

The Foreign Languages Newsletter

Clark University · Worcester, Massachusetts

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FROM THE CHAIR

The November 9th issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* featured an article on How Foreign-Language Departments bring Everyday Texts to Teaching. Highlighting efforts to develop foreign-language curricula in US universities that embrace “real-world” applications of the foreign tongue researcher Burton Bollag interviewed language professors who stressed (1) the importance of a communicative approach in language study, (2) an interdisciplinary emphasis that breaks away from the primacy of literary texts in language classes and (3) “a sustained collaboration among all members of the teaching corps” so that faculty teaching advanced courses are also familiar faces in the introductory language-level classes.

Reading this article, Clark students might wonder, “So, where’s the beef?” Our FL&L curriculum has long highlighted real-world communicative skills with different courses emphasizing the diversity of linguistic expression from formal to familiar discourse. With an exciting variety of course offerings that include politics, popular culture, film and even translation workshops, Clark students should recognize that they are on the cutting edge of foreign-language education.

Of course, the Clark model is more than just a cluster of strategies to make language study more appealing. Our efforts have part of a curricular plan to strengthen strategic links across the disciplines to other areas of study, such as the International Studies Stream, Government, Geography, IDCE and Communications. Study-abroad options in France, Germany, Spain, Latin America, Japan and China have added special coherence to the kinds of interlocking program arrangements that increasing numbers of our students take advantage of. If you’d like to read the full article, check on line at <http://chronicle.com>.

Marvin D’Lugo

EDITOR’S NOTE: As I begin a year-long sabbatical, this issue marks the end of my editorship of the Newsletter. With the next issue, I turn the reins over to my able colleague, Professor EVERETT FOX, who will serve as acting chair of the Foreign Languages Department for 2008. ¡Hasta pronto! MDL

CLASS TRIP TO THE BIG APPLE

On October 31 Assistant Prof. Belén Atienza’s Spanish 131 class: “Readings in Hispanic Literature,” attended New York City’s Spanish Repertory Theater for a Spanish language performance of Federico García Lorca’s play “La casa de Bernarda Alba.” The class, including students from University Park HS, comments on this unique class trip:

“I enjoyed the play so much because I was able to see it in a different perspective than what we learned in class. Being in the audience made me able to relate to each of the characters in the play. It really touched me when at the end, Bernarda, who is a very autocratic, oppressive and cold person, finally opened her eyes, and just cried and showed her real feelings in front of her family. At this moment I understood how seeing a play live is more powerful than just reading or seeing it in a movie.” -Sarah Simatupang -Class of 2009

“The play was great and totally what I did not expect. The actresses were sensational, especially Maria Josefa, she brought comedy to the play that I hadn’t noticed was there when I read it. The diversity of countries they (the actors) came from added to my reaction and understanding of their characters.

Overall the trip was awesome and an absolute experience, both on the educational side, as we are in our theatre section of class, and in the social aspect for, in my opinion, I feel closer to my friends in class.” Patricia Sanchez, University Park High School.

“Seeing the play was different from reading it or watching the movie because we were able to see and hear everything, including the reactions from the audience. It was also interesting to see how the director interpreted the text through his use of props and set. Although doing away with the white, thick walls does away with the symbols of purity, sterility and entrapment, the cage-like bars were a more universal way of depicting the house, and they constantly reminded the audience of the prison in which the women lived.” Kayleigh Lagasse

“Integrating an outside supplement like the play into an academic curriculum can be quite refreshing. Spanish is my major and I hope to be able to continue to grow in the language and culture during my years at Clark. The play that I saw today truly was an educational experience for me, because it brought life to

words in a textbook and perspective in learning not only new languages, but their cultures as well." - Andre Kenstowicz.

UNDERGRAD TA EXPERIENCE AT CLARK

During the fall semester students worked as peer Teaching Assistants in language courses under the supervision of Professor CONSTANCE MONTROSS. As part of the expanding archive of their undergraduate peer-teaching experiences, they have written comments:

From V. Avril Perez, TA in Spanish 106:

As a Teaching Assistant (TA), I've tried to give practical help to students that will supplement their classroom lessons and also to provide information on Latin-American culture. For example, we practice reading and aural comprehension with news items from Latin America. I have also used maps of the region with the aim of helping students familiarize themselves with the placement of countries and capital cities as well as teaching them about Latin American music and dance. The students have also dealt with certain emotional and controversial themes such as migration. In this latter context, I have shared some of my personal knowledge and experiences in order to promote conversation and a more interactive debate. I think that being a TA in Spanish classes offers me a lot of experience in practical communication with other people, something that's really important in my major in International Relations.

From Alex Lefter '08:

I started working as a Spanish TA in the spring semester of my freshman year. As a Spanish major, my goal has been not only to speak the language fluently, but also to become educated about Hispanic literature and culture. I am also considering pursuing graduate coursework in Spanish and eventually teaching. Being a TA has given me a flavor of what is like to teach Spanish, which most people don't get until they are graduate students, and it has helped me to make a mature decision about my future career goals involving Spanish.

From Sara Estes-Smith '08:

I've been a TA for only one semester. When Prof. Montross asked if I would be interested in this kind of work, I didn't feel very confident about my own skills as a teacher. But after several weeks with a seasoned teacher as my guide, and the warmth of the students, I feel much better. I hope I've created a learning environment for everyone and that everyone ends the semester with good memories of our discussion groups.

FACULTY NOTES: THE CHIAPAS LINK

Two members of our Spanish faculty have been actively involved in exploring different aspects of the socio-political life of the Chiapas region of Mexico this semester.

Assistant Professor of Spanish, BELÉN ATIENZA, gave a series of talks at the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas Mexico in late November. She spoke on "Lope de Vega y los Medici: Arquitectura y poder en la Quinta de Florencia" in Tuxtla Gutiérrez and read her poems at the Casa de la Cultura, in San Cristóbal. The newspaper *El Heraldo de Chiapas* published an interview with Prof. Atienza as well as selections of her poetry.

In late December, Spanish Professor CAROL D'LUGO will participate at the national Modern Language Association convention in Chicago on the panel "Interpreting Historical Turbulence: Mexican Writers on Tlatelolco, the Earthquake of '85 and the Zapatista Rebellion." D'Lugo will speak on "Narrativizing Indigenous Rebellion." She will be joined on the panel by Juan J. Rojo, Clark grad and Asst. Prof. of Spanish at Texas Christian University, who will talk on: "Being There: Voice and Representation in the 'Other' *Testimonios de Tlatelolco*."

TEACHER TRAINING OPTION IN MADRID

Through the auspices of Begoña Llovet, Director of the Tandem Center in Madrid, Clark graduates with previous study abroad experience in Spain who are interested in careers in teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language, may enter a year-long program in Madrid. For more information contact Spanish Program coordinator, Prof. María Acosta Cruz at macostacruz@clarku.edu.

THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES NEWSLETTER is published by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Estabrook Hall 301, Clark University, Worcester, MA 01610. Please send news items and announcements of coming events to Newsletter Editor, care of the Department, or call us at (508) 793-7342, 793-7234 (e-mail: jberg@clarku.edu).

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