

Department of Modern Languages

2020-2021 Newsletter



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Welcome!

Greetings from the Department of Modern Languages! This past year has been extremely difficult for everyone. Students, faculty / staff, and WKU alumni have lost loved friends and family. Many have endured financial hardships and social isolation. However, we have shown resilience and flexibility. In Modern Languages, we have adopted new technologies, changed teaching modalities, and maintained high standards for all students. I marvel at the rigor of our classes, the enthusiasm students show, and the care and compassion displayed on a daily basis.

This newsletter provides a taste of this year’s departmental achievements. It exemplifies our passion for teaching, research, and service. We are especially proud of our students. They travel the world, seek out opportunities to help others, and act as exemplary representatives of the WKU spirit here and abroad. After graduation, they pursue graduate degrees and careers with entrepreneurial vigor. They need no external motivation, but their motivation is infectious and inspires faculty and staff, in addition to current students.

Please keep in touch with us through our [website](#) and [social media](#). We wish you a restful summer.

Sincerely,
 Dr. Alex Poole
 Interim Department Head

Modern Languages About Us

The Department of Modern Languages is located in the Honors College and International Center (HCIC) building and houses over eight language programs and works to develop communication competency in each student. Students can take courses that prepare them in the languages of Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, German, Russian, East European studies, and Japanese, while offering 4-year degree paths in Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic. There are several courses offered in the Colonnade Program that allow non-majors and non-minors to participate in language learning. Teaching certifications and Graduate Studies are also offered within the department.

The mission of the department is “to cultivate communicative skills and cultural awareness that prepare students at Western Kentucky University to be more knowledgeable and sensitive citizens of the local, regional, and global communities.” The support of the departmental faculty and staff, alumni, and student body make it possible for this mission to continue. All students are encouraged to learn with a new mindset and practice understanding of all minority groups.

This newsletter encompasses the current events of the department and updates from current students, faculty, and alumni throughout the 2020-2021 school year. While the Covid-19 Pandemic has influenced various events and opportunities, the department has remained strong and able to provide the best learning atmosphere for their students. This newsletter will showcase the Department of Modern Languages and the people that make it up.

The “Department of Ancient and Modern Languages” was founded at WKU in 1911.



Dr. Poole, Interim Department Head

We offer three departmental scholarships to support students who participate in study abroad programs.

Student Profile

Noah Moore

Noah Moore is a current senior at WKU double majoring in Public Relations and Spanish and minoring in Arabic. He utilizes his language skills in several campus organizations and founded the Modern Language Ambassadors program after spending a summer at a language immersion camp. Noah said, "It took amazing faculty support and a lot of amazing students but it's been a really fun program!" Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the program has been inactive this year, but they are excited to return to normalcy soon.



Photo credit: Sierra Bailey



"Every person has helped me see how fun language learning can be."

Earlier this semester, Noah was selected as a recipient of the Critical Language Scholarship for Arabic through the U.S. Department of State. While the Covid-19 Pandemic has moved the program to a virtual format, Noah is extremely grateful to the WKU Modern Languages Department for the part they played in this accomplishment. His favorite part about the program is the supportive staff and faculty. "Every person has helped me see how fun language-learning can be," said Noah.

Noah has also taken part in many Study Abroad opportunities during his time at WKU. Before the Pandemic, he spent a Winter Term living in Argentina where he capitalized on his Spanish major and developed more conversational speaking and teaching skills.

Noah would like to thank all of his professors and advisors in the department, especially David Dimeo, Lhousseine Guerwane, Melissa Stewart, Susann Davis, and Alexander Poole, for their guidance and offerings of abundant opportunities. After graduation in May of 2021, Noah plans to move abroad and teach Arabic.

Student Profile

Holden Schroeder

Holden Schroeder, a sophomore with a triple major in Political Science, International Affairs, and German, provided insight into his experience learning German here at WKU as one of the last certified for the major. Though German upper level courses will no longer be offered, lower-level courses will still be available.

“Here, the German classes are normally very small,” said Holden in regards to the atmosphere of his classes. “It’s a very personal experience, and a great major to work directly with the professors both out of class as well as in class.” Holden noted that the German program’s professors made sure every student felt that they had a personal stake in the program.



“Knowing some elements of the culture made navigating the foreign environment much easier.”

This sense of comradery between peers and professors is what Holden said he appreciated the most about learning German here at WKU.

Holden has been to Germany twice, motivating him to study German in college alongside his own heritage and the fact that he studied it for four years in high school. “I was so thankful to have some German experience before I went, as being able to communicate and knowing some elements of the culture made navigating the foreign environment much easier.”

After graduating, Holden plans to go to law school and become an attorney. Holden noted that having his German major alongside his other two majors opens a lot of doors for him in the future where he can combine these two areas of expertise. Additionally, he would like to work with German people in America who have limited English experience.

Student Profile

Courtney Morgan

Courtney Morgan is a senior triple majoring in Business Economics, Marketing, and Chinese and is a part of the Chinese Flagship Program at WKU. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Defense, and it teaches American students critical languages that are necessary for America’s national security and economy.

For Courtney, Mandarin has been her main focus and passion ever since joining the program. She entered WKU with no experience with the language, but found that after just one semester, almost every course was being taught completely in Mandarin. While this may have been overwhelming at the time, Courtney thought that it made her experience even



Photo credit: Dr. Vivian Gornik

“Speaking Mandarin with your professors creates a special bond.”



more rewarding. “Speaking Mandarin with your professors creates a special bond. That’s a connection very unique to language learning and is so rewarding,” said Courtney.

During her time at WKU, she has also found other ways to get involved in her programs and the Department of Modern Languages. Courtney studied abroad in Taiwan funded by the WorldTopper scholarship, Honors Development Grants, SGA Grants, and a Honors Travel Abroad Grant.

Her experiences in the department relate directly to her courses in Economics where she was able to develop a capstone project about coal prices and mining accidents in Appalachia. “I referenced some studies on coal mining safety in China and was able to read and translate the source documents to use for my research.” After graduation, Courtney will be working for JB Hunt Transport Services as a Dedicated Manager in training.

Student Activities

Spanish Club

Amidst the lingering pandemic, the Spanish Club has been regularly holding its meetings over Zoom. Last semester, Spanish Club learned about different styles of Latin American dancing. Additionally, the Spanish Club has been hosting guest speakers from across the globe to learn more about Hispanic culture and to practice their own Spanish speaking skills. Some members of the Spanish club have been able to gather in pairs or small groups to practice their language skills.

In a collaboration with the Korean Pop Culture Club, the Spanish Club held an event on March 17th where members of both clubs watched music videos from each culture, and then recreated the choreography together.



Patrick Murphy cooks with Gabriela Vargas.



Arabic Club

Arabic Club not only aids students in language acquisition, but it also explores and emphasizes the value of its Arabic culture. Kerby Gilstrap, a junior Arabic, International Affairs, and Sustainable Development major, serves as the Arabic Club President.

“During my time as president of the Arabic Club, I have tried to make our events more accessible to all students, not just the students who study the language,” said Kerby in regards to her presidential position. “There are many misconceptions about the region, the people, the language, and the major religion of the region Islam. I myself had many misconceptions before I started to study Arabic, so it’s my goal to help any person learn about the region, regardless of their background.”

Student Activities

Flagship Kite Festival

On April 14th, students in the Chinese Flagship program celebrated the coming of spring with a day of kite flying! Dr. Ke Peng, Chinese Flagship Director and Professor, said that she wanted to engage students in a cultural event that is popular in Southern China.

Students used bamboo sticks and wax paper to craft their kites. Because the wind was uncooperative, students were running to give their kites traction; then, they would pass off their spools to other students who would continue to run to keep the kites in the air. She explains that kite-flying is a way to release negative energy accumulated in the winter, and the physical exertion promotes health, fitness, and longevity for the new year. “There are sayings for this,” Dr. Peng said. “The ones who are flying kites will live forever!”



Photo credit: Clinton Lewis

Chinese Immersion House

WKU’s Chinese Language Immersion House (CLIH) is a housing option available to students in the Chinese Flagship Program who aspire to experience an immersive living-learning language environment. To understand what life within the CLIH entails, Gabriel “Gabe” Feinn, a junior Chinese major with a Teaching English as a Second Language minor, gave insight into the world beyond its doors.

“I love living in the ‘I-House’!” said Gabe. “Things have been a bit different this year due to Covid-19 though. We don’t uphold the language pledge to speak Mandarin at all times because we don’t want to add an additional layer of stress, and we all also spend the majority of our time in the house. But it’s been great living with 6 other people who are in the same program and speak the same language.”



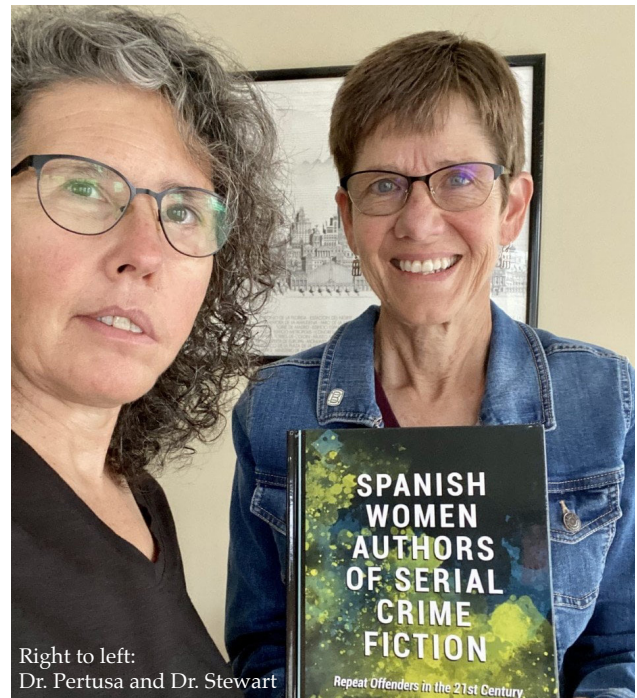
Left to right: Issac Feinn, Sam Aldrich, Trevor Harry, and Reilly Aldrich present their homemade dumplings

Faculty Accomplishments



Lhousseine Guerwane

Arabic instructor Lhousseine Guerwane recently won the College Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching. This award is given to professors who not only demonstrate superior knowledge in their field and pedagogical methods, but who also strive for personal growth within these fields. Professor Guerwane certainly exhibits all of these qualities, with students referring to him as “the best of the best.” As an active member in the Arabic program, Professor Guerwane also instructs students in WKU’s VAMPY summer program for middle and high school students. The Department of Modern Languages congratulates professor Guerwane on his excellent performance in the Arabic program.



Right to left:
Dr. Pertusa and Dr. Stewart

Dr. Inmaculada Pertusa and Dr. Melissa Stewart

Spanish professors Dr. Inma Pertusa and Dr. Melissa Stewart recently published a new book entitled “Spanish Women Authors of Serial Crime Fiction: Repeat Offenders in the 21st Century.” Dr. Pertusa and Dr. Stewart edited the volume that features analyses of recent detective series with female investigators. The book focuses on how authors of these series incorporate current issues in Spain—including political, social, and economic issues—while breaking traditional conventions of the genre.

Alumni Update

May Quaid

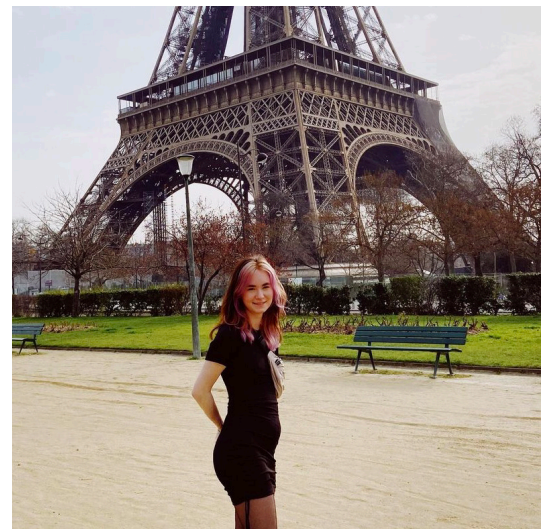
May Quaid graduated in May 2020 with majors in French and Creative Writing. Currently, she lives in Avranches, France and works as a language assistant at a local middle school. As a native speaker of English, she gives pronunciation assistance to students, while also deepening her understanding of French. "It's a program where different people from various countries come to French schools to share their languages," May said.

May was able to start her journey in the Modern Languages Department her freshman year after realizing that French, and language as a whole, was more than just a hobby; it was her passion. She credits WKU and the Modern Languages Department for opening the door to multiple opportunities for studying abroad and receiving scholarships through the KIIS program; she was able to visit France during her undergraduate experience for one semester. These developments led to the post-graduation opportunity she is now taking part in.

While the Covid-19 Pandemic affected May's arrival to France, she was still able to work in person while wearing a mask. France is currently under lockdown, so May is spending her time enjoying beaches, monuments, and other outside activities. May will complete the final month of her teaching program online due to Covid-19 guidelines and will return to the states in May, but has been thrilled with her experience and the opportunity to represent WKU in France while continuing to learn more about the language.



"Different people from various countries come to French schools to share their languages."





Alumni Update Keightley Dudgeon

Keightley Dudgeon was unaware how important the Arabic language would soon become to her when she took her first bi-term course in 2016. After taking Spanish in high school, Keightley decided to “try something new” to fulfill WKU’s language requirement. “After a month in my Introductory Arabic class...I knew that I wanted to learn more and continue to develop my language skills.”

“I knew that I wanted to learn more and continue to develop my language skills.”

Keightley had the opportunity to study abroad in Jordan, Morocco, and Qatar during her time in the Arabic program. She credits these experiences for furthering her language abilities as she was able to interact with native speakers and utilize the Arabic language in everyday-life situations. Keightley now teaches immigrants and refugees at Kentucky Refugee Ministries, a non-profit organization in Louisville.

To Keightley, learning a second language expanded her worldview and allowed her to become more social and open-minded. She said, “It also provides an opportunity for travel, where you will arguably learn more than you would in a classroom.” Learning a language is difficult, but Keightley praises the Arabic faculty for their continuous dedication and support. Her advice to those struggling to learn a new language is to engage with native speakers, such as international students on campus, or to study abroad. Keightley’s own experiences have inspired her to further her education, and possibly learn additional languages so that she can continue to travel to new places.



Stay in Touch

Faculty Retirements

Two members of the department will be retiring this year—Dr. Karin Egloff, professor of French, and Dr. Laura McGee, professor of German and co-principal investigator of the Chinese Flagship program. We thank Dr. Egloff and Dr. McGee for their exemplary service to the department and their unconditional dedication to their students’ success. We wish them the best in their retirement and future endeavors.



Dr. Egloff



Dr. McGee

Alumni Survey

We would love to hear from you! Please take a moment to fill out this brief survey to help us connect with you. Of course, please feel free to reach out to us and follow us on social media using the information on the right.

[Take Survey](#)

Connect With Us

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