at Eastern, giving a well-rounded explanation of everything I brought up in the video. The voice over made for a polished final product. And the cherry on top? The entire video is only in Spanish. -Almi Morales, Theater major and Spanish minor

Students Working (and Learning) for Positive Change

By Gabi de los Reyes, French Tutor

Dr. Michèle Bacholle continues to inspire her students in her Perspectives on Women's Issues (FRE/WST 331) course as she incorporates a plethora of topics about the lives of women both in a Western and non-Western context. These topics include different cultural, political and religious topics. As an exercise in experiential learning, Professor Bacholle asks students create fundraisers to aid young women with scholarships to attend secondary education at the Jean Bruny College in Les Palmes, Haiti.

This fall, I was a student in this class. Collectively, my fellow students envisioned and held a number of fundraisers such as a sticker sale, an on-campus pop-up thrift store,



a bake sale, a Dunkin gift cards raffle, and an event for Halloween! My group conducted a “Decorate your own Tote Bag for \$10” sale, where we provided acrylic markers to allow people to create their own designs and use the tote bags as a canvas. My group sold 10 tote bags at different locations on campus, raising \$100. The other student groups were also effective with their projects. In total, the class raised \$734, which helped four young women with their tuition.

International Mother Language Day



IMLD celebration in Student Center Café, March 2026.

The WLC Department once again took the lead in bringing an [International Mother Language Day](#) (IMLD) celebration to Eastern’s campus in 2026. UNESCO has designated February 21 as IMLD to celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity and foster tolerance and respect for others around the world. Although this winter’s snow and campus closures delayed the festivities, the campus came together in the Student Center Café on March 2 to learn about and celebrate different languages of the world.

The event featured a continuous run of award-winning short films from world cinema. From comedy and animation to horror and drama, the film line-up included all genres, as well as works from nearly every continent and language family. The nature of short films – generally 5-10 minutes long – made it ideal for anyone to

drop-in and catch a quick glimpse of stories and sounds from other places and people. A sample of films shown at this year’s IMLD event is available as a [Playlist](#) on the WLC Department’s [Youtube channel](#).

In addition to international short films, students, staff and faculty engaged in a variety of language-based activities in the Student Center Café. There were international snacks to sample, a photo booth with word bubbles to play with, simple games with a variety of alphabets/scripts /characters to enjoy, as well as inspirational stickers in various languages and prizes. All of these activities were made possible with funding from the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#).

Leading up to the March 2 event, the World Languages and Cultures Department worked with faculty and staff from around campus to launch a social media-based Scavenger Hunt of Languages. A set of 12 language-based find-spots, including 11 different languages, were established around campus. Using Instagram to document the journey across campus, students followed clues to each of the different find-spots. From texts in Korean and Tamil and works of art by speakers of Persian and Mandarin Chinese to infographics about Bulgarian natural geography, Turkish historical figures, and idioms in Canadian French, scavenger hunt participants learned about the mother tongues of many Eastern community members. The WLC Department is immensely grateful to Kwangwon Lee, Lora Lee, Qimin Liu, Fatma Pakdil, Afarin Rahmanifar, Sheila RuJoub, Anya Sokolovskaya, Sudha Swaminathan, Sarah Tasneem, Anik Vasington, Emiliano Villanueva and Christian Yankov for sharing artifacts and knowledge of their mother languages for the Scavenger Hunt of Languages. Muchas gracias. Merci beaucoup. Vielen Dank. どうもありがとう. மிக்க நன்றி.

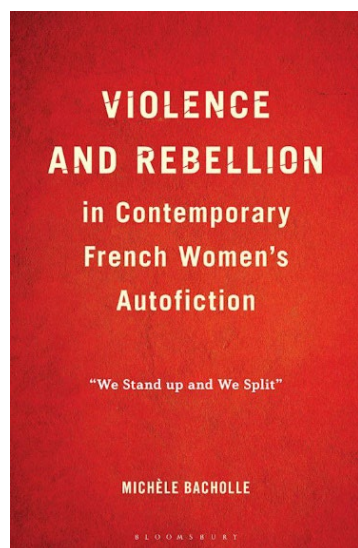


Students partake in activities at IMLD celebration.

In addition to all the activities at the Student Center Café, Chartwells contributed to the celebration by serving an international lunch menu at Hurley Hall on March 2. Some of the delicious dishes available include potato and cauliflower samosas, chicken and eggplant paprikash, a cold sesame noodle salad, and pulled pork poutine. Yum!

We look forward to IMLD celebrations in the future.

New Book: *Violence And Rebellion in Contemporary French Women's Autofiction*



This February, [Bloomsbury](#) released Dr. Michèle Bacholle's latest book, *Violence and Rebellion in Contemporary French Women's Autofiction*, a volume about French writers sharing stories and reflections of experiences that they have endured and how they have rebelled against gender-based violence, from the obvious (rape and femicide) to the insidious (workplace interactions). Bacholle frames the analyses of the book's ten chapters within the context of the patriarchal, misogynistic, classist, racist and ageist layers of French society and the historical and contemporary movements of rebellion and resistance. One reviewer, Adrienne Angelo, Director of Women's and Gender Studies, Auburn University, remarked that the book was, "a bold and necessary intervention. [It] reveals how French women writers are rewriting trauma into resistance, making it a must-read for anyone interested in feminist literature and social justice."

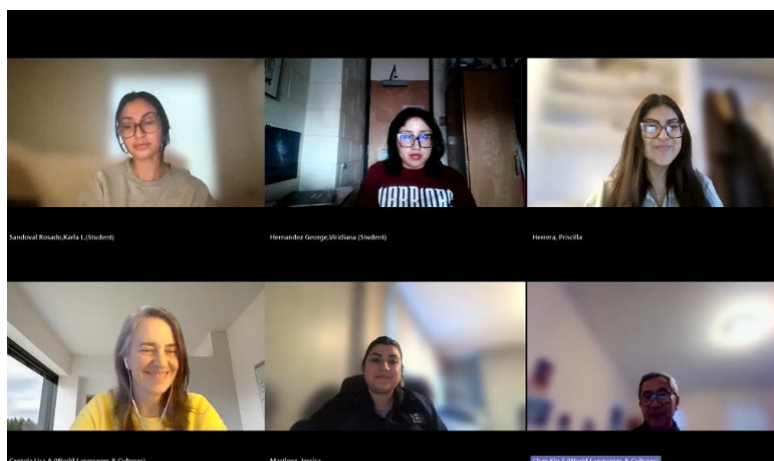
Dr. Bacholle is a world-renowned researcher in French women's literature. She has presented and published widely on topics related to French-speaking women writers. She is the co-founder and co-editor of the Annie Ernaux International Studies series (De Gruyter, forthcoming 2027) and is the co-editor of *Annie Ernaux Beyond Words: Images and Scenes* (De Gruyter, forthcoming 2026).

Alumni Forum

By Sarah Morales, WLC Department Student Office Assistant

The annual Alumni Forum was hosted virtually on April 7, 2026, and featured Jessica Martinez '20 and Priscilla (née Herrera) Rambarose '24. Both alumnae provided unique perspectives of their time here at Eastern and how what they learned through the WLC Department transferred to their careers.

Jessica Martinez graduated with a bachelor's in Spanish, minoring in Criminology and Sociology, and is currently getting her master's at UConn while working in their Office of Student Care and Concern. During her time at Eastern, she took a sociology class that required community service and volunteered through the Center of Community Engagement (CCE), and after graduation began working as a Spanish medical interpreter for patients battling substance abuse. Jess also mentioned her struggles as a first-generation student and urged other students to reach out to professors and to network. She says, "You need to advocate for yourself, and I wish I knew that early in my college career."



Screenshot of Alumni Form, April 2026.

Priscilla Rambarose graduated with her bachelor's in Spanish and Elementary Education and currently works as a Pre-K public school teacher in southern Massachusetts. Priscilla works in a predominantly Hispanic community and uses her experiences from the WLC Department to help communicate with her students' parents. She says that taking Spanish even as a native speaker helped her to slow down and really understand the language. To practice Spanish, she recommends reading articles and watching television in Spanish.

Both of these very talented women showed how their time at Eastern translated over to the real world and we are so grateful to have had them for our Alumni Forum this year!

Sigma Delta Pi

By Gabi de los Reyes, miembro activa

La Sociedad Nacional Honoraria Hispánica, más conocida como [Sigma Delta Pi](#), inició a cuatro nuevos miembros— dos profesoras y dos estudiantes (yo soy una de las estudiantes) -- por su dedicación, excelencia y apreciación del estudio del español. En la ceremonia, todas nosotras seguimos las instrucciones de los oficiales del capítulo Nu Chi, Jeremy Vélez Olmo, Grace Gronski y el Dr. Kin Chan para prestar el juramento de la Sociedad. Encendimos velas (una para cada persona) simbólicas. Además, firmamos nuestros nombres en el libro de los miembros. Este acto reconoció nuestra aceptación oficial en la Sociedad. Poco después de eso, cada persona recibió un broche y unas flores. Como estudiantes, mi compañera y yo también recibimos cordones especiales para lucir en la graduación. Así seremos reconocidas como miembros de esta sociedad. Por fin, después de la iniciación, tomamos fotos, comimos comida y hablamos. ¡Fue un honor ser parte de Sigma Delta Pi ¡Felicidades a la Profesora Parera, la Profesora Armstrong y a Claudia Wilson por su logro! ¡Y muchísimas gracias a los oficiales y a la distinguida invitada, la Dra. Sonia Cintrón-Marrero!



2026 Sigma Delta Pi induction ceremony. From left to right: Jeremy Vélez Olmo, Dr. Cintrón-Marrero, Dr. Armstrong, Magdalena Parera, Gabi de los Reyes, Claudia Wilson, Grace Gronski and Dr. Chan.

High-impact Learning: Field Trip to Rhode Island



Rhode Island Black Film Festival, April 2026.

Eastern, and the WLC Department in particular, is committed to providing its students with dynamic, innovative and impactful educational experiences. This spring Professor Bacholle was awarded an LAC Enhancement grant from the Division of Academic Affairs to support high-impact learning practices in her LAC 200 – *Films & Series for Positive Change for Women* course. Students, along with Professor Bacholle and Anik Vasington and Mike Palumbo of the Center for Instructional Technology, took a field trip to the Rhode Island Black Film Festival in Newport in April.

The group viewed a series of new and creative films by Black film makers, writers and directors from across New England and beyond that allowed them to learn about local activists. In the class discussion afterwards, students were struck by the message and composition of one particular film, [My Mama Joe: Hope & Help](#), by Herbert Caldwell, a

documentary about the caregiving for JoeAnna "Mama Joe" Caldwell, a community hero whose life and work were affected by Alzheimer's disease.

Grants like this one offer Eastern professors, and by extension their students, a way to explore and critically engage with unique topics, materials and experiences, which are key elements of Eastern's mission as a liberal arts institution. Dr. Bacholle thanks Provost Wilson for the opportunity.

New Curriculum > New Courses

The 2025-2026 academic year was highlighted by the rollout of several new courses, including SPA 231: *Spanish for Business* and SPA 232: *Spanish for Health Services* that are part of the Spanish program's updated curriculum. Each of these courses incorporates profession-specific language skills and projects.

SPA 232: *Spanish for Health Services*, taught by doctoral candidate Inleidys Hernández Delgado, a researcher who taught a similar course in Cuba, focuses on preparing students with Spanish medical vocabulary, concepts and professional skills. It is a course that pairs well with Eastern's Medical Interpreting in Spanish minor, as well as Health Sciences and Nursing majors.

Jeremy Vélez Olmo, a Spanish major and SPA 232 student, summarized the course as "a comprehensive exploration of the healthcare sector entirely in Spanish that actively incorporates student research and participation. The final for that class involved identifying a major issue or trend affecting Spanish-speaking patients in the U.S. and researching it. Ultimately, the goal was to develop and propose possible initiatives responding to it."



Professor Pitassi and Ruth Viruet present at the Community Celebration event, November 2025.

The inaugural offering of SPA 231: *Spanish for Business* launched this fall with an innovative partnership between Eastern and the [Latino Chamber of Windham](#), a chapter of the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce. The dynamic partnership was forged by Angela Pitassi, a Spanish Lecturer at Eastern and doctoral candidate at UConn, and Ruth Viruet, director of the Latino Chamber of Windham, both of whom saw the potential in connecting Eastern students and local Willimantic business owners.

Viruet noted, "the Latino Chamber invested hours building the trust between merchants and students. As the business owners started getting to know the students, the ideas started to flow. They were able to talk and explore ideas based on today's economy and business needs. Students were able to adapt their technical, classroom-based knowledge to real life situations."

Some of the student-business partnership projects included enhancing a business's social media presence, assisting in the commissioning of advertising art, and negotiating pricing for giveaways.

Reflecting on the partnership and student projects, Professor Pitassi stated, "I am extremely grateful to the local business that decided to open their doors to the students of *Spanish for Business* and I am extremely proud of my students and their work with the Latino Chamber."

In celebration of this mutually beneficial arrangement, the WLC Department hosted a Community Celebration in the President's Dining Room of Hurley Hall in November 2025. Members of the Latino Chamber of Windham, its parent



Professor Pitassi (left) and Ruth Viruet at Community Celebration.

organization the Windham Region Chamber of Commerce, members of the Eastern community, as well as family and friends gathered to learn about the projects and work undertaken by the students and business owners.

At the conclusion of the semester, Professor Pitassi told the [Willimantic Chronicle](#), “This partnership not only creates an important bridge between community and University but also highlights the significance of the Spanish language in the Willimantic community as a vehicle for communication, a language through which students and local business owners grow together.”

The WLC Department and the Latino Chamber hope to continue the partnership in future semesters.

Translation & Interpretation Practically Applied



Students in SPA 404 record a Spanish-language campus tour.

Over the course of the spring semester, students enrolled in Professor Angela Pitassi’s SPA 404: *Spanish Translation & Interpretation* course learned about and practiced the skills and strategies of professional translators (written) and interpreters (oral) with a variety of assignments and projects. For the final project, students utilized their translation skills to create a new and potentially valuable resource for recruitment. Students worked in groups to translate the standard English-language campus tour script and create a Spanish language live-action campus tour video. Prior to this project, this type of resource, which could be incredibly helpful to Spanish speakers interested in Eastern, did not exist.

When envisioning this project, Professor Pitassi noted that “a group of people that might find this type of video useful

are Spanish-speaking parents of prospective students. Every parent wants to learn about their child’s prospective college experience. This video could make that desire more accessible.”

This project was possible due to the energetic and productive collaboration between Professor Pitassi and Lisa Houghtaling and Nicholas Torres in Eastern’s Media Services Department. Media Services lent their expertise in shooting film on campus, as well as in professional video editing to the project.

A playlist of the SPA 404 [Spanish language campus tour](#) is available on the WLC Department’s YouTube channel.

Asian Language Studies Return

After a hiatus of a several years, Japanese language and culture classes returned to Eastern this spring. Professor Mizuho Aussicker, a dedicated faculty member who taught Japanese at Eastern for many years, is with us again.

As usual, Professor Aussicker brought innovative and engaging educational practices into her classroom to help her students connect with the material. In the JPN 216: *The Japanese World* class, for example, one class day was dedicated to Japanese culinary culture. But this was not an ordinary class of slideshows and worksheets. Professor Aussicker brought in a buffet of home-made Japanese dishes and students sampled a range of Japanese



Students in JPN 216 enjoy 'Food Day.'

flavors, including rolled omelet (Tamago-yaki), pork ginger (Butaniku no Shōgayaki), simmered pumpkin (Kabocha no nimono), fried fish sausage with nori sprinkles (Chikuwa no Isobe yaki) and fish cake with cucumber (Chikuwa). Professor Aussicker also provided the ingredients, utensils and instructions for students to prepare their own sushi, which is a highlight of 'food day.' Alyssa Conrad, a senior majoring in Political Science commented that, "it is learning through eating."

The return of Japanese studies this spring, coupled with the return of Chinese (Mandarin) studies this coming fall, are welcomed additions to current course offerings as they support students pursuing a minor in Asian Studies as well as Eastern's Liberal Arts Core.

Guest Speakers: Puerto Rican Filmmakers Visit SPA 219

By Erika Santiago, Spanish major

I currently am a senior at ECSU, double majoring in Spanish and Early Childhood Education. I had the pleasure of observing the presentations given by guest speakers that visited the Hispanic Screen Cultures course this spring. I was able to speak to Glorimar Marrero Sánchez on her 2023 film [La Pecera](#), as well as Kisha Tikina Burgos on her film [Antes que cante el gallo](#) and Gustavo Ramos Perales, the person behind the film [El Chata](#). Not only was this a great opportunity for me and for others to discuss questions regarding the films with the filmmakers themselves, but the insight given by these talented creators was very interesting. Being able to get an idea of how a film is created, how choices are made behind the scenes, as well as their thought process on what the film means has allowed me to really understand the true importance of film and creating a story. Watching films in different languages opens the doors to not only becoming familiar with another language - it also opens your heart up to learning about different cultures, people, and stories that do not get told through mainstream Hollywood films. I truly enjoyed getting to ask filmmakers and storytellers about the ins and outs of creating films.



Soy estudiante de último año en ESCU, completando una doble especialización en español y educación infantil (ECE). Tuve el placer de asistir a las presentaciones ofrecidas por los guionistas invitados que visitaron el curso de Hispanic Screen Cultures este semestre de primavera. Pude conversar con Glorimar Marrero Sánchez sobre su película de 2023 [La pecera](#), con Kisha Tikina Burgos sobre su película [Antes que cante el gallo](#) y con Gustavo Ramos Perales, la persona detrás de la película [El Chata](#). No solamente era una maravillosa oportunidad (tanto para mí como para los demás) porque pudimos plantear preguntas sobre las películas directamente a sus realizadores, sino que también resultaron sumamente interesantes las perspectivas compartidas por estos talentosos creadores. El poder de aprender la idea de cómo se crea una película —de cómo se toman las decisiones tras bastidores, así como del proceso de pensamiento detrás de lo que el filme significa— me ha permitido comprender verdaderamente la auténtica importancia del cine. Además, me ha ayudado a entender la creación de historias. Ver películas en idiomas diferentes no solo abre las puertas a familiarizarse con otra lengua, sino que también abre el corazón a aprender sobre distintas culturas, personas e historias que no suelen ser narradas a través del cine comercial de Hollywood. Disfruté tener la oportunidad de preguntar a cineastas y guionistas sobre los pormenores de la realización cinematográfica.

Mesamigos

By Sarah Morales, una mesamiga

Mesa de Español, or Spanish Table, is a community outlet for Spanish-speakers of all levels. Whether they are practicing their Spanish, or are native speakers, students come together on Thursdays to talk about their week while snacking on empanadas, juice and coffee. Regular attendees coined the term “mesamigos” to describe the friendships that were made at Mesa de Español. The mesamigos routinely tell each other and Professor Chan the “chisme,” or gossip, on the latest things happening in their lives and around campus. Professor Chan, who hosts the program, assists in vocabulary development and fluency tips. Over time, students become increasingly more comfortable with their Spanish and can even help their friends, or mesamigos, with their Spanish skills as well.



A meeting of Mesa de Español, fall 2025.

In Memory of Evi Correia

By Dr. Kin Chan

Evi first came to Eastern in 2008, double-majored in Spanish and Business Administration with a concentration in International Business, and minored in Communication. She was inducted into Sigma Delta Pi in 2011 and studied in Alicante, Spain in the summer of 2012. I remember her smile every time she came by the office, usually accompanied by her fellow Cape Verdean, Soely Barros. She earned her teacher’s certification in 2016 and started right away at



Norwich Free Academy. Over the years, she kept in touch, thanked us for inspiring her to become a teacher, and even opened her class doors for others to observe. In an email, she shared about her job, “Me gusta la escuela donde enseño, es aquí mismo en Norwich. Creo que aquí me quedaré por muchos años.” In 2025, Evi accepted our invitation to participate in the Alumni Forum, in spite of the ordeal that, unbeknownst to us, she was going through. She joined the forum remotely from a bare room—it turned out to be the hospital where she was being treated for cancer! Tragically, Evi passed away this fall. During the Forum, she shared a lot of advice, but her enduring legacy to our students is: “Do not sell yourself short—Know your worth.” Her funeral was attended by family, relatives and, not surprisingly, by countless students who passed through her high school classes at Norwich Free Academy. - Nuestros pésames. ❤️❤️❤️

Alumni Updates

Maria Arredondo '25, an Art major and Medical Interpreting in Spanish minor, is currently enrolled in Code The Dream, a nonprofit organization helping underrepresented people break into the tech industry. She is learning JavaScript and the ins and outs of web development.

Natasha Durand '25, is currently working on her master's in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Botany at California State University, Chico. She hopes to start her research this summer by collecting *Arctostaphylos* cuttings and growing them in a greenhouse. She works in the Anthropology office as a graphic design assistant.

Shaheera Khan '21, a former WLC Department student worker, is a background investigator for CACI, Inc. Federal, a counterintelligence and security contractor for the Department of Defense. Shaheera returned to campus this fall as a panelist for the "Becoming a Woman" project. On a personal note, she recently got engaged.



Shaheera Khan with her fiancé.

Julianne Martin '23, a former French Tutor in the WLC Department, completed the Cambridge University Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) course at the Bell Language School in Switzerland and recently applied to be an English Language Teacher in Switzerland.

Jessica Martinez '20, a Spanish major and Criminology and Sociology minor, worked in the non-profit Healthcare sector for several years before taking on a number of roles at UConn. She is currently pursuing a master's in Business Administration while working at the UConn's Office of Student Care and Concern, providing support and resources to at-risk students. She joined the WLC Department's Alumni Forum as a guest speaker this spring.

Priscilla (née Herrera) Rambarose '24 graduated Magna Cum Laude from Eastern in 2024 with a BS in Elementary Education and Spanish, and was inducted into Sigma Delta Pi, the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society. She is currently working as a Pre-K public school teacher in Massachusetts. Graciously, Priscilla joined the WLC Department's Alumni Forum as a guest speaker this spring.

Erika Rohr '25 is pursuing a master's in Anthropology - Museum Studies at California State University, Chico. She currently works at the Valene L. Smith Museum of Anthropology as a curatorial assistant.

Jessica Saffiotti '22, an Asian Studies minor and former Japanese tutor, came back to campus for a visit this spring. They have lived and worked in Haenam, Jeollanam-do, South Korea for the past year and a half. Jessica received a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TELF) certification soon after graduation and found their position through Epik, an English Program in Korea. They teach English to middle schoolers at the Haenam Institute of Creative Convergence Education and has plans to stay in South Korea for another year and a half.



Jessica Saffiotti (right) with Professor Aussicker.

Ashley Smith '20, a Spanish major and Latin American and Caribbean Studies minor, is a third grade Dual Language English teacher in Stratford supporting students in biliteracy and bilingualism. In May of 2025 she graduated from Fairfield University with her Sixth Year Certificate in Bilingual Education and she is currently working on her Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certification and Bilingual K-12 certification.

Corina Yanes '21, a former WLC Department student worker, is currently working on a master's in Applied Behavior Analysis and hopes to work with students with special needs in the future.

The WLC Department likes to stay in touch with alumni and to connect alumni with one another – please reach out and let us know what you are up to, WorldLanguages@EasternCT.edu.

Selected Photos from 2025-2026



Welcome Back Ice Cream Social, September 2025.



Explora Español, September 2025.



Mesa de Español, Spring 2026.



Cast of the reading of *Happening*. Left to right: Jibril Davis, Katherine Tineo, Zoe Calhoun, Prof. Bright-Holland, Prof. Morgan, Celeste Petrowsky, Alison McGuigan, Kairi Cobb, and Prof. Bacholle.



2026 International Mother Language Day photo booth. Left to right: Lisa Centola, Jaya Vijayasekar, Glorimarie Peña Alica, and Magdalena Parera.



WLC Department's End of Year party, May 2026.

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