Starting in 2010, the department’s study abroad program will offer a new summer program in the beautiful city of Arles in the south of France. Students will depart from Chicago in May to take courses equivalent to 103, 104, 205, and 213 in Arles for four weeks. They can earn four credit hours for a course, with three hours of instruction per day. They will meet with teaching assistants (moniteurs and monitrices) from Arles à la Carte etc. (ACE) in small groups outside of class for 12 hours over the course of four weeks. During these sessions, students develop themes such as the French family, leisure, the work environment, and the European community.

Kathie Thornton, director of ACE, described the program in the following way: “We specialize in ‘à la carte’ linguistic and cultural programs for individuals and small groups, focusing on language acquisition through various options such as host families, language intensive meals, and regional excursions. Programs are designed to fit participating individual or group needs, interests, and language levels.” Each program participant lives with a host family and thus can practice in a real-life context what has been learned in the classroom. In this way, students can learn firsthand the customs of the region and the cultural habits of the French people. The French host families provide breakfast and three dinners. ACE includes in its program three intensive lunches where students can eat together and practice what they have learned under the supervision of the French teaching staff. There are several excursions in Provence, a region famous for its lovely and varied countryside as well as for its historical sites. The plane ticket that is covered in the program participation fee is arranged, and allows a short period of travel time for those who wish to travel in Europe after their stay in Arles.

“At this point, up to 22 students are registered to participate,” says Patricia Dimit, the study abroad graduate student coordinator. “We will have excursions to Avignon, Nîmes, and Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.”

Arles is famous for its Roman history and architecture, dating back to 100 BC, although the first settlements go back to the Greeks. Arles is also known from Vincent Van Gogh’s picturesque landscapes, and its ancient history museum, the Musée de l’Arles et de la Provence antiques, with one of the best collections of Roman sarcophagi to be found outside Rome.

Bon voyage à tous!
Dear Friends,

It is daunting to take up the headship of the Department of French in a time of economic difficulty. I thank my predecessor, Armine Mortimer, for her stewardship during the past five years. Thanks to her careful administration of our resources, we are in good shape going forward. The department and the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics have risen to the challenges. People are pulling together to protect our core mission and find creative ways to get through this tough patch.

I wanted to introduce myself briefly. I am a medievalist and have just served as director of the interdisciplinary Program in Medieval Studies. While I have worked on lyric poetry and courtly romance, my current focus is Christine de Pizan, France’s first professional woman of letters. I am particularly interested in manuscript anthologies that contain her works. This research has led to various exciting projects. I am working with an international, interdisciplinary team of scholars studying the magnificent Shrewsbury Book, interesting to me because it contains Christine’s treatise on war. Our team recently received a grant from the National Science Foundation to study this particular manuscript and produce a website presenting the manuscript in its cultural context. The site will serve as a pedagogical resource and as a portal for ongoing research. Check my webpage for updates!

This newsletter suggests the vitality of the department in the diverse activities of our students and faculty. Our Centre Pluridisciplinaire has received generous funding from the French government, resources that we use to bring scholars to campus and to sponsor conferences such as “The New Immigrant Europe: Languages and Borderlands” and “Proust and His Era/Proust et son époque.” A large group of students are participating this year in our Illinois Program in Paris, and this summer we inaugurate a new summer program in Arles. New faculty publications have appeared: Laurence Schehr’s *Subversions of Verisimilitude: Reading Narrative from Balzac to Sartre* (Fordham University Press, 2009); Adlai Murdoch’s edited special issue of *Research in African Literatures* (Vol. 41, 1), *Aimé Césaire, 1913-2008: Poet, Politician, Cultural Statesman*; and Doug Kibbee’s edited volume, *Chomskyan (R)evolutions* (John Benjamins, 2010). Our graduate students have defended dissertations and presented their research at major conferences. Our undergraduate majors are putting the finishing touches on their senior theses.

We are grateful to our alumni for their generous and faithful support. These gifts fund awards that recognize outstanding academic achievement by our French majors and the teaching excellence of our graduate teaching assistants. These contributions help us purchase and maintain LCD projectors, which enhance our teaching, and help us to support graduate students’ travels to professional conferences to present their research. They also allow us to provide fellowships that attract and retain superior graduate students.

Please let me know if you are able to visit the University. It would be a pleasure to welcome you back to the Department of French. Send us your news—we enjoy hearing from our alumni.

Cordially,
Karen Fresco
Department Head
I locate the ‘literary’ in musical as well as linguistic structures, through analysis of both textual production and reception.

John Nimis, visiting instructor in the Department of French since the fall of 2009, is expected to defend his PhD thesis, titled “Literary Listening: Readings in Congolese Popular Music,” at New York University in April 2010. Besides teaching FR 207: “French Grammar and Composition” and FR 208: “Critical Writing and Reading,” he contributed to our course offerings with a wide variety of exciting topics in French and Francophone studies, such as FR 240: “Construction of African and Caribbean Identity,” FR 410: “Modern African Fiction,” and FR 409: “L’Afrique francophone.” John’s interests bring together music, literature, and linguistic analyses of French-influenced Lingala songs. While this might seem unorthodox, John is in fact an accomplished musician, having studied piano performance at the University of Michigan between 1998 and 2000. He explains: “I played music from a young age, and when I started taking French, I was introduced to lots of different kinds of music, including music from Francophone Africa, but also Francis Cabrel. This was a big part of what got me excited about French. When I taught at a summer immersion program for French, I was in charge of teaching songs and playing guitar, so these interests have been combined for a long time in my life.”

John was a Fulbright scholar in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006. As a fluent Lingala speaker, he has firsthand experience of all registers of the language spoken and written in the country. He has many stories to tell about Africa and the Congo, and sums up his research as follows: “I’m very proud of the research that I did in Kinshasa learning to play the guitar in the Congolese style and working with musicians to produce original music. Now I am playing in a band in Urbana-Champaign called Rumba na biso. This is like a dream come true!”

The year before John came to teach in Illinois, he spent a year at the University of Witswatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, as a visiting researcher. John was working on his dissertation in South Africa, but also traveled to other countries, such as Mozambique and Namibia. He was involved with WISER, which is a renowned research center for the social sciences and humanities, where he interacted with a group of world-class interdisciplinary scholars. He also participated in the roundtable “Translating Africa in Global Contexts” at the University of Illinois in the fall of 2009. He had this to say about today’s Africa: “From an academic standpoint, modern African culture organically creates important challenges to disciplinary order. The interdisciplinary character of my work, for instance, is a result of the study of Congolese popular music, which just doesn’t fit in traditional disciplinary categories. This is why I think that research on Africa will be an important part of the solutions to an increasingly urgent identity crisis for the humanities in Western academia: it leads us to an interdisciplinary that is not a ‘way out’ of a dead-end field, but rather a ‘way in’ to exciting new research topics that are currently still outside the scope of any other field. In a world more oriented on images and sounds that new media technologies are making an even smaller, faster, and more multilingual place, I think Africa will become more and more important. African cultures, with their amazing linguistic diversity, cultural richness, and débrouillardise, are well-equipped to adapt in this fast-changing world.”
These past two years brought numerous distinctions to Daniel Brant, an MA student in French studies. Upon entering the program in August 2008, he received the prestigious Illinois Distinguished Fellowship for three consecutive years. He then obtained second place in the 2009 Alumni Essay Contest. Also in 2009, at the 35th 19th-Century French Studies Colloquium in Salt Lake City, Utah, Dan was presented with the Naomi Schor Memorial Award, which is given to the author of the colloquium’s best graduate student essay, for his paper “Racial Evolution and Colonial Gender: Louis Bertrand’s ‘Latin-Mediterranean’ Solution.”

A native of California raised in Washington state, Dan’s interests in French date back to his high school years in Spokane, Wash., where he once simultaneously held the titles of 2001 Fall Athlete and High School French Student of the Year. Over the course of the following years, his experience as a teacher of English took him to Héricourt and Deauville, and various exchange programs in French introduced him to Caen, Grenoble, and Paris. His travel and experience with other cultures sparked his interest in many subfields of French studies, ranging from film, critical theory, gender, colonial and postcolonial cultures, and 19th- and 20th-century French literature. When asked about all these accomplishments realized in less than two years, Dan points to his goal of pursuing his graduate studies at the PhD level to become a French professor. As he notes, the PhD “will prolong my involvement in the exchange and transmission of ideas, philosophies, cultures, and language.”

Leïla En-naili, a PhD student in French studies, follows in the footsteps of a long list of awardees of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) yearly fellowships in the Department of French. For her project, “Representation of Foreigners and Immigrants in 20th-Century French Literary and Filmic Narratives,” Leïla was awarded a graduate student fellowship for the academic year of 2009-2010. This fellowship will allow her to devote the entire spring semester to the writing of her doctoral thesis on the representation of foreigners and immigrants in 20th-century French literature and films. In particular, her thesis examines current debates on the redefinition of national identity and sheds light on how otherness is constructed and undermined in fictional narratives. She is working on representations of the foreigner from four angles: memory, relations between the foreigner and the “French,” the body of the foreigner, and the spatial dimension in which it evolves. This project also earned Leïla an invitation to present her work at “The New Immigrant Europe: Languages and Borderlands” conference organized by the European Union Center and the Centre Pluridisciplinaire of the Department of French.

Leïla was born in the northeast of France. After a preparatory and a master’s degree in English literature, she participated in an exchange program between the University of Metz and the University of Illinois. She then started the master’s program in the Department of French. She was awarded a Dissertation Completion Fellowship from the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics for the academic year of 2010-2011, which will enable her to focus on research and writing.

Christopher Carignan, a native of Washington state and a second-year PhD student in French linguistics, is one of the student assistants in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics Phonetics Lab, headed by Professor Ryan Shosted (linguistics) and in the Beckman Institute’s Biomechanics Lab, headed by Professor Chiling Shih (EALC and linguistics). For spring 2010, Chris holds a fellowship from the Department of French, which allows him to prepare his preliminary examination on the acoustic and articular aspects of nasalization in different dialects of French under direction of Professors Zsuzsanna Fagyal (French) and Ryan Shosted (linguistics). Chris uses an electromagnetic articulograph to experimentally examine the movements of the jaw, lips, and tongue, with the goal of determining which types of variations in nasal articulation are responsible for typical dialectal pronunciations of vowels in words such as “vin” that might sound more like “vein” in Quebec and “veine” in the south of France.

His work has implications for phonetic theory, second-language acquisition, and the mechanisms of sound change in French and other languages.

Chris’s plans for the future are ambitious and unequivocal: “My career goals are to continue research in the acoustic, articular, and aerodynamic properties of speech as a university professor. I also plan to broaden my research to other speech phenomena in the future.”
Kate Coughlin is an MA student in language learning and a research assistant for Professor Annie Tremblay in the Second Language Acquisition and Bilingualism (SLAB) Lab in the Foreign Languages Building. She is studying the recognition of liaison-initial words in French. The research investigates how second language learners of French extract information from speech to identify vowel-initial words that start with a liaison consonant in French. This work is conducted in collaboration with Dr. Elsa Spinelli at the Laboratoire de Psychologie et NeuroCognition, Université Pierre-Mendès, Grenoble, France. Kate is also working as a collaborator with Professor Tremblay on a different project that examines the role of working memory in the processing of number agreement by second language learners of French.

Originally from a northern Chicago suburb, Kate first conducted language research as part of her undergraduate senior honors thesis in the Department of French. She became interested in second language research while completing her teacher certification in French and taking psycholinguistic classes. When asked about her future plans, Kate says: “I am very much looking forward to continuing to work with Annie as I complete my MA in French language learning. After my MA program, I am planning to pursue a PhD in second language acquisition and continue to do research in phonology and processing.”

Joe Johnson, a second-year undergraduate student majoring in French with a minor in medieval studies, is heading to Paris to study at Sciences Po next year. He likens this experience to another life-changing event he experienced once as a child: moving from a small Chicago suburb to the big city at age 10. “The comparison might seem incongruous,” he writes, “but at that age the distance between my old friends and our new house in the city seemed absolutely enormous to me. It was manageable for short visits, and we often went back to see our old friends, but after a while I just had to adjust and make new friends in a new environment.” Joe expects to be faced with similar challenges when moving to Paris even for a short time. This time, however, the thrill of anticipation dominates all feelings of anxiety: “I know this will broaden my horizons, and help me focus on what I want to do next—it’s wonderful to be able to channel that childhood experience into an entirely new one that I can seek out on my own.”

What made him choose Sciences Po? In his choice of the program, Joe singles out exciting course offerings that were an exact match to his combined interests in literature and social history. “I remember looking through the list of courses to be offered next year and seeing nothing but exciting options: “Women and Politics: Regression and Revolution,” “Writers and Political Crises,” “The Contemporary Novel,” and many more. I simply couldn’t resist applying to this program!”

“Medieval studies caters to my interests in major literary figures and the history of French.”

—Joe Johnson

Joe is no less eloquent when it comes to talking about his passion, which is literature. “I love to study texts,” he states. “I like to examine their content and form, and to reflect on the social, historical, and cultural contexts that led to their production. That sort of study is considered interdisciplinary, but I don’t think any discipline can be thought of like an island.”

One of the major literary figures who has deeply inspired Joe is Christine de Pizan, the medieval poet who earned her living with her pen and dared to challenge the male-dominated literary and artistic realm of her era. “Christine de Pizan is a personal hero of mine. She represents one of the greatest pleasures of studying the medieval period, which is that it can’t be painted with a broad brush: there were always opinions that differed from the norm, and we can see many of the same conflicts of the modern era reflected in this tension.”

Joe is also interested in autobiography, particularly the impact of fictionalization on identity. One of his current seminar projects is the sociocultural context of writings by François Rabelais. Once in Paris, Joe will be observing contemporary French culture from direct experience rather than academic study. He expects to be surrounded by both a vibrant community that pushes forward, and relics from the past that speak to its history.
Graduate News

Graduate Student Teaching Awards (Fall 2009-Spring 2010)

Congratulations to Michael Foster who won the Instructor of the Summer award in August 2009 for the Upward Bound College Prep Academy here at the University of Illinois.

SLCL Dissertation Completion Awards for the Academic Year of 2011-2012


Graduate Student Talks and Presentations (Spring 2009-Spring 2010)


Professor Accad also gave a conference, titled “L’excision ou l’écriture de la douleur,” followed by a roundtable discussion with professors and novelists Ezza Agha Malak, Nazik Yared, and Amira Issa. The event was followed by the performance of songs and poems composed by Professor Accad.


Professor Adlai Murdoch gave a lecture titled “The Role of Haiti’s Past in Planning its Future” at the U of I College of Law, and was interviewed on WCIA in February on causes of Haiti’s distress and on ways in which relief efforts can help improve the situation.

As Professor Murdoch noted, it is probably not widely known that Haitians have never had the financial capacity to build a substantial country for themselves. Although the country became independent in 1804, the former French colonial power subsequently imposed a fine of about $22 billion on Haiti that took the country 122 years to pay off. For years, this debt consumed up to 80 percent of the country’s GDP, leaving no funds for investments in infrastructure. After the invasion and occupation of Haiti by the United States from 1915 to

Faculty News

Professor Douglas Kibbee was featured in a two-hour Discovery Channel TV documentary on Michel de Nostradamus (1503-1566), known as Nostradamus, the well-known French physician whose writings became famous worldwide as prophecies taken to predict future world events. The Discovery Channel documentary and DVD were released in November 2009. Solicited for his expertise on 16th-century French language, Professor Kibbee accompa-
Looking into the future, Professor Murdoch stressed the importance of self-determination for Haiti. “We need to make sure that Haitians have control of their own future,” he said. “This means that Haitians should have the right to decide what is important for them and how their country needs to be reorganized without yielding to foreign financial interests that would invest in tourism and, yet again, take profit out of the country.” In Professor Murdoch’s view, the 1 million Haitians living overseas can play an important role in raising the $14 billion needed to put the country back on its feet. The best way to contribute to this effort is to use nongovernmental organizations “that already have a footprint in Haiti and can become the conduits for distributing the money. In that case, a fresh start, if it is properly handled, can put Haiti on a much better footing to face the future.”

Students and faculty in the Department of French wish to express their heartfelt congratulations to Professor Emerita Armine Mortimer, who was recently awarded the title of Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques. The Palmes Académiques is one of the world’s oldest civil awards, and France’s highest award for academic achievement. Created by Napoleon since 1855, it has been awarded to teachers, professors, and major contributors to French national education in France and overseas. This prestigious prize is a testimony to Professor Mortimer’s distinguished career as a gifted teacher, as a kind and attentive mentor, and as a superb scholar, whose numerous publications on a wide variety of topics, periods, and authors are highly respected for their remarkable quality.

Michael Mulryan (PhD ’08, French studies)

I have a four-three teaching load at Christopher Newport University. Last fall, I taught a seminar in English on the history of French urban discourse from the 18th to the 20th century, a survey of French literature from the Middle Ages to the Revolution in French, and two sections of French 101. This semester I am teaching one section of advanced intermediate French, French civilization from antiquity until 1870, and a team-taught class on Western drama in translation. I am the study abroad coordinator, a member of the new curriculum committee, and a member of the hiring committee for the French lecturer position. I also attended the Council on Undergraduate Research conference in Washington, D.C., in February. I presented a paper at the East-Central American Society for 18th-Century Studies in Bethlehem, Pa., in October, and am organizing a session for the American Society for 18th-Century Studies annual meeting in March, in Albuquerque, N. Mex. I have won a faculty development grant from the provost’s office to do research in Paris this summer at the Arsenal Library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Overall, I love my job but have been very busy. Our French majors are extremely enthusiastic. We have a very active French club, a film series, and do Francophone/Francophile outings.

Jessica Sturm (PhD ’08, SLATE)

I’m assistant professor of French and applied linguistics at Purdue, and also the director of the French Language Program. I teach one course per semester, as a result of being the language program director. This semester I am teaching an SLA graduate seminar in French; in the fall, I will teach a pedagogy course in French on using film in language teaching. I also anticipate teaching French phonetics, the methodology class for new TAs, and SLA seminars in English in the future, as well as occasional classes in the beginning language sequence. I am also serving on some MA and PhD committees and am the graduate language examiner for French.

I really enjoy the students at Purdue and I find my colleagues very friendly and pleasant to work with. I love my job and feel lucky to have found such a great position.

Kelly Folliard, a former French and international studies major, has been keeping in touch and using both English and French overseas ever since she graduated eight years ago. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Frenchophone Gabon from 2002 to 2004, and last summer helped organize an orphanage in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Her knowledge of French was singled out on more than one occasion when she did not need simultaneous interpretation at briefings that included presentations in French. Since January 2010, she has been serving in Kabul. Her job there involves running a grants program to increase Afghan women’s participation in political life, ranging from civic and voter education to training female politicians. Kelly has been working on laying the groundwork for the program that she was hired to implement. She anticipates traveling around the country to advertise the program to women’s groups. So far, she has met several inspiring and courageous women who continue to fight for women’s rights despite major obstacles. She readily acknowledges that her knowledge and affinity to foreign cultures and languages prepared her well for this job.

Chabha Hocine, former MA in interdisciplinary French studies major, was named director of Logan College of Chiropractic’s Learning Resources Center in December 2009. Hocine brings 14 years of high school, college, and university teaching and library experience to her position at Logan in Chesterfield. Most recently, she served as learning resources system manager at Vatterott Educational Centers. She earned a bachelor’s degree in jurisprudence at the University of Algiers in Algeria, and has a master’s degree in library and information science from the Graduate School of Library and Information Science as well as a master’s degree in French from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
The conference on “Proust and His Era,” held on April 8-10, 2010, was organized by Professors Patrick Bray and Laurence Schehr. Besides the College of LAS, the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, and the Department of French, it was sponsored by over 10 other departments and interdisciplinary programs across campus. It brought together a group of eminent scholars to talk about Proust’s worlds, both the ones depicted in his novels and the one in which he lived. The conference welcomed a variety of critical perspectives, and included not only Proust’s work, but also works by authors in the early 20th century, including Colette and André Gide, as well as writers who might be largely forgotten today but who were visible figures during the time Proust worked.

The Department of French hosted two conferences in the spring of 2010. The conference on “The New Immigrant Europe: Languages and Borderlands,” held on March 12, was sponsored by the Centre Pluridisciplinaire of the Department of French, the European Union Center, and the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics. It was organized by Professors Douglas Kibbee, Zsuzsanna Fagyal (French), and Dorothee Schneider (history). It focused on language, literary voices, and the social and cultural life around the new EU borderlands associated with migrants and immigrants. Highlighting research by U of I faculty, students, and three guest speakers from Europe and the United States, the conference cast light on themes that connect broader social policies with cultural life and national identities of countries within the European Union.

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