Prof. Martínez-Gómez Receives Service Award

Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez was recognized with the Distinguished Faculty Service to Students Award at the Faculty Recognition Awards Ceremony held on April 20. The honor is presented each year to one member of the faculty who makes exceptional contributions to the lives of students at John Jay College.

One student, in nominating her, said that “Professor Martínez-Gómez has always aimed to provide John Jay students with networking opportunities. These experiences, personally, did not only help me gain insight into an interpreter’s life but also future possible work opportunities…. After completing my undergraduate degree, professor Martínez-Gómez and I are still in frequent contact. She continues to be a positive influence — not only in regard to my career goals and decisions, but also my life.”

In Memory of the Victims of the Massacre in Orlando
News

Gemütlichkeit at the Café Sabarsky

Prof. Waltraud Raninger took her German students to Café Sabarsky, an authentic Austrian coffee house reminiscent of those of the 1920s and 1930s, where they enjoyed traditional Gemütlichkeit — a state of social conviviality. The menus were in German and the German waitress spoke to the students in that language, giving them practice in a realistic setting they would encounter in any German-speaking country. Located across the street from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Upper East, the class took advantage of the spring-like weather to stroll through Central Park to arrive at the destination.

The café included newspapers and magazines in German that the students could read while waiting to be served. Below is Prof. Raninger (left) with some of her students: Star Manzueta, Vincent D’aquaro, Curtis Harbers, and Natalie Joseph.

To the right, Vincent D’aquaro takes advantage of the opportunity to read in German from Der Spiegel.
Poet Claudia Prado Visits John Jay Spanish Class

The Argentinian writer Claudia Prado visited Prof. Mariana Graciano’s Spanish 215 composition class which in the spring semester was run as a workshop on creative writing in Spanish. During her visit she presented her new work, “Primero” (“First”), which combined video and poetry.

Ms. Prado was born in Puerto Madryn, Argentina. She is the author of three books: El interior de la ballena [The Interior of the Whale] (Nusud, 2000), Aprendemos de los padres [We Learn from our Parents] (Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, 2002) and Viajar de noche [Traveling at Night] (Límón, 2007). She co-directed the documentaries Oro nestas piedras about the poet Jorge Leonidas Escudero, and El jardín secreto [The Secret Garden], about the poet Diana Bellessi. Her poems have been published in numerous newspapers, journals and anthologies including: Antología de poesía de la Patagonia [Anthology of Poetry from Patagonia] (Málaga, CEDMA, 2006), Poetas argentinas (1961-1980)[Argentinian Women Poets] (Buenos Aires, Ediciones del Dock, 2007); Desorbitados: poetas novísimos del sur de la Argentina [Exorbitant People: Very New Poets from the South of Argentina] (Buenos Aires, Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2009), and Penúltimos, 33 poetas de Argentina [The Penultimate People, 33 poets from Argentina] (México, UNAM, 2014). In 2011 she was the recipient of a Fondo Nacional de las Artes grant, and in 2015 a Queens Council on the Arts grant. From 2006 to 2011 she was one of the teachers in the poetry workshop “Yo no fui” [It Was Not Me] in the women’s penitentiary in Ezeiza, Argentina. Since 2003 she has led poetry and prose workshops for adults and adolescents.
As part of the continuing “Language Matters” series, Prof. Mariana Graciano arranged a joint appearance of two prominent novelists and a poet reading and discussing their works (see the poster to the right). Participants included Sylvia Molloy who is a professor at New York University and past-president of the Modern Language Association; Buenos Aires-born Silvina López Medin who is the author of three books of poetry and was awarded the First Prize for Poetry Initiation by the Argentine Culture Department and the International Young Poetry Prize by the Loew Foundation; and Chilean writer Lina Meruane who was a recipient of the Mexican Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz Prize. In the photograph below are, from the left, Prof. Graciano, Silvina López Medin, Lina Meruane, and Sylvia Molloy.
Prof. Keiko Miyajima arranged a workshop on Japanese culture which was held at John Jay College on April 7. The event featured Yasushi Fujimoto and Kurea Hananoya from Japan performing the “White Lion” and “Time-Noodle,” two pieces of Rakugo, the traditional art of Japanese comic storytelling which is several centuries old. They also played selections on the Shamisen and Sanshin, traditional Japanese musical instruments, and concluded the workshop with a hilarious sword-fighting workshop. The room was filled with laughter from the beginning to the end, proving that humor is capable of transcending the boundaries of cultures. Some students even stayed after the event to try out the Shamisen. It was really a wonderful performance and many in attendance expressed their desire to experience more Rakugo. The performers were impressed by the warmth and enthusiasm of our students, and are already planning to come back next year to give an even better (if such a thing is possible) performance!
A Day at the Met

Prof. Hassan Mortada took his students to the Metropolitan Museum for a first-hand exposure to Arabic culture. From the left, those participating were Tahneem Kamal, Kainat Iqbal, Mariajose Ortega, Sean Skeeters, Christian Ramirez, Rupinder Kaur, Tasnuba Showmi, Hubba Attique, Kelseey Anzures-Licona, Mohammed Ahmed, Abel Grullon, Marina Kim, Katrina Falger-Deitchman, Asad Sheikh, Fatma Abdelaal, Kamran Uddin, Natalie Johnson, Muztahid Kaiser, Renata Calderia, Shamsher Tariq, Bessie Tejada Pena, Alex Cedeno.

Want to Increase Your Career Opportunities?

Adding a credential in Spanish/English interpretation and/or translation is a wonderful way for students in various majors to enhance their employment possibilities. The U.S. Department of Labor projects a 42 percent employment growth rate in these fields as opposed to the general growth rate of 14 percent. Students completing this option will be prepared to take the State and Federal legal interpreter certification exams, the American Translators Association (ATA) certification test, and be well-prepared for a career providing high quality interpretation.

Students interested in more information on the programs should contact the coordinator, Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez Gómez at amartinez-gomez@jjay.cuny.edu or 212-621-3755.
Learning a language is not the mechanical substitution of one word for another, it is understanding the gist of what is being heard or read within the cultural context of the person who said or wrote the original. One of the assignments Prof. Marina Guimomar gave to her students in Portuguese was to develop a presentation on some relevant cultural topic to present to the class. Several of the students chose to do a PowerPoint to accentuate their oral report to the class. The photos on this page reflect some of the students’ creativity.

The slide on the Brazilian rain forest at the top right is from the presentation of Angeline Dominguez and the photo of Porto’s City Hall, in Portugal by Andrea Waterman and Iguazu Falls on the bottom right is from the presentation of Rosa Alvarado.

IGUAÇU FALLS

O nome Iguazu origina de duas palavras que significam 'água' e 'grande'. Cataratas do Iguazu são cachoeiras localizadas na fronteira da Argentina e do Brasil. As quedas são 1,7 milhões de comprimento, dividido por linhas ao longo de sua borda. Estas quedas variam de 197 a 269 pés de altura. Três cidades em três países, Brasil, Argentina e Paraguai, têm acesso ao Rio Iguazu. Dois terços das Cataratas do Iguazu estão no lado da Argentina. Iguazu Falls é mais alto do que, e duas vezes tão larga como Niagara Falls. Cataratas do Iguazu foi formada como resultado de uma erupção vulcânica. Esta erupção deixou uma grande fenda.
Roswell Ramos Wins Design Award

Roswell Ramos, a Spanish student of Prof. Liliana Soto-Fernández, won the coin design competition sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. On April 16 he was honored at the association’s annual conference. The event, organized by Prof. Soto-Fernández, brings together teachers, professors and administrators from the tri-state area. Most are representatives from feeder schools to John Jay. The Consul General of Guatemala was present at the event to view the Guatemalan coin that Mr. Ramos designed. This was part of a project to encourage students to learn more about the history and culture of the Spanish-speaking world.

From left, Honorable Myriam Delaroca, Consul General of Guatemala, Roswell Ramos, and Prof. Liliana Soto-Fernández.

Pizza Night

Prof. Marina Guthenberg took her Italian class to “Tutti matti” on Long Island for “Pizza Night.” In addition to enjoying the cuisine, they had an opportunity to use their Italian language skills to order their meal. It was a wonderful night with 27 students attending: 22 from John Jay College and five joining the group from St. John’s University.

All of those pictured to the left were members of the group which covered several tables.
Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez organized an improv theater workshop for interpreting students on April 18. Led by the seasoned improv teacher Olive Persimmon, from The Engaging Educator, students in the B.A. in Spanish and the Certificate Programs in Legal Translation and Interpretation engaged in interactive activities based on the ideas and principles of improv theater. Through these activities, they strengthened essential skills for the professional development of a marketable interpreter: public speaking, quick thinking, dealing with nervousness and stage fright, flexibility, and careful listening skills, among others.

The focus of improv applied to interpreter training lies in exploiting both initiative and teamwork, in the framework of activities centered on and connecting presence and attention to others and their messages. Plus, it was fun!
Lunch at the Marrakech

Prof. Chernor Barrie took his Arabic class to the Marrakech Restaurant, a Moroccan establishment in Midtown Manhattan. Events such as this provide students with an opportunity to use the language they are studying, as well as experience some aspects of another culture. Students participating included, from left to right: Hassan Ahmed, Kayla Harrod, Sara Kukli, Prof. Chernor Barrie, Marcos Aguilar, Marina Saad, Grace Theresa Agalo-Os, Iqra Islam, Aya Hussein, Fairrooz Haider. In the center at the table are Andrew Mavros and Saghir Ahmad.

Learning Japanese Calligraphy

Prof. Mieko Nakamura Sperbeck’s students in Japanese 102-01 tried their hand at the art of “shodo,” a form of Japanese calligraphy, during community hour on May 11 and 16. Shodo originated in China and was introduced to Japan around the 6th century. Each student picked his/her favorite kanji characters such as 川 meaning “river” and 時 meaning “time” and wrote them on a piece of rice paper called “hanshi” with an ink-dipped brush. Many of the students were surprised to find out how thick the calligraphy brush was! The students included, from the left, Elijah Coleman, Jiajun Huang, John Furey-Lessen, Kevin Pena, Riki Takahashi, Jianting Zhen, Debbie Chan, Juan DeJesus, Prof. Nakamura Sperbeck, Natalie Venegas, Anna Shakova, Dailies Cruz, Rafael Cruz, Tiana Bush, Jason Stringfellow, and Melissa Gaiti.
The Culture of Language

Prof. Hyon Kim takes the cultural context of learning a language seriously. In this class, students prepare PowerPoint presentations on various countries in order to examine how the local culture interacts with language usage.

Language and culture are inextricably linked. A recent article in The Wall Street Journal titled “Lost in Translation” noted that “new cognitive research suggests that language profoundly influences the way people see the world.” Centuries ago the Emperor Charlemagne asserted that “to have a second language is to have a second soul.” The author of the article, Lera Boroditsky, notes that “Patterns in language offer a window on a culture’s dispositions and priorities. For example, English sentence structures focus on agents, and in our criminal-justice system, justice has been done when we’ve found the transgressor and punished him or her accordingly (rather than finding the victims and restituting appropriately, an alternative approach to justice). So does the language shape cultural values, or does the influence go the other way, or both?” This is why the study of languages is such an important part of culture.
Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez organized a guest lecture entitled “Translation Project Management: What is it and How it Can Become My Career?” Alicia Gómez and Marina Martínez, recent translation and interpretation graduates from the University of Salamanca (Spain) and junior translation project managers and freelance translators for Tolingo Translations (Hamburg, Germany), visited Spanish 340 (Legal Interpreting I) on May 18, 2016. Besides covering the basics of translation project management and access to the profession, they engaged in very enriching discussions with students about, among other topics, dealing with clients, managing translation teams, working with computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, and implementing quality control mechanisms.

“La Mise en Situation”

An important part of the teaching of a second language, is “la mise en situation” (Simulations). In Prof. Soha Wakim’s French class the students implement the vocabulary they learn through real-life exercises. They write, express themselves and they have fun at the same time. The accompanying photos show students practicing vocabulary and conversations for “In a French Restaurant.”

Vonte Belgrave – Daneal Cambell – Crystal Kennedy
Yira Caceres – Vanessa Clairjeune – Daniella Rice
Cayleen Young – Kayla Marie Talbot – Lenah Hannoh
The Juan A. Soto Scholarship was established in 2004 by Prof. Liliana Soto-Fernández of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures in honor of her father. It is given each year to a student who excels in the study of Spanish. This year two such scholarships were given. The recipients were Andrés Cabrera and Aracelis Cáceres.

Andrés Cabrera is in the Translation and Interpretation Concentration of the Spanish major and has a double major in criminal justice. He left his native Ecuador for the United States when he was twelve and attended the Borough of Manhattan Community College before enrolling in John Jay College.

Aracelis Cáceres was the first student to enroll in the new Spanish major. She selected the Literature and Culture Concentration because she loves reading, especially the works of Gabriel García Márquez. Now that she has completed her undergraduate degree, she plans to pursue a Master’s degree to prepare for a career teaching Spanish and Hispanic culture at the college level.

Congratulations to these deserving students!
Adjuncts of the Year Recognized

Adjunct faculty are important elements in the educational mission of John Jay College. This is especially true for the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures which has the highest percentage of adjunct faculty in the College. Without them we could not hope to meet our obligations to students.

Due to budgetary constraints the usual plaque awarded to the department’s “Adjunct of the Year” was unavailable the last two years, so this year we took the opportunity not only to recognize this year’s honoree, but also to present the awards to those recognized during the previous two years. The selections are based on peer-reviews, feedback from students, and evidence that the instructor has “gone the extra mile” to assist our students.

The 2013-14 awardee was Prof. Irma Romero. A writer herself, she makes every effort to give students contact with Latin American literature by bringing authors to her classes and also taking student to the theatre and on other field trips.

Prof. Chernor Barrie received the 2014-15 award. In addition to providing extracurricular cultural experiences for our students, such as the trip to the Marrakech Restaurant noted on page 10 of this newsletter, he was also instrumental in writing a major grant application for the department.

In 2015-16 the department recognizes Prof. Marlenys Villanueva whose efforts to provide extra curricular activities for our students have appeared in several past issues of the newsletter.

Congratulations! All of these faculty members have contributed substantially to the success of our programs, and most importantly to our students.

From left, Prof. Irma Romero, Prof. Sílvia Dapía (department chair), Prof. Chernor Barrie, and Prof. Marlenys Villanueva.
Silvia G. Dapía served as a consultant to Caldwell University in New Jersey for a degree program review. She also served as discussant for a session on “La lógica de los afectos” (The Logic of Affects) on May 28 at the Latin American Studies Association conference in New York City in May and in June attended a conference on “American Ethnicity and Ethnic Community Building” at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, where she also chaired a session on Polish immigrants in the United States and participated in a graduate studies workshop.

Aída Martínez-Gómez was honored with the 2016 Distinguished Faculty Service to Students Award in recognition of her outstanding work as a teacher and mentor for students at John Jay College. She had her article “Facing Face: Non-professional Interpreting in Prison Mental Health Interviews” published in the European Journal of Applied Linguistics, presented the paper “Rethinking the Interpreter’s Role: Lessons from Non-professionals” at the 3rd International Conference on Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation in Winterthur, Switzerland, and the paper “Redefining Community Interpreting Through the Experiences of Young Natural Interpreters” at the 8th Biennial Conference of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association in Monterey, CA. She also received an Enhanced Travel Award from the Office for the Advancement of Research.

María Julia Rossi attended the conference “Text as Process: Genetic and Textual Criticism in the Digital Age” held in Pittsburgh on April 4-6, where she presented a paper on her archival research with Silvina Ocampo’s manuscripts, entitled “Of Epicene Particles and Other Misleading Tricks. Gender Ambiguity in a Short Story by Silvina Ocampo.” She also published the article “Silvina Ocampo. La identidad desafiada y los dobleces de la infancia” [Silvina Ocampo. Challenged Identity and the Deceitfulness of Childhood] in the journal Hispamérica.

Liliana Soto-Fernández was a member of a round table and discussion on hybrid teaching methods at Baruch College’s “Teaching Languages in the Technological Age” conference. The other members of the panel were Sébastien Dubreil, Professor of French and Francophone Studies, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Berta Carrasco, Professor of Spanish, Hope University and the author of Hybrid Language Teaching in Practice; and Eda Henao, Professor of Spanish, Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY. She also was named co-editor of the Revista Círculo de Cultura Panamericano Junto, along with Prof. Oneida Sanchez.
Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez receiving the Distinguished Faculty Service to Students Award at the Faculty Recognition Awards Ceremony held on April 20. President Jeremy Travis is on the right, and next to him (from right) are Lynette Cook-Francis, Vice President for Student Affairs; Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez, Connie Velásquez, Evelin Ramírez, and Johanna Brand.

Interested in Modern Languages?

Information about our programs, courses, faculty and students, frequently asked questions, as well as previous issues of our informative newsletter, can be found on our website at:


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