From the Department Head

After more than ten years working at OSU I took over as Department Head from Karin Schestokat, who retired after twenty-four years of service. Prof. Schestokat was a cornerstone of the German program throughout her time at OSU. She brought important changes to the Department when she became Head in 2015. She brought American Sign Language into the Department and fostered its growth. Under her watch we reorganized the lower-division sequence for all languages, and more than a third of our career-track faculty were hired during her tenure. She will be missed.

This has been a big change from my previous role in the Department, teaching all levels of Spanish and researching Medieval Iberian literature, even more so because of the pandemic. What would normally have been a quiet transition in summer was a frantic search for technology as OSU prepared for the start of the fall semester. We quickly moved furniture and reinstalled computer systems in Gundersen 104, which had been in the process of being converted into the Language Resource Center. We equipped it and our other classrooms in Gundersen with sophisticated cameras which would allow students to follow classes remotely if necessary. While most of our classes are being taught in person, a considerable number were moved entirely online and are being taught synchronously through video conferencing. Both methods seem to be functioning well because of the hard work of both students and faculty.

This year has also seen some important changes in personnel. Sandy Busby, a lecturer in ASL, and Nuri Creager, a long-time lecturer in Spanish, retired. Aaron Roggia, an Assistant Professor of Spanish, resigned to pursue a career in business, and Emmanuel Velayos accepted a position at CUNY. Jennifer Holt, a lecturer in German, accepted a position at Loyola University in Maryland. We wish them well.

We are also happy to welcome new people. Carol Ready, Assistant Professor of Spanish, comes to us from the University of Minnesota, where she did her Ph. D. in Spanish Linguistics. She is a sociolinguist who works on issues of identity among Moroccan immigrants in Granada. Carolina Sitya-Nin, Assistant Professor of Spanish comes to us from Eastern New Mexico University. She did her Ph. D. at the University of Oklahoma and specializes in foundational narratives in nineteenth century Southern Cone literature. In Spanish we are also happy to welcome Alexander Cárdenas, a Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish and recent Ph. D. from the University of Colorado, and Colin Brown, a Visiting Assistant Professor of German who comes to us from Pacific Lutheran University. Finally, Janice Woods has joined the ASL program as a Lecturer. She comes to us from OSU-OKC.

With the arrival of vaccines OSU has begun to plan for a normal fall semester and we are hopeful that students will again be able to travel for study abroad. Spring enrollments are solid and although the fall semester was very difficult, our programs are surviving the pandemic. The Spanish minor remains one of the most popular programs in the College of Arts and Sciences. With vaccinations begun we look forward to a more normal Fall 2021 semester.

Erik Ekman
Department Head and Associate Professor of Spanish
2020-2021 Languages and Literatures Scholarships

The John Sadler Scholarship
Dr. John Sadler, an OSU alumnus, is now a pediatric psychiatrist in Colorado. This scholarship is awarded to a student of foreign languages who has demonstrated academic excellence, especially in the area of language study. The recipients are Chloe Cavins, Sociology major, American Sign Language minor; Ashley Ruley, English major, French minor.

The Frances Lee & Charles Dutreau Scholarship
This scholarship was endowed by the late Professor Frances Lee and Colonel Charles Dutreau. Professor Dutreau taught Spanish in the Department from 1961-1971. It is given to outstanding students of foreign languages to pursue a study-abroad program. The recipients are Kayla Dunn, Multimedia Journalism and Spanish majors; Kassandra Gaona, Psychology and Spanish majors.

The Reusen-Berghmans Memorial Award
Mr. Michael Yeager, an OSU alumnus, who is now working at Waddell and Reed in Kansas City, has named this award for Georges Reusen and Josephine Berghmans, his Belgian "grandparents", the parents of the father of the Belgian family with whom he lived during his study abroad. It is given to a student of French pursuing language study in a French-speaking country. The recipient is Ashlyn Amador, Global Studies major, French and Philosophy minors.

The Hilde Wohlert Memorial Award
The award was endowed by former students of Prof. Hilde Wohlert, who taught German in the Department from 1968 to 1997 and passed away in 2005. Prof. Wohlert served for many years as coordinator of the German program. She and her husband Harry also pioneered the German by Satellite program that was televised to students in the public schools; the program still continues under the name German Online. The recipient is Rebecca Dempewolf, Architectural Engineering and Spanish majors.

The Susan Waid Childs Endowed Scholarship
The recipient must be enrolled as a full-time student at the University. The recipient must be enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, pursuing a degree in a foreign language and must be involved in a study abroad program outside of North America. The award will be given to no more than one recipient each year. Selection preference will be given to students who are enrolled in a study abroad program for the first time. The recipient is Krista Eldridge, Spanish major.

The Golconda Foundation Award
The Directors of the Golconda Foundation offer these awards to outstanding students in upper-division foreign language classes. The Foundation’s representative is Mr. Chris Bolding of Edmond. The recipients are Mariah Carter, Political Science major, Spanish minor; Rebecca Dempewolf, Architectural Engineering and Spanish majors; Rachel Dolan, Biochemistry major, Spanish and Neuroscience minors; Lauren Egleston, Multimedia Journalism and Spanish majors; Kayla Hoelscher, Global Studies major, French and Spanish minors; Breann Loeber, Chemical Engineering major, Spanish minor; Diego Marek, Environmental Sciences and Spanish majors; John Mulder, Civil Engineering major, Spanish minor; Melanie Olson, Economics major, American Sign Language minor; Tatum Richardson, Psychology major, Spanish minor; Curtis Herron, Microbiology/Cell and Molecular Biology major, American Sign Language minor; Allison White, Art major, American Sign Language minor.

Buck & C.A. Aldrich Endowed Scholarship
The recipient must be enrolled as a full-time student at the OSU Stillwater Campus. The recipient must be enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, with a study focus on foreign languages. The scholarship is intended to help cover the travel costs for a student who wishes to travel within the US or internationally, and gain experiences directly related to their major. The recipient is Shamara Arias, Economics and Spanish majors.

The Outstanding Senior Award
The Outstanding Senior Award is given to a graduating senior who is a declared major or second major in foreign languages. The recipient must have a strong academic record in language classes at OSU. The ideal candidate will have been an active participant in departmental functions. The recipient is Rebecca Dempewolf, Architectural Engineering and Spanish majors.
Remembering Herr and Frau Wohlert, OSU 1977–81
Aaron Fogleman, Batavia, Illinois, 29 March 2020

I studied History and German at OSU from 1977 to 1981 and just learned from a friend who also studied at the time that Dr. Harry Wohlert died last October. The OSU Emerti obituary also noted that Dr. Hilde Wohlert had passed away in 2005. The obituary was helpful and informative, but in no way conveyed the importance and meaning of Herr Wohlert’s teaching efforts for students like me and my friend Jay Clark. I have not yet seen an obituary for Frau Wohlert, who in my view was an absolutely outstanding teacher. So I am writing something for both of them that appreciates and remembers their efforts as teachers from a student point of view.

After living a wandering existence in much of the country, I landed at OSU, nineteen years old, ready to study History, and clueless in foreign languages. This changed quickly when college requirements pushed me into German I with Herr Wohlert during my first semester and German II with Frau Wohlert the following spring. It was the beginning of my life-long love affair with the German language. I do not know anything about the Wohlerts’ distance learning efforts, as that came later, but they were both masters of face-to-face classroom teaching who sent me on my way. Above all, in their own, separate ways each was a Mensch.

Some of the basics that the Wohlerts taught back then probably are not much different now. They began with grammar and vocabulary in Deutsch Heute, which was very difficult at first. Herr Wohlert told us that we already knew a few hundred German words, just because we were American, and that cheered us up. Always meeting in the Classroom Building, he walked into class every day and energetically said, “Guten Tag meine Damen und Herren!” That year the Wohlerts sent us to the language lab twice per week, but I went every day because I liked it and because the woman who ran it was Erich Maria Remarque’s goddaughter. In the second year we read the Californische Staatszeitung and learned advanced grammar. After bragging to Frau Wohlert about mastering extended adjective constructions and endings she laughed at me a few weeks later when I blew them on a major assignment. My grades in her classes were sometimes a little lower. Triumph came in the third and fourth years, when reading ten whole pages for each class meeting – of Schiller and Goethe with Frau Wohlert and Brecht with Herr Wohlert. There was little deep assessment of literature in these classes. Instead, they pushed us to learn the language, and we did. Later I saw all of these plays performed in Stuttgart, and it was fabulous. At the advanced level I learned translation, which included an independent studies course with Frau Wohlert translating 19th-century historical texts into English. I thought this was a big deal because I read printed “Fraktur,” but Frau Wohlert tried to tell me it was not. Later I saw her point, but I did become skilled at translating, which served me well professionally. At a certain point Herr and Frau Wohlert only spoke German in class, during office visits, or whenever we met on campus. Except that Frau Wohlert always gave assignment instructions in English, to ensure that no one could plea misunderstanding later when not completing their work correctly. Frau Wohlert especially pushed us to keep talking, no matter how many mistakes we made – that was how one learned a language, and she was right.

Herr and Frau Wohlert were a good team, promoting a curriculum and certain general goals together, yet teaching individual courses in different ways and styles. Having taught at OSU for a few years they understood the background of students. It is hard to get rid of stereotypes growing up in the U.S. with no connection to Germans, but they insisted. In the first year they both quickly obliterated the notion of Hollywood German, which was verboten in their classes. After studying German at OSU and moving to Germany it did not take long before I was embarrassed by what I had once believed. The Wohlerts knew this well, and dealt with us appropriately, but always humanely.

But they were different. Herr Wohlert effectively used humor and storytelling about German culture. His occasional brief, intriguing references to life in East Berlin from World War II and the early Cold War, seeing thousands of dead people, escaping, and having trouble finding a bathroom on his first day as an immigrant in the U.S. kept us in the classroom. But he also constantly forgot his class notes, which was annoying in the upper-level classes. Occasionally, there was a tug-of-war with the History Department, such as when Herr Wohlert told us that Copernicus, who was from the Prussian border town of Thorn, was German, not Polish. The History Department always won these brief, pleasant debates. Frau Wohlert was serious, yet pleasant: You were going to learn something that day, that week, and that semester with her. She taught me to keep talking, to ignore mistakes, and how to correct beginners (or not). There were no long stories and jokes, she always remembered her class notes, and the advanced students preferred her classes for it. And then one day in my senior year Frau Wohlert suddenly told a joke about Einstein. It was not very funny, and those of us who knew her well looked at each other in disbelief, before we began smiling and laughing a little. Never mind that it was a bad joke: It was funny, because Frau Wohlert had told a joke. In retrospect it seems that Herr Wohlert attracted us into the program and broke us in, while Frau Wohlert worked hard with the advanced students to really get us somewhere with the language. It was a great combination.

Perhaps one of the most important things Herr and Frau Wohlert did as teachers was to encourage us to learn outside of the classroom. Herr Wohlert once told us
that studies showed that average upper-level students only spoke the language three minutes per week in the classroom, which was not nearly enough. In response, my friend Jay worked on a farm in Bavaria one summer and came back to fall classes speaking German better than anyone. I bought a short-wave radio and listened to Deutsche Welle, hung around with a German family in Stillwater, and made an effort as president of the German Club to keep us busy with the language and culture. Doug Hale and Richard Rohrs of the History Department talked to us about their research on German immigrants in Oklahoma. We went to Tulsa and saw a Fassbinder movie and ate in a German restaurant. And we invited a famous German professor named Iring Fetscher to talk about Marx in what became a big event on campus for the History and Philosophy Departments. Jay and I went to see Fetscher the next morning in the Student Union hotel. German students do not do this, I discovered later when studying in Freiburg, so Fetscher didn’t know what we wanted and nervously asked Herr Wohlert about it. Herr Wohlert told me later that Fetscher was relieved to know that we just wanted to talk about Marx. Most importantly, the Wohlerts’ encouragement led us to organize conversation groups with a German graduate student named Reiner Smolenski and an exchange student named Bärbel Zimmermann. Every Tuesday and Thursday evening for my entire senior year we met in the Student Union cafeteria for an hour and spoke only German. That was a lot more than three minutes per week, and so on my first day of a five-year stay in Germany after leaving OSU I spoke the language confidently. Two weeks later, while having to interpret in front of a hundred people at a formal occasion, I survived by remembering that Herr Wohlert had taught us to translate “as accurately as possible, but as freely as necessary,” and Frau Wohlert had taught to “say in English whatever it is they are trying to say in German.”

The Wohlerts were much more than a class and teachers who gave you grades, credits, and some knowledge of German. Herr Wohlert used to say that “the best way to learn English was to study German.” I had never heard of accusative, genitive, and conjunctive until German I and II, and this was just the beginning of many discoveries. If you were up for it, the Wohlerts showed you the way to much more and gave you a nudge toward understanding American society and its language by studying another place and its language — something I have found very useful in my work as a US historian to this day. It was a privilege to have studied with them those four years long ago, and I am sure many, many other OSU students feel the same way.

Faculty News

Isabel Álvarez-Sancho (Spanish) presented “La moderna Lais Hispania de María Teresa León en su autobiografía del exilio Memoria de la melancolía” at the annual meeting of the South Central Modern Language Association in Little Rock, Arkansas in October 2019, and published a book chapter entitled, “¿Alabanza de España y Latinoamérica? La representación de los destinos de exilio en Memoria de la melancolía de María Teresa León” (Praising Spain and Latin America? Representing Exile Destinations in Memory of Melancholy by María Teresa León) in the book Destinos del exilio republicano published by the Fundación Bruno Alonso y Centro de Estudios Montañeses, Spain, 2020.

Rachael Cullick (Classics) presented two papers in 2019: “Apollo’s monstrous delight in the Thebaid” at the Classical Association of the Middle West and South (CAMWS), University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, 4 April 2019 and “Pessima vis: Venus in the Thebaid and Irish goddesses of War” at the Fédération internationale des associations d’études classiques (FIEC), University College London, UK, 5 July 2019.


Jonathan Ellis (Spanish) presented "The Reflected Image in Three Autos by Calderon." Association for Hispanic Classical Theater's "AHCT Virtual Symposium 2020" on July 15.


Jonathan Z. Ludwig (Russian) was invited to present “Kazakh Eurasianism” at the Texas Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies Conference at Texas A&M in College Station, TX, in September 2019. He also published “Anti-Chinese Protests and the Kazakh State” with SAGE International, Australia, and attended the annual meetings of the Central Eurasian Studies Associations (CESS) and the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). He also accepted an invitation to serve on the Oklahoma State Department of Education World Languages Advisory Team.

Susana Perea-Fox (Spanish) presented “La lucha por pertenecer en una sociedad glocal en Compro, luego existo y Debo, luego sufre de Guadalupe Loaeza” at the annual meeting of the South Central Modern Language Association in Little Rock, Arkansas in October 2019.

Carol Ready (Spanish) presented "Identity in crisis: Asserting Morroccanness through stories of struggle" at the 49th conference of The Linguistic Association of the Southwest on September 24, 2020.

John te Velde (German) gave a presentation entitled “Do-Support in West Germanic Languages” for the Friends of Oklahoma Language Sciences in the English Department at OSU on 17 October 2019.

Christopher Weimer (Spanish) presented “The Strange Case of the King Who Impersonated His Own Imposter: History and Metatheater in Vélez de Guevara’s El rey muerto” at the "AHCT Virtual Symposium 2020" on July 15.

Club News

The Chinese Language Association (CLA): Engaging, inclusive, and collaborative, the organization is growing more structured and is taking one step at a time! Our vision is to create opportunities for Chinese learners and Chinese native speakers to communicate in Mandarin, explore ways of learning Chinese, and foster cultural engagement.

After our first officer election in Spring 2020, we redesigned our fliers and publications to interest both Chinese learners and Chinese native speakers to join the organization. We named both Chinese learners and native speakers as our new officers to better embrace thoughts from different perspectives. We continue our practice of weekly meetings and have made it more attractive and creative. Before each session, officers advertise on social media and come up with a Chinese word of the week that summaries the topic. During the conversations, we encourage equal participation by creating a round-table discussion. We share traditional Chinese food, books, and videos to help to spread ideas. Currently, we are experimenting with a “50-minute English, 50-minute Chinese” agenda to form people into groups for one-on-one discussions in the second half of the session. Up until now, we have addressed topics such as Chinese New Year, self-introductions in Chinese, Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK), and Chinese cooking.

Fall semester has been challenging. While some of our plans for in-person cultural activities and group trips have been put on hold, we continue to meet regularly online.

The French Club has been meeting weekly over zoom to talk about French culture and current events, and to practice French conversation.

The Spanish Club has been holding its tertulia on its usual schedule with a reduced number of participants in Gundersen 104, which has permitted them to maintain a safe distance. Tertulia, the twice weekly conversation meeting, has been the best way to practice Spanish outside of the classroom for years. The club hopes to resume some of its other regular events, such as movie nights, in Spring once social distancing requirements ease.

The Mu Upsilon chapter of the national Spanish honorary society Sigma Delta Pi held its annual initiation ceremony on 21 November 2019. Chapter President Sergio Mares and Treasurer Griffin Hughes led the ceremony and inducted four new student members: Karmyn Long, Matea Manterola, Daren Rodriguez, and Olivia Treat-Alvarez. Spanish professor Stephanie Rohner was also inducted as a faculty society member. The chapter has been unable to hold inductions since the pandemic began, but plans to hold one in late Spring 2021.
Congratulations

Our Fall 2019 Graduates:
Mary Cervantes (Spanish)
Jaron Holden (Spanish)
Ryan Hollands (Spanish)
Samantha Homann (German)
Ellie Scheaffer (German)
Ana Paula Solis Ruiz (German, Spanish)
Ethan Streich (Spanish)
Ayrianna Swanson (French)

Our Spring 2020 Graduates:
Edgar Garcia (Spanish)
Iris Owens (German)
Mario Portillo-Swails (French)

Our Fall 2020 Graduates:
Rebecca Dempewolf (Spanish)
Matea Manterola (International Business and Spanish)
Taylor Potts (French)
Eden Patton (Spanish)

Griffin Hughes (Spanish) with Prof. Alvarez-Sancho

Sarah Soliman (Spanish minor)

Leigha Odom (Spanish)
Addison van Zandbergen (Spanish)

Joshua Ross (Spanish)
Olivia Treat-Alvarez (Spanish)
Eden Patton (Spanish)
Ethan Streich (Spanish)

Caitlyn McDowell (Spanish)
Congratulations to Samantha Homann (BA, German and English) who received a Fulbright U.S. Student Program award to travel to Germany during the 2020-2021 program cycle, where she will support the teaching of English as part of a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship.

Congratulations to Ryan Hollands (BA, Spanish, Economics, and Political Sciences) who was named the CAS Orange Gown Graduate for Fall 2019 Commencement.

Congratulations to Kassandra Goana (Spanish and Psychology) who was crowned OSU’s Miss Hispanic/Latina 2020.