

CMLL NEWS & VIEWS

Volume 3 / Issue 1



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL & MODERN
LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

EVENTS FALL 2018

August 30-31 Italian Parliament
Representative visit

September 21-22 CMLL
Symposium

September 24-28 Classical
Week

November 5-9 Shaping Germany:
A Focus on Immigrants and
Refugees

ISOLC language tutoring:
Wednesdays 5:00-6:00 pm

Language Clubs meet regularly
during the year.

CMLL @ MFLA in Hattiesburg,
MS (October 12-13) and ACTFL
in New Orleans, LA (November
16-18)

FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

It's hard to believe that fall is already here and the start of another school year is underway. (As horribly trite as that sentence is, I've said it every September for the last 55 years.) Autumn is my favorite time of year, and I thrive on the ambitious energies of my colleagues who have been coming up with creative ideas all summer long. As you'll read elsewhere in this newsletter, CMLL will bask this fall in many activities and accomplishments. Such are the indicators of a successful department.

I want to share a similar indicator of great importance. Last year, CMLL tenured with promotion four professors: Silvia Arroyo in Spanish, Brian Davisson in Spanish, Sol Pelaez in Spanish, and Karim Simpure in French; and we promoted Keith Moser to full professor. That was an amazing achievement for a department our size. Ours is truly a department of teacher-scholars. I feel quite honored to work among some of the best faculty members throughout the entire university.

The simple truth is: we touch people's lives here in CMLL. Our students are exposed to the world, and they're transformed; our faculty serve the wider community, and it is benefited; we write books and articles which improve the sum of human knowledge; and we help each other daily to become better learners, teachers, and scholars. So, I invite you, as a friend of CMLL, to enjoy this newsletter and to join me in taking great pride in this department.

Best regards,

Peter

MSU FACULTY GRANTED PHI BETA KAPPA CHAPTER

On August 3, 2018 the 45th Triennial Council granted MSU faculty Phi Beta Kappa charter, Gamma of Mississippi. This prestigious honor is shared by only 10 percent of colleges and universities in the U.S. We are excited to have this distinction because it carries with it a recognition of commitment to arts, humanities, and sciences. One of the areas of particular importance is the high standard of eligibility requirements for students, which includes non-native language proficiency. As the chapter begins its work, MSU students will now be eligible for consideration of Phi Beta Kappa membership. The inaugural class will be inducted in Spring 2019. To learn more about the Phi Beta Kappa Society visit www.pbk.org. [A.D.]



The PHI BETA KAPPA *Society*

THE NATION'S OLDEST ACADEMIC HONOR SOCIETY

Founded December 5, 1776

GERMAN EMBASSY SPONSORS SERIES OF EVENTS AT MSU

“Shaping Germany: A Focus on Immigrants and Refugees” will be a week-long event starting November 5, 2018. This is a grant from the German Embassy in Washington, D.C. in cooperation with CMLL, Political Science, the College of Arts & Sciences, Airbus/Eurocopter, and the German Club. It will be a week of programming, including two films, and a talk by Phillip Conner of the Pew Research Center in Washington on global migration with a focus on Germany. That will be followed by a panel discussion, which will include our student interns who worked in Berlin, faculty, and a member of the German Consulate in Atlanta. On Thursday, November 8, Starkville High School thespians will be performing *the Scar Test* by Hannah Khalil. Dr. Sally Gray, one of the organizers of the event, hopes that students, faculty, and members of the community will attend all events, which are free and open to the public. Additionally, there will be programming for two local schools, including the Mississippi School of Math and Science in Columbus and Sudduth Elementary in Starkville. Our students will be presenting material on Germany and immigration in classrooms at these schools. [A.D.]



ALUMNI FEATURE: BRITTANY MASSEY

Brittany Massey received her Master's in French from MSU in December 2017. She was accepted into the competitive Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF) where she will teach English starting October 1 in a French high school and middle school in Poitiers, in southwestern France. We caught up with Brittany before she left for her teaching year in France.

Born in Florida, Brittany began her school years in Maryland, and later moved to Fulton, Mississippi, where she graduated from Itawamba Agricultural High School. Initially she had planned to attend Itawamba Community College, like most of her friends, but changed her mind at the last minute and went straight to Mississippi State. As an undergraduate student at MSU, Brittany chose the International Business program because she knew that she wanted to study a foreign language. “I’ve always been a little bit obsessed with different languages and cultures. I always thought of foreign languages as a secret code that I wanted to crack. I was attracted to French because of its beauty and the rich history of the culture.”

It was in her upper-level French literature classes at MSU that Brittany says she really fell in love with the language. She recalls the first time she had to read a novel in French (Proust), that she almost dropped the language completely because it was so difficult. However, she stuck with it, and credits her French professors for encouraging her to keep going.

“I have had so many wonderful teachers at Mississippi State throughout the many years I studied there. The language department there is truly an amazing place. Everyone is and always has been extremely kind and warm, and they genuinely care about their students.”

The highlight of her MSU undergraduate studies was her summer study abroad at Laval University in Quebec City, Canada. “It was the first time I had been out of the country, and it was both initially terrifying and exciting. I learned so much during the time I spent there. Every single time I stepped out of my dorm room, I was having a learning experience including everything from ordering a sandwich at a Subway to having a passing conversation with the janitorial staff on campus. There really is nothing comparable to living in another culture, even one as close to us as Canada.”

Now, Brittany is looking forward to living in another culture, as she travels to France this month for the first time ever. Her teaching appointment runs through April 2019, and she plans to travel as much as possible while abroad, hopefully visiting Spain, Italy and Morocco.

Her advice for CMLL students? “Travel as much as you can. Anywhere, just go. It is one of the most enriching and rewarding endeavors a person can undertake. It opens your eyes to other cultures, deepens your understanding of humanity, widens your compassion for others, and strengthens your appreciation of home.” [L.K.]

“Rester, c’est exister. Mais voyager, c’est vivre.” – Gustave Nadaud



CLASSICAL WEEK AT MSU

The Classical Week this year, sponsored by Shackouls Honors College and CMLL, will include a student production of Sophocles' *Oedipus*. The play will be presented Tuesday, September 25 and Wednesday, September 26 at 6:00pm on the Griffis Hall Courtyard in the Zacharias Village on MSU Campus. Admission is free and audience is encouraged to bring blankets or chairs and a picnic to enjoy during the performance.

For details on other events related to Classical Week, contact Dr. Salvador Bartera at CMLL or Dr. Donna Clevinger at Honors College or check the event website <https://www.honors.msstate.edu/events>. [A.D.]

CMLL AND NSPARC HOST VISITOR FROM ITALIAN PARLIAMENT

The Honorable Fucsia Nissoli visited MSU in August to discuss the importance of Italian Studies in the Southern US. CMLL, with support from College of Arts & Sciences and in cooperation with NSPARC, hosted the visit, which was the first ever visit from an Italian parliament representative to MSU. The first part of the visit was a series of talks given to MSU faculty, staff, and students. Deputy Nissoli presented her perspectives and expectations in her talk "Italian Culture, Language, and Research in the Southern USA, a Promising Reality." The executive director of NSPARC, Dr. Parisi and the Dean of College of Arts & Sciences, Dr. Travis emphasized the importance of the various relations between our organizations and Italian universities that would lead to the technical and research training of many aspirants in the sector. Dr. Rosy Nigro from CMLL highlighted the growth of the Italian language program at MSU, which started in 2008 with 20 students and now has an average of 90 students per year. The second part of the visit included meetings between Deputy Nissoli and the department head of CMLL, Dr. Peter Corrigan, and the Associate Provost of MSU, Dr. Peter Ryan. The visit, organized by Dr. Nigro, was a step in establishing long-term partnerships focusing on the economic aspect of the impact of the Italian language in the southern region of the United States. [A.D.]



NEW STUDY ABROAD ORGANIZED AT CMLL

Every year MSU students travel abroad to enrich their educational experience. Our department offers a variety of faculty-led study abroad programs for students in many languages. Now we are creating a new program for students interested in enhancing their studies in French for Summer 2019. MSU French Instructor Lydia King plans to lead the new study abroad program, in Tours France, in collaboration with the *Institut de Touraine* French language immersion school. Located in the heart of the Loire Valley, Tours is just one hour southwest of Paris by train. MSU students will likely be lodged with local French host families, visit the world-famous châteaux of the kings of France, also have the opportunity to spend a long weekend visiting Paris. Both four-week and six-week programs of study should be available, with the departure date set for late May 2019. The trip is still in development and details will be announced later this semester.



Mont Saint Michel, France

Applications will be due to the Office of Study Abroad in early February 2019. Please check the CMLL website for forthcoming details, or contact Ms. King for more information: leh16@cml.msstate.edu. [L.K.]

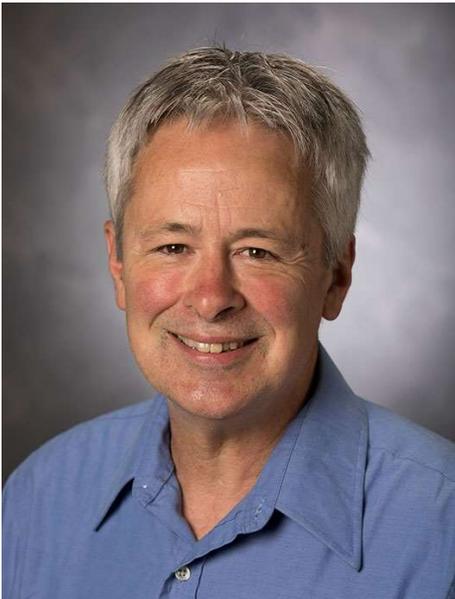
CMLL SYMPOSIUM: THE METAPHOR OF THE MONSTER

On September 21, The Department of Classical & Modern Languages and Literatures will hold its biennial Symposium, which this year will feature Dr. Jonathan Krell as the keynote speaker. The Symposium will host scholars from the United States and abroad. The full program for the Symposium can be found at cml.msstate.edu/symposium. The Symposium Series publication will follow the event. This publication will include articles selected through a blind review process that provide a critical overview of the theme as detailed below. [A.D.]

Mermaids, giants, gorgons, harpies, dragons, cyclopes, hermaphrodites, cannibals, amazons, krakens, werewolves, barbarians, savages, zombies, vampires, angels, demons— all of those inhabit and represent our deepest fears of attack and hybridization, but also our deepest desires of transgression. Frequently described in antithetical terms, monsters were frequently read in the past as holy inscriptions and proofs of the variety and beauty of the world created by God, or as threats to civilization and order. These opposing views on the monster show the radically different values that have been assigned to monsters since they started to permeate the human imagination in manuscripts, maps, and books.

Their hybridity challenges natural order and escapes taxonomy, thus problematizing our epistemological certainties. Inhabiting the margins of society, monsters also police social laws and show the consequences of transgressions on their own deformed bodies. Moreover, they are pervasive in nature and metamorphose into something else in different historical periods in order to embody the fears of that age, never to disappear from our imagination.

The 2018 Classical & Modern Languages and Literatures Symposium focuses on the concept of monstrosity as a cultural construct in literature, science, and art, and the ways in which the monster has been shaped, used, and interpreted as metaphor by scientists, writers, and artists in order to depict otherness, hybridization, threat to hegemonic order, and artists in transgression.



Dr. Jonathan Krell, the keynote speaker, teaches Business French and 20th- and 21st century French literature at the University of Georgia. His current research interests are in the contemporary French novel and its relationship to ecology. Previous research centered on myth criticism, especially in the light of the fiction and essays of Michel Tournier. He is the author of *The Ogre's Progress: Images of the Ogre in Modern and Contemporary French Fiction* (U of Delaware P, 2009) and *Tournier élémentaire* (Purdue UP, 1994), and translator of Michel Tournier's *Le Miroir des idées* (*The Mirror of Ideas*) and *Eléazar, ou La Source et le buisson* (*Eleazar: Exodus to the West*) (University of Nebraska Press, 1998 and 2002). Other publications include articles on Tournier, Zola, myth criticism and ecocriticism in *Romanische Forschungen*, *French Forum*, *Dalhousie French Studies*, *Littérature*, *Romanic Review*, *Mythosphere*, and *French Literature Series*. He is currently preparing a book entitled *Ecocritics and Ecoskeptics: A Humanist Reading of Recent French Ecofiction*, to be published by Liverpool UP.



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY
2018 CLASSICAL & MODERN
LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
SYMPOSIUM

FACULTY FEATURE: DR. BRIAN DAVISSON, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SPANISH

Brian Davisson came to Mississippi State in 2012, after completing his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of California-Davis. He has been very active in study abroad, leading programs in Spain and in Central America, and is the graduate coordinator for CMLL. He is the recipient of the 2018 Arts & Sciences Teaching Award. [A.M.]

What would you say is your overall and/or current research focus and interest?

My research focuses on 19th and 20th century Central American literature and culture. I do a lot of work on cartography, natural histories, travel narratives, and novels in the 19th century, and also on avant-garde literature and exiled writers in the first half of the 20th century. I tend to focus on all of those topics in terms of how we look at space, whether it's physical spaces or how we think of space in more abstract terms in our heads, and how the idea of space has an effect on how people produce culture or define political projects.



Could you talk about your teaching interests?

I mostly teach classes on literature and film. With the graduate students I'm currently teaching a course on the Latin American avant-garde, and in the past I've taught classes on literary theory, the theory of the novel, and the carnivalesque. With undergraduate students I've taught several classes on Latin American and Spanish cinema, and quite a few classes on Spanish and Latin American literature. I also teach periodically with the Honors College. I'd love to see more of our foreign language majors join the Honors College.

Since you are the graduate program coordinator, can you talk about it?

Sure, we've been awarding Master's degrees in French, German, and Spanish for a long time at Mississippi State. In the past the classes for the program have been very focused just on courses in each language, so a student in French, for example, would interact with the other French students but wouldn't take courses with the Spanish or German students. We've been working recently on adding courses that are taught across language traditions, so in some classes our students can now interact in the classroom together, and it also widens their understanding of literary and cultural traditions as a whole. This is always balanced with making sure that they have a strong foundation in the language that they are studying. We've also been working to get our M.A. students more involved in study abroad, whether as students or as program assistants, and are also getting them more involved in presenting at conferences and working on other professional development activities so they're ready for the job market or for going on to a Ph.D. program.

Thinking ahead, where would you like to see the graduate program in the future?

The department has been looking at getting an online Master's program off the ground recently. We'd like to be able to serve graduate students in the state, the region, and internationally, including those who aren't able to relocate to Starkville. We're also focusing more heavily on the pedagogical side of things, to make sure that they have a strong foundation in language instruction, and I'd like to see us increase the number of courses and activities that are beneficial to the students looking to teach. In the longer term, we'd like to develop a Master's track in Classics. Currently there are very few programs in Classics in the Southeast, and we have a good number of Classics faculty that work in a variety of fields, so we feel like we're in a good position to have this be a point of strength in our program in the future.

What are you currently working on?

I'm working on a book on 19th century Central America. It focuses on how the development of national identity was dependent on understanding geography, space, and movement throughout the Central American isthmus, and how all of this is reflected in historical writings, maps, and novels and short stories. The books that I've been researching for the project, oddly enough, are really interesting and also really boring. The writers tend to be very long-winded, so they aren't overly exciting to read in detail, but they're usually doing really interesting things with how they mix different types of writing together. They tell the history of a country in the form of a fictional travel narrative, or they write novels that look more like political treatises. I like to explain that my research is focused on making boring books sound interesting, but the authors of all of these books do these things for a reason, so for me it's like a puzzle working out how all of the different pieces of their writings all fit together and connect to the bigger picture.

You recently spent the summer in Spain leading the study abroad, can you talk about this experience?

This past summer was the fourth time I've led the program in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. We've really seen the number of students jump up over the past few years, including the last two years when Dr. Arroyo led the program. The 45 students we had this past summer took excursions to Madrid and Segovia, and took language and culture classes at Alcalingua in June and July. They had time during their weekends to travel throughout Spain and practice their language and culture abilities as they interacted with native-speakers. This program is always fun for me too, since I get a chance to see parts of Spain that I've never visited before, and also to go back to places that I really enjoy. The past couple of years with the program I've been spending a lot of time traveling to northern Spain, which doesn't see as much tourism compared to southern Spain, but it's perfect for anyone who likes nature, with lots of good hiking and walking, and beautiful mountains and coastline.

How have you seen the Spanish program change since coming here?

I've seen a lot of changes with upper-level classes. The department has had a strong focus on literature since I arrived, but we're offering more courses that are either specifically culture courses (like courses on Latin American cultural studies), or that focus on the culture of a specific place and time. There's still a good emphasis on literature which I think is very important for the students. They can use literature to engage with a lot of different social, political, or cultural phenomena, and it's important to be able to read longer texts when a person is practicing a language. It gives them more connection with reading through context, which is an important skill, and helps build up vocabulary and an understanding of syntax. But at the same time, supplementing literature with other forms of culture allows students more points of contact with the topics they're studying, so I'm glad the Spanish program is shifting in that direction.

What is something interesting about you that you would like everybody to know about you?

I decided to start making bread a few years ago. I learned how to make focaccia when I was in graduate school, but around three years ago I started working on making different kinds of breads and pizza doughs. I can make four different styles of pizza dough, including Neapolitan and New York style, and also thicker crust pizzas. I also learned how to make ciabatta and a better focaccia than the one I first learned. Now we don't ever order out for pizza, and if I get invited to a dinner at a friend's house, I usually bring the bread. I've joked that I might retire in a few years and open a bakery and café in town.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION CLOSE-UP: FRENCH CLUB

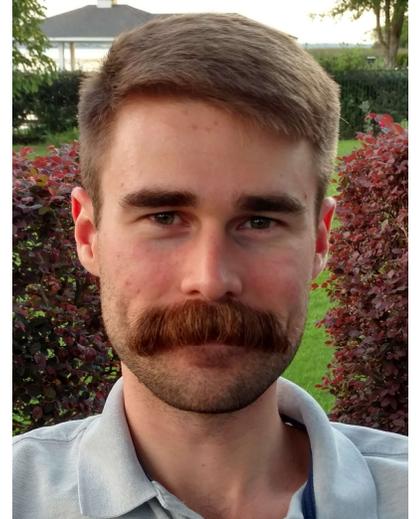
MSU French Club is a dynamic group of students who share an interest in French language and culture. The club meets twice per month and hosts engaging, fun events throughout the school year, such as French food demonstrations, guest speakers, French trivia night, conversation night, and a holiday party. Last year students prepared a traditional *Bûche de Noël*, or holiday yule log, to share together. French Clubbers also love playing *pétanque* on the Drill Field. *Pétanque* is a French lawn bowling game, similar to bocce ball, which is especially popular in the region of Provence.



Students kicked off the 2018 fall semester by making traditional French crêpes together and enjoyed them with a variety of toppings. A crêpe is a thin pancake that originated in Brittany, in northwestern France. In the spring, French Club participates in International Fiesta by selling homemade French baked goods such as madeleines, financiers, gâteaux basque and cannelés de Bordeaux. MSU French Club will meet this fall on Sept. 27, Oct. 18, Nov. 1, Nov. 15 and Nov. 29 at 5:00 p.m. in McCool 202. Any MSU community member who wants to learn more about French language and culture should attend. No prior knowledge of French is needed. Please contact faculty advisor Lydia King for more information: leh16@cml.mstate.edu À bientôt! [L.K.]

STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES: RYAN SHOEMAKE, A BULLDOG'S JOURNEY TO BERLIN

Ryan Shoemake is a Mississippi native, having grown up in the small town of Laurel in Jones County. After graduating from high school in 2013, Ryan pursued his interests in math and science by studying physics at Jones County Junior College. He also worked part time as an assistant computer technician for his former school district. Transferring to Mississippi State in 2015 to continue his studies, Ryan switched to computer engineering after two arduous but formative semesters to explore his developing passion for computer technology. He has enjoyed taking courses in computer programming, electrical circuit design, and microprocessors. Ryan's aptitude in these classes recently allowed him to complete a six-month internship developing Android applications at Kopis Mobile, a small engineering company in Flowood, MS.



When looking to satisfy his two-semester foreign language requirement for physics, Ryan elected to study German and subsequently developed an intense interest in the language. Ryan's success in the language aided his induction into the Society of Scholars. With the help of his German professor Dr. Sally Gray, Ryan applied for and was accepted into the 35th Congress Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) program, a cultural and ambassadorial exchange of students and young professionals between Germany and the United States striving to increase understanding between the two cultures. As part of the program's language acquisition phase, Ryan is currently studying German in Radolfzell, a small town in southern Germany. Ryan will move to Berlin where he will study at the Technische Universität Berlin and later intern at one or more German companies, all over the course of ten months. After his time in Germany, Ryan plans to return to MSU and complete his engineering degree. [A.M.]

"Living and studying in Germany has been a fantastic experience. Every day is its own adventure, and interacting with native speakers has rapidly improved my language skills. Almost every experience challenges or expands my Weltanschauung in some way."

—Ryan Shoemake

CMLL WELCOMES NEW STAFF AND FACULTY

Fall is always an exciting time for us with many new students coming to MSU, especially this year, with the highest enrollment across campus. This year, we are also welcoming many new employees at our department. Join us in extending a warm welcome!

Ms. Heather Belle, Administrative Assistant I
Dr. Scott DiGiulio, Assistant Professor (Classics)
Dr. Kelly Moser, Assistant Professor (Spanish)
Ms. Nana Takeda, Lecturer (Japanese)

Mr. Saad Bushaala, Lecturer (Arabic)
Ms. Pilar Martinez, Lecturer (Spanish)
Mr. Sean Sung, Lecturer (Chinese)

CMLL NEWS & VIEWS EDITORIAL STAFF CHANGES

Dakotah Daffron took a new position as Editorial Assistant at Management Concepts Inc. in Washington D.C. While I will miss his contributions to the newsletter, I am excited for his new career. Arleana and I are delighted to have Lydia King and Heather Belle as part of our team as we continue to bring you departmental updates.

Ania Debicka-Dyer



DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL AND MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

The Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures at MSU, consisting of faculty members in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish, offers Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts Degrees in Foreign Languages with concentrations in Classics, French, German, and Spanish.

East meets West, Classical languages converge with Modern languages giving our students the experience that will allow them to embrace diversity, while maintaining a solid sense of their own historical identity.

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