We bid farewell to Professor Bernice J. Mitchell
Interviewed by Jon Aske

The world languages and cultures department would like to announce the retirement of Spanish professor Bernice J. Mitchell, who has been teaching in the department for the last 30 years. It is with great sadness that we see her go, but we are also very happy for her, for she will finally be able to enjoy retirement in Florida all year round with her beloved husband Al who, we are told, has been waiting for this moment for some time now.

We met virtually with Professor Mitchell, who is currently hibernating in Florida, and asked her a few questions.

Bernice, thank you so much for chatting with us. A lot of people around here are going to miss you a lot and we wanted to say good bye by means of having this chat with you. Perhaps you could start by telling us a little bit about yourself. For instance, tell us where you’re from and how and when you became interested in languages.

Well, actually, I am a local person. I am from Swampscott, MA, though I have also lived in Concord, NH, and in Houston, TX. I guess I was destined to make languages a career since I was a child. At the time, my grandparents and parents spoke Yiddish when they did not want children to know what they were saying. Obviously, that is the best way to learn a language, to make yourself understand so you know what they are talking about! At age 7 I began to study Hebrew in Hebrew School, and I loved it. In 9th grade I began Latin, which I took for 4 years, and in 10th grade I took Spanish for three years. My love of languages and different cultures became a major part of my personality.

After completing my bachelor’s degree and studying in Mexico City for my junior year in college, I began to teach at the old Classical High School in Lynn, MA, by day, and at General Electric at night.

In addition, from 1976-1980 I had taught at Boston State College, which became UMASS, Boston. I also taught at Rice University in Texas for three years and in Boston University’s CELOP program.

So you have moved quite a bit. And how did you end up at Salem State?

I started to teach at Salem State, Sept., 1985, the day after Hurricane Gloria. I was hired by Dr. Finkenthal, chair of the foreign language department and Dr. LeClair, chair of the Criminal Justice Program, since students enrolled in the criminal justice courses in those days were required to take one semester of Spanish, SPN 101. I taught the police officers of the Somerville Police Dept. Vice Squad in Somerville on Saturday.

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mornings, since they were not allowed to come to campus as they were in uniform and carried guns. They got off duty at 7 AM and we began class at 8 AM. I immediately realized that the traditional SPN 101 book was neither applicable nor beneficial for the police officers. Therefore, I was allowed to order the training manual in Spanish for the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Dept) since these books were much more in tune to the needs of police.

After that semester, I was invited to teach each semester, late afternoons, evenings, in the summers and on Saturday mornings at Salem State for the next 30 years! The courses I have taught in the foreign language department/world languages and cultures department are SPN 101, 102, 201, 202, 201X-202X, 203, 250, 350, 351, 352, 416, 417 and 418. Since I taught part-time at Salem State, I taught full-time at Swampscott High School for more than 20 years.

It sounds like you really enjoy teaching. And having talked to many people who have taken classes with you I know that students love taking classes from you. You have been one of the most popular instructors in the department and you have instilled a love of Spanish language and culture in your students over the years. I remember how last summer you taught a new course, Spanish for Medical Personnel, and how much fun you seemed to be having, even dressing the part, wearing a white coat and carrying a stethoscope in class.

I truly love teaching all levels of Spanish; however, my passion is teaching Latin American Literature. I do love teaching advanced grammar, as well. My biggest challenge has come within the last four years when we began using the computer based program (ANDA for Spanish courses). I was/am not part of the computer generation, so for those of you familiar with “SAM”, he has been my nemesis, and I anticipate an amicable divorce from him after I teach SPN 201 this coming Summer Session!!

I think we would all love to hear about your impression of the changes the University has undergone in the last 30 years. After all, none of us in the department has been here that long. We’ve all been here for less than 20 years.

I can honestly say that the use of technology in the classroom is one of the greatest changes I have experienced. Other very noticeable changes I have seen and love are the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity amongst the student body, as well as amongst the faculty. I truly love being on the second floor of Sullivan Building and hearing multi-languages being spoken in the halls. Also, I fully endorse the new name of our department, from the foreign language department to the world languages and cultures department. This is what we are all about. I have also seen the entire student body increase over the years. We changed from Salem State College to Salem State University, a new and prestigious distinction.

Another change is the amount of students who take late afternoon courses and night courses after having worked all day and having to deal with family matters as well. I am so impressed that they are so focused and determined to continue with their education. A new breed of students, recent veterans, have appeared in several of my classes, and I have felt very honored to teach them considering what they have done for me. I enjoy having heritage speakers of Spanish in my classes who want to hone their grammar and vocabulary skills along with becoming certified to teach Spanish one day.

Another change which is truly exciting is the opportunity to study abroad. This program exists in many departments and just reinforces and enhances all the classroom learning by making it come alive. The amount of languages we now offer far exceeds what was offered 30 years ago. We teach Spanish, French, Italian, German, Latin, Arabic, and Mandarin.

When in graduate school, I was in the first class that offered a degree in Bilingual/Bicultural Studies with an ESL endorsement. In fact, our class worked under the professorship of Dr. Ernie Mazzone, and we were the group that drafted the TBE (Transitional Bilingual Education) Act. In 1971 Massachusetts became the first state in the country to pass this Act. It mandated bilingual education for students of Limited English proficiency (LEP s) in the public schools. Salem State University now offers programs and degrees in the teaching of ESL. In fact, we even teach ESL classes.

So what are your plans for the future? Are you going to travel the world, write a book? I imagine you would also like to spend more time with your wonderful grandchildren.

I have been working in education for a total of 45 years, and I have loved every minute of it. In all probability I might look for an adjunct position teaching Spanish and/or ESL in Florida. I hope to travel to Europe where my grandchildren live. I know I will take courses here in Florida, also. I am really looking forward to spending full time with my husband who has been very encouraging and supportive of my career. I think he will be thrilled to see “SAM” out of our lives!

Well, Bernice, you know you are going to be missed. I know speak for all in the department when I say that we are going to miss you. We will miss our long chats about so many things. We will even miss your wonderful color-coordinated outfits, with shoes and colorful glasses. But you know you will stay with us in our hearts.

Well, you can be sure that the feeling is mutual and that I will be missing Salem State very much as well. I honestly loved each one of my Department Chairs, their administrative assistants and all my colleagues. They are truly superb, and you will learn a lot from them. Without all the focused and motivated students I have taught at Salem State throughout the years, I might have left the field of education a long time ago.

Best of luck to you in all your endeavors! And stay in touch!

Professor Mitchell is currently in Florida but she will be in Salem in May to teach Summer courses one more time.
On February 23, 2015, Ti-Cheng Balbo, Abdelkrim Mouhib and Michele C. Dávila from our department presented “It’s a Small World After All: Understanding Cultural Traits from Latin America, China and the Arab World” to the community of Salem State with the goal of creating awareness of perceived stereotypes ingrained in the American culture about people from Latin America, China and the Arab world. They identified cultural traits from these countries that affect the interactions with the international and diverse population of Salem State University.

The Richelieu Club of Salem celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in February. The Richelieu Club promotes French language and heritage in the greater Salem area, gives annual scholarships to high school French students and does fundraisers for local charities. The French program was well represented at the 50th anniversary gala by French faculty Dr. Elizabeth Blood (Richelieu Club Vice President), Prof. Brigitte Lagoutte (Richelieu Club member), Prof. Mary-Kay Miller, along with current French students Jeff Robinson (French major and Richelieu Club member), Gail Coughlan (French major), Monica Ciruelos (French minor), and former French students Erin McManus, Shawn Pinette and Steve Lacey. Steve Lacey’s jazz trio provided music for the event.

The world languages and cultures department is proud to announce that the departmental secretary, Ronnette Wongus received the university’s “Employee of the Quarter Award.” We’re thankful for all of her hard work and proud of this recognition, even though it does not even begin to reflect how much she does and how essential she has become. Congratulations, Ronni!

The MAT in Spanish announces that seven of our graduate students will be presenting the results of semester-long research projects at this year’s Graduate Research Symposium on May 13 at 1pm. Come by to hear these Spanish-language presentations about where culture crosses with pedagogy. Location TBA.

The world languages and cultures department would like to announce to our students that those of you who demonstrate superior knowledge of the subject area in our department, and have exemplary participation in co-curricular activities or voluntary service, or study abroad, may apply for departmental honors. In order to be eligible a student must have a grade point average of at least 3.5 in the major. Students may apply in writing to the chairperson of the world languages and cultures department by the end of the second month of their last semester before graduation to be considered for departmental honors.

The Center for International Education and study abroad office is now on North Campus in Sullivan 114.

The world languages and cultures department has students going to Quebec and Oviedo this summer with strong enrollment.


Faculty News

Michele C. Dávila presented “Bildungsroman en el tópico: El arca de la memoria de Dinorah Cortés Vélez” at the V International Conference of Literature in Arecibo, Puerto Rico on April 19, 2015.

Nicole Sherf published an article “Incorporating and Promoting Awareness of Student Progress in Proficiency” in ACTFL’s Jan/Feb 2015 The Language Educator.

In addition to chairing a session on translation for the Northeast Modern Languages Association’s annual conference in Toronto (NEMLA April/May 2015), Kristine Doll is the guest editor of a special edition on translation for The Seventh Quarry Poetry Magazine (Swansea, Wales UK). This issue focuses on translations of Catalan poetry into English and includes several of Dr. Doll’s translations as well as her introduction to the six Catalan poets featured in the magazine. Additionally, Dr. Doll’s translation of the Catalan poem “Hores angleses” by August Bover recently appeared in Jaén i Urban’s London’s Rivers, published by the University of Alicante (Spain).

Elizabeth Blood was recently interviewed with Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello (IDS) for a Franco-American genealogy podcast called “Maple Stars and Stripes” about Salem’s French-Canadian and Franco-American Heritage.

Anna Rocca has been elected as the Regional Representative of Women in French in the New England and Eastern Canada. This MLA-allied Organization, is a scholarly association whose goal is to promote the study of French and Francophone women authors, the study of women’s place in French and Francophone cultures or literatures, and feminist literary criticism. Dr. Rocca’s primary goal is to also reach a broader representation of women, particularly those in developing countries, who would enrich WIF and the reciprocal understanding of the forms in which feminism manifests itself.
On July 23, 2014, two thoughtful and good-natured professors of considerable scholarship from Salem State took an interesting mix of graduate and undergraduate English and History students and lifelong learners abroad to Poland to explore the themes of “Poland: World War II and the Holocaust.” I was one of those students and I can say that the experience was profound. We arrived with great curiosity and left with a greater sense of the urgency of memory, an historical motif that has become central in honoring such an experience. Professors Stephenie Young (English) and Christopher Mauriello (history) created an itinerary rich in the history of this period and compelling in the exploration of the transcendent themes of remembrance, scholarship, ethnicity, place, and the rule of order.

For many of us who had never been to Poland, the visits to Auschwitz and Majdanek made less abstract the horrors of the Holocaust. Auschwitz is universally emblematic of the Holocaust and attracts visitors from all over the world. Consequently, its manicured avenues and restored barracks require constant upkeep and make it more of a “tourist” monument to the immense suffering that happened there. More instructive of concentration camp degradation is Auschwitz II—Birkenau—the largest of the camps, where tens of thousands of Jews, Poles, Gypsies, Soviet POWs and many people from other nations perished. Walking through the barracks where prisoners were housed, and seeing the artifacts of abuse, death, the crematoria, and the mountains of shoes and shorn hair, made palpable the suffering of the innocent in ways mere photos and film cannot.

Majdanek, a forced-labor and eventual death camp in Lublin, was an even more powerful experience. With a large Jewish population, Majdanek was one of the camps targeted in the Wannsee Conference as a site for the “Final Solution”—Hitler’s overarching plans to exterminate European Jewry. Over 360,000 victims from 28 countries and 54 nationalities died or were murdered there, 120,000 of them Jews. For many of us visiting Majdanek, standing on the ground where many of the ashes of those unfortunate souls who were buried in haste and without lamentation, then disinterred, the scale and horror of genocide rendered us speechless. The “Mausoleum of Ashes,” designed by Wictor Tolkien in 1969, serves as a memorial graveyard of nameless, but not forgotten men, women and children slaughtered and incinerated by the Nazis.

Walking through what was left of the Krakow and the Warsaw Ghettos had the odd, dislocating effect of giving a sense of how the atrocities began in ordinary, familiar neighborhoods. Visiting museums and institutions of Jewish history, and participating in workshops facilitated by well-informed university and museum scholars, gave even greater context to our visit. The Schindler Factory Museum in Krakow provided us visually striking exhibits that we could explore at our own paces. We also had the opportunity to visit the Collegium Maius at Jagiellonian University, whose edifice dates back to the 1400s, and whose alumni include Nicolas Copernicus and Pope John Paul II. In one of the University’s modern buildings, a pair of graduate students provided us with some Polish perspective on Auschwitz, the Holocaust and on life in modern Krakow.

We also delighted in the vibrant bohemian culture of Krakow (which Hitler would deem as degenerate), and the resurgence of Warsaw as a world-class ‘peoples’ city. Both cities are testaments to the indomitable spirit of the Polish people in their collective desire to reclaim hope in the face of such historical despair.

Program Participants with Dr. Chris Mauriello at the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw (from left to right): Brendon Clarke Coogan, Katie Michko, Molly Kavanagh, Lyndsay Caron, Dr. Chris Mauriello, Erin McLaughlin, Kristal Donnelly, and Jillian Fitzgerald
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals

J. Douglas Guy

For Salem State students and recent graduates looking for a year-long professional experience abroad, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX) presents a remarkable opportunity to live, study and intern in Germany, the most dynamic economy and influential power in the European Union.

CBYX is open to young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who have clear career goals, a demonstrated interest in contemporary Germany and the willingness to serve as a person-to-person ambassador for the United States. Applicants do not have to speak any German whatsoever, although language skills are preferred. The CBYX fellowship is awarded each year to 75 American and 75 German young professionals, and is funded by the German Bundestag and the U.S. Congress through the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). This fellowship provides an essentially free year of study and internship work experience in Germany, including free round-trip airfare, 8 weeks of intensive language instruction, a semester of university-level professional study in one’s field, followed by a paid second semester internship. Free housing is provided in a home-stay, shared apartment or dormitory setting.

Applicants from any and all disciplines are encouraged to apply, from business, IT, teaching and international relations majors to cooks and agricultural students. The program is not so much academically competitive as it is an attempt to send a diverse group of enthusiastic, accomplished, motivated young Americans to live, learn and work in Germany for a full year, expand their personal and professional skill sets and return fluent in German. Students are not allowed to return to the U.S. before the year is up -- they have to be ready to invest a full year’s effort to the experience, but the reward sets the stage for a life-long international career. Students can find information and online application materials for the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals at cbyx.info.

“TED Talks for Language Enthusiasts”

Elizabeth Blood

TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) began as an annual conference sponsored by the nonprofit Sapling Foundation and has evolved into a series of free online videos on a wide range of “ideas worth spreading” (TED.com). The talks, usually 18 minutes or shorter, are provocative, informative and inspirational. If you are a language major or minor, or if you are just interested in how people communicate across language barriers, check out the following TED talks on languages and cultures:

**Ethan Zuckerman:** Listening to global voices
www.ted.com/talks/ethan_zuckerman

This talk weaves together the topics of language, culture and technology. Zuckerman asks why, in a world so interconnected by technology, we still end up connecting primarily with people who are just like us? His answer will inspire you to expand your horizons online.

**Patricia Ryan:** Don’t insist on English
www.ted.com/talks/patricia_ryan_ideas_in_all_languages_not_just_English

In this talk, Ryan challenges the concept that English is or should be the primary global language and makes a passionate call for learning foreign languages and engaging in translation, arguing that great ideas can emerge from all corners of the globe. Would we have made the progress we have if Einstein had to pass a TOEFL exam before publishing his work?

**Tim Ferriss:** Smash fear, learn anything
www.ted.com/talks/tim_ferriss_smash_fear_learn_anything

Ferriss’ greatest fears included learning to swim, to speak a foreign language and learning to dance. In this talk, he explains how he smashed his fear and created an effective way to become an expert in these areas. (He now speaks multiple languages!)

**Suzanne Talhouk:** Don’t kill your language
www.ted.com/talks/suzanne_talhouk_don_t_kill_your_language

Can you express yourself as well in a second language as you can in your native language? Filmed in Arabic in Beirut, this subtitled talk also deals with the global dominance of English and calls for people to maintain their mother tongues.
Arthur Mas, the Catalan leader, argues that parliamentary elections in September will decide whether Catalonia will declare independence from Spain. He has made a promise to the Catalan people: since the Spanish central government has refused to allow a vote on independence, a victory by the nationalists parties, such as his own, Convergencia Democratica, and Esquerra Republicana, will be understood as popular support for a declaration of independence within 18 months of the election. At this moment the coalition of Convergencia and Esquerra already have 56 representatives in the Catalan Government and they need 68 votes to win, but Mas is confident that as the time of the election approaches, members of other parties will support their views.

The bold measure is a response to the prohibition by Spain’s Constitutional Court of the Independence Referendum on November 9th, 2014, which was passed by the Catalans. Unlike the United Kingdom, which just allowed a referendum in Scotland regarding independence, Spain has steadfastly refused to admit the right of self-determination for the Catalan people. Since when has Catalonia felt the need for Independence?

Spain was born out of the union of the Crown of Castile, in Central Spain, and the Crown of Aragon, which included Catalonia, at the end of the 15th century. The kingdom of Aragon preserved its distinctive rules, constitution and laws until the 1714 when Philip V imposed centralized Castilian rule. Separatism bouts sprouted in the 19th c. and 20th c. During the Spanish Republic, 1932, Catalonia obtained a statute of autonomy which it soon lost under Franco’s Dictatorship, which lasted from 1939 to 1975. The region restored its autonomy in 1977. Historical identity, the recent oppression by Franco and a very harsh campaign of recentralization of power in Madrid, according to Mas, the Catalan leader, have led Catalan citizens to consider the vote for an independent state in the near future. The tradition of rich commerce and industry in Catalonia provide power for the idea. What do the people directly involved in the independence movement think about all this? I interviewed a college student, Oriol Cerda, 20, born and raised in Catalonia, pursuing a degree in Chemical Engineering.

Why Catalonia independence?
It is hard to think of a single reason why, but basically it is due to the breach of communication between the central and the regional governments. I would compare the relationship with your roommates, there are some conflict areas, you propose some solutions and you get back indifference or No for an answer. After a while, you start looking around for a different apartment. The same happens with the independence of Catalonia. The Central Government is incapable of communicating or has no will to communicate.

But why now?
The discontent comes since the previous government. The former president, Zapatero, said that he would approve the statute of Catalonia passed by the Catalan parliament, but then the Constitutional Court amended it resulting in a travesty of the original document. The timing could not be worse. It all happened simultaneously with the financial crisis. Catalans have the perception that they could govern themselves better and administer their finances much better than the Spanish government. The resistance of the central government to negotiate and propose viable solutions to the impasse of the Catalan statute have provoked the renaissance of the independence movement.

What is your major concern?
If the centralism and Castilian rule prevail, our language, traditional dances and music, the castellers... everything that is synonymous with Catalan identity will disappear. On the economic aspect, Catalonia is a rich region. It gives a lot of money to Madrid, and then it doesn’t receive a fair share. I don’t understand why Madrid refuses to let Catalonia keep some of their taxes and administer them as they do with some taxes in the Basque Country.

Would life be different for Catalans if the state of independence is declared?
In the beginning, for ten maybe twenty years, life would be harder while new financial administrations and channels are established. Also, there is a danger of internal divisions, within the same region. But in the end, in the long run, Catalonia would keep its identity and it would be even more prosperous.

Would your life change?
Yes! I would be able to demonstrate for something constructive, not to just struggle against Madrid’s rule. I would be able to demonstrate in Barcelona and put real pressure on our own government to follow the statute and be straightforward with the people of Catalonia. No more games.

After we concluded, it was clear to me that Catalans want to be heard, are proud of their land and culture and would rather take care of it without any partners. I am, however, saddened. As the daughter of a separatist Catalan, Basque mother and Spanish upbringing, I would rather keep the family together.
Chantons les saisons!
FRE 304 student poetry

In FRE 304 this semester, advanced French students worked together to write poetry inspired by Paul Verlaine’s poem “Chanson d’automne” (“Song of Autumn”), creating a “Chanson d’été,” a “Chanson de printemps” and a “Chanson d’hiver” (yes, we can still find something poetic in this winter season!).

Chanson d’hiver
L’hiver sent comme
La neige et le feu

Mon chocolat chaud sent doux
Le bout de mon nez est rouge et froid

J’embrasse ma couverture
Je sens le froid de ma fenêtre
Je porte mon pull en laine

Chanson de printemps
Oh printemps!
Quel beau temps!
Où l’on entend des chants,
Les enfants

Que c’est amusant
Que les oiseaux chantant
Profitent du beau temps

Le ciel plein de couleurs
Des papillons dans nos demeures
Oh printemps!
Quel temps rempli de bonheur!

Chanson d’été
Les enfants crient
Le sable nous brûle nos pieds
Aux ballons, nous filons des coups de pied

Nous sommes contents
Il n’y a pas de problèmes au monde
La limonade est douce
Et les enfants nagent

Vous sentez la brise marine
Et vous mangez de la glace
L’été est super à n’importe quelle place

On breaking out of my comfort zone in Istanbul
Elspeth Slayter

Just the bare bones of the call to prayer trickle through the earthquake-proof wall. Everyone is off at work. I have the key to the apartment, I can leave if I want to. The outside taxi cacophony chills my skin with its whirs and whizzes. I contemplate my self-imposed confinement here in Istanbul. My fingers and toes touch the leaded window over the neighborhood; the coursing warmth of the city just at the bottom of the hill.

I’m in the mood for some baklava-like savory cheese-filled börek, why not step out for some? Stinging doubts swarm me as soon as the thought is out. My husband’s fear, my brother-in-law’s fear and my father’s fear merge into the idea of me, walking alone, in Istanbul. “I’m an experienced traveler – What’s the matter with me?” My fear’s zenith propels my turn away from the window, to the door. I’m going to do it.

My legs ache with shin splints as I find myself negotiating the steep hill to the park. Children are giggling and cavorting in the distance. Traversing the park, I smile at the mothers and benches are filled. I cross the street in the golden warmth, locating my Turkish niece who left the house in a micro-mini this morning. I shouldn’t be fearful as a woman. Why is it so hard to just go out?

Entering the mall, it’s a familiar drill. Place the bag on the magnetometer. Greet the attendant with “İyi Günler,” Walk on. My heart rusts as the smiling, familiar attendant greets me with more than the usual pleasantries. This guard with the modern lavender-patterned hijab recognizes me. Blushing, I muster “sorry, don’t understand!” in my nascent Turkish. She rubs my shoulder knowingly, waves me on with a smile. The fear in my mind’s eye is distracted. I am known here.

Cupping my lira in my pocket, I head for the börekçi. I am so focused on practicing my food order in mental loops, that I overshoot the entrance. I walk around the block again for a second try. I try on an ‘I-belong-here’ swagger at entry. Grinning nervously, my Turkish is quickly answered in English. I slink to the farthest table. Spooning slow, deliberate portions of hot, buttery börek into my mouth, a few unadulterated moments of normalcy emerge from the noodles, maybe even some joy.

Perhaps I should walk to the park around the mosque? Lots of women sit there with their kids. Isn’t the language of women and children universal? This is a modern city – this is not Tehran or Baghdad. I don’t have to veil. I’m dressed more conservatively than my Turkish niece who left the house in a micro-mini this morning. I should embrace the feminine. I won’t make too much of it. I promise myself. My brain is an odd mix of puffed up peacock at my success and the matter with me?” My fear’s zenith propels my turn away from the window, to the door. I’m going to do it.

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The author on the island of Bozcaada with a 15th century mosque in the background

Elspeth Slayter is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at Salem State University. Through her marriage to a Turkish American, she launched into the process of language learning and acculturation. Learning conversational Turkish is a requirement for obtaining Turkish citizenship - but also affords greater access to the experience of Turkish culture. The following is a creative response that she wrote to visiting Istanbul.


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My legs ache with shin splints as I find myself negotiating the steep hill to the park. Children are giggling and cavorting in the distance. Traversing the park, I smile at the mothers and children, but I am unnoticed. All the park benches are filled. I cross the street in the golden warmth, locating my New York street-crossing skills while dodging cars. Blood pounds hypertense in my ears. Sunshine softens my goosebumps. I target the mall below, across the boulevard.

Entering the mall, it’s a familiar drill. Place the bag on the magnetometer. Greet the attendant with “İyi Günler,” Walk on. My heart rusts as the smiling, familiar attendant greets me with more than the usual pleasantries. This guard with the modern lavender-patterned hijab recognizes me. Blushing, I muster “sorry, don’t understand!” in my nascent Turkish. She rubs my shoulder knowingly, waves me on with a smile. The fear in my mind’s eye is distracted. I am known here.

Cupping my lira in my pocket, I head for the börekçi. I am so focused on practicing my food order in mental loops, that I overshoot the entrance. I walk around the block again for a second try. I try on an ‘I-belong-here’ swagger at entry. Grinning nervously, my Turkish is quickly answered in English. I slink to the farthest table. Spooning slow, deliberate portions of hot, buttery börek into my mouth, a few unadulterated moments of normalcy emerge from the noodles, maybe even some joy.

Perhaps I should walk to the park around the mosque? Lots of women sit there with their kids. Isn’t the language of women and children universal? This is a modern city – this is not Tehran or Baghdad. I don’t have to veil. I’m dressed more conservatively than my Turkish niece who left the house in a micro-mini this morning. I shouldn’t be fearful as a woman. Why is it so hard to just go out?
The Department of World Languages and Cultures
Annual HOPE Award

doing Humanitarian work
creating Opportunities for those in need
promoting Peace in the world and
sharing your linguistic and cultural Expertise with others

Each year, the WLC department holds an essay competition exploring the dynamic relationship between community and humanitarian service, education and leadership, particularly in the context of how these can improve our world.

The contest is open to students who are majors or minors in the department as well as to alumni. Essays are written in any of the languages represented by the department (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Italian, Spanish). American Sign Language is also an invited subject.

This year the writers were asked to submit essays that responded to the following quote by Ludwig Wittgenstein: “The limits of my language are the limits of my world”.

From the submissions, two first-place essays were chosen: “Life Because of Language” by Fabiola Mejia and “El poder del idioma” by Fredy Javier Rodriguez Diaz; the first, written in English; the other, in Spanish. Each author will receive $150.00 and publication. Second prize goes to “Creating Bridges” by Ruthann Sterling for $75.00, and third prize is “A Successful Struggle” by Terrell Greene for $50.00.

“The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”
- Ludwig Wittgenstein

Life Because of Language
Fabiola Mejia

The importance of language to life could not be more powerfully or accurately explained than in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s famous quote. Many associate language to a certain part of the world, believing that an area needs only one manner of verbal expression. The essential function of language tends to be to allow us to communicate with one another, which is important enough on its own. Yet if we search deeper for a greater purpose in language, we see how much it enables us to grow and to better understand the world. This is especially true for those exposed to more than one language from a young age.

Language is something that I have been keenly aware of since I was a child. Growing up in a large Mexican household and being sent to an English-speaking school offered me the opportunity to learn both languages simultaneously. The adults in my home spoke only Spanish and most had very little, if any, academic experience of their own. Knowing how hard it was to live in a country where English was the central language, my parents, especially my mother, encouraged my siblings and me to learn and speak both languages. At first, I thought that knowing another language was just another skill; but soon I learned that it would have many advantages.

As my siblings and I began speaking English more fluently, my parents would have us translate for them. At about eight years old, we were helping my mother make doctor’s appointments or pay bills over the phone when there was no Spanish interpreter available to assist them. For any mail they would receive in English, my siblings and I had to be ready to explain its contents to them as best we could. Even when we went to restaurants, my parents would allow us to order the food and tell them what the price came to. Knowing a language other than the one our family originally spoke gave my siblings and me a wonderful sense of capability as well as of responsibility.

Had we not been brought up to know two languages, I don’t believe that my siblings and I would have gotten a good understanding of what it is like to grow up. As children, translating the words off of bills for my parents was simple enough as retelling a story to someone. But as we grew and were actually able to understand what these papers were, we understood they were things we would be dealing with as adults ourselves. We came to know what due dates and minimum payments were, how appointments were supposed to be made to fit our schedules, and even to look up and explain new recipes to our mother.

I think the most valuable thing we learned by knowing two different languages, is the notion that we must help others with it. I can’t count the amount of times I’ve helped other Hispanic women at a grocery store or at a children’s clinic when they
El poder del idioma
Fredy Javier Rodríguez Díaz

Dos años han pasado desde la primera vez que asistí a una preparatoria estadounidense. Recuerdo muy bien ese momento: me sentía completamente perdido. Todos hablaban en inglés, un idioma que yo no entendía en esos momentos de mi vida. Me preguntaba a mí mismo: “¿Vos que hacés aquí?” Soy originario de Guatemala, el país de la eterna primavera, y durante toda mi vida el español fue la única lengua que aprendí. Nunca me preocupé por aprender otro idioma ya que nunca pensé que algún día podría necesitar comunicarme en otro idioma. Aunque esto es un poco irónico, ya que en mi país existen 24 lenguas oficiales.

Durante mis primeros días de preparatoria en este país me sentía muy solo y alienado ya que no era capaz de hablar en inglés. No podía compartir mis ideas y pensamientos en clase ya que me sentía avergonzado de hablar en este idioma. Vivir esta situación me hizo darme cuenta de la importancia de aprender un segundo idioma, no solamente por razones académicas o profesionales sino porque hablar otro idioma es una herramienta con la cual podemos entender y ayudar a otros; es un medio a través del cual las personas pueden ver más allá de su propio mundo. Nos da poder.

Me tomó alrededor de un año para poder comenzar a hablar en inglés. Cientos de palabras en español fueron remplazadas por sus equivalentes en inglés. Mudarme a este país fue un proceso muy difícil en mi vida. Dejar atrás mi cultura, mi idioma y mis tradiciones fue como morir en vida. Adaptarse a una nueva cultura, especialmente a la cultura estadounidense, es un proceso muy abrumador para alguien que viene de un país donde la religión y las costumbres tienen un gran peso en la sociedad. Simplemente no podía comprender muchas cosas sobre la manera como las personas viven aquí. Sentimientos de frustración y desesperación invadían mi mente. Quería renunciar a todo. Llegué a pensar que aprender inglés no era para mí; que tal vez no estaba destinado a ir a la universidad. Sin embargo, recordé que todos somos capaces de hacer todo lo que nos proponemos en la vida y esta tarea no me iba a quedar grande. Para mí, la educación es una de las cosas más valiosas en mi vida y nada ni nadie –ni yo mismo– me iba a detener de poder alcanzarla. Decidí que era tiempo de cambiar, de enfocarme en aprender inglés y alcanzar mis sueños. Después de esto, sentí que poco a poco la persona que solía ser murió y alguien nuevo nació de las cenizas dejadas por el tiempo y el cambio.

El tiempo pasó rápido en mi vida. Comencé a ver el mundo de una manera distinta: comencé a entender la manera en como esta sociedad funciona. A través del proceso de aprendizaje del idioma inglés comprendí como las personas viven, actuan y creen; pude identificarme con los problemas y las luchas de muchos en la sociedad.

Sin lugar a dudas, el aprendizaje de un segundo idioma me ha dado el conocimiento necesario para alcanzar el éxito. Me ha brindado el poder para poder luchar por mis ideales. Quiero ser capaz de hablar en todos los idiomas que pueda aprender en mi mortal vida. Quiero ser capaz de conocer otros mundos. Como el ilustre filósofo y lingüista europeo Ludwig Wittgenstein dijo: “El límite de mi idioma es el límite de mi mundo”. Al ser capaz de comprender otro lenguaje, mis horizontes se han expandido. Las barreras que antes me detenían de alcanzar mis sueños se han desvanecido como la nieve al principio de la primavera.

Hablar diferentes idiomas me ha enseñado que en este mundo existen muchos mundos coexistiendo en una sola dimensión. Cada idioma en el planeta representa un mundo distinto, pero todos representan a una sola humanidad. Aunque nuestras palabras sean distintas, aunque seamos diferentes, todos compartimos los mismos sentimientos y problemas, sueños y luchas. El idioma le da al hablante el poder de ser parte de un mundo único y fascinante, y ahora yo soy parte de varios mundos.

Después de dos años de haber venido a este país, he logrado llegar a la universidad. Miro atrás y me doy cuenta de cuánto mi vida ha cambiado gracias a la habilidad de poder hablar dos idiomas. Me recuerdo de mi primera clase en la preparatoria de este país, triste y desolado. Ahora, veo a una persona distinta, con una mente más abierta a las posibilidades. He cambiado. He visto un mundo distinto y sé que veré aún más ya que esto se ha convertido en mi pasión.

Si alguien me preguntara ahora: “¿Y vos que hacés aquí?” Alegremente respondería: “Pues aquí, conociendo mundos nuevos”.

Now that I am a mother, I have made it my goal to encourage my daughter to speak both English and Spanish. She may want to learn a third or fourth language, and it would be something I would proudly support. I may not be able to give her the same lessons that my own parents taught me, but I will certainly explain the value in knowing several languages and why it would give her different perspectives of the world that she would not be able to see otherwise. In this, Wittgenstein’s quote stands true; life is only as vast as one’s language allows it to be.
Summer Reading

Kenneth Reeds

The image is of a person reclined on a beach chair under the sun. Next to him or her sits a small table only big enough for a beverage and a dog-earred paperback. The latter might be opened to a particular page as it rests on the table or, perhaps, the sleeping person’s belly. Hopefully it is slowly being read as part of a summer trip focused on disconnecting from school, work, and anything else that provokes stress. The beach in question might really be your own home or any other place where you can relax. The book, however, is guaranteed to take you far from Salem State. That is, after all, the point of summer break: to mentally distance yourself from your studies and then to refocus as you prepare for the coming semester. Even if money gets in the way of truly feeling the sand between your toes, thanks to the library a good novel is within easy reach and can often be the most complete escape. With this in mind, some of our faculty have suggested books in Italian, French, and Spanish. There is nothing like getting away and it is better still if you can do it in another language.

Anna Rocca recommends two books in Italian. The first is Fabio Geda’s Nel mare ci sono i coccodrilli [In the Sea there are Crocodiles]. Dr. Rocca writes that it relates the true story of Aniatollah Akbari, a ten-year old boy from Afghanistan who ends up being adopted in Turin, Italy. Forced to abandon Aniatollah in order to escape the Taliban, his mother recommends him to never steal, use drugs, or weapons. The child describes his trip from Afghanistan through Pakistan, Turkey, Greece and finally Italy. His first-person narration makes the reader reflect upon the similarities of people’s hopes, despite cultural and geographical differences. The second book that Dr. Rocca suggests is Valentina D’Urbano’s Il Rumore dei tuoi passi [The Noise of your Steps]. This is the fictional story of Beatrice and Alfredo’s friendship that turns into a bitter-sweet love. The reader witnesses the challenges of relationships as well as the couple’s new fears when they approach their twenties. Moving, passionate and unforgettable.

Elizabeth Blood recommends two works about Haiti, reflecting on the 2010 earthquake and its aftermath: Tout bouge autour de moi by Dany Laferrière and Mémé attaque Haïti by Marie Larocque. Laferrière’s book is a memoir and chronicle of the devastating earthquake and its emotional impact on the author. Larocque’s novel, just recently published, tells the tale of Mémé who returns to Haiti after the earthquake to help some elderly friends to discover that the culture she loves has not changed despite the changes provoked by the earthquake. Remember that sometimes it is easier (and cheaper) to buy books in French at renauld-bray.com (equivalent of “Barnes and Noble” in Quebec). You can pay with a U.S. credit card and the purchase can be downloaded or shipped to the U.S. .

In Spanish, Nicole Sherf recommends returning to a classic in Gabriel García Márquez’s Cien años de soledad. Without a doubt, one of the twentieth-century’s most famous novels, it is the text that made the term magical realism part of the worldwide literary conversation. Michele Dávila also suggests García Márquez, but instead of a complete novel she is thinking about the reader with less time and recommends the Colombian’s short stories in the form of the collection Doce cuentos peregrinos. She writes that these twelve stories are examples of the author’s storytelling skills in a condensed form. In addition, Dr. Dávila points to Julia Alvarez’s El tiempo de las mariposas which is a fictionalization of the story of the heroic Mirabal sister’s confrontation with the Dominican Republic’s dictator Rafael Trujillo. Lastly, Fátima Serra recommends two books by the recent winner of the Premio Planeta: Clara Sánchez. The first is Lo que esconde tu nombre (Premio Nadal 2010). It tells the story of a young woman who seeks refuge in a village on the Mediterranean coast while she is pregnant and reflects on her whole life. She becomes friends with an old couple that end up being Nazi expatriates. It narrates a personal story and at the same time it covers the history of the Nazis that lived in Spain under Franco’s protection. The second is Entra en mi vida (2012) which narrates the story of a younger woman that it is trying to figure out her life. Once again mixing fiction with historical fact, the author intertwines the tale of this teenager with the recently-uncovered news of babies stolen by nuns at hospitals and given illegally to adoptive families. Dr. Serra states that she likes it because it depicts very well life in Spain for kids who are of a similar age as the majority of the students at Salem State.

Lastly, Jon Aske wrote the following which reviews the book Hombres buenos by Arturo Pérez-Reverte. Time to get reading.

HOMBRES BUENOS (GOOD MEN), BY ARTURO PÉREZ-REVERTE
Jon Aske

Arturo Pérez-Reverte Gutiérrez is a well-known Spanish novelist. He started his writing career as a journalist, being a war correspondent for over twenty years (1973-1994). He is perhaps best known for his Captain Alatriste novels, set in the 17th century, which have been translated into English. (There is also a 2006 movie, Alatriste, based on this character.) The genre that Pérez-Reverte specializes in is the historical novel. Reading his novels is a great way to learn about history in a fun way, for his novels are gripping and well-crafted and make you identify with the characters and live the events that he narrates. This is a definitely an appealing way to learn about history, as long as the novels are well researched and well written, as tends to be the case with Pérez-Reverte’s novels. In case you have not tried it, this is your chance.

The latest novel by Pérez-Reverte just came out in March. Its title is Hombres buenos (Good Men). So far it’s only available
Hombres buenos is a book of intrigue that takes place in the late 18th century, when Spain was still an empire, before the emancipation of the American colonies. Spain was also at the time a rather backwards country, at least compared to other countries, including its neighbor France, the leader of progress at the time in Europe. These were revolutionary times in France in several different spheres, from science to politics. It is also, of course, the period of the American Revolution, which took place just a decade before the French Revolution. This most interesting period is known as the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment.

But not so much so in Spain, which clutched to traditional, religious-based obscurantism in many respects. One of the highlights of this period in France was the famous French Encyclopédie, an encyclopedia of science, arts, and technology which was the major work of the French philosophes of the time, who were devoted to science and secular thought. Not surprisingly, the French Encyclopédie was banned in Spain.

However, not everybody was opposed to progress in Spain at the time, just the ruling elite, who liked things just the way they were. And that’s where Pérez-Reverte’s book comes in. It tells us the quite plausible story of two good men who struggled to bring the Enlightenment to Spain, while others tried to prevent them from doing so. Actually, what they tried to bring to Spain, from France, were the 28 volumes of the famous Encyclopédie.

The plot of the story is described thus in the book (my translation): “At the end of the 18th century, two members of the Spanish Royal Academy, librarian Hermógenes Molina and admiral Pedro Zárate, were sent to Paris by their colleagues at this institution in order to obtain copies of the 28 volumes of the d’Alembert and Diderot’s Encyclopédie, which had been banned in Spain. Nobody could have suspected that the two academics were going to face such dangerous adventures and unwelcome intrigue. Theirs was a trip full of suspense and surprises, which took them through roads plagued by bandits and uncomfortable country inns, from their semi-enlightened enclave in the Madrid of King Charles III, to the Paris of the cafés, the sitting rooms, the philosophical gatherings, licentious mores, and political upheaval on the eve of the French Revolution. The novel is based on real facts and characters. The riveting, fascinating, and moving novel is documented with extreme rigor. Hombres buenos narrates the heroic adventure of people who, guided by the Enlightenment and Reason, wanted to change the world by means of books, a world that was starting to set aside old ideas and in which the longing for liberty made monarchs shake with fear and the establishment reel.”

I hope this preview has piqued your interest and if history and novels appeal to you, this book, or others like it, might be a good place to get started.

britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186659/Encyclopédie
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclop%C3%A9die
amazon.com/Arturo-Perez-Reverte/e/B000A5PMPNUI/
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_Alatriste (the novels)
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alatriste (the movie)

Prospective Undergraduate Spanish Teachers: Have You Heard About the new 4+1?
Nicole Sherf

The Salem State School of Education has undergone a transformation over the past year or so as a new dean has come on board and the undergraduate licensure programs are adopting a program format of 4+1. Last spring, Dr. Joseph Cambone came to us from Lesley University and brought an exciting new energy and enthusiasm to the school; inspiring faculty, students and facilitating the transformation of educator preparation programming. All of the undergraduate licensure programs are creating new flow sheets with newly created education course offerings. The world languages and cultures department is about to send their materials for approval to Curriculum Committee. Up until now, students who wanted to teach Spanish followed the program of an undergraduate degree in Spanish with the concentration in either elementary or secondary education. With the 4+1, when the program approval takes place, students who are accepted into the program will complete a four year Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a one year Master of Education. There is some overlap between the two levels of coursework, meaning that students can take courses that “double dip” or count for both the undergraduate and the graduate degree. They end up with the same license to teach Spanish in either the elementary level (grades Prekindergarten through 6th grade) or the secondary (5th grade through 12th) that they would have gotten under the current Elementary and Secondary Concentrations, but they also get a Master’s degree. Principals and Superintendents agree that they value a candidate who has that extra degree, one that will be necessary as the teacher moves along the levels of licensure. In addition, the Methods course for teaching Spanish in the current program of studies will eventually be divided into a two semester course in which the potential for more time will be possible for processing, practicing and incorporating of the themes, theories and important documents and resources for foreign language teaching. Be advised that the new program is more rigorous as you will be taking graduate courses as of your senior year, and, as such, the application standards are higher. A higher GPA is expected for admittance into the program as well as a variety of other benchmarks which are being discussed now in the School of Education. Students who are currently in the process of completing their Elementary or Secondary Concentration should continue to do so. If you are very new to the major and have not yet begun to take the EDU courses, please talk to Dr. Nicole Sherf, the Secondary Education Coordinator, about when and how to get involved in the new program.
A Seal of Biliteracy rewards high school graduates who attain a functional level of foreign language proficiency and English with a seal affixed to their diploma. Passage of a Massachusetts law that makes such a seal possible has been subject to various political currents, however, I am very hopeful that the bill that has been entered into consideration for the new legislative session that began in January will pass. This new bill is a no-cost legislation and because of the strong response to the call to contact your legislator in January, it has the support of a great number of co-sponsors.

A Seal of Biliteracy is important for Massachusetts because using levels of proficiency as a standard to reward performance can be transformative for programming. Programs that want to reward functional ability in the foreign language will focus more on how to achieve that than how well students memorize and conjugate. Additionally, proficiency is a more meaningful way to document student performance than the grades they received in their classes or ‘seat time’ as measured in years of study. With proficiency, we are interested in what students are able to do and say in the language in communicative and culturally authentic settings. I am leading a working group to develop the parameters to award the Seal at the various levels that include all the various levels of language teaching, and in which piloting of the use of the Seal is taking place in a few districts in the North Shore. I am happy to report that we are considering the college credit that would be awarded for a two-tiered Seal awarded on completion of high school as well as a Seal for attainment of a high level of proficiency upon completion of college. The proficiency levels are a national standard and a student receiving a Seal could make mention of it in their college application or resume under achievements and honors.

Thank you to all who sent messages to your state legislators during the short period between January 16 and February 4, at the start of this new legislative session when co-sponsors could sign up for new bills. Because of your participation, more than 900 messages were sent to legislators which resulted in 56 Co-Sponsors signing up on the House side and 16 on the Senate side. We have a strongly supported bill moving forward in the legislative process! See the list of legislators below:

What’s next? Please follow up with your legislator if you see his or her name on the list and tell them how appreciative you are of their support of this important legislation! If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Sherf, MaFLA’s Advocacy Coordinator, at advocacy@mafla.org.

**HD 1698, to establish state seal of Biliteracy:**

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**SD 1012, to establish state seal of Biliteracy:**

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