

Department of World Languages and Cultures

Fall 2021

THE WORLD AWAITS!

Puerto Rico Calls

The sound of the coqui in the evenings, the palms on the beautiful beaches, the rich musical traditions that blend Taino, African, and European traditions and...the food! It is not too early to begin planning for the spring 2022 trip to Puerto Rico. Dr. Mohamed will lead a group for a ten day trip to do service work with Techos Pa' Mi Gente, an organization that works to ensure safe housing on the island. In addition, you will sightsee and explore the island's fascinating Afro-Caribbean culture.

While some students might choose to take the trip to complete their Beyond The Gates credit, others can join to practice their Spanish and have a meaningful and fun travel experience. The group will depart after graduation in May. Prices and exact dates and details will be announced soon. If you are interested, contact Dr. Mohamed at smohamed@mercyhurst.edu. You do not have to be a Spanish minor or major to join the trip; heritage speakers of Spanish are strongly encouraged to consider this opportunity.



¡Bomba con Buya!



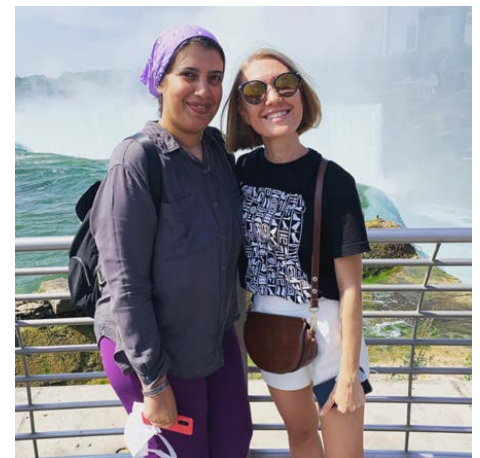
Join us for a celebration of Puerto Rican music, dance, and culture as the Chicago-based group, Bomba con Buya, comes to Mercyhurst on October 7-8. They will give a presentation and workshop on Thursday, October 7, at 7:00 in the Taylor little Theater. On Friday evening at 7:00, they will perform again at the Martin Luther King Center in Erie. Both events are free and open to the public.

Bomba con Buya aims to preserve and advance bomba. Developed during the 18th century among the island's African descendants, bomba is Puerto Rico's oldest surviving music and dance form. Buya means 'good spirit' in Taino, and the group strives to embody this idea. The group released Buya Live in 2015 and Southern Sessions in 2019.

These events are sponsored by Hafenmaier College, MIAC, the Martin Luther King Center, the office for Mission Integration, and the Student Life, as well as by a generous donation from alum Sara Jaecks '04.

Finally...Fulbrights return to campus

After teaching remotely from their home countries, Fulbrights Nada Soliman (Arabic) and Kristina Smagina (Russian) finally touched down in Erie in late August. For the first time, Fulbright allowed FLTAs to have a second year on their grant, in order to make up for the year spent teaching via Zoom during Covid. Nada and Kristina are happy to meet their students in person and to experience life on campus. They have already visited Niagara Falls (see photo on right)! Kristina will be teaching Russian courses this fall and Nada will be tutoring Arabic and offering events on Egyptian culture. Both FLTAs also take courses as part of their grant, so you might see them in one of your classes. They are in a new office this year; when you get a chance, come by Preston 203 to say hello.



Language is the road map of a culture.

From Erie to the Great Wall of China: How I Went From Graduating Mercyhurst to Teaching in China for Three Years

By: Jake Braymiller '18

In April of 2018 I was one month away from finishing my undergraduate degree at Mercyhurst. I would come out of school with a dual Bachelor of Arts in Intelligence Studies and Public Health, so you'd think that would mean double the job opportunities for me! However, in reality, I felt so lost in life. I was not ready to give up life as a student and join the "real world" workforce. I craved something more exciting, more spontaneous. And just as I was coming to this realization, I received an email from a friend about a teaching opportunity in China. He told me that he had been teaching English at a school in a small city named Yangzhou and that this opportunity had opened his eyes to the world. I didn't hesitate, despite having never even left North America before. The very next day I got on the phone with the school for an interview and they told me I just needed a Teaching English as a Foreign Language Certification (TEFL), and I was hired. So, I took a course online and, three months later, I was on a plane to China. The rest was history.

The truly exciting reason I moved was to get out of my comfort zone and experience something new. But my biggest fear was the language barrier. I knew absolutely no Mandarin whatsoever. I took Spanish at Mercyhurst, and my experience with Chinese was so limited that I had to Google Translate how to say "Hello." I was ready to try, though. What I'll say about trying your hand at a language completely foreign to you is two things: the best way to learn is to speak with native speakers, and you'll want to start your learning with the essentials. I began studying a few months prior to leaving and I first learned how to converse about daily life needs, things like numbers, colors, food/drinks, important phrases (how much is this? where is the bathroom? etc.). Starting small saved me in the beginning when just going to a restaurant seemed daunting. Then once I met some local coworkers and made friends, my conversation skills got to the next level just by using the language daily. My listening rapidly improved and I slowly gained a much stronger ability. Speaking with native speakers is such a wonderful immersive learning experience that can make you much more confident.



Jake Braymiller in his Chinese classroom.

*"Speaking with native speakers
is such a
wonderful immersive experience"*

The teaching itself was such a joy too! I worked in a school with students ages four through twelve. The environment was completely English immersive, aka, no Chinese allowed in class by the teacher or student. As I was teaching younger students, I did not need a high English language knowledge of complex grammar or literature. I mostly got to teach simple language and phrases each week. However, I really loved the job because I got to play games with the kids and grow as a person along the way. The classes were a good size (14 students) and I felt like I was able to make a difference in their lives. Plus, I won't lie to you; the salary was a huge bonus. In China you can make up to \$4,000/month as an English teacher, yet the cost of living is significantly cheaper. For example, rent for a two-bedroom apartment is roughly 300 USD a month! Therefore, overall, the experience there as a teacher was very positive.

Lastly, working in Asia opened the world to me in a way I never imagined. I visited places I'd only ever heard about, such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, Shanghai, and many others. Additionally, I have been able to travel to over 11 different countries in the Eastern Hemisphere, including incredible Asian cities such as Seoul, Bangkok, Manila, Kuala Lumpur, and beautiful sights like Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Ha Long Bay in Vietnam. I always like to say that there are two forms of learning, through instruction or experience, with the latter being one of my favorite things in the world. So, if you're feeling lost in life like I was, traveling can make all the difference!

Check out Jake's Youtube channel
<https://youtube.com/c/JakeBraymiller>



Welcome, French and Spanish Conversation Assistants!



The Department of World Languages and the International Student Office have joined forces to pilot a new Conversation Assistant Program. For this program, international students are hired by the Office of International Affairs to work with their American peers who are studying foreign languages. Conversation Assistants offer tutoring, conversation tables, and even assist with communicative activities in the classroom. They also have opportunities throughout the semester to provide different cultural experiences for foreign language learning students. Through this program, we hope to provide MU students with the opportunity to make cross-cultural connections, expand their horizons, and, of course, develop their language skills by communicating with native speakers in the target language. Additionally, we hope to provide international students with more opportunities to connect with their peers. Our pilot presently works with Spanish and French but our goal is to expand to our Russian, Chinese, and Arabic programs. This semester, the Department of World Languages would like to welcome (left to right in photos) Yisela Reyes (Spanish), Valentine Budin (French), Alessandra Kopper (Spanish), and Sofia Carrizosa (Spanish). Times and dates for conversation group in "Important Dates", below.

Fall Get-Together

Come and meet the new (and old!) language majors and minors at our annual fall get-together. Faculty Dining Room (near the Grotto in the basement of Egan), October 28, 4:00.

Food and beverages!

Language Scholarship Updates

Juniors pursuing a major or a minor in Spanish may now apply for the Karen C. Williams Spanish Scholarship. This \$1000 grant in honor of our former Spanish professor who passed away in 2019 is presented each fall. Deadline for applications is Nov. 1, 2021. For more information, contact Dr. Edwards or Dr. Mohamed.

Meanwhile, the Vivetta Petronio scholarship for study abroad was awarded to French minor, Madeleine Rowland, who will study in France for spring semester. Congratulations, Madeleine! That scholarship will be available again for the 2022-23 academic year, with a deadline in early spring semester. Contact Dr. Boudreau at dboudreau@mercyhurst.edu for more information.

Flamenco as a Practice of Resilience

In collaboration with the Dance department, we are hosting dancer and educator Alice Blumenfeld (see photo of Blumenfeld performing at right) for an evening of Flamenco. Flamenco is a traditional form of music, song, and dance of southern Spain, often associated with the Roma people. Blumenfeld's presentation, "Flamenco as a Practice of Resilience" will take place on Wednesday, September 29, at 7:00 in Hirt 212 and will include an introduction to the history and practice of flamenco as well as an opportunity for participants to move a little! Blumenfeld will also be working with dance students to choreograph and stage the fall ballet. This event is free and open to the public. Vaccinations and masks required!



Important Dates

Mondays 3:00 and Wednesdays at 6:30 in Student Union, Spanish Conversation group

Wednesdays at 3:00 and Fridays at 5:00 in tent in front of Ryan Hall, French Conversation Group

September 29, 7:00 Hirt 212 "Flamenco as a Practice of Resistance"

October 7, 7:00 Bomba con Buya workshop Taylor Little Theater

October 8, 7:00 Bomba con Buya concert, MLK Center, 312 Chestnut

Oct. 28 4:00 Department Fall Get Together, Egan Faculty Dining Room

Oct. 28, Day of Action, "I Stand with Immigrants" (see Dr. Edwards)

Nov. 1 Deadline for Karen C. Williams Spanish Scholarship



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