A Message from the Chair

I hope that everyone enjoyed a rewarding Fall Semester and I especially wish to thank everyone in our department who contributed to a successful semester.

As of January 1 I will be on sabbatical for the Spring 2017 semester. During my absence Prof. Bettina Carbonell from the English Department has kindly agreed to act as the interim chair of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Prof. Carbonell received her MA and PhD degrees in English and American literature from New York University. Her research and teaching interests include the relationship between narration and ethics in the representation of American history; narratives of conquest, resistance and transcendence; cultural activism through literature and other art forms; and museums and American culture. Her most recent book is Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts (Blackwell Publishing).

If you need anything related to the department while I am on sabbatical, please contact Prof. Carbonell at her e-mail, bcarbonell@jjay.cuny.edu. She will be glad to assist you with whatever you might need.

Silvia Dapía

Becoming a Professional Interpreter

Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez organized a guest lecture entitled “Establishing Yourself as a Professional Interpreter” for students in the Translation and Interpretation Certificates and in the Spanish major.

Irene Vicente Rodrigo, a graduate from the MA in Translation and Interpretation program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, California, and a successful junior freelance interpreter, visited the Spanish 440 class (Legal Interpreting II) on November 16. She narrated her experiences as she established herself in her career as a freelance interpreter, both in the United States and in Europe. She also shared wonderful tips on how to create and expand one’s client portfolio, prepare for challenging interpreting assignments, become involved in professional circles, and operate one’s own freelance business, among others topics.
News

Students Attend CinéSalon at Alliance Française

Prof. Soha Ibrahim’s French 101 and French 102 classes were invited to the French Institute—Alliance Française (FIAF) to view the weekly CinéSalon film series. They were treated to Bled Number One, a 2006 French drama directed by Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche.

In the movie, “Kamel” is deported from France to his native Algeria where he is thrust into the uncertainty of the civil war. The film allowed students to better discover the Algerian culture as well as the difficulties encountered by an immigrant who returns to his country of origin for the first time.

Ordering in French at Le Pain Quotidien

Prof. Soha Ibrahim’s French 102 class spent some time learning how to order food in a restaurant, then visited Le Pain Quotidien to try out their skills. It was a good thing that they practiced because their waiter, Michel, spoke only French to them.

In the photo above left, from the left, are Shalini Sukhai, Meigi Lin, Prof. Soha Ibrahim, Lorena Villavicencio, Sarah Luzincourt, Gage McNally, Melissa Rodriguez, and Rebecca Anson. In the photo above right, Shalini Sukhai practices ordering with Michel, the waiter. Everyone agreed that the meal and the experience were amazing.
Prof. Susan Berk-Seligson visited John Jay College on December 5 to share her research about the language of gang violence in Central America as part of our department’s Language Matters Lecture Series. Invited by Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez and with the support of the Faculty-Student Engagement Program, Prof. Berk-Seligson gave a talk entitled “Reported Threats: The Routinization of Violence in Central America.” She discussed how language is used to exert violence or to report it, particularly in the form of threats and in the context of the illegal activities of the international “18th Street” and “Salvatrucha” gangs in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. She used excerpts from hundreds of interviews with law enforcement and victims, school administrators and teachers, community leaders and at-risk youth, to analyze the nature of these threats, the people who make them and receive them, and the ways in which they are reported and to whom.

Dr. Susan Berk-Seligson is Research Professor of Spanish Linguistics at Vanderbilt University. She has authored the books Coerced Confessions: The Discourse of Bilingual Police Interrogations (Mouton de Gruyter, 2009) and The Bilingual Courtroom: Court Interpreters in the Judicial Process (University of Chicago Press, 1990, 2002), as well as dozens of articles in the fields of forensic linguistics, court interpreting, and sociolinguistics. Her award-winning research has been supported by the National Science Foundation, among others. She also serves as a Research Affiliate of the National Center for State Courts and as a member of the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpreting, the educational foundation of NAJIT, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators.
A Visit to the Kings County Family Court

Students in the advanced legal translation and interpretation courses visited Kings County Family Court upon the invitation of Judge Lillian Wan on September 19. Accompanied by Prof. Martínez-Gómez, they had a private meeting with Judge Wan, who explained the role of Family Court within our court system and shared her experiences as a Family Court judge, her insightful perspectives on language access in courts, and her recommendations for best practices to work with interpreters. Later in the day, students observed a series of hearings in the part of Judge Javier Vargas, including a case involving a Russian interpreter. After this first visit, these students have been attending other court proceedings in civil, criminal, and family courts throughout the city, either individually or in small groups, in order to shadow Spanish interpreters and closely observe their work. They would like to thank all the court officers and interpreters that have welcomed them in their workplaces and have made these enriching learning opportunities possible.

Here at the entrance of Kings County Family Court are (from left to right) Prof. Aída Martínez-Gómez, Martha Mendoza, Diana Cadmen, Yesica Siguencia, Kiara Paredes, Nicole Abdallah, Ismary Calderón, Amarfelin Hemández, Claudia Dardón, Erwin Cruz, Yaritma Cabral, and Digna Chávez.
Tasting the Grub to Tut’s Hub

Prof. Lamees A. Fadl took her Arabic language students to the Egyptian restaurant Tut’s Hub in Astoria. While there they not only enjoyed delicious Egyptian and Middle Eastern food, but also watched and discussed a film that will be included as part of the final exam in the course. Students were able to practice their language skills by ordering their food in Arabic. They also learned about the different Arabic dialects and traditions, since the restaurant employed workers from different Arabic-speaking countries. Everyone agreed it was a wonderful experience.

Puppets and Calligraphy

Prof. Meiko Sperbeck’s students in Japanese 101 went to see a Japanese traditional puppet show called “Joruri” at Hunter College on December 2. On the 12th, Japanese 201 students tried their hand at calligraphy, the art of decorative handwriting. Some of the students tried “the shodo” (Japanese calligraphy) and had Japanese snacks at the Bounenkai during community hour on December 12th. The Bounenkai is a Japanese tradition where friends and colleagues gather and forget about the problems that they experienced in this past year and look forward to the new year.

Want to Increase Your Career Opportunities?

Adding a credential in 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 at amartinez-gomez@jjay.cuny.edu or 212-621-3755.
In October, Prof. Keiko Miyajima’s Japanese 101 and 102 classes enjoyed Rakugo, a traditional Japanese comic storytelling. Rakugo performers Showto (“a laughing man”) and Arara, along with a Shamisen (Japanese string instrument) player Koneko, came from Japan to introduce hilarious Rakugo stories, traditional Japanese songs and games, filling the classroom with laughter. Prof. Lisa Reinke from the Dept. of Communications and Theater Arts also joined the class as an assistant performer.

“Peace on Your Wings”

In September, through the courtesy of the Gerald W. Lynch Theater of John Jay College, students from Prof. Keiko Miyajima’s Japanese classes, along with their families and friends, enjoyed the opportunity to see “Peace on Your Wings,” a children’s musical by a Japanese-American theater troupe from Hawaii, describing the life and death of Sadako, a 12-year-old victim of Hiroshima.
On November 17, Prof. María Julia Rossi’s sister, the singer Ana Rossi, originally from Argentina but now living in Spain, visited her Spanish 211 class. Students interviewed Ana, asking her questions about her childhood, her career, and her lifestyle. After singing for the group, she taught them to sing “Ojalá que llueva café” (I hope there will rain coffee), a song by the Dominican musician Juan Luis Guerra.

This semester, Prof. María Julia Rossi received a Faculty Students Engagement Fund award which she used to take her classes on a field trip to the Hispanic Society on America on November 22. After admiring the Hispanic works of art and following the guided tour by the museum staff, the group had lunch at Coral, a Spanish-speaking restaurant in the neighborhood.
Prof. Marina Guimaraes’s Portuguese 101 class prepared PowerPoint presentations as part of the cultural acquisition portion on the course. The first pages of some of these creative works appear on this page.
Silvia G. Dapía delivered a paper on “Reflections on Power in Gombrowicz’s Ślub [The Marriage]” at the International Conference “Los polacos y la Comunidad Polaca en América Latina: pasado y futuro” (The Poles and Polish Communities in Latin America: Past and Future) at the Gdynia Emigration Museum in Poland October 27-28. She also offered a “Job Search Workshop” for graduate students at the CUNY Graduate Center. In November she was named to the editorial board of the book series “Fines del mundo. Estudios culturales del Cono Sur” printed by INOLAS Publisher, Ltd, in Potsdam, Germany, and London, England.

Lamees A. Fadl participated in a workshop hosted by the Institute for Language Education in Transcultural Context in The Graduate Center. It was led by Dr. Julio Rodríguez, Director of the Center for Language & Technology and National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and focused on the Project-Based Learning Design Rubric and success 21st century skills through project design elements. She also attended The Heritage Arabic Focus Group at the CUNY Graduate Center where Arabic instructors discussed their experiences, challenges, and needs in terms of Arab heritage students at senior and community colleges. She is one of the Arabic instructors that Prof. Alex Elinson at Hunter College and Stephanie Love selected to participate in their project “Heritage Arabic eBook.”


Waltraud Raninger participated in the German Teacher Virtual Conference sponsored by the Goethe Institute in New York City.

Aída Martínez-Gómez had her article “Language, Translation and Interpreting Policies in Prisons: Protecting the Rights of Foreign Language-Speaking Inmates” accepted for publication in a special issue of the International Journal of the Sociology of Language entitled Translation Policies and Minority Languages: Theory, Methods and Case Studies. She also received an “Innovations in Language Education” grant from the Institute for Language Education in Transcultural Context for her pedagogy-focused research project “Reshaping Language Interpreting Pedagogy Through Students’ Self-perception of Their Role as ad hoc Interpreters.”

Liliana Soto-Fernández organized the LVII annual conference of Círculo de Cultura Pan-americano at John Jay College on November 12. She presented a paper titled “José Martí y la literatura infantil a través de los ojos críticos de Eduardo Lolo.”

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Mieko Sperbeck is an active member of a research team that has been awarded a grant from the Institute for Language Education in Transcultural Context (ILETC) for their project “Phonological Advances of Heritage Language Learners of Japanese and Their Pedagogical Implications.” This project examines phonological and syntactic advantages of heritage language speakers of Japanese over learners of Japanese as a second language. The goal is to identify different instructional approaches and assessment criteria for heritage learners of Japanese.

Héctor Velarde is the executive producer of Videophilia (and Other Viral Symptoms), directed by Juan Daniel F. Molero, which won Rotterdam’s Tiger Award and has been selected to represent Perú in the 2017 Oscar.

Marlenys Villamar received a certificate for a Trainer of Trainers Workshop she participated in at the Cervantes Institute in New York where she gave a presentation titled “Eyes That Do Not Read, a Heart That Does Not Feel.” The workshop was directed by Professors José Ignacio Callén of the Cervantes Institute and Angelina Craig-Florez of Columbia University. She also gave a lecture on “Cuban Literary Texts and Their Insertion in ELE Classes” at the 53rd meeting of the Pan American Culture Circle at John Jay on November 12. In addition, she attended the Faculty ePortfolio Development Program offered by John Jay College in Fall 2016.

As part of their Hispanic cultural experience, Prof. Irma Romero’s Spanish class went to a Mexican restaurant on November 17. The students had an opportunity to use their new language skills to order from the menu and then to sample typical Mexican cuisine.

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: