

Fall 2012-Winter 2013



In this Issue

Teach for America: Washington D.C.

Catching Stories in Cochabamba

More Than a Dash: The Legacy of Professor Roy Nelson



Message from the Chair



I am very grateful to all faculty and students who helped in the administration of RLL last year and contributed to making our department an excellent place to work and study. Our

undergraduate students kept us very busy: a great number of them enrolled in our classes; organized events for their peers and faculty; organized the language clubs; and applied for internships and study abroad programs. In fact, undergraduate students in all our languages and cultures were successful in receiving awards and grants. This past summer, RLL was able to offer our first summer volunteer grant to support volunteer work in Nicaragua, in addition to the internship stipends and study abroad scholarships that we already offer. We also honored the excellence of our graduating seniors by presenting awards to those who excelled in the study of our Romance cultures. We are extremely lucky to have many outstanding concentrators and minors in our French, Italian, and Spanish programs, and to have the support of our alumni whose generosity allows us to have the means to recognize these students. For the first time this year we had the pleasure of inviting one of our alumni to participate in our graduating senior ceremony. Laurie Endlar Lee gave a very engaging speech at the annual reception in spring 2012 and parents, students, and faculty enjoyed her presence immensely.

This year Helene Neu, our French elementary language director has retired. We are profoundly grateful to Helene for all her years of service and excellent work in RLL. She will be missed.

I am very happy to report that as of January 2013 we will have a new undergraduate minor in Portuguese. Our students will have access to a variety of classes that will allow them to become proficient and knowledgeable in the acquisition of the Portuguese language and the cultures of Lusophone Africa, Brazil, and Portugal. Professor Fernando Arenas, with the help of Professor Alejandro Herrero-Olaizola and Carissa Van Heest, have made this exciting addition to our curriculum possible.

RLL graduate students have also been very active this past year. They organized the 18th Annual Charles Fraker Conference featuring Professors Jacques Lezra (NYU) and Alberto Moreiras (Texas A&M) as keynote speakers. They also continue to successfully manage *Tiresias*, RLL's online graduate student journal. The *Tiresias* group sponsored the visit of cultural critic Alberto Toscano (Goldsmiths, University of London). This year we welcomed six new graduate students in our Ph.D. program and they are already helping with the organization of the next Fraker and the next is-

sue of *Tiresias*.

This past year we had an outstanding program of distinguished scholars and lecturers. Among them, we hosted the visits of Professors Mary Roberts (University of Sydney), Ruth Ben-Ghiat (NYU), and Armin Schwegler (UC Irvine). We also had the honor of having among us one of the most renowned Spanish-language writers from Guinea, Donato Ndongo. His visit was a hit among our undergraduate students who had the rare opportunity to talk and listen to a contemporary writer. Professor and Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito (Italian Institute for the Human Sciences, Naples) joined us in February for our 30th Hayward Keniston Lecture, which is our opportunity to remember and celebrate the intellectual life of renowned Hispanist Professor Hayward Keniston, who was Domingo Faustino Sarmiento University Professor and Dean of the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) at UM. Our colleague Professor Ryan Spziech organized an excellent conference on medieval studies, "Late Medieval Exegesis." And our department was happy to co-sponsor many interesting events across campus, which had a direct impact on our students and faculty. Among them, we participated in the annual Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) conference and in the film series "Women Visualizing Africa," organized by Professor Frieda Ekotto and RLL Graduate Student of French Marie Stoll. We also participated in the LSA Language Theme Semester, in which two of our graduate students (Brian Whitener and Martin Vega) organized a talk on Nahuatl, the most widely spoken of the indigenous languages of Mexico.

RLL faculty has also been busy with publications, research accomplishments and awards. Professors Steve Dworkin and Ryan Spziech have published books with Oxford University Press and University of Pennsylvania Press, respectively. Professor Peggy McCracken has co-edited a book with Professor Sharon Kinoshita (UC Santa Cruz). Professor Karla Mallette was awarded the Helmut F. Stern Fellowship at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities for the academic year 2012-13. Professors Enrique García Santo-Tomás and Vincenzo Binneti received Michigan Humanities Awards. We are proud of our colleague Professor Paulina Alberto who received the Roberto Reis Book Award from the Brazilian Studies Association for her book published in 2011. She also received a Class of 1923 Memorial Teaching Award. Professor Gareth Williams and Lecturers Rachel Criso and Carlos de los Santos were nominated by students for recognition at the Council on Global Engagement for their endeavors in helping to make UM a globally engaged community. I was deeply honored to be the recipient of the John D'Arms Award for Distinguished Graduate Mentoring in the Humanities.

Furthermore, I am very happy to welcome two outstanding new members of faculty to our program. Assistant Professor Nicholas

Henriksen and Lecturer III Lorenzo García-Amaya are both linguists working on Spanish sociolinguistics, phonetics and applied linguistics. They will contribute enormously to the expansion of our course offerings in linguistics and will thereby help diversify our curriculum in the future.

As we teach a large number of students, both in our elementary language programs and in our concentrations and minors, one of our main priorities is the undergraduate curriculum and the teaching of our outstanding undergraduates. In 2012, we had 249 students who graduated with a minor or a concentration in French, Italian, Spanish or Romance Languages. I would like to extend my congratulations to all of them and to those who won RLL awards.

As I close this letter, I would very much like to share with you RLL's deep gratitude for your generosity and for considering, once more or for the first time, supporting our students and programs with your donations. It is your generosity in supporting us that make it possible for our students to receive scholarships, internships and grants both to recognize their outstanding academic work and to have potentially life-changing experiences abroad. Once again, I would like to emphasize that we would love to hear from you. If you are ever in Ann Arbor, I would love for you to stop by the MLB. And we would love to receive your alumni news to include in our "Alumni Update" ■

Cristina Moreiras-Menor, Chair

Check out the new look of RLL on the web!

www.lsa.umich.edu/rll

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Inside

03 Faculty News

05 En Nuestra Lengua

30th Hayward Keniston Lecture

06 Between Two Cultures:
An Interview with Helene Neu

07 Teach for America: Washington D.C.

09 Graduate News

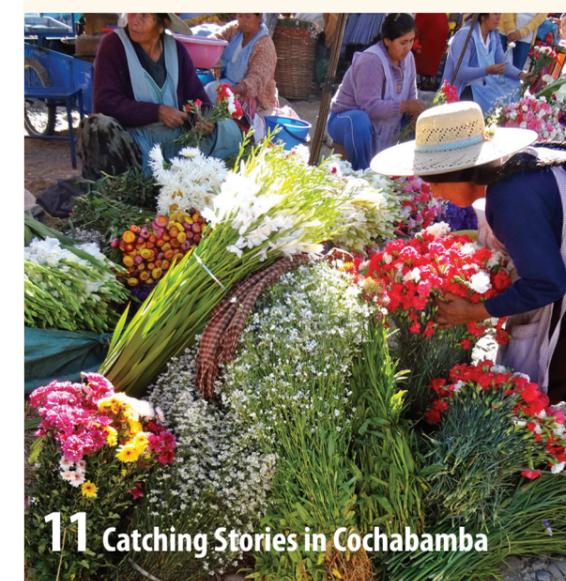
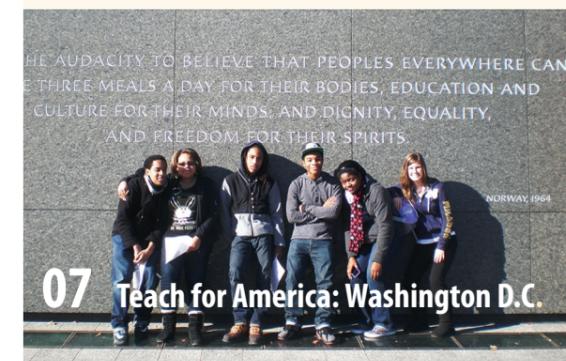
11 Catching Stories in Cochabamba

12 Introducing Spanish Club

13 More than a Dash: The Legacy
of Professor Nelson

14 In Memory: Professor Emeritus
of French Roy Nelson

Alumni Update



Focus on Faculty

Karla Mallette, associate professor of Italian and near eastern studies, was awarded the Helmut F. Stern Fellowship at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities for the academic year 2012-13.

Enrique García Santo-Tomás, professor of Spanish, and **Vincenzo Binetti**, professor of Italian, received Michigan Humanities Awards for 2013.

Peggy McCracken, professor of French and women's studies, co-authored *Marie de France: A Critical Companion* (Boydell, 2011) with Professor Sharon Kinoshita (UC Santa Cruz).

Marie de France is the author of some of the most influential and important works to survive from the Middle Ages; arguably best-known for her *Lais*, she also translated *Aesop's Fables* (the *Ysopé*), and wrote the *Espurgatoire seint Patriz* (St Patrick's Purgatory), based on a Latin text. The aim of this Companion is both to provide information on what can be gleaned of her life, and on her poetry, and to rethink standard questions of interpretation, through topics with special relevance to medieval literature and culture.

Fernando Arenas, professor of Lusophone African, Brazilian, and Portuguese Studies, was closing keynote speaker at the 9th annual graduate student conference at UCLA in May 2012 with his lecture titled, "Africans and Afro-Descendants in Portugal: Continuity and Ruptures from Late Medieval to Postcolonial Times."

He was also opening keynote speaker at the 14th Annual University of South Carolina Comparative Literature Conference.

Ryan Szpiech, assistant professor of Spanish, authored, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic* (University of Pennsylvania Press) published in early 2012.

Conversion draws on sources from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim polemics to investigate the importance of the narrative form in dramatizing the conversion of religious infidelity to faith in the context of the medieval western Mediterranean.

Cristina Moreiras-Menor, RLL department chair and professor of Spanish and women's studies, was awarded the John D'Arms Award for Distinguished Graduate Mentoring in the Humanities.

Olga Gallego Smith, lecturer IV of Spanish, co-authored and led the writing of Spanish I, an innovative, communicative online course created with an advanced language-optimized learning platform for Middlebury Interactive Languages. The Spanish I course has been nominated for a 2012 CODiE award by the Software & Information Industry Association.

Javier Sanjinés, professor of Spanish, delivered a paper on "Andean Modernity and Post-colonial Thought" at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai, China, on May 21, 2012 and participated in Beijing at the XXV Conference of the Academy of Latinity, in cooperation with Tsinghua University on May 23-25, 2012.

In addition he published a paper on "Mariátegui and Andean Revolutionarism," in *Humanity and Difference in the Global Age*, published by the Academy of Latinity and an article on "De la nación mestiza a los recientes desplazamientos de la metáfora social," in *Tinkazos: Revista boliviana de ciencias sociales*. His article, "Fluvial Metaphors and the Politics of Place in Bolivia" has recently been accepted for publication in *Localities* (Pusan National University, South Korea). He has upcoming conferences on Latin American Cultural Studies at PIEB, in La Paz, Bolivia, at Ohio State University, and at Universidad Andina "Simón Bolívar" in Quito, Ecuador.

Paulina Alberto, associate professor of Spanish, Portuguese, and history, received the Roberto Reis Book Award from the Brazilian Studies Association for her book, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (UNC Press, 2011), and also received the LSA Class of 1923 Memorial Teaching Award.

Gareth Williams, professor of Spanish, **Rachel Criso**, lecturer IV of French, and **Carlos de los Santos**, lecturer IV of Spanish, were nominated by students at the Council on Global Engagement for their work on undergraduate global engagement at UM.

Steve Dworkin, professor of Romance linguistics and Spanish, recently published, *A History of the Spanish Lexicon: A Linguistic Perspective* (Oxford University Press) in early 2012.

This history of the Spanish lexicon is written from the interacting perspectives of linguistic and cultural change and in the light of advances in the study of language contact and lexical change. *History* is aimed at advanced students and scholars of Spanish linguistics and will interest specialists in Hispanic literary and cultural studies.



Nicholas Henriksen

Nicholas Henriksen is a new faculty member in linguistics in RLL. He received a dual Ph.D. degree in Hispanic linguistics and linguistics from Indiana University in 2010. He also studied at the Universitat de València in Valencia, Spain and collaborates with faculty from the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha in Toledo, Spain. Henriksen comes to UM from Northern Illinois University, where

he held a tenure-track appointment for two years.

Henriksen's research focuses on issues in the phonetics and phonology of different varieties of Spanish from an experimental perspective, focusing primarily on prosodic structure and the intonational signaling of questions and statements. His work has a strong interdisciplinary component, drawing from the fields of phonological theory, sociolinguistics, diachronic linguistics, and dialect variation. Henriksen's most recent publications are based on the intonational structure of questions and statements in varieties of Spanish spoken in northern, central, and southern Spain, framed within contemporary theoretical approaches to intonational phonology. A broader impact of his findings is that they put to rest some of the long-standing issues in Spanish intonational structure and open the door to newer hypotheses on intonational form. Recently, Henriksen has begun to explore the social and linguistic motivations of rhotic variation (i.e., 'taps' and

'trills') in Peninsular Spanish. One important connection between his work on intonational variation and rhotic variation is the common theme of covert and overt prestige and the influence of prescriptive norms among college-aged young adults who reside in areas of rural Spain.

Henriksen is now expanding his work on Spanish intonation to the field of bilingual and heritage language learning for speakers of Spanish in the greater Chicago and southeastern Michigan areas. He works primarily with speakers of Mexican descent and asks whether their intonational data may be framed within current positions on language contact, bilingualism, and the interactions that arise within the first and second language phonetic domains. His current empirical data reveal a wide range of phenomena at the phonetic and phonological levels of intonational analysis.

Henriksen currently teaches advanced undergraduate courses in Hispanic linguistics and looks forward to proposing new courses in his research areas for the department's robust cohort of concentrators and minors. He is currently recruiting students to work on his research projects in experimental phonetics and sociophonetics through the university's Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP). Apart from his professional responsibilities, Henriksen has taken recent interest in the culinary traditions of Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean island nation where he was raised. He looks forward to returning to Trinidad during the December recess ■

John D'Arms Award for Distinguished Graduate Mentoring in the Humanities

Cristina Moreiras-Menor, professor of Spanish and women's studies, and chair of RLL, was a winner of the 2011 John H. D'Arms Award for Distinguished Graduate Mentoring in the Humanities. These prestigious awards were created in honor of John H. D'Arms, vice provost for Academic Affairs and dean of the graduate school (1985-1995), to recognize scholars and/or creative artists of extraordinary depth and breadth who have provided their students with the quality of intellectual support that only remarkable learning, coupled with boundless generosity of spirit, can bestow. The award was presented in a formal ceremony on April 19, 2012, in the Rackham Amphitheatre. Janet Weiss, dean of the Rackham Graduate School and vice provost for Academic Affairs, presided over the event.

In making the award, Dean Weiss affirmed the selection committee's judgment that Professor Moreiras-Menor embodies to the highest degree the qualities which the D'Arms award is meant to recognize: exceptional scholarship, broad and deep knowledge, boundless generosity, and an outstanding record of fostering the intellectual, scholarly, creative, and professional growth of doctoral students. A scholar of modern and contemporary Spain who has published two monographs and many articles on literature and film, particularly in the context of Spain's transition to democracy, Professor Moreiras-Menor has instilled in her students an understanding of the wide-ranging issues relevant to a study of modern culture. In every aspect of her scholarly and pedagogical practice, she has been an exemplary mentor and a superlative role model for her students.

Since she joined the department in 2002, Professor Moreiras-Menor has played a major role in all aspects of graduate education. She served as graduate chair from 2005-2007, before becoming chair of RLL in 2010. She has taught numerous well-attended graduate seminars and many independent studies. She has directed nearly 20 dissertations and served on the committees of many more.

However, more important than the sheer quantity of her mentoring activities, the award attests to their consistently high quality. Professor Moreiras-Menor was cited as an outstanding mentor in all ways: a rigorous teacher who brings out the best in her students and leads them to realize their full potential; a stimulating intellectual interlocutor; a generous and supportive mentor who gives selflessly of her time and attention; a scholar of broad and deep knowledge who elicits respect and helps her students to go beyond themselves. She was specifically recognized as an inspiring role model who mentors by example, enacting the values to which she subscribes and which she believes to be important for her students to have in the future. In addition to providing her students with a rigorous training in their fields, Professor Moreiras-Menor imparts to them a deeply felt commitment to the humanities in theory and practice, and to the role of education, and educators, in society.

In conferring this award, the University recognized that Professor Moreiras-Menor reflects the highest ideals of graduate education at the University of Michigan ■

En Nuestra Lengua

Nationally recognized En Nuestra Lengua (ENL) was launched in 2010 to create solutions that successfully combat the Latino education achievement gap. It is an ongoing collaboration between Spanish-speaking elementary school students, their families, and an interdisciplinary team of university researchers/faculty, with the full support of Ann Arbor area public schools.

“The “achievement gap” in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The achievement gap shows up in grades, standardized test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college-completion rates, among other success measures. It is most often used to describe the troubling performance gaps between African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their non-Hispanic white peers, and the similar academic disparity between students from low-income families and those who are better off.” (2011 *Education Week*)

In 2009, 18.7% of students enrolled in Ann Arbor elementary schools were potentially Spanish speakers and national statistics predicted 30% of Hispanic students would drop out of high school. Troubled by this trend, RLL Professor Teresa Satterfield and José Benkí, a research investigator in the Institute of Social Research at UM, initiated the ENL project. Currently, it is the sole resource in the Ann Arbor area for Spanish-dominant parents who want to be more directly involved in their children’s education. There is no cost to families to participate in the program.

ENL operates as a Saturday school for Spanish-speakers, sup-



Students in the En Nuestra Lengua program.

plementing the existing pre-kindergarten thru grade 3 school curriculum with coursework in Spanish. Concurrent with the children’s Saturday instruction, a parental information group is held to support Spanish-speaking caregivers in their interaction with the public school system and to provide a forum for other relevant topics.

In the 2011-12 academic year, ENL served nearly 100 Spanish-speaking children, ages 3-10 and their families, from various cities and schools in southeastern Michigan.

For further information on the program or to donate, please see the ENL website www.umich.edu/~tsatter/ENL or contact Teresa Satterfield, tsatter@umich.edu ■

30th Hayward Keniston Lecture

RLL was pleased to welcome Professor Roberto Esposito to campus on Thursday March 29, 2012 to present the 30th Hayward Keniston Lecture titled, “The Different Characteristics of Italian Thought.”

Professor Esposito is professor of contemporary philosophy at the Italian Institute for the Human Sciences in Naples, Italy. He is considered one of the most original and influential voices in contemporary political philosophy, best known for his work on biopolitics and political theory.

“Esposito’s thought always sustains a critical, productive relation with both the modern legacy of Fascism and with certain legacies of deconstruction, in particular, with the move within deconstruction toward the thought not of the subject, but of that which exceeds it: namely, with impersonal,” said Gareth Williams, professor of Spanish in RLL in his introduction of Esposito. “For Esposito, as it was for Jacques Derrida, the possibility of renewing the ground of political philosophy remains a promise beyond the realm and history of representation.”

Esposito’s most famous books, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008) and *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford University Press, 2009) have both been translated to English by Timothy Campbell, professor of Italian studies and chair of Romance Studies at Cornell University.

You can watch RLL’s 30th Hayward Keniston Lecture online at <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/events/multimedia> or listen to the audio-only version.

The Keniston lectures are made possible by the generous Hayward Keniston Lecture Endowment given to the Department by the Keniston family in memory of Hayward Keniston. Keniston served as department chair of RLL from 1940-1945 and dean of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) from 1945-1951. The Keniston lectures, which began in 1971, have been a highlight of the RLL calendar for over 40 years ■

Between Two Cultures: An Interview with Helene Neu

Helene Neu, former director of the elementary French program in RLL, talks about growing up, her time at UM, and the best things about RLL.



Would you talk a little about your background? I was born in Torrance, California - a town about 20 minutes south of LAX (Los Angeles International Airport). I lived in the nearby area called “Hollywood Riviera” by locals because of the beach, vegetation, and houses that look very much like those on the French Riviera for all but four years until I left for college. Because of my father’s work, for seven months, when I was 9 years old, we lived in Mexico City then when I was 11 years old, we moved to Brussels, Belgium where we lived for three years.

When did you become interested in French? I became interested in French, while living in Belgium and learned there. I continued studying when I returned to the U.S. while in high school and in college because I liked it and it was easy for me. Actually, I don’t know if I realized it then, but it was also a way to continue to live in two cultures and languages - to hold on to what had become an important part of my identity. I was determined to get back to Europe and so, I participated in the University of California’s wonderful study abroad program in Bordeaux during my junior year. After returning, I took French phonetics for a year and loved it, but it wasn’t until graduate school that I had my “ah-ha” moment and realized that I wanted to pursue linguistics and phonetics, which



In the 80s and 90s Helene was very active in the ballet community and remained part of the Ann Arbor Dance Theatre until 1992.

are two of my research interests, along with secondary language acquisition.

When did you start teaching at UM? In fall 1976.

What will you miss most about teaching at UM? Contact with students

who enjoy learning and are motivated to learn, not just focused on a grade, as well as the sense that I’m contributing to their learning, enjoyment of learning, and - in some cases - their intellectual growth and development of critical thinking skills.

I’ll also miss informal conversations with students outside of class time and the contact that I’ve had with many of my colleagues, but it will be nice to see some of them away from the MLB!

Another thing that is very important to me, that working and teaching in the Department has provided, is that it has allowed me to live between two cultures. From the age of 11 and during all but eight years of my life, I’ve spent at least part of the day among Francophones and speaking French.

What do you think makes RLL unique?

The tremendous financial support by the department, mentoring by graduate faculty, and the guidance graduate students receive in their teaching by language program coordinators. The opportunities for grad students to design their own upper-level literature classes and teach them. I’ve heard how impressed people on hiring committees at other universities are with the variety of teaching experiences that many of our grad students have had.

I’ll also miss the variety of languages spoken, nationalities, and cultures among the people teaching in the department. In many universities, French and Italian are in one department and Spanish and Portuguese in another. It’s great to walk down the hallways and hear all of these languages, including at times Catalan and

Croatian!

Besides French and English, do you speak any other language(s)? Well, I hesitate to say that I really speak any other languages, but I have studied a few others in my life: Spanish, Italian, Russian, Turkish, and Arabic. I have a spotty history with Spanish, but at some point I’d like to get back some fluency in it.



Helene at age 7.

What are your plans after retirement? I’m taking a sociolinguistics class (Linguistics 542), hoping to catch up a bit with where I left off before I came to UM and possibly get back into research. Over the past summer, I rediscovered the pleasure of reading for fun - fiction and nonfiction - and read more in three months than I had read in the previous five years or more! I might join a book club. I’ve already begun to do a lot more socializing and not just on weekends, going to movies in the middle of the afternoon, sleeping late on a weekday. Once I’m fully retired (I’m teaching French phonetics in winter 2013), I’m sure that I’ll do some traveling, but I’m not terribly interested in typical tourist type travel ■

To learn more about Helene and her history with the department, tune in to RLL’s podcast interview available on our website: www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/events/multimedia.



Teach for America: Washington D.C.

Alumna Nichole Endline (BA Spanish '10) explains how one program and an amazing groups of kids changed her career and her life forever.

Coming from Midland, Michigan, I never really saw evidence of educational inequity first hand—I was fortunate enough to live in an area with great public education. When I came to the University of Michigan, I continued to experience the privilege of having access to great educational opportunities and talented teachers and professors. It was here during my four years in Ann Arbor that I was exposed to some of the harsh realities that Americans living in poverty face every day, which greatly affects their ability to succeed in school and achieve in life.

As part of the Residential College (RC), I had the pleasure of interacting with many exceptional Spanish professors, one of whom introduced me to an organization that really opened my eyes. Cristhian Espinoza-Pino, a lecturer in the RC, was the faculty advisor for Proyecto Advance, Latino Mentoring Association (PALMA) and I joined in my second semester of my freshman year. Throughout my three years in the organization, I interacted with Guadalupe Salazar, or Lupe, and her two sons, Hernan and Gabriel. I worked with Lupe helping to teach her English through the use of Spanish. Occasionally I would go with Lupe to her sons' schools and translate during parent-teacher conferences so that Lupe could participate and support her sons in their education. I quickly realized the challenges that immigrant families face when it comes to involvement in their children's education due to language barriers. This was my first experience seeing educational injustice and I felt outraged. Through some conversations with Cristhian and outside research, I came across Teach For America, an organization whose mission is to end educational inequity in the United States. This mission was deeply personal to me, especially as I thought of Lupe's two sons and about their limited access to necessary educational supports and resources. I applied to Teach For America in the fall, was accepted, and moved to Washington, D.C. to begin my two-year commitment in the corps. Little did I know, I was embarking on a journey that would forever change the way I viewed the world and my perspectives on education in the US.

During my two years as a corps member of Teach For America, I had the privilege of teaching high school Spanish to over 250 amazing and talented students in Prince George's County, Maryland, just outside of the District. With a Spanish and environmental studies background, I felt the weight of responsibility, teaching a classroom of kids and being accountable for leading them to high academic achievement. I wanted so badly to be a transformational teacher for my kids and I planned on doing exactly that by inspiring and motivating my kids to work hard, think big, and do their best each and every day. In an effort to become part of my school community, interact more with my kids and build relationships, I became the varsity girls' soccer coach at my school. I jumped right into the school year with two hours of soccer practice every day after school and prepping for three classes

each night in addition to my graduate coursework, which was an optional part of the program. All of this kept me extremely busy but also very much connected to the work I was doing and very grounded in the reason I was in Washington, D.C., the nation's capitol, and part of Teach For America.

I was so focused on my content, so focused on giving my kids rigorous lessons and challenging work, and so focused on pushing and supporting my kids as they strived to meet the high expectations of my courses that I wasn't as focused on really listening to them. I knew that they were facing extreme adversity at home and in their communities, but I hadn't really stopped to talk with them about it and question them about how they were affected by it. It wasn't until I did that I really saw my kids grow leaps and bounds, internalize the importance of education and push themselves in class. I want to introduce you to some of my amazing kids:

Ana: From Honduras, Ana moved here at the age of 11 and didn't know any English. Due to this language barrier, she was immediately placed on a track that would never challenge her in the ways necessary to push her to high academic achievement. During her junior and senior years, I worked closely with Ana, in Spanish class, during lunch, and after school, trying to get her caught up in chemistry, English, and algebra. She worked 30+ hours a week at a fast food chain and had difficult relationships with those in her family. Although she considered dropping out of school a handful of times when things got really tough, I had the privilege of seeing the smile on her face as she crossed the stage to grab her diploma in May 2012.

Davon: Born and raised in Prince George's County, Davon was tested for learning disabilities at some point before 7th grade and was given an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and enrolled in special education. After his unit 1 test, Davon scored below 50% and his case manager wanted to pull him from the class. However, I talked with Davon and his parents to allow him to stay in class on the condition that he come to tutoring with me twice a week after school. By the time he took his unit 2 test, Davon scored a 74%

and I couldn't have been more proud. He worked very hard in class and after school. All of this paid off when he scored a 96% on the final exam at the end of the year.

Debo: From Nigeria, Debo came to the U.S. at an early age and was blessed with parents who worked tirelessly to teach him English. By the time he'd reached high school, he had been placed into more advanced classes and one could hardly imagine that he came here not knowing the language. He was part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at my school and I had him in Spanish. No one at the school had gotten the diploma in over 8 years and it was rare for a kid to get above a 2 or a 3 on the Spanish exam (out of 7). We worked extremely hard in class and after school (when he didn't have to care for his younger siblings after school) and he did the impossible—he graduated the valedictorian of his class, got the IB diploma, received a 4 on the Spanish exam, and gained admittance to the University of Maryland-College Park with several scholarships to his name.

Malik: From our nation's capitol, Malik has spent a large part of his life being bounced between relatives. His father was not in the picture and his mother intermittently abused drugs and was forced to surrender her rights to live with and parent him. He had a lot of built up anger and frustration. He frequently acted out in school. He was almost 18 years old but still in the 10th grade, because he'd failed English twice as well as Spanish. While in detention with me for two weeks straight, Malik and I talked a lot about his past and about why he acted the way he did. Every day he revealed more and more about himself that made me feel sick, sick from hearing about how much he'd faced in his life at such a young age. This was such a turning point for Malik in terms of his behavior in school—he told me that no one had ever really listened to his story and taken time to work through how he was feeling. Although he wasn't a complete angel, he was for me.

Michaela: From Jamaica, Michaela came to the U.S. also at an early age and worked very hard early on to achieve a high level of English fluency. Despite the great academic success she had experienced in school, Michaela did not feel good about herself. I met her on the soccer field in my first year (and in my second year she was in my Spanish class) and could already see what a leader she was—she led by example. I constantly drew attention to Michaela's impeccable leadership and character and later the team selected her to be the captain—she was captain both years I was at the school. After, I watched as she graduated in the top 10% of her class. She told me later that she never saw herself as a leader until she met

me, because no one had ever helped her see it.

Jose: From Washington, D.C., Jose has a mother who was African American and a father who was Puerto Rican. He attended an international elementary school that offered instruction in both English and Spanish. When he was in middle school, his father was killed in Iraq, which continues to affect Jose in many ways to this day. He was incredibly intelligent and talented but began to reject everything about himself that his father had cared about or inspired him to be—this meant Spanish was out the window. I had Jose in class for two years and developed a very close relationship with him and his mother.

An important lesson I've learned from my two years in the classroom is that before kids can be successful in school and reach levels of high academic excellence, they must first feel empowered to do so. Many of the students in my classes had the odds stacked against them from the beginning—they were from low-income areas, living with only one parent or sometimes with grandparents or relatives, many had to care for younger siblings or work after school to help their families out with bills, and the majority had fallen victim to a culture of low achievement and low expectations. Once I was able to build the relationships with my kids that allowed them to feel supported, safe, respected, and capable, I truly saw them shine. Each and every one of them is intelligent, hard-working, and incredibly resilient—they simply needed some additional supports and systems in place that would allow others, like me, to see it. Unfortunately, not all teachers, and schools, and communities are equipped with the resources to make this happen, which poses a big threat to the future of these students, my students, growing up under these circumstances.

I have just finished my two years in the corps and joined thousands of Teach For America alumni. I fully expected myself to pursue law school or another graduate school program upon my completion of this experience; however, what I've actually done is something entirely different—I joined staff at Teach For America. My kids have completely changed my life trajectory just like I hope I have changed theirs. As I begin this new chapter in my professional career, I will keep the memories of my kids close and use them to keep me forever grounded in this work and fighting to end educational inequity, one day at a time ■



Nichole's students in front of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington D.C.



Nichole and the girls from her soccer team.

Message from the Graduate Chair

It is a great pleasure to welcome yet another outstanding group of new graduate students to RLL. Ludmila Ferrari, Ben Ireland, Juan Leal Ugalde, Mary Renda, Emily Thomas, and Juan Udaondo Alegre join a vibrant and active student community.

At the same time as they are completing classes, teaching undergraduate students, and writing their dissertations, our graduate students continue to publish a journal, *Tiresias*, to organize conferences and lectures, and to attend scholarly conferences outside of the University of Michigan.

We are all extremely proud of our students' accomplishments and offer them warm wishes for continuing success ■

Peggy McCracken
Professor of French, Women's Studies, and
Comparative Literature

Meet the New Graduate Students



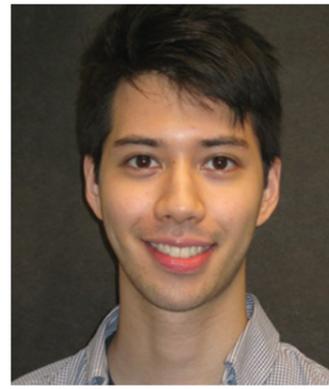
Juan Udaondo Alegre (Spanish)
Universidad Nacional de Educación a
Distancia, B.A. in History and Geography
Universidad da Coruña, M.A. and Ph.D. in
Education

Interests: Spanish medieval and Golden
Age literature; philosophical and historical
hermeneutics; poetry and rhetoric; theatri-
cal and performance studies; Muslim and
Judaic tradition in Spain; iconography; and
hagiography.



Ludmila Ferrari (Spanish)
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, B.A. in
Art and M.A. in Cultural Studies

Interests: Latin American subaltern studies
and postcoloniality (subversion and resis-
tance); and political poetics.



Ben Ireland (French)
Davidson College, B.A. in French

Interests: Franco-Asian literary, socio-cul-
tural, and filmic intersections (France and
Japan, China, Vietnam); Japanology; criti-
cal French literary theory (semiotics, post-
structuralism, Marxism, psychoanalysis,
post-humanism); philosophy of language;
gender and sexuality studies and Medieval
French literature (12th-13th centuries).



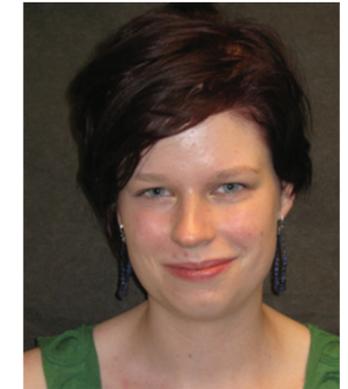
Juan Leal Ugalde (Spanish)
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile,
B.A. in Philosophy

Interests: postcolonial studies; critical
theory; subaltern studies in America; An-
dean cultures; and gender studies.



Mary Renda (Spanish)
Xavier University, B.A. in Spanish and
Political Science

Interests: cultural and subaltern studies;
indigenous representation; and postcolo-
nial feminism.



Emily Thomas (Spanish)
Carleton College, B.A. in Spanish

Interests: Peninsular literature; Hispanic
studies in the 20th Century and the Early
Modern Era.

Congratulations to the following Ph.D. recipients in 2012:

Talía Dajes (Spanish)

Dissertation: "Staging Terror: Violence and the Aesthetics of Civil War in Contemporary Peru"
visiting assistant professor, Michigan Technological University

Christian Kroll (Spanish)

Dissertation: "Writing Beyond Reason: Literature, Insurgency, Counterinsurgency and Sovereignty in Contemporary Latin America"
assistant professor, Sewanee University

Sandra Watts (Spanish)

Dissertation: "Genre in the Works of Benjamín Jarnés: 'el género intermedio'"
senior lecturer, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Why Support a Romance Languages & Literatures Graduate Student?

The range and variety of RLL graduate student research is the window into the cultures, languages, dialects, politics, social structures, and history of the Romance world. Currently some of our students are researching the literature of Francophone Africa; feminism, cinema, and theater in Italy; violence, political resistance, ethnic identities, and social movements in Latin America; and U.S. and Mexico border relations. Their fluency in the native language allows RLL graduate students to study first-hand, un-translated, unfiltered materials to form a more accurate perspective and interpretation of the target community and culture they are studying, which later results in articles, essays, and other publications useful to the general public. However, gaining access to these materials requires time abroad, a potentially prohibitive cost.

As the necessity of global insight, understanding, and engagement continues to rise, RLL has made it a priority to help as many of our students as possible conduct research abroad. Annual endowments and fellowships range \$15,000-\$50,000 each. With over 50 active graduate students, your donation to RLL to support graduate students is crucial. Please help support RLL graduate students today by contributing to:

Endowed Fellowship
First-Year Graduate Student Fellowships
Fifth-Year Graduate Student Fellowships
Summer Graduate Student Fellowships
Graduate Research Fellowships

To learn more about these opportunities and to donate, please visit <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/alumnifriends/givingopportunities> ■

Catching Stories in Cochabamba

Courtney Weber, an honors double concentrator in Spanish and anthropology talks about her summer in Bolivia and how we can all be “story catchers.”

When you mention that you spent the summer in Cochabamba, Bolivia, you can expect a number of responses, especially surprise; people don't often hear of this less-than-common summer destination. In fact, many are puzzled as to where in the world Bolivia is even located. Immediately intrigued, most want to know why I spent my summer in such a distant country. My story begins when I say I was there to study the growing type two diabetes epidemic.

Diabetes in the developing world is a huge problem and it continues to grow every day. For 10 weeks, I studied this public health issue at Bolivia's only integral diabetes care facility. Centro Vivir con Diabetes (CVCD) is a nonprofit organization that provides the medication, specialists, education, food, and social services that diabetics need to live healthy lives. As the center grows, their partner Direct Relief International (DRI) is looking for ways to streamline practices and help CVCD on their path to self-sustainability. With DRI's guidance, I along with four other UM students had the opportunity to assist the center with research. At the end of our summer (or Bolivian winter), we were able to present DRI and CVCD with our policy recommendations and findings.

This brief description of my work with CVCD is only the forward to the stories I collected from Cochabamba. These stories are the most treasured souvenirs that I brought home and they have changed me for the better.

One story that will give a personal face to a country many have never heard of is about Flor, a 5-year-old we met at CVCD's type one diabetes camp. She couldn't sleep because of five rotten teeth and a gum infection she had been living with for months. Her family was unable to afford any type of dental care. Like many people around the world without health insurance, little Flor had no other option but to live with this problem.

Another story is about the CVCD home visits. These patients opened their homes to us, and talked about the shame, fear, and guilt that come with a diabetes diagnosis. Still other stories show a



Courtney talks with a mother and her son.

completely different side of Bolivia: the friendly religious debates we saw in the plaza on Saturday afternoon; the colors, smells, and tastes of the largest outdoor market in South America; the indigenous groups that live and work aboard the floating islands of Lake Titicaca; and even being mugged on streets of Cochabamba, which is a lesson I learned about how to be safe and have shared with my friends in Ann Arbor to keep them safe as well.

This imaginary book of stories doesn't sit on my shelf collecting dust, but travels with me on a daily basis. I'm able to simultaneously read it every day and loan it to each of my friends, family members, and acquaintances. Some of the stories are inspiring, a few are funny, and others are difficult to relive, but each is a story of how a new perspective shaped who I am today. Although I was fortunate enough to travel to a completely different country to do this, we can all be story catchers even at home. Simply, we must choose specific experiences to remember, relive, and share because of what they taught us, or how they challenged our previous feelings and outlooks. In this way, we can all call ourselves authors of some of the most riveting, memorable, and beautiful stories around ■

RLL Summer Internship Stipends

RLL was happy to award summer internship stipends to three RLL undergraduates in summer 2012. RLL Summer Internship Stipends, open to all declared concentrators and minors in RLL accepted to an internship program where their language skills will be used extensively, is made possible by generous donations to the department. These stipends have been crucial in making internships, especially unpaid, financially feasible for students. However, this is still an area of great need and each year the number of student applicants increases.

If you are interested in helping us support undergraduate student internships, please make a donation today by mailing in the donation form on the back page or donate online at <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/alumnifriends/givingopportunities>.

Introducing Spanish Club

“Hello everyone!

As former president, I'm happy to have the opportunity to write about the Spanish Club at the University of Michigan.

The Spanish Club is a student-run organization. The goal of its operations is to increase the conversational ability and cultural awareness of its members. It is our belief that, in order for a person to advance their language skills, that person needs to have interesting and available content, as well as a relaxed atmosphere in which to practice their conversational Spanish.

At the heart of the Spanish Club are the conversation hours. These hours are run throughout the week in Espresso Royale, a local coffee shop, on State Street. What I see as a major benefit of the conversation hours is the presence of peers helping peers in their language acquisition. Members possess varying degrees of skills in Spanish, so often the conversation hours naturally develop into mentor and mentee relationships. The conversation hours also have an element of the English coffeehouses of the 17th century, in which patrons came, not to drink their coffee alone and to study, nor to drink their coffee and talk only with friends, but rather to share ideas and opinions with a variety of other people. I believe this keeps the blood of the Spanish Club fresh. I have seen many individuals join the Club through the conversation hours and develop a comfort with the language that they had not known before. Personally, I can say that not only did my comfort with the language increase through my participation in the Club conversation hours, but, on a larger scale, so did the way in which I thought.

As the Club has grown, the leadership has continued to expand the Club's offerings. RLL has been intrinsic in this expansion. RLL has provided the Club with the necessary funds to put on events such as ‘Medicos sin fronteras,’ ‘Los Arhuacos: un contacto cultural,’ and ‘En nuestra lengua.’ On an individual scale, the professors in RLL have been supportive of the Club's goals. Not only have they helped us contact possible presenters for Club events, but they have also given presentations of their own. Cristina Moreiras-Menor, Tatiana Calixto, Teresa Satterfield, and Ruben Peredo deserve special thanks for their contributions. Raquel González deserves a particular saludo, as she has worked with the Club nonstop, hosting her own conversation hours once per week and always keeping her door open to exchange ideas and advice.

Another highlight of the Spanish Club has been the “Spanish Course Preview Night.” The goal of this event is to provide students with an opportunity to learn, directly from professors, which courses will be offered in the following semester. The preview night was developed with the understanding that a class is more than just the works that will be read or the syllabus that is presented. Its purpose is to offer students the opportunity to get to know professors in a way that the course description does not. Therefore students should be able to make better informed decisions concerning their courses, leading to fewer class changes and more teaching and learning time for all involved (as well as less stress!). In addition the “Spanish Course Preview Night” provides students with the opportunity to get a feel for RLL's culture and creates a sense of community between students and RLL faculty.

The Club also offers many other activities. For several years running, the Club has offered free tutoring to all Spanish concentrators four days a week for four hours a day, providing them the opportunity to ask an upper-level Spanish student to proofread a paper or explain the subjunctive tense. The Club also offers film screenings of Spanish, Latin American, and South American films, coordinated with the Center for Campus Involvement, and salsa nights.

During my presidency, I had a great time participating in the Spanish Club. It gave me the opportunity to connect with other students interested in the same subjects as I, students whom I respected and with whom I have remained in contact. These students, like me, are now spreading their wings and exploring the world outside of the United States – this is the type of globally oriented individual that the Club attracts. This year, I hope the Club will be even more successful under the new leadership of the enthusiastic and charismatic Nichole Hess. That said, I would like to encourage you to support the Spanish Club in whatever way you can, and I will reinforce that statement with my alma mater's rallying cry: ‘Vamos Azul!’”



Currently Brice is working with a program, run by the Chilean Ministry of Education, called “English Opens Doors,” teaching English in a local Chilean high school.



Spanish Club 2011.



From left to right: Prof. Roy Nelson, Nikki Descoteaux, and Mrs. Anita Nelson in Sarasota, Florida 2003.

More than a Dash: The Legacy of Prof. Nelson (1929-2012)

For Alumna Nikki Klayman Descoteaux (B.A. 1967, M.A. 1968; ABD 1970) Professor Emeritus of French Roy Nelson will be remembered for much more than just his academic achievements.

The February 2012 Sarasota obituary for Roy Nelson, professor emeritus of French, was brief, but as was noted in a well-known memorial poem, it is not those numbers 1929-2012 that count but what Roy did with the dash in between them. As his former student and longtime friend, I wish to honor his memory as a mentor and teacher, hoping to give those who did not know him an idea of how he “spent his dash” in such a valuable way, one that inspired his students in their French coursework and that validated them as individuals and human beings.

In the academic year 1966-67, Prof. Nelson taught the undergraduate senior honors French class. Held in a small group, the course lent itself to intense discussions and close relationships. By example and method, Prof. Nelson encouraged us to listen, question and explore. He supported us through the graduate program application process, as well as through the arduous honors final oral examination. In my case, the support went beyond the test.

He knew I had three acceptances to graduate schools, including a couple of teaching fellowship offers. However, my own University of Michigan, while accepting me to the graduate program, hadn't

offered me a fellowship. I had to make my decision soon! At the end of my honors exam, he asked the faculty panel, the department chair, and me to stay behind. He launched into an inquiry as to why the department hadn't given me a fellowship yet. Was the faculty going to allow this academic asset (I guessed he meant me) to escape to another university? My teaching fellowship letter was in my mailbox the next day.

In graduate school, I took a couple of 20th century courses with Prof. Nelson. His love of French was evident by the passion with which he read us excerpts from even the most impenetrable Nouveau Roman text. When he read or commented on the works, his bright blue eyes alternately blazed with intensity and twinkled with humor. When a student received a paper back from Prof. Nelson, they knew it had been thoroughly read and digested. Once students realized that the enormous quantity of comments and questions were his method of continuing a literary conversation, students appreciated it. Thankfully, he normally used green ink for his comments. I think red ink would have been too intimidating. In fact, once I began teaching, I also avoided using red ink when correcting papers, because of him.

In our post-Michigan years, we became Roy and Nikki to one another and the friendship with Roy and his wife Anita has been immensely important to my husband, also an RLL alumnus, and me. We shared our travel experiences, child-rearing joys, books we read and many delicious French meals. Roy always expressed pride in what his children and his former students accomplished. His love of life was evident, whether in France, Ann Arbor or Sarasota and he never stopped having an impact on people, even in retirement.

I shall remember him as one of my heroes, but one at a most human level. Paraphrasing a thought attributed to Albert Camus, Roy gave his students and his dear family the roots to center and support themselves and the wings to take off for exciting journeys. Roy, you are a part of who I am. Thank you. Peace to you.



From left to right: Nikki, Prof. Nelson, Mrs. Anita Nelson, and Mr. Al Descoteaux in Cape Cod 2005.

In Memory: Professor Emeritus of French Roy Nelson

Roy Jay Nelson, Professor Emeritus of French, died February 8, 2012. A scholar and teacher of modern French literature, Prof. Nelson joined the UM faculty as an instructor of French in 1957 and retired in 1994.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Prof. Nelson earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Pittsburgh in 1951, and an M.A. from Middlebury College in 1952. He completed his Ph.D. at the University of Illinois in 1958. At Michigan, he rose through the ranks to Assistant Professor (1960), Associate Professor (1965) and Professor of French (1972). His publications included *Péguy, poète du sacré* (1960) and *Causality and Narrative in French Fiction from Zola to Robbe-Grillet* (1989), as well as three textbooks and a number of articles on French literature and film.

He is remembered by generations of UM students as an exceptionally dedicated and outstanding educator at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. His dedication to students and his great success as a teacher were recognized by the Ruth Sinclair Award for Honors Counseling and, in 1992, the Amoco Foundation Teaching Award.

Recognized by his colleagues for his fairness, efficiency, and devotion to democratic principles in all matters of faculty governance, Prof. Nelson twice served as acting chair of RLL in 1977 and again in 1992-93. He served on virtually every departmental committee and on many LSA and UM bodies, including the Admissions Committee, the Senate Assembly, and the Rackham Divisional Board for the Humanities.

During his retirement in Sarasota, Florida, he was active in the local Alliance Française and in the University of Michigan Alumni Association Chapter. He is survived by his wife of many years, Anita, by his daughters Barbara Nelson Videira and Wendy Nelson, and by three grandchildren.

**This article was shortened from the original by Professor William Paulson (RLL) which appeared in The University Record Online April 30, 2012 edition.*

Alumni Update

“I have been teaching French at The Archer School for Girls in Los Angeles for the last 7 years, including four as department chair. I love L.A.! Married almost 20 years, with a son and a daughter. I miss my former grad student colleagues from the late '90s! I would love to hear from you.

valerie.yoshimura@mac.com.” - Valerie Yoshimura Ph.D. 2000

We want to hear from YOU!

Update us with your latest news! We want to know what you are up to these days!

Send your news to rll.editor@umich.edu with the subject line, “Alumni News.” Be sure to include your full name, your graduation date, and your degree/language. Please also indicate whether you want your email address listed with your posting or not.

