

THE POLYGLOT

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER FROM THE
WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES DEPARTMENT

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FROM THE CHAIR

The 2019-2020 school year started out as usual, with everyone ready to and excited to be back at school. However, the Spring semester threw us for a loop with the COVID pandemic, making it hard for everyone involved, students, faculty and staff alike. But all of us soldiered on. Professors redesigned finals for a digital format, students had to make do with the resources available to them at home and on the Internet, and although all libraries are closed to the public, they have provided support to both our faculty and students. Far from unraveling the sense of tight-knit community we at Eastern are used to, the pandemic and the virtual-based community it has catapulted us into have made us all even stronger and we can't wait to see our students and each other in person.

Although the past few weeks have been challenging for all of us, there are some highlights from this past year, among which is our hiring of two alumni of our program, Edwin Alverio ('07) and Franca Biales ('83) as adjunct Spanish faculty this fall.

We look forward to seeing our Eastern friends this fall.

¡Saludos a todos! Au revoir! Ciao!
很快再见 السلامه مع
また近いうちに会いましょう

Dr. Kin Chan
Department Chair

RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In mid-March as the Covid-19 pandemic began to spread, Eastern closed its campus and moved all classes online for the safety of its students, faculty and staff. It was a bold action that required rapid and grand changes across the University and in the way we teach languages. These changes caused difficulties and frustrations for instructors and students alike. Faced with these challenges, the faculty in the World Languages and Cultures Department explored a variety of innovative ways to teach from a distance.

Professor Vijayasekar, an adjunct professor teaching Introductory Spanish, used the online learning application associated with the course's textbook in ways she hadn't before. The publisher's app created and securely handled online assessments in place of written quizzes and exams. She also tapped into strategies for creating interactive activities online that she learned in workshops from organizations like the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages.

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Dr. Michèle Bacholle, Professor of French, “spiced things up” in her video-conferenced classes. While discussing Emmanuel Carrere's film *The Mustache* in her French Cinema class, she donned a drawn-on curled mustache. Interestingly, her students failed to notice or mention her mustache, which made her feel like the very character in the film, a man who questions the world around him and his sanity when his wife doesn't notice that he has shaved his mustache.

Other professors noted the flexibility, resilience and dedication of students. Dr. Marie-Dominique Boyce, an adjunct French professor, noted that some of her students liked the change to the online classroom because they had more materials in written form. Some of her students were thriving on tests and quizzes because there was not as much emphasis on spoken conversations and interactions.

While some students thrived, others were overwhelmed and tremendously challenged the past few weeks. Professors within the department and across the University noted a drop in regular class participation. Some students shared that the drastic change in their schedules – child care, essential worker responsibilities, home life situations, etc. – negatively impacted their studies.

Professors in our Department were keenly aware of those stresses and tried to assist students in a myriad of ways. The Department's French and Spanish tutors were available to assist students virtually on a number of platforms. Professor Vijayasekar made sure to check-in with each of her students every week by phone. Professors tried to keep class activities fun, like the way Dr. Bacholle shared a Kahoot game about famous mustaches.

Just as this semester was challenging for students, it was also a challenge for our faculty as well. It required a Herculean task of rapidly (in one week) changing course structures to distance-learning formats. Technology had to be learned and adapted to. Outreach to students was intense. Regular classroom exercises such as homework review or student-to-student conversation were scrapped and replaced with online alternatives.

Dr. Chan lamented about what was lost in classes the past few weeks: “In-person interaction is crucial to learning languages; for example, a lot is said through non-verbal communication: imagine all the gestures we make, all the gestures our students make, the reactions we have to them, the immediacy of 'presence,' the supervision of simultaneous group work/conversations, and so many other factors that are lost by being online.”

As we all continue to deal with the life changes surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, our Department looks forward to next school year and hopefully to a return to our in-person, hands-on, interactive teaching. But we are also ready to face an online teaching situation again and now we are prepared to use everything we have learned these past weeks.

By Lisa Centola, University Assistant

STUDENTS RAISE MONEY FOR GIRLS' SCHOLARSHIPS IN HAITI

By Shaheera Khan, expected Class of 2021

For the second year, students in the *Perspectives on Women's Issues* course, taught by Dr. Bacholle, hosted a fundraiser to help cover tuition for a female student in Les Palmes (Haiti) High School – annual tuition \$180 USD. This course focuses on issues that women face around the world. Dr. Bacholle believes that, with a class like this, it is important to not only learn about the struggles of other women, but also to take action. Because of this philosophy, Dr. Bacholle challenged her students to craft and host a fundraiser. By putting us – her students – in charge of the fundraiser, doing everything from brainstorming the kind of fundraiser and acquiring the goods to publicizing it, Dr. Bacholle let us take ownership of the project. It helped us realize that by each of us doing a little, we can help a lot.



Students sell stickers for Haiti scholarship fundraiser

This fall semester the class decided to host two fundraisers. I led one of these, a sticker fundraiser, which was sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW), Eastern Chapter, of which I am the President. With this sponsorship, NOW purchased stickers in bulk and then students from Dr. Bacholle's *Perspectives on Women's Issues* class sold the stickers around campus. The NOW Public Relations manager, Amen Zaidi, enhanced the success of the fundraiser by making both digital and print fliers. Students, staff and faculty alike bought hundreds of fun, symbolic, and even silly stickers – all of which supported the education of girls in Haiti.



Student from Les Palmes High School

The class also hosted a fundraiser in collaboration with Moe's restaurant in Willimantic. On a November evening, people showed up at Willimantic's Moe's with a special fundraising flier. As a result, twenty percent of what they paid for their meals went towards the fundraiser.

This year's fundraisers far exceeded the goal of funding one one-year scholarship. Our fundraising efforts covered four full scholarships, as well as additional money to add to another scholarship!

This January, Dr. Bacholle received four 'thank you' letters from the students that benefited from our efforts. The letters were hand-written and included pictures of each of the students as well. The experience was heartwarming for myself and my classmates because we were able to see how much of a difference we made in these young girls' lives.

GUEST LECTURE: INSIGHTS FROM AN INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR

By Lisa Centola, University Assistant



P.J. Kimani speaks to students

On Thursday, February 27 the World Languages and Cultures Department welcomed P.J. Kimani of *ABC Language Services*, based in Rocky Hill, Connecticut to talk to students about the field of translation and interpretation.

Speaking with over 20 years of experience, Mr. Kimani gave our students a snapshot of the field. Students learned about recent changes in translation technology, day-to-day challenges, typical clients, and they gained insight into how to pursue a career in the field of translation or interpretation. Several students, both Spanish and Mandarin language students, followed up with Mr. Kimani to explore potential internship or field experience opportunities.

This guest lecture dovetailed with this semester's English-Spanish Translation class (SPA 404), which introduces students to the 'art and science' of translation from English to Spanish.

As it has done in the past, the World Languages and Cultures Department will continue to host guest lectures to offer our students a varied and broad perspective on world languages. Mr. Kimani's talk on the field of translation and interpretation has the potential to be particularly useful to our students as they plan for their lives and careers after school.

As our world continues to become ever more connected, the number of the jobs in the fields of translation and interpretation has skyrocketed in recent years. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) projects that this trend will continue. According to BLS numbers, employment for interpreters and translators will grow by 19 percent over the next decade, which is significantly faster than the five percent growth anticipated across all other sectors.

The World Languages and Cultures Department is currently planning guest speakers for the 2020-2021 school year. The Department loves to hear from alumni and to include them in our panels of guest speakers. Please reach out if you would be willing to serve as future speaker.

MY STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE

By Ashley Smith, Class of 2020

Hello, my name is Ashley Smith and I am a Spanish major with a minor in Latin American and Caribbean Studies. I will graduate with



Ashley Smith in Barcelona, Spain

my undergraduate degree in May 2020. I studied abroad this past summer in Barcelona, Spain.

Being a Spanish major and an aspiring Spanish teacher, I wanted to go to a Spanish-speaking country so that I could immerse myself in the language and practice my speaking skills. Of course, I was nervous and hesitant about going abroad due to finances. However, I was able to receive financial aid, and was awarded the Global Citizenship Scholarship and the Tammy Schaeffer Scholarship. These loans and scholarships were extremely helpful in making the trip possible and reduced the financial stress.

I left for my trip at the end of May 2019 and returned mid-July. As you can imagine, the weeks and days leading up were filled with nerves and disbelief that I was actually going. However, once I got there I was filled with excitement and eagerness to explore. I took two classes: Spanish Art and Architecture and Spanish Language.

Since Europe is known for being easy to travel around, I took a few trips. I visited Vienna and London on the weekends. Barcelona is a huge city, so I spent most of my time trying to see everything it had to offer. Within Spain, I also traveled to a few cities that were not too far from Barcelona, such as Monseratt, Girona, and Sitges. I wish I could have had more time to explore more countries and cities.

Two of my fellow Spanish majors also traveled abroad recently. One student, Brad, spent 10 months in Granada, Spain. He felt that the experience was invaluable as it provided him with an opportunity to learn a second language and gain an understanding of another way of life. He also agreed that the ability to travel around Spain and the rest of Europe was one of his favorite aspects of the trip.

Another student, Jaran, spent three months in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on internship with BAIS Argentina, a marketing and event-planning company. Through his internship he was able to

enhance his Spanish skills by working with native speakers. He planned events across the city, as well as organized travel events outside the city, and assisted on other marketing assignments.

Overall, I would not trade my experience study abroad for anything. It was truly a gift and a privilege to be able to make such remarkable memories in an exciting and educational setting. I believe it greatly helped me as a Spanish major as I was able to constantly interact with native Spanish speakers and learn more about the language and culture in Spain.



Bradley Pinkover in Granada, Spain

RIBBONS OF REMEMBRANCE

By Lisa Centola, University Assistant

After seven years of research on suicide loss and grief in contemporary French literature, Dr. Michèle Bacholle, Professor of French, published a book in 2018 on contemporary narratives by French writers who are suicide loss survivors. Her research project moved her to reach out to Eastern's Office of Wellness Education and Promotion to organize an event that would bring together and support suicide-loss survivors.



Sandra Rose-Zak from the Office on Wellness and Promotion and Dr. Michèle Bacholle

The event, *Ribbons of Remembrance*, was held in the J. Eugene Library on Thursday, November 21, 2019, a day that coincided with International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. Dr. Bacholle was featured on two local radio stations, Eastern’s WECS-FM and WILI-AM, in the days leading up to the event to raise awareness about the about suicide loss and to invite members of the community to the gathering.

At this solemn community event, the names of loved ones lost to suicide were read aloud and candles were lit in their memory. Their names were also written on colorful ribbons and tied to a remembrance tree. This was an idea that Dr. Bacholle had witnessed at an American Association of Suicidology convention. The remembrance tree was on display in the J. Eugene Library from mid-November until mid-December 2019.

Ribbons of Remembrance also featured poems written and read by Janet Bannister ('19) and local poet Gerda Walz-Michaels. Student groups were actively involved as well. *Modern Movement*, a modern dance troupe, and *Key of She*, an all-female cappella group, delivered moving performances.

With this event Dr. Bacholle hoped to break the stigma that is still attached to mental illness, suicide, and suicide loss.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

SIGMA DELTA PI UPDATE

By Kylie Whitmeyer, Class of 2020

Sigma Delta Pi, also known as the National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society, was established in 1919 at the University of California, Berkeley. The society’s motto is the Greek phrase “Spanías Didagéi Proágomen” meaning “Let’s go forth under the teaching/guidance of the Spanish language.”

The Nu Chi chapter of Sigma Delta Pi was established at Eastern in 1979, and is the University’s oldest honor society in the School of Arts and



2019 Sigma Delta Pi Inductees

L to R: Adrianna Arocho, Natalie Cummins, Jaran Smith, Jacob Paciotti



Sciences. Since its inception, hundreds of students have been recognized for their outstanding achievement in Hispanic studies.

Last year's ceremony, held on April 27, 2019, welcomed and celebrated the newest inductees: Adrianna L. Arocho, Natalie H. Cummins, Jacob Robert Paciotti, and Jaran W. Smith.

This induction ceremony consisted of a reception, ceremony proper, and luncheon in which the initiates were accompanied by family, former inductees and alumni to celebrate their achievements. Carli Palmer and Theresa Pagnozzi, students that had been previously inducted, served as officers of the ceremony. Dean Carmen Cid and professors Dr. Kin Chan and Dr. Sonia Cintrón-Marrero (emerita) served as guest readers. Other notable attendees of the 2019 induction were the following Nu Chi honorarios: Donald Freidrich (1979), Sharon Bernard (1979), Franca Arcuri Biales (1983), and Andrew Dickinson (1992).

Due to current COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Sigma Delta Pi initiation was held virtually and inducted three new members: Analia Correa, Brianna Nolan and Ashley Smith, with three of last year's inductees officiating.

Sigma Delta Pi is the only honor society devoted exclusively to students studying Spanish in four-year colleges and universities, and Eastern continues to recognize annually the following values of the community: identifying diligence, honoring success, and celebrating inclusivity.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Kelly Sheehan ('18 Spanish and Business), English teacher at the C.E.C. Politécnica Nacional in Quito (Ecuador), did not let the pandemic get in the way of her wedding plans. In March she and Andrés (Faria) tied the knot. Our best wishes to the young couple!

We love to hear from our alumni. If you would like to share where you are and what you are up to, please reach out to our University Assistant, Lisa Centola, at CentolaL@EasternCT.edu.



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