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As we develop our programs, we are grateful to the support of our alumni and friends. Increasing our support for graduate students is a priority, as we seek to provide fellowships (which are only six or seven years to spread over languages and more opportunities for research abroad). We have benefited from the tremendous generosity of alumna Ronni Lacroix (see profile on page 10) who has recently been funding an annual undergraduate fellowship. The University President Mary Sue Coleman has announced a ‘President’s Donor Challenge’ devoted to financial aid for graduate students: for every $1 pledged until December 31, 2008 President Coleman will contribute an extra $0.50. You can read more about this campaign at http://www.lsa.umich.edu/rll.

We also welcome 11 new graduate students, selected from a strong group of over 100 applications. We congratulate the seven graduate students who successfully defended their dissertations (see page 8). We say goodbye to those who are leaving Ann Arbor to take up assistant professorships elsewhere and wish them the very best as they begin their careers. Of our current graduate students, Rebecca Wines (French) was awarded a place in the Mellon Dissertation Seminar for her project on sport and nation in modern France. Ashley Rainey won a place in the Bryn Mawr Summer Program in Avignon, France. We also welcome 11 new graduate students, selected from a strong group of over 100 applications.

We continue to enhance the quality of our undergraduate programs. RLL is second only to English among Humanities departments in the number of concentrators we have. Our new concentration in Romance Languages and Literatures was approved by the University and is now up and running. We have also introduced a senior seminar which brings together honors students in all of the concentrations — Spanish, Romance Languages and Literatures, Italian, and French — in preparation for the writing of an honors thesis. The enrollments in our undergraduate courses continue to be strong, and so it is of special concern to us that the College Board has announced the cancellation of the Advanced Placement programs in Italian, French literature, and Latin literature. On behalf of one of the largest Romance language departments in the country, I wrote a letter to the College Board and have been working with the Modern Language Association to ensure that these subjects continue to be made available to secondary school students.

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M y book makes use of the concepts of “autonomy” and “nomadism” in order to generate a provocative re-reading of the representation of urban space in key texts of Italian literature, which in turn enables a radical rethinking of the city as a strategic symbol of modernity and its crisis. Città nomadi explores the relationship between the representation of urban space in twentieth century Italian culture and the defining development of national identity through a number of critical moments before and after Italian reunification—that is to say, from the early 1910s, through the “Reconstruction” period of the 1930s until the so-called Second Republic of the 1990s. I address the peculiarity of Italian national history at these critical moments in order to demonstrate how the representation of urban space, and of the city as a “positive” symbol of modernity, served to generate a certain image of national identity within which an Italian “people” could be identified. These were emblematic historical periods in which the prevailing intention was, in fact, to project in the audience’s collective imaginary an idea of the “Italian people” tenaciously and enthusiastically engaged in the construction of a new national identity in Italy.

The urban space presented in some of these novels appears therefore diversified into a series of interesting “grey areas” and of stimulating territorial destabilisations: in this respect the city becomes the specific historical location through which the crisis of the myths of the “Risorgimento” and of the “Resistance,” and the vain ambition implicit in the process of reconstructing a new patria (homeland) and a more credible national identity, could be narrated. My elaboration of the notions of “autonomy” and “nomadism” has implications for the way in which we usually interpret and visualize the city, both as a literary imaginary and as a strategic space where notions of “centrality” and “marginality” can be renegotiated; furthermore, by addressing the inevitable crisis of the traditional notion of nation-state and through the identification of sub-national and transnational categories, my book allows for a radical rethinking of globalization, which the “global” city in itself problematically embodies.

Italian Elementary Program Director Romana Habekovic is a coauthor of A vicenda Romana (McGraw-Hill, 2008), a comprehensive Italian language program for intermediate level students. It is a two-volume program.

Italian Elementary Program Director Romana Habekovic and Italian Coordinator Sandra Palach published a textbook for third-year culture and conversation courses entitled Pascal à tal (Heinle Cengage Learning, 2009). The textbook has a companion web site, and an audio and video component. It is already being used in Italian 275 courses.

Italian Elementary Program Director Romana Habekovic and Italian Coordinator Sandra Palach received a Spring/Rollackham faculty grant to continue work on her computer model of bilingual first language acquisition, “BabyCat.” Her commentary on Christiansen & Chater’s article “Language as Shaped by the Brain,” is to appear in the journal Brain and Language.

LL has almost two dozen faculty affiliates. Affiliates are scholars from a wide range of departments and programs across the University whose interests, specialties and concerns often go beyond literature and culture but connect closely with those of our department. They are historians and anthropologists, musicologists and political scientists, linguists and classicists; their primary homes are the Program in American Culture, the Department for African American and African Studies, the Departments of Women’s Studies, History of Art, Theater and Drama, Screen Arts, English, and so on. What they all have in common is their interest in matters related to countries and cultures that are RLL’s objects of study. For example, the latest scholar to join the ranks of our affiliates, Mark Padilla of the School of Public Health and the Department of Anthropology, studies the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Mexico. His unique expertise is a precious addition to our faculty’s research on Latin America, gender, and sexuality.

These scholars’ affiliation with RLL is a way to facilitate their contributions to many of our endeavors (and ours to theirs), such as participation in conferences, invitations of guest speakers, and other avenues of intellectual exchange and collaboration between our units. The affiliates’ availability to sit on dissertation committees and to offer courses of interest to our graduate students is another crucial dimension of the program. Given our students’ propensity increasingly to pursue research projects that cut across established disciplinary boundaries, affiliates offer them unique possibilities to develop as multifaceted scholars themselves and acquire the sort of expertise that will be extremely valuable when they embark on their own careers.

RLL affiliates program is an opportunity for our department to match the geographical, historical and cultural diversity that, by definition, characterizes Romance Studies with the vibrant life of the University and of the world beyond, and continues to produce groundbreaking research. Our affiliates’ names and home units appear on our webpage. Check them out: www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/deptdir/affiliates.html.
The New Romance Languages and Literatures Concentration

Professor Jarrod Hayes discusses the new concentration and its benefits to students

The Department is proud to announce that, after several years of hard work, its new concentration in Romance Languages and Literatures has been approved by the University. We have long collected anecdotal evidence that a significant number of our students desired a concentration which would include more than one Romance language. In response to this student demand, we have developed a comparative concentration that will not only ensure maximum language proficiency in both languages, but also create a "bridge" between the two languages to encourage students both to discover and to make connections between them. Nonetheless, while the RLL concentration is heavier than most humanities concentrations, we have kept the credits required for the concentration lower than might otherwise be the case, by counting fewer lower-level courses than in other language-based concentrations. This encourages students to begin upper-level coursework after the minimum prerequisites. We have also created a concentration with enough flexibility to give students the choice between treating the languages somewhat equally or having "primary" and "secondary" languages.

The requirements for the concentration consist of 42 credits divided into two general groups. Part I consists of courses taken in the target languages and corresponds to courses students would take if they were concentrating in a single language. Part II is designed as a "bridge" between the two languages fostering both practical/linguistic and intellectual components. It is this part of the requirements that is the most distinctive aspect of the concentration and makes it unique in the country. The requirement is one course in Romance philology or linguistics grounds the concentration in a basic understanding of the linguistic "kinship" between Romance languages. Students also must take an elective, which encourages them to explore the intellectual connections between the fields of French and Francophone studies, Hispanic studies, and Italian studies. It will also foster both a comparative and interdisciplinary understanding of Romance studies. All RLL concentrations will be enrolled in a senior seminar during the fall semester of their senior year. The seminar builds on students' prior coursework to reinforce connections between courses in French, Italian, and Spanish, offer an introduction to the methods of Romance Studies, and explore potential topics for which crossing boundaries between languages might provide productive avenues of inquiry (e.g. the pan-Romance Caribbean, pre- and early-modern studies, Mediterranean studies, comparative fascism). A major component of the senior seminar is the individual research project tailored to each student's linguistic competence. For students opting to write an honors thesis in RLL, the senior seminar constitutes the fall semester of work on the thesis. This seminar is being offered for the first time in fall 2008.

The RLL concentration offers a challenging concentration for advanced students. Students who come to Michigan with training in more than one Romance language are especially urged to consider an RLL concentration. Those with AP credits in French, Italian, or Spanish, are also invited to do so, for early planning can make it possible to concentrate in RLL even if starting the second language from scratch. With some additional coursework in each language, students may also use the RLL concentration for a major in one language and a minor in the other for the purposes of a teaching certification in both languages.

For more information, students should contact the RLL main office of the Department to make an appointment with the RLL advisor.

Focus

Spanish 232: Special Topics

by Lecturer Carlos de los Santos

Opportunities in Spanish at the University of Michigan were first introduced in the mid 90's as a way to involve professors in the teaching of language courses. By means of these special topic courses they were able to combine their own field of study and research interests with the teaching of language. More recently lecturers have taken the lead in proposing and offering these courses.

A great variety of topic courses have been taught in our department: courses on history (Historia de España contemporánea, Historia contemporánea de España a través de la música, Las tres Culturas en la España Medieval), on literature (Representing Lorca, Magic Realism in Southern Cone Literature), on economics and commerce (Business Spanish), and on many other aspects of culture (Cataluña, Spanish Cinema and Mass Media, Spanish Cuisine, Andalucía... etc).

In the Fall 2008 semester we are offering three interesting and very different topic courses: Andalucía y el Flamenco, designed and taught by Cristina Reina-Nieto, focuses on the development of the students' understanding and appreciation of Andalusian history, culture and society through the discovery and discussion of its valuable past, dynamic present and challenging future, with a special emphasis on Flamenco music. Cristina is bringing her personal experience and background as an Andalusian and professional flamenco dancer.

Tatiana Calixto is teaching Un Museo de la Región Andina. The course is a collection of topics focusing on Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The topics recognize and explore the geographic, cultural, and historical similarities and differences of the societies that have come to be known as the Andean Region. The course examines and analyzes how these topics interconnect and differ from one another. Another important part of the course is to relate these Andean cultural manifestations to one's own culture and experience. In Winter Term 2008, students in Tatí's class held an exhibit exploring various topics of the Andean Region. Visitors were able to get a taste of the traditions and customs of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The exhibit consisted of student-made presentations through dance, photography, video and more.

This fall 2008 semester, Tatí has just returned from Peru where she has been doing research for her class thanks to grants from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and the LSA Dean's Office.

Finally, Raquel Gonzalez is teaching Readings from Argentina, Chile and Peru. This new course incorporates written and visual texts to explore the culture of these countries. Raquel brings into the classroom her experience as a language instructor and her previous experience as a Spanish 232 topic course instructor on Southern Cone literature.
The RLL Graduate Program

Every year the graduate program fills out with new faces and new imaginations. This year we have a large and vital cohort of new graduate students, whose interests range through medieval French, to colonial Latin America, to the African novel, to contemporary poetry and politics in Spanish. Two have been among us already as lecturers; the rest are newly arrived. They bring us, in addition to their formidable academic creativity, many other talents, from musical theater to poetry and even baking, among of course, many other things.

The graduate students as a community continue to create things together. In April 2008, the graduate-student-organized e-journal Tiresias published its second issue, “We’re Still Lying and Other Truths,” with scholarly and creative contributions from faculty and graduate students from our own and other universities. Issue 3, “Policizing Sexuality,” will appear later this year.

Graduate students are also organizing the 16th Annual Charles Fraker Conference, to be held this year on November 7th and 8th. Celebrated philosopher Alain Badiou—author of Deleuze: The Clamor of Being (1999) and Being & Event (2005)—will be the keynote speaker, along with Eduardo Cadava and Bruno Bosteels. That the graduate-student organizers secured such a celebrated and exciting keynote speaker shows clearly the seriousness and professionalism of their approach to organizing the conference, and the papers of all the participants will give us reason to celebrate the graduate community as well as its guests.

Our students Sharon Marquart, Michelle Miller, Ana Ros, Anne McGee, Leslie Marsh, Patricia Keller, and Jon Snyder have received their doctorates and made their appointments.

We are also pleased to have Anne McGee and Michelle Miller continue in RLL with post-doctoral appointments.

We offer our best wishes to this year’s Ph.Ds who are taking up positions at other universities:

Patricia Keller (Spanish) Cornell University
Sharon Marquart (French) University of Houston
Leslie Marsh (Spanish) Georgia State University
Ana Ros (Spanish) State University of New York-Binghamton
Jon Snyder (Spanish) Syracuse University Program in Madrid

The President’s Challenge

U-M Ann Arbor has over 17,000 graduate and professional students but fewer than 1,500 endowed accounts to support them. A full graduate or professional fellowship can cost upwards of $50,000 a year. With the success of the Michigan Difference Campaign, the President’s Challenge: Phase II was created to address one of the most pressing ongoing needs for every school and college across the University campus. It will allow donors the opportunity to use their gifts to support graduate and professional students, realizing that financial support is an important part of UM’s ability to attract the best graduate and professional students, realizing that financial support is an important part of UM’s ability to attract the best graduate and professional students, realizing that financial support is an important part of UM’s ability to attract the best graduate and professional students.

The Phase II Challenge is a 1 for 2 match for endowed and expendable gifts, up to $1 million per donor. With the success of the Michigan Difference Campaign, the President’s Challenge: Phase II was created to address one of the most pressing ongoing needs for every school and college across the University campus. It will allow donors the opportunity to use their gifts to support graduate and professional students, realizing that financial support is an important part of UM’s ability to attract the best graduate and professional students. The challenge allows donors to direct their graduate support gift to the department of their choice and welcome expendable gifts of any amount, while an individual endowed gift can be opened for $50,000. For more information on how you can help support the graduate and professional students of UM visit www.giving.umich.edu/where/presidents_challenge.htm. You can also contact the LSA Development office directly at (734) 615-6333.

Meet the New Graduate Students

Catherine Brown
Graduate Chair
A Talk With Ronni Lacroute

by Professor Michele Hannooch

Ronni Lacroute has been a part of several groundbreaking initiatives, including securing a chair in neuroscience at Stanford University and teaching a course on French in the context of international development. Her dedication to education and international relations has been recognized with the establishment of the Ronni Lacroute Chair in Neuroscience at Stanford.

Lacroute's educational background includes a graduate fellowship in the Romance languages, which she completed at the University of Michigan. She has also taught French at the International School in Geneva and at the University of Michigan, where she was instrumental in the development of the "immersion" method, which is now standard practice in most foreign-language programs.

With her former husband, pioneer computer engineer Bernard Lacroute (UM MSE, 1967), she now runs the Willakenzie Estate vineyard and winery in Oregon's Willamette Valley, one of her many contributions to the world of fine wines. Lacroute's philosophy is that the best students should be able to learn without the financial burden of loans, and she has been instrumental in this regard.

Lacroute continues to be active in education and the arts, serving as a trustee of Linfield College and on the Board of Directors of Chamber Music Northwest. She is currently working on a novel, which she hopes will be published within the next two years.

Alumni News

If you are not a member of the U-M Alumni Association, it is easy to join. Simply visit the website mentioned below, or call the Association direct at (734) 764-0344 or (800) 847-4754.

Nancy Daines (Dorsey) (M.A. Spanish 1955)
"I'm teaching Spanish at a private school. Bill, my husband, teaches in the UM Dental School part-time. We have 13 grandchildren."

Margaret (Goldin) Lincoln (AB French 1970)
"I worked as a high school library media specialist in Battle Creek, Michigan, and earned a Ph.D. in information science from the University of North Texas in 2006. She now enjoys teaching online for San José State University. Email: mlincnlm@lakesviewspartans.org"

We want to hear from YOU!!

Send an e-mail to rll.editor@umich.edu or mail in this reply.

Name: __________________ Graduation year: __________

Degree/Language: __________________ E-mail address: __________________

(Your e-mail will be included in your Alumni Note, unless you note otherwise)

Your news for Alumni Notes (please limit to 2-3 sentences):

Contact us:
Attn: Editor
Romance Languages and Literatures
The University of Michigan
4108 Modern Languages Building
812 East Washington Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1275
The Chiara Maria Levin Award
for Breadth and Excellence in the Romance Languages

Chiara Maria Levin (1984-2007) graduated with honors from the University of Michigan in May 2006, with a concentration in French and Francophone Studies. She was fluent not just in French but also in Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Unfortunately, Levin had barely begun her adult life when she was killed by a stray bullet in a gangland shoot-out. In remembrance, family and friends have joined together to endow a fund in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures for outstanding students who share Levin's love of language.

This endowment funds two awards, granted by the faculty of RLL. One award is an annual prize to a graduating senior who, like Levin, has demonstrated exceptional achievement in the study of the Romance languages and literatures. Levin's life and academic work were greatly enriched by a semester spent in Montpellier, France. For that reason, the second award is a travel grant given to an undergraduate planning to study abroad.

Additional contributions to this endowment fund are welcome. Please make checks payable to "The University of Michigan" and note the name of this fund on the check. Mail to: David Cave, Ph.D., LSA Development, Suite 5000, 500 S. State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

To read more on this fund and others relating to the department, visit us on the web: www.lsa.umich.edu/rll/alumni/giving.html.