

Department of World Languages and Cultures

Spring 2022

Exploration

Study Abroad is Back!

This spring sees the renewal of study abroad in the department, and it's about time! Liz Reese (Intel, World Languages and Cultures '22) is studying in Spain this spring. Madeleine Rowland was the recipient of the Vivetta Petronio Scholarship for study abroad in France; she used her award to study this spring in Grenoble, France. See their stories below.

In May, Dr. Mohamed will lead a group of students on a service trip to Puerto Rico. Accompanying her will be Allison Siegmann, Madison Jukkola, Ellie Chuzie, Madison Rogers, Cassie Hocket, Liz Nestor, Blanca Nieves, Julia Stranges, and Kaylee Moffit will be traveling with her. Some students will satisfy their Beyond the Gates credit with this experience.

If this sounds exciting, you can plan to join a Faculty-Led Study Abroad experience next spring with Dr. Boudreau, who will lead a group to France in May 2023. This trip will be in conjunction with Pete Zohos and Hospitality and will focus on the cuisine and culture of France. Interested students will need to sign up for the associate FSAT course and will receive 3 credits.



Liz writes: "I'm in Madrid right now and heading to Toledo tomorrow. We went to Reina Sofia and the Royal Palace today and walked around the Royal Botanical Gardens yesterday. After a day trip to Toledo, we're heading to Sevilla and will start classes next week. I am taking "Relaciones del Mundo Latino y los Estados Unidos", "Esclavitud en America Latina y el Caribe", "Traducción Español-Inglés / Inglés-Español", and "Sevilla: La Expresión de una ciudad a través de su arte".

"So far, we have gone to the Royal Cathedral in Madrid, walked around Toledo, and visited the Alcazar in Sevilla. I am also growing accustomed to the late lunches and dinners, siesta life, and have enjoyed the tapas bars in the city. We're going to Cádiz on Friday for a day trip and will also have the chance to go to Granada, Extremadura, and Aracena during the semester." Liz is seen in the photo on the left in Madrid.

Madeleine (in photo on the right, at the Musée de Grenoble) wrote with an update on her experience as well: "I am participating in the AIFS program in Grenoble, France, which means I am housed with a host family. My host family is a family of four who live in an apartment in the middle of the city. I attend classes at the Université de Grenoble, all completely in French. I've met many other students all involved in the CUEF program, which is the program for the international students, and if I'd like to talk to them, it usually has to be in French as that is the only language we have in common."

Maddie explained what she'd experienced in her first weeks in France: "I've already gone hiking in the mountains and visited a historic chateau. There are many other things to do like skiing, cheese tastings, and traveling around France. I'm very excited to see what the remaining five months have in store for me." (right, at the Musée de Grenoble).

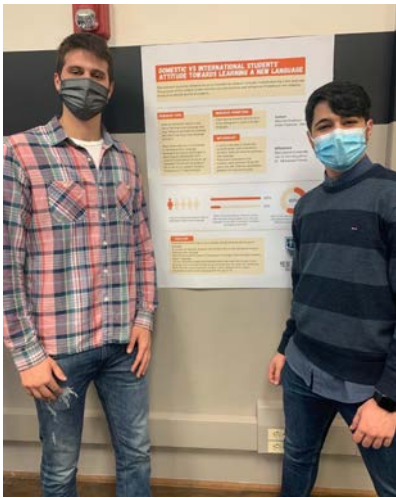
If you are interested in studying abroad, you should visit the study abroad office in Preston 101 to examine all your options. Make sure you consult your language professor all throughout the process to help you select that best site and program and choose classes. Your professor will need to sign off on the classes you take to make sure they are transferred back to Mercyhurst correctly. We strongly suggest longer experiences, like a semester or summer, and homestays, if possible, to increase your opportunities to use your language skills.

"...I urge you to travel, as far and as widely as possible. Sleep on floors, if you have to. Find out how other people live and cook. Learn from them, wherever you go." Anthony Bourdain



Examining Language Through Research

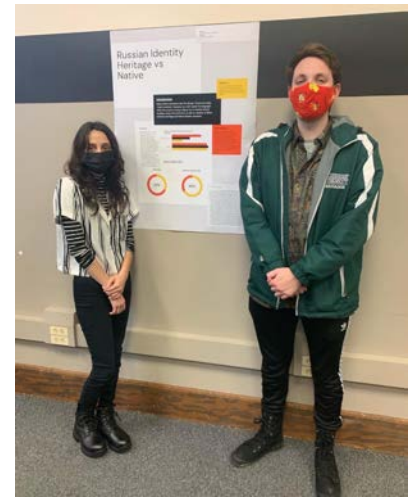
Students in WL 314 Intro to Sociolinguistics conducted and presented research projects this fall. Working in pairs, students produced original research that included "Domestic vs. International Students Attitude Toward Learning a New Language", "Bilingual Education in the United States", "Russian Identity: Heritage vs. Native Speakers", to name a few. Then they presented their work to other students, faculty, and staff in December. Dr. Mohamed shared the importance of this kind of research project: "I have students do research so they can directly examine and apply what we learn in the classroom. This allows them to see that the complex issues we examine do in fact exist. Also, having them do research leads to more critical thinking. Students are curious about an idea, and then they need to think about how to accurately examine their idea via research design. It's easy for us to assume one thing causes another, but frequently there are underlying factors that are involved. Conducting research allows students to understand this".



Hristo Plasheski and Mo Khadraoui



Grace Thompson



Fatmira Gobeljic and Jack Kregness

Join Us for Maslenitsa, a Russian Festival!

Russian Club invites all students and faculty to attend the Maslenitsa Festival to be held on campus on March 3, 3:30. Also known as "Butter Week", the festival was originally held before the onset of Lent, as a last chance to celebrate before the solemn religious holiday began, much like Carnival in other countries. Today it is often celebrated as a secular holiday, where families and friends gather to make and eat bliny (Russian crepes).

This year the Russian Club will make bliny and play games outside, but the most exciting part of the celebration on campus will occur around the firepit behind Old Main, where we will burn the traditional Maslenitsa effigy!



What is the OPI?

Every spring, senior language majors engage in an Oral Proficiency Interview as a culmination of their language education at Mercyhurst. The Interview is conducted by trained testers through the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). According to the ACTFL website, "The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, or OPI, is a live, 15–30 minute telephone conversation between a certified ACTFL tester and the candidate. It is a valid and reliable test that measures how well a person speaks a language. The procedure is standardized in order to assess global speaking ability, measuring language production holistically by determining patterns of strengths and weaknesses. Through a series of personalized questions, a sample of speech is elicited and rated against the proficiency levels described in ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 – Speaking, Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Descriptors – Speaking, or the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), depending on the type of language proficiency certification that is needed.

"The primary goal of the OPI is the efficient elicitation of a ratable sample. To be ratable, a speech sample must clearly demonstrate the highest sustained level of performance of the speaker (known as the "floor") and the level at which the speaker can no longer sustain the performance (known as the "ceiling"), over a variety of topics. The OPI resembles a conversation, but in fact, the tester follows a strictly controlled structure and protocol." (<https://www.languagetesting.com/oral-proficiency-interview-opi>)

The rating, which will appear as novice (low, mid, high), intermediate (low, mid, high), advanced (low, mid, high) or superior, can be used on job and for graduate school applications. The ratings also help the department assess if our programs are meeting their goals.

Important Dates

February 15, 4:30 Main 205 Arabic calligraphy workshop, with Nada Soliman.

February 17, 7:00: "Talking Black in America", movie and panel discussion with Dr. Mohamed.

February 22, 7:00: Department Trivia Night hosted by Dr. Duda. Prizes! Get your teams ready!

March 3, 3:30: Maslenitsa Festival! See Kristina Smagina for more info.

March 4 9-2:00 Day in World Languages for area high school students. Ask your language teachers if you can assist!

March 8 International Women's History Day (have a happy break!)

March 23. 7:00 pm. Women's History Month Poetry Reading. Join us for poetry and snacks in Laker Landing!

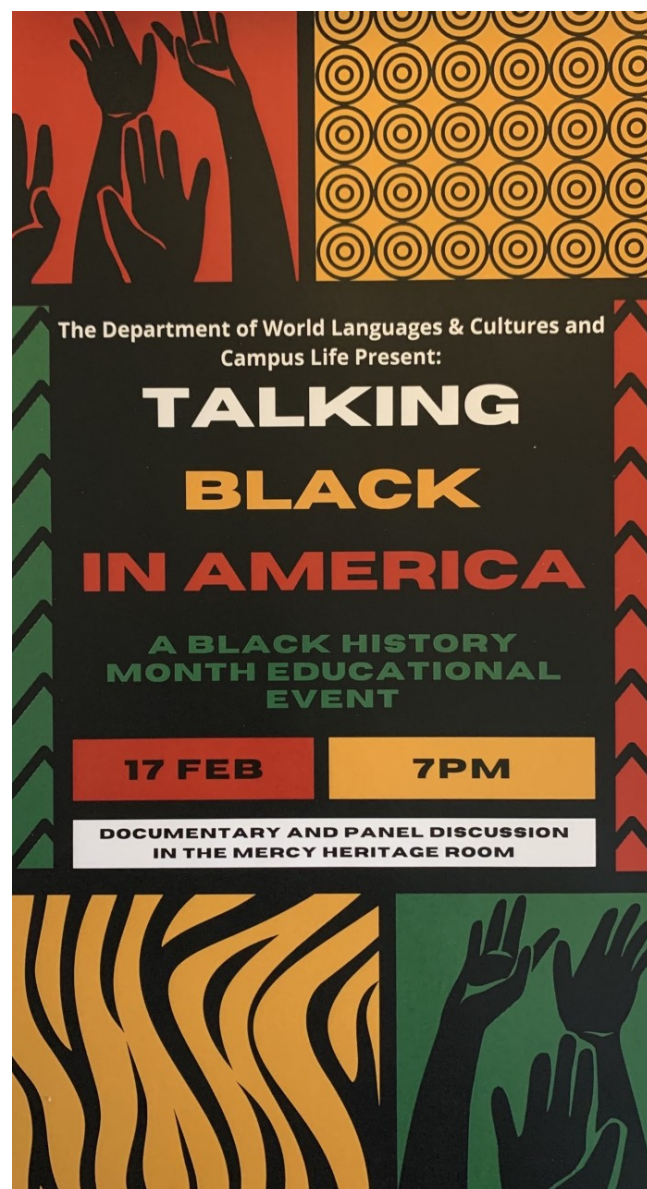
March 29 3:30 Sophomore and Senior Major Review

March TBD Spanish movie night, hosted by Span 300

April: Oral Proficiency Interviews for senior majors (see article on previous page)

May 5 Phi Sigma Iota induction - juniors and seniors, watch your inboxes!

May Puerto Rico trip departs



Pump Up Your Proficiency

You can't just rely on the classroom to get you to advanced proficiency in your language. Make sure you are finding ways to engage with your language every day, even when there's no homework. Here are some suggestions to get you to the next level:

- Use an online language learning app to give you a few extra minutes of daily practice (Dr. Boudreau likes Duolingo);
- Listen to a podcast in your language (try Radio Ambulante, in Spanish, or News in Slow Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic, Chinese);
- Music, music, music!
- French and Spanish speakers can check out www.boomalang.co to sign up for 15-30 minute conversation times with native speakers. Cost starts at \$9.50 per session, but goes down as you book more sessions. (German, Italian, and Portuguese are also available);
- Read! blogs, tweets, news, books - this is an accessible way to improve your vocabulary and cultural understanding.
- Interact with native speakers. There are native speakers of all of our languages on campus and Erie is home to folks from all over the world. Go to conversation group, even if it's not required for a class. Go out of your way to chat with people who speak the language you're trying to learn; it's intimidating but so important for honing our language skills and you'll end up with new friends. You can also volunteer at area agencies, like the Multicultural Community Resource Center or the US Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, and use your language abilities to help others. For more information about volunteer opportunities, contact Bethany Brun at bbrun@mercyhurst.edu.



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