Barbara Altmann Steps Down as Department Head

Leonardo García-Pabón will lead the department for the next three years

Barbara Altmann Steps Down as Department Head

Dear friends, colleagues, and alumni,

I looked up just now to find three years had flown by! My appointment as department head came to a close as of fall term, and it has been another wonderful year. Our successes of 2008–9 touched all sectors and all levels, and I can mention only some of them here. The “Reading Fear” conference organized by our graduate students got us off to a great start in October. In winter 2008, we were delighted to hire Pedro García-Caro as assistant professor of Spanish after his three years with us as a visitor. We pioneered a new format for our third-year Spanish lit surveys that ran all year. Since September 2008, two new head undergraduate advisers have helped us counsel our hundreds of majors in a new advising office. And by the time this newsletter is in your hands, we will have celebrated many promotions: Kelley Léon-Howarth, Nathan Whalen, Melanie Williams, and Alex Zunterstein have been promoted to senior instructor as of September 2008; and three faculty members in Spanish—Gina Herrmann, Analisa Taylor, and Leah Middlebrook (jointly appointed in the Comparative Literature Program)—have received tenure and promotion to associate professor. Quite a list of accomplishments in any language!

The department is productive, stable, and poised for more intellectual adventure as Professor Leonardo García-Pabón takes over as head. Please continue to support us with your gifts and your good wishes. We put them all to good use! I began directing the Oregon Humanities Center here at the UO starting last fall, but I will continue to invest in Romance Languages, my home in so many ways. As I move out of the head’s office in Friendly Hall, I’d like to close by expressing my appreciation for the exceptional office staff that keeps us all going. It has been a joy to share the space and the job with Linda Leon, Barbara Verwest, and Jeanne Lawson. I thank them with all my heart for their professionalism, their hard work, and their patience and good humor with us all.

A la prochaine!

Barbara K. Altmann

New Undergraduate Advising Office Named for Honored Adviser Luis Verano

As of fall term 2007, the Department of Romance Languages adopted a new undergraduate advising structure to accommodate the needs of the students and faculty members in French, Italian, and Spanish programs. In this new structure, Associate Professor Amalia Gladhart serves as director of undergraduate studies. Spanish instructor Kelley Léon-Howarth and French instructor Melanie Williams serve as head undergraduate advisers.

Under the leadership of Professor Barbara Altmann, the department was thrilled to designate a separate office for undergraduate advising in honor of long-standing and greatly appreciated senior instructor and adviser Luis Verano. Verano began teaching at the University of Oregon in the mid-1980s after having finished his Ph.D. in Spanish literature here. His teaching has spanned the department curriculum from first-year language to upper-division literature.

Leonardo García-Pabón is professor of Latin American literatures. He specializes in Andean literatures with an emphasis in the colonial period. He has also done extensive research in Bolivian literature from different periods. He holds an M.A. from the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium) (1981); and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (1990). His last published book is De Incas, Chaskañawis, Yanakanas y Chullas. Estudios sobre la novela mestiza en los Andes, published by the Universidad de Alicante in Spain.
We were fortunate to host Arturo Arias spring 2008 for an unusually rich series of lectures and discussions. Appropriately enough, Arias—Guatemalan novelist, critic, scholar, screenwriter, and professor at the University of Texas at Austin—wore many hats during his visit to the UO, enthralled undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members alike. Professor Arias delivered a series of four public lectures on contemporary Mayan literature. Entitled “In Their Own Words: Contemporary Mayan Literature,” the lecture series formed an integral part of two seminars taught this spring: Assistant Professor Analisa Taylor’s SPAN 407, Mayan Mesoamerica, and Assistant Professor Pedro García-Caro’s SPAN 407, Violence in Twentieth-Century Latin America. Students from both courses attended the public lectures, which addressed texts they were already studying in class; Professor Arias then alternated between the two seminars for additional sessions with each group. The public lectures represent the first lecture series presented in Spanish, without translation, at Oregon. Professor Arias also delivered one of the lectures in the spring seminar and speaker series, “Colonial Skins, Independent Acts: (Post) Colonial Literatures in the Romance World.” Professor Arias’ intellectual generosity and erudition enriched all of us. Generous support from the Savage Foundation and the Latin American Studies Program supported his visit.

Teaching Matters

In the RL Teaching Matters professional-development workshops, coordinated by Amanda Powell, GTFs, instructors, and tenure-related faculty members exchange tools for integrating literary and cultural study with language pedagogy, from first-year through graduate-level study. 2007–8 topics included “Integrating the Study of Texts and Contexts” (David Wacks, Spanish), “Grading: Fast, Fairly, and Well” (Leslie Rubberg, UO Teaching Effectiveness Program), “Teaching Students to Write: What Works” (Robert Davis, RL director of language instruction), “Helping Students Read: The Double Difficulty of Archaic Language” (Gina Psaki, Italian), and “One Hundred Words for Solitude: Integrating Language Development in Literature Classes—Long Novels” (Pedro García Caro, Spanish). These conversations give a boost to our own teaching with a sample of what our colleagues offer in their classrooms.

Moving Up, Moving On

Shaunna O’Brien, M.A. ’06, is teaching in Italy, applying for doctoral programs in linguistics.

Jennifer Servi, M.A. ’06, is teaching at Valdosta State University in Valdosta, Georgia.

Holly Bennington, M.A. ’06, is teaching at Central Oregon Community College in Bend, Oregon.

Cameron Lougee, M.A. ’06, is teaching at Lane Community College.

Ana Warren, M.A. ’06, is teaching at Oregon State University.

Olivier Clarinval, Ph.D. ’08, landed a teaching job at Kwantlen University College, near Vancouver, British Columbia.

Enrico Vettore, Ph.D. ’07, has a tenure-track position teaching Italian at California State University, Long Beach.
Antonella Antonelli used her grant to travel to Italy to study the concept of an “Italian character.” The scholarship will help defray the costs of visiting the vast library of Giacomo Leopardi, who wrote a foundational essay on Italian identity.

Antoine Bargel used the funds from the Beall Graduate Scholarship to conduct research in libraries and archives in Paris during the summer. The focus of this research is to identify new sources on the journalistic and critical reception of Jorge Semprun’s work in the 1960s and ’70s.

Melinda Buttes, a recipient of the Perry J. Powers Scholarship, used this scholarship toward tuition for the 2008–9 school year in order to complete a double-major in Spanish and linguistics.

As a recipient of the Françoise Calin Scholarship, Kathryn Darnall used the funding to study abroad in Angers, France, in 2008.

Lisa DiGiovanni participated in a four-week course in Santiago, Chile, entitled Revolution, Dictatorship, Democracy: 1970–2008, that will examine the trajectory of Chilean history, politics, and culture over the past forty years. This course will give her the opportunity to discuss with prominent Chilean scholars, writers, and activists the various ways in which Chileans have attempted to deal with the trauma of political violence and narrate historical memory.

Alison Ecker used her scholarship for study abroad in Ferrara in fall 2008.

Ramon Fonkoue is using his grant to further research on his doctoral dissertation, which explores the question of whether the most acclaimed works in postcolonial literatures are, ironically, those whose subversive potential is neutralized. This research focuses on a writer from Quebec, Hubert Aquin, and another from the French Antilles, Patrick Chamoiseau.

Kristina Kirchgessner used the scholarship from the Department of Romance Languages for summer-abroad study in Perugia, Italy.

Mayra Monroy used her scholarship to help fund her master’s studies during the 2008–9 academic year.

Carrie Nicholson used the Leona M. Kail Scholarship to assist in studies as she prepares for a career as a Spanish interpreter. Specifically, she has applied for an IE3 global internship under the Institute of International Education in Mexico City for the coming fall.

Uriel Plascencia traveled to Mexico to study indigenous literature.

Luis Gonzalo Portugal used the Beall Graduate Scholarship to continue research about idolatry and its impact in the colonial period in Latin America (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) as well as the propositions of some poets and philosopher about this topic.

Vania Díaz Romero, a doctoral candidate in Romance languages, travelled to Bolivia over the summer to conduct testimonial interviews with women writers.

Meorah Aretina Solar studies comparative literature and Spanish. Her Leona M. Kail Scholarship was used to help her travel to an intensive Spanish program in Oviedo, Spain—a trip she calls “a dream come true.” Solar writes, “I will be there for four weeks without my three- or ten-year-old daughters, which makes me a little nervous, but I am so very excited to immerse myself in twenty-four hours of thought, reading, and communication in Spanish.”

Alexandria Westlake will use her scholarship for study abroad in Chile in spring 2009.

World to World: An International Translation Workshop

In summer 2007, Amanda Powell directed an intensive workshop in literary translation, SPAN 408/508, Mundo a Mundo/World to World. This two-week course at Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro, México, was cosponsored by the Department of Romance Languages, the Interamerican University Studies Institute, and UAQ. Twenty participants from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, and the United States included writers, translators, university and high school faculty members, and literary aficionados, ranging in age from twenty to eighty. Guest speakers included Pedro García-Caro (on translating Wallace Shawn’s The Fever into Spanish), along with other poets, writers, dramatists, and translators from the U.S. and Mexico. A related two-week course at Oregon was held summer 2008, starting July 28.

This workshop will be done again Summer 2009.
Autunno a Macerata

In fall 2007, twenty UO students joined fifteen students from other Northwest and Midwest schools for a semester in Macerata, Italy. Macerata is a beautiful university town of about 40,000 in a region of central Italy bordering the Adriatic. From Macerata you can view the sea in one direction, the snowy Sybilline Mountains in the other. The town, like the Marche region, is—inexplicably—not much visited by foreign tourists, so it is an authentically Italian destination for our students. It’s still the Italy I fell in love with in college, and I loved seeing students encounter the weekly market, real caffé and gelato, the grape and olive harvests, and the quirky individuality of a small Italian city.

Ours is the only American program in Macerata, and our thirty-five students really appreciated that using English wasn’t an option. They had to speak Italian every day, as Heleana Theixos and Barry Devine explain:

“We spoke no Italian when we arrived, and Macerata doesn’t really have English speakers. . . . The shopkeepers also became our friends. After starting out struggling to ask for milk and bath towels and hamburgers, we ended up, at the end of the trip, sad to leave Fabio and his cafe, Luciana and her pizza place, who were by then our friends. We received going-away presents from the chocolate lady and the bar owner, and we now have Italian e-mail pen-pals for life.”

Academics are the major focus of the Macerata program. In my teaching, I found three major pedagogical payoffs. First, I could teach Dante’s Divine Comedy in its own landscape: the cities, churches, paintings, Roman ruins, mosaics, and scenery that Dante walked through and wrote about. We went on excursions to places he visited, and to institutions such as monasteries or town halls that form the backdrop of his poem.

The second thing I loved about teaching on the Macerata program was the cohesive, comfortable class atmosphere. Students were exponentially more confident and active in class discussion because they knew each other well, spent time together on excursions, and argued about Dante outside of class.

Study abroad is always transformative. It’s a cliché, because it’s true, that students go abroad to discover the world, and they discover themselves. Tim Cooper put it like this:

“For me, every day in the program was new and exciting, in that I was totally immersed in a much different culture, with a cuisine, language, and people I had never experienced before. It is such a life-changing experience.”

Amrit-Sadhana Khalsa Boyd also cherishes the memory:

“The time I spent in Macerata is priceless. I learned so much about life and how it should be enjoyed. It changed me in ways I didn’t know were possible and it made me a better person.”

It’s a privilege to be a part of an experience like that.

Gina Psaki, Professor of Italian

Chris Picicci Awarded a Ph.D. in Italian Literature

Here is Chris’s advise to doctoral students: “Ph.D. students should have a completed dissertation the trimester of their defense. The Graduate School requires that all committee members have the finished dissertation at least by the fifth week of the term a student intends to defend. Leave plenty of time to adhere to the Graduate School’s strict guidelines on formatting the final document. I would suggest working closely with your adviser on each chapter (most dissertations have five) of your project. After considering his or her feedback, grammatical corrections, and incorporating additional suggested articles and books for each chapter, it is advisable to provide the other three committee members with a copy of each chapter for further constructive criticism and comments. At the time of the defense, all committee members should have read your entire dissertation and be familiar with it. Ideally, a student should discuss the project with all committee members before defending it.

Preparation, communication, and organization are essential for a successful defense.”

Chris Picicci, Ph.D. ’08, took a tenure-track position teaching Italian at Colorado State University, Pueblo, in fall 2008.
On November 8–10, 2007, the committee of doctoral students from the Romance languages department organized the graduate conference “Reading Fear: Representations of Fear in Romance Literatures.” The conference focused on the concept of fear and its multifaceted representations in texts across time periods and genres. This conference aimed to engage its participants and a university audience in a discussion about fear as a social and aesthetic force. Although fear is an instinctual emotion caused by a perceived threat, fear may also be learned or culturally constructed. Further, fear may serve as a motivating impetus for social change or be manipulated as a tool of power.

The various uses and abuses of fear, then, can lead to a variety of responses including resignation and nihilism or an energized call for solidarity or action. How is fear negotiated through literature and other art forms? Are fear and power inextricably linked? Finally, how can an analysis of fear help us to more fully understand larger collective institutions, whether they be family, community or country?

Our keynote speakers included Mabel Moraña (Washington University, Saint Louis), who delivered a paper entitled “The Sublime Object of Desire and the Tongues of Fear in Latin American Narrative”; Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi (Stanford University), who delivered “Triumph over Fear: A Politics of Memory”; and Lino Pertile (Harvard University), who delivered “Uses of Fear from Dante to Primo Levi.”

The conference also featured an art exhibition by Chilean artist and UO doctoral candidate Roberto Arroyo, a poetry reading of original poems in French, Italian, and Spanish, and music performances by Nobuko Wingard, Alexis Smith, Evlyn Gould, and Nicolino Applauso.

Participants were all moved and inspired by the panels, presentations, and extracurricular events. The success of the conference was due to the hard work and planning of the Romance languages faculty and the members of the organizing committee—Nicolino Applauso, Blanca Aranda, Sonja Burrows, Olivier Clarinval, Lisa DiGiovanni, Ramon Fonkoué, Ana Paulina Mross, Luís Portugal, Virginia Piper, and Jamie Richards.
Office Named for Honored Adviser Luis Verano  

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classes. In addition to teaching, Verano has guided and counseled thousands of students over the years he has served our department.

Verano’s kindness, fairness, and dedication to the Department of Romance Languages bring great meaning to the name of the new office, located on the second floor of Friendly Hall. Inside, the office holds two computers for student-registration use, and a group advising and waiting area, which accommodates up to eight students at once. León Howarth and Williams have displayed many brochures and other advising materials with information on study- and internship-abroad opportunities through the University of Oregon, as well as for other opportunities to use language skills in the community.

In the new advising office, León Howarth and Williams offer drop-in advising for undergraduates twelve hours a week. These hours are for students who seek information on the major and minor programs in French, Italian, Spanish, and Romance languages, who would like to declare a major or minor, or who have other related questions. From fall to spring term of the 2007–8 academic year, more than 850 students came in person to the new advising office for these drop-in hours. Hundreds more students contacted the head undergraduate advisers via e-mail or phone with questions. We invite you to come by for a look at this office, named for Luis Verano.

Cuban Film Series  

By Tania Triana

The last few months have seen significant changes in Cuba, especially with Fidel Castro’s February 2008 decision to step down after forty-nine years as Cuban head of state. Castro’s ceding of power to his brother Raúl was but one milestone in the new era that Cubans have termed the “Special Period in Times of Peace.” Since the onset of the Special Period in the early 1990s after Cuba lost its favorable Soviet subsidies, Cubans have experienced severe rationing and shortages of food, fuel, and medicine. In order to prevent the collapse of the Cuban economy, the Cuban state turned to tourism and increased economic ties with other nations. The crisis in legitimacy of a revolutionary state that promises to fulfill the basic needs of its citizens and can no longer do so has resulted in new inquiries into the meaning of the Cuban Revolution and the historic transformations Cubans are experiencing.

One cultural sphere in which these new inquiries are occurring is in Cuban artistic production. Unfortunately, the U.S. embargo and travel ban against Cuba prevent many people here from learning about how Cubans on the island are discussing this historic moment. In order to bridge this divide, I organized the winter 2008 topics course SPAN 490/590, Twentieth-Century Latin American Literature: Cuba’s Special Period in Literature, Film, and Music, and an accompanying film series, “The Films of Cuba’s Special Period, 1994–2003.” The series screened five films produced by Cuba’s state film agency, Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos, that were representative of contemporary debates about the Special Period.
News from the Library

With us for over a year and a half now, Jeff Staiger, the Romance languages subject specialist in the library, is the person to contact about getting materials for the library. He is interested in hearing from all members of the department about his or her research directions and cherished projects, so that he can shape the collection in accordance with the evolving needs of the campus’s Romance language constituency. During Jeff’s first year, the library was able to make a number of significant purchases. Voilà, some highlights: a rare sixteenth-century commentary on Petrach’s Canzoniere for use in the Petrarch Project; an elegant facsimile edition of the medieval Livre de chasse de Gaston Phebus (both in the library’s University Archives and Special Collections); two beautiful scholarly compendiums from Éditions Honoré Champion, one that assembles all the successive versions of Baudelaire’s Fleurs du mal and another that reproduces Zola’s notebooks for the Rougon-Macquart series. Despite an exiguous budget for journals, the library was also able to acquire a bevy of new subscriptions in the field of Romance languages, including Iberoamericana, Revista de la literatura mexicana, Italian Poetry Review, Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies, Latin American Theatre Review, Conjunto, and Primera revista latinoamericana de libros. A bonus infusion of Latin American primary and secondary works this year was supported by the Philip and Jill Lighty Latin American and Spanish Cultural Studies Endowment Fund. The library has also added PRISMA (Publicaciones y Revistas Sociales y Humanisticas), a full-text database that complements HAPI (Hispanic American Periodicals Index). All of these resources are either already in the library or on their way. In addition, a bolstering of the library’s DVD holdings is currently taking place, and over the summer hundreds of films will be arriving, representing the oeuvres of the major canonical French, Italian, Spanish, and Latin American directors from the 1950s to the present. Jeff is sure that all of these new acquisitions will receive much use in the coming years.

Beyond the acquisition of materials, Jeff performs a number of other services of which he invites everybody to make use. One of the most important is the delivery of classroom presentations, at various levels, on the effective use of the library. Another is consulting with students about research strategies. He also keeps himself abreast of developments in educational technology and scholarly communications, subjects where rapid change is now virtually the norm, in order to serve as a resource for members of the department in these fields.

Spanish Minor Gets Hands-on Medical Experience in Ecuador  By Kelley León Howarth

University of Oregon senior Rachel Weintraub took her Spanish skills to a whole new level during winter term 2008 when she interned in two Ecuadorian medical clinics. Her experience included daily rotations going on rounds with doctors, observing live births, examining patients, and even scrubbing in on surgeries. Weintraub, a pre-med biology major and Spanish minor, took advantage of this opportunity through Child Family Health International (CFHI), one of numerous sites in the IE3 Global Internships program administered by the Office for International Affairs. She plans to attend medical school and was thrilled to find a chance to get real-world, practical experience in a public health setting as an undergraduate student. “One of the biggest benefits I received from this internship was a perspective on international health. Previously, I had only seen and therefore truly understood one health-care system, the one in the U.S. The experience allowed me to see international medicine and issues such as child health, tropical diseases, and parasites.”

Weintraub spent the first six weeks of her internship in the Ecuadorian capital of Quito. While there, her daily routine consisted of mornings spent in medical rotations at a large public hospital. Her afternoons were devoted to the study of Spanish medical terminology in intensive courses at a language school. The remainder of her internship was spent in the small town of Chone, where she participated in morning medical rotations at the local clinic, with the option of additional rotations in the afternoon.

Improvement of her Spanish language skills was an important goal for Weintraub as she prepared for her experience. She admits that it was challenging at first, but says, “By the end of my internship, I was delighted by how much I learned in terms of vocabulary, and my ability to express myself without pausing to find the words.” She enjoyed the personal experiences she had with her host family as well as the opportunity to see museums and historical sites throughout Ecuador. Weintraub’s experience testifies to the unique opportunities available through the IE3 Global Internships program, where students put their language skills to use in practical ways while gaining professional experience in an international setting. Although internship credits are not applicable to majors or minors in the Department of Romance Languages, students can earn upper-division elective credits toward their UO degree. Between summer 2007 and spring 2008, the UO sent twenty students on IE3 internships to over thirteen different sites in Latin America.

More information can be found online at ie3global.ous.edu.
The Petrarch Project: “Petrarch Is Again in Sight”

By Massimo Lollini

In a poem dedicated to Osip Mandelstam, a Russian poet who disappeared in Stalin’s gulag, Paul Celan speaks of a petrified desert where it is still possible to see a rudimentary form that makes him conclude: “Petrarch is again in sight.” Celan, the poet survivor of the Shoah, might not have known that Mandelstam had translated four sonnets from Petrarch’s Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, adapting them to his poetic persona. However, it is not by chance that two of the great poets of the twentieth century resort to Petrarch to suggest and rescue an idea of poetry in times when it is most neglected. 

Rerum vulgarium fragmenta (Fragments of scattered things in vernacular), the original title given by Petrarch to his collection of poems, conveys the idea of an ongoing project that, in taking shape and form, maintains a fragmentary, uncertain, and open nature. This title is still in use in academic writing, and should be considered the most accurate to describe Petrarch’s lifelong project in writing his poems. The project “Petrarch Is Again in Sight” promotes precisely the idea of Petrarch’s Rerum vulgarium fragmenta as an “open,” “living” book that “grows” with its readers, a text that can be read and studied as a continuous work in progress. Today’s digital technology makes it possible to implement in new ways this idea that was already at the core of Petrarch’s lifelong poetic writing. The Petrarch Project website includes different versions of Petrarch’s Rerum vulgarium fragmenta—variants of individual poems, translations, rewritings, adaptations, and commentaries—providing multiple texts and multiple ways of looking at the original source materials. This allows for pedagogical, technical, and research-related innovation particularly appealing for those scholars in the Department of Romance Languages willing to promote an integration of activities in French, Italian, and Spanish. For more information, visit the website at https://language.uoregon.edu/petrarch.
Faculty Achievements

In 2007, Alexandre Albert-Galtier was named a member (independent contractor) of the Advanced Placement French Literature Redesign Commission as well as a member of the focus group for the Advanced Placement Best Practices Course Study of World Languages (French and Spanish Literature Survey), part of the joint audit of AP courses across the nation by the Center for Educational Policy Research and the Educational Policy Improvement Center on behalf of the College Board. In addition, one of his survey courses (FR 318) was selected by the College Board as one of the ten best French literature courses in the country, and it will be used for development for the Advanced Placement preparation.

Barbara Altmann gave two papers in Arizona in February, including an invited lecture at Northern Arizona University entitled “A Knight Errant in Oregon.” The presentation discusses an important fifteenth-century Middle French manuscript housed in the UO Libraries’ University Archives and Special Collections. Altmann also finished her three-year headship of the department. Since September, she has been director of the Oregon Humanities Center.

Robert Davis received the 2007 Ray Verzasconi Award for Contribution to the Profession from the Confederation in Oregon for Language Teaching. In addition, he just completed his new book in collaboration with A. Ramos, Portafolio: Introduction to Language and Culture (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill, forthcoming).

André Djiffack published his three-volume book with Éditions Gallimard: Mongo Beti: Le Rebelle I, II, and III. In March 2008, he was invited to Paris by La Maison de L’Amérique Latine to present this work. Among the audience members were Professor Jacques Chevrier of the University of Sorbonne and André’s colleague Fabienne Moore, who was spending her sabbatical in France.

Cecilia Enjuto Rangel has a book article, “Baudelaire y Cernuda: un recorrido por las ruinas de la ciudad moderna” in Escribir la ciudad (Maribel Ortiz and Vanessa Vilches, eds.) (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fragmento Imán, 2008). She also gave a paper on two films on the Spanish Civil War and postwar Spain, El espinazo del diablo and El laberinto del fauno, by Mexican filmmaker Guillermo del Toro, at the fourth annual Congreso Transatlántico at Brown University in April 2008.

Juan Armando Eppe was invited to give lectures on his book-in-progress on Latin American short fiction at the universities of Salamanca and Oviedo (May 2008). He gave also a keynote address, “Teatro breve y minificación,” at the Jornadas Internacionales de Minificación, held at the University of Las Palmas, Canarias, on May 29–31, 2008.


Pedro García-Caro was invited to participate in a colloquium that examined the presence of Latin American writers in Spain during the vibrant 1920s, at the Casa de América in Madrid, June 2008. His lecture was entitled “Tierra Caliente: Primo de Rivera y la Revolución Mexicana.” He also presented a paper entitled “Entre familiaridad y exotismo: un episodio (trans)nacional de Benito Pérez Galdós” at the fourth annual Transatlantic Conference at Brown University. An article version appears in a special volume on war and literature in Hispanic cultures (España en armas: Cultura de guerras/Guerra de culturas) in the Vanderbilt e-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies, September 2008.

Leonardo García-Pabón has recently published a book on mestizaje in novels of the Andean region: De incas, chaskañawis, yanakunas y chullas. Estudiososobre la novelamestiza en los Andes. (Murcia: Universidad de Alicante, 2007). He also read a paper entitled “El oro de los incas y las nuevas naciones: los textos andinos de Juana Manuela Gorriti” at the fourth annual International Congress of the Transatlantic Project at Brown University in April 2008.

Evlyn Gould heads a team of UO guest editors and has authored the preface to two volumes of Romance Studies, subtitled Literature Matters I and II, forthcoming from Maney Publishing, London. At the 2008 Modern Language Association convention in Chicago, she delivered a paper on testimonial novels emerging during the Dreyfus affair, “Among Dreyfus Affairs: The Emergence of Testimonial Chronicle.”

Gina Herrmann has a book forthcoming with University of Illinois Press, Written in Red: The Communist Memoir in Spain. She also gave a paper on recent Spanish television documentaries that deal with the human rights abuses of the Franco dictatorship in Spain, for a conference on law, culture, and the humanities, held at UC Berkeley in March 2008.

Nathalie Hester published a book, Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Travel Writing, with Ashgate Press. She gave a paper on representations of women in merchant accounts at a conference at the University of Chicago on new approaches to early modern Italian studies.

Monica Lara was selected to participate in a workshop on proposal development in June 2007. She also participated in the Office of Academic Affairs’ September 2007 multimedia workshop. Also, her proposal for an Abbie J. Bakony Professional Development Endowment grant from the Yamada Language Center was funded.


Karen McPherson gave a paper entitled “Le sexe des étoiles and Emporte-moi: Monique Proulx and Léa Pool Imag(in)ing Romance Languages Newsletter 9
Italian Travel Writing

Nathalie Hester’s *Literature and Identity in Italian Baroque Travel Writing* is the first full-length study in English on Italian travel writing of the seventeenth-century, an unusually fertile period for Italian contributions to the genre. The book goes against a critical grain that has traditionally presumed the travel writing of early colonial powers (Spain, Portugal, England, France) to accurately represent European travel literature. Instead, this study makes the case for Italy’s specificity because of the primacy of literary culture, not proto-statehood and expansionism, in the construction of Italian identity.

The specifically literary characteristics of Italian travel writing—including its humanism or Petrarchism—highlight the classic eminence throughout Europe of a prestigious tradition inherent to Italy, one compensating then for the peninsula’s lack of a national political identity. The question of Italian identity remains essentially a question of language and literature, and Italian travel writers inscribe their identities in the text through literary means, such as the incorporation of plot and character elements from Italian epic poems, the use of poetry and metaphorical language, and the focus on bizarre or marvelous elements associated with baroque literary aesthetics. The fascinating and sometimes quirky travel narratives discussed in this book—many of them “bestsellers” in their day— recount travel through Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Pietro Della Valle portrays himself as the hero of an epic tale, marries a Syrian “warrior woman” in Baghdad, and after her death continues to travel for several years, taking her embalmed body along with him wherever he goes. Francesco Negri, perhaps the first continental European to describe a ski lesson, uses Petrarchan language to write of travel in frigid conditions in Scandinavia. Francesco Carletti imitates Boccaccio when depicting amorous relations between men and women in Goa. These are just a few examples of the foregrounding of literary and narrative elements in Italian baroque travel writing.

Don Quijote on Saturdays

Leah Middlebrook, with both RL and the Comparative Literature Program, has had the pleasure of filling in for English professor Jim Earl in one of his Insight Seminars on Don Quijote. She’s hooked. Professor Earl embarked on the quixotic (couldn’t help it!) project of reading parts one and two of Cervantes’ classic novel with twenty returning students over the course of seven meetings during this past spring term. His plans became complicated when he found he had to leave town for several weeks. Middlebrook could not be happier that he decided to give her a call.

“Insight Seminars perform just the kind of function we look to from a public university,” she writes. “Most of the students in this particular class are professionals or retired professionals who have a lot of intellectual curiosity and a lot of life experience to share. Jim made a terrific choice in choosing the Quijote—it lends itself to so many contexts. And the students are motivated and energetic. They are as open to reading through a handout on Montaigne, Cicero, and friendship as they are to speculating about what in the world happened to Sancho’s donkey (this last was before we started part two, where the mystery is explained).”

“I find myself learning from them,” she continues. “A significant portion of the group has military experience, and it’s interesting to think about the bond between Don Quijote and Sancho as a kind of trench friendship. We also read Marcela’s famous speech out loud on a day when gender politics had become part of the class dynamic. This is a really marvelous experience, and I would do it again in a heartbeat. It doesn’t hurt that one of our group often bakes and brings along cake.”

Insight Seminars celebrate “the life of the mind” with members of the community who want to spend their Wednesday evenings or Saturday mornings talking over books and ideas with the UO faculty. For more information, visit uoinsight.uoregon.edu/.
The Yamada Language Center and RL

The Romance languages faculty and students work closely with the Yamada Language Center in a number of ways, but principally in the areas of educational technology, instruction in less commonly taught Romance languages, and professional development and outreach.

For the past four years, Yamada has offered summer workshops in multimedia, which more than twenty RL faculty members have participated in. This participation has led to redesigned courses, more extensive use of web-based conferencing tools, and a much better understanding on our part of the vast range of teaching and research that RL faculty members are engaged in. In addition, periodic workshops are offered on special topics such as authoring tools for second-language purposes.

For large-enrollment language courses, three Yamada software tools are popular among the RL faculty: 1) the Virtual Language Lab (babel.uoregon.edu/YLC-AV), a large collection of online audio and video material to accompany course books, foreign language news, and instructor-produced materials; 2) audio-video conferencing software such as Amiga and Voiceboards, which runs inside of Blackboard; and 3) wiki and blog hosting. Each of these tools helps students reinforce and practice core aspects of language learning: listening, speaking, and writing. This year the audio- and video-conferencing software has allowed RL students to reach beyond the boundaries of Eugene and partner with students in France and Italy.

For literature and culture courses, faculty members are assisted in developing specialized web resources hosted on Yamada’s servers, ranging from custom-designed archives such as the Petrarch project (described elsewhere in this issue) to assisting with audio-video productions and interactive slideshows for courses focused on art and film. One of the most common questions from RL faculty members is about scheduling a room to do a hands-on workshop or asking for help in a technology-intensive course. Yamada has been able to accommodate more of these requests.

Through the World Languages Academy and the Self-Study Language Program, Yamada has been able to offer major Romance languages such as Portuguese or languages for which there is not enough demand to offer regular courses, such as Romanian and Catalan, or indigenous languages which are part of the Spanish-speaking world, such as Nahuaatl. Each of these operates in close collaboration with participating faculty members from the Romance languages department.

Yamada is committed to working with language teachers and learners at all levels, around our state and region, and cooperates in outreach events such as Foreign Language and International Studies Day and works together on grants and projects for our language- and literature-focused professional associations, such as the Modern Language Association and the American Association of University Supervisors and Coordinators and Directors of Foreign Language Programs.

Emeritus Spanish professor Dave Curland was a cofounder of the Yamada Language Center. His vision is still alive at Yamada—serving each language (and each language department) in a special way best suited to its needs and interests.

Faculty Achievements continued from page 9


Leah Middlebrook presented a section of her new project on poetry, prose, and European and American “species of identity” at the Renaissance Society of America in April. In October, she was in Córdoba, Spain, speaking on rhetoric, agency and the sonnet to the Society for Renaissance and Baroque Hispanic Poetry. Thanks to Middlebrook’s efforts, the next meeting of the SRBHP will take place at Oregon in fall 2009!

Fabienne Moore, while on sabbatical research leave, was invited to give a talk entitled “Prose Poems of the French Enlightenment, or the Politics of Genre” at the Maison Française of New York University in November 2007.


Tania Triana presented a paper, “Afrocubana Voices: Diasporic Dialogues in Black Feminism” at the Latin American Studies Association Conference in Montreal, Canada. She was also selected to participate in the 2008 Future of Minority Studies two-week summer institute in transnational feminisms, to be held at Cornell University.

Analisa Taylor has a book forthcoming with the University of Arizona Press: Thresholds of Belonging: Indigeneity in the Mexican Cultural Imagination. She presented conference papers at the Latin American Studies Association Congress in Montreal, Canada, the Mexican Conference at the University of California, Irvine, and the Cine-Lit VI Conference on Hispanic Film and Fiction at Portland State University.

Please Consider Making a Gift to Romance Languages!

Contributions of any size make a real difference. In this past year, among many other examples, we have used gifts to bring in guest speakers, support visiting faculty members, award prizes to undergraduates, provide refreshments at professional workshops, and support cultural events. Our programs are much richer thanks to the generosity of our donors!

Checks can be made out to the UO Foundation, Department of Romance Languages, and mailed to the UO Foundation at PO Box 3346, Eugene OR 97403-0346. Another option is to make a pledge to Romance Languages when you receive a phone call or letter from the UO Annual Giving Program asking you to make a gift to the university.

We invite you to browse the website for the College of Arts and Sciences (cas.uoregon.edu/index.htm) and the new and improved site for Romance Languages (rl.uoregon.edu). Look for updates on current events at rl.uoregon.edu/main/news/shtml.

If you have questions or would like more information about any of our programs, feel free to contact Leonardo García-Pabón at (541) 346-4021 (lgarcia@uoregon.edu) or Heidi Shuler, director of development for humanities, at (541) 346-0044 (hshuler@cas.uoregon.edu).