

Department of World Languages and Cultures

Fall 2022

Twenty Years of Fulbright on Campus

This fall marks 20 years since Mercyhurst began hosting Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants. It all began with an email from the Institute of International Education (the organization that manages the Fulbright program) asking if we would like to host a TA from Turkey. Our first FLTA was Ulviye Sener, a young woman who taught Turkish 101 and 102. FLTAs provide 20 hours a week of teaching and tutoring in their language while taking at least four university courses. Ulviye decided to complete a Masters degree in Special Education during her year with us. She went on to teach and study on the subject of dyslexia in Turkey and she has published several articles with Dr. Phil Belfiore, her professor of Special Education here, in a professional relationship that has lasted two decades.

Since then, we have hosted FLTAs from Turkey, France, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Mexico, Spain, Russia, and Taiwan. More than 30 FLTAs have worked with us and created unique opportunities for our language students as well as lasting relationships. FLTAs run formal classes, offer conversation groups and pronunciation practice, and host cultural events - from burning Maslenitza dolls in the fire pit to celebrate spring to sharing traditional recipes at an iftar during Ramadan. Former FLTAs have written countless letters of recommendation for our students, welcomed students to their home countries, and provided essential support to the new FLTAs just starting their work with us.

This year we have three FLTAs with us. Kristina Smagina (Russia) returns for her third year with us. Samira Bahadi (Morocco) will arrive in October to support Arabic classes. Sharon Nien - our first Taiwanese FLTA - is teaching Mandarin classes and working with Asian Studies program. Make sure you welcome them and take advantage of this unique program.



Sharon Nien, our new Fulbright from Taiwan



Kristina Smagina our returning FLTA from Russia

Mercyhurst students are Fulbrighters, too!

The Fulbright program offers opportunities for US students and faculty to travel and study abroad, too. This year Allison Siegmann is applying for a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Mexico for 2023-24. The process includes completing a thorough application, with a language assessment as well as personal statement, and an essay on a project she would like to engage in while teaching abroad. She will have a campus interview and then will submit all her documents to Fulbright. Preliminary selection happens in January and then final selection in April. If selected, Allison will work for a year supporting an English language classroom in Mexico, and sharing her culture with her new students.

Allison joins several recent language alums as a Fulbright competitor, including Maya Bauer (selected, Ireland), Lucy Belleau (campus nominee), and Cole Lowe (selected, Argentina).

If you would like to apply for a Fulbright to study or teach abroad, reach out to Dr. Justin Ross, jross@mercyhurst.edu, who handles all prestigious awards at Mercyhurst. He will share information on the Fulbright awards that are available and lead you through the process.

What we did on our summer vacation

Hanna Good ('23) studied in Valparaiso, Chile this summer (see photo at right below), having adventures and getting credits toward her degree in Spanish Education.

Libby Koyn (Spanish/Intel '23) completed an internship at the United Nations this summer. She is now studying abroad in Barcelona, Spain for the fall semester. Look for photos of her experience upcoming on our Instagram page [mercyhurst_world_languages](#).

Dr. Katie Duda traveled to the Czech Republic and Portugal.

Dr. Sherez Mohamed gave a paper on Arabic-Spanish bilinguals in Puerto Rico, at the Habilnet Conference on Harmonious Bilinguals, in Frankfurt, Germany.

Seven students accompanied Dr. Mohamed on a service trip to Puerto Rico, where they worked with Techos Pa Mi Gente, helping with reconstruction efforts that are still needed after Hurricane Maria. The group also traveled to the rainforest and the beach, learned to dance bomba, and explored Afrolatino culture on the island. The group included Allison Siegmann, Julia Stranges, Madison Rogers, Kaylee Moffit, Elizabeth Nestor, Madison Jukkola, and Ellie Chuzie (see photo below left).

Dr. Alice Edwards gave a paper in Dublin, Ireland, at the Carlow University Round Table in Mercy Higher Education.

Allison Siegmann (Spanish '23) and Reagen Soledad (Spanish minor '23) helped at the Amerimasala Multicultural Festival in Erie in July. They staffed a book tent for K-8 children (see photo, below center).



Mercyhurst students in Ponce, Puerto Rico, with Dr. Mohamed (right) and her husband, Ricardo (left).



Reagen Soledad helps students choose books at the Amerimasala Festival.



Hanna Good visits Cajon del Maipo in Chile this summer.

International Film Festival: October 7-8

Join us on October 7 and 8 for our first International Film Festival sponsored by the department, with generous funding from the Hafenmaier College and a donation from alum Sara Jaecks. It will take place in Taylor Little Theater and is free and open to the public.

October 7

7:00 Hacia el Sol - Towards the Sun (US/UK. Run time 20 minutes) Introduction: Dr. Alice Edwards, Professor of Spanish

8:00 The Earth is Blue as an Orange (Ukraine. Run time 1.14) Introduction: Dr. Katie Duda, Assistant Professor of Russian

October 8

1:00 Theeb (Jordan/UAE/UK/Qatar. Run time 1.40) Introduction: Dr. Seyma Akyol, Assistant Professor of Political Science

3:00 Petite Maman (France. Run time 1.12) Introduction: Dr. Doug Boudreau, Associate Professor of French

5:00 Dying to Survive (China. Run time 1.56) Introduction: Dr. Meng Wang, Assistant Professor of Mandarin

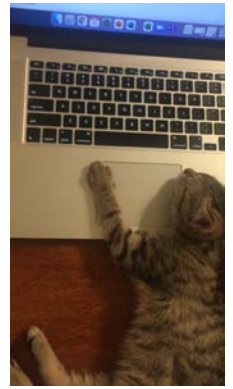
7:30 Official Competition (Spain. Run time 1.54) Introduction: Dr. Kris Gossett, Associate Dean, Walker School of Business

Faculty Spotlight: Meet Our Arabic Professor



Dr. Muna Al Shawafi

"My name is Muna Al-Shawafi. I came to the United States eight years ago to follow my passion for education and learning. I believe that learning Arabic can create many exciting opportunities for my students, so I am dedicated to ensuring that my students make the most out of their Arabic language learning journey. With my M.A. in Bilingual Education and Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, I am happy to have been contributing to the growth of the Arabic Program at Mercyhurst University for the last two years. In my free time, I love to read, learn new languages, and entertain my cat - Zayna."



Zayna, correcting Arabic papers

Alum Spotlight: Matt Yoch (Arabic '17)



Matt Yoch in the United Arab Emirates

"I graduated from Mercyhurst back in 2017 as an alumni of both the Intelligence Studies program and the Department of World Languages. In early 2022, an international business consulting firm reached out to me concerning a position in their Dubai office with the Forensic & Litigation Consulting team, which is their business intelligence unit. I moved to the UAE in July of this year and am now a permanent resident in the Emirates. Projects have spanned asset tracing, due diligence investigations, and strategic intelligence projects, all utilizing multilingual open source intelligence collection methods. It took a while to find my right fit after graduating with a niche double major, but I am really enjoying my position here so far in the Middle East."

Teaching ESL in the US and abroad

Join us on Tuesday, September 27, 4:30-5:30, in Mercy Heritage Hall, for "Teaching English as a Second Language", a panel discussion on the role of the English as a Second Language teacher in US schools, the greater community, and abroad. Education majors can learn how you can be certified to teach ESL with an add-on endorsement of just five courses, and how this can enhance your teaching profile. Others might want to add a six-credit ESL minor to use when living and teaching abroad.

Presenters include Regina Cocolin, instructor of ESL at Mercyhurst; Cathy Whitmire, Education Manager/ESL instructor at the Multicultural Community Resource Center, and Alexandra Kleckner, Spanish Ed/ESL alum, Director of ESL in the Harborcreek School District.

We hope to see you there!

Important Dates

September 27 4:30-6:00 Panel on Teaching ESL, Mercy Heritage Hall

October 7-8 International Film Festival, Taylor Little Theater

October 27 Language in Motion visits the Carpe Diem Academy (see Dr. Edwards for more information)

November 1 Deadline to apply for the Karen Williams Scholarship in Spanish. Open to all junior Spanish majors and minors. \$1000.

Nov 2 "I Stand With Immigrants" Day of Action. Check Instagram for more info on how you can be involved.

Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going. - Rita Mae Brown



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