

WLLC SPOTLIGHTS

A Publication of U of A's Department of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures | Vol 1 Edition 1

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SPRING 2017 EVENTS

- ~ April 17 - 18 - *U of A Jewish Studies Program Presents a Series of Events from author Arie Kaplan*; Lecture & Workshop
- ~ April 3 - *Gessen to present lecture titled "The Man Without A Face and Words Will Break"*; Lecture
- ~ March 15 - *"Exiles, Immigrants, & Refugees: People With Rights Not Just Needs"*; Panel
- ~ March 4 - *Tag Der Chemie An Der Uni Akansas*; German Chemistry Event
- ~ March 2 - *Bauer presented on "Lucretius' New World: Cannibal Heterotopias in the 16th Century"*; Lecture
- ~ March 2 - *Marat Grinberg's "The Great Banned Soviet Film Commissar"*; Lecture

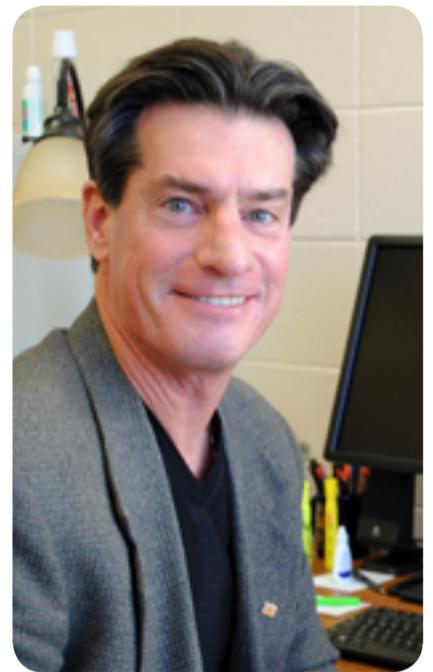
MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends and Alumni of the U of A Department of World Languages:

I'm pleased to share with you this relaunch of our department newsletter, this time around in electronic form. We hope you might find something here to catch your interest and attention, and perhaps stir a few memories. This is our first shot at this and we would welcome any feedback or suggestions for improvements you might care to share. Our goal with the newsletter is primarily to share a glimpse of our people –faculty, students, and alumni, and their accomplishments and activities, and we hope that many of you will reach out to us and share too.

Best,

Steve Bell, Chair



COMICS ARE NOT ALWAYS COMICAL

Sterling takes us deeper into the world of German comics

The words 'comic books' are typically associated with superheroes or witty satire, but according to [Brett Sterling](#), assistant professor of German, comics are not always so comical. As a kid, Sterling enjoyed reading comics. The illustrations of superheroes and villains battling it out intrigued him until the age of 13.

He revisited the world of comics while in graduate school and now it has become part of his research.

"I went to an intensive language camp for Russian and there was this guy there who suggested that I read the book *The Watchmen*," said

Sterling. "I went to Berlin immediately after the camp for about a year. I wandered into a bookstore and picked up *The Watchmen*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and a few other comics."

Sterling's revisited interest in comics led to an even more intriguing genre, German comics. It was not until he arrived back in the States that he decided to look closely into German comics.

His interest grew into research and now he teaches a course on German comics.

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“My research is focused on the boom of German comics which began between 2005 and 2010,” continued Sterling.

“There wasn’t much quality comic production in Germany until the 2000’s. Comics are rare at the university level in any language,” he said.

Sterling incorporates German comics mostly from the last ten years. He tries to introduce his students to comics about current issues such as LGBT rights, white supremacy, and the treatment of refugees in Germany. His assigned readings are usually from authors of the three primary German-speaking countries; Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Not all topics found in comics are easy to deliver. Sterling said he often introduces comics that deal with important topics such as violence, oppression or sexuality.

“There are things that I really like but the material might be a little challenging for my students,” he added.

For example, *Heute ist der letzte Tag vom Rest deines Lebens* (Today Is the Last Day of the Rest of Your Life), one of Sterling’s required readings for his course, is an autobiography that includes

portrayals of rape. Author, Ulli Lust, constructs herself in every single panel.

According to Sterling, the images may be too visceral for some readers, but they are necessary depictions of the author’s experiences.

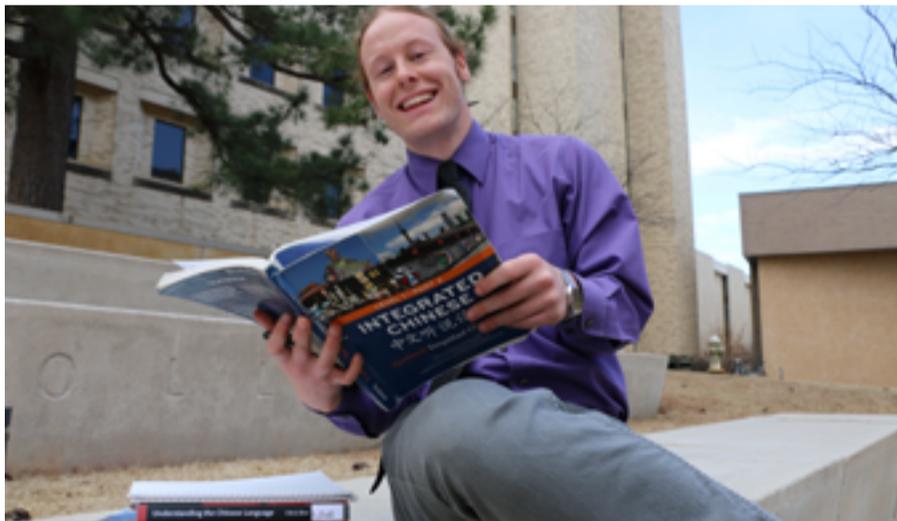
“A German comic about rape may be difficult for my students to talk about and I completely understand that, but it has its value,” said Sterling. “Lust’s comic draws attention to the pervasive presence of sexual assault against women in contemporary society,” said Sterling.

And as one of Sterling’s students commented, by showing readers images of her assault, the author makes it more difficult for people to deny her experience.

“Comics can take topics that are serious in nature and put us in a position where we are able to engage with them imaginatively.”



TIPTON CREDITS CHINESE PROGRAM FOR RECENT ACHIEVEMENT



Learning a second language can be challenging. Zachary Tipton, environmental science major and Chinese minor has embraced the challenges of learning a second language and has been accepted to attend the Princeton in Beijing (PiB) program.

PiB is a high-quality, intensive study abroad program in intermediate and advanced Chinese language for serious language students.

Tipton was initially drawn to the program because of its stern requirements. Applicants must have studied Chinese at least one year, write a statement of purpose in either Chinese or English, submit a 3-5 minute recording of themselves speaking Chinese on any subject, and be interviewed via Skype.

He said the most appealing requirement was the language pledge. Students must agree to only speak Chinese for the duration of the program. If students do not honor the language pledge, they are asked to leave the program.

According to Tipton, the Chinese program at the U of A has given him the courage and emotional strength to go abroad. He also said the faculty in the Chinese program are caring and supportive.

“Studying a second language instantly makes you a better person. You learn to connect with people in entirely different situations than your own. You also learn how to appreciate your own culture,” he added.

“The Chinese faculty promote student success and will do anything to uplift their students. The professors are always available, and the language lab hosted in the WLLC Center offers students a more intimate learning experience,” continued Tipton.

The program has been fundamental in encouraging and fostering his dreams by teaching both the language and culture of China.

Tipton finds the business Chinese courses to be extremely helpful because these courses are preparing him to move forward in his career.

COMING OF AGE NOVELS: WHAT DO THEY TEACH US?

Lorenzo explains the significance of 'coming of age' novels

Dr. Violeta Lorenzo-Feliciano, assistant professor of Spanish, became fascinated with Latin American literature before leaving grade school.

During her senior year of high school, Lorenzo-Feliciano was required to read a coming of age novel, but little did she know, this novel would set the tone for her academic research.

She was intrigued by the open implications of political issues and rants about gaining independence.

Today, her love for Spanish-Caribbean coming of age novels burns even stronger.

For the past seven years, Lorenzo-Feliciano has been conducting extensive research on this genre.

Spanish-Caribbean coming of age novels have been said to be bit antiquated, but according to Lorenzo-Feliciano studying novels and essays written by Spanish-Caribbean authors is essential, because this type of research allows individuals to understand issues of identity, nationalism and colonialism.

“For example the Dominican Republic went through one of the harshest dictatorships during the 20th century. Spanish-Caribbean coming of age novels written about this era do not necessarily propose national pride, but rather question what the nation is or what it should be. In a way these texts point to the problems behind absolute discourses of nationality,” said Lorenzo-Feliciano.

Throughout her research Lorenzo-Feliciano has read and analyzed a number of Spanish-Caribbean coming of age novels, and although each novel has different protagonists and contexts, she said the themes of national identity, independence, citizenship, citizenry, and politics remain consistent.

“Spanish-Caribbean coming of age novels are openly political, which is something you do not primarily find in the European prototype unless you dig deeper to find out what the implications are. In these types of novels you also find young people trying to make sense of the dictatorship or colonialism,” she added.

One of her most thought-provoking findings in Spanish-Caribbean coming of age novels is the theme of rebellion in some texts. Lorenzo-Feliciano said in most coming of age novels, the protagonist matures physically or psychologically.



See “NOVELS” page 4

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GIVE TODAY

NEW PROGRAM WITH NEW INITIATIVES

[Edvan Brito](#), assistant professor of Portuguese, said he is elated to be a part of this brand new language program. In the near future, Brito plans to start a faculty-led study abroad program to Brazil.

Along with a list of goals for the Portuguese program, he also plans to work closely with the College of Business on new and interesting courses. In addition, he hopes to see more influence of Portuguese in Latin American Studies.

Brito said one of the most effective strategies for understanding various cultures is to learn their language. With that goal in mind, he works to ensure that his students not only learn Portuguese, but also embrace its significance.

LANGUAGE POLITICS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The new course will highlight the significance of language to governmental policies and industry. Learn about the indigenous languages of Africa, and participate in discussions on the dominance of other languages and how they led to political variations among countries in Africa.

In addition to gaining more insight about the political realm, students can expect to learn about the stereotypes that surround language and tribes, the surge of wealth from foreign investors, and what led to the reshaping of the Sub-Saharan culture.

Language Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa will be taught by [David Irungu](#), instructor of Swahili.

**WE WOULD LOVE TO
HEAR FROM YOU!**

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NOVELS *continued from page 3*

If the protagonist does not grow or becomes a “positive” part of society, then the novel is considered a failure.

“There are not a lot of scholars who have studied this comprehensively. I do not necessarily see it as failure. Maybe the protagonist does not desire to be part of the status quo, and by not being part of the status quo in the eyes of society they may be considered a failure because they do not integrate themselves,” she continued.

According to Lorenzo-Feliciano, some of these novels have been censored at some point. Others have been banned from schools during certain periods.

However, she said this genre has to be read with a critical eye since some of the novels that made it to the school curriculum are racist or misogynistic.

During her research, she hopes to discover why such novels were not or are not incorporated in school curriculums, and literature produced by Hispanics or Latinos in the United States.

MURNIATI'S RESEARCH TELLS THE STORIES OF THE 'FORGOTTEN'

Tri Murniati, Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies doctoral student, is using her research to tell the stories of Indonesian domestic workers.

The goal of her research is to change the 'mindset' of readers about domestic workers, and map Indonesian migrant writing's position in the world of immigrant writing.

She has been accepted to attend the 2017 Asian Graduate Student Fellowship at the National University of Singapore. During this six-week program, Murniati will collect supporting materials for her research on Indonesian domestic workers.

The fellowship is offered by the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore to Asian graduate students working in the humanities and social sciences on Southeast Asian topics. The aim of the fellowship is to enable scholars to make full use of the wide range of resources held in the libraries of National University of Singapore and the

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Murniati is excited about her upcoming venture. The fellowship will provide her an opportunity to do fieldwork that is essential to her overall research.

She believes her findings will be beneficial for people to see Indonesian domestic workers with a new, fresh lens.

“The long-term goal of my research is to help people acknowledge a new genre in Indonesian literature, Sastra Buruh Migran, and to develop a better understanding of migrant workers.”



TWO

MINUTES *with*

Huguette Bobda

Graduate Assist. of French



Where are you from?

I have lived in many places. Germany was the last place I lived in.

Why did you choose to come to the U of A?

I came to the U of A to earn a bachelors degree in accounting. I became interested in foreign languages after taking a few electives in French.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I really enjoy using my abilities to help my students. There have been times when I felt that my teaching was not effective, but students proved me wrong by being able to converse with each other in French. This is so rewarding!

When you are not here, where are we most likely to find you?

When I'm not here, I am usually on the field with my boys.