

# Polyglot

Department of  
Modern Languages  
and Classics

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

The past academic year was another excellent one for the Department of Modern Languages and Classics. Our students and faculty received top university and national honors. Faculty members continued to publish at a prolific rate, and they shared their expertise through their leadership activities within local, regional, national, and international professional organizations. During the past summer most faculty

members received computer upgrades, and we added two new multi-media rooms to our home in BB Comer Hall. At a time when U.S. institutions of higher education are experiencing hiring freezes or worse, we were fortunate to hire a new Assistant Professor of Spanish, a Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish, a



Thomas C. Fox, chair

Spanish Instructor, and an Italian Instructor. As the University continues to grow, so does our department: our enrollments increased by 21% during the past academic year, and have increased by a staggering 48% in the past two years. Last year we had 62 graduate students and, by our calculations, 130 Foreign Language and Literature majors (Classics, French, German) and 185 Spanish majors.

We enjoy hearing from alumni and encourage them to send us their news, memories, and ideas. Please be sure to visit our website at <http://bama.ua.edu/~mlc/index.html>, where you can find departmental news. ♦

## TWO MLC STUDENTS SELECTED TO USA TODAY COLLEGE ACADEMIC TEAM

*Excerpts from UA News, April 29, 2009*

### LAURA DOVER

Hometown: Jasper

Majors: Philosophy, Spanish

Laura Dover observed how the Spanish-speaking students at the Tuscaloosa school where she tutored felt lost in a sea of English speakers. So Dover, a junior from Jasper, decided to do something about it.

"The solution to this problem seemed to me a simple one: expose Hispanic children to English before they begin their primary education, at an age when they are most receptive to language skills," says Dover.

She approached the Tuscaloosa City Schools about starting a summer class for Spanish-speaking preschoolers, but money was tight. So she went to Jumpstart, an existing summer program for at-risk students, and

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Laura Dover on the right and Laura Godorecci second from right

STUDENT NEWS

received permission to set up her program using Jumpstart's resources, including facilities, lunchroom staff and busing. For a teacher's salary and supplies, she requested and received a grant of \$5,000 from the Hispanic Jumpstart program.

"I have been in public education for 12 years and have never met anyone as dedicated and eager to help those who are less fortunate," Kristi Garcia, an English as a Second Language specialist with the Tuscaloosa City Schools, wrote in her recommendation letter. "Her knowledge of community needs and determination to ensure the success of this endeavor was simply astounding."

Dover and two other students put up fliers to advertise the program and visited soccer fields, restaurants and churches. Dover also visited families personally to urge parents to enroll their children; as a result, eight Hispanic children joined the pilot program in the summer of 2008.

"Perhaps the success of this program is portrayed best through the words of 5-year-old Cassandra: 'I can't wait to start kindergarten,'" Dover says.

Dover is double-majoring in Spanish and philosophy and plans to go to medical school. Among her many accomplishments, she is enrolled in UA's Honors College, received a grant from the Daniels Community Scholar Program and serves as vice-chair of UA's Blackburn Institute. In November 2006, she was declared champion of the Moral Forum Tournament debate, a program sponsored by the UA Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility, which judges students' ability to debate and engage on moral topics.

"Finally, I should mention Laura's moral courage," Dr. Kathleen P. Cramer, senior associate vice president for student affairs, wrote in her nomination letter. "This ability to take a stand for what is fair and right has continued to be her strength throughout Laura's academic career."

Dover is the daughter of Mike Dover and Lynne Dover.

### LAURA GODORECCI

Hometown: Northport  
Majors: Interdisciplinary Studies, Classics

**Laura Godorecci** has a lot on her plate—in particular, the UA senior is shooting a documentary on the Slow Food movement. The Northport native, who already had a short film shown at the Cannes Film Festival, has been working on the production for two years. Pursuit of her dream has taken her to Italy, where she shot footage at the world's first Slow Food university.

Why slow food? Godorecci finds the topic palatable – and filling. The movement started in the 1990s as an alternative to the mass-production of food, she says, and operates "under the concept that good health follows from people eating well."

"Marrying the fields of film and cultural studies that make up the emphasis of my major, my documentary covers slow food's beginnings and focuses on the movement's contemporary attempts at preserving health and culture," she says. "I am the documentary's director, producer, writer and cinematographer." Godorecci is a Classics major, a student in UA's interdisciplinary New College as well as a member of the Honors College and the Blount Undergraduate Initiative. Her poise and scholarship make it easy for professors to forget she's an undergraduate.

"As a faculty we sometimes have to remind ourselves that Laura is only an undergraduate student," Dr. James Hall, director of New College, wrote in a nomination letter. "Her maturity, intellectual capacity, the breadth of her reading and thinking, often make us feel like we are lucky to have an extra faculty member in our midst."

Her filmmaking talent and creativity have overwhelmed her professors at UA. One instructor was so taken with Godorecci's work that she introduced the student to the Italian film critic Gianalberto Bendazzi.

"Laura is a standout student who writes voraciously in her journal, who researches thoroughly her subjects, who understands that 'thinking' is an activity stimulated by curiosity and who consistently contributes as a leader," wrote Dr. Janeann Dill, who teaches filmmaking and creativity in New College, in recommending her to *USA Today*.

Godorecci's short film "Untitled" was shown in the Cannes Film Festival Short Film Corner in 2008. In addition, Godorecci is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and received the UA Alumni Honors Scholarship.

Godorecci's parents are MLC faculty members Maurizio and Barbara Godorecci. ♦



MLC faculty members Drs. Barbara and Maurizio Godorecci.

## GUNN NAMED STUDY ABROAD AMBASSADOR

**Lekisha Rachel Gunn**, a senior from Montgomery who is double-majoring in German and economics, was selected to be a 2008-2009 DAAD Young Ambassador.

DAAD Young Ambassadors are undergraduate students from North America who recently have studied in Germany and are interested in promoting study in Germany to students at their home school. DAAD Ambassadors help encourage fellow students to study abroad by highlighting their experiences. Ambassador selection is competitive and the students receive training in New York once selected.



*Lekisha Rachel Gunn*

In 2008, Gunn was a DAAD Undergraduate Scholarship recipient and studied at the University of Mannheim during the spring semester. Gunn spent five months abroad studying German history and improving her language skills.

Gunn plans to study international law and says she would love to live in Germany again if the opportunity presented itself in the future. Gunn says she encourages all of her fellow students to study in Germany and believes the rewards are indescribable. ♦

## CLASSICS MAJOR RECEIVES TOP UA AWARD

Recipients of the 2009 Premier Awards—the top individual honors for scholarship, leadership and service at UA—were announced recently by UA President Robert E. Witt at a recognition ceremony.

The Dr. Catherine J. Randall Award, named for the former director of UA's innovative Computer-Based Honors Program, is given to one graduating senior. The Randall Award recognizes the most outstanding student scholar at UA, based on GPA, rigor of course study and extraordinary scholarly or creative endeavor. **Laura Godorecci** of Northport is this year's recipient.

Godorecci has pursued a truly interdisciplinary course of study at UA, including arts and humanities as well as the sciences. Godorecci designed and completed independent learning experiences through which she produced numerous scholarly and creative works. Her passion for filmmaking complements her dedication to scholarship. ♦

## UA STUDENTS AND PROFESSOR PIONEER STUDY IN CUBA

The University of Alabama's initial trip to Cuba proved to be quite an adventure. In the spring of 2009 eleven undergraduate students and the Director, Dr. Michael Schnepf, Professor of Spanish, spent almost four months on the island traveling, studying, and learning about life in Cuba. The students took four classes that included topics that ranged from the complex relationship between Cuba and the USA to culture and conversation. They also interacted with Cuban students via sports, social ties, and university activities.

The group was also quite adventurous. They traveled from one side of the island to the other: from Viñales to Santiago and from Varadero to the Bay of Pigs. Closer to Havana, they visited various Hemingway haunts—his home, his favorite bars, and where he fished—all the



*Alabama students at a war memorial in Santiago de Cuba.*

important museums, the Martí tower and much more. One student swam with the Cuban National team, another preached a sermon in a Cuban church, and still another played on a local basketball team. Many students marched in the Mayday Parade in front of Raúl Castro, spoke with priests, professors and common workers.

The University of Alabama will offer a similar undergraduate program in the spring of 2010. ♦

## NEW LANGUAGE HOUSE OPENS

Beginning in Academic Year 2009-2010, students can live in the French House, a new Living/Learning Community directed by a live-in native (or near-native) speaker of French! Located on campus in one of the University of Alabama's newest residence halls, Ridgcrest South, students have all the convenience and amenities of campus housing, coupled with opportunities for language study and out-of-class experiences centered on developing French speaking skills in a relaxed, but stimulating environment.

### *Who can live in the French House?*

The French House is open to any UA student who is interested in French language and culture. The minimum requirements include a French placement test showing proficiency through FR 201 and placement in FR 202 or higher, and enrollment in FR 205 (Fall) and FR 206 (Spring), each earning two



*Dr. Carmen Mayer-Robin and Elizabeth Barker*

credits. Students earn up to 4 elective credits counting toward the French major or minor by enrolling in these two courses. However, students can have another major and still live in French House.

### *What does living in the French House mean?*

Participants, guided by a live-in native (or near-native) speaker (the French House Director), agree to dedicate two hours per week to full language immersion with a view to increasing oral proficiency while developing interpersonal skills, encouraging cultural exchange, and fostering intellectual growth. Activities may include any of the following: attendance at the French Club sponsored Film Series, shared

cooking and meals, games, book-of-the-month club, or excursions centered on cultural or linguistic development (to the art museum, to attend guest lectures on campus, to participate

in and help coordinate French Club events, such as the Soirée crêpes). Student residents will also keep a journal in French. Grading shall be performed by the French House Director, under the supervision of a faculty advisor who will serve as Instructor of Record and who will provide oversight and mentoring to the French House Director, as needed.

The French House is the result of an initiative by Dr. Carmen Mayer-Robin, Associate Professor of French. The Director during the upcoming academic year is Elizabeth Barker, a graduate student in French. The Department of Modern Languages and Classics also sponsors a successful German House, under the direction of Dr. Elaine Martin, Professor of German. ♦

## GERMAN STUDENTS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS

**Joshua Frank**, who received his B.A. in German from the Department of Modern Languages and Classics, has been selected for a Fulbright grant that will allow him to spend a post-graduate year at the University of Jena, Germany. He will return to the MLC German MA program in 2010-2011.

**William Robertson**, an undergraduate majoring in German, has received a scholarship from the Federation of German-American Clubs that will allow him to spend a year studying at the University of Mannheim. Robertson also recently received a fellowship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and spent part of academic year 2007-08 in Germany.

**Charlotte Lewis**, a German MA student, has just returned from the University of Munich, where she spent

academic year 2008-09 with a scholarship from the Federation of German-American Clubs.

**Alex Haber**, who graduated in 2009 with majors in German and Classics, has also received a scholarship from the Federation of German-American Clubs and will spend a year at the University of Heidelberg. He will return as a student in the German MA program. ♦



*Joshua Frank*



*William Robertson*



*Charlotte Lewis*



Dr. Douglas Lightfoot

## BEST ARTICLE OF THE YEAR

Dr. Douglas Lightfoot's article "Language History for Teaching and Learning German" in *Die Unterrichtspraxis* 40.1 (2007): 34-45 has been selected by the editorial board as the best article of the year. *Die Unterrichtspraxis* is one of the two official publications of

the American Association of Teachers of German. It is rigorously refereed and is international in scope. Lightfoot is Associate Professor of German in the Department of Modern Languages and Classics. ♦

## TWO MLC PROFESSORS PROMOTED

Two Associate Professors in the department have been promoted to the rank of Professor, effective August 16, 2009. **Dr. Metka Zupančič**, Professor of French, has written or edited four books on contemporary French or Francophone literature and thought. She was recently awarded the rank of "Knight" in the Order of the Academic Palms, the oldest French academic honorary society. **Dr. Kirk Summers**, Professor of Classics, is the author of two books on neo-Latin literature and teaches a course on Greek and Roman mythology that enrolls 500 students each semester. Summers was recently designated an Arts and Sciences Distinguished Teaching Fellow. ♦

## MLC FACULTY RECEIVE SUMMER GRANTS

**Dr. Michael A. Schnepf**, Professor of Spanish, received a \$4,000 grant from the Program for Cooperation Between the Spanish Ministry of Culture and U.S. Universities to travel to the Canary Islands to work in the Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós, which celebrates the work of Spanish realist novelist Benito Pérez Galdós. During the summers of 2008 and 2009 Schnepf worked on the author's original manuscripts and galley proofs. Pérez Galdós was born in the Canary Islands.

**Jeffrey Guenther**, Instructor in German, received a grant from the American Association of Teachers of German and the Ministry of Economics and Technology of the German government to participate in a pedagogy seminar in Leipzig, Germany during the summer of 2008.

**Dr. Andrew Drozd**, Associate Professor of Russian, received a US Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Fellowship to attend a pedagogy seminar in Moscow during the summer of 2009. ♦

## GODORECCI SELECTED AS MCNAIR SCHOLARS FACULTY FELLOW

**Dr. Barbara Godorecci**, Associate Professor of Italian, was selected in a campus-wide competition as one of two 2009 McNair Scholars Faculty Fellows. She will serve as an instructor for McNair seminars and as a consultant to the McNair program. ♦

## MODERN LANGUAGES PROFESSORS SERVE ON FULBRIGHT COMMITTEES

Two professors from the Department of Modern Languages and Classics recently served on the National Screening Committee for the U.S. Student Fulbright Program.

**Dr. Alicia Cipria**, Associate Professor of Spanish, served on the National Screening Committee for Spain, and **Dr. Thomas Fox**, Professor of German and Chair of Modern Languages and Classics, served on the National Screening Committee for Germany. The committees select highly qualified U.S. graduating seniors and graduate students to spend a year in a foreign country with the support of a Fulbright fellowship. Screening committee members are chosen from a national pool. They must be accomplished scholars with international experience and high standing in their field. ♦

## LAZDA SELECTED AS A&S DISTINGUISHED TEACHING FELLOW

**Dr. Rasma Lazda**, Associate Professor of German, was selected to serve as an Arts and Sciences Distinguished Teaching Fellow for three years. She will serve as a resource person for A&S faculty. Lazda has published articles on pedagogy and an innovative online textbook. She currently serves as President of the Alabama chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German. She joins Dr. Kirk Summers, Professor of Classics, as a Distinguished Teaching Fellow, giving MLC two of nine A&S Distinguished Teaching Fellows. ♦



Dr. Rasma Lazda

## MLC LAUNCHES FIRST CHINA SUMMER PROGRAM

**Dr. Xiang Zhang**, Instructor of Chinese, took 11 Alabama students to Xiamen University, China in summer 2009. This is the first time an MLC faculty member has led a summer program to China. Last summer MLC faculty also led over 100 students on summer programs in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Spain. ♦

## TWO SPANISH PROFESSORS INVITED AS VISITING PROFESSORS

During the past academic year, two MLC Spanish professors accepted invitations to teach at other institutions.

**Dr. Aida Toledo**, Associate Professor of Spanish, taught in the fall semester at the University of Toulouse, France.

**Dr. Ignacio Rodeño**, Assistant Professor of Spanish, taught for the entire academic year at the University of Florida in Gainesville. ♦

## NEW FACULTY IN MLC

The department was fortunate to be able to hire four new faculty members during the past year. These new people have joined the department as of August 16, 2009:



*Dr. Sarah Moody*

**Dr. Sarah Moody** completed her doctorate in Latin American Literature at the University of California in Berkeley, where her dissertation analyzed literature and journalism from the turn of the twentieth century, focusing on the intersection of gender and new nationalisms under modernity. She is currently working on a book-length project

that studies how discourses of style, particularly gendered style, were brought to bear on the articulation of a peripheral modernity. Her classes treat 19th-century Hispanic American literature through “modernismo.”



*Dr. Óscar Robles*

A native of Mexico who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona, **Dr. Óscar Robles** is an expert in Mexican and Mexican-American literature and film. He has published a book and several articles in these fields. He holds an appointment as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish.

**Mr. Rafael Alvarez**, instructor of Spanish, is a native of Spain and a former Olympic diver. He holds an MA from our department.



*Mr. Rafael Alvarez*



**Ms. Lidia Ciccone**, instructor in Italian, is a native of Italy and holds an MA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she is working on a Ph.D. She will teach in the Italian program, where enrollments have increased 97% since academic year 2003-04. ♦

*Ms. Lidia Ciccone in Rome.*

## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

MLC professors continue to publish at a crisp clip. During the past academic year, MLC faculty members produced 48 publications of all kinds, 41 of which were refereed. Three professors published books:

**Dr. Ana Corbalán**, Assistant Professor of Spanish, authored *El cuerpo transgresor en la narrativa española contemporánea* (Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias).

**Dr. Aida Toledo**, Associate Professor of Spanish, edited and contributed to *Otra vez Gomez Carillo* (Guatemala: Academia Editora).

**Dr. Maurizio Godorecci**, Associate Professor of Italian, co-authored with five other poets *Celebración de la poesía Italo-Guatemalteca* (Guatemala: Ediciones del Cadejo). **Dr. Barbara Godorecci**, Associate Professor of Italian, wrote the introduction. ♦

## SCHNEPF RECEIVES MOSELEY AWARD

In 2008, **Dr. Michael A. Schnepf** was awarded the Edward Moseley Award as the "Hispanic/Latino Advocate of the Year."

Dr. Schnepf was recognized for his work with The University of Alabama's Spanish Outreach, a program that he founded in 2003. Over the last seven years, his "Outreachers" have performed over 2,000 hours of community service helping young Spanish speakers master the many nuances of English.

Dr. Edward Moseley was an outstanding professor and administrator at The University of Alabama for more than thirty years. His interest in and compassion for the Hispanic community set a high standard for those who follow in his footsteps. ♦

## STUDENTS WIN MERCEDES SCHOLARSHIPS

**Rosmary Pescod**, a senior at the Alabama School of Math and Science in Mobile, won the Mercedes Benz US International Prize awarded at the University of Alabama's annual German Day in February 2009. Sponsored by our department, German Day brings approximately 500 high school students from the state of Alabama to the University of Alabama campus for a day of competitions and activities in the target language. The best graduating senior who intends to study at the University of Alabama is awarded a scholarship of \$1000. Rosemary is currently a freshman at the University, where she has joined previous Mercedes Benz USI award winners Serena Courson, Laura McHan, Lorelei Schellhammer, and Taylor Morgen Sorenson. All are majoring in German.

In addition to Rosemary Pescod, the following four students received Mercedes Benz US International scholarships during the past academic year:

**Whitney M. Taylor**,

**Wesley W. Wintermyer**, **William Boden Robertson**, and **Joshua Frank**. Taylor and Wintermyer are double majors in German and business and each received a \$1000 Mercedes Benz US International Scholarship for Business German. A triple major in German, Political Science, and History, Robertson received a \$1000 Mercedes Benz US International Scholarship for study in Germany, which he combined with a prestigious grant from the German Academic

Exchange Service (DAAD) to study in Mannheim, Germany.

Frank received a \$1000 Mercedes Benz US International scholarship for the German Undergraduate Major with Outstanding Progress in German. As an undergraduate, Frank spent a year in Mannheim, and he has recently received a competitive Fulbright grant to spend the current academic year in Jena, Germany.

In addition to High School German Day, the department sponsors Latin Day, Spanish Day, and French Day. Over 2000 Alabama high school students and their teachers visit our department and campus for these events. ♦



Rosmary Pescod, 2009 German Day Winner, with her teacher Muriel Hoequist (Alabama School of Math and Science) and Felyicia Jerald, MBUSI.



Taylor M. Sorenson, 2008 German Day Winner with Edel Revord, MBUSI

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## FRENCH IMMERSION

The first French language retreat at Camp McDowell, held on March 28-29, 2009, brought together French majors and minors, UA French Club members, French Graduate teaching fellows and faculty, as well as children and friends of the French program from various UA departments (New College, Religious studies, English) for this overnight language adventure. Meals, hiking, conversation, games, a hay ride, treasure hunt, and general good cheer were shared by all. Students left the retreat with a sense of accomplishment and improved confidence speaking French. The trip, organized by Associate Professor of French, Dr. Carmen Mayer-Robin, was free to students and supported by a generous CAISS grant from the College of Arts & Sciences.

