

# SCHOOL OF LITERATURES, CULTURES, AND LINGUISTICS

THIS NEWSLETTER COVERS THE DEPARTMENT OF THE CLASSICS, PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE AND WORLD LITERATURE, DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES, DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH AND ITALIAN, DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES, DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS, DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION, DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES, DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE, AND CENTER FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES.

## “WORDS MATTER”: SLCL GRADUATION 2018

The School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics concluded its 10-year anniversary in 2017-18, with its annual May Convocation ceremony, Saturday, May 12, in Foellinger Auditorium.

This year's Sesquicentennial class also marked a nearly 20% increase in the number of SLCL graduates who participated in convocation compared to 2017, with 132 students crossing the stage to receive their certificates of graduation. This included 83 bachelor's degree recipients, 39 master's degree recipients, and 10 doctoral candidates. Approximately 900 guests plus more than 30 faculty members attended the event, which was followed by a reception in the Atrium of the Foreign Languages Building. Professor Jean-Philippe Mathy, director of the School, served as emcee, and Martin Camargo, professor of English, was this year's LAS associate dean who presented diploma covers to graduates.

This year's speaker was Mara Wade, professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures. She addressed graduates and guests about the importance of words and reading.

She said that reading is just the first step in a humanistic education. “The central affordances of reading are language, meaning, and interpretation, key concepts that will allow us to understand and adapt to a changing world and environment. Critical thinking, to question deeply, the ability to summarize and then synthesize, to project beyond a given narrative and consider other alternatives are all essential components of this sort of education—and prerequisites in today's world.”

Wade noted that she recently had given a reference for one of her students, telling a prospective employer who asked about

vocational skills that the student had “meta-skills,” in Wade's words “the ability to see and understand the demands of a project, to identify key concepts and what needs to be done to reach the project's goals.” Wade then went on to explain, “It is not enough to send students into the world knowing particular technical skills or methods that will very soon be outdated.”

The speaker also called attention to the value of a humanistic education in the workplace.

“The clear advantage of a humanistic education is that you are preparing for jobs that don't yet exist. Preparing not for a particular job, but for life circumstances, acquiring key skills, core capabilities that prepare you to communicate well, to read and analyze, come to solid conclusions, articulate ideas based on knowledge gained from literature and culture, from both the present and the past, and from our own and other cultures.”

She made a broader point about the value of reading. “By reading and having read widely, you have built up both critical thinking and your powers of visualization. One of the main values of a humanities degree is your ability to form and realize a vision, to tap into your creative capacities to see fresh solutions, to create new things, to come to new ideas. As students in our programs, you are extremely well equipped to go out into your futures.”

In closing, Wade urged this year's graduates to keep on reading. “Passion for reading is great gift. It will serve you well.”



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

### Give to the School

Please consider investing in the future of the School through a gift designated for either: 1) the **SLCL Annual Fund**, which helps to promote overall excellence in the school; 2) the **Douglas A. Kibbee Prize**, awarded annually to the most outstanding dissertation proposal; or 3) **SLCL departments or programs**. Your gift is most appreciated! Visit our website, [slcl.illinois.edu](http://slcl.illinois.edu) and click "Give to SLCL" in the upper right-hand corner.

### Attention, Alumni/ae: We Want to Hear Your Stories

We want to hear from you: What do you do (job title, duties), where do you work, and how has your U of I education prepared you for your success? Please send us your story, 200 words maximum, subject heading "My Alumni/ae story" to: Rick Partin, [partin@illinois.edu](mailto:partin@illinois.edu). You may include a photo of yourself in electronic format (.jpg or .png preferred). We'll publish select ones on our School website: [slcl.illinois.edu](http://slcl.illinois.edu).

### Check out Our Website

Look on our School webpage, which includes a Calendar of Events, Announcements, a Feature News section, and our own Facebook page.

For a snapshot of SLCL in numbers, please see our brochure that describes the scope of our School and why we call ourselves the "Gateway to a Global Learning Experience." Go to [www.slcl.illinois.edu/news/brochure](http://www.slcl.illinois.edu/news/brochure) and click on the image to see how the SLCL contributes to the academic mission of the University of Illinois.

### SUMMER 2018

#### School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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## Spanish graduate finds relevance, satisfaction in using what he studied at Illinois

by Rick Partin



Like a lot of students at the LU of I in the late 60's, **Terry Collier**, who was pursuing a major in Spanish, began to wonder if what he was studying for was relevant, given those turbulent times.

Today, he recalls, "Vietnam war opposition was the major campus theme. There were almost daily protests and demonstrations against the war. There was administrative crackdown on activities when it was believed they got too out of hand."

He adds, "The most symbolic and extreme gesture, at least to me, was having the Illinois National

Guard with full uniforms and rifles stationed all over the campus for several days. It was a most incongruous sight, but the same thing was happening on many other campuses.

"There were also demonstrations and student soul searching after the King and Robert Kennedy killings. In the air was a sense that the entire country and all of its history and institutions, including the university, was based on racism and war mongering and that the only noble job of a student was to, if not destroy (amount the extremist elements) American institutions, then at least to not be a part them."

In that environment he began to feel that "spending mental effort on things as Spanish linguistics, Spanish Romantic Literature and Latin American poetry was a waste of time and totally irrelevant to the realities of a country on fire."

Fortunately for Collier and for people in his future, he stayed at Illinois and not only completed a BA in 1969, but also an MA in 1972.

From there he got a job in his hometown as a Spanish instructor at Danville Area Community College. He had to apply to community colleges across the US, but DACC needed both a Spanish and a French instructor. He could teach both, so they came back to him with an offer.

Although he enjoyed teaching, he wanted more of a challenge and had always wanted to be a translator or interpreter. After a chance visit to the United Nations during a spring break he was so impressed with the interpreters there that he decided to apply to the only two translator/interpreter schools at the time—Monterrey Institute and Georgetown. Both accepted him but he chose Georgetown, as it was a one-year program.

After completing the Georgetown program he applied to every organization in Washington, D.C., that hired translators/interpreters. He twice took the State Department interpreter/

translator exam and was eventually hired as an escort/seminar interpreter in Spanish and English. "I had the glorious honor of traveling with dozens of US government guests from Spain, Equatorial Guinea and Latin America, to almost every region of the U.S., serving as interpreter for all of their professional and social meetings."

By the 1980s, Collier left interpreting to become an international procurement professional. He was selected for procurement assignments in several countries, but specifically for his Spanish skills in Mexico, Dominican Republic, and Bolivia. He procured and delivered equipment and supplies for U.S. Agency for International Development projects around the world: Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

He lived in Mexico for more than a year under a contract with a private firm in D.C., procuring college textbooks in Mexico City and transporting them to college bookstores in Central America. He also spent several weeks in the Dominican Republic, training legal staff on US government procurement regulations. And, he had several assignments in Bolivia assisting U.S. government and World Bank-funded projects in procuring needed equipment.

Collier's first procurement consultant job as an independent procurement professional was in Honduras, helping a USAID-funded project procure educational equipment. He said that most of the educated staff he dealt with in all of the countries spoke a readily understandable Spanish, but he had more of a challenge in rural areas or in "more popular city neighborhoods."

Today Collier lives in rural Homer, Ill. He works for Carle Hospital. He got a job at Carle after visiting his mother-in-law there and noticing a sign informing patients to call a certain number if they needed an interpreter. So, he applied for an opening for a medical Spanish interpreter and took the required exam. Eventually he was hired.

Carle provides interpreters for Spanish, French, Chinese, and sign language. It has access to almost any language via special interpreter communication systems.

Collier said that officially he works part-time, but his hours tend to be 8 to 5. He interprets for English-limited Spanish speaking patients for clinic visits, examinations, medical tests, and surgical operations. All interpreters are required to take a hospital-sponsored medical terminology course.

"I enjoy this work immensely," he says. "It takes me back to my first love. My work is needed and useful. I'm constantly learning—both Spanish and English vocabulary." He says his two biggest challenges are medical terminology that varies among countries and certain dialects.

But Collier loves the challenges and the variety to his current job. "Every day is different, and I owe much to Spanish and sincerely appreciate my major." ☞

# Mr. Ebel does not go to Washington

## But he learns much—about the political process, himself and what he most values

by Rick Partin

**J**on Ebel couldn't sleep the night of the US elections held on Nov. 7, 2017.

The next day he made a decision: to run in the Democratic primary for the United States Representative for Illinois's 13th congressional district.

"I felt 'This is a time when people have to evaluate and decide what matters to them.'"

What Ebel decided was that he might be able to best serve his fellow citizens by running for the congressional seat currently held by Rodney Davis. "I ran because I believe that we are very poorly represented right now in terms of our values and the issues, that our congressman has stopped listening to or caring about this community, and that we need to be the change we seek."

But first, Ebel had to talk with his wife, three daughters, and numerous friends. All were on board with his decision, including friends with political and business experience.

He found additional support while attending his 25th reunion at Harvard. With friends and community members giving him their financial support and time, in Ebel's words, "All those things lined up."

Ebel had no previous experience in politics, but to an extent felt that was the point. "We need more nurses, social workers, writers and teachers in Congress."

However, four other candidates had the same goal: Betsy Londrigan, a former staffer to U.S. Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.); physician David Gill; former Illinois Assistant Attorney General Erik Jones; and teacher Angel Sides.

Ebel, a professor of Religion at the U of I, was also a U.S. Navy veteran (the only veteran in the race) who had worked in Naval Intelligence.

The 13th district covers parts of Bond, Champaign, Madison, McLean and Sangamon counties, and all of Christian, Calhoun, De Witt, Greene, Jersey, Macon, Macoupin, Montgomery and Piatt counties, as of the 2011 redistricting which followed the 2010 census. All or parts of Bloomington, Champaign-Urbana, Decatur, Springfield, Taylorville, and Edwardsville are included. It's a huge district that spreads southwesterly from Bloomington and Champaign to near St. Louis.

Because the district was so large, money and name recognition became very important. Candidates with more money could garner more name recognition.

As for issues, in traveling around the district talking with voters, Ebel found that the main issues were the same ones that concern most people when it comes down to it: healthcare, education, jobs. But, he added, in February and March of this year gun control became more of an issue because of the shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and President Trump's proposed trade restrictions on China. Ebel said Illinois farmers in particular became concerned that a trade war with China would close markets on which they depend for their livelihood. "Agriculture needs access to global markets and good



prices," he asserted.

In running for Congress, Ebel found that it's an "all-consuming endeavor," one with constant travel, plus town meetings, candidate forums, fundraising, eating on the run for weeks on end, and too many nights of only three to four hours of sleep.

On Election Day, March 20, 2018, the voters spoke. Londrigan won with 24,515 votes (45.7%); Jones was second with 12,024 (22.4%), Gill third with 7,757 (14.4%) Ebel fourth with 7,167 (13.3%) and Sides fifth with 2,237 votes (4.2%). Londrigan even won in Champaign County, outdistancing Ebel 35-30%.

Ebel put it simply: "We really got beaten," adding, "There is nothing as abrupt as losing an election."

However, he was quick to add, "You make a plan based on what you know and execute it to the best of your ability. The plan didn't work."

But he gave credit to the victor. "Betsy ran a very smart campaign. She did an incredible job raising money." Ebel added that she had the support of many politicians, including Senator Durbin and super-PACs. But he wasn't bitter about the election or that Londrigan, a U of I graduate, won. He plans to work for her in the general election. "She's courageous, kind and thoughtful."

In reflecting on the campaign, Ebel offers, "Campaigns are complicated things. Voters cast votes for complex reasons. And, campaigning is a large part of the job—even if you win.

"I might not have appreciated fully what I was up against."

And, he said he had no idea that Londrigan's margin of victory would be as large as it was. But he has no regrets. "I tried to be who I am, wherever I am. And I know I would have represented this district very well."

So is there a second run in the works?

Although Ebel said he can understand why people run a second time ("You learn a lot and you adjust"), and though he acknowledges the adage 'never say never,' he maintains that he does not intend to run again.

Why?

"My job is to think through thorny problems about religion with my students in the Department of Religion at the University of Illinois." It's a place and a job he loves. "I'll do my job—being the best faculty member that I can be." ☞

# Mara Wade named Getty Residential Scholar



**M**ara Wade, professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, has been awarded a Getty Residential Scholar Grant. The scholarship allows Wade to spend

the 2018 fall semester at the Getty Research Institute working on her book "The Politics of Culture: Public Monuments in the Free Imperial City, Nuernberg 1521-1620."

Since 1985, the Getty Research Institute has selected scholars, artists, and cultural figures to work in residence on projects related to its annual research theme. The theme for the fall 2018 term is "monumentality," which

will address fundamental questions of art and architectural history such as size and scale, as well as how monumentality is embodied by various cultures, its role as a tool for nation building, and the subversive potential of monument-making.

Wade's research is based on a volume that she recently identified, a 17th century biography by the humanist Georg Rem of the Free Imperial City of Nuernberg as told through its public monuments.

"Rem's remarkable volume is a missing link that connects the cultural politics of the city's elite with its civic art program," the project description says. "It is the only known work that situates the allegories and emblems of one of the most magnificent civic spaces in the Holy Roman Empire within the context of public art and civic ideology. This hybrid print

and manuscript volume describes Nuernberg's program of civic monuments across an entire century, outlining a consistent cultural policy that stretched back to the time of Duerer. In so doing, Rem advanced a radical argument: these texts and images were not merely the products of a stable civil society, they created it."

While at the Getty Research Institute, Wade will be able to make use of Getty collections and participate in the intellectual life of the Getty Center and the Getty Villa.

She is the principal investigator for Emblematica Online, a multi-year international digital humanities research project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and her research has a strong focus on digital humanities. To learn more about Emblematica Online, visit: <http://emblematica.grainger.illinois.edu>. ☞

# Department of French and Italian organizes photo exhibition of 1968 French protests

**T**he Department of French and Italian organized a photo exhibit entitled "Au cœur de Mai 68" ("At the Heart of May 68"), held in the FLB Atrium from April 24-26.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the Association des Amis de Philippe Gras and Les Films des Quatre Planètes. It features 43 previously unpublished images of the May 1968 protests taken by acclaimed photographer Philippe Gras and discovered after his death in 2007.

Professor **François Proulx** was instrumental in putting together the three-day exhibit, and

two of the students in Proulx's French cultural history course, Lauren Longfellow, a senior from Mahomet, Ill., and Luke Lucio, a sophomore from La Grange, Ill., made class presentations about issues depicted in the photos.

The department organized the exhibit with the support of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States. The Midwest tour of the exhibition was made possible by the Cultural Service at the Consulate General of France in Chicago with the generous support of the France-Chicago Center at the University of Chicago. ☞



# Columbia University Press launches Chinese literature book series edited by Professor Zong-qi Cai



Jennifer Crewe (left), director of the press affiliated with Columbia University, and Zong-qi Cai, professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures, U of I, pose for photos at the launch ceremony of the book series titled, "How to Read Chinese Literature," in Washington, D.C., on March 23, 2018.

**I**n March the Columbia University Press recently launched a book series titled "How to Read Chinese Literature" which features the work of one of its general editors, **Zong-qi Cai**, professor of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the U of I.

The book series aims to transform the learning and teaching of Chinese literature, language, and culture in the English-speaking world. It's a collection of Chinese literary anthologies and language texts covering all major literary genres, with non-Chinese students and scholars as target readers.

The series is aimed at bridging the gap between learning and teaching for non-Chinese students and scholars, especially in traditional Chinese poetry and prose, according to Cai. He stressed that the most challenging part about teaching non-Chinese students is the need for an interpretive and analytical approach instead

of using descriptive, abstract words that could be well-perceived by Chinese speakers.

Since 2008, Columbia University Press has published three books edited by Cai—now all part of the series—starting with "How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology."

The book has been popular among students, scholars, and other readers, paving the way for the idea of publishing a series.

"I think it was a great idea," said Jennifer Crewe, director of the press affiliated with Columbia University. Referring to how Cai and other editors have compiled the books, which put together the English translation of traditional Chinese poetry and prose, their Chinese texts, and translation into modern Chinese, she added, "It's a successful formula that will help students for years to come."

The entire book series is expected to be out by 2020. ☞

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Professor Antony Augoustakis co-edits new book, "Epic Heroes on Screen"



**Antony Augoustakis**, professor of Classics, has co-edited (with Stacie Raucii of Union College) a new book titled "Epic Heroes on Screen" (Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

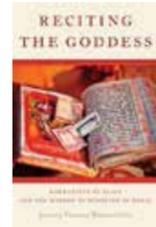
This is the first collection to look at the most recent manifestations of the ancient hero on screen. It brings together an array of perspectives on twenty-first century cinematic representations of ancient world heroes and antiheroes—from the mythical Hercules in

various forms to famous leaders of the Greek and Roman worlds.

Films and television series examined range from Hercules and The Legend of Hercules to Atlantis and Supernatural, as well as other biopic works influenced by the figure of the ancient hero.

For more about the book: <https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-epic-heroes-on-screen-hb.html>

### Professor Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz publishes new work on Hindu narrative tradition



**Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz**, assistant professor of Religion, has published a book titled "Reciting the Goddess: Narratives of Place and the Making of Hinduism in Nepal" (Oxford University Press, 2018).

This new work is the first critical study of the Svasthanivatakatha (SVK), one of Nepal's best-known and most-heard/listened to narrative tradition. The SVK is a sixteenth-century Hindu devotional tradition dedicated to the Nepali goddess Svasthani.

Reciting the Goddess is also the first detailed study of the Hindu goddess Svasthani, her mythology, and her iconographic transformations. Birkenholtz examines Svasthani's character and identity, which is tied to the pan-Hindu goddess tradition and is grounded in local culture. She also views the representation of women in the SVK and the ways in which the text influenced local and regional debates on the ideal of Hindu womanhood.

For more about the book: <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/reciting-the-goddess-9780199341160?cc=us&clang=en&>

### Professor Eric Calderwood publishes book on Spain and the making of modern Moroccan culture



**Eric Calderwood**, assistant professor of Comparative and World Literature, has published a new book titled "Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture" (Harvard University Press).

Through state-backed Catholicism, monolingualism, militarism, and dictatorship, Spain's fascists earned their reputation for intolerance. Yet 80,000 Moroccans fought at General Franco's side in the 1930s.

What brought these strange bedfellows together, Calderwood argues, was a highly effective propaganda weapon: the legacy of medieval Muslim Iberia, known as al-Andalus. This legacy served to justify Spain's colonization of Morocco and to define the Moroccan national culture that eventually supplanted colonial rule.

Drawing on a rich archive of Spanish, Arabic, French, and Catalan sources, Calderwood reconstructs the political career of al-Andalus, showing how shared pasts become raw material for divergent contemporary ideologies, including Spanish fascism and Moroccan nationalism.

For more about the book: [www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674980327](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674980327)

### Professor Rachel S. Harris publishes new feminist study of Israel's film industry



**Rachel S. Harris**, associate professor of Comparative and World Literature, has published a book titled "Warriors, Witches, Whores: Women in Israeli Cinema" (Wayne State University Press, 2017).

Harris' book is a feminist study of Israel's film industry and the changes that have occurred since the 1990s. The author adopts a cultural studies approach, considering the creation of a female-centered and thematically feminist film culture in light of structural

and ideological shifts in Israeli society. Harris situates these changes in dialogue with the cinematic history that preceded them and the ongoing social inequalities that perpetuate women's marginalization within Israeli society.

"Warriors, Witches, Whores" is divided into three major sections, each of which considers a different form of feminist engagement. The first part explores films that place women in traditionally male spheres of militarism. The second recovers the narratives of women's experience that were previously marginalized or silenced. The third offers examples of feminist activism that reach beyond film to comment on social issues.

### Dr. Florencia Henshaw receives Excellence in Language Instruction Award



**Dr. Florencia Henshaw**, director of Advanced Spanish for the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, is the recipient of the CLIC Excellence in Language Instruction Award.

Henshaw was chosen by members of the CLIC Advisory Board/Selection Committee. The award recognizes and rewards the commitment to pedagogical excellence and innovation of one faculty member each year.

"I am honored to receive this award," said Henshaw. "Language instruction is my passion, and being recognized for what you love to do is very special."

### Lilya Kaganovsky publishes new work on Soviet cinema



**Lilya Kaganovsky**, director and professor of Comparative and World Literature, and professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, has published "The Voice of Technology: Soviet Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1928-1935" (Indiana University Press, 2018).

As cinema industries around the globe adjusted to the introduction of synch-sound technology, the Soviet Union was also shifting culturally, politically, and ideologically from the heterogeneous film industry of the 1920s to the centralized industry of the 1930s, and from the avant-

garde to Socialist Realism.

Kaganovsky explores the history, practice, technology, ideology, aesthetics, and politics of the transition to sound within the context of larger issues in Soviet media history. The author argues that the coming of sound changed the Soviet cinema industry by making audible, for the first time, the voice of State power, directly addressing the Soviet viewer, thus producing and imposing the "Soviet Voice."

To learn more about the book, visit: [www.iupress.indiana.edu/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=809139](http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/product_info.php?products_id=809139)

### Professor Anke Pinkert receives IPRH Fellowship



**Anke Pinkert**, associate professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, is one of three recipients of an IPRH (Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities) New Horizons Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for 2018.

Pinkert's research project is titled, "Remembering 1989: Future Archives of Public Protest and Assembly."

Her areas of research include Modern German culture, literature, and film; Holocaust studies; memory and affect; post-communist transnational studies; Humanities as field, theory, and practice; educational philosophy; and mass incarceration. She was previously named an IPRH Humanities Fellow for academic year 2012-2013 for her project, "Transforming the Humanities through Higher Education in Prison."

Pinkert was honored by the IPRH at a ceremony on campus at the Levis Faculty Center held on May 3.

### Professor Robert Rushing receives campus-wide undergraduate teaching award



This spring the LAS Awards Committee has chosen **Robert Rushing**, professor of Comparative and World Literature, as a recipient of the LAS Dean's Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

Each year, the college selects outstanding educators for awards in several categories. The nomination process begins early in the year, and a

committee recommends recipients to the dean of the college.

Nominators for Rushing remarked on his effectiveness and professionalism in his teaching, describing how his discoveries and research lead naturally into "teaching moments" for his students. He is known for encouraging students to grow in their new language rather than simply memorize.

Rushing's research interests include 20th- and 21st-century Italian literature; contemporary Italian fiction; Italian film; critical and interpretive theory, especially psychoanalysis; popular culture; comparative literary studies; genre.

He is the author of "Descended from Hercules: Biopolitics and the Muscled Male Body on Screen" (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), which was the winner of the American Association for Italian Studies Film/Media book prize, and "Resisting Arrest: Detective Fiction and Popular Culture" (New York: Other Press, 2007).

### Professor Dov Weiss wins National Jewish Book Award



**Dov Weiss'** book, *Pious Irreverence, Confronting God in Rabbinic Judaism*, won the Jewish Book Council's National Jewish Book Award in the category of Scholarship. Weiss' book was chosen from among four finalists in the Scholarship category.

"Pious Irreverence, Confronting God in Rabbinic Judaism" was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 2016. To learn more about this

award-winning book, visit: [www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15604.html](http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15604.html).

Weiss is an assistant professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion. He received a PhD in the History of Judaism from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 2011. His research interests include Ancient Judaism, Rabbinic Thought and Literature, Medieval Judaism, History of Jewish Theology, Jewish Biblical Interpretation, and Modern Jewish Thought.

The Jewish Book Council, founded in 1925 and re-organized in 1994 as a non-profit corporation, is the only organization in the organized American Jewish community whose sole purpose is the promotion of Jewish books.

### Two SLCL professors receive Beckman awards



Professors **Melissa Bowles** and **Angeliki Tzanetzou** are recipients of an Arnold O. Beckman Award, selected by the Campus Research Board for projects of special distinction.

Bowles, Associate Head and Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, was designated for her research project, "Instructed Heritage Language Acquisition." Her research interests include classroom second language acquisition, heritage language acquisition, and language testing and assessment.

Tzanetzou, associate professor and director of Graduate Studies for the Department of the Classics, was designated for her project, "Mothers' Toil: Motherhood and the Body Politic in Athenian Drama." Her areas of specialization include Greek drama, Greek political theory, gender, and religion.

In 1980, Dr. and Mrs. Arnold O. Beckman initiated the Beckman Research Endowment with a major gift to the Campus Research Board and a challenge to the U of I to develop matching private support.

### Nikelly Annual Lecture in Modern Greek

Professor **Andreas Lyberatos** of Panteion University in Athens, Greece, gave the annual Dr. Arthur G. Nikelly Annual Lecture in Modern Greek Studies on April 17 in the Foreign Languages Building.

Titled "A Balkan Time? Timekeeping Practices and Attitudes toward Time in Southeastern Europe (16th-early 20thc.)," the speaker addressed the belief that people in Southeastern Europe have had and still have attitudes towards time which differ from those of namely the central and western parts of Europe.

The annual lecture was established in 2013 in honor of the memory of the late Dr. Arthur G. Nikelly, a clinical psychologist and associate professor of health sciences who began his career at the U of I in 1959.

### SLCL and Undergraduate Research Week

Students from the SLCL gave presentations in the Atrium of the Foreign Languages Building April 19 as part of Undergraduate Research Week. About 25 students in SLCL 200's "The Human Experience" course, taught by Dr. Judith Pintar (seated in photo, in purple sweater, talking to students), gave a presentation titled "Evading the Uncanny Valley: Programming honest chatbots." Her students built on the work of prior years' students to collaborate on an artificial intelligence (AI) interface, a "chatbot." Their challenge was to avoid the unpleasant sensation experienced by people who interact with bots, when the bot seems to be human but then misses the mark. The students tried to create a bot that's honest about its botness, interacting in a human-like way, but never pretending to be human.

In the day's second presentation, Anqi Hu shared her research project, "The cross-linguistic interpretation and use of the count/mass distinction." Hu is working with professor Tania Ionin and graduate student Sea Hee Choi, funded by an award from the SLCL Undergraduate Research Initiative.



## Washington University expert on religion, politics gives annual Thulin Lecture in Religion



**R. Marie Griffith**, the director of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics at Washington University in St. Louis, discussed political and religious disagreements surrounding sex when she delivered the annual Majorie Hall Thulin Lecture in Religion at Spurlock Museum on campus April 12.

Griffith, whose lecture was titled “Sex and American Christianity: The Religious Divides that Fractured a Nation,” is a frequent media

commentator and public speaker on current issues pertaining to religion and politics, including the changing profile of American evangelicals and ongoing conflicts over gender, sexuality and marriage.

In her lecture, she reviewed political and religious disagreements among American Christians during the past 100 years, including debates about such issues as birth control, censorship, interracial marriage, sex education, abortion, sexual harassment, and LGBTQ rights.

Griffith received a PhD in religion from Harvard University, and she taught at Princeton University and Harvard before moving to Washington University in 2011. She is the editor of the journal *Religion & Politics*, a project of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics. In 2015, she was appointed as a speaker in the Distinguished Lectureship Program of the Organization of American Historians.

Her latest book, “Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians

and Fractured American Politics,” published in December 2017, looks at the century of religious conflict that produced the current culture wars.

Her previous books include “God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission,” which examined the practices and perceptions of contemporary evangelical women, and “Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity,” which explored the history of Christian-influenced attitudes and practices in modern America, culminating in the evangelical diet and fitness movement.

The Thulin Lecture in Religion is named for Marjorie Hall Thulin, a 1931 graduate of the University of Illinois. She enjoyed a successful career in advertising and published poetry and children’s literature, in addition to editing a book on the history of Glencoe, Ill. Mrs. Thulin wanted students to understand how religion grows and functions in a complex society, especially Christianity in America. Through her endowment, the religion department brings an internationally known scholar of religion and contemporary culture to campus.

Mrs. Thulin passed away on June 28, 2009. She was 98 years young. 

