

# Newsletter



JOHN JAY COLLEGE  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
*Educating for Justice*

The Department of  
*Foreign Languages & Literatures*

Vol. 1, No. 3

May 2011

## *A Message from the Chair*

The time seems to have flown by and, as we end another academic year, I would like to begin by thanking everyone who contributed in so many ways to the department's successes.

During the year, the department worked with Daniel Auld and Kat Méndez to make adjustments in the Language Lab to better serve students and faculty, hired new tutors, and implemented a system for tracking student work. To ease registration problems, we worked with Richard Saulnier, Cheuk Lee, and David Primat to eliminate the "codes" required for foreign language enrollment and also worked with Kat Méndez whose very helpful assistance will result in a more efficient student enrollment process.

To support student learning, we reduced the size of language classes from a maximum of 32 students to 28, the first step in moving toward the standard set by the ACTFL. We also adopted the best practices endorsed by ACTFL for teaching languages. Some experimental courses have been submitted to the Curriculum Committee for approval as permanent courses, and other new experimental courses have been designed.

To better evaluate itself, the department has also made much progress in designing an assessment program for its courses and minor.

Individual kudos go to Prof. Liliana Soto-Fernández for her excellent record of scholarship and professional activities and to Prof. Raúl Rubio for his promotion to associate professor. A complete list of the faculty's scholarship appears on page 3.

Finally, but by no means least, I wish to personally thank all of my colleagues, and everyone else for their wonderful friendship and support during my first year at John Jay College.

*Silvia Dapía*

## *"Empowering the Tribe" A Symposium on LGBTI Equality & Justice*

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures is pleased to announce that it is planning a gender and LGBT symposium to be held in the next academic year. Under the leadership of Prof. Raúl Romero, the symposium will encompass the fields of Hispanism and Latin American cultural studies. Prominently featured will be the theme of social justice in a wide range of disciplines throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The symposium will include scholars from John Jay College as well as other CUNY and local institutions.

The department hopes to foster relationships with academic, civic, and cultural institutions that have prioritized gender and LGBT social justice issues among their goals. Email: [empoweringthetribe@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:empoweringthetribe@jjay.cuny.edu).



---

## Department Kudos

---

**Wanda Arriaga** won the 2010 Best Actress Award from the organization Premios ATI (Awards for Actors/Actresses of Independent Theatre). On April 24 she also received the ACE Award (Association of New York City Critics) for her performance in the *Miss Piña Colada*. With these two awards, she has received all three of the possible awards an independent actor/actress can receive in New York City.

**Silvia G. Dapía** delivered a paper on “Trayectorias y fronteras de Gombrowicz: Del polaco al francés pasando por el español (Gombrowicz’s Trajectories and Borders: From Polish to French over Spanish)” at the Third Conference on “Europa y sus fronteras” (Europe and its Frontiers) sponsored by the Arbeitskreis Spanien–Portugal–Lateinamerika of the University of Köln and held in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, March 14. She also published an entry on Roman Polanski in *The Polish American Encyclopedia* (McFarland Publishers, 2011).

**Aristides Falcón–Paradí** has completed his novel *En clave ble blen* about the legendary rumba player, composer, and dancer Chano Pozo who at the peak of his career in 1946 left Havana for New York. A few months later, he joined Dizzy Gillespie’s big band where they both collaborated to invent the ground-breaking jazz genre, Cu-Bop, a Cubanized version of Be-Bop. Cu-Bop combined Chano’s Afro-Cuban polyrhythmic influences with Gillespie’s orchestrations leading to the world-famous jazz standard Manteca.



**Jill Claretta Robbins** was one of six poets selected to participate in C. D. Wright’s poetry master class at the Unterberg Poetry Center at the 92nd Street Y and was also selected to participate in the poetry master class of Rosanna Warren, both in March. Last year she attended two workshops with the poets Sharon Dolin and Jean Valentine at the Center and is currently working on a collection of her own poetry.



**Raúl Rubio** presented a paper on “Cuba in Cinematic Context during the 1930s-1950s” at the “Cuba Futures” international Conference at the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies (CUNY) in March. As a Fellow of the Cuba Project, he served on the Organizing Committee for the conference. In April he attended the National Association for Ethnic Studies (NAES) Conference at Claremont Graduate University (CA) where he served as the Conference Program Chair and also presented a paper on “Ethnicity in the Films of the Republican Era, 1930s.”

**Liliana Soto-Fernández** was recognized with The Ruth Bennett Award for Outstanding Contributions to Hispanic Studies. She hosted “Cuba: Paraíso Prohibido Conference,” the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala of the AATSP Metropolitan New York Chapter, co-sponsored by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, on March 19. It focused on Cuban writers, economics and politics. She also served as panel moderator for “Cuba: Past and Present” that included several prominent scholars. In February she was named Chair of Education for the North American Academy of the Spanish Language. In March she published “Los personajes de dos cenas eucarísticas en la obra de Josefina Leyva” in *Josefina Leyva: La cena de los trece comensales* (Florida: Alexandria Library, 2011), 294-303.



**Steve Zhang**’s essay “Wang Can (177-217)” on the eminent ancient Chinese poet and essayist, appeared in the Gale series, *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 358, Classical Chinese Writers of the Pre-Tang Period* (Cengage Learning, 2011). The series is “one of the largest reference series in literature standing in any library in America,” and this volume is the first one dedicated to pre-modern Chinese literature. It includes scholars from 24 universities in Germany, Japan, Singapore and the United States.



---

## Summary of Department Scholarly Activities, 2010-11

---

The department faculty have been especially productive this year, as evidenced in the following list of achievements. Congratulations to everyone for their fine work.

### Clara Castro-Ponce

- Paper, "Estrategias retóricas en la *Admiración operum dei* de Teresa de Cartagena: admiración y maravilla" in July 2010 at the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese Conference in Guadalajara, México.

### Silvia G. Dapía

- Paper – "Trayectorias y fronteras de Gombrowicz: Del polaco al francés pasando por el español (Gombrowicz's Trajectories and Borders: From Polish to French over Spanish)" at the Third Conference on "Europa y sus fronteras" (Europe and its Frontiers) sponsored by the Arbeitskreis Spanien–Portugal–Lateinamerika of the University of Köln and held in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, March 14.
- Article – "Borges y la lírica: poesía sin sujeto" in Alfonso de Toro, ed., *Borges poeta* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2010).
- Article – "Roman Polanski," *The Polish American Encyclopedia* (McFarland Publishers, 2011).
- Appointment – Named guest editor for an issue of *Polish American Studies*, published by the Polish American Historical Association, that will focus on the experience of Polish immigrants in Latin America.

### Liliana Soro-Fernández

- Paper – "Latinos in the US: The Self and the Family," American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese in Guadalajara, México in July 2010.
- Paper – "Assessment at the University Level," American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese in Guadalajara, México in July 2010.
- Paper – "El mundo que nos espeja: Los latinos y las

películas de Hollywood" at the Annual Congress of Círculo de Cultura Panamericano at William Patterson University in New Jersey in November 2010.

- Article – "La vicisitud de la mujer cubana en el período especial," *Círculo*, Vol. XXXIX, 2010 (pp. 154-161).
- Article – "Los personajes de dos cenas eucarísticas en la obra de Josefina Leyva" in *Josefina Leyva: La cena de los trece comensales* (Florida: Alexandria Library, 2011), 294-303.
- President, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, beginning January 1, 2011.
- Award – The Ruth Bennett Award for Outstanding Contributions to Hispanic Studies.
- Hosted – "Cuba: Paraíso Prohibido Conference," the Annual Gala of the AATSP Metropolitan New York Chapter, co-sponsored by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of John Jay College on March 19, 2011.
- Chair – Education for the North American Academy of the Spanish Language.

### Raúl Romero

- Co-author – "Il Livro do Desassossego di Fernando Pessoa/Bernardo Soares: epifania e poema in prosa" in the anthology *Studi su Fernando Pessoa* (Perugia, Italy: Edizione dell'Urogallo, February 2010).

### Raúl Rubio

- Article – "Cosas cubanas: economía, ideología y estética de la cultura material cubana" in *Espéculo: Revista de estudios literarios* (Universidad Complutense, Madrid, Spain), Volume 44 (March- June), 2010.
- Review – Esther Whitfield's *Cuban Currency: The Dollar and "Special Period" Fiction* in *Hispanic Review*, Volume 78, No. 3 (Summer, 2010).
- Professional Office – Elected to serve a three year term on the Board of Directors of the National Association for Ethnic Studies.

---

## *Students Attend WordStages Theater*

---



*On April 28, students from Prof. Wanda Arriaga's SPAN 112 course visited the WordStages Theater to attend a performance of "La barberia." Following the performance the students had an opportunity to go backstage and speak with the director, actors and actresses. For some students, this was their first opportunity to attend a live play.*

---



*On Wednesday, May 18, Prof. Uhnsook Park's Japanese language class held its end-of-the-semester oral presentations followed by a picnic lunch. The group, and several guests, enjoyed the convivial gathering which has become a department tradition.*

---

---

## *Students Volunteer at Museo del Barrio*

---

I had never heard of the Museo del Barrio before last fall. Then the Department of Languages and Literatures organized a trip so I decided to go and found out that it's mainly a Hispanic museum and the exhibitions are on Latino communities and topics. It made me feel as if I was back in my hometown in Puerto Rico. Due to the hospitality and good feeling, I decided to sign up to volunteer with the museum.

The first activity I signed up for was called "Super Sábado." It is held every third Saturday of the month with different workshops for the community. December 18, 2010, was my first "Super Sábado" and I signed up to volunteer with the "coquito" (a Puerto Rican holiday coconut drink) taste contest. This activity is about the whole community tasting the best coquito within the five boroughs. My assignment was to give out wafers in order to make the process faster and more efficient. This experience was very nice, especially having the opportunity to interact with the Spanish Harlem community.



*Some of the decorative crowns prepared for the "Three Kings Parade."*

The second activity that I signed up for was the "Three Kings Parade" since it is an essential part of my Puerto Rican culture. For this celebration we prepared decorative crowns for the children that would attend the parade. With the help of Rubielina Burgos and Sharina Amaro, both of them John Jay classmates, we created 1,073 crowns within a three-week period. In addition, we marched in the parade. It was a truly beautiful experience. We had the opportunity to see the happiness in children's faces firsthand.

I have decided to apply for an internship with Museo del Barrio and I look forward to more unique experiences like the first two. Thank you to Prof. Raúl Rubio for telling our class about this, to Prof. Lisandro Pérez who led the tour, and Prof. Silvia Dapía of the Department of Languages and Literature for sponsoring the trip.

— by Barbara Báez,  
Spanish Minor



*Left to right — Barbara Báez, Rubielina Burgos, and Sharina Amaro.*



*Best wishes for a pleasant and productive summer from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.*

### *Department Contact Information*

Phone: 646-557-4415  
Fax: 212-265-3321  
E-Mail: [sdapia@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:sdapia@jjay.cuny.edu)  
Address: Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures  
John Jay College/City University of New York  
619 West 54th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10019