

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA MODERN & CLASSICAL LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

Winter 2022 Newsletter

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Melissa Gjellstad, Ph.D.

With the new year arriving shortly, we reflect on a successful fall semester. It felt good to see campus emerge from the deepest grip of the pandemic as we resumed gathering and adjusted to new standards of life moving forward. The Department of Modern & Classical Languages & Literatures (MCLL) continues to look ahead, and it is a pleasure to be Chair at this particular moment.

We've learned more about online delivery of our language, literature and culture courses and how best to work with students in those instructional modalities. We faculty collaborate with students in co-curricular activities through advising student organizations and hosting events on campus. During Homecoming Week, we hosted the Merrifield Open House to celebrate the first 93 years of our beloved building. We anticipate our future teaching and learning spaces in the renovated Merrifield building, keeping those goals in mind as we transition out of our current spaces and in to Gamble for the duration of the remodel. These transitions inspired this outreach to you, our graduates and supporters, to update you with the latest happenings in our department and share with you the empowering stories of our students, faculty, and staff. Let's reconnect and build community together.

At a time when the world can feel isolating and divided, we continually seek to provide courses, opportunities and experiences that expand our students' perspectives and prepare them to be global citizens. Support from our alumni and friends help enhance our ability to do so. Thank you for considering a gift to the department as you plan for year-end giving.

Sending wishes for a happy, healthy holiday season and prosperous new year!

Melissa Gjellstad



PS: Follow us on social media!

  @UNDlanguages

UPDATES

FACULTY & STAFF

The calendar year of 2022 has brought changes to the composition of our department. In February, MCLL said farewell and welcome to two administrative assistants. We thanked Donna Simlai for her hard work during the past years of the pandemic and welcomed Dena Hegg to our main office. We are so lucky to have found them both! Dena came to us from Music Department and quickly transitioned into her position here. Dena keeps us running smoothly and efficiently, keeping us laughing whenever we stop by Merrifield 320. Leah Breuer returned for a second year as our student employee; with her double majors in Spanish & Communications, she is a helpful resource for everyone. Watch for her work on our social media feed!

This May we congratulated Dr. Debra Maury on her retirement. Dr. Maury taught all levels of Spanish. She pioneered many of our online courses before the pandemic forced us all to adapt to this delivery method. Dr. Maury taught a variety of other Spanish courses, including language for the professions and a capstone course on “The Science of Art. Studies in Cultural Aesthetics.” She has left North Dakota for her new home in Virginia, and we wish her all the best in this newest chapter of life.

After four years of steady leadership, Dr. Thyra Knapp stepped down as Chair this summer. We thank her for staying the course during the unknowns of the pandemic, enabling us all to be successful amid turbulent times. She has stepped up as the interim chair of Department of Teaching, Leadership & Professional Practice in the College of Education and Human Development. She will also co-chair the Strategic Planning Committee for the College of Arts & Sciences this year.



Dr. Marc Gandarillas joined the department in August as our new tenure-track Spanish faculty member. Dr. Gandarillas defended his dissertation on Spanish-Catalan bilingualism in Argentina at the University of Florida's Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies earlier this year. He has a robust research agenda and has begun working with UND students in the Spanish program language courses.



Merrifield Hall 1967

EVENTS ON CAMPUS

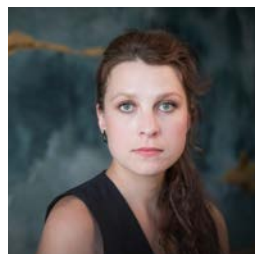
On November 5th, the poems by beloved Norwegian poet Olav H. Hague came to life through music and translation, thanks to the collaboration of three women from Norway and the United States. Reidun Horvei (singer and performer) and Inger-Kristine Riber (pianist and composer) paired with Katherine Hanson (scholar and translator) brought poems from nynorsk to English into an engaging program that melded performance and lecture – a blend of fine arts and humanities that celebrated this unique poet and his work. Titled RIT, the trio published a bilingual text containing the poems and an accompanying CD in late 2021. The trio completed a tour in 2021 in Norway and brought RIT to the US in 2022.



THE NEXT 93 MERRIFIELD HALL

Nearly every UND undergraduate student has taken a course in Merrifield Hall during their years on campus. We are proud to be one of the core humanities disciplines at the heart of this iconic, beautiful building. In September we celebrated the first 93 years of Merrifield Hall.

Now, as we prepare to move out this month for the [2023-24 Merrifield renovation project](#), we want to celebrate the stories that our alumni have from this building. What are your Merrifield memories? Submit your narratives and photos online at [Merrifield Memories](#).



SAVE THE DATE: March 9, 2023: Norwegian pianist Oda Hjertine Voltersvik will present a program titled “Nordic Unrest” with piano pieces by Edvard Grieg, Jean Sibelius, Geir Tveitt and Atli Heimir Sveinsson. In these pieces the composers aimed to capture either elements within the dramatic Nordic nature or reflect tales or characters originating from mythology and folklore. The program’s pieces reflect an inner unrest from the characters described.

MCLL COURSES

While degree-seeking students in our department take mostly program-specific courses to complete their language degrees, two upper-level courses bring together all majors in their final semesters. Intended as a scaffolded pair of summative academic experiences, the LANG 380 “Global Gateways” and LANG 480 “Global Connections” sequence offer students a deep dive into the interdisciplinary nature of cultural practices and traditions around the world. Both courses serve as valuable Essential Studies requirements, fulfilling UND general education learning outcomes for advanced communication and capstone courses.

The **Global Gateways** (LANG 380) course has recently featured topics on “Pirates & Piracy” with Dr. Sherrie Fleshman, “The World is Gone: Coming Home from War” with Dr. Eric Ross, “Travel, Trespass and Testimony” taught by Dr. Sarah Mosher, and “Remembrance and Forgiveness” designed by Dr. Helene Weldt-Basson. The thematic focus allows language students to coalesce on a theme and conduct independent research into their areas of language and cultural expertise.

The **Global Connections** (LANG 480) capstone course again asks students to evaluate and synthesize elements of their education in the creation of their final projects. Recent capstone themes include “World Mythologies” and “The Plague in Literature & Film” both by Dr. Claudia Routon, “Medicine, Health, and The Body in Literature, Film, and Graphic Art” with Dr. Sarah Mosher, and “Laughter as Literature: Comedy from Aristophanes to Standup” with Dr. Eric Ross.

Our department also offers online, asynchronous language courses in beginning German, Norwegian, and Spanish. Taught by departmental faculty members Dr. Jonathan Green, Steven Finney, and Steven Schmidt, these [SPEA](#) or “self-paced enroll anytime” courses are popular options for the busy lifestyles of today’s students. From motivated high school students to retired professionals, these lifelong learners value the opportunity to take our language courses from the comfort of their hometowns while still gaining the UND experience – and credits on their transcript.

STUDY ABROAD

UND resumed sending students abroad in 2022 once international travel restrictions loosened. Our MCLL students have been leading the way as some of the first to spend semesters abroad, immersed in the cultures of the languages they study here at UND.

We proudly announce that Dr. Amanda Nagy will lead the university’s only faculty-led study abroad this academic year. Dr. Nagy travels to Vienna with UND students in late May 2023. This course meets learning outcomes for the “Analyzing worldview” special emphasis in our Essential Studies program – just another way that our department serves the general education core mission of our university. Students will take daily excursions that use the city as a classroom, learning about the history, art, architecture, urban design, and environmental innovation of this European cultural center.



HONORS & AWARDS

We are proud to help our students meet their educational goals. Many students dream of studying abroad while at UND but encounter financial hurdles to realize those ambitions. Our generous donors make those dreams into thrilling realities through scholarship funding. In a competitive process, departmental faculty award meritorious students travel and academic scholarships to aid them in language learning and educational experiences abroad.

**For this
academic year,
we awarded 60
students \$85,450
in scholarships.**

This included sending twelve students to seven countries for their transformative educational experiences. Thank you, donors, for prioritizing our students on their journey to become global citizens and leaders.

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS!

We're grateful for your help in supporting Languages students and programs!
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Scholarship award winner offers insight into her motivation for learning Norwegian and adding it as a degree.

“ I am a student at the University of North Dakota majoring in Medical Laboratory Science with a minor in Norwegian. Growing up, my grandfather would talk about our family's ancestry. I learned from my grandpa that my 2nd great-grandmother was from Norway and that there are distant relatives still living in Norway. Ever since then I wanted to visit Norway, see distant relatives, and learn the language and culture. I never knew what part of Norway she was from or when she came to the States. It wasn't until recently that I learned that she was born in Heimdal, Sør-Trøndelag in 1894. She married in 1913 and had nine children. Sometime between 1913 and 1916 they moved to North Dakota and started their family. They made another trip back to Norway in 1919. The family moved back to the United States for the last time in 1921. In 1925 my great-grandmother was born in North Dakota. It was my grandfather's interest in ancestry that introduced me to Anne. With the help of online tools like Ancestry I have been able to connect to my Norwegian roots. Learning more about my 2nd great-grandmother has impacted me in a very personal way. Since learning more about her I have wanted to know more about Norway's culture and language because it makes me feel one step closer to the family I have yet to meet. ”

Kelsi Mansfield

STUDENT SUCCESS

Nathan Foster

Boren Scholar to Taiwan

Status update:

I am currently just under 2/3 of the way through my Boren experience in Tainan, Taiwan. Having been in the swing of things for some time now, approximately 4 months, I can feel my Chinese improving more and more every day. Being immersed in the language has forced me to use my Chinese every day, which is of course exceptional language practice, but even more



importantly has improved my confidence in my language skills.

They say the friends you make in college are friends for life, and I am 100%

sure that the same applies for those you meet while abroad. The people in Taiwan are certainly some of the friendliest I've ever met. With the end of the current term approaching, my friends and I have just started planning where we'll explore next with our 2 weeks off. Can't wait to see what else Taiwan has to offer!



Elizabeth Kolb

Fulbright to Germany

Status update:

Yes thanks for checking in! Everything is good here, I just moved into my new apartment yesterday. My landlady is incredibly kind and everyone has been very welcoming. The landscape here in my town is breathtaking. I took a bike ride already today, and it was like a movie scene! I am very much looking forward to meeting my mentor teacher and interacting with classes.





Taylor Roehl

CBYX to Germany

Status update:

Hello to everyone back home in the department of Modern & Classical Languages & Literatures! My name is Taylor Roehl, and in the Spring 2022 semester at UND I was fortunate enough to win a fellowship with a program called the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (with the help of many of you who might be reading this newsletter right now). With this program, funded by the United States Congress and the German Bundestag, I get to spend eleven months studying, volunteering, and interning in Germany.

At the end of July, I left home for a brief orientation in Washington DC with the other 72 American CBYX-YP participants before flying to Germany and arriving at my temporary placement-city of Cologne (Köln, in German) in the first few days of August. Since then, I have moved in with a wonderful host family, spent a month taking intensive German courses at a language school, and explored the city of Cologne and the surrounding area as much as possible. While I was originally quite intimidated by the idea of moving to Germany with a group of people I had never met before, I can honestly say that I've

been shocked by how quickly I've been able to form genuine relationships with my fellow CBYX participants, other students from around the world at the language school, and my German host family. It has also been extremely interesting to learn about the cultural differences between Germany and the United States first-hand. I can now say from experience that German directness is both refreshing and startling at the same time for someone accustomed to "North Dakota niceness," and there is a steep learning curve to public transportation for someone who has always driven wherever they need to go. Alongside these differences, though, I have noticed plenty of similarities that allow me to feel right at home in my new environment, and I can't wait to dive deeper into my cultural immersion in the next phases of the program.

At the end of September, I will move to my final placement city of Munich (München), Bavaria. There, I'll spend a semester taking classes at a German university, followed by approximately five months at an internship before returning home to the US in June. I'll be living with another host family in Munich, and I hope to continue improving my German language skills while studying and working there. The past month has already been a time of serious personal growth, and it's exciting to think about how life-changing the remaining ten will surely be.

I wish everyone back on the UND campus a fantastic semester!

Liebe Grüße aus Deutschland,
Taylor Roehl

MORE FROM TAYLOR

In the Spring, Taylor researched newspaper coverage on a mass murder for the ND Digital Atlas course with Dean Brad Rundquist and Mike Jacobs. Roehl compared accounts of the 1920 murder in German- and English-language newspapers published in North Dakota.

[Taylor's Project: The Murdered Family](#)



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PS: Follow us on social media!



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WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Alumni are invited to share updates and news for future newsletters. Photos are always a welcome addition! Please include your program and year of graduation.

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