



Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

Somos y Estamos

Spanish

Spring 2019

Somos y Estamos, Primavera/Spring 2019

Department of Spanish

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/spanish_noticieros



Part of the Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Department of Spanish, "Somos y Estamos, Primavera/Spring 2019" (2019). *Somos y Estamos*. 14.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/spanish_noticieros/14

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Spanish at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Somos y Estamos by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.





WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Department of
Spanish

Primavera/Spring 2019

Somos y Estamos

Queridos Amigos & Dear Friends,

It is time to welcome students and faculty back to campus for the Spring 2019 semester! Our wonderful Department of Spanish continues to flourish and to nourish a love of the Spanish language and passion for Hispanic linguistics, literature, and culture.

The year 2018 brought us some good-byes: a jubilant retirement for our beloved Professor Bob Felkel in May, and a sad farewell to our dear Professor Michael Braun, who passed away in August. In this issue, we remember Professor Braun, and Professor Felkel shares some excellent advice, as well as how he is keeping busy.

In August, I became department chair, standing on the shoulders of giants (Chairs Benson, Tasende, and López). We are thirteen total permanent faculty, with a few of us currently in administrative appointments. I am pleased to welcome Term Faculty Specialist Dr. Lindsay Jeffers. Our research takes us all over the Spanish-speaking world and sometimes beyond. We are immensely proud of our department's 180 majors and minors, 35 graduate students, and all the students occupying some two thousand seats a year in our courses. Our study abroad programs are going strong, with eighteen students just back from Burgos, Spain, and thirteen students beginning their adventure in our new spring semester program in Heredia, Costa Rica!

This semester, we look forward to the next installment of our Film Festival, as well as a live performance of Griselda Gambaro's play, "El Nombre," by the Teatro Latinoamericano y Vecinal de Battle Creek in March. Stay tuned for the announcement of our second annual "Concurso de video" (Video contest), with a February deadline and March viewing and voting night. In April the semester will close with our annual Honors and Awards ceremony, featuring many prizes and scholarships for students made possible by our generous donors.

Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, we send you our very best wishes for the new year. Please stay in touch, and if you find yourself near campus, please come visit!

Saludos cordiales desde la Torre de Sprau,

Kristina Wirtz
Chair



Contenidos:



In memory of
Professor Michael
Braun p. 2



Faculty News
pp. 3 and 4



Student Honors and
Awards Ceremony
p. 5



Study Abroad p. 6



Department Events
p. 7

In Memory of Professor Michael Braun, 1967 - 2018



The Department dedicated this year's ofrenda to the memory of our colleague and master teacher, Professor Michael Braun.

Michael was an alumnus of the Department of Spanish at Western Michigan University (B.A. '90, M.A. '92), where he had studied with professors John Benson, Jorge Febles, Robert Felkel, Robert Griffin, and Carolyn Harris, among other faculty, who later became his colleagues. He then taught Spanish at the secondary level for twelve years in Portage Public Schools, where he became known as one of the best high school teachers in the Kalamazoo area.

Michael began teaching at WMU as an adjunct professor in 2001, was hired as a faculty specialist in 2004, received early tenure in 2008, and was promoted to master faculty specialist in 2010. He was known for his work with the Michigan Department of Education and his prize-winning, immensely popular presentations at the Michigan World Language Association. Among the many honors Michael received were the College of Arts and Sciences Teaching Excellence Award in 2016, the Michigan World Languages Association Barbara Ort-Smith Award for Outstanding Contributions to World Language Education in 2017, and the 2018 WMU Distinguished Teaching Award, the highest honor WMU bestows for teaching excellence.

A beloved professor, and one whom many students describe as their most influential teacher at WMU, Michael remained an innovator. He mentored countless students in the Spanish Education major, shepherding them through their preparations for the Oral Proficiency Interview, a difficult test that is key to their accreditation. He developed the advanced course "Modern Language Instruction" to prepare secondary teachers and the intermediate course "Spanish for the Professions" to prepare students headed for other careers. He substantially revamped and left his indelible mark on the department's course in Spanish Conversation, which he approached as a coach, encouraging students to expand their communicative skills while simultaneously encouraging colleagues and graduate teaching assistants to move to a student-centered pedagogy.

Michael traveled extensively in Spain and Mexico and was a major advocate for study abroad. Michael was a born teacher. Above all, he was a lovely, generous person with a quick wit. We in the community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni of the Department of Spanish, like all those who knew him, will miss him more than we can say.



Faculty News



Dr. Felkel Retires with 47 years of service

“La pluma es la lengua del alma” - Cervantes

Barbara and I began our teaching careers together and we decided to also end them together: I retired on May 1 and Barbara on June 15 of 2018. We haven't really adjusted to retirement yet, but one thing we can say for sure is that we LOVE no longer hearing the alarm clock go off at 5 AM on weekdays. LOL. Speaking for myself, one aspect of this new freedom that I really appreciate is the time to finish a few reading projects that I had been forced to abort because of time constraints. One book that I finished last week was *Historia de España* by the French historian Joseph Pérez. Several professors at the Universidad de Burgos had told me that this was one of the best general histories of Spain available. Now I have resumed reading a truly lovely book by the Catalan writer Josep Pla,

El cuaderno gris. When I finish *El cuaderno gris*, the next thing on my list will be to get back to the first three of a projected four volumes of John Richardson's *A Life of Picasso*, which will probably go down in history as one of the five most important books on art published at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Professor Wirtz suggested that I use part of this space to offer some words of advice to former and current students. What it comes down to is this: be extraordinarily protective of the time that you are going to need in order to become competent in your profession. When I taught SPAN 6800, Research and Writing, one of the books I assigned was *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods*, by the French Dominican priest A. G. Sertillanges, and I invited my students to be especially attentive to two chapters, “The Organization of Life,” and “The Time of Work.” Sertillanges says that “[i]n the organization of our life, the essential point to safeguard . . . is the wise provision of solitude.” If aspiring scholars needed to hear this in 1920 when *The Intellectual Life* was published, how much more do we need to hear it today when the use that many of us make of social media has come to resemble a national case of OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)! Whenever I have taught Don Quijote in recent years I have shown my students an article from the *Atlantic Monthly* (July/August 2008) by Nicholas Carr titled “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” I did this because Carr quotes a pathologist who confessed that his frequent use of the internet has so altered his mental habits that he is no longer capable of reading a lengthy novel like *War and Peace*. I was trying to warn my Quijote students, just as I am trying to warn you, not to let that happen to you, because if it does, it will be the kiss of death for any intellectual vocation you may have.

Finally, many thanks to everybody I have known at Western Michigan University, students, colleagues, and administrators for making the forty-seven years I spent here a marvelous ride that I would not exchange for anything. And to any students who are reading this issue, remember that once I have had you as a student I will consider you my student forever. This means that you can ask me for a letter of recommendation any time you need one, even if I had you back in 1971! (I've kept all my grade books to make sure that I never forget any of you.)

Professor Robert Felkel joined the University's Spanish department as an assistant professor in 1971. He became an associate professor in 1979 and a full professor in 1990. He previously had taught high school Spanish in Massachusetts. Felkel earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Boston College and a doctoral degree from Michigan State University.

He is a past board member of the Medieval Institute, serving twice as its chair, and was a 1989 recipient of the WMU Distinguished Teaching Award and a 2017 recipient of the WMU Distinguished Service Award. His work in promoting hospice care also has been acknowledged at the state and national levels, as he has been a volunteer for Hospice of Greater Kalamazoo since 1991.

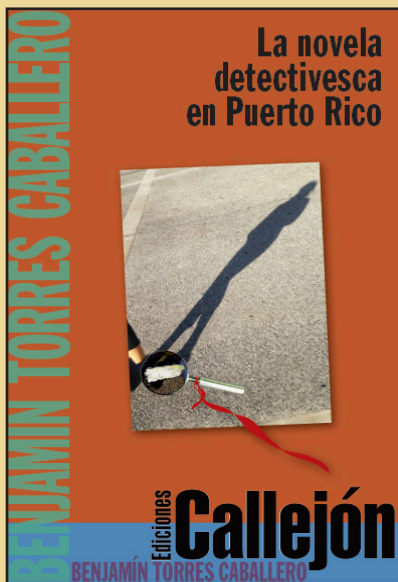
Faculty News



New book by Professor Benjamin Torres: *La novela detectivesca en Puerto Rico*

Professor Torres has a new book on the detective novel in Puerto Rico, published by the Editorial Callejón:

En este estudio, Benjamín Torres Caballero se ocupa de hacer un análisis de las principales novelas detectivescas escritas en Puerto Rico en el transcurso de treinta años, casualmente, entre la aparición de dos novelas de Mattos Cintrón, *El cerro de los buitres* (1984) y *La vida es una enfermedad sexualmente transmisible* (2014), dedicando a cada escritor capítulos individuales que se pueden leer independientemente.



Welcome to our new professor Lindsay Jeffers!

The Department of Spanish is delighted to welcome Dr. Lindsay Jeffers as Term Faculty Specialist for Spring and Fall 2019.

Dr. Jeffers completed her Ph.D from Western Michigan University in 2017. Her dissertation research focused on teacher preparation, the mentoring of student teachers, and the relationship between secondary schools and universities.

Her research interests are teacher preparation, new teacher induction, second-language acquisition, and composition.

Dr. Jeffers is a former high school English and Spanish teacher and is also co-director of the Third Coast Writing Project at Western Michigan University. She is an alumna of our department (BA 2003) and our Study Abroad Program in Burgos and has led student groups in Mexico, Spain, France, Peru, and Costa Rica. One of her notable accomplishments was completing the Camino de Santiago in 2012!

If you are on campus in Spring 2019, please visit Dr. Jeffers in Sprau 417 to welcome her. Dr. Jeffers will be advising students in Spanish Education, coordinating the OPI exam, and teaching SPAN 5580: Modern Language Instruction for secondary-level educators in Spring semester, as well as contributing to teaching a range of other Spanish courses in Spring and Fall.



Student Honors and Awards

The Department of Spanish presented honors and awards in our annual ceremony on April 6, 2018.

For the full list, of awards and recipients, please visit our Facebook page,
<https://www.facebook.com/spanishwmu>



Guest Speaker
Dan Ebenhoeh with
Professor Michael Braun



President's Scholarship recipients
Abigail Bolen, Yurivel Estrada,
Collette Green, Lauren Lalonde,
Alexa Telfer, Martha Tinker, and
Amanda Van Baren with Professor
Germán Zárate-Sánchez



WMU Student Ensemble
Sin piano performs



Writing Contest winners
Max Sznaza, Sofía Ovalle
Martínez, and Alex Merry
with Professor
Mariola Pérez de la Cruz



Ruth Kirby Scholarship and Award
recipients, Miriam Alarcón, Gabrielle
Giangrande, Madison Nakayama,
Elisabeth Charney, Maria Gutiérrez,
Victoria Williams, Rachel Anderson,
Sofía Ovalle Martínez, Dana Evey, and
Aurora Mokris



Phi Beta Kappa inductees,
Alexis Armijo, Rachel
Anderson, Colleen
Richardson, Daniel
Goodman, Andrew Larkin,
Sofía Ovalle Martínez, and
Dana Evey with Professor
Pablo Pastrana-Pérez

Thank you to our generous donors for allowing us to recognize our students and help them!

**You are invited to our 2019 Honors and Awards ceremony:
Friday, April 5, 2019, 3 p.m. | Bernhard Center Rooms 208 - 209**

Study Abroad

The Department of Spanish directs a faculty-led study abroad program each semester, summer session, and spring break.



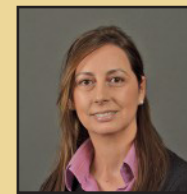
**Announcing new Study
Abroad Program
in Costa Rica: Spring 2019**



Faculty Director:
Prof. Michael Millar



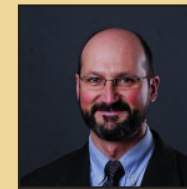
**Burgos, Spain
Fall Semester**



Faculty Director:
Prof. Mariola Pérez de la Cruz



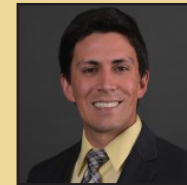
**Santander, Spain
Summer II Session**



Faculty Director:
Prof. Pablo Pastrana-Pérez



**Quito, Ecuador
Summer I Session**



Faculty Director:
Prof. Germán Zárate-Sánchez



**Querétaro, Mexico
Spring Break**



Faculty Director:
Prof. Kristina Wirtz



CAMP Director:
Ms. Liliana Salas

See program requirements at: <https://wmich.edu/spanish/studyabroad>
WMU students can apply online at: <https://broncosabroad.wmich.edu>

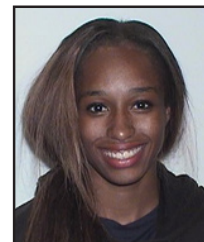
Department Events

Certamen de Escritura

The winner of our second annual writing contest is:

Jas McLemore for *El castillo*

¡Enhorabuena, Jas!



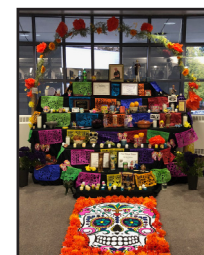
Festival del Cine:

Each semester, the Spanish Department hosts a spanish-language film festival. In spring 2019, the Festival del cine will take place during the week of March 18.



Altar para los Muertos:

Every fall, Professor Mariola Pérez de la Cruz and Spanish Department graduate student volunteers design an “ofrenda” in Waldo Library to educate the university community about the Mexican Day of the Dead, which is celebrated on November 1.



Annual Video Contest:



Mark Majcher, Irene Kivinen and Max Wellman - 2018 First Prize
“Hijo perfect”



Dr. Mariola Pérez de la Cruz and Ursula Mayr - 2018 Second Prize
“Hola, me llamo Úrsula”

The 2019 video contest is coming in February, with viewing and voting night in March.

Annual Honors and Awards Ceremony



Dr. Natalio Ohanna, Glen (Will) Kellam, Héctor Salazar Zaragoza, and Alexis Umlor, 2018 winners of Suzanne M. Wheatley Scholarships for study abroad.

**The next Honors and Awards Ceremony is April 5, 2019,
3 p.m. in Bernhard Room 208**

¡Gracias!

Directory

Dr. Kristina Wirtz, Chair

Dr. Antonio Isea

Dr. Lindsay Jeffers

Dr. Irma López, Interim Director of IIAS

Dr. Michael Millar

Dr. Patricia Montilla

Dr. Natalio Ohanna

Dr. Pablo Pastrana Pérez

Dr. Mariola Pérez de la Cruz

Dr. Mercedes Tasende

Dr. Benjamín Torres

Dr. Mercedes Tubino Blanco

Dr. Robert Vann

Dr. Germán Zárate Sáñez

Ms. Colleen Sante, Office Coordinator

Ms. Madeline Alonso, Office Associate

Ms. Carolyn Seaver, Office Associate

410 Sprau Tower

269-387-3001

<https://wmich.edu/spanish>

To see the latest news, visit us and like us on facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/spanishwmu>



Thanks to Carolyn Seaver for newsletter design and production!



**Quito, Ecuador
Summer 2014**

Make a Gift

We welcome your tax-deductible donation to the WMU Department of Spanish!

To give directly via credit card, please go to: <https://wmich.edu/spanish/giving>

This site also has a downloadable giving form to print and mail with a check, if you prefer.

Thank you: All gifts make a difference in our department and in the lives of our students.