

Department of World Languages and Cultures

Spring 2021

American Sign Language at Mercyhurst

The Department of World Languages and Cultures reinstated American Sign Language as a language option in 2019. Dr. Boudreau credits student demand, particularly from the Education department, with the push to offer the class. Presently, we offer ASL 101 and 102. Dr. Boudreau notes the popularity of the courses: "It's exciting to be able to offer this opportunity." The classes are taught by Dominic Rios, who shares his thoughts here:

"I learned American Sign Language at the University of Pittsburgh. I was taking classes with a major in Psychology and Special Education and, apart from thinking ASL was interesting, I thought that sign language would be an extra tool in my resume. I did an internship at Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and fell in love with Deaf culture. I'd like people to know that I was fortunate to have taken this course for many reasons but mostly that it was the tool that helped me get the job that I actually love doing.

"First and foremost, students should know that American Sign Language and knowledge of Deaf culture can be utilized across many fields of study. Simple knowledge of ADA laws, technologies, and public practices helps students be an asset to their field of practice. Learning ASL and understanding Deaf culture helps in medical fields, including physical and occupational therapies, dentistry, psychology, and audiology. For these fields, you will learn the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) laws, especially pertaining to a Deaf individual's rights to an interpreter, who pays for the services, and how to use a Remote Video Relay system when interpreters are not available. In the education field, ASL is important for teachers of Deaf individuals, ASL interpretation, early childhood interventions, early childhood education (baby signs), special education, life skills education, and speech and language pathology. While I do not teach about autism, there are some cases where American Sign Language is used to aid in communication with individuals on the Autism Spectrum. And really, any field can benefit from ASL, as Deaf people are involved in every walk of life. Knowing the culture and language will be an asset to any Mercyhurst student."

Interested students can contact Mr. Rios at drios@mercyhurst.edu or can talk to Dr. Boudreau about the courses, dboudreau@mercyhurst.edu.



Reese Earns Language Scholarship

Elizabeth Reese (left) is our first recipient of the Karen C. Williams Scholarship for Spanish. Liz is a junior double major, combining Intelligence Studies with a contract major in World Languages: Spanish and Arabic. The scholarship, named after the late Spanish professor, provides \$1,000 to a junior Spanish major or minor who has shown success in and dedication to the field. The scholarship was made possible by a generous donation from Dr. Williams' parents, Mary Ann and Richard Christensen, as well as donations made by alums, students, and colleagues. Rising juniors pursuing a Spanish major or minor can apply in the fall of 2021. Congratulations, Liz!

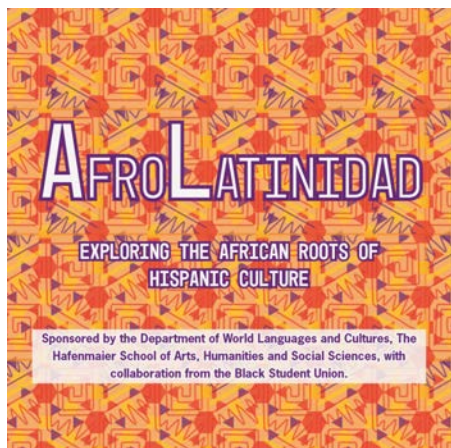
French Study Abroad Scholarship Available

As travel becomes easier, students interested in studying abroad to study French should consider applying for the Vivetta Petronio Scholarship. Dr. Petronio was a beloved French and Italian professor at Mercyhurst and was a longtime chair of the department.

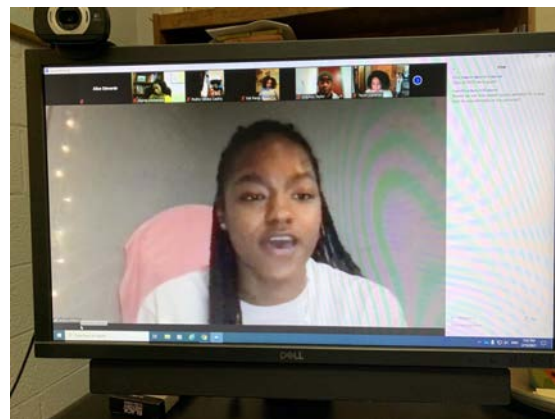
The scholarship, funded by one of her former students, offers \$4,000 for a full-time undergraduate student (a rising sophomore, junior, or senior) who has plans to study abroad in a country where French is the main or secondary language (not including Canada). The program may be for university credit, an internship, self-directed/ designed language immersion, etc. Programs may be any length of time (four-week minimum) during the coming academic year. Students who demonstrate financial need and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0. may apply. See Dr. Boudreau for information.

*A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions -
Oliver Wendell Holmes*

Celebrating Black History Month



The Department observed Black History Month with a week of events focused on Afrolatinidad. Dr. Mohamed hosted a panel that engaged in a conversation about Black experience in the Americas. The panel included Janiece Withers (pictured at right) president of Black Students for Unity, and alum Grayson Taylor, as well as former Mercyhurst World Learning student Pedro Valdez Castro and social worker Kat Pérez from the Dominican Republic. We also hosted a movie night, watching the 2014 Venezuelan film *Pelo Malo*. The week was capped off with an invited lecture by Dr. Eva Michelle Wheeler, from Oakwood University, speaking on "Sangre Negra: Language and Race in the Global Telling of Black Stories."



... and Women's History Month

International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Significant activity is witnessed worldwide as groups come together to celebrate women's achievements or rally for women's equality. Marked annually on March 8, International Women's Day (IWD) is one of the most important days of the year to:

- celebrate women's achievements
- raise awareness about women's equality
- lobby for accelerated gender parity
- fundraise for female-focused charities (from internationalwomensday.org).

IWD is an official holiday in many countries around the world. It was first celebrated in 1911 in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland on March 19. After women gained suffrage in Soviet Russia in 1917, March 8 became a national holiday there. The day was then predominantly celebrated by the socialist movement and communist countries until it was adopted by the feminist movement in about 1967. The United Nations began celebrating the day in 1977. The U.S. had historically celebrated Women's Day on the last Saturday of February, but in 1981, Congress voted to establish Women's History Month in March.

This year's theme for IWD is #ChooseToChallenge, encouraging people to challenge barriers to women's equal participation in their communities and the world. As Gloria Steinem, world-renowned feminist, journalist, and activist, once explained: "The story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist, nor to any one organization, but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights."

Language Trivia Night



Join us Thursday, March 18, at 7 p.m. for our first departmental Trivia Night! Gather a team of three to four friends to compete, but make sure you have a multi-language group, since the questions will come from the language and culture groups the department offers. Register using this link:

mhur.st/WLC-trivia

There will be prizes for the top team and best team name. Any questions? Ask Dr. Duda at kduda@mercyhurst.edu.

Important Dates

March 8: International Women's Day

March 16: Advising Day, no classes. See your advisors!

March 18, 7 p.m.: Department Trivia Night (see article at left)

March 25, 4 p.m.: Sophomore and Senior review (watch email)

April 8, 4 p.m.: Careers in Languages Zoom (see article below)

April TBA: Oral Proficiency Exams for senior majors (see Dr. Edwards to schedule)

April 23: Dia de San Jordi (Catalunya) - give a book and a flower to your special person!

May 3, 5 p.m.: Phi Sigma Iota, induction (watch email for invites)

What's Next? Careers in World Languages

On April 8, 4 p.m., we will be Zooming with folks from all over the world - alums and friends - as they share where their language studies have taken them professionally. Join us to hear their stories, ask questions, and get ideas that might help you find a path after graduation. Below, you'll find additional stories from other alums about their career journeys:

Chris Irwin (Spanish Education '98)

"After teaching for several years, I got a second bachelor's degree in health and safety management. Now I work with adults, teaching them safety laws and how to use different types of equipment to protect themselves in construction sites and manufacturing plants. My Spanish actually got me in the door for this job, as they were looking for someone to teach these classes in the language. While I primarily work with English speakers, the Spanish comes in handy all of the time. I've taught many classes in Spanish over the years. I've also traveled throughout Latin America, including to Chile, Argentina, and Brazil for training. I also interact almost weekly with our teams throughout Latin America. Just this week I was translating questions from our sales team in Argentina to our engineers here in Pittsburgh to help them deal with an issue that they need to solve there. I count my ability to speak Spanish as one of the greatest gifts I have had the pleasure of attaining in life. (It also helped me meet my fiancée, so there's that, too :))"

Eric Anibaldi (Criminal Justice, Spanish '95)

"I've been employed as a police officer for over 23 years with two different agencies. I was first hired by the Herndon, Virginia, Police Department, which is located in suburban Washington, D.C. The entire Northern Virginia area, and specifically Herndon, has very large number of Spanish-speaking persons living there. In order to effectively serve its citizen base, the Herndon Police Department desires recruits who can speak Spanish. The Spanish-speaking population there is mostly from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. There were many shifts that I worked in Herndon that I would speak more Spanish than English. After three years in Virginia, I moved to the Pittsburgh area. I've worked for the Bethel Park Police Department since 2002. While the need for Spanish speaking police officers isn't as prevalent, I am often called upon to use my language skills. It's very often interesting to see the reactions of Spanish-speaking persons when I arrive at a scene and am able to communicate with them. Their reaction is almost always one of relief. I'm proud of the skills that I obtained during my time at Mercyhurst. I would encourage anyone who is considering a similar career path to invest the time and effort to learn the Spanish language and the cultures of the persons who speak it."

Contact Dr. Mohamed for Zoom information for this event.



Ashley Sayre de Rivas (Spanish, Asian Studies)
Chef, Lavery Brewery, Erie, Pa.



JoEllen Marsh (Arabic Studies)
Lead program Director at CONNECT, Pittsburgh, Pa.



Sarah Keene (French)
Works at Peace Corps, Washington, D.C.

Department News

- Lucy Belleau (Spanish Education '21) is completing her student teaching at Fairview High School. Lucy was also nominated by the university for a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Scholarship in Spain. Congratulations!
- Dr. Edwards presented a paper at the Congreso Internacional de Literaturas y Estudios Hispánicos on March 6. Her paper was entitled "The Ghosts of Post-Memory in La resta, by Alia Trabucco Zerán."
- Professor Estremera is training for a potential Olympic appearance in Japan this summer. If he qualifies, he will be representing the Puerto Rican National Team in the steeplechase. All this while he teaches and finishes his dissertation. ¡Buena suerte, Ricardo!
- Dr. Mohamed will be giving a talk on Arabic and Spanish language contact, "Arabic-Spanish Bilinguals in Puerto Rico: An Overview," at DePauw University on April 22. In addition, she will be a guest on the Our Erie podcast on March 26, talking about linguistics and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). You can listen to the episode from wherever you access your podcasts.



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