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“It is not enough to send students into the world knowing particular technical skills or methods that will very soon be outdated.”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.”

“WORDS MATTER”: SLCL GRADUATION 2018
Give to the School
Please consider investing in the future of the School through a gift designated for either 1) the SLC 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 in the SLC departments or programs. Your gift is most appreciated! Visit our website slcl.illinois.edu and click “Give to SLC” in the upper right-hand corner. For a snapshot of SLC in numbers, please see our brochure which describes the scope of our School and why we call ourselves the “Gateway to a Global Learning Experience.” Go to www.slcl.illinois.edu/brochure and click on the image to see how the SLCL contributes to the academic mission of the University of Illinois.

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.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Last month, the website of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences published an interview of Professor Silvina Montrul, a member of our School’s faculty and a renowned specialist in bilingualism and second language acquisition (http://go.las.illinois.edu/Montrul18). In the course of the conversation, Professor Montrul mentioned the University Language Academy, a program she founded in 2010 and described as one of her proudest achievements. The Academy provides an invaluable service to parents and children by promoting the learning of a second language in childhood and helping heritage speakers maintain their language. In addition to Spanish classes, the Academy offers summer camps in Greek and Latin for students aged 9 to 17 thanks to the Department of the Classics. The piece featuring Professor Montrul gives me an opportunity to highlight the multiple ways in which the School of Literatures, Cultures, & Linguistics serves local communities through outreach and public engagement. Many of our faculty and students use their knowledge of languages and cultures to address the educational and linguistic needs of a broad spectrum of individuals in Central Illinois, including K-12 students, incarcerated people, and immigrant and refugee families, whether by teaching English, translating official documents, or volunteering in local institutions and organizations in need of interpretive services.

The School’s Intensive Foreign Language Instruction Program (IFLIP) provides courses to hundreds of teenage and adult learners during the winter and summer sessions. This summer, IFLIP classes enrolled more than 250 participants in fifteen courses at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels in a wide range of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Italian, Korean, Latin, Russian, and Spanish. Previous issues of this newsletter have highlighted the accomplishments of faculty and students involved in the promotion of public service and civic responsibility. The limited space of this letter only allows me to share two prominent examples of these activities.

Professor Ann Abbott (Spanish and Portuguese) has been repeatedly recognized for her space of this letter only allows me to share two prominent examples of these activities.

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

By Rick Partin

Like a lot of students at the University of Illinois in the late 60’s, Terry Collier, who was pursuing a major in Spanish, began to question the purpose of what he was studying for was relevant, given those tumultuous times.

Today, he recalls, “Vietnam war protests were the major campus theme. There were almost daily protests and demonstrations against the war. There was administrative crackdown on activities when it was believed the door was too far 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 translation or interpreter/translator 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 Spait 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 US 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 5 to 8. 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.”

SUMMER 2018
School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This newsletter is published biannually by the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is produced by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Office of Communications and Marketing. Suggestions and correspondence may be sent to the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics:

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For a snapshot of SLC in numbers, please see our brochure which describes the scope of our School and why we call ourselves the “Gateway to a Global Learning Experience.” Go to www.slcl.illinois.edu/brochure and click on the image to see how the SLCL contributes to the academic mission of the University of Illinois.
Mr. Ebel does not wish to go to Washington

But he learned a lot about the political process, himself, and what he most values

by Rick Parlin

I 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’ 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 best part in that he could “sell 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, 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 his fellow citizens: “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, campaign 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 better 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 so 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.”

Department of French and Italian organizes photo exhibition of 168 French protestors

The Department of French and Italian organized a photo exhibit entitled “Amour de Ma Mère (“At the Heart of May”),” 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 Syrinx Productions featuring 43 previously unpublished images of the May 1968 protests taken by acclaimed photographer Philippe Gras and discovered after his death in 2007.

Professor Francesco Paretti was instrumental in putting together the three-day exhibit, and will address fundamental questions of art and architectural history such as site 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 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 monument-making across an entire century, outlining a consistent cultural policy that stretched back to the time of Durer. In so doing, Rem advanced a radical argument that 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.getty.edu.

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

In March the Columbia University Press recently launched a book series titled “How to Read Chinese Literature,” in collaboration with the work of one of its general editors, Zong-qi Cai, professor of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois.

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 monographs covering all major literary genres, with non-Chinese students and scholars as their target readers.

The series is aimed at bridging the gap between learning and teaching of non-Chinese students and scholars alike 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.


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. “Regarding how to 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.
Professor Anthony Antugostakis co-edits new book, “Epic Heroes on Screen”

Anthony Antugostakis, professor of Classics, has co-edited (with Jaroslav Rasici 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 cinema and the ancient world and heroes and heroines—from the mythical heroes and heroines in various forms to famous leaders of the Greek and Roman worlds. Films and television from Homer’s The Iliad and The Iliad of Homer (The Iliad of the Odyssey) to the 2018 film Wonder Woman were previously marginalized or silenced. The third offers examples of the examination of the hero in literature; contemporary Italian fiction; Italian film; critical and interpretive theory; especially psychoanalytic theory; popular culture; comparative literary studies; genre.


Professor Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz publishes new work on Hindu narrative tradition

Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, assistant professor of Religion, has published a book titled “Revisiting 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 SvasthaniRatakatha (SVK), one of Nepal’s best-known and most-loved/litten to narrative traditions. The SVK is a centuries-old Hindu devotional tradition dedicated to the goddesses Svasthani and, at times, 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/revisiting-the-goddess-9780190994116?view=us&ac=0&cid=0&cv=0

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. Yet 8,000 Moroccan fought as General Franco’s side in the 1930s.

What brought these strange bedfellows together? Calderwood argues that a shared fascist ideology serves as the legacy of medieval Muslim Iberia, known as Al-Andalus. This legacy helped to justify Spain’s colonization of Morocco and to define the Moroccan political cultural tradition that evolved. Drawing on a rich archive of Spanish, Arabic, French, and Caralan sources, Calderwood reconstructs the political career of al-Andalus, showing how shared pasts between them provide new perspectives on divergent contemporary ideologies, including Spanish fascism and Moroccan nationalism. For more about the book: www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog. php?isbn=9780674908327

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’s 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 film industry’s role in constructing women and femininity within the Israeli context. The book includes a foreword by Girls on Film, an important figure in Israeli women’s cinema, and an afterword by cinema studies scholar Shaislug, who explores the book’s implications for the study of gender in film.


Professor Anke Pinkert receives IPRH Fellowship

Anke Pinkert, associate professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, is one of three recipients of an AH (Harry Higgins Program for Research in the Humanities) New Horizons Summer Faculty Research Fellowship for 2018. Pinkert’s book is titled “Remembering 1989: Future Archives of Public Protest and Assembly.” Her areas of research include Modern German culture, literature, and film; Holocaust studies; 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 2017-2018 in her project, “Transforming the Humanities through Higher Education in Prison.” Pinkert was honored by the IPRH at a ceremony on campus at the Lewis Center for Held on May 3.

Two SLCL professors receive Bekman awards

Professor Melissa Bowles and Angelica Tamayo 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, “Interpreting Heritage Language Acquisition.” Her research interests include classroom second language acquisition, heritage language acquisition, and language testing and assessment. Tamayo, associate professor and director of Graduate Studies for the Department of the Classics, was designated for her project, “Mother’s Tong: 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 UI to 1 to develop matching private support.

Nikky Annual Lecture in Modern Greek

Professor Andreas Lybarotas of Panteion University in Athens, Greece, gave the annual Dr. Arthur G. Nikky 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 toward 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. Nikky, a clinical psychologist and associate professor of health sciences who began his career at the UI in 1959.

SLCL and Undergraduate Research Week

Students from the SLCL gave presentations in the Atrium of the Foreign Languages Building titled “Evolving the Day: From 1989: Future Archives of Public Protest and Assembly.” Her areas of specialization include Greek drama, Greek political theory, gender, and religion.

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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 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.