

# Modern Languages

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## Bienvenue, Willkommen, Bienvenido

Welcome Dear Readers!

You are a past, present or future student of the Modern Languages Department, and we hope you will enjoy this new addition to our website. In writing this Summer Newsletter, we have you in mind: your stories, experiences, interests, and questions.

The Department has undergone a few changes during this past year. Dr. Marie-Luce Parker retired from her position as chair and faculty in 2008. Dr. Miguel González-Abellás is the present chair.

In this special issue on **Study Abroad**, you will find an overview of the programs available, but also stories from returning students, as well as many opportunities for students to benefit from an

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**International Education.** In a competitive job market, students who succeed in foreign language studies are more sought after than others and open up worlds' of possibilities for themselves and their choices of career.

Again, welcome to the Department!

## Why Study Abroad?

Certainly, you have thought about it, but are concerned whether it is worth the investment: "it's out of my reach for sure." You might be afraid of the time commitment: "how is this going to work out with my plans to graduate in four years?" Also, you doubt the impact of such a decision on your life: "**is it worth it?**" All legitimate concerns.

Instead of giving you the language teachers' perspective on the amazing opportunities offered at Washburn, enjoy discovering **students' perspective** on their particular apprehensions and their unique answers.

Take a look at our programs, either available through the Department of Modern Languages

or, through the office of International Programs at <http://www.washburn.edu/iip/>

It is not by chance that International Education is a part of the life-changing options promoted by the Washburn Transformational Experience (**WTE**).

Before your read riveting stories from returning students, don't forget to mark your Bod calendar, and visit the

- ✓ **Study Abroad Fair on Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 11:00AM**, Memorial Union, where you will meet organizers, students, and learn all you need to know to make an informed decision.

## Bridges to Career's Doorstep

By Travis Byers Senior German and Management Major

When asked to write a brief visit into Washburn University's German Department, I knew that would be an easy task because there has not been a department on campus that's affected my career path more. German has been my major since I started my undergraduate studies and **active membership** of its club ensued. German, as a major, can build bridges to career's doorstep, open doors to new friendships and arrange opportunities to study in Germany or Austria that no one should pass up! I am grateful for, enthusiastic about and supportive of the ambitions of the German department. Thanks to them, I treasure the unforgettable memories from my one semester abroad in **Osnabrück Germany**.

### Study German, Business or Social Sciences

#### Klagenfurt, Austria University of Klagenfurt

[http://dia.uni-klu.ac.at/univ\\_e.htm](http://dia.uni-klu.ac.at/univ_e.htm)

- Fall Semester: Sept – Feb. & Spring, Feb. – July
- Summer Program: beginning of July – beginning of Sept.

#### Osnabrück, Germany Fachhochschule Osnabrück

<http://www.wiso.fh-osnabrueck.de/incomingstudents.html>

- Fall Semester: Sept – Feb. & Spring, Feb. – July
- Summer Program: mid Aug. – mid. Sept

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## Make the Language Real

By Kelly White Spanish Major

As someone who expects a lot from post-secondary education, I have not been disappointed by my experience as a student in Modern Languages Department at Washburn. The professors and administrators – from an impressive variety of countries and cultural backgrounds – have always been excellent, and in addition to offering high-quality traditional on-campus courses, they have also facilitated my participation in a **5-week summer study abroad program in Puebla, Mexico**, they have encouraged my volunteer efforts with a local **Latino community center**, and they have worked with me as an individual to make the Spanish language a real, meaningful and beneficial part of my life, not just an academic endeavor.



*Bremen, Germany (North of Osnabrück)*

### Study Spanish in Mexico, Spain, Paraguay...

- Puebla, the Popular Autonomous University of the State of Puebla
- Guanajuato, the University of Guanajuato
- Monterrey, University of Monterrey
- Asunción, Catholic University, Asunción, National University
- Santander, University of Cantabria

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## A Sort of Platonic Endeavor

By Colin Kostecky German / English Major

Something phenomenal once happened to me in a dentist waiting room. I was still feeling the jetlag from my year abroad in Germany (I'd often catch myself starting a *wie bitte?* upon mishearing anyone and was still overly-excited about the concept of free public restrooms in America), and I was reading the most virile thing available—some drab magazine I'd found pressed between stacks of *Cosmos* and *People*. Suddenly, my eyes caught the word “*mensch*” in the article; it stuck out like a friendly pair of lederhosen at a black tie event. *What* I thought, *a German word in an English article?* Then there was another: “*zeitgeist*.” *‘Time-spirit’? What’s that all about?* Something was happening here—my mind was more perplexed than a Gordian knot. My dictionary, however, would prove a great disentangler. One teeth-cleaning later, I came home to find that these words were definitely German, but anglicized; and it amazed me how easy it was to memorize their definitions since I had an understanding of the original language. I then fell into an etymological hysteria—tearing out the Latin and Greek and French

*It's a great way to learn and keep a hold of new vocabulary, as well as establish a deeper connection to my mother tongue*

origins of words I thought I'd known: “confidence” comes from *fidēs*, faith or trust, “agnostic” from *a + gnōsis*, without knowledge, “cul-de-sac” is French for *bottom of sack*....It was like an entire world had been operating under my notice, and just now discovered. It is for this reason that I am continuing my studies of German at Washburn and why I've enjoyed taking some basic French courses: I'd like to achieve a basic understanding of the languages which founded English as we know it today—German, French, Greek, and Latin—because, for one thing, it's a great way to learn and keep a hold of new vocabulary, as well as establish a deeper connection to my mother tongue. It's also a sort of platonic endeavor, a striving toward the ideal or truth of a word, like etymology's etymology: [Gk. < *etumon*, true sense of a word].

## Fall in Love with Spanish Culture

By Tammy Mitchell WU Alumni

It may sound dramatic, but the Modern Language Department at Washburn University changed the course of my life. After finishing the initial Spanish courses to fulfill Washburn's foreign language requirements, I couldn't get enough of Spanish. I continued taking courses until Professor Miguel González-Abellás encouraged me to study abroad.

Thankfully, I took his advice and spent two semesters at the University of Cantabria in Santander, Spain. My time abroad not only honed my language skills, but also made me fall in love with **the multifaceted Spanish culture** and led to my decision to pursue a master's degree in Spanish literature.

I am in the final weeks of my MA at the University of Kansas, and I will leave for Spain in August of this year to become a full-time lecturer at the University

of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. Five years ago, I never would have believed that I would have an advanced degree in Spanish literature, and now I am in a field that I love with **countless opportunities for travel and learning**. I owe so much to the Modern Language Department, and specifically to Miguel, for supporting me and encouraging me during and after my studies at WU.



*Spain, Fresh Seafood*

## Step Out Into the Unknown

By Josh King Mass Media, Public Relations Major

If you had told me even two years ago that I would be studying abroad for two months, by myself, I would have told you you were crazy. Professors had been hounding me for years, telling me that studying abroad was perfect for me, that it was something I needed to do.

Not willing to **step outside my clearly defined comfort zone** I made up a multitude of excuses, good quality excuses. I told them it was too expensive, I told them I didn't think it wasn't worth it for just a Spanish minor and my big card, the one no one wanted to argue about, I told them my family was too important, that I simply couldn't be away that long.

*It's my opportunity to experience  
life outside my comfortable life  
in small-town Kansas.*

Yet as I write this, I'm 11 days away from 65 days in Costa Rica, **65 terrifying yet exciting days** that will change my life forever. I think I knew all along that I should study abroad. I had been telling myself that it wasn't right for me, because it was easier that way. It was **easier to stay here in Kansas** with my family and friends, it was easier to keep working my comfortable job and cruising through classes, but for the first time in my life I'm ready to take off on an adventure unlike anything I've ever experienced.

It's my opportunity to prove to myself and my family that I can step out into the unknown and succeed. It's **my opportunity for adventure**. It's my opportunity to experience life outside my comfortable life in small-town Kansas. It's my opportunity to grow and become a better person, to become a better citizen of this global community we call home.

## Forever France

**Newsletter Editor:** *How did you decide to study in Clermont-Ferrand?*

**Michael Gilmore:** Going to Clermont wasn't that hard of a decision. I had already seen the North of France while on vacation a few years before. I wanted to see another part of France.

**William Olliso:** I decided to study in Clermont-Ferrand because Washburn has connections with Université Blaise Pascal and so it was the "default" choice for me. A lot of Americans have never heard of the town, and even some French people would ask why I would want to go there, but I really liked the town. I've visited other cities in France and a few other spots in Europe but Clermont-Ferrand is now like **my second home**. I love it there.

**NE:** *What is the most striking memory from your stay in France?*

**Gilmore:** The most striking thing was, well, the strikes. I missed a few days of work because the



*Robert Van Trump, Michael Gilmore and William Olliso*

trains were on strike. When I didn't have to worry about the trains striking, I had to worry about **my students striking**. Then for a few weeks, I couldn't go to classes because the campus was blocked off by students. I was there during the CPE strikes.

Please see *Forever France* on page 5



**Olliso:** My most striking memory is feeling so **intellectually super-charged**. When one is abroad one learns new things constantly, everyday, without trying. Every experience is in at least some small way new and exciting. I remember being constantly curious and feeling like a sponge.

**NE:** *Did you experience a cultural shock there?*

**Gilmore:** I didn't really experience a culture shock. But then again, I've moved around so many times that I'm not really shocked anymore.

**Olliso:** I can't say I really experienced much of a cultural shock. I felt like I adapted very well to my new situation and started enjoying it almost immediately. I've heard of some people being depressed the first month, for me I probably had about **two days where I felt odd**, but that was mostly because I felt useless when trying to communicate, especially compared to some of the other exchange students from other countries, who, in addition to knowing their native tongue, and knowing French (usually better than me) they could also speak English fluently. There I was struggling to learn my second language.

### Study French

**Clermont-Ferrand, University of Blaise Pascal**

[www.univ-bpclermont.fr](http://www.univ-bpclermont.fr)

Fall: Sept – Feb. & Spring: Feb. – July

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## Book Club in Topeka

By Roy Lacoursiere

This group began almost 8 years ago through the initiative of a woman involved in reading groups, Pat Bell, who spoke with several others with interests in reading and reading groups to see if we would be interested in a **French group**.

We agree, and she organized the first meetings. After a year or so she moved out of state to be closer to her family. With my growing interest in French and French literature, I agreed to be the coordinator.

*You see cool things, meet new people,  
form relationships that can continue  
and survive even after you return.*

Other than this feeling of inadequacy I had no problems adjusting to my new surroundings.

The hardest part of studying abroad was **coming back**. But in a lot of ways it's just as important. You go to a new country and learn about it, then you go home and you learn a lot about your own country. Things that go unquestioned and un contemplated suddenly stand out as odd or curious. Everything is new abroad, but when you come back, everything there is new too.

**NE:** *For you, what are the benefits of studying abroad?*

**Gilmore:** The benefits are endless. I lost 40 pounds while there from all of the walking. My language skills improved after a month. I also learned to not take things so seriously. That's not to say that I didn't do anything there. I just didn't worry as much. It was **less stressful** for me.

**Olliso:** The benefits of going abroad are too great to be listed. You learn so much in such a short amount of time. You see cool things, meet new people, form relationships that can continue and survive even after you return. Going abroad was the best thing I ever did. I met my fiancée and made numerous other friends with whom I stay in contact with over the Internet. I have no regrets and highly recommend going abroad to everyone.

In the eight years we have lost a few other members, but have gotten as many new ones. For most members it is literature read **in English translation**.

We are **all lovers of good literature**, but I will give you my particular reasons for liking the group. I will start with the group members, with whom I/we have gotten to

Please see *Book Club* on page 6

be friends over the years, then the literature. French literature gives me an opening into some of the world's best literature that has influenced other world literatures, and this is true going back to the Middle Ages (of which we have sampled some) and continuing to today. If one looks, for example, at **Nobel Prize winners**, French literature and writers are over represented. Then the literature opens into major events of world history, and culture. And to not belabor matters too much, if one is interested in the language, as I am, the books can be read in French, contributing to growing vocabulary, etc.

Although there are many things that we've read that I have loved, if I have to pick one work it would be **Proust's *In Search of Lost Time***. Even if one does not read the whole work, reading only the first volume gives a good introduction. Besides the work being filled with treasures of characters, society, excellent writing, etc., it is a work that has contributed to so much other literature after it throughout the 19th century and still today.

The French Literature Reading Group meets in the Topeka Public Library. For more information, contact Roy: [lacour\\_1@cox.net](mailto:lacour_1@cox.net)

### Modern Language Department Website:

<http://www.washburn.edu/cas/is/>

**Thank you to all of our contributors:** students, alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the Department of Modern Languages.

With special thanks to Randall Scott, WEA.

This newsletter will be published every summer.

**We look forward to your comments.**

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*Dear Readers,*

*Many programs offered and sponsored by the Department of Modern Languages: the Modern Languages Scholarship fund helps students who study abroad, and the Modern Languages Program fund provides support for many department priorities including: tutoring by and for students, language club activities, field trips, etc. All your gifts make a significant difference in the quality of education at Washburn.*

*Current and future students directly benefit from the services and opportunities to which you choose to contribute. In helping support our programs, you also shape our students' experience.*

*Your gift is appreciated at any level. Please help make a difference by designating your gift, and don't forget to fill out the information slip so we can better thank you for your support.*

*The Department of Modern Languages.*

Two simple ways to support students and programs in Modern Languages at Washburn:



**Online:** Gifts can be online made via the Washburn Endowment Association Website  
Click on the following link: <https://www.wea.org/Giving/Give.asp?~=>

- In the **Donation Information** rubric, select **Donate to:** *College of Arts and Sciences*
- A drop down menu will appear, where you can select *Modern Languages*
- In the **Gift Detail** rubric, write whether you would like your gift to go to *Modern Languages Scholarship fund* or *Modern Languages Programs*.



**By Mail:** Please mail your gift to Washburn Endowment Association  
1729 SW MacVicar Avenue  
Topeka, KS 66604

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