

ISSUE 01

AY25

INSIGHTS

**From the Michele Bowman Underwood Department of
Modern Languages and Literatures**

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CO-EDITORS: ANDREA MARTINEZ AND DEANDRA IRIZARRY

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dr. Logan J. Connors

Welcome to a new academic year and to our inaugural departmental newsletter! Insights features stories about our award-winning students and faculty here in the Michele Bowman Underwood Department of Modern Languages and Literatures (MLL) at the University of Miami. You will also find news about departmental events, new policies and programs, and other initiatives. Let me express my deep gratitude to Deandra Irizarry and Andrea Martinez – the chief architects of our newsletter.

2023-2024 is in the books and it was a great year for our department. We welcomed fantastic new colleagues, created new study abroad programs and academic minors, and conducted an impressive array of cutting-edge research projects. In the pages that follow, you will read about the diversity of publications, fellowships, and prizes awarded to MLL faculty and students. These research initiatives complemented the nearly 350 courses we offered to undergraduate and graduate students at the university. Our dedicated instructors spent countless hours imparting linguistic and cultural knowledge because global literary is at the heart of what we do.

You cannot be global if you live in only one language. The students and faculty in MLL will continue to hit this point home in every course, every program, and at every event we offer.

But in an era of doubt over the value of humanistic and multilingual education, we need to share our beliefs as clearly and as widely as possible. Over the next year, I would like to challenge each and every one of us to celebrate MLL and its achievements, consistently and relentlessly. Teach one of your colleague's publications; tweet your students' achievements; reach out to a colleague from another department to see how we can best serve them and their students. To colleagues and students in MLL: let's take our vision "on the road" and say it loud and proud.



To our **friends and colleagues** at the university, in our community, and beyond: please engage us. We are here to serve you. Come to our events; email our faculty to gain their insights; hire our students and former students because they are qualified, professional, and highly engaged. If you can, please support us (turn to the back page for more information on how you can help us achieve our goals).

2024-2025 is already off to a great start. I hope that this academic year brings you good health, happiness, and moments of curiosity and wonder. Take care and please be in touch.

Yours truly,

Logan

ACADEMIC

ADMINISTRATION

Department Chair: **Logan Connors**

Associate Department Chair: **Susanna Alles Torrent**

Director of Graduate Studies: **Allison Schifani**

Director of Arabic Studies: **Suja Sawafta**

Director of Chinese Program: **Rebecca Doran**

Director of Italian Program: **Mojca del Fabbro**

Director of Undergraduate Studies in French: **Viviana Pezzullo**

Director of French Basic Language: **Kevin Finn**

Director of German Program: **Antonella Cassia**

Director of Japanese Studies: **Eiko Williams**

Director of Portuguese Program: **Steven Buttermann**

Director of Undergraduate Studies in Spanish: **Omar Vargas**

Director of Spanish Basic Language Program: **Ager Gondra**

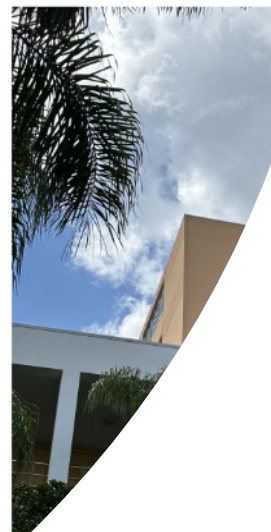
Director of Spanish Heritage Language Program: **Andrew Lynch**

Director of MLL Language Laboratory: **Rachida Primov**

Director of UParis Program: **Logan Connors**

Director of UMadrid Program: **Lillian Manzor**





REVISITING 2023-2024: A SHOWCASE OF EVENTS

In the 2023-2024 academic year, a multitude of events celebrated the diversity of languages, culture, and activities within our department. Here are just a few of the wonderful events held during this academic year.



MLL LECTURE SERIES SPRING 2024

Merrick 210.02

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH

SHAI COHEN
"Transforming Education with ChatGPT: Empowering Teachers and Enhancing Classroom Learning"

FRIDAY, APRIL 5TH

EUGE STUMM
"Introduction to Semantic Search using Semantra"

LOURDES SCHMADER
"Ñañapura: Exploring Sisterhood and Collaboration Among Ecuadorian Kichwa Women of the Amazon and Their Struggle to Protect the Environment"

FRIDAY, MARCH 22ND

PATOIMBASBA NIKIEMA
"Caricaturing Life from the Inside: An Exploration of the Extremes in Aya de Yopougon"

LORELLA DI GREGORIO
"Migrant Children's Creativity: A Way Out and a Learning Tool"

FRIDAY, APRIL 12TH

ANGELA MARINO
"Festivals and Governance: The Failures of Representative Democracy and Political Futures (for the Love of Earth)"

Alliance Française Miami Metro & University of Miami present

Francophonie, Africa, and beyond

A conversation with
ALAIN MABANCKOU

MARCH 27, 6:30 PM

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
Whitten Learning Center (LC) 184

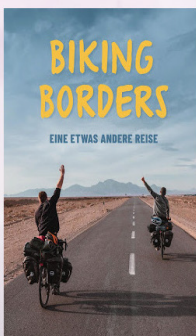




GERMAN VIRTUAL FILM CLUB

Join us virtually on Zoom as we discuss & express ideas about the movie in the target language.

March 19, 2024
Biking borders



2:00 PM

3:00 PM

April 16, 2024
Je suis Karl



All movies are available on Netflix and need to be watched in advance



INSIGHTS ON... 2024 PHD GRADUATES



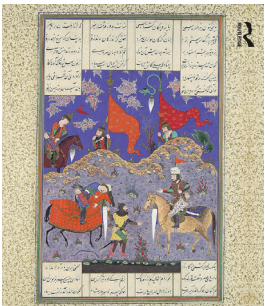
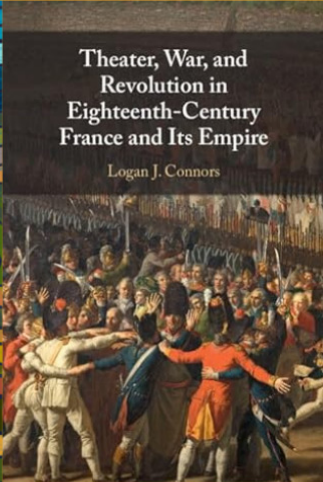
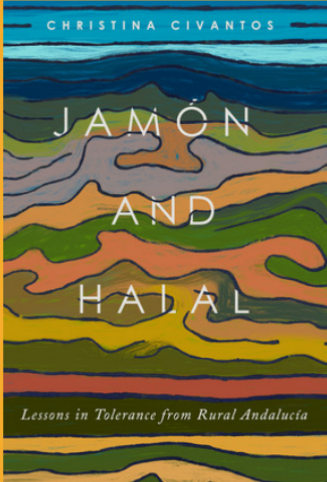
The Michele Bowman Underwood Department of Modern Languages at the University of Miami congratulates two recent PhD graduates in Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Studies. Mauro Cazolla's dissertation on the craft of translating autosociobiography in the works of Annie Ernaux and Edouard Louis and Rim ElBelkacemi's work on the marginalization of women in master narratives on the Algerian War of Independence was recently defended. Both dissertations showcase the richness of languages, culture, and the importance of humanities studies.

Throughout their time as graduate students, Mauro Cazzolla and Rim El Belkacemi demonstrated remarkable scholarly productivity and academic dedication. Their defenses displayed the depth of detail and innovative approaches that aspiring literature, culture, and linguistics scholars should strive for. The department celebrates them for their hard work.

The Michele Bowman Underwood Department of Modern Languages wishes Mauro and Rim all the best as they begin their professional careers. The university is proud of both of you, and our doors will always be open.

INSIGHTS ON...

RECENT PUBLICATIONS



The Epic World

Edited by Pamela Lehtopich

**Tracy Devine
Guzman**

CHAPTER IN EDITED VOLUME

“Keeping the Sky in Place:
The Saga of Indigenous
Environmentalism” featured in
The Epic World.
(Routledge, 2023)

BOOKS

Christina Civantos

Jamón and Halal: Lessons in Tolerance
from Rural Andalucía
(Amherst College Press, 2022)



Scan to Purchase

Logan Connors

Theater, War, and Revolution in
Eighteenth-Century France and Its Empire
(Cambridge University Press, 2023)



Scan to Purchase

Pamela Delia Fuentes Korban

Memory and History in Argentine
Popular Music
(Lexington Books, 2023)



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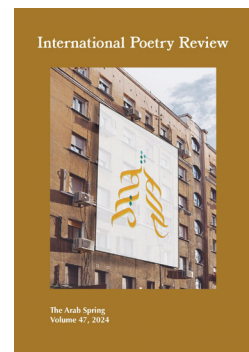


**Ager Gondra and
Eukene Franco**

Landa

ARTICLE

Variation in the Production of
Basque Ergativity: Change or
Stable Variation?
(Cambridge University, 2024)



Suja Sawafta
GUEST EDITOR

“The Arab Spring,” Special issue
of International Poetry Review,
Volume 47
(UNC Press, 2024)

POLYGLOT ROOTS TO AI REVOLUTION. A SCHOLAR'S JOURNEY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI MICHELE BOWMAN DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES

Shai Cohen

In this insightful interview, we explore the academic journey and perspectives of a devoted linguistics scholar at the University of Miami's Michele Bowman Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Inspired by the influence of a multilingual grandmother, Shai is committed to conducting



pioneering research on Sephardic diasporas and incorporating AI into language studies. Our interview captures his intellectual curiosity and professional development, as he reflects on transformative experiences within the department, the impact of his teaching and research, and his forward-looking vision for the future of the Humanities.

What inspired you to pursue a career in linguistics?

My fascination with languages began with my family, particularly my grandmother, who spoke fluent Haketia, Spanish, French, Hebrew, and Arabic. She was the only polyglot in my family, and as I grew older, I felt a strong desire to connect with her heritage through language. I decided to learn Spanish in France, which led to my becoming fluent in both languages. This experience inspired me to pursue higher education in France, where my passion for Spanish Philology blossomed. Through my studies of Iberian and Latin American cultures, I developed a deeper appreciation for how languages serve as vehicles for cultural history and identity. My doctoral research was less about hoarding knowledge and more about sparking dialogues across centuries of literature and theory. This academic journey has not only broadened my understanding of languages, history, and culture but has also revealed how they shape human experience across time and space.

How has working with MLL shaped your professional growth so far?

Working with the MLL at the University of Miami is like being in the world's most exhilarating linguistic gym. Here, I flex my academic muscles daily, not just through teaching, but by diving headfirst into research that spans the globe. From integrating AI in language studies (think C-3PO, but for languages) to unearthing the narratives of Sephardic migrations, it's been a journey of epic, scholarly proportions. This experience has transformed me from a solo academic adventurer into a true believer in the power of collaborative intellectual feats. My association with the MLL has provided me with extensive opportunities to engage with wonderful people who, like me, thrive on questioning assumptions and engaging in thought-provoking conversations. This shared enthusiasm is palpable from every corner of this department.

What do you find most fulfilling about your role within our department?

The most fulfilling aspect of my role is the profound impact I have on shaping the academic and cultural identities of our students. By coordinating the department's internship programs, I've integrated real-world experiences with academic learning, fostering a comprehensive educational environment. This role also enables me to contribute to scholarly debates and pedagogical innovations through original research and publication. The challenges of academic life are manifold, yet they are balanced by the freedom to explore and create new knowledge, to inspire and be inspired by our students, and to contribute to what Hegel described as 'Universal consciousness'—the collective intellectual and cultural achievements of our society. Despite external perceptions, academic life can be challenging yet exhilarating, maintaining a balance that elevates every role to the highest standards. The blend of rigor, freedom, and a pinch of academic mischief makes each day a rewarding challenge.

How do you think your expertise has contributed to the growth of our department?

Actually, I firmly believe that we are fortunate to be living in a time when the Humanities are facing a dire situation. Every day, more and more departments are downsizing, and the scientific community views us as obsolete. But why are we lucky? Because it's up to us, this and the next generation, to prove our value, not for what we're doing now, but for what we will contribute to a better tomorrow. As for me, I envision our department as a great big brain. My work in Sephardic Studies, languages, and AI integration has been like stimulating it with small intellectual sparks, awakening new ideas and discussions. I firmly believe that integrating AI tools won't just update our methods—it's like equipping our teaching and research capabilities with rocket fuel. As a result, we're not just keeping up with academic trends; we're setting them. Every paper published and every project undertaken is a step towards proving that our department is not just surviving; it's thriving! Furthermore, my ongoing research projects are gaining momentum, engaging in outreach, fostering collaborations with other institutions, and thereby enriching the intellectual diversity of our department.

Looking ahead, what do you envision for the future of our department, and how do you see yourself contributing to that vision?

The future? Oh, it's bright and beaming with tongues, bytes, and books. I envision us harnessing more technology, perhaps even VR, where students can 'walk' through historical linguistic landscapes—imagine strolling through Renaissance Spain or engaging in a debate with Roman rhetoricians! I foresee us, together with faculty and staff, continuing to expand our reach to students and setting an example for other departments by integrating more advanced technological tools into our curriculum and further enriching our global studies program. Our role will be pivotal in leading some of these initiatives, particularly in leveraging AI to deepen our understanding of linguistic and cultural studies. My contribution? I hope to make a meaningful impact. Our shared goal is to transform our department into a beacon of innovation, where tradition meets technology, and every scholarly meanderer will find solace.

What are you most looking forward to this upcoming academic year?

For the upcoming academic year, I am particularly enthusiastic about launching new courses that incorporate my recent research findings on Sephardic diasporas, engaging with difficult issues such as peace in the Middle East, and the integration of AI into educational methodologies. These courses are designed to provide students with unique insights into the convergence of traditional humanities studies and modern technology. My involvement in curriculum development is geared towards creating a dynamic learning environment that not only challenges but also inspires our students to think critically and creatively about the roles they can play in evolving fields of study. This year, I'm all set to roll out new courses that will send our students on a journey of discovery, incorporating my recent research findings on Sephardic diasporas, engaging with difficult issues such as peace in the Middle East, and the integration of AI into educational methodologies. Think of it as an academic odyssey, with more data analysis and fewer lost suitcases and ideas. I'm particularly excited to see how these courses will help our students navigate some of the complex challenges we face. Leading these innovations in curriculum development is not just a job—it's a quest to keep our academic kingdom of the Humanities both enlightened and enchanting.



FACULTY

GRANTS & AWARDS

Celebrating Excellence in Community

We are excited to share our department's most recent faculty grants and awards. These important recognitions highlight our faculty's outstanding research and dedication at the University of Miami Michelle Bowman Department of Modern Languages.

Congratulations to all the recipients for their achievements and contributions to advancing knowledge in their respective fields of research. We are proud of your hard work and look forward to your continued success!

Please, be welcome to congratulate the following faculty for their recognition:

- Dr. Susanna Allés Torrent:

Casa de Velázquez, François Chevalier Visiting Researcher.

- Dr. Steve Butterman:

Fulbright Alumni Ambassador Award.

- Dr. Christina Civantos:

Brinker-Gabler award for innovative work in European studies from the Council for European Studies

- Dr. Logan Connors, Dr. Nadia Naami, and Dr. Viviana Pezzullo:

Albertine Foundation for French in Higher Education Grant

- Dr. Logan Connors :

Election, Associate Member, Center for the Study of French Language and Literature (Sorbonne Université)

- Dr. Tracy Devine Guzman:

Fulbright Scholars Award (Brazil)

- Dr. Cae Joseph Massena:

FAAUW Postdoctoral Fellowship

- Dr. Andrew Lynch:

Research Fellow, Center for Ibero-American Studies (University of Heidelberg)

- Dr. Lillian Manzor:

Wallace Foundation Latinx Theatre Commons

- Dr. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel:

Fulbright Scholar Award (Trinidad and Tobago)

- Dr. Suja Sawafta:

TARII Academic Research Institute Fellow, Iraq.



CHEERS TO
OUR
FACULTY'S
REMARKABLE
AWARDS



THE LANGUAGE OF CARE

MLL'S NEW SCIENCE AND HEALTHCARE SPANISH MINOR

A new minor in Spanish is now available for students interested in pursuing careers in science and healthcare. In Fall 2024, students declare a minor in Spanish for Science and Healthcare Professions. Our new minor will allow students interested in entering the medical field to enhance their Spanish knowledge, with an emphasis on medical and science-related terminology and understanding. Having proficiency in two languages in any professional field offers students increased opportunities to grow their careers. Below are the requirements for this upcoming minor. For more information, please contact our Director of Undergraduate Studies Omar Vargas (o.vargas52@miami.edu).

Requirements for the Minor in Spanish for Science and Healthcare Professions

The minor in Spanish for Science and Healthcare Professions consists of 15 credits of advanced Spanish (5 courses). The sequence of coursework is as follows:

For Non Heritage/Non Native Speakers:

1. **SPA 202**
2. **SPA 203** (required to take section focused on Spanish for Science and Healthcare Professions). Prerequisite for this course is SPA 202 or equivalent.
3. **SPA 302** (Cultures of Spain) or **SPA 303** (Cultures of Spanish America). Prerequisite for those courses is SPA 203 or equivalent.
4. **SPA 433** (Medical, Cultural and Bioethical Debates in Spanish). Prerequisite for this course is SPA 302 or SPA 303.
5. **SPA 446**- Cultural Debates: Public Speaking on Societal Issues. Students can substitute this course with SPA 394 (Spanish Internship, 3 credits).

For Heritage/Native Speakers:

1. **SPA 208** (required to take section focused on Spanish for Healthcare Professions). Prerequisite for this course is SPA 207 or equivalent.
2. **SPA 302** (Cultures of Spain) or **SPA 303** (Cultures of Spanish America). Prerequisite for those courses is SPA 203 or equivalent.
3. **SPA 433** (Medical, Cultural and Bioethical Debates in Spanish). Prerequisite for this course is SPA 302 or SPA 303.
4. **SPA 446**- Cultural Debates: Public Speaking on Societal Issues
5. Students can choose from one of these courses:
 - SPA 321, 322, 330** when the topic relates to Science and Healthcare Professions.
 - SPA 394** (Spanish Internship, 3 credits).

BROADENING

HORIZONS

Exciting changes are coming to MLL this upcoming academic year. We are thrilled to announce our UMadrid program, a new semester-long study abroad opportunity beginning in Spring 2025. The University of Miami is partnering with CEA CAPA Madrid Center and Universidad Antonio de Nebrija Center to offer classes to undergraduate students from any major within the university. This program also gives students, both Spanish and non-Spanish speakers, the opportunity to learn about Madrid through the language and culture. Lillian Manzor, faculty director of the UMadrid program, gives us insight into the new program.

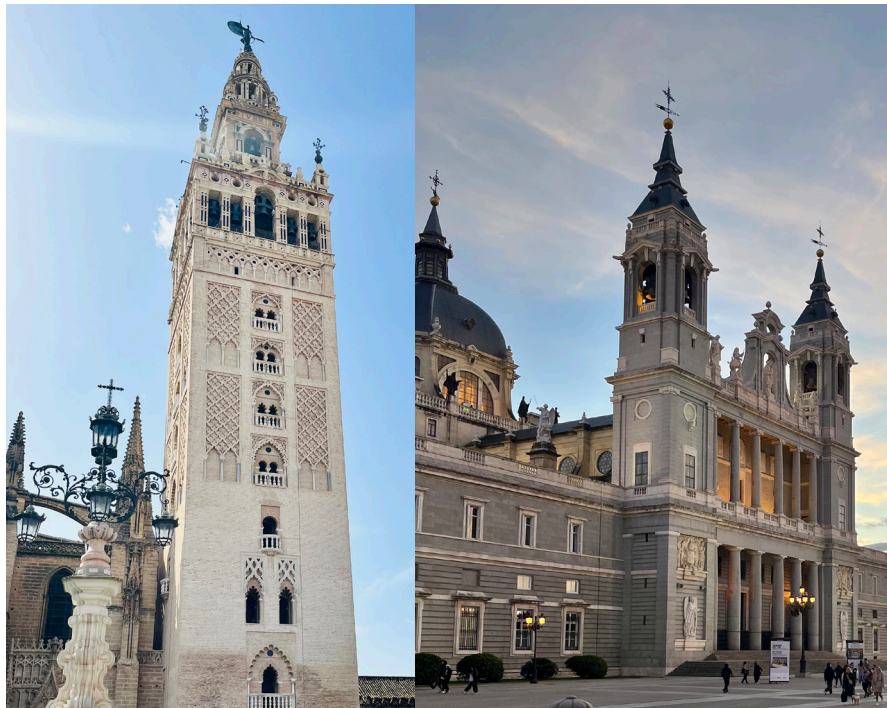
Exploring UMadrid

What will be the primary focus of the UMadrid semester abroad?

UMadrid allows students to engage with the city, its people, and Universidad de Nebrija's students. The primary focus is to experience a new culture and another language to be able to acquire a deeper understanding of students' own and of others' linguistic and cultural heritage. In other words, to acquire the global literacy needed to thrive in today's interconnected world.

Each semester long study abroad program offers a course taught by an MLL professor emphasizing a certain aspect of the city. What will UMadrid's course be focusing on?

The course is titled Discovering Madrid. Students will engage with the city as a social, political, and artistic place, both in history and in the present day. Through a series of readings, discussions, site visits, guest speakers, and self-directed experiences, students will form an authentic relationship of inquiry with Madrid and emerge as experts in one of Madrid's barrios (neighborhoods). Their final project consists of a group



research or creative project focusing on one of Madrid's barrios. They will have to do field observations, interview residents and/or workers, and incorporate their research and personal experiences in their final group project.

How will this new program help students studying Spanish expand their knowledge of the language?

First of all, students will have the opportunity to practice their Spanish 24/7 in the capital of Spain and one of the major cultural capitals of Europe. They also have the unique opportunity of living with a host family so they can really get a feel for the language in a personal, informal home setting.

What aspect of the program are you most excited for students to experience?

Using the city as a classroom which links knowledge to place and space.



Meet Lindsey Faucher

Lindsey Faucher is a passionate and dedicated student whose academic journey in French studies is deeply rooted in her Haitian heritage. Inspired by the desire to connect more profoundly with her cultural roots and communicate effectively with family members, she embarked on her French studies with enthusiasm. This initial fascination grew into a profound commitment to the language, leading her to pursue further studies in French.

As she looks toward a career in international relations, her French proficiency will be a significant asset, opening doors to global opportunities. Her time at the University of Miami has been invaluable, particularly her participation in the Virtual Immersion Program (VIP), where she honed her teaching skills by conversing with English learners in France. This experience will be instrumental in her role as a Fulbright English

Teaching Assistant in Switzerland.

Her internship at Alliance Française in Miami further enriched her French language skills and immersed her in the francophone community. Working alongside native speakers expanded her vocabulary and provided a professional context for her linguistic abilities.

To incoming freshmen, she offers invaluable advice: take full advantage of the events hosted by the Michele Bowman Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Engaging in conversation circles, attending cultural events, and participating in film series screenings provided her with opportunities to practice her language skills in a relaxed environment while meeting new people outside the classroom.

What led you to pursue your studies in French?

I chose to study French because of my Haitian heritage. Proficiency in French would allow me to deepen my connection to my roots and communicate more effectively with family members. As I began my first French class, I was captivated by the experience of gaining greater access to my cultural heritage. This fascination motivated me to pursue further studies in the language.

How has your French studies influenced your future professional goals?

I anticipate applying my French skills as I enter the field of international relations as French is one of the primary languages used to communicate between countries and governments. My knowledge of French will certainly be advantageous and open the doors to more opportunities.

Congratulations on receiving the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant award! How will your experiences at the University of Miami contribute to your upcoming endeavors in Switzerland?

The University of Miami has provided me with countless experiences of cultural exchange that will help in my future endeavors as a Fulbright grantee. For example, I participated in the Virtual Immersion Program (VIP) for multiple semesters where I had the opportunity to converse with students learning English in France. This experience gave me a glimpse into potential strategies I can use in the future while teaching English in Switzerland.

What was your most significant learning from your internship experience with Alliance Française?

My experience at Alliance Française deeply enriched my French skills in a professional environment. As I worked alongside native French

speakers, I expanded my vocabulary and became immersed in the francophone community in Miami.

As an alumna, what advice would you offer to incoming freshmen?

I advise incoming freshmen to take advantage of the events hosted by MLL! I appreciated the opportunities to be immersed in language learning outside the classroom by participating in conversation circles or cultural food at the various film series screenings. This offered an opportunity to meet new people outside of the classroom and practice my language skills in a more relaxed environment.





SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS: RECOGNIZING OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS AND WELCOMING NEW SCHOLARS

We are delighted to congratulate all our graduate students for their outstanding achievements this year. Your dedication, hard work, and academic excellence have not only brought pride to our department but also set a remarkable example for your peers.

We are equally excited to welcome our new students to our academic community. Your journey with us is just beginning, and we look forward to supporting you as you embark on this exciting path.

Together, we will continue to foster a vibrant and dynamic environment for learning, growth, and discovery. Congratulations to all!

Nadiyah Aamer:
Awarded the Summer
Doctoral Research Grant
for the 2024 Summer.

Gabriel das Chagas:
American Studies Teaching
Fellowship. University of
Miami American Studies
Program. 2024 - 2025.

Jacob Dennis:
Congratulations to Jacob
for his presentation.
"Rethinking the tirailleur:
Performances of Colonial
Conscription for the
Centenary of WWI."

**Catheline Théodora
Desire:** Congratulations to
Catheline for receiving an
MA in Didactique des
Langues, du FLE, du FLS :
Métiers de la Recherche,
de l'Enseignement et de
l'Ingénierie pédagogique. --
-Université Sorbonne-
Nouvelle/Université Paris 5
Université Paris.

Diona Espinosa:
awarded the Goizueta
Research Fellowship.

Marcia Fanti Negri:
Awarded the Dean
Dissertation Award 2024-
2025 from the College of
Arts &
Sciences and The Summer
Doctoral Research Grant
2024,
Graduate School,
University of Miami.

Eukene Franco Landa:
Awarded the Center for the
Humanities Dissertation
Fellowship offered by the
College of Arts & Sciences'
Center for the Humanities,
and the Summer Doctoral
Micro-Grant, offered by
the graduate School at the
University of Miami.

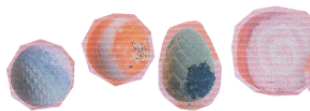
**Maytte Hernandez-
Lorenzo:** awarded
Doctoral Archival and
Specialized Research
Award 2024-2025 from the
College of Arts and
Sciences at the University
of Miami and the 2024
UMIA Field Research Grant
by the University of Miami
Institute for Advanced
Study of the Americas.

Neta Kanny: presented at the XVII Congress of the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA), San Diego State University, San Diego, California, from April 4-6 2024, her paper titled "Macabéa e Sofia: feminilidade migratória e a procura de identidade em A hora da estrela, de Clarice Lispector, e Os continentes de dentro, de Maria Elena Morán".



Nina Lee: presented "The Aesthetic of Whiteness in the Age of Darkness: Revisiting the Medieval in American Popular Culture Panel: Inventing the Past: Popular Culture and Tensions in the Collective Conference: 5th Annual Modern Languages and Linguistics Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference at Florida State University.

Massiel Medina: moderated keynote speaker panel for the Exploring the Caribbean: New Questions, Methods and De-bates Conference



Yoán Moreno: awarded UMIA/LAS Distinguished Graduate Fellowship (2024-2025), offered by the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas.

Marisleydi Ramos: awarded UMIA/LAS Distinguished Graduate Fellowship (2024-2025), offered by the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas.

Yasamin Rezaei: awarded the Summer Doctoral Research Grant for the 2024 Summer, offered by the Graduate School, at the University of Miami, and for being a 2023-2024 Outstanding Graduate Research or Scholarship Award Nominee

Kathy Rubio: participated at the Michele Bowman Graduate Conference 2024.

Ernesto Rumbaut: paper "Catalizador Femme" accepted to the XXXII Congreso Internacional de Literatura y Estudios Hispánicos (CILH) in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia

Savannah Saavedra: presented the following papers: "The long road through modernization: A comparative analysis of the process of modernization in Dire Straits "Telegraph road" and Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude,"

Lourdes Schmader: awarded the FLAS Summer (Foreign Language and Areas Studies) fellowship – This is a highly prestigious national fellowship provided with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's International Foreign Language Education Office (IFLE), the Summer Doctoral Research Grant for the 2024 Summer, offered by the Graduate School, at the University of Miami and the 2024 UMIA Field Research Grant by the University of Miami Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas.

Euge Stumm: Co-advised with Doctor Daniela Levandowski on the bachelor's thesis in Psychology of Eduarda Meireles "Trajetórias Rumo à Parentalidade: Experiências de Pessoas Trans e Não Binárias" (Pathways to Parenthood: Experiences of Transgender and Non-Binary Individuals) at Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre, Brazil

Diana Valcarcel: presented "Natura Sacer: Modern Totalitarianism and the Systematic Slaughter and Silencing of Our Environment" at the Scientific Committee of the 7th World Conference on Research in Social Sciences

Aileen Vezeau: Received the McKnight Fellowship 2023-2024 and the Dean's Fellowship 2023-2024.

Ruming Yang: presented "The Zombie Narrative in "Los chinos" of Alfonso Hernández Catá." at the 22nd Annual Tri-University Graduate Student Conference on Latin America and the Caribbean, Florida International University.



Welcome New Scholars!

Albin Aichberger
Rose Accilien
Monica Baró
Yaliza Gutierrez
Linet Hernández
Catalina Revelo



Inspiring positive change through policy and understanding.

We are pleased to showcase Neta Kanny, a third-year PhD student in Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Studies in Spanish and Portuguese, in our latest newsletter. Neta graciously shares her experiences and advice from her journey in our program. She also expresses her passion for humanities, languages, and culture, offering a glimpse into her first year of teaching as a Graduate Student at the University of Miami.

Whether you are a prospective student considering a PhD in Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Studies or a dedicated faculty member, Neta's interview provides an overview of life beyond halfway through our Michelle Bowman Underwood Department of Modern Languages PhD program. We invite you to read Neta's inspiring interview and witness the contributions of one of our passionate students.

What inspired you to pursue our PhD program and develop your interest in Spanish and Portuguese?

I was particularly inspired to pursue our PhD program due to its emphasis on interdisciplinary research interests and the development of student skills. From the beginning, my desire to study transnational cultural productions of the Venezuelan migrant crisis was welcomed by the department, and I felt encouraged to incorporate my interests in political science and digital humanities to further set apart my research interests. Additionally, I knew that I wanted the opportunity to pursue both Spanish and Portuguese as my languages of study, seeing as 1) my bachelor's and master's degrees were in both of these languages and 2) my research focuses on Venezuela and Brazil as two countries at the heart of the Venezuelan migratory and diasporic experience.

“I was particularly inspired to pursue MLL’s PhD program due to its emphasis on interdisciplinary research interests and the development of student skillsets.”



NETA KANNY

Thinking about this past academic year and your breadth exam defense, how did you prepare for it, and what insights can you share with other students who will be taking it?

My biggest piece of advice: start early! I began conceptualizing different versions of my syllabi and reading materials during the summer after the first academic year. I was in constant communication with my committee throughout the summer into the fall semester, and balanced reading for graduate seminars, the breadth exam, and teaching by making a daily schedule to tackle tasks in an organized manner. Another tip: don't be afraid to ask for advice! I'm very grateful that the students in our program are so friendly and open to sharing their experiences when it came to the breadth exam. Overall, while preparing for the exam was difficult, I greatly enjoyed the experience and view it as incredible preparation for the academic job market.

Reflecting on your experience with our program at the University of Miami, how has the goal of earning this degree shaped your academic and professional growth so far? Are there any unique opportunities or experiences that have been particularly significant for you?

Over the last two years, the goal of earning this degree has undoubtedly shaped my academic and professional growth. As a self-proclaimed lifelong student of applied language, I am constantly seeking opportunities to implement my language skills and intercultural competencies to inspire positive change through policy and understanding. Before joining our doctoral program, I served as a research consultant for the Carter Center's 2021 Nicaraguan election observation project, trained as a Spanish Literacy Promoter with the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, and taught English in a bilingual elementary school through the Spanish Ministry of Education in Jaén, Spain. These experiences have shaped the kind of individual and academic that I am today, and ultimately led me to work as the Venezuela Intern of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs in the Office of Andean Affairs during the first summer of our program. This was an incredibly unique experience, as I had the opportunity to prepare leadership to engage on Venezuelan issues and current events related to the country's 2023 opposition primaries and 2024 presidential elections. Academically, I have had the chance to present and publish papers in numerous conferences and journals in both Spanish, Portuguese, and English related to the Venezuelan migrant crisis.

Based on your previous response, can you share what specific research/project you are currently working on and if the breadth exam has influenced your approach to your studies?

My breadth exam connected my political science cognate with my interests in literary and cultural productions – my Portuguese survey course covers 19th – 21st century Brazil through the lens of the country's complex migratory history, and my Spanish special topics course covers 20th-century revolutions of Latin America. This has directly influenced my multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach to my studies as I continue to build on my research going forward. One project that I am currently working on is for my digital humanities certificate – a digital cartography project mapping Venezuelan diasporic cultural productions – that

engages with numerous themes from my breadth exam. This evidently will play a role in my qualifying exam and potential dissertation topics as well.

This year, you had teaching assignments—how has this teaching experience within the program enhanced your perspective on future milestones?

First and foremost, I am grateful to the department for allowing me the chance to teach both Spanish and Portuguese courses at the University – my skills and passion for both languages have been nurtured over the years by educators, and I hope to further inspire my students throughout the program! This experience has definitely influenced my perspective on future professional milestones, as I would like to utilize both languages in my desired career in diplomacy. I also use teaching as a humbling reminder that just as our students are learning in our respective courses, we continue to learn throughout the PhD program!

Finally, do you have any recommendations for future students to help them succeed in our program? What have you enjoyed the most so far?

First and foremost, lean into your interests and pursue them! This is definitely the program for exploring what fascinates you intellectually. Another piece of advice is to make sure you stay organized, because you'll have a lot to balance, but once you get in a groove, you'll find it easier to stay productive and keep your tasks in order! Also – don't hesitate to get out of your comfort zone! I knew that our department was the right fit because I would have the chance to expand my skills. For instance, I had no previous background in digital humanities, but seeing that it is an emerging field, I knew that I wanted to learn more and grow as a scholar and professional. What I've enjoyed the most so far is the sense of community from our department – whether I'm engaging in meaningful conversations with our wonderful professors, confirming a graduate-related question with our office staff, or debating with and learning from our diverse graduate students, I am constantly growing and the opportunities are endless!

UPCOMING

EVENTS

The upcoming academic year promises a wealth of exciting events at our department. We kick off the year with our annual **Department Orientation** on August 15th and 16th, welcoming back faculty, lecturers, and graduate students to gear up for the academic year. Additionally, we will host our **Languages Without Borders** event during the fall and spring semesters.

This event will allow students to explore the diverse offerings of MLL.

These offerings include classes spanning 12 different languages, two majors, seven minors, internship opportunities, and exposure to various languages and cultures. We will also host our **MLL lecture series** in the fall and spring semesters. This series will feature presentations by faculty, lecturers, and graduate students from the department. The MLL Lecture series will also include invited educators from outside institutions. In the spring semester, our **Graduate Student Conference** will empower 2nd-year graduate students to build a conference from the ground up. We will also have more department-focused events like conversation tables like **“Hora del Café”** and **film series**. These events hosted throughout the academic school year will ensure continued learning outside the classroom and give students from outside the department a taste of language learning and cultural exploration.



Important Dates

August 19.....Classes Begin

August 28.....Last Day for Registration

September 2.....Holiday (Labor Day)

October 12-15.....Fall Recess

November 4.....Registration for Spring 2025

November 26-December 1....Thanksgiving Recess

December 3.....Classes End

PhD Virtual Open House.....September 20

MLL Lecture Series

September 27, October 18, November 15,
February 7, March 21, April*

Department Meetings

September 4, October 9, November 13,
January 29, February 26, April 25*

Final Group Exam

December 9, 2:00-4:30 pm

End of Semester Reception

December 9, 4:30 pm

CAS Meetings

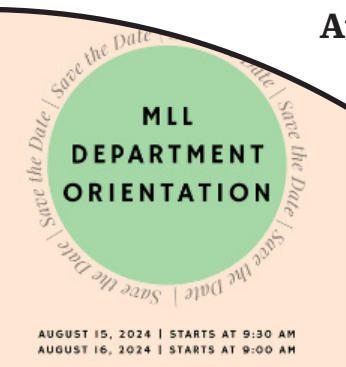
August 16, 9:00 am - New A&S Faculty Orientation

September 24, 3:30 pm - College Faculty Meeting

November 4, 3:30 pm - College Faculty Meeting

December 4, 4:00 pm - CAS Faculty Staff Achievement Reception

*to be determined





Support

MLL

“We are a diverse and intellectually curious group of scholars and students who provide an academic gateway to Miami and to the world.”

-Logan J. Connors, Department Chair

HELP US CONTINUE TO INSPIRE A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS THROUGH AWARDS, EVENTS, GUEST SPEAKERS, AND TOOLS OF ENRICHMENT. YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN THEIR ACADEMIC AND INTELLECTUAL ENDEAVORS.



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