Greetings from Elizabeth Scarlett, Professor and Chair

I hope that you will enjoy the reboot of the RLL newsletter, bringing you the latest activities and happenings in French, Italian, and Spanish at the University at Buffalo. This semester finds us busy redesigning our departmental website—to be unveiled in a few months—and ensuring the fullest contribution of our disciplines to the new UB Curriculum, which will launch in the Fall semester of 2016. It has been far from all work and no play, however, with events celebrating the 400th anniversary of Cervantes as well as the visiting musical At Buffalo that explores the 1901 Pan American Exposition from an international and domestic diversity viewpoint. Our annual Graduate Student Conference hits the five-year mark, and the Québec Big Buffalo Film Festival turned three. Thanks to the diligence and generosity of first-year Assistant to the Chair Judy Edmister, you can take a look at these pages and get in touch with the lively scholarly community of Romance Languages & Literatures at UB. Graduate and undergraduate alumni: please send us your news for the next edition!

Thanks to our Donors!

Donations do make a difference, and every little bit helps. RLL’s alumni and friends continue to give generously to our general fund, special student programming initiatives, and Study Abroad scholarships. We appreciate your support!

To contribute through our website, please go to rll.buffalo.edu/support rll

In This Issue

- Greetings from the Chair
- Meet our New Faculty
- Tales from Study Abroad
- Faculty and Student News
- Student Awards & Scholarships

March 7 2016: Hungry Italian cooking students eagerly wait to sample the class project!
Meet RLL’s New(er) Faculty: An Interview with Henry Berlin

Dany Jacob: Thank you Dr. Berlin for meeting up with me. My question is: why academia?

Henry Berlin: I was always bookish, I liked my humanities classes in school, and then in my junior year of college, a professor explained to me how graduate school in the humanities worked in the US. Until then, I had the impression that grad school would function the same way as undergraduate, in terms of funding and loans. But once I knew that PhDs could be fully funded, it became a real option to me. I was aware that you would not get rich as a grad student but at least there was an option to avoid more debt!

DJ: So you went straight from undergrad to grad school?

HB: Not quite. I worked for three years first, as an ESL teacher and as a copyeditor. After a while, I realized how much I missed being in the classroom, and that helped me make the decision to go back to school with confidence. I was happy and making a living at my copyediting job, but I had a positive desire to keep studying.

DJ: Why Spanish and not another foreign language?

HB: My case is maybe a bit atypical. I always liked reading literature and foreign languages. In middle school, we had to choose between French, Latin or Spanish. Spanish was the only language I heard on a regular basis, so it seemed logical that it could be connected to my daily life at some point. This seems pretty ironic nowadays since I work on medieval Spanish, which is rather far away from our colloquial language use! But Spanish is part of my daily life in other important ways, of course.

DJ: What is your area of expertise?

HB: First, I focus on medieval Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan. All three are important to me and they give a true portrait of how I work. Then, from a thematic or conceptual point of view, I focus on the history and theory of emotion in a very wide variety of genres; the principal one would be poetry, but I also study prose narrative and philosophical and theological treatises.

DJ: What brought you to study and work in that area?

HB: It started with my study abroad in Valencia. There, in addition to Castilian they speak Valencian (or southern Catalan). I became aware of minority languages in the Spanish state and their ties with nationalism, which is one of the key elements that led me to the Middle Ages. It gave me an opportunity to look at the roots of the different national identities throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The truth is that the problem of nationalism became less important to me after a while, but I realized how closely the literatures of these languages were related to each other. It is artificial to study one in isolation from the others or even to “compare” them, because the truest picture is one in which they are in constant dialogue throughout the Middle Ages.

DJ: Did you ever have a “close call” where you could have specialized in a different field?

HB: Well, at first I thought of working on modern peninsular literature and I was drawn more and more back to the Middle Ages. The decision came relatively early, but I didn’t start grad school knowing I would work on the Middle Ages. Another option could have been colonial Spanish American literature which I love. I am certain that if I did not do medieval studies, I would probably focus on that.

DJ: Is there something distinctive about being at UB?

HB: Yes, there are three things. First, I have been extremely impressed by the undergraduates here, by how outgoing they are, which is an important element in any foreign language class, by how well they are speaking and writing the language by their senior year, by their willingness to engage with difficult texts — we are studying medieval texts after all, and they are very challenging. Second, it is an immense pleasure to teach graduate seminars and to be able to go more in depth and teach more specifically things from my research. Here again, the grad students are very talented and show a great ability to open themselves to a discipline that is new to them. Finally — and UB has a national reputation for this which turned out to be true — there is the openness to interdisciplinary work. That might range from philosophically informed literary criticism to different spaces such as the Early Modern Research Workshop, where you can have fruitful exchanges with colleagues from different disciplines. Of course, that is true to some extent everywhere, but it is really fostered here. It is a great environment to enrich your own way of thinking.

(Continued on page 6)
Tales from Study Abroad

“My name is Ute [Inselmann] and I am a student of French literature on an exchange year in Lausanne, Switzerland. I am teaching English composition and broadening my experience in academia by collaborating with colleagues from all over Europe and from various disciplines such as comparative literature and linguistics. Comparing advantages and disadvantages of academia in Europe vs. the U.S., I observe that resources are a lot more readily available in the States and that academics in Europe are more mobile and cooperate better across university systems, disciplines and national borders. Having had this privilege, I consider it a crucial experience as a graduate/post-graduate scholar to work abroad for a season.”

Celebrating a snow day with friends in Lausanne—submitted by Ute Inselmann

UB Summer Abroad June 13-July 16, 2016
Social Change in Buenos Aires

“Social Change in Buenos Aires” is a 6 credit-hour UB Study Abroad summer program in Argentina, June 13-July 16, 2016. Rather than merely visiting the city, participants will gain detailed knowledge of Buenos Aires’ way of life, its food, art, dance, architecture. Participants will take two courses, both taught in English: The first on “Comparative Political Economics” will provide background on Argentinean government and business. The second on “Current Issues in Argentina” will focus on history and culture, and will require participants to conduct research throughout the city itself. All participants will be housed in well-appointed apartments (with kitchenette, security and gym) in Recoleta, one of the city’s most beautiful neighborhoods. Spanish is helpful (but not required) and Spanish majors/minors may opt for work in the language that will count to their program of study. Applications were due March 15, although they will be accepted after this date on a first-come/first-serve basis. For more information contact Program Director Justin Read (jread2@buffalo.edu) or UB Study Abroad (www.buffalo.edu/studyabroad).

UB / Buff State /University of Salamanca Summer Program

Buffalo State and the University at Buffalo co-sponsor the Programa de Estudios Hispánicos. This summer program offers participants the opportunity to sample Spain’s historical and artistic treasures and to earn six undergraduate or graduate credits in Spanish language and culture at University of Salamanca, Spain’s oldest university. By staying with a Spanish family, students strengthen their language skills and experience Spanish culture firsthand. Apply at http://studyabroad.buffalostate.edu/spain by March 15 annually.
**Departmental News and Events**


**Laura Chiesa’s** book *Space as Storyteller: Spatial Jumps in Architecture, Critical Theory and Literature* is forthcoming in Spring 2016 with Northwestern University Press. She will give presentations at two international conferences: “After Violence: Interlocking Cine-matic Spaces in Audiarid, Denis, and Maiveen,” at the American Comparative Literature Association Conference (Cambridge, MA, March 2016) and “Expanding Contemporary Art Through Language and Literature,” at the International Comparative Literature Association Conference (Vienna, Austria, July 2016).

Congratulations to **Fernanda Negrete** for winning a Humanities Institute Fellowship Award for Spring 2017! She will devote her time to her first book project, “Symptom and Sensation: Post-Freudian Experiments in Literature and Art,” which investigates an unrecognized global female avant-garde beginning in the 1960s that, revising the Freudian notion of hysteria, upholds the creative power of aesthetic encounters, beyond pleasure, to reshape subjectivity and unsettle the social link.

**Christian Flaugh** is presenting at two conferences this spring, “Forms of Informality: Textual Analysis & Pop Culture in the Global South,” March 11-12, 2016 (hosted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison), and at the African Literature Association annual conference, April 6-9, 2016 (hosted by Kennesaw State University and Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia). He also has a co-edited collection coming out this year, “Disability in French and Francophone Worlds” (Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies). Under the auspices of the UB Humanities Institute Performance Research Workshop, he most recently co-coordinated (with Lindsay Brandon Hunter of Theatre & Dance) the “AT BUFFALO @ U at Buffalo” roundtable and performative presentation March 31, 2016.

**Amy Graves-Monroe** is presenting a paper called ’Souverainettes intermittantes’ at the Sorbonne this March 17/18 at a colloquium on ies et insulaires.


**Jean-Jacques Thomas’** new co-edited book with Christelle Reggiani (Université Paris-4 – Sorbonne), Hermes Salceda (Universidad de Vigo – Spain) and Christophe Reig (Université de Catalogne – France) came out in November 2015 in the US and Canada. Recent invited lectures have included « Quebec Studies at UB: History, activities, Future” With Nicole Bojko, AATF-WNY Annual Conference, Buffalo State College, Buffalo, April 27-28, 2015; « Isidore Isou :»

(Continued on page 5)

As part of UB’s Humanities Institute New Faculty Seminar Series, **Fernanda Negrete** presented her work on “Clinical Aesthetics: Psychoanalysis, Schizophrenia, and Art’s Work on a Body” in October 2015. In November, **Henry Berlin** presented his work on “Confession and the Rhetoric of the Passions in Late Medieval Iberia.”

**Fernanda Negrete** also received the Faculty Internationalization Fund from the office of the Vice Provost for International Education this spring, to explore long-term research and undergraduate study abroad collaboration opportunities with MARGE research group and Université de Lyon 3 in Lyon, France. She will give a public lecture on Samuel Beckett and Luciano Berio on April 26th, 2016 at Lyon 3.


In early October, 2015, **Andrew Serio** presented "Strategies in the teaching of Italian language and culture through the medium of television" at the 3rd Annual Binghamton University Conference on Foreign Language Teaching.

**Ashley Byczkowski** passed her qualifying exam, and will present her paper, “The Caribbean Poetic Rebellion: Demanding Madness” at the UB RLL GSA Conference April 1st-2nd and at the GAFIS Symposium April 8-9th at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She will present her paper, “George Sand: Woman as Artist” June 10th at the 2016 Women in French Conference in Gettysburg, PA.

**Nicole Bojko** organized the Fall 2015 Francophone Film Series in conjunction with AATF’s French week celebrations at which some of RLL’s graduate students presented films (Dany Jacob, Maria Gratias-Sinon, and Isabelle Fournier). She received a Mark Diamond Research Fund Grant, and studied at the BnF (French National Library) in Paris for 2 weeks in January 2016. She was elected as 2016 Secretary of the AATF WNY chapter. She organized the Fall 2015 Quebec Lecture Series which included lectures from Cirque du Soleil scholar Dr. Karen Fricke and Quebecois author and radio host Stanley Péan, as well as the 3rd Annual Big Buffalo Quebec Film Festival March 30-April 1, 2016.

**Lori Chilcott** passed her qualifying exam in Spanish Literature. She will presenting her paper, “The Search for Puerto Rican Identity in Los soles truncos and El gran circo Eukraniano” at the annual Caribbean Without Borders Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico, April 6-8, 2016. Lori will present on the Williamsville School District’s LOTE curriculum and at the annual AATSP (American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese) conference in Miami, FL, July 8-11, 2016.
Dany Jacob delivers French dictation for the annual Alliance Française de Buffalo High School French Competition March 12, 2016.

Languages & Literatures Graduate Student Association. The event featured a keynote address from Dr. Cindy McPhail, professor at Nazareth College and UB alumna. Participants included both graduate and undergraduate students from various departments at UB as well as Buffalo public school teachers. (submitted by Tanya Farnung-Morrison).

Dr. Stephen Hessel, PhD alum and Assistant Professor at Ball State University, returned to campus March 7 to deliver a presentation in honor of Cervantes 400th anniversary. Entitled "Image Not Found: Portraiture, Identity, and the Future of Cervantismo," the presentation was enthusiastically received by a full house! Steve also spent some time mentoring RLL grad students while on campus. We appreciate his time and willingness to travel to Buffalo during uncertain March weather!

The 5th Graduate Student Conference in the RLL Department was held April 1-2, with keynote speaker Dr. Charles Batson from Union College. The topic was "Framing the Self(ie): Heterogeneity of Identities in (non)spaces." Thanks to all the organizers and participants for a job well done!

Nicole Bojko and Dany Jacob organized a special French panel April 7 for the 25th Anniversary of UB’s Poetics Program in honor of Robert Creeley, one of the program's founders. The invited guests came from France, and discussed the contemporary situation of innovative poetry in both France and the US. The talks and reception were held at the Marriott/Amherst.

Congratulations to Genevieve Oliveria, Maria-Gratias Sinon, Yuting Jia, Bojana Laketic, and Fernando Simon Abad, all of whom passed their Qualifying Exam this spring!

(Continued from page 2)

...and Introducing More New Faculty Members!

Stephanie Schmidt received her Ph.D. from Stanford University in 2011 and specializes in literature from colonial Mexico and early modern Spain. Her current book project, Ancestors and Empire: Foundational Narratives of Anahuac and Early Modern Spain, examines works by indigenous and Iberian writers and performers who stage and discuss culture-shaping stories about ancestors and empire, in order to make sense of radical changes during the first century of Spanish expansionism in the Americas.

Fernanda Negrete investigates questions of desire and bodily excess in aesthetic encounters with contemporary works of art and literature. Her book manuscript, “Symptom and Sensation: Post-Freudian Experiments in Literature and Art” establishes dialogue across experimental texts and participatory art from France, Brazil, and the United States, psychoanalysis, and Deleuzian aesthetics, to explore the ethical implications of creation beyond self-identity and the social link. She enjoys teaching about relationships between literature and the arts and between psychoanalysis and aesthetics. She has written articles on Marguerite Duras, Nathalie Sarraute, Gilles Deleuze, Artur Barrio, Jacques Coursil, and Damián Ortega. She is also currently developing a project on Samuel Beckett and Luciano Berio on voice and hybridity.
RLL Receives Bequest for Spanish Study Abroad Scholarships

RLL gratefully acknowledges the generous bequest of the Wilma J. Newberry estate. Dr. Newberry was a faculty member of RLL (formerly Modern Languages and Literature) from 1973-1997. Born in 1927 in Covington, Kentucky, she received her B.A. from Case Western Reserve and her Ph.D. from the University of Washington. She is noted for her book *The Pirandellian Mode in Spanish Literature from Cervantes to Sastre* and for her articles on modern Spanish theatre and narrative in *Hisapnia, PMLA, Symposium*, and other journals. Funds will be used to assist undergraduate Spanish majors with expenses of studying in Spain. We hope to begin accepting scholarship applications in Fall 2016.

Student Awards

Congratulations to all nominees for the 2016 RLL Outstanding Senior Award, including to this year’s recipient, **Blake Cooper**. Blake graduates summa cum laude with a BA in Spanish and Linguistics. As a UB student he presented original research on the semiotics of the poetry of Federico García Lorca at UB’s Celebration of Academic Excellence (where he was awarded a blue ribbon) and SUNY’s first Undergraduate Research Conference. He also traveled to Argentina (Summer 2015) to work as an intern with a consulting firm specializing in cultural competency education. In his spare time he translated a novel by an Argentine author, which he later submitted for publication with the help of UB faculty, and helped prepare articles for publication on disability in Haiti. He currently works at the International Institute of Buffalo helping to find interpreters in under-served languages for work in schools, hospitals and courtrooms. ¡Enhorabuena, Blake!

RLL graduate student **Dijana Savija** is an award winner through this year’s Graduate Student Excellence in Teaching Awards. She will be honored with her fellow award recipients at a ceremony in April. Many of us are familiar with the effort, energy, and skill that make Dijana deserving of this recognition. Thank you to all those who assisted in the nomination process within RLL, and to those who helped train her as a Teaching Assistant. May this spur Dijana on to subsequent achievements.

**Miguel Matos** is the recipient of a UB Arthur A. Schomburg Fellowship award. The department thanks Professor Amy Graves-Monroe for all her efforts to secure the award and the Graduate School for recognizing Miguel’s past accomplishments and future promise.

(Continued on page 8)

RLL’s Conversation Tables Take Off

**French:** Mondays 2pm  
904 Clemens

**Spanish:** Wednesdays 1pm  
904 Clemens

**Italian Conversation Club**

*Board Games and Music!*

**Wednesday Meetings:**

*February 3, February 17, March 23, April 13, April 27*

*Room: Clemens 930; Time: 4pm*
The Melodia E. Jones Chair co-sponsored the Alliance Française de Buffalo’s annual Excellence in French Studies Competition Saturday, March 12th, 2016. Cash prizes for highest marks in dictation will be awarded to Tara Porter, Buffalo Seminary, first place, (Sophie Michaud, teacher**) ($200), Julia Stevens, Starpoint High School, second place, (Suzanne G. Staskiewicz, teacher) ($150), Anabel Cornacchio, Buffalo Seminary, third place, (Isabelle Fisher, teacher) ($100) at RLL’s commencement ceremony on May 13. (**Sophie Michaud is an RLL graduate, having earned her M.A. in French and Francophone literature under the advisorship of Jeannette Ludwig.) Thanks to Dany Jacob for running the competition, and for his French dictation skills!

**Congratulations also to our 2015-2016 study abroad scholarship recipients:**

**Linda Diane Rock Memorial Scholarship Fund**

Jessica Hall, $580, Summer 2015, SUNY/Oswego, Paris, France  
Daiki Kamakura, $580, Fall 2015, SUNY/Cortland, Costa Rica  
Julia Erbacher, $580, Spring 2016, Univ of Albany, Madrid, Spain  
Julia Slezak, $580, Spring 2016, SUNY/New Paltz, Oviedo, Spain

**Maria E. Becker Memorial Scholarship Fund**

Brian Page, $600, Fall 2015, Univ Paul-Valéry, Montpellier, France