

# Romance Languages & Literatures Communiqué

Autumn 2011

## Putting Students First

By Flore Zéphir

Among our department's greatest strengths is our commitment to our students. This commitment permeates everything we do. Every semester, our faculty members work independently with students on topics of interest to them and help them prepare papers for presentations at conferences or articles for publication. To cite examples of such mentoring from the past year alone, **Mary Jo Muratore** worked with doctoral student Tomaz Cunningham on several 17th-century French literature research projects; **Charles Presberg** encouraged María Taub to secure travel grants to deliver papers at conferences and to publish an article; **Valerie Kaussen** worked with French doctoral student Virginie Ems-Bléneau on literary theory and criticism; and **Juanamaría Cordones-Cook** encouraged Spanish doctoral student Ana Zapata-Calle to present a paper at one of our conferences devoted to Cuban writer Georgina Herrera.

**Mamadou Badiane** also encouraged Ana to present a paper at the Midwest Modern Language Association meeting in Chicago; **Michael Ugarte** encouraged Spanish doctoral student Danilo León to present papers at conferences in St. Louis and Chicago; and **Carol Lazzaro-Weis** took two students, Cunningham and Jessica Joyce, to a conference in Windsor, Ontario, to present papers and secured travel funds for them from our Canadian Studies Program; and she also

worked with French doctoral students Rochelle Baldrige and Courtney Alber on prose narratives of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. **Megan Moore** worked with Ems-Bléneau on French medieval literature; **Béa Gallimore** worked with doctoral student Wendy McBurney on feminism and post-colonial theory; **Iván Reyna** worked with Spanish graduate student Daniel Garcia Vieyra

become more familiar with the world of academic conferences and publications. In addition, Steve agreed to serve as adviser to the newly created theory reading group, which was also formed by our graduate students. In spring 2011, the group met for the first time to discuss a wide range of theoretical approaches to literature and cultural studies. He and Lazzaro-Weis led



Participants in the 2011 program in Lyon: front: Ayelen Costa, Dana Smith, Patricia Vewenda, Cho Ling Ngai, Claire Pratt; back: Jean-Charles Roux (restaurant owner), Pinki Thakker, Justin Shanitkovich, Sarah Kahnbergman, and Lauren Flaker.

on the chronicles of the conquest of the Incas; **Stephen Hessel** worked with undergraduate student Kristi Eftink on Hispanic literature; and **Monica Marcos-Llinas** launched our Catalan language and culture courses.

Moreover, our faculty members serve as advisers for various student organizations. For example, Hessel works with our department's graduate student writing group to help them

discussion sessions with the group. Badiane works with the Spanish Club, which was led last year by undergraduate seniors Madison Allen and Kyle Riggs. The club organizes a weekly conversation table and other cultural gatherings.

Along similar lines, our international programs are all designed to increase our students' linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as their awareness of global issues — opportunities that they would not necessarily find within the classroom. We have four international programs. **John Zemke** runs the program in Oviedo, Spain; **Daniel Sipe** and Lazzaro-Weis take turns running the program in Lyon,

France; Gallimore runs the program in Rwanda; and **Jacquelyn Sandone** runs the program in Cusco, Peru. In later pages, you will read about some of these students in their own words.

Furthermore, **Jack Draper** and Reyna organize lectures and symposia for our Faculty and Graduate Student Seminar series, thus adding to the intellectual life of the department, with

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# From the Department Chair



By Flore  
Zéphir

It is with a great deal of enthusiasm and pride that I share with our alumni, colleagues, and friends the various accom-

plishments of our department, many of which are highlighted in these pages.

We were particularly happy to learn that in June **Carrie Wilkins** made a generous donation of \$30,000 to our department intended to provide fellowship awards to our doctoral students, with a preference given to those working in French/Francophone literature. A native of Louisiana, Mrs. Wilkins earned her master of arts degree in French from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and she also studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. She had a long career as a high school French teacher in the public schools in Aurora, Colo., and she retained a strong interest in the French language and culture.

The Wilkins fellowship was established to honor her life, her French teaching career, and her commitment to multiculturalism. We convey our heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Wilkins, with the hope that she will be as proud of our collective accomplishments as we are.

We are also pleased to announce that, thanks to the tireless efforts of our own **Carol Lazzaro-Weis**, MU has signed an accord with Paris West University Nanterre la Défense for a lectureship exchange. The first exchange will take place this fall. Taoues Hadour, a graduate student from Nanterre, will come here to teach French classes, and doctoral student Prisca Rice will go to Nanterre to teach English classes. This kind of exchange goes a long way in fostering a spirit of international collaboration and enrichment that is at the core of the discovery mission of our department and university.

We thank the various units that have helped sponsor our events: The Chancellor's Diversity Initiative; the Center for Arts and Humanities; the MU Lectures Committee; the College of Arts and Science; the School of Journalism; the Departments of history, English, anthropology, and women's and gender

studies; the Black Studies Program; the Peace Studies Program; and the Museum of Anthropology.

Last but not least, we extend our thanks to our own staff members: **Pamela Myers** for designing all of our posters and brochures; **Mary Harris** for helping with travel arrangements and proofreading materials for the chair, and **Marcia Reeves** for taking care of all our fiscal matters.

We reiterate our commitment to MU's teaching, research, and service mission, and we are grateful for all the support received last year that allowed us to fulfill our responsibilities to our students. We genuinely appreciate the support of our alumni and friends, and we hope that we can count on all of you to help us with our future activities. We invite you all to contribute to our gift fund, which will allow us to continue to provide exceptional learning and research opportunities for our students. We also invite you to visit our department's Web page at [romance-languages.missouri.edu](http://romance-languages.missouri.edu) to learn more about us and to stay abreast of department news. Please do not hesitate to drop me a note at [ZephirF@missouri.edu](mailto:ZephirF@missouri.edu), or to call me at 573-882-5048 to share your activities or to make a donation to the department.

## Putting Students First

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students participating in numerous ways. Among the department's events was a concert featuring Catalan singer **Pau Alabajos Ferrer**, organized by Monica Marcos-Llinas in October; a talk on Mexican films by **Guadalupe Pérez-Anzaldo** in October; a talk on exile, emigration, and immigration from Equatorial Guinea to Spain by Ugarte in November; Cordones-Cook's screening of an excerpt of her documentary on Nancy Morejón in February; and a symposium on Catalan language, literature, and culture, which, in addition to presentations by invited speakers **Bradley Epps** from Harvard University and **Alba Girons Masot** from Georgetown University,

included presentations by the students enrolled in our spring Catalan class, organized by Marcos-Llinas. She was able to secure generous contributions from the Institute Ramon Llull in Barcelona, Spain, the Generalitat de Catalunya, and Casa Català Quebec, to help finance our Catalan activities.

Our commitment to putting students first and opening new territories for them is best summarized by Michael Ugarte, 2010 Kemper Fellow, when he writes: "I'm very proud to have directed Chad Montuori's dissertation, 'Gendering Migration from Africa to Spain: Literary Representations of Masculinities and Femininities.' It is an example of what we professors

should all strive for when we supervise the writing of dissertations: a delicate balance between encouraging the student to think on his/her own and guiding them through unfamiliar territory. While the topic of representations of migrations from Africa to Spain is being covered these days with more and more frequency, I don't know of anyone who has made the bold attempt to "gender" the experience. Chad chose this topic on his own. This is all part of the family of romance languages at MU. When I have students like the ones you see in that video, teaching is a sublime experience." We will not have it any other way. Check out what Chad has to say at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahqF\\_9t3QOM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahqF_9t3QOM).

# The Afro-Romance Institute for Languages and Literatures of the African Diaspora

By Valerie Kausen

In 2010–11, the Afro-Romance Institute brought to the MU campus a number of renowned U.S.- and foreign-based scholars, writers, and artists. The academic year began in October with a poetry reading by Cuban Poet Laureate Nancy Morejón, who addressed a packed house at the Museum of Anthropology. The bilingual event, organized by Juanamaría Cordones-Cook, inaugurated the Nancy Morejón Special Collection of Afro-Romance Literature and Culture, which consists of published and unpublished material, books, manuscripts, journals, and films from Afro-Romance cultures and traditions.

Continuing with the theme of Cuban women of letters, we ended the year in April with a symposium titled Georgina Herrera: A Twentieth-century Maroon. In addition to a bilingual poetry reading by Georgina Herrera, scholars from around the country participated in several panels, and Cordones-Cook presented an early cut of her documentary film, *Cimarroneando con G. H.* During their visits, both Morejón and Herrera visited Spanish literature courses where they chatted with students and answered questions. Another Cuba event, a talk by Chancellor's Professor of Spanish at Vanderbilt University William Luis took place in November and was organized by Mamadou Badiane. Luis's historical analysis of Cuban anti-slavery, "Blacks, Slaves, and Antislavery Narrative: The Emergence of Cuba's National Literature," drew more than 70 students and faculty. Luis also had a chance to talk with students enrolled in Mamadou's class.

The spring semester saw a number of Afro-Romance events whose foci ranged from culture and politics in Equatorial Guinea to race in Brazil and housing rights in Haiti. In March, Jan Hoffman French, assistant professor of anthropology from the University of Richmond and vice

president of the Brazilian Studies Association, presented on her book, *Legalizing Identities: Becoming Black or Indian in Brazil's Northeast*. In April, Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo, a former member of our Spanish faculty, returned to campus, where he received a warm welcome from former students and colleagues. Updating the campus on events in his native Equatorial Guinea, Ndongo-Bidyogo gave a powerful lecture on the relationship between political resistance, culture, and literature in Africa's only Hispanophone nation.

Continuing the institute's commitment to keeping Haiti a primary focus of our educational and scholarly efforts, two spring semester events were devoted to informing the MU community about Haitian culture and the situation in Haiti one and a half years following the January 2010 earthquake. In February, two female artists of Haitian descent presented their work to an audience of close to 100 students, faculty, and Columbia residents at the Black Culture Center. Poet and painter Marilène Phipps-Kettlewell read from her short story collection *The Company of Heaven*, and gave a powerful presentation on the history of Haiti. She was followed by Gina Ulysse, associate professor of anthropology, who performed a one-woman show, "I Am a Storm," which combines poetry, song, history, and snippets of news and media about Haiti and Haitians. In March, the institute organized a symposium called Post-earthquake

Haiti: Housing Crisis, Displacement, and the State. The symposium featured Reyneld Sanon, a grassroots activist from Haiti, whose organization, FRAKKA is leading the move-



Lisa Rathje, Georgina Herrera, Dawn Duke, Juanamaría Cordones-Cook, Ana Zapata-Calle, Rhonda Collier, and Paula Sanmartin at the Georgina Herrera symposium in April.

ment to assure adequate housing for Haiti's thousands of homeless earthquake survivors. Sanon was followed by associate professor of political science at UMSL, Jean-Germain Gros. Gros's presentation, "Anatomy of a Natural Disaster," discussed how Haiti's fragile state became a key factor in the extent of the earthquake's damage.

Overall, the Afro-Romance Institute organized seven events in the past academic year that drew together hundreds of faculty and students. The institute continues to pursue and fulfill its mission to support, celebrate, and publicize the work of writers, artists, and scholars from around the Afro-Romance world, as well as to expose these works to students. We invite our readers to visit the Afro-Romance Institute's Web site at: [afroromance.missouri.edu/](http://afroromance.missouri.edu/).

# Faculty in Action

**Asier Alcázar**, assistant professor of Spanish, has continued work on his second monograph, *The Syntax of Imperatives*, a joint work with Mario Saltarelli, to be published in the Cambridge University Press *Studies in Linguistics* series. In addition, he has published several peer-reviewed articles while continuing to present his work in international venues domestically and abroad.

**Mamadou Badiane**, assistant professor of Spanish, published an article titled “Negritude and Negritude: Reflection on Two Poetics of Caribbean Cultural Identity” in fall 2010. He also pre-

sented four papers: one in Martinique on Afro-Caribbean religions; one on negritude and negritude in Senegal; one on Afro-Caribbean identity conflicts at the Midwest Modern Language Association conference in Chicago; and another on Afro-Caribbean cultural traditions at Case Western University.

**Juanamaría Cordones-Cook**, professor of Spanish, organized a session on “The City in Latin American Contemporary Literature and presented a paper on Images of Havana in Cuban Poetry at the Latin American Studies Association in Toronto in October 2010.

In March 2010, she traveled to Cuba to continue her work on the Black Cuban Intelligentsia and gave several lectures at the Unión de Artistas y Escritores de Cuba (UNEAC). The first one, “La Emelina de Eugenio Hernández Espinosa,” was presented at the inauguration of their journal *Jornadas Literarias de UNEAC: Arte y Literatura de las Culturas Negras en Cuba y en América*, which coincided with the celebration of the United Nations’ Year of the Afro-descendants in Cuba. She also offered a bilingual reading of Herrera’s poetry and the screening of her documentary *Cimarroneando con G.H.* (Georgina Herrera). She was also involved with the filming of living histories of Afro-Cuban playwright Maité Vera, and of film and cultural critic Victor Fowler Calzada. In early December, she completed another documentary: *Nancy Morejón, La silla dorada (antología audiovisual)*.

**Jack Draper**, assistant professor of Portuguese, published and presented a wide variety of research in 2010–11. His first book, *Forró and Redemptive Regionalism in the Brazilian Northeast*,

was published in October, and a related article was published in the *Latin American Research Review* in February. He also published one chapter on woman-centered narratives in contemporary Brazilian cinema and has a forthcoming chapter on child-centered narratives. He is also continuing work on his second book project exploring the emotion of *saudade* in Brazilian literature, music, and cinema, and he presented two different papers on the topic at major professional conferences.

**Stephen Hessel**, assistant teaching professor of Spanish, presented “The Great Liminal North: *Persiles* at Home and in Rome” at the annual Modern Languages Association conference in Los Angeles in January.

**Dawn Heston**, assistant teaching professor of Spanish, was featured in 2010 in an article in *Converge Magazine* titled, “YouTube: The Next Major Teaching Tool?,” which highlighted her use of YouTube videos as an authentic resource in the classroom. In the fall 2010 edition of *The Innovator* newsletter, her implementation of educational technologies was featured in “Leveraging Curricular Consistency.” The article can be found at: [etatmo.missouri.edu/eventsservices/innovator/fall2010/](http://etatmo.missouri.edu/eventsservices/innovator/fall2010/)

**Valerie Kaussen**, associate professor of French, continues her research on citizenship, culture, and the role of humanitarian organizations in Haiti’s post-earthquake tent camps. An article based on this research, “States of Exception: Haiti’s IDP Camps,” appeared in the February 2011 issue of *The Monthly Review*. She traveled to Haiti in July with a grant from the MU Research Council to continue her work.

**Linda Keown**, assistant teaching professor of Spanish, conducted an advanced placement workshop for the Center for Professional Development of West Virginia in August 2010. She also participated in fall 2010 in two textbook advisory boards for introductory Spanish textbooks. In spring 2011, she spoke at the technology conference on campus sponsored by ET@MO about using Wimba for oral testing through Blackboard. She successfully pioneered a simulated conversation oral testing format in Spanish 1250 and



Professor Juanamaría Cordones-Cook, Cuban poet Nancy Morejón, and Dean Michael J. O’Brien at the inauguration of the Nancy Morejón Special Collection of Afro-Romance Literature and Culture, October 2010.

1100 based on the interpersonal speaking assessment for the advanced placement Spanish language exam.

**Carol Lazzaro-Weis**, professor of French and Italian, published “Bodies and Gendered Spaces in Post-unification Italian Studies” in the fall 2010 issue of *Romance Studies*. She is awaiting the publication of her book on Victor Tixier’s voyages and of an article on gender in post-unification Italian literature. She returned in January from her research leave during which she worked on her book-length manuscript on women and the historical novel. As president of the American Association of Italian Studies, she organized its annual conference at the University of Pittsburgh in April 2011.

**Megan Moore**, assistant professor of French, completed her monograph, *Exchanges in Exoticism: Byzantium and the Making of the Mediterranean in Old French Romance*, due out in 2012. Contributing to the nascent field of medieval Mediterranean studies, *Exchanges in Exoticism* explores how literature depicts Mediterranean cross-cultural marriage as a space for women to exchange culture and critique the formation of pan-Mediterranean empires during the Crusades. She also had a preliminary book chapter stemming from research about gender and grief published in *Masculinities and Femininities in the Middle Ages*.

**Edward Mullen**, professor emeritus of Spanish, reviewed a number of articles and manuscripts for professional journals and university presses last year. The eighth edition of *El Cuento Hispánico: A Graded Literary Anthology*, now in print for over 30 years, appeared in January. The book includes short fiction by Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo, the Equatorial Guinean author who was a writer-in-residence in our department from 2005 to 2008.

**Joseph Otabela-Mewolo**, assistant teaching professor of Spanish, presented a paper at the Second International Conference on Afro-Hispanic Literature in Madrid this past October. He also presented a paper at the Mid-America Conference on Hispanic Literature in St. Louis in November. He published a chapter, “Leer el tiempo en

*Los poderes de la tempestad de Donato Ndongo*” in fall 2010, and a book titled *Literatura rebelde desde el exilio: Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo* in 2010.

**Charles Presberg**, associate professor of Spanish, spent a year on sabbatical writing his book titled *Praising the Folly of Truthful Tales: “Don Quixote” and the Poetics of Life*. He also delivered a paper, “Heavens in Their Heads: Cervantes’s Exemplary Madmen,” at the annual conference of the Cervantes Society of America.

**Roberta Tabanelli**, assistant professor of Italian, published her book, *I ‘pori’ di Napoli: Il cinema di Mario Martone, Antonio Capuano e Pappi Corsicato*, in February. On July 20, she presented the book in her hometown of Faenza at the screening of Capuano’s latest film, with the director present as well. Her article on filmmaker Antonietta De Lillo has been accepted for publication for a special issue of Italian female filmmakers for *Studies in European Cinema*, to be published next spring. She was awarded a 2011 Summer Research Council Grant to continue her work on Italian transnational cinema.

**John Zemke**, professor of Spanish, who regularly teaches a course on Spanish oral traditions, took research leave in winter 2011 investigating oral traditions in southeast Asia. He experienced performances of traditional folk orchestras with improvisational praise songs in northern Thailand; improvised praise poetry with *khene*, pan-pipe performances, in northern Laos; all-night performances of shadow puppet theatre, *wayang kulit*, in central Java; and household *gamelan* in Bali. He also saw Burmese marching bands celebrating novice Buddhist monks in Myanmar and spent a month-long residence studying traditional North Indian music.



Professor Carol Lazzaro-Weis and French graduate student Jessica Joyce at a Windsor, Ontario, conference in October 2010.

**Flore Zéphir**, professor of French and department chair, presented two conference papers: one on the transformation of the Haitian diaspora as a result of the January 12, 2010, earthquake at the ALARA conference in Lima, Peru, in August 2010; and another on Haitian Creole in education at the University of Florida in March. Her article, “The Languages of Haitians and the History of Creole: Haiti and Its Diaspora” appeared in a book on Haitian Creole language in 2010.

## Personal Corner

**Dawn Heston** has recently published an educational children’s book available in English and Spanish titled *Cities by the Sea Around the World (Ciudades cerca del mar)*. The book emphasizes an introduction to classic literature and world geography through the theme of cities by the sea. Included in the book are folk songs, art projects, and hands-on activities with blocks to enhance children’s creativity and memory of the content. The blocks featured in some of the activities are those designed by her husband for their son and made in Columbia, Mo.

**Marcia Reeves**, the department administrative associate, is proud to have her two children attend MU. Her daughter, Rachel, is majoring in English, and her son, Paul, in anthropology and biology.

By Flore Zéphir

Once again, many of our graduate students have had a successful academic year. It is with great pride that we tell you who they are. In fall 2011, our department will welcome 10 new graduate students, thus maintaining the number in residence at 40 students.

Spanish doctoral candidate **Anthony Butler** presented "The Poetics of Fulfillment: The Personal, Sacramental and Heroic in St. John of the Cross's 'Cantico espiritual'" at the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference in March. This summer, he taught Spanish at the Middlebury-Monterey Language Academy in Poultney, Vt., an intensive, immersion-based Spanish program for high school students modeled after Middlebury College's Language School.

Spanish doctoral student **Maria Taub** has a paper accepted for publication in the *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, "Arauco domado de Lope de Vega: Reflexión ética acerca de la historia." She also presented two conference papers: the first one, "Arauco domado de Lope de Vega: Acusación velada" at the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater's Symposium on Golden Age Theater in March; and the second, "Ética y estética en Arauco domado de Lope de Vega," at the Mid-America Conference on Hispanic Literature this past October.

Spanish doctoral student **Ana Zapata-Calle's** article, "El mundo de Chen Pan en *Monkey Hunting* de Cristina García: chinos, africanos y criollos en la diáspora cubana," was accepted for publication in *Chasqui*. Another, "En la guerra de Carmen de Burgos: Crítica del proceso de nacionalización e imperialismo español en Marruecos," was published in *Decimonónica*. Her review of *Capa prieto* by Yvonne Denis Rosario is slated to appear in *PALARA* this fall. Two more papers were presented last fall at the Mid-America Conference on Hispanic Literature and at the annual convention of the Midwest Modern Language

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Association in November 2010, and a third at the MU symposium on Herrera in April.

Spanish doctoral student **Danilo León** presented two conference papers last academic year: the first, "Laila Karrouch y Najat El Hachmi: la literatura como medio efectivo de integración, escape y refugio de dos marroquíes en la España de hoy en día," at the Mid-America Conference on Hispanic Literature in October 2010; and the second, "El viaje sin retorno: España en la poética de Antonio Machado antes y durante la Guerra Civil," at the University of Chicago's conference on Iberian and Latin American Literatures in April. He also participated in the MU Graduate School's Preparing Future Faculty Program this past fall and spring.



Participants on the trip to Cusco, Peru: (front) Jacquelyn Sandone, Sean Rowland, Michael Flinchpugh, and Angie Pagan; (back) Monica Kozaczka, Kristen Carranza, Cecilia Garza, Sarah Ekart, Alex Sandone, Cydni Robertson, Kacie Fingerhut, and Stephanie Pegler.

French doctoral student **Tomaz Cunningham** presented a paper titled "Comment Être Transculturel sans se Fatiguer, Examining Dany Laferrière's Protagonist as a Transcultural Subject" at the Midwest Association for Canadian Studies Conference in Windsor, Ontario, in October 2010. In spring 2011, he presented a paper for the MU Graduate and Professional Students Council in the Creative Arts/Humanities division, winning first place for his paper titled "From Survivor to Witness: A Lacanian Analysis of Narrative Voice in Genocide Fiction."

French doctoral student **Virginie Ems-Bléneau**, presented "Conflicting Narratives and Constructed Identities: Transnational Dynamics and Genocide in Rwanda" at the Conference of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies at The Ohio State University in April.

In fall 2010, Spanish master's student **Toshiya Kamei** presented "Los espacios del cafetal y del ingenio en Cecilia Valdés" at the Mid-America Conference on Hispanic Literature in October. He also translated poems by Spanish poet Ana Merino in the literary journal *Sirena*, and Mexican poet Leticia Luna's *Wounded Days and Other Poems*. In spring 2011, he read from that book with Luna at Rana Café in Mexico City, and also appeared on the radio program *La Orquesta Filosófica* with the poet. In addition, he translated Mexican writer Ana García Bergua's short stories in *The Dirty Goat*, *Gargoyle*, *Moon City Review*, *Red Rock Review*, and *Silk Road*.

French MALT student **Jessica Joyce** presented "L'homme fragmenté et son complexe d'infériorité dans deux livres de Jacques Godbout: A Reading of *Salut Galarneau* and *Une histoire américaine*" at the Midwest Association for Canadian Studies Conference in Windsor, Ontario, in October 2010. She was offered a part-time French instructor's position at Lange Middle School in Columbia for 2011-12.

## In Their Own Words

By Chad Montuori, PhD '11

"I don't know how you do it."

This is the most common comment I received from friends and family regarding my pursuit of a doctoate in Spanish literature while working full-time at Maple Woods Community College in Kansas City and trying to balance my life as a husband and father of three. Often times my reply was limited to a nod or a shrug, since I preferred to downplay what I was trying to accomplish. I must confess that there were those moments (many of them on I-70) when I wondered if what I was doing made sense. I mean, after all, I had a tenure-track position that granted me the flexibility to be with my family. Why, then, did I continue? I suppose there are multiple answers to this question, but the one that I ultimately come back to is the support, guidance, and encouragement that the romance languages department provided me throughout my six-year journey.

While I officially began classes in spring 2005, it was a meeting I had with Dr. Zéphir in 2004 that convinced me this was the path I wanted to take. Just as she has done on so many occasions, she provided the right words at exactly the right time and encouraged me to apply for the program. I am forever grateful for moments like these when she made me feel like the question or concern I had deserved her complete and undivided attention. Taking her advice, as I often do, I began the process and officially enrolled the following spring.

One of the seminars I took that first semester was the Sentimental Novel of Latin America, taught by Dr. Garcia-Pinto. Since my master's was more focused on foreign-language teaching, it was in this course that I learned what it was going to take to achieve my goal. It was in her course that I learned the difference between reading a novel and studying it. In fact, I still find it hard to just sit back and enjoy a book without writing in the margins or taking notes.

My other seminar that semester was the Literature of Equatorial Guinea

taught by visiting professor, and unbeknownst to me at the time, writer, Donato Ndongo. The readings and discussions that took place in this class sparked my interest in African migration to Spain, a topic that would eventually become

the focus of my dissertation. My interest in the topic moved beyond just West African migration to Spain and broadened to include the movement of North Africans across the Strait of Gibraltar. Despite the many differences that defined the two regions, I identified an important characteristic universal to the experience: gender roles and expectations. I realized that this was the direction I wanted to take, and I turned to Dr. Ugarte, who became my dissertation director, for input.

Having been around the department for a while, I knew Dr. Ugarte possessed a strong interest in the relationship between Africa and Spain. What was so impressive about him was his ability to listen to my ideas and not try to influence my thinking. Dr. Ugarte excels at listening. His calm demeanor and subtle, but effective words of encouragement like "Keep on Keepin' On" and "Keep on Truckin'" continue to impress on me across all aspects of my life.

While I have limited my comments to a handful of professors, I must acknowledge that at some point during my odyssey, my path crossed with almost every member of the department. Despite the distance of working and living in Kansas City, I always felt a part of the family that is the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures.

By Michelle Forbes, PhD '11

I made it to "the show!" I wrote my dissertation, defended it well, and earned a doctorate. As I write this essay (Sunday, June 26), my whole life from the past years in Columbia is packed away



Catalan singer Pau Alabajos Ferrer and Susanna Sebastia performing in front of an attentive audience, October 2011.

in Fruit Loops and Trix cardboard boxes, waiting for the moving men who will arrive tomorrow at 8:30 to haul everything to Valdosta, Ga. Over the next two months I'll be adjusting to my new surroundings and preparing for my new life at Valdosta State University as an assistant professor of Spanish and TESOL.

Before applying for a doctoral program, I lived in Central America, mesmerized by the "unusual" language of the Black people on the Atlantic coast, the Garífunas. I wanted to somehow incorporate a study of their language in my research, I just wasn't sure how. I researched doctoral programs and it so happened that MU had a concentration in Afro-Romance studies, then directed by Professor Marvin Lewis. After being admitted, I had accepted the fact that I would study literature, but Dr. Lewis knew that my bachelor's and master's degrees were in linguistics. He helped me design a plan of study that incorporated a majority of linguistics courses.

As my professors came to know me, as well as my academic and personal strengths and weaknesses, the more I could depend on them to advise me on things such as research questions, recommendation letters, editing an article for possible publication, and much more. When writing the proposal that earned me a Fulbright scholarship, my adviser (Flore Zéphir) helped me all day — on a Sunday. By the time I was writing my dissertation, I felt confident to approach any member of my committee at any time when I was stuck, of which I really should have taken more advantage. Instead of hitting a wall and

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staring at it for sometimes days on end, I would finally ask a professor from my committee for advice and the wall always crumbled. Even though I sometimes felt overwhelmed when writing the dissertation, I'll always look back on the process with a smile. When I was ready to start applying for jobs, Dr. Zéphir helped me with everything from putting together a teaching dossier, advising on the MLA interviews, coordinating the campus interviews all over the country, and finally negotiating a contract. A good rapport with one's professors is inextricably linked to one's success as a graduate student.

More than anything, I'm elated that the Garífunas in Guatemala have ex-

language, people around the world will come to learn that the Garífunas do not speak "some dialect" (as many Guatemalans say).

I'm so proud to have earned my doctorate at MU. I feel fully prepared to face the rigors of a tenure-track position and to be a good professor and scholar.

## By Ana Zapata-Calle (Spanish doctoral student)

In Spain, back in the '40s after the Civil War, my parents were born during the years of Franco's dictatorship, which have been called "the starvation years." They grew up in the countryside of the Ciudad Real Province. Both of them were the children of poor farmer families who also suffered repression under the new regime, as some of their family members were in prison, including one of my grandfathers and one of my great-grandmothers. As children, my parents only knew how to live in fear, work the land, and take care of their animals. They could not go to school because they needed to work to survive, and they were pretty isolated in the countryside. When my father was a teenager, he became aware of class divisions in society and the

discrimination he suffered from being poor and illiterate. Eager to improve his life, he was about to go to Equatorial Guinea to find a better life, because the government was recruiting farmers. But in the end, he did not go because the political situation there was complicated and dangerous.

Years later when he married my mother, my father had two jobs: one was in a sugar factory, and the other was running his parents' farm with my mother and their five children. I was the third child, born in 1976; I grew up in that farming environment. By

the time I was six, I had the chance to go to school, owing to a new democratic government under which education was not only a duty but also a right. The government provided transportation and food for children from the countryside, making it possible for them to attend school. Every day, as soon as I came back from school, I worked with my parents on the farm. As I grew into a young woman, I wanted to explore the world but did not have the means to travel. Instead, I used every book that I could find to experience the world through reading.

I then was able to achieve something that my parents never thought possible for their children: I went to college. I obtained my bachelor of arts degree in Spanish literature with an emphasis on Spain from the Universidad de Castilla la Mancha in my hometown. Later, my desire to travel took me to work in other countries, such as France and England as an au pair. Subsequently, I attended Muskingum College in Ohio as an exchange student for eight months. This experience led me to pursue a master's in Spanish literature with an emphasis in Hispano-American literature at Ohio University. There, I participated in two academic programs in Mexico and Ecuador, in which I had the opportunity to interact with indigenous people in Mexico and see how the Andeans lived the experience of emigration in Ecuador.

My interest in Afro-Hispanic literature started in Limoges, France, in 2006, with a non-profit association called Culture Alpha. This organization helped immigrants like me learn French. In the classroom, I met Africans and non-Africans who came to France; many of them were fleeing wars and other very difficult social situations. They told me their stories, and I started to read about African countries, thinking also about Equatorial Guinea, where my father wanted to go when it was still a Spanish colony. It was in Limoges that I started reading the work of Donato Ndongo, the most important writer from Equatorial Guinea who, I would later learn, was also a visiting professor at the University of Missouri with the Afro-Romance Institute. I was interested in the



William Luis of Vanderbilt University discussing the emergence of Cuba's national literature, November 2010.

pressed the highest approval of my dissertation. As the current president of Guatemala, Alvaro Colom, visited the Garífunas for the first time in April, they plan on presenting him with my dissertation to better understand their history and language. My Web site, [www.GarifunaResearch.com](http://www.GarifunaResearch.com), has also been very well received and has been visited by tens of thousands of people in 44 countries. I'm very happy that the Garífunas have told me that this is only the beginning of an enduring relationship; with my continued recognition and promotion of them and their

African diaspora, and I went to Lisbon to learn Portuguese intending to go to Brazil and compare the Afro-Brazilian diaspora with the Caribbean diaspora. This is still an open project.

My life is a story of connections that I have made with people and their life stories, as well as with the many cultures I have experienced in my travels. All my intellectual life is rooted in the history of my family, my own experiences, or the experiences of others whom I have met in my life. My research focuses on issues of discrimination based on geography, class, gender, race, and age. Being a critic of literature helps me discuss these topics as a cathartic process for my own feelings. In my studies, I combine Spanish-American literature, peninsular literature, and Afro-Hispanic literature, because I feel that I cannot separate them. Every step of the way, I find a voice that needs to be recovered: indigenous, African or African-descent, poor men and women, children without childhood, victims of political repression, and survivors of wars.

When I started my PhD at the University of Florida, I wanted to focus on Africa and the African diaspora. Sadly, the professor who was going to be my adviser became seriously ill; I could never meet her. I was instead doing research about the Spanish Civil War when it was mentioned to me that there was a professor in Missouri by the name of Michael Ugarte who did research on both the Spanish Civil War and Equatorial Guinea. Subsequently, I decided to transfer to MU and focus on Afro-Hispanic literature.

As soon as I started to take courses in the department, I knew I was at the right place and at the right time in order to continue to grow personally and professionally. The two professors who guided me the most were my adviser at the time, Dr. Ugarte, and Dr. Juana María Cordones-Cook, my current adviser. They both work in the field in which I am most interested: Africa and the African diaspora. They also work with issues of regime repression and female writers.

Since I started studying Spanish literature back in Spain, I have been in six different departments of romance

languages and literatures. All of them have provided me with many positive experiences, but the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at MU is definitely the right place for me. I do not want to move anywhere else.

### By Nelson Danilo Leon (Spanish doctoral student)

After obtaining my master's degree with an emphasis on language teaching from MU in 2008, I moved to Washington, D.C., to teach Spanish and to start a program for heritage language speakers at a well-known public charter school. This was a great experience, but I made the decision to return to Mizzou. In fall 2009, I was admitted to the PhD program in Spanish literature. The past two years have been critical for my academic career, and my professors have provided me with a firm grounding in literature, needed in order to choose topics for my research. With their help and guidance, I have had the privilege to represent Mizzou and its Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at four professional conferences in and out of the state of Missouri.

My research concentrates on issues that conflictive cultural identities cause, especially among societies with large numbers of immigrants on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition, I am interested in the poetry and novels written about the Spanish Civil War.

I encourage all graduate students to take advantage of everything that the department can provide them during their years as a graduate student.

### By Tomaz Cunningham (French doctoral student)

I have several interests, which made selecting a dissertation topic a challenge. My research focuses on the image of the male mulatto in the French literature of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. I started to investigate this topic after taking a seminar by Dr. Weis on Race and the Enlightenment. In this class we read several books that were best sellers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but are not commonly studied today; it was interesting to see how modern concepts of race were perceived at that time.

I have found the PhD program at MU to be a great fit for me. Although my dissertation topic focuses on the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, I am also interested in 17<sup>th</sup>-century literature and Canadian literature. My professors have helped me develop those interests, while at the same time constantly reminding me to remain focused on my dissertation.

Besides their academic expertise, what continues to impress me about the French faculty is their deep commitment to the professional development of their students. I have had several opportunities to meet other academics in the field at conferences that Dr. Weis and Dr. Sipe have encouraged me to attend. Dr. Muratore is an incredible resource in helping me explore 17<sup>th</sup>-century French literature and culture, and she has devoted a great deal of her time to guiding my ideas and reading my work to get it into "scholarly" shape. I don't believe anyone could find professors as dedicated to their students and to their work at any other university.

### By Virginie Ems-Bléneau (French doctoral student)

I am interested in questions of identity in literature, whether it is gender identity, racial identity, or national identity. Being a French national living abroad, I am particularly interested in the question of French identity: what does it mean to be French? Is "Frenchness" something that can be acquired? Is it something that can be lost? Does French nationality encompass what it means to "be French"?

I have chosen the University of Missouri because of the open-mindedness of our faculty members, and because of the area in which they specialize: particularly post-colonialism (Dr. Galimore), enlightenment (Dr. Weis), and film studies (Dr. Kaussen). I also appreciate the ability to work with other departments, especially those that are pioneers in identity scholarship and research such as women's and gender studies, English, and sociology.

In April, I presented a transnational analysis of the rhetoric of the 1994 Rwanda genocide at a conference held

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# Undergraduate Student News

In June 2011, our undergraduate adviser, Associate Teaching Professor **Nancy Molavi**, who is loved and respected by our undergraduate students, decided to retire. Needless to say, she will be sorely missed by all of us. We wish her well as she begins a restful and joyful chapter of her life. However, Nancy has assured us that she will drop by to see us every now and then and that she would ensure a smooth transition for our undergraduate students, as they begin to work with our new undergraduate adviser, **Demetrio Anzaldo-Gonzales**, who will be joining us in the fall from the University of Idaho as an associate teaching professor of Spanish.

—Flore Zéphir

By Nancy Molavi

Alpha Mu Gamma, Phi Nu Chapter of the University of Missouri has a new adviser, **Stephen Hessel**, who replaces Nancy Molavi. The Phi Nu Chapter is proud to count eight new members initiated in March and a new president elected, Rachael Galvin.

## Fellowships and Awards

In November 2010, **Nicholas Daniel Gass** (journalism and French) was selected as one of the two finalists for the 2010–11 David Kaplan Memorial Fellowship at ABC News. Former ABC broadcast journalist Sam Donaldson conducted the final interview and selected Nick. He received a \$10,000 stipend in addition to a paid position at the news bureau in spring 2011.

In December, **Yasaman (Yasi) Hemmat**, who is majoring in French, Spanish, and biology/pre-medicine, was awarded an Anne E. Hayden Scholarship. In February, other students were also awarded scholarships from the College of Arts and Science. They include **Caitlin Carter** (Spanish), who received the Willis V. Shepard Memorial Scholarship; **Myles Freborg** (French), who received the Lonald D. Hambley Scholarship; **Georgia Gonder** (Spanish), who received the Ruth Earline Taylor Allen Scholarship; **Emily Lynn** (French) who received the Thomas B. Harris Scholarship; and **Rebecca Taylor** (Spanish) who received the Ruth

Earline Taylor Allen Scholarship.

Many of our students were honored in April. **Ashleigh Bartlett**, French and political science major, received the David L. Boren National Security Education Program Scholarship for the second time in a row. She also received a Thomas Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship. **Amelia Bock**, journalism



Spanish student Elena Di Miceli with her six-year old “host sister” in Oviedo, Spain, Summer 2010.

and Spanish; **Kelly Brdicka**, BA '11 Spanish, BJ '11; **Alexandra Browning**, journalism and Spanish; **Noah Myers**, Spanish; **Kyle Riggs**, medicinal chemistry and Spanish minor; and **Paul Rolfe**, journalism and Spanish were all nominated for the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. Nancy Molavi, Jacquelyn Sandone, and Michael Ugarte

served as mentors and nominators to these award-winning students.

## Worth Noting

Several of our French graduates will serve as assistants d'anglais in French lycées in 2012–13: **Ellen Burch**, **Jeremy Davis**, and **Ashleigh Ladue**. In Spanish, we recognize the efforts and energy of **Kyle Riggs**, who started the Spanish Club, and of **Madison Allen**, who devoted her time to organizing the Spanish conversation groups and tables. Both graduated with honors. **Grant Quigley** spent a year in South America and became fluent in Spanish. He has been accepted into the prestigious London School of Economics.

## Study Abroad

In summer 2011, **John Zemke** took a group of 17 students to Oviedo, Spain; **Carol Lazzaro-Weis** took nine students to Lyon, France, and **Béa Gallimore** took 11 students to Rwanda. You will hear from some of these students

below. In addition, MU launched a Spanish service-learning study-abroad program in Cusco, Peru, which was led by **Jacquelyn Sandone**, Spanish instructor and technology specialist for the College of Arts and Science. During their time in Peru, students studied Spanish and worked two days a week in indigenous communities on service projects, including building clean-burning adobe stoves in more than 40 homes in the village of Pinankay and laying the foundation for a school in Ocorunu.

## In Their Own Words

By Elena Di Miceli, Spanish student  
Having the opportunity to spend four weeks in Oviedo during summer 2010 was truly an experience of a lifetime. Because my primary goal was to become more fluent in Spanish, Oviedo was the perfect choice for me.

The structure of the program allowed me to learn Spanish from a native Spanish professor, an MU professor, and my host family. I can easily say that I learned the most Spanish by simply playing with my six-year-old host

sister, who was never afraid to correct me or teach me new words and everyday phrases!

The city of Oviedo was absolutely beautiful and very safe, and I was able to take advantage of the excursions as well as do some personal traveling throughout Spain. What I loved most about Oviedo is that it is not a typical tourist city; I was able to experience the Spanish culture firsthand from my host family without the distraction of tourists from other countries. There were events planned through the university with all of the international students, allowing me to practice Spanish, experience the culture, and meet people from around the world! Also, having the opportunity to be in Spain during their first World Cup victory topped off my already amazing experience!

The Oviedo study-abroad program well exceeded my expectations and has reinforced my desire to travel and learn about new cultures.

*By Megan Thickpenney (Spanish student)*  
My love for all things Spanish was born when I first visited the country two years ago. The summer 2010 study-abroad program in Oviedo gave me a chance to spend more time in Spain, all the while enhancing my language skills and knowledge of the culture. While I was there, I lived with a Spanish family and attended classes specifically designed to develop a student's language skills.

This program was especially beneficial to me because of the family living situation and availability of advanced Spanish classes. The program is designed to teach students at every level of language proficiency, and therefore I was constantly challenged in my knowledge of Spanish and the culture that accompanies it. In addition to the academic portion of the program, the time I spent with my host family proved to be invaluable.

My summer in Oviedo provided me with so much more than knowledge of colloquial phrases and how to correctly use *por/para*. Besides being in Spain when they won the World Cup, the highlights of the program for me were the friendships I formed and the

memories made during all of our cultural excursions.

I went into the program with expectations of improving my conversational skills, and I left Spain at the end of the summer having achieved that and so much more. Oviedo left me with stories and experiences that I will talk about for the rest of my life.

*By Justin Shanitkovich (French student)*  
When considering where I wanted to study abroad, Lyon seemed an easy choice. It presented the perfect chance to practice my French, while providing a welcoming atmosphere. What France offered as well, for a literature and film student, was the chance to immerse myself in a culture that prizes the arts, especially in Lyon, where cinema as technological marvel has its origins.

I have benefitted enormously from the program, improving my language proficiency drastically while also gaining a new understanding of a culture apart from my own. I gained invaluable experience there, learning at a rate impossible to match in a classroom alone.

I recommend that anyone interested in improving his or her French or comprehension of another culture take a similar trip.

*By Danielle French (French student)*  
I chose to spend this summer in Lyon not only to finish my minor, but also to immerse myself in a different culture and language for six weeks. I was familiar with Lyon, having visited the city twice before with friends of my family, so it seemed like the ideal opportunity for me to study abroad. Lyon is the perfect size and extremely well situated for weekend travel. It also doesn't hurt that it is the gastronomic capital of France.

The program was beneficial to me in many ways. My reading and oral comprehension skills improved enormously, along with my writing and speech. I also learned so much about the importance of gastronomy in French culture and its influence on the French language.

A few highlights that stand out in my mind are Vieux Lyon, the trip to Paris, of course, and pretty much everything I ate while I was there. With architecture dating back to the Middle

Ages and its location along the Saône River, Vieux Lyon is the most beautiful part of the city, in my opinion.

As for Paris, my favorite part of our weekend there was the gastronomic tour of the city, visiting historical restaurants, bakeries, and butchers.

I had hoped that we would travel outside Lyon more often, but looking back, it also afforded us more free time to explore Lyon and travel on our own. All of my other expectations were met, most certainly all those concerning food. I do suggest that those who want to participate complete more French classes than required. Overall, it was an incredible experience that was well worth the expense and work involved, and it is something that I will most definitely never forget.

## Graduate News

Continued from Page 9

at The Ohio State University. In this paper, I traced the arguments that led to the genocide across the borders of the nation and into the international community. This subject was of particular interest to me because the very reason why nearly a million people were brutally killed in 1994 (their ethnic identity) was not, in fact, a historically stable construct. On the contrary, it was subject to constant reshaping by forces that lay beyond the control of the local populations, which, nonetheless, were the actors and victims of the horror that befell their nation, their families, and their lives. I believe that there are important lessons to be learned from what happened in Rwanda because the kind of rhetorical manipulation of identity that has been perpetrated is, perhaps on a smaller scale, still happening all over the world, including in France.

I am analyzing the novel *L'Enfant de Sable* (written by Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun) that I hope to present at a French literature conference next March. This novel focuses on issues of gender identity, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for national identity.

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The department appreciates hearing from alumni and friends. Send announcements or milestones to the address listed above.

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## Special Recognition

**Carol Lazzaro-Weis** has been named the Catherine Paine Middlebush Professor of Romance Languages. She will hold the title from August 2011 to August 2014.

**Juananaríá Cordones-Cook** received a Mizzou Advantage Award for her project *Ediciones Vigía* and the *Aesthetics of Bricolage*. Her work with the *Ediciones Vigía*, a series of handcrafted books from Cuba, was featured in a recent video produced this spring by *Mizzou Magazine*. Watch it at [romancelanguages.missouri.edu](http://romancelanguages.missouri.edu).

**Erick Blandón** has recently been cited for his work on the Baroque in Nicaragua in the authoritative volume, *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, published by the prestigious Royal Spanish Academy. The Academy, which was founded in 1713 in Madrid, is the official royal institution responsible for regulating the Spanish language.

**Michael Ugarte's** work on African emigration to Spain was featured in the fall/winter 2010 issue of *Illumination*, "Sojourners and Strangers:

A Scholar of Exile, Emigration, and Repatriation Speaks the Language of Lives in Transition."

**Valerie Kaussen** is one of the lead faculty members on a project titled MU Global Connect, which received an MU Advantage seed grant. Funds will support the development of an interdisciplinary undergraduate certificate that emphasizes cross-cultural studies and work in a global "digital world." The principal investigator on the project is Monika Fischer from German and Russian studies.

**Mamadou Badiane** received an Excellence in Education Award in spring 2011 from the Division of Student Affairs. He was nominated by student Madison Allen, a member of the Spanish Club.

Several of our graduate instructors were nominated for a TA Choice Award in spring 2011. In French, they include **Malick Coly, Chad Kelly, Mina Schultz, Prisca Rice, Erica Titus, Jessica Joyce, Rochelle Baldrige**

and **Louise Allen**; in Spanish, **Megs Ledoux, Jamie Rowe, Reina Drake, Pablo Serna, Brittnea Collins, and Borja Sordo de la Pena.**

**Marcia Reeves**, our administrative associate, earned her bachelor's of general studies degree with an emphasis in management and psychology in May.



Professor Joseph Otabela, Equatorial Guinean writer Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo, and Professor Michael Ugarte, before Ndongo's talk in April.