

Volume XXXII
Spring 2024

THE AMBASSADOR

The Department of World Languages and Cultures

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Notes from The Chair

Dear Alumni, Students, Faculty, and Friends of World Languages and Cultures,

Happy Spring! As we approach the second half of the semester, this Ambassador issue wants to take a moment to reflect on the incredible achievements and contributions of our language department community. Since this is my last semester as the Chair of this amazing department, I want to express my gratitude to our students, alumni, staff, and faculty for the dedication and passion of each and every one of them. It has been six years filled with challenges and triumphs but especially with lots of support from all of you. Gracias!

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to our faculty members for their unwavering commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service. Their innovative pedagogical approaches, scholarly pursuits, and engagement with our students both inside and outside the classroom are truly commendable. Their dedication to fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment sets the standard for academic excellence within our department. In this issue, you can read about our faculty commitment to teaching, research, and service.

I also want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Director of the Language Learning Center, Hannah Grijincu, our Graduate Assistant Ximena Jiménez, and the Administrative Assistant JoAnne Jurkiewicz, for their invaluable support and contributions to the smooth functioning of our department. From administrative tasks to organizing cultural events and everything in between, your hard work and professionalism are the backbone of our departmental operations. Your tireless efforts behind the scenes do not go unnoticed, and I am grateful for the integral role you play in our department's success.

Of course, none of our achievements would be possible without the talent, enthusiasm, and hard work of our students. Whether they are mastering a new language or participating in cultural exchange activities, our students continue to impress and inspire us with their creativity, intellect, and passion for learning world languages. They are the reason we do what we do, and it is a privilege to be part of their educational journey.

As we look ahead to the future, I am confident that our department will continue to thrive and evolve, guided by our shared commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and community engagement. Thank you all for your continued dedication, hard work, and support. I am proud to be part of such a dynamic community.

Best regards,

Dr. Yamile Silva, Chair

FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Dr. Virginia Picchietti

Dr. Virginia Picchietti, Professor of Italian and Associate Faculty of Women's and Gender Studies, is involved in the following scholarly projects:

- Her essay, “`Dirà cose molto importanti sulla nostra bellissima patria’: The Representation of the Italian Shoah in Roberto Benigni’s *La vita è bella* (Life Is Beautiful),” has been accepted for publication in the refereed journal *Italian Quarterly*, published by Rutgers University.
- She is co-editor of a book on Italian author Grazia Deledda, winner of the 1926 Nobel Prize in Literature. Dr. Picchietti has also authored a chapter and co-authored the introduction.
- She translated the memoir, *Nata per te. Storia di Alba raccontata fra noi*, with Dr. Marzia Caporale (Department of World Languages and Cultures).

Service to the Profession: Dr. Picchietti served for the third year as Chair of the Distinguished Service Award of the American Association of Teachers of Italian.

Dr. Habib Zanzana

Dr. Zanzana is presenting two conference papers at NeMLA in Boston, in March 2024.

- “Reconceptualizing Surplus: Labor, Identity, and the Socio-Cultural Landscape in Evaristo's 'Girl, Woman, Other.’” NeMLA, Boston, March 7-10, 2024
- "Divergent Paths of Precarity: Gendered Labor in Ginzburg’s *the Mother* and Federico Fellini’s *La strada*." NeMLA, Boston, March 7-10, 2024.

Dr. Yamile Silva

Fellowships:

- Silva’s application for the The Gail and Francis Slattery Center for Ignatian Humanities Fellowship was granted for the Spring 2025.

Talks:

- By invitation, Silva presented her talk “More about the Santo Domingo Case’: Writings by Abigail Mejía on the US Occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-1924)” at the Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures Department at Texas Tech University on January 24, 2024.
- By Invitation, Silva presented her talk “After 100 years of the de-occupation: Abigail Mejía’s writings on the US Occupation” at the Department of Foreign Languages, Literatures and Cultures at James Madison University on February 24, 2024.
- Silva will present her paper ““Quiero que me des satisfacción a mi y al mundo”: Relación de los ultrajes a los indios en los Reinos del Perú (1664)” in the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) conference in Bogotá, Colombia on June 15, 2024.

Service to the Profession:

- Silva served as external program evaluator for the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Culture at Ithaca College in March 2024 (by Invitation)
- Silva served as the president of the Doctoral Defense Committee for Iranzu Peña Pascual. Universidad de Navarra, Spain. December 20, 2023 (by Invitation).
- Silva is co-organizing the pre-LASA conference (Colonial Section) to be celebrated on June 11, 2024, at the Museo Colonial de Bogotá.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

By: Ximena Jimenez

Madison Policare

Year: Senior

Major: Computer Science

Minor: Japanese and Mathematics

Were you exposed to another language growing up?

My grandmother immigrated from Italy, so she had to learn English when she came to America. She spoke Italian quite frequently, which was my earliest exposure. I also grew up watching anime in Japanese as a kid, which led me to more tv shows and movies in Japanese.

What made you interested in studying Japanese?

I can’t recall a time when this wasn’t a desire of mine. I wanted to learn the language for such a long time. I think I was always a very curious kid, and I always wanted to learn more about different cultures. The more that I learned about Japanese culture, the more I admired it and wanted to learn the language. I was able to learn a bit here and there, but I wanted the structure of a classroom and the guidance of an instructor. Language nuances can be easily misunderstood, and



Madison Policare sitting on wooden bench.

I wanted to avoid learning things incorrectly. I was thrilled to discover the University had Japanese language courses.

How has knowing another language helped you in your studies? Job? Personal life? Future career?

I've always believed that studying the language adds a lot more structure to my academics. Discussing this with fellow students who have also studied Japanese here, we all seem to agree. Personally, it has brought immense joy to my life. Learning Japanese is a delight, and it's a language I've always wanted to master. In terms of my future career, I aspire to work in Japan. So, as you can imagine, progressing in my studies is very fulfilling, prompting me to step aside and contemplate more about what I'd like my future to look like.

Tell me about your past study abroad experience or future study abroad experience?

I don't have any past experiences, but I am planning to study abroad this summer at Sophia University in Tokyo.

What has been your favorite language class? Why?

I've only taken Japanese here at the University, and I don't think that I'd be able to pick any of the courses as my favorite because each of the professors I had the privileged opportunity to work with had such a special and unique way of teaching. I will forever be grateful to my first professor, Professor Fukube, who helped set me up for success through his structured style that reinforced all my foundations for the language. Despite his departure from the University, I continue to rave about him whenever I can! The following year, Professor Matsui was so encouraging and hardworking. As I continued with the language, he helped me believe in myself when I was feeling overwhelmed with all of my studies along the way. He is deeply caring and still so supportive to me and all his students. I felt my conversational Japanese begin to feel much more solid that year. My current professor, Professor Omori, is delightful and brilliant. My year with her has been almost entirely one-on-one. She works hard to challenge me and focuses on my weaknesses, all while providing such a fun and enjoyable experience.

What is the best thing about studying a language at the University of Scranton?

For me, the support from professors and the connections with fellow students have been invaluable. The friendships formed and the meaningful connections with professors have truly enriched my journey.

What have you learned about the Japanese culture?

As I continue to learn about the intricacies of Japanese culture, pinpointing specific aspects is difficult. There's so much I've learned, and it feels like I'm constantly learning something new. One of my favorite aspects to explore is their holidays and celebrations. I truly value learning about the customs and traditions associated with these special occasions, I appreciate that there is always so much thoughtfulness woven into these celebrations.

What advice do you have for students who are considering studying another language?

I wholeheartedly encourage it. While it may seem intimidating at the start, numerous resources are available for support. Professors are eager to assist students, and the LLC provides tutors who are happy to work with students, whether for language practice or to address any challenges they may be facing.

What do you enjoy in your free time?

I enjoy reading, running, video games, spending time with friends, and discovering new hobbies as I go. I love it when I have an active passion project. Currently I'm building a 6502 computer. It's made from a 6502

microprocessor, which started the personal-computing revolution. It's quite a learning curve, but exceptionally rewarding.

Future career?

It's hard to say. As a computer science student, I constantly discover new aspects of the field, some of which I didn't anticipate appreciating so much. The more I learn, the more my perspective evolves. In any case, I hope to be making some sort of contribution to technological advancement in Japan.

Blaze Bono

Year: Senior

Major: Finance

Minor: Italian

Blaze Bono, originally from Staten Island, minored in Italian here at the University. He was exposed to another language growing up as his father's side of the family spoke the Sicilian dialect. Because his generation of the family didn't speak Italian, he took it upon himself to learn the language in college. Another reason he was motivated to learn another language was because he wanted to appreciate Italian culture more. Picking up another language has helped change his perspective as he can see things from not only an American view but also an Italian point of view.

During Spring 2023, he studied abroad in Milan at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. His daily routine included grabbing an espresso at the local café, commuting to class, and hanging out with friends at the end of the day. During this experience, he learned more about the culture and the mentality they held. He noted that Europeans work to live whereas Americans have the mentality of living to work. He also noticed the hospitality and how willing people were to help as well as the strong sense of community. His favorite part of the trip was the food and how each region had its own signature dish. "Every part of Italy has something to offer," he said.

His favorite class so far has been Italian 482: Advanced Guided Writing because it was where he saw the most growth in knowledge and familiarity with the language due to how writing and reading-intensive the course was. He believes this class served as an excellent segway into his study abroad trip. For anyone hoping to learn another language, he advises to just do it as it is a valuable life skill.

For fun, he loves to watch soccer, read books, and spend time with family and friends. In the future, Blaze hopes to work in wealth management or start in an entry level office role where he can eventually build his own clientele. He noted that if there were an opportunity to work in Milan, he would definitely move there.



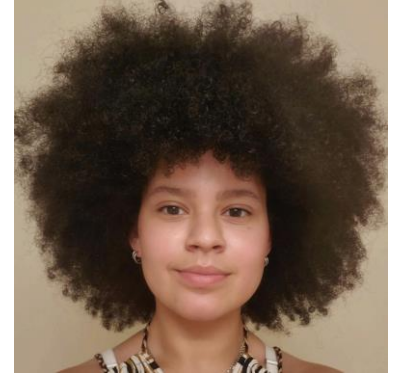
Headshot of Blaze Bono in Milan

Jamie Santiago

Year: Senior

Major: International Business with a French Concentration

I'm a Puerto Rican student who moved to Scranton when I was five years old. I chose to major in International-French Business because I've been fascinated by the gaps in language since I was a little girl and navigating my way around them. I've since wanted to learn many more and hope to explore Arabic and Farsi next (which has Arabic and French loan words). Growing up, I also served as a translator for those around me, so I understand the importance of language for communication and for having the tools to understand your own self-expression.



Headshot of Jamie Santiago

At Scranton High School, I had an incredibly overqualified, fantastic French teacher (Mr. Andrew Witko) who further fed this passion within me, and so I chose the University's specialized major, opting for French as my concentration. I'm currently doing philosophical research on language & semantics while being mentored by an inspiring professor (Dr. Andrew LaZella). I'd like to continue my work in semantics, activism efforts, and eventually move into environmentally regenerative business projects.

VISITING INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHT

Yun (Lily) Chiang

What have you learned from your experience in Scranton?

It is truly gratifying that I've had the chance to teach in Scranton for two years, and this is my last year here. I have really learned a lot from here; all the coworkers and colleagues have helped me tremendously, and I truly enjoy the atmosphere. There is no gap between teachers and students, and every teacher at the university genuinely cares about every student. It's not just a campus here; it's like a small community and home where all the students can experience connection. I also enjoy the Department of World Languages. Everyone here is so kind and friendly; we're like a small international community. We have Teaching Assistants who come from Germany, France, Japan, Argentina, and Kuwait. They bring their culture, traditions, and language here, and I have learned a lot from them. In the first semester, I also took the World Language Teaching Methods class taught by Ms. Hannah. I learned a lot from her, and during the class, we shared different stories from different countries, which was a good experience for me.



Headshot of Taiwanese Instructor, Yun Chiang

What has been your experience with your students?

I love my students; they work so hard in my class. They show great enthusiasm for studying Chinese, and the atmosphere in the class is nice. Everyone has a chance to speak and practice Chinese, and we also do a lot of cultural events during class, such as calligraphy, dumpling-making, and tea ceremonies. It's also a great experience to share our different cultures with each other. In these two years, some of my students received scholarships to study in Taiwan during the summer break. I am glad they are interested in studying abroad, and this program is becoming popular. I think it's a great opportunity for them to learn more about Taiwanese culture and to learn Chinese in real life. Finally, the Taiwan Ministry of Education also supports Scranton by

providing the TOCFL (Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language), and all my students worked hard and passed the test with good grades.

What places have you visited?

During these two years, I have traveled almost all around the U.S. The best way to learn more about this country is by traveling, which is another reason why I chose Scranton. It's very close to New York. Fortunately, I had a chance to stay in New York during the winter break, and after that, I started to fall in love with the Big Apple. I've also been to Washington DC, Boston, and Niagara Falls, all of which are not far from Scranton. Each of these different scenes has left me with many memories. I'm really glad I had the chance to visit all of these cities.

What are your plans?

My dream is to travel around the world while I am teaching. My next step is teaching in Europe. I really like the U.S., not only because it is the strongest country in the world and offers good teaching opportunities, but also because of the people here. Americans have big hearts and big smiles; they're always willing to engage in small talk with strangers like me, always ready to help each other, and always encouraging people. That's the main reason I love this country the most, and it's why I still want to come back in the future.

RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

World Language Day

By: Hannah Grijincu



Sheila Mignolet, the Spanish FLTA, standing in front of a table with traditional Argentinian items.



Naoko Omori, Japanese Visiting Instructor, standing next to traditional Japanese garments.



Rahma Baklouti, the Arabic FLTA, standing in front of Tunisian flag.

On March 5th, the World Languages and Cultures Department welcomed one hundred high school students and teachers from all over the NEPA region to The University of Scranton campus for a day full of language and culture learning and exploration at the first World Language Day.



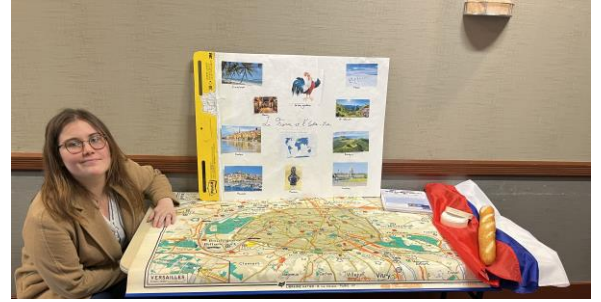
Yun Chiang, Taiwanese Visiting Instructor, standing next to traditional Taiwanese items.

From learning how to sound like a German to ordering croissants in a French bakery, these high school students learned six languages from the World Languages and Cultures Department's Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants and Visiting Instructors. Students learned to distinguish Chinese tones and practiced reading Japanese hiragana, katakana, and kanji through manga. They learned what Argentinians value (futbol, mate, and time with family and friends) and practiced finding Arabic letters in different parts of the word.



Joshua Hartmann, German FLTA, standing alongside the German map and chocolates.

But their studies expanded beyond these instructors' languages: Students also had the chance to learn about the FLTAs' and visiting instructors' countries as well through interactive displays on each of their countries. Students explored cuisine and the beautiful landscapes of Tunisia as well as traditions and festivals of Germany. They practiced their Japanese calligraphy and watched a Ghibli movie. They guessed Chinese characters and learned about Taiwanese culture and geography. They explored France's overseas territories and delicious cuisine and learned about iconic Argentinian people, regions, and food.



Heloise Verissi, French FLTA, next to French map, poster, and traditional French cuisine.

World Language Day served to motivate and inspire students to continue in their language learning journeys by demonstrating how languages create opportunities for engagement with other cultures and communities around the world. Languages open doors to other people, other opportunities, and ultimately, other worlds, and this event aimed to inspire students to continue learning languages and exploring other cultures.

Asian New Year

By: Naoko Omori & Yun Chiang



Taiwanese Instructor, Yun Chiang, presenting on the Lunar New Year



Group of students alongside Visiting Instructors Yun Chiang and Naoko Omori



Japanese Instructor, Naoko Omori, teaching origami

Naoko Omori, the Japanese visiting instructor, provided her perspective on the Japanese New Year which is celebrated on January 1st and is called Oshogatsu. She talked about Japan's unique culture. She explained how going to a shrine or temple is called hatsumode. She also touched on the different activities or events are done on New Year's Day. For example, the ingredients of the New Year's dishes have meanings, and they are eaten with wishes for a wonderful year ahead. In addition, 2024 is the year of the dragon, so all participants joined in an origami workshop to make a dragon.

Yun (Lily) Chiang, the Taiwanese visiting instructor, also shared her perspective of the New Year. The Lunar New Year is the most important day of the year in Taiwan and China, and she is grateful to the Scranton Asian Club and the Department of World Languages for giving her the chance to hold this event to share the culture

and traditions of the Lunar New Year with students. The atmosphere was vibrant as so many students attended.

At the beginning of the event, they enjoyed wonderful Asian dishes, including dumplings, spring rolls, and sushi. After dinner, they held a chopsticks competition. Every student was excited, and there was great teamwork during the game. The chopsticks competition was not only fun but also educational, helping students gain insight into Asian culture.

The last part of the event was her presentation about the Lunar New Year in China and Taiwan. She aimed to educate students about the specific activities and foods traditionally associated with the festival. Chiang introduced foods with symbolic meanings, such as dumplings representing wealth and apples symbolizing peace. For good luck in the new year, she encouraged the students to partake in these foods.

She believes this cultural event provides a valuable opportunity for cultural exchange between Asian and U.S. cultures, allowing Scranton students to broaden their horizons. It is her favorite event which she enjoys organizing. Chiang expressed her gratitude to Dr. Ann Pang-White, the Asian club students, and the exchange students from Taiwan. Without their help, this event wouldn't have been as successful. She hopes the Asian Event becomes a traditional event in Scranton.

Beyond Borders: A Journey Through Folktales from the French-Speaking World

By: Ximena Jiménez



Japanese Visiting Instructor, Naoko Omori, talking to group of students.



Dr. Habib Zanzana talking to group of seated students.



French Teaching Assistant, Heloise Verissi, showing her family crest.

On Wednesday, February 21st, Héloïse Vérissi, the French Fulbright Teaching Assistant, hosted a French cultural event open to the Scranton community. “Beyond Borders: A journey through folktales from the French Speaking World” was an event that allowed students to discover new aspects of the French-speaking cultures.

Through the tales, different slideshows, and activities, they were able to experience aspects of the cultures of Belgium, the Caribbeans, Asia or even Antarctica. The three tales reflected cultural values of the places they came from, showing the diversity of the Francophonie. The night concluded successfully with each participant painting their coat of arms. “The wealth of the Francophonie culture does not solely lie in the beauty of the French language but in the diversity of the cultures that are speaking this language,” Vérissi commented on the event.

The Year of the Dragon

According to the Chinese Zodiac calendar, 2024 is the year of the dragon. Join Taiwanese visiting instructor Lily Chiang as she teaches us about the symbolism of the dragon in China and Taiwan and shares the legend of the dragon. You will experience traditional Chinese paper-cutting art and taste delicious Taiwanese desserts. Join us on March 25th from 4:30-5:30 P.M. in Leahy 235 (Kane Forum).

2024 TA Talks

Join the World Languages and Cultures Department at the 2024 TA Talks. Explore these cultural five countries through the perspectives of international instructors who teach their languages at the University of Scranton. These Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants and Visiting Instructors will give their personal insights into each of their countries around the globe, sharing about daily life, cultural values, and what they love about their home countries. Register here for these two TA Talks to learn about Germany, Japan, Argentina, France, and Tunisia.

Germany & Japan
Tuesday, April 9th
11:30 A.M. – 1:30 PM
Brennan 509

Discover the history and culture of Germany with Joshua Hartmann from Dresden, Germany and learn about daily life and popular past times in Japan with instructor Naoko Omori from Kobe, Japan.

Argentina, France, & Tunisia
Thursday, April 25th
4:30-6:30 PM
Brennan 509

Learn about the beauty of Tunisian landscapes and the history of social reform in Tunisia with Rahma Baklouti from Monastir, Tunisia and explore the beautiful landscapes and unique cultural traditions of Argentina with Sheila Mignolet from Cipolletti, Argentina. Get a glimpse into French culture from a native Parisian and explore the French-speaking world with Héloïse Vérissi.

Tunisian Event

Mark your calendars for April 15th! Arabic TA Rahma Baklouti will be sharing a taste of Tunisian culture from 4:30-5:30 in Leahy 235.

FALL COURSES 2024

SPANISH: Elementary Spanish 1 (SPAN 101), Intermediate Spanish 1 (SPAN 211), Spanish Conversation (SPAN 311), Spanish Culture and Civilizations (SPAN 313), Introduction to Hispanic Literature (SPAN 320), History of Spanish Literature (SPAN 330), and Service & the Hispanic Community (SPAN 335)

FRENCH: Beginning French (FREN 101), Intermediate French (FREN 211), and French Conversation (FREN 311)

GERMAN: Beginning German (GERM 101) and Continuing German 1 (GERM 211)

ITALIAN: Beginning Italian (ITAL 101) and Intermediate Italian (ITAL 211)

ARABIC: Elementary Arabic (ARAB 101) and Intermediate Arabic 1 (ARAB 211)

JAPANESE: Elementary Japanese 1 (JPN 101) and Intermediate Japanese 1 (JPN 211)

CHINESE: Elementary Chinese (CNS 101), Intermediate Chinese (CNS 211), and Advanced Chinese (CNS 311)

GREEK: Elementary Greek 1 (GRK 111), Greek Literature & Mythology (GRK 213)

LATIN: Elementary Latin 1 (LAT 111)

RUSSIAN: Intense Elementary Russian (RUSS 110)

ASL: American Sign Language 1 (ASL 101)

WORLD LITERATURE: Intro to World Lit (LIT 105) & Global Aesthetics of Care (LIT 107x)

LANGUAGE LEARNING CENTER

The Language Learning Center, located in O'Hara 306, offers language learning support for students and community members learning Spanish, French, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and English. Services available include language conversation hours, a computer lab, language tutoring, a database of language resources, and more. The LLC also offers English as a Second Language tutoring to adult English learners in the community and hosts events for local students and community members such as the annual TA Talks, various cultural events hosted by our Fulbright TAs, and high school immersion days. Curious about how the Language Learning Center can help you learn a language or improve your language skills? Contact Hannah Grijincu at Hannah.grijincu@scranton.edu or 570-941-4711.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Stay up to date with the Department's activities, events, news, and highlights by following the World Languages and Cultures Department's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages listed below!



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