

## It's official: World Languages and Cultures

**M**arch couldn't come soon enough for Dawn Bratsch-Prince.

And it wasn't just the beginning of spring that had the chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures excited.

In March, the Board of Regents, State of Iowa, approved a new name for the academic department that Bratsch-Prince chairs.

"I couldn't wait to be able to say World Languages and Cultures," said Bratsch-Prince. "We were very eager to order new stationery and business cards."

So much so that when workmen came to put up signs earlier this semester in the department's recently renovated space in Pearson Hall, they were told to wait until after the Regents acted.

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures formally began the process of changing the department's name back in July 2004, although the groundwork was laid as far back as 2001.

Since that point the proposal has been approved by various groups on campus including the Faculty Senate and the statewide Council of Provosts.

"World Languages and Cultures more accurately describes how this department has broadened the scope of what we do," she said. "Literature, narrowly defined, and languages aren't the only things we teach in this department. By looking at the old name, however, that is the impression one gets."

Faculty in the proposed Department of World Languages and



Cultures use film, culture and literary and non-literary texts to teach a variety of courses including offerings in civilization, history and women's studies.

"The name just better reflects what we actually do," Bratsch-Prince said, "and it gives us room to reorient ourselves and continue to build on our strengths. The new name will allow us to attract a broader student audience. Once they see what the department has to offer, we are hoping they will enroll in our courses and declare a primary or secondary major in World Languages and Cultures. The new name should allow us to attract different kinds of faculty – individuals who have a more interdisciplinary focus and expertise."

The department's current faculty searches have already demonstrated that – attracting candidates who Bratsch-Prince describes as being "flexible" when it comes to their

research efforts and classroom instruction.

In the past, other academic departments on campus have been slow to approach faculty in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures with collaborative projects because of the department's previous perceived narrow focus.

Bratsch-Prince hopes the name change will enable additional interdisciplinary faculty research and classroom efforts that focus on the world's languages and cultures. One of the first such efforts has been F LNG/ME 484/584x, "Globalization, Technology and Culture," co-listed and team-taught by Mark Rectanus, professor of German, and Jim Bernard, Distinguished Professor of mechanical engineering. The course has attracted over 100 students this spring, the majority of them in engineering, and many of these are off-campus participants.

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Dawn Bratsch-Prince

## FLL known as World Languages & Cultures

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Another collaboration will be a 100 level course that the department and the linguistics program are collaborating on called "Introduction to World Languages" (F LNG/Ling 199x), planned for fall 2006.

"World Languages and Cultures is a better home for courses like these," Bratsch-Prince said. "You wouldn't find these types of courses in a more traditional Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. It brings these two disciplines to a meeting point."

Bratsch-Prince says the department aims to increase collaboration with logical partners such as English, TESL, anthropology, history and political science, while welcoming research and teaching projects with new disciplinary partners such as management, HRIM, and biological and chemical engineering.

"The new department name brings these two disciplines (languages and cultures) to a broader public," she said.

Yes, I would like to help the Department of World Languages and Cultures at ISU.

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## WLC Newsletter

**Dawn Bratsch-Prince**, chair  
Editor: Kathy Leonard  
Design: Dave Gieseke

The WLC Newsletter is published twice a year (spring and fall) for the alumni, friends, and faculty of the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Iowa State University, an academic department in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

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Kathy Leonard, professor of Spanish



Elizabeth Rock, a senior Spanish minor

## Two recognized for international efforts

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences recognized international activities by its faculty, staff and students during its annual spring international dinner.

Those honored for their international work included: **Kathy Leonard**, professor of Spanish in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, received the LAS Distinguished International Service Award. Leonard was honored for her work directing the Latin American Studies Program, study abroad involvement and international research efforts. Leonard has coordinated several study abroad trips to Chile, Bolivia and Peru. Her research interests include Latin American women's narrative, second language acquisition and translation studies. She has published numerous translations of Latin American women's narrative and a number of books dealing with the work of women authors. She is currently working on a book project, *Women of Silver and Tin: The Forgotten Miners of Bolivia*.

**Elizabeth Rock**, a senior political science and international studies major, has received the LAS Student International Excellence Award. A Spanish minor, Rock has studied abroad in Spain and Belize while at Iowa State. She was also enrolled in the first Arabic course offered on campus, has participated in the Model United Nations student group and served as an intern for the Iowa Council for International Understanding. She plans to attend graduate school to study international relations.



### Puhl named Barron Award winner

**Emily Puhl**, a senior double major in Spanish and history, has been named a recipient of the Wallace E. Barron All-University Senior Award by the ISU Alumni Association.

The Barron Award is one of the highest honors an Iowa State student can receive during his or her collegiate career. The students are recognized for their high character, outstanding achievement in academics and university/community activities, and promise for continuing these exemplary qualities as alumni.

A piccolo player in both the ISU Concert Band and Cyclone Marching Band, Puhl has also served as a section leader for the marching band and was honored with the ISU Alumni Band Marcher of the Year award. Puhl has appeared on the Dean's List every semester she has been enrolled at Iowa State and received the President's Award for Competitive Excellence.

Puhl's off-campus activities include cooking meals for the Emergency Residence Project, teaching English as a Second Language to immigrants and serving as a language interpreter for a medical mission to Honduras.

# Course offerings

## Brazil Today

Portuguese 320x "Brazil Today" will be offered as part of a Department of Education Title VI Grant for Languages and Cultures for Professions in the fall, 2006. Through an analysis of cinema, literature, popular music, television, and Internet sites the course will address Brazilian customs and etiquette, the country's historical and geographical background, basic political and economic panorama, high tech industries, the role of religious organizations with regard to social issues, ecology, urban violence, the sociopolitical significance of Carnival, the impact of globalization, and Brazil's role in international organizations. "Brazil Today" will be taught in English by **Dr. Thomas Waldemer**.

"Introduction to Medical Interpretation" is currently being offered in Spring, 2006, to meet the demands and interests of ISU students and members of the community who may work in the medical field. This class will offer students the unique opportunity to learn techniques and methods employed by medical interpreters as well as the ethics of the profession. **Tia Huggins** is the instructor.

## Teaching World Languages Today

Foreign Languages 587X, "Teaching World Languages Today," will be offered as a Web-CT (on-line) course for teachers of world (foreign) languages June 12 to July 28, 2006.

This course provides a forum in which secondary (grades 7-12) world language teachers can discuss current developments in world language instruction and assessment. The course will be delivered entirely via the internet. Participants will read articles taken from *Foreign Language Annals* and other professional publications and share their understandings through threaded discussions. Participants will create projects that they can implement in their own classrooms.

A secondary teaching license in a world (foreign) language and a minimum of three years teaching experience is a prerequisite for the course.

Participants will:

- Increase their knowledge of recent developments in world language instruction
- Design instruction based on integrated performance assessments
- Integrate culture in language instruction
- Incorporate grammar in communicative teaching approaches
- Make use of technology in world language instruction

For more information contact **Dr. Linda Quinn Allen**, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Iowa State University, 515-294-7742 or [lqallen@iastate.edu](mailto:lqallen@iastate.edu)

To register: <http://www.lifelearner.iastate.edu> Click on "college credit courses" and then "registration".

## Latin American Program

The Latin American Studies Program has been very active this past year. In the fall we offered a Latin American film festival, organized by two WLC faculty, **Julia Domínguez** and **Tom Waldemer**, which coincided with Latino Heritage Month. Various instructors presented an overview of each film before it was shown and then led attendees in a discussion.

Movies shown were: "Guantanamo" (Cuba), "María llena eres de gracia" (Colombia), "Orfeo" (Brazil) and "La ley de Herodes" (Mexico).

A seminar series also took place in the fall with the following talks: "Women and Natural Resource Management in Latin America" presented by Professor **Cornelia Flora** and graduate student **Edith Fernández-Baca**, "Patterns of Medical Choice in Southern Mexico" presented by LAS Dean **Michael Whiteford**, and "Brazil's History and My History of Brazil" presented by James Hufferd.

The spring seminar series included the following talks by ISU professors: **Max Viatori**, "Neoliberalism and the Menace of Multiculturalism in Ecuador," **Eugenio Matibag**, "Spain's Empire in the Philippines: From Magellan to McKinley," and **Kristin Pesola**, "Fatal (Tourist) Attractions: Saura's *Antonieta* and Mexican National Identity."

In conjunction with the Greenlee School of Communication, the Latin American Studies Program hosted Mercedes Lynn de Uriarte who currently teaches Journalism and Latin American Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. She presented a talk titled "Meeting Yourself Coming and Going: The Long Arm of Media, Empire and Latin America."

Our featured speaker in the spring was Sandra Benítez, the author of four novels (*Night of the Radishes*, *The Weight of All things*, *Bitter Grounds*, and *A Place Where the Sea Remembers*), two of which are set in El Salvador. While at ISU, Benítez met with students and gave a reading of her work as well as a talk for the ISU community titled "The Saving Grace of Stories."

The Program is pleased to announce the winner of the Latin American Studies Essay Contest: **Victoria Muñoz**. Vicky will receive \$300.00 for her winning essay and be recognized at the WLC's Awards Ceremony in April. Stay tuned for more information about the Latin American Certificate Program which we hope to have approved soon.

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# Faculty notes

**Dawn Bratsch-Prince** (Spanish) has been nominated and elected to the MLA Elections Committee (2006-2008). The committee is charged with identifying scholars in the diverse fields of modern

languages for service on the organization's Delegate Assembly. The Delegate

Assembly is a body of 275 individuals who determine issues and policy for discussion by the greater membership of the organization. She spent two days in downtown New York City learning about the operation of the MLA and the specific duties of the committee. She has also been asked to serve as an evaluator for one of the NEH grant programs. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn how the NEH is structured and how grants are processed and evaluated. Of course, two days in Washington, D.C., is an added benefit.



**Kathy Leonard** (Spanish and Linguistics) has received a Fulbright for Research in Bolivia for 2006-07 for her project with women miners. This is a serial grant which will allow her to travel to Bolivia several

times over the next three years. She has also signed a contract with Scarecrow Press for her book *Bibliographic Guide to Narrative in English Translation by Latin American Women Authors*.



**Lee L'Hote and Chad Gasta** (Spanish) gave two presentations in Tucson, Arizona. The first was an



invited lecture to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Arizona entitled: "Immigrants, Piracy and Entrepreneurship: The Street Vendor System in Alicante, Spain." They then gave a presentation on FLL's "Spanish, Business, and Entrepreneurship in Alicante, Spain Program" and served as panel discussants at the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference.

**Olga Mesropova** (Russian) delivered a paper at the MLA Convention in Washington, DC "Amateurs of Private

Investigation: Women in Russian Television Detective Series." Her article based on that paper and entitled "The Comedy of Female Sleuths: Televising Daria Dontsova's Ironic Detectives" is forthcoming with *The Russian Review*. Two of her book reviews came out in the Spring and Fall 2005 issues of *Slavic and East European Journal* and another review is forthcoming in the Spring 2006 issue.



**Kristin Pesola** (Spanish) had her article published: "Forgeries of a Failed Hero: Antonieta Rivas Mercado



in the Hands of José Vasconcelos," **5** *Latin American Literary Review*, July/December 2005. In November, 2005, she presented: "Touring the Revolution: International Co-Productions and Mexican National Identity." Second Annual Conference on Latin(o) American and Iberian Cinema. University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Nov. 2-4, 2005.

**Tom Waldemer** (Spanish) had his article "O Braço de Prata and the Hand of Tyranny in Ana Miranda's Boca do inferno" accepted for publication in *Romance Notes*.



## Updates from the French Program

Five students from Professor **Dan Sipe's** Business French class have applied for internships in France through the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Washington D.C.

Each candidate completed an extensive job dossier in French including CV, letter of motivation, formulaire de candidature, and a request for a letter of recommendation.

This is a first for the French Section.

Two winners were selected for the French Internship Prize from a very strong pool of FRNCH 304 candidates. They are:

**Tina Walston**, senior in French, and **Kathryn Wagner**, senior in Mechanical Engineering.

## Latin American Studies

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Finally, we would like to say farewell to Professor **Patrick Barr** (History) who has taken a position at Ohio University beginning fall, 06. We appreciate all he has done for the Latin American Studies Program during the past two years.



Kathy Leonard hopes to spend several months in Bolivia chronicling that nation's "women of silver and tin."

# Women in the mines

Unimaginable.

That's how Kathy Leonard, professor of Spanish and Hispanic linguistics in the Department of World Languages and Cultures and director of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' Latin American Studies Program, describes the working conditions facing Bolivian miners.

"Men, as well as women, have worked, and continue to work, under the most precarious conditions," she said. "There is no safety equipment of any kind – no breathing apparatuses, no barricades to keep people from falling into pits 50 to 100 feet deep, no modern equipment, only picks and shovels.

"I have seen children as young as five years old working in the mines alongside their fathers."

Bolivian women who work in the mines, called "palliris" in the native language of Quechua, are typically widows of miners. They sit just outside the mine

entrances 10-12 hours a day, breaking up rocks to extract any minerals left there. They sell what they have extracted, earning, if they are lucky, about \$20 per month.

Because of economic considerations and superstitions women are not allowed to formally work inside the mines where they could earn considerably more.

"It's back-breaking work that often takes place at extremely high altitudes and in adverse climactic conditions," says Leonard, who has visited the mines several times.

The lives of Bolivian miners have been well documented in Bolivia's realistic fiction, called "literatura minera," or "mining literature." The genre typically portrays the miners as a group oppressed by cruel Bolivian and foreign mining administrators.

Leonard, whose past research has focused on contemporary Bolivian women authors, first became aware of the women in the mines through this literature. Women included in these works are often portrayed as "stoic partners, passive yet supportive of their husbands or companions."

However, in the mining literature written by men, these women miners have been more traditionally portrayed as prostitutes, the bearers of bad luck in the mines, or even as a source of torment to the men who are close to them.

Beginning this summer, with the help of a Fulbright Grant in research, Leonard plans to travel back to the mines to see if this widespread negative portrayal in the mining literature derives from fact or superstition. She is scheduled to be on faculty professional development assignment next academic year and plans to spend some of her leave in Bolivia.

Leonard plans to conduct an extensive review of the mining literature from colonial times to the present and use this information to compare the portrayal of the "palliris" in the literature with the oral histories she compiles. She also plans to speak with the miners.

"I want to learn about the lives of women miners directly from them," she said. "I plan to document their current living and working conditions by conducting personal interviews with the 'palliris' and male miners and photographing them in their homes and at work."

But getting to that point might prove to be difficult.

"I know that the miners won't immediately accept me and talk with me," Leonard said. "It will take some effort to gain their trust and I will have to carefully prepare the groundwork."

The result of Leonard's research will be a book with the tentative title: *Women of Silver and Tin: the Forgotten Miners of Bolivia*, and a possible photography exhibit.



New fellowship allows Chinese professor Aili Mu to learn more about calligraphy in her native country.



# The art of calligraphy

**A**t the same time Aili Mu learned of a workshop in Chinese calligraphy, a new faculty fellowship in art history in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures was being announced.

The Jeorald S. McClain Art History Scholarship for Faculty was established to show how art history is an important form of language. The \$4000 award was established by McClain, professor emerita of art history, to cover a portion of the expenses of travel abroad to faculty members to engage in a structured summer study program in art history.

For Mu, assistant professor of foreign languages and literatures, it was the perfect combination of being in the right place at the right time.

"I thought I could put the funds to good use," she said. "She gave the department a wonderful opportunity to show language is really more than most believe it is."

With the support of the scholarship Mu, who is a native of China and teaches Chinese language and culture courses at Iowa State, attended the inaugural Chinese Calligraphy Workshop in China last June. The workshop was designed for language instructors who wanted to present calligraphy within a language program.

Mu and her fellow participants met with calligraphy educators and masters while observing their practice. They also visited calligraphy programs and classes at several Chinese universities during the two-week workshop.

"We studied and discussed both theoretical and practical aspects of calligraphy learning," Mu said. "I felt I needed to study Chinese calligraphy as an art form to be a better instructor in Chinese studies."

After attending the workshop, Mu was asked to write an article that was published in a collection of essays by the journal *Chinese Calligraphy*. In "The Aesthetics of Chinese Calligraphy and its International Implications," she argues for the international significance of Chinese calligraphy as an art form.

The article looks at the current views on the meaning of Chinese calligraphy for the world and examines the aesthetic depth embedded in the act of writing Chinese characters in ink and with a brush.

The final part of Mu's article looks at what can be learned from the aesthetic practice of Chinese calligraphy in general and how the quality of life for future generations can be improved through aesthetic learning in particular.

"Calligraphy is very much a part of the Chinese culture," she says. "It takes every form you can image. It (calligraphy) is every where in popular culture, both in China and in the West."

You just have to look around Mu's Pearson Hall office to prove that point. There are several examples of Chinese calligraphy from a scarf and bag she brought back from her most recent trip to China to the photo frame she purchased at the Ames' Hobby Lobby.

Calligraphy, Mu says, is a popular activity in China, comparing it to young Americans playing soccer or taking piano lessons.

Because Mu started school in China the year that nation's Cultural Revolution began, she did not receive formal training in calligraphy. Although the workshop allowed her to learn more about the art, she doesn't consider herself a calligraphy expert.

Still Mu plans to include a three-week unit on calligraphy in a course this spring. With funds remaining from the McClain fellowship, she purchased books and supplies to teach the course. Long-term plans include beginning a calligraphy course to be included in Chinese Studies offerings.

# classical studies

## An update from the program chair

Classical Studies faculty and students have been very active on and off campus this season. We currently have over two dozen majors and minors who are combining their study of Classics with history, anthropology, English (literature, education, and technical communication), political science, accounting, biophysics, Spanish, and women's studies - a very diverse group! Students are planning careers or additional education in museums, historic preservation, the law, medicine, engineering, the sciences, literature, and teaching. Students now are advised directly in the FLL Department by **Elizabeth Rectanus**, departmental advisor.

We continue to develop and make innovations in our curriculum. Here are some program highlights:

- This summer Prof. **Peggy Mook** will take students abroad for the final season of excavating at Azoria, Crete. Six students will again be participating in the Classical Studies Program's study-abroad course in Greece (Cl ST 394-395) this summer. This is the last time that the program will consist of participation on the excavations at Azoria, in Crete. Beginning in summer 2008, the program will once again be a three-week long study-travel program conducted in various areas of Greece.

- Online Latin is coming to you!

We are developing two online courses to cover the same material as our on-campus courses in Latin 101 and 102. This will be the first online foreign language offering at Iowa State, and it can be used to meet exit requirements for LAS College and other curricula. Moreover, it will enable students to begin or continue their study off-calendar; and will fill a growing demand for precollege Latin study. We will first offer Latin 101 online in the summer of 2006 and Latin 2002 in the fall of 2006. These courses will then run simultaneously year-round during the regular semester and summer session schedules.

The demand for Latin is increasing at the university and precollege levels nationwide. At Iowa State, enrollments in beginning Latin have risen during a period of faculty reduction and faculty availability entails that the one-year sequence begin in the fall and conclude in the spring. Our online offering will **benefit students** by enabling them to begin or continue their study of Latin via ISU at times different than the present fall-only start date, and to do so without having to come to campus. Online Latin will not replace our on-campus sections, but will also serve nontraditional audiences and

nontraditional schedules. Since Latin is taught in few Iowa high schools, most ISU students must start it in college, and the lack of opportunity to begin Latin at times other than fall has hampered many students who would have liked to progress farther in it.

This **audience** includes: all ISU students, particularly LAS students for the purpose of completing the one-year language exit requirement; all college-level students whose schedules do not permit them to start a year-long sequence in the fall; students who are able and willing to progress more rapidly than a year-long sequence permits; students who would benefit from the opportunity to progress slightly more slowly; students with disabilities; students who would like to explore the ancestor of the Romance languages (e.g. students in Spanish, French, history, linguistics, philosophy, English literature) and an important component of western civilization; students who are taking one semester of a foreign language to fulfill requirements in colleges other than LAS; precollege students; professionals such as Spanish or French teachers in the field; interested adults. Online Latin can be awarded as continuing education credits for precollege teachers of other languages and related disciplines. As a nonspoken language, Latin is ideal for online learning and teaching and is offered in this format at many American universities. Currently, Iowa State University offers no online elementary foreign languages courses. Latin would be the first such offering.

A nationwide shortage of precollege Latin teachers, coupled with widespread precollege foreign language teacher retirements, has prevented a number of Iowa high schools from introducing, reintroducing, or retaining Latin offerings. Latin is a favored subject among home schools, but there are few good resources. While our project by no means targets this group, Online Latin at ISU will nicely serve them. Several times a year the FLL Department receives requests for Latin from Iowa schools, from teachers seeking a Latin course for their



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middle- or high-school students, or from homeschool groups.

**Latin often attracts highly-motivated and high-achieving students**, for it is recommended as a background to law and all of the clinical health professions, and students of Latin have the highest GRE scores. The opportunity to come to Iowa State having already earned ISU credit can help us recruit high-ability high-school students to ISU. Students whose schedule does not permit them to take the 102 class on campus can **complete their language requirement more conveniently**.

Faculty course designer **Madeleine Henry**, professor of classical studies, will create the main content. Instructional support specialist **Julio Rodriguez**, director of the FLLRC and doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instructional Technology is developing the course with Prof. Henry now. His special expertise is in instructional design and software development and evaluation. And—he has studied Latin himself. Undergraduate student assistants, supervised by Rodriguez and Henry, working in the FLLRC, are helping post content modules. This truly team effort would not be possible without the College of Liberal Arts center for Online Learning (COLL). COLL will help in the adaptation of the material (including tests) to modes suitable for online delivery.

The addition of an online course to the Department's offerings fits with the department's long-term plan to increase the effective integration of instructional technology into the teaching and learning of world languages. Although the Department is currently engaged in innovative projects that are made possible through the use of modern distance learning technologies (e.g., the REEES Project makes it possible for students to take less-commonly taught languages, such as Polish, using videoconferencing tools), it has not yet offered a full credit language class in asynchronous online mode. The Latin 101/102 series would be the first sequence offered in this mode, which constitutes a significant step toward the increased and effective use of technology in the department. At the end of this newsletter update is a screenshot of the course on WebCT.

- We have had three visiting speakers this academic year. In the fall Distinguished Alumna **Heather Schafroth** (Harvard Law School Class of 2008) addressed us on the value of a classical education, as did **Gaius Stern** (Berkeley) on the topic of Marcus Agrippa and Roman coins. This spring Professor **Lee Ann Turner** (Boise State University) presented a public lecture, "Politics and the Popularity of the Hercules and Omphale Myth in Western Art."

- Next year for the first time Classical Studies will have a graduate assistant to help with the instructional mission of our program.

- Our faculty continue their scholarly activities.

**David Hunter** (of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department and Supple Chair in Catholic Studies) will become president of the North American Patristic Society in May of 2006. He also received a grant from the Louisville Institute to begin work on a history of priestly celibacy in the Catholic Church. Prof. Hunter will teach a course in advanced Latin next year.

**Margo Kitts** (also of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department) is teaching our Epics course this spring. Her book *Ritual Violence in Homeric Society* was just published by Cambridge University Press.

**Margaret Mook** recently presented two papers on the results of excavations at the Archaic site of Azoria, in Crete, Greece: "Excavation of an Archaic City at Azoria in Eastern Crete," Jan. 27, 2006, at the German Archaeological Institute International Colloquium: Crete in the Geometric and Archaic Period, in Athens, Greece; and "Excavations at Azoria, East Crete, 2005," Jan. 7, 2006, at the 107th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, in Montreal, Canada.

**Madeleine Henry** gave a lecture in January 2006 at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, and will present a paper at the annual meeting of the Classical Association of the Midwest and South in April, on her ongoing research projects on the traffic in females in ancient Greece.

**DID YOU KNOW...** In 2005, college-bound high school seniors taking Latin averaged 559 out of a possible 800 on the verbal section of the SAT – significantly higher than students of most other languages. (The College Board)

For more information about Classical Studies at Iowa State, visit us at [www.language.iastate.edu/classical/index.htm](http://www.language.iastate.edu/classical/index.htm)

*Madeleine Henry*  
Professor & Program Chair  
Classical Studies



# Internships in Spain

By Paul Jennings

I didn't know what to expect the first time I walked into RGD Solutions. The building was quite typical for Spain: a 6-floor combination of residential apartments and commercial office spaces.

The work area itself was divided into three large offices, shared by two or three people each, and one large multipurpose room. Since I was only there for a short time, they put me in the multipurpose room. As it turned out, this was actually the best place to learn about the similarities and differences in working in a different culture.

RGD Solutions is a software company. Their main product is a comprehensive system that allows the owners of bed-and-breakfasts in Spain to computerize their reservations and put their establishments on the internet. While the advantages of such a system may be obvious to most Americans, most bed-and-breakfast owners in Spain probably don't even have computers, let alone internet access. My co-workers not only had to create software that worked; they had to convince their customers that they needed it.

This is just one example of the state of technology in Spain. The people have varying states of awareness that they need technology in order to survive in a globalizing world. Most of them realize that education is the key to the future, but it seems that there isn't much direction. English is the language of technology, and students learn it almost from the start of the school system, but the end results are sporadic at best. The best that anyone I worked with could do was a simple, "Hello, how are you? I am fine?" In what was perhaps the ultimate irony in this language gap, they had to ask me how to

pronounce the name of their company.

What was most interesting to me was the juxtaposition of a modern occupation in a traditional society. In many ways, the office felt just like the offices where I have worked in the United States. However, everyone went home for the siesta at 2:00 in the afternoon, and then came back at 5:00 to work another three hours. Traditionally the siesta is taken at this time because it is the hottest part of the day, but it becomes less and less necessary as modern conveniences such as air conditioning become widely available. Will they keep this vestige of their culture as time goes on?

My favorite memories from RGD Solutions are the times that we spent at the more or less mandatory coffee breaks in the afternoons. We shared and compared stories of growing up, school, working, and life in disparate backgrounds. In the end, there were more similarities than differences. Maybe it was that our cultures weren't that far apart to start with. Maybe it was that the world is already small and getting smaller. But it speaks to a truth that I think is all too often forgotten today: We aren't that different after all.

## Cáceres Internship – Spring '05

by Matt Wittkop

During the spring of 2005, I worked an internship at a residential construction company named Provivesa while studying in Cáceres, Spain. My entire experience abroad was invaluable, and the time I spent working and performing small office jobs at Provivesa was something I'll always remember.

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It is proven that learning a language is only accomplished through experience and practice, and at Provivesa, I was immediately placed in a real-world situation, where using and understanding the Spanish language was necessary to complete the daily tasks required of me. By constantly using the language with many different coworkers, my technical vocabulary grew incredibly and my ability to speak many types of people improved.

Working this internship also gave me great insight as to the business culture of Spain. The cultural differences of the business environment, like daily siesta, smoking in the office, and office pets were strange at first. It was distracting to focus at times with a dog yapping in the next office, or cigarette smoke filling the hallways, but after a short time it helped make the work more tolerable and less stressful. It seems work in the U.S. is always a matter of life or death compared to Spain, where it is only something to be done to earn a living and be happy.

Starting a new job is never an easy task, especially in a foreign country that speaks a different language. From my experience, I was able to take away that the business cultural environment will be different everywhere you may be, but the keys to performing effectively will remain the same, as hard work and effective communication will prove valuable in any business setting.

The internship at Provivesa provided me with much more than work experience. I greatly improved my skills of the Spanish language and I experienced first hand the cultural differences of a business environment in another country.

## My internship abroad

by Amy Joines

During my time in Spain, I had the opportunity to work for a small information technology outsourcing firm called External Informática. I was able to experience firsthand the Spanish style of business, and I gained valuable insight into the vast range of cultural differences in the workplace while practicing my second language.

External had a typical Spanish business environment. They had only a few employees, and they were very knowledgeable about their clients (many of whom were family and friends) both professionally and personally. They operated in a very modest office, and the computers and other technological appliances they used were much older than what is typically seen in an American business.

Initially, I did some light office work to become accustomed to the environment, and I was able to spend

time interacting with the employees and observing their business style. I was shocked to see how laid-back and personally the business was conducted. Any one of them would instantly stop what they were doing if I needed help at all. More importantly, they seemed very happy to do it. This emphasis on people, whether they were employees or customers, instead of on money and work, was perhaps the biggest culture shock for me.

However, my biggest lessons at work were learned during my conversations with my boss Julian. He went out of his way every day to explain to me what he did and why he did it. He would take me with him occasionally when he went to a meeting or on an errand. Also, we probably spent two hours a week talking about every topic imaginable. Some days we had light discussions about places to visit and things to see and do while I was in Europe. Other days, it was debating topics from government policy to business culture. Not only was this the best language practice I've ever experienced, but I was able to learn to examine my own views and culture, which I had previously seriously pondered, from the viewpoint of someone who thinks differently than I do.

Doing an internship abroad was the most significant experience of my college career. Although it may not be the most technically challenging work I have done as an engineering student, it opened my eyes to the vastness of the world and taught me lessons which cannot be learned in the classroom. I value that experience more than any other I have had so far in my life.

## Student study abroad news

### Ester Catherine Harmon Scholarship

Four students were awarded the Ester Catherine Harmon Scholarship during the summer, 2005 for study abroad. The scholarship paid for program costs and airfare for the following students:

Megan Bradfield (Alicante, Spain): \$3,750

Paula Burgraaf (Alicante, Spain): \$3,750

Nicole Johnson (Cuernavaca, Mexico): \$1,782

Kathryn Anderson (Quebec City, Canada): \$2,257

### Teaching English in France

Four students were accepted to teach English in French Schools during the 2005-06 academic year.

They are:

Hilary Becker (Fr 102)

Howard Hughes (Fr 102)

Sarah Chapman (Fr 202)

Chase Caster (Fr 202)

Over the last 3 years, the French program has sent more than 10 students to France with this program.