

ISSUE 4 • FALL 2023

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UNIVERSITY OF AKRON MODERN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

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## NEWS TO BRIGHTEN YOUR DAY

Welcome to the Fall 2023 Issue of the Department of Modern Languages Newsletter!

Right at the top, please note that our Spring semester this year starts a little later than usual on **January 16, 2024!** (We start on a TUESDAY!)

As always, if you have news you'd like to feature in the newsletter, please do not hesitate to share.

Happy Holidays!



## A LETTER FROM THE INTERIM CHAIR

BY: DR. MARY BIDDINGER

Dear Modern Languages Colleagues,

It has brought me great joy to walk past your classrooms this semester and hear lively conversations in many languages. Recently a discussion in one of my creative writing classes turned to foreign language learning, and my students erupted in praise for what they have learned in your courses, particularly in Spanish and German. Thank you for all that you do for our students, and for your continued warmth and collegiality in the department.

As in past semesters, the Department of Modern Languages hosted numerous events and activities for students, and I am excited that this newsletter provides an opportunity to showcase this programming. We concluded the semester with a festive holiday potluck celebration, and I am still in awe over the delights that were created by faculty members.

Finally, I must thank Dr. Camelly Cruz-Martes and Theresa Procopio for all of their efforts (and superb teamwork) this semester. I know that we are all grateful for their hard work and planning.

Best wishes for the holiday season,

Mary B.

# B~UNIDOS & THE ART OF SPANISH WOMEN ARTISTS



The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company was founded by Harvey S. Firestone in 1900 and merged with Bridgestone in 1988 which transformed Bridgestone into the world's largest tire and rubber company.

B~UNIDOS, an employee resource group, is responsible for making an inclusive and diverse environment for current and future Hispanic, Latin and ally employees. Through the search for, development and retention of top Hispanic and Latin talent, B~UNIDOS aims to enhance representation among teammates of all levels.

On Friday, September 15, to kickstart the events celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month, Dr. Maria Alejandra Zanetta was invited by B~Unidos Bridgestone Americas to talk about the art of Spanish women artists Maruja Mallo, Ángeles Santos and Remedios Varo.

Cara Krstolic, the Executive Director, Race Tire Engineering and Production Bridgestone Americas Tire Operations, invited Dr. Zanetta as a guest speaker. Krstolic is a former student of Dr. Zanetta who graduated from The University of Akron with a double major in Engineering and Spanish.



Pictured above, Cara Krstolic and Dr. Maria Alejandra Zanetta.



# STUDY ABROAD FAIR!

On Wednesday, September 27, Kirstin Polen de Campi hosted a Study Abroad Fair for the University through the Education Abroad Department. Students had a chance to learn about our faculty led trips as well as other study abroad opportunities from partnered or third-party programs!

## STUDY ABROAD 2024

### “DISSTA: The Spanish Experience”

The Spanish Experience is an immersion learning experience spent living and studying in Spain. The program is centered in the city of Valladolid where they will get the opportunity to experience first-hand the Spanish lifestyle and culture.

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

### “Live like an Italian”

JULY 12 - JULY 22

Just a few steps from the Adriatic Sea, Atri is one of the most beautiful and traditional towns of the Abruzzo region of Italy, a village with a rich history and vibrant, colorful culture.

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS!

### LE MANS

Embark on a 4-week Summer program at the Université du Maine, in Le Mans, France. Le Mans has a beautiful medieval quarter and is one hour by train from Paris, close to Normandy and Brittany, as well as to the châteaux of the Loire Valley.

## Zips Abroad!



On Monday, November 13, Education Abroad partnered with the Williams-Honors College to put together a panel of International students and study abroad students to share their experiences around the world!

**Read more on Page 13.**



## BCAS: PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS!

BCAS: Pathways to Success, an event catered toward Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences students, was held on October 11, 2023. Students were invited to come and chat with departments to explore majors, minors, and certificates.

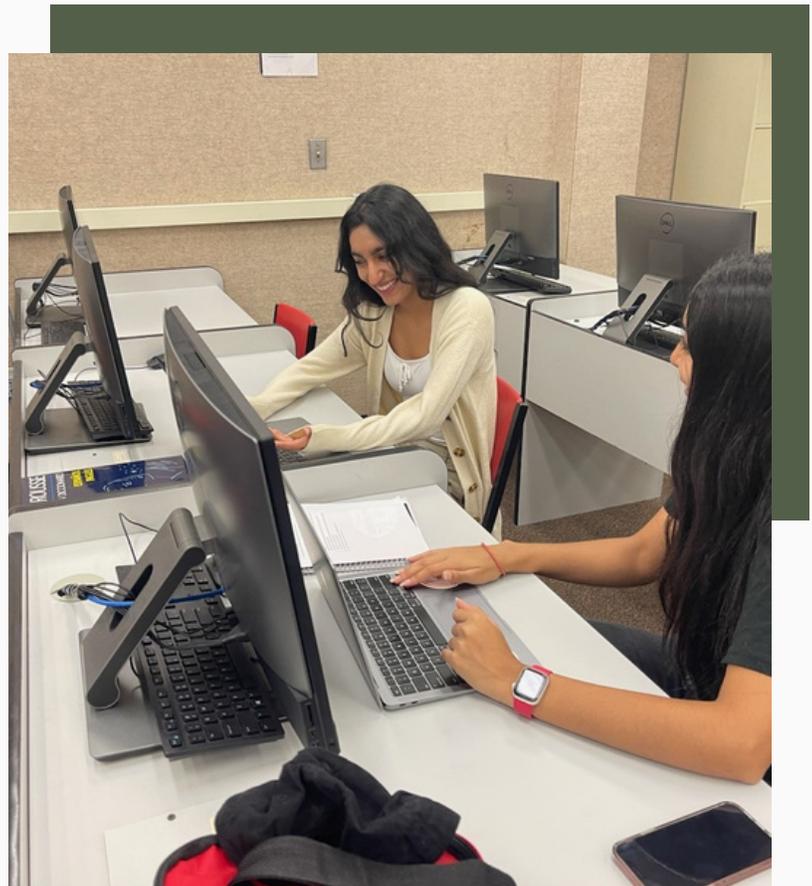
This was a great way for students to find out about us! We had trivia for them (Zippy participated too!), news of our events, all of our language offerings as well as information on how they benefit from learning languages.

## SPANISH CLUB STARTS UP!

It's been so long since we've seen a club! As we all know, the pandemic really affected student organizations and clubs in general.

On October 3, 2023, the Spanish Club met for the first time. Under the direction of Dr. Camelly Cruz-Martes and Chauncy Johnson, interested students met to brainstorm and organize goals for this new club!

If you have students who are interested, please contact Dr. Camelly Cruz-Martes for more info.





# THE DEPARTMENT HOSTED TWO GUEST SPEAKERS THIS FALL

BY: DR. CAMELLY CRUZ-MARTES

On October 25, 2023, the Department of Modern Languages hosted Nick Verderico, a UA alumnus. Mr. Verderico visited Dr. Camelly Cruz-Martes' SPAN 305: Spanish for Business course.

Mr. Verderico is the Head of Latin American Sales at The J.M. Smucker Company. He discussed his experiences with multinational business development, international marketing, and consumer package goods exports in Spanish-speaking countries.

The talk promoted active learning through student questioning, both formally and informally. Mason Beal, a Spanish major graduating senior, said, "A very important topic Mr. Verderico included was his experience of making a mistake conducting business with someone from Mexico. I have made mistakes, so they have caused shame, and I think it is crucial to remember that everyone makes mistakes, especially in their second language. I think many people are afraid of learning a new language, and many are also afraid to speak the language after they learned it."

Our expert guest speaker is also a non-native speaker of Spanish. This motivated students in the same circumstances, especially when he encouraged students about their own process and language anxieties: errors are inevitable on the road to achieving language mastery.

Near peers, in sum, can help learners see the achievable and reasonable process of language learning. In so doing, this can help them stay driven during what can be a long learning process.

Rhea Mahajan, a business major, observed evidence in Nick's presentation that loving one's job is possible, a reminder that learning exercises more than the cognitive dimension. Students also saw Spanish as an end in itself and a vital tool for opening markets, relationships, and business.



## GUEST SPEAKERS, [CONTINUED]

On November 6, 2023, the Modern Language Department invited Isaac Baez, Director of the Summa Health Equity Center, to discuss the Health Disparities that affect Latinx communities, specifically in Northeast Ohio.



Mr. Baez visited Dr. Camelly Cruz-Martes' SPAN 308, Spanish Composition for the Health Professions. This course is required for students pursuing the Advanced Spanish for Health Professions Certificate. Mr. Baez received his Master's in Public Health from NEOMED and his Certified Diversity Executive (CDE) certificate through the Institute of Diversity Certification. In addition, he has conducted training throughout Stark and Summit Counties, including Cultural and Linguistic Competency, Cultural Humility, Language Access, and LGBTQ+ 101. His passion for working with those in need has been why he pursued a public health career.

Some of the learning outcomes of the Spanish Advanced Composition for the Health Professions course are to assess significant health problems and cultural practices unique to the Hispanic community, to investigate and evaluate the health care disparities in Latinx populations and their causes, and to analyze health law and health care compliance supporting Latinx patients' rights. Mr. Baez's experiences and expertise are essential resources, beyond books, for students to learn about the health needs many immigrants experience while living in the United States.

For example, after the presentation, one student told reflected on the experience and how a new immigrant might feel because the presentation was delivered only in Spanish.

Even though the students had access to English subtitles, he imagined how difficult could be to live where most things are difficult to understand. The students and faculty present left the presentation with a newfound perspective how important communication and language is in the healthcare field.



# DR. ORTIZ JOINS INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS IN CELEBRATING DOLORES CASTRO'S LEGACY

BY: DR. ALEXIS ORTIZ

Dr. Alexis Ortiz, recently participated in the much-anticipated book presentation entitled "El canto del zenzontle. Aproximaciones críticas a la obra de Dolores Castro," a critical exploration of the influential Mexican author, Dolores Castro. Dr. Ortiz contributed an essay focusing on Castro's only novel, *La ciudad y el viento* (1962). The virtual event was held on December 11, 2023, and was sponsored by Universidad de Colima and the School of Letters and Communication.

In his essay, Dr. Ortiz offers an insightful analysis of Castro's approach to Mexican history, particularly her intricate depiction of the Cristero Wars—a turbulent period in the 20th century. His work delves into the nuanced ways Castro addressed these historical events, offering a fresh perspective on their significance in Mexican cultural memory.



30 Mar. 2022. Reforma, <https://www.reforma.com/ella-es-dolores-castro-poeta-que-desafio-su-epoca/ar2376754>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.



7 Dec. 2023. Diario de Colima, <https://diariodecolima.com/noticias/detalle/2023-12-07-presentarn-libro-el-canto-del-zenzontle-aproximaciones-criticas-a-la-obra-de-dolores-castro>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.

Furthermore, Dr. Ortiz's piece sheds light on the often-overlooked role of women in the editorial industry during the mid-20th century. He explores how Castro navigated a male-driven industry, making significant contributions that reshaped the literary landscape of the time. The book presentation marked a gathering of prominent scholars from Mexico and around the world, all united in their admiration of Dolores Castro's work. This event not only honored the legacy of Dolores Castro but also highlighted the ongoing relevance of her work in understanding Mexican history and the evolution of literary forms. Dr. Ortiz's participation and contribution were noted for bringing new dimensions to the appreciation of Castro's novel, *La ciudad y el viento* and her broader influence in literature and history.

The gathering underscored the vital role of academic collaboration in deepening our understanding of literary giants like Castro, and the importance of preserving and exploring their works for future generations.

For more information (in Spanish), [please click here.](#)

# SOCIAL MEDIA BREAK!

@UAKRONLANGUAGES

## WHERE CAN YOU FIND US?

FACEBOOK

INSTAGRAM

LINKEDIN

YOUTUBE - COMING SOON! \*

\*Our Youtube channel will be for archival purposes. This will allow us to catalog videos of guest speakers, department events, study abroad videos, 'commercials', etc. Faculty and staff can also reference and use this media for recruitment of prospective students.

## WE'RE ON SPOTIFY!

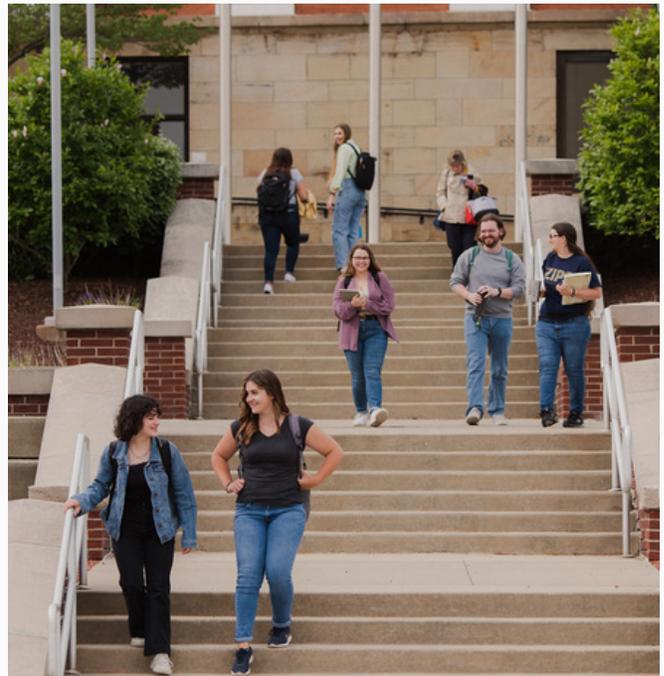
To start, every language has their own playlist and there is room for more! There are also some fun themed playlists. This is something I saw the Boise State World Languages Department do and I immediately borrowed the idea.

As always, suggestions and recommendations are welcome. (My music degrees are not for naught, let me know how I did!)

# DEPARTMENT WEBSITE GETS A MAKEOVER!



The Department website is undergoing a refresh! The goal is to make the information more accessible for prospective students, current students, faculty and advisors all while updating the look to give it a cleaner, more modern feel!



You can now find all of our language offerings underneath **Academics** and all languages have their own pages with helpful **resources** (coming soon), links to degree plans and the **courses** we offer - a digital bulletin of sorts!

The **Careers** page is now broken up by concentration which leads students to pages with career ideas, potential employers and helpful links.

\*As always, your opinion matters to me so if you see anything on the website that you would like changed or updated, please let me know!

## PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Encourage your students to follow us on Social Media! The Department is often posting about university and local events, upcoming courses, resources, scholarships, info sessions, movie recommendations and more!

**@uakronlanguages**

# DIA DE LOS MUERTOS FALL 2023

This event was such a favorite last year that this year, on November 2, The Department of Modern Languages again displayed a Día de los Muertos altar at the International Lounge, Student Union.



## SYMBOLOLOGY

Students were invited to experience what a typical Día de los Muertos altar looks like and learned about the symbology behind it.

[SEE MORE](#)



## CRAFTING AND CALAVERAS!

Much like last year, students were invited to decorate their own skull and let their creativity run wild. Some used sequins, gems, markers to draw their designs, and even feathers!

New to the event this year, Dr. Cruz-Martes taught students how to make flowers from tissue paper and each student was encouraged to take all of their creations home with them.

Thank you to everyone who participated and spread the word!

# TWO PIECES ACQUIRED BY THE SUMMIT COUNTY LAND BANK

Dr. Maria Alejandra Zanetta recently had two pieces of her art acquired by the Summit County Land Bank as part of its art collection for their new offices. The Summit County Land Bank is a nonprofit community improvement corporation which works closely with Summit County's 31 cities, villages, and townships to address abandoned and blighted property while supporting community and economic developments. Congratulations to Dr. Zanetta for this wonderful accomplishment!



"Winding Road" by Maria Alejandra Zanetta

## **Maria Alejandra Zanetta** **@maria\_alejandra\_zanetta\_art**

We all know Dr. Zanetta as a Distinguished Professor of Spanish in our department but she also holds a B.A. in painting from the National School of Fine Arts, "Prilidiano Pueyrredon," in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and has taught art at the college level.

"Much of her abundant professional scholarship deals with Spanish-speaking artists (painters, filmmakers, poets, writers) across four centuries, including the 20th century. She has maintained a parallel artistic and design practice with many solo and group exhibitions, productions for print, and regular critical notice." (Summa Health)



"Before the Storm" by Maria Alejandra Zanetta

# ZIPS ABROAD!

BY: KIRSTIN POLEN DE CAMPI

HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON  
EDUCATION ABROAD DEPARTMENT &  
THE WILLIAMS HONORS COLLEGE



On Monday, November 13th, a group of international students and study abroad students came together and discussed their experiences abroad in celebration of International Education Week.

This is an initiative of the United States Department of State and United States Department of Education to promote programs to prepare US students for a global environment and attract future leaders from abroad to study, learn and exchange experiences.

The panel of students shared their experiences from what it was like taking classes at different universities to the differences in grading systems abroad as well as the biggest culture shock moments!

Connor Vanmaele, an English major who studied at Konstanz University in Germany explained that instead of many assignments over the semester, he was tasked with one large assignment. Although worried at first, Connor found it made him a better researcher upon completion.



THE PANEL: (from left to right)

## Benjamin Dziworshie

International graduate student  
Major: Applied Politics  
Benjamin is from Ghana, West Africa.

## Connor Vanmaele

Major: English  
Studied at Konstanz University  
Konstanz, Germany.

## MaLanie Kelly

Major: Accounting  
Studied at the American University  
Cairo, Egypt.

## Emily O'Quin

Major: Spanish  
Studied at Universidad de Valladolid  
Valladolid, Spain.

## Autumn Groen

Major: Cybersecurity  
Studied at Deakin University  
Geelong, Australia.

## Jose Garcia Barahona

International graduate student  
Major: Electrical Engineering  
Jose is from Honduras, South America.



Overall this was an amazing experience for the students who participated on the panel and for the students and faculty who attended.

Education Abroad is hoping to have a repeat of this event in the Spring semester in order to help University students who are getting ready to travel and study abroad in the Summer and Fall of 2024.

MaLanie Kelly, an accounting major who studied at the American University in Cairo said that there was not an emphasis on notetaking but rather students listened to lectures and then immediately applied what they learned in group work which simulated more professional work environment.

At Deakin University in Australia, Autumn Groen, a Cybersecurity major, noticed that students had to work harder with additional assignments to get a high distinction.

Benjamin Dziworshie, a graduate student from Ghana reported similar findings. Benjamin is studying Applied Politics with the Bliss Institute. He said A's are rare in Ghana and that for undergrad students, most of the classes are crowded and accessibility is an issue.



## Public vs. Private Schooling

The panel also noted a large distinction between public and private schooling. Here in the United States, we are used to private college and universities being more selective and often times, harder to be admitted to. In many parts of the world, it's the opposite!

Public schooling is harder to get into, has more rigorous standards, and is often free to attend upon admittance! If you have money to pay for private schooling, you can go--and perhaps because of this, the standards are not as high.

# VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING AT THE OAXACA LEARNING CENTER:

A REWARDING EXPERIENCE FOR THREE SPANISH STUDENTS

BY: DR. ALEXIS ORTIZ

The Oaxaca Learning Center (TOLC) in Mexico has been a beacon of hope and progress, providing no-fee academic tutoring and training along with social services to low-income students from educationally under-served urban neighborhoods and indigenous rural communities in the State of Oaxaca. Its mission is to empower Oaxacan youth with the skills and confidence needed to envision and realize a brighter future. The center focuses on academic support in subjects like math, physics, chemistry, and English, while also offering mentoring and personal development opportunities within a holistic learning environment.

Recently, three Spanish students – Emily O’Quin, Miranda Castillo, and Alba Mastromatteo – had the opportunity to participate in virtual volunteering with this transformative program during the fall semester.

Their involvement is a shining example of how cross-cultural and international collaboration can enhance educational initiatives and foster personal growth. O’Quin, Castillo, and Mastromatteo each brought their unique perspectives and skills to the table, contributing significantly to the Learning Center's mission.

[Working with TOLC] I learned more about Mexican culture as well as how someone my age experiences life within that culture. My knowledge of Spanish was helpful as it helped me help him with his English. If my partner was ever missing a word in his English vocabulary, I could help him find what he wanted to say. Also, it seemed to help him be more comfortable around me when he talked in Spanish as he was more in his own element.

I would recommend other Spanish speaking students to volunteer with the Oaxaca Learning Center because it was a unique experience to both immerse yourself in the language as well as learn more about other people's lives and cultures.

**- Alba Mastromatteo**

## VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING [CONTINUED]

During my time working with the Oaxaca Learning Center I met with Abril, a 15-year-old living in Oaxaca Mexico. We spoke in Spanish and English about our hobbies, likes, and dislikes. We discussed food, movies, music, and what our lives were like. It was nice to meet someone so passionate about learning English. [This experience allowed me] to practice my speaking with a native Spanish speaker. I think it also helped to have a variety of people to practice with, not just my professors.

I would recommend that other Spanish students volunteer with the Oaxaca Learning Center, however I would advise them to be aware that some days there will be connection issues on the Oaxaca side, so the Intercambios will not happen.

**- Emily O'Quin**

[While volunteering] I was able to learn more about Mexican culture and the daily life of a young student. [Thanks to my knowledge of Spanish] I was able to translate words from Spanish to English when my partner wasn't sure what a certain thing was called or if she had forgotten.

[Regarding my experience], I think it is a fun way to make connections in another country and learn the differences between your own culture and someone else's.

**-Miranda Castillo**

These students' experiences highlight the profound impact that volunteering can have, not just on the communities served, but also on the volunteers themselves. The Oaxaca Learning Center's focus on providing academic support and fostering self-confidence and leadership skills in its students makes it a unique and vital resource for the Oaxacan community. The contributions of volunteers like Emily, Miranda, and Alba help ensure the Center's ongoing success and the fulfillment of its mission.

PLEASE VISIT  
[HTTPS://WWW.TOLC.ORG.MX/](https://www.tolc.org.mx/)

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

CASSIDY  
KUHAR

*Psychology,  
French (minor)*



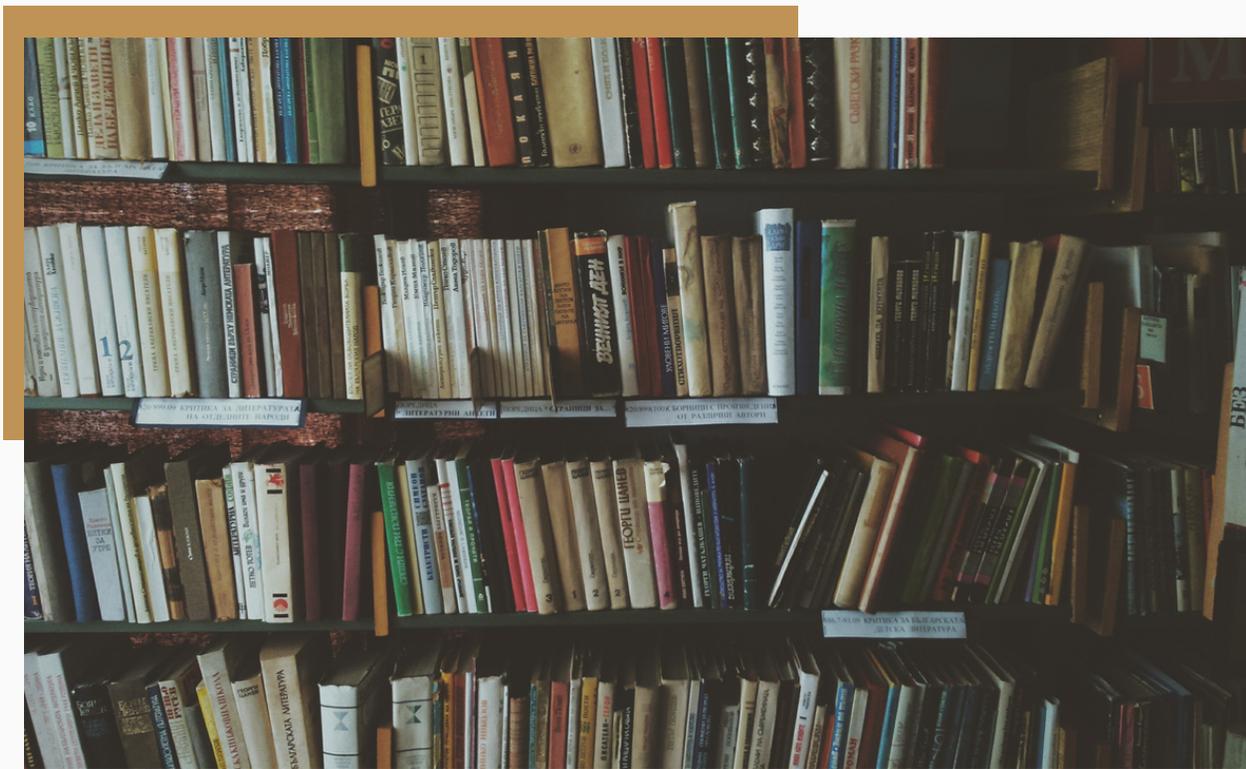
## FRENCH INTERNSHIP AT THE CUMMINGS CENTER

WRITTEN BY CASSIDY KUHAR

In May 2023, I began my internship at the Cummings Center for the History of Psychology where I researched the history of a French aircrew selection program during World War II. Under the supervision of Dr. Maria Adamowics-Hariasz, Associate Professor of French, and Dr. Jennifer Bazar, the Assistant Director of the Cummings Center, I gained hands-on experience in a psychology museum using primary and secondary sources in English and French.

The main objective of this internship was to reconstruct and explain the development of the aircrew selection program, and through my work, I gained experience in other areas as well. The internship allowed me to improve my research and written skills in French, as well as my conversational and public speaking skills.

At the end of the summer, I presented my research to my supervisors along with faculty from the Cummings Center and Dr. Jeremy Bruner, Senior Assistant Professor at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. I am also working on the production of a pair of bilingually-narrated documentary shorts that will become part of the Cummings Center's Youtube series, 5-Minute History Lessons. I will also present my work at the CHEIRON conference next summer and the Midwestern Psychological Association conference in April. This internship has been a fantastic opportunity and a wonderful experience, and I am very grateful to everyone who has supported me on this project.



Cruz-Martes, C., & Washbourne, K. (2023). Latinx Children's Picture Books Reconsidered: Translation Texts, Contexts, and Complications. *Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingüe*, 35(2), 39–60  
[LINK](#)

Washbourne, Richard & Cruz-Martes, Camelly. (2023). "Text as Haunt: The Spectrality of Translation". *Translation and Interpreting Studies*.  
[LINK](#)



Ortiz, A. "Entre Siglos Y Movimientos, Gregorio Torres Quintero Y La Vaquera". *Connotas. Revista De crítica Y teoría Literarias*, n.º 26, enero de 2023. 332-367.  
[LINK](#)

Zanetta M. A. (2023) "El mensaje ecofeminista en Tierra Finita (Isidro Jiménez Gómez y Mariola Olcina Alvarado, 2021)". *Área Abierta. Revista de comunicación audiovisual y publicitaria* 23 (1), 2023: 41-54.  
[LINK](#)

Zanetta M. A., "Maternidad como resistencia y denuncia en la obra de Carmen Conde y Raquel Forner" *Confluencia (Colorado State University)* . Volume 39 Nº2 (Spring 2024).

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SEE YOU ALL IN

# 2024

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Happy holidays and enjoy your well-deserved break.  
We will see you all again on January 16, 2024!



We'd love to hear from you!

Are you working on a new project?  
Do you have outstanding student  
work you'd like to share? Did you  
recently travel?

Throughout the semester, feel free  
to e-mail your submissions to  
Theresa ([tmp77@uakron.edu](mailto:tmp77@uakron.edu)).

Thanks so much!

