

LA/W/S Newsletter

CHAIR'S NOTE

The new semester, year, and decade all come with mixed emotions for the Department of LAWS. Although we celebrate these new beginnings, we mourn the loss of Dr. Ileana Szymanski, who lost her difficult battle with cancer last December. Please see the WGS Director's Note for more information about her. At the end of the Spring 2020 semester, LAWS also will see Dr. Kevin Nordberg go off into his well-earned retirement after numerous years of teaching Philosophy and Latin American Studies. Please see the last page of this newsletter for a tribute to him. The Department of LAWS has been fortunate to count two such faculty members as our own for as long as we have.

Last Fall semester, we supported some significant events on campus. Cristina Rivera Garza, Distinguished Professor in Hispanic Studies and Director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston, gave a talk entitled, "A Domestic Archaeology of Repatriation," to a standing-room only audience. See photo above. Later that evening, Rivera Garza read from her creative work to a more intimate audience as part of the University Reading Series. Sponsors and organizers for both these events included Dr. Yamile Silva, the Humanities Forum and Center, and the Departments of World Languages and Cultures and English & Theatre.

For this semester, we have the Latin American Studies Film Festival, which focuses on domestic stories in Latin America. Also, we will have Ernesto Quiñonez visit our campus to give a reading of his latest creative work on March 26, 2020. Please see page two of this newsletter for more details about all of these events. Have a great semester everyone.

-Susan C. Méndez, Chair of Latin American & Women's Studies

WGS DIRECTOR'S NOTE



"One more thing: when I die, I would like to be remembered as an open person, open to the world. With big and understanding eyes that have seen and sees lots of things. More than full of knowledge, wise (in the Greek sense, I mean, I don't want to recite books by memory, but know how to live and help others to do the same.)"

Dr. Ileana Fernanda Szymanski wrote those words back in 1997, and they describe so well who she was and how she lived her life. Ileana's friend, Jatzibe, shared this passage with us on December 12, 2019, the day we lost Ileana to her hard fought battle with cancer.

Ileana joined our community in 2008. Initially, she taught Ethics, Introduction to Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy, and Feminist Philosophy of Science. By 2012, her scholarly interest in the philosophy of food (and maybe her love of good food!) led her to develop and teach a special topics course on the Philosophy of Food as well as an Introduction to Philosophy course for a First Year

Seminar entitled, Wellness and Food. She loved teaching her first year students, maybe as much as she loved baking.

Ileana was an engaged, respected, and loved associate faculty member in the Women's and Gender Studies Program. She had an abundance of love to share, and she lived to share her love. We have lost a great woman; however, her smile and love will remain in our hearts.

-Jean Harris, Director of Women's and Gender Studies





LAS SPRING FILMS

Domestic Stories in Latin America

All films take place in Brennan 228 at 7:00 PM

FEB. 13: *Vazante* (Brazil, 2018)

Brazil, 1821. During the time of slavery, a rich cattle herder leaves his young bride to return to cattle droving, allowing an ill-fated love-story to take place on his ranch.

MAR. 12: *Birds of Passage* (Colombia, 2018)

During the marijuana bonanza in Colombia, Rapayet and his indigenous family get involved in a war to control the business that ends up destroying their lives and their culture.

APRIL 30: *La Nana* (Chile, 2009)

The story of how a maid called Raquel, who has worked for over 20 years in one affluent Chilean household, rediscovers and frees herself from a mental servitude of her own making.

University Reading Series and LAWS present Ernesto Quiñonez

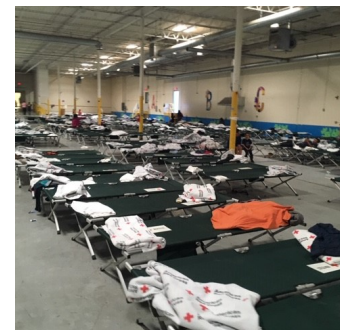
With generous support from the Office of Equity & Diversity and the Departments of English & Theatre and World Languages and Cultures, Latinx novelist and Associate Professor of English at Cornell University, Ernesto Quiñonez will visit our campus on March 26, 2020. Quiñonez authored *Bodega Dreams* (2000) and *Chango's Fire* (2004). *The New York Times* declared *Bodega Dreams* to be a "New Immigrant Classic." His third and latest novel, *Taina* (2019) narrates the story of a young man named Julio who is attempting to understand the "mysterious" pregnancy of his love-interest and the impact that the historical practice of sterilization of Puerto Rican women has had on his mother and on his love-interest's mother.



Quiñonez will read from his latest novel, *Taina* (2019), and other works on March 26 at 6pm in DeNaples 405. The reading is open to the public.

Asylum Work and Its Importance

Violence perpetrated by street gangs, drug cartels, organized crime groups, and corrupt state officials have forced numerous people from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to flee their homes in search of security and economic opportunity in the United States. If lucky enough to overcome deadly obstacles in Mexico and along the U.S. – Mexico border, these individuals might have the opportunity to seek relief from deportation through protections such as asylum, withholding of removal, or Convention Against Torture in a U.S. immigration court.

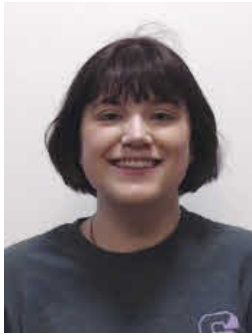


In order to be granted one of these protections, applicants must demonstrate that there is a strong likelihood that they would be at grave risk of harm should they be forced to return to the country from which they fled. They must also convince the court that the persecution would occur because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and that their government would be unable to protect them.

I have provided expert witness testimony in over fifty asylum cases for people from El Salvador and Guatemala. These cases involve threats, extortion, sexual assault, torture, and murder perpetrated by the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs, drug cartels, and other criminal groups, against the people of El Salvador and Guatemala. In my capacity as an expert witness, I provide written and telephonic testimony to explain whether the persecution that the asylum seeker describes in his or her testimony is consistent with my understanding of conditions in the country.

In the past, students from Political Science, International Studies, and Latin American Studies have worked on these asylum claims. Please contact me if you are interested in doing so as well. –Mike Allison, Chair of Political Science & faculty member of LAS

Women's and Gender Studies Students share their Journeys



Seniors Grace Hudock and Colleen Boyle discuss their experiences with the Women's and Gender Studies Program and how it has impacted their academic career here at the University.

Why did you choose to pursue an academic career in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS)?

GH: I chose the WGS major because feminism has interested me from a young age. The idea of equality for all sexes and genders is a basic principle that I believe we should all adhere to. The WGS major was the best option for me to become more educated and inclusive in my work and activism. I have learned so much in my time here at the University and I am so thankful to have declared this as my major.

CB: I feel that my WGS concentration heavily influences my course of studies here at Scranton. I look to incorporate a feminist lens into everything I do inside and outside of the classroom, and seek to educate myself about issues of gender and representation as they exist on this campus and in the world around me.

Why do you feel your coursework is relevant in today's world?

GH: The WGS Program is extremely relevant to today's world, especially in our country's current political climate. It is more important than ever to speak up for minority groups and advocate for social change that benefits all parties involved. The WGS courses here at the University help to broaden one's worldviews and take into perspective the different ways we experience everyday life because of our identities. They also help to teach the fundamentals of advocacy and how to work persistently to make institutions, such as the workplace, more inclusive and equal for all.

CB: The ability to analyze current events and our institutions and social structures through a gendered lens is increasingly invaluable in society. Whether it be in politics, business, media, or medicine, there is an increasing, and rightful, demand for representation and equality. What pushed our society toward justice is not only passion, but education and advocacy.

What do you plan to do with your education moving forward?

GH: After graduating in the spring, I hope to continue my advocacy into the workplace at a local non-profit or domestic shelter.

CB: While I am unsure of what my next step is professionally, I am grateful to the WGS Program for giving me an education I can bring into any field.

-Grace Hudock, Women's and Gender Studies major and Communications minor and Colleen Boyle, Communication major and Women's and Gender Studies concentration

WGS Faculty at Work

Dr. Paul Datti and colleagues offered a pre-conference Institute entitled, *Being LGBT+ in today's Social and Political Climate*, at the Pennsylvania Counseling Association Conference

Dr. Jean Harris coordinated & presented at *Ready to Run NEPA*, a University program targeting women in NEPA interested in politics and political office

Dr. Ann Pang-White developed a new course which is approved for WGS, PHIL 232: Women in Chinese and Western Philosophies

Dr. Meghan Rich developed a new course which is approved for WGS, SOC 222: Gender in Society

Dr. Billie Tadros published her essay, "Most doctors will just say 'Stop running': Women Runners' Narratives, Agency, and Identity," in an edited collection entitled, *Women's Health Advocacy Rhetorical Ingenuity in the 21st Century* (Routledge)

Saluting Kevin Nordberg, Ph.D., Philosophy and Latin American Studies Professor, on his retirement



Please read below as LAWS Department colleagues share their memories of Kevin Nordberg over the years:

I have many notable memories of Kevin Nordberg, as I worked closely with him in the organization and direction of our annual 3-week Faculty Led Study Abroad trip to Guadalajara, Mexico for 6 years. The memory that stands out in my mind, though, dates back to the year 2000, some 6 years before our collaboration in the Guadalajara trip began, when Kevin and I were both participants in The University of Scranton's second annual Bridges to El Salvador program. We were standing in an open field in the Salvadoran countryside and noticed some vultures in the distance. Kevin casually asked me if I thought those would be called *zopilotes* or *buitres*, two words in Spanish for vultures or buzzards. I remain to this day amazed that an adult language learner in his first visit to a Spanish speaking country, and who had only recently begun to study Spanish, would know even one word for vulture (as that is not vocabulary commonly learned in classroom settings), much less two.

—Rap Parsons, retired faculty member of World Languages and Cultures & LAWS

In his role as Contract Administration Officer, Kevin would accompany me as FAC Chair to the monthly FAC/FPC Chairs meeting. This meeting is where administrators and FAC representatives try to hash out many of the major issues facing FAC and the FPC. Kevin is fond of telling a FAC/FPC Chairs meeting story where we knew that a particularly controversial topic was going to arise and that tempers might flare. The way Kevin tells it, on the way to the meeting, I asked Kevin to stop me if he felt that I was going too far in my advocacy for the union's position. Sure enough, during the meeting itself, I became quite animated in my expressions, and Kevin put his hand on my shoulder to stop me, as I had requested. However, as he remembers the incident, I yelled, "Kevin, be quiet! I'm about to solve this!" and went on with my tirade/carefully reasoned argument. In my defense, I actually did subsequently propose a mutually acceptable solution to the problem. However, on many other occasions, Kevin's composed demeanor and advice before, during, and after these sessions helped me to advance the union's interests in a more moderate and judicious fashion than my instincts would have directed me to do on my own.

—Michael Friedman, faculty member of English & Theatre, LAWS, and FAC chair for twelve years

In 2006, I was recruited to join the Latin American Studies Program. Shortly after I did, I found myself in a conversation with Kevin Nordberg and he mentioned the poem "Sátira filosófica" by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. At the time, I had not read the poem but as a literature professor, I did my best to remain a useful part of the conversation. Later, I felt embarrassed. As a newly inducted member of LAS, I should have read Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's poetry already. Kevin Nordberg had found me out! I was a fraud, as that is the way most young academics feel: constantly not quite good enough. Days after, in the interoffice mail, I found a copy of the same poem sent to me by Kevin Nordberg with a little note, which referenced our discussion. I automatically felt relieved; Kevin's simple but meaningful gesture reassured me of his respect. No matter how I thought the conversation went, it was clear that he regarded me as his peer, and I felt better.

—Susan C. Méndez, Chair of LAWS and faculty member of English & Theatre

Kevin Nordberg has always been known as a Renaissance man, i. e. "a person with many talents or areas of knowledge." This first came to my attention many years ago. I arrived at the university in the Fall of 1985, and the university was just beginning to sponsor the faculty purchase of computers for home use. As I recall, the university bought the computer and then deducted the cost monthly over time. At any rate, this was in the antiquarian days of computing. Being in World Languages, I wrote in English, and Spanish and Portuguese. The word processing system at the time was WordStar, which was an ineffective and frustrating program to use, to say the least. IT, or whatever the tech people were called then, were no help at all. Write with a ç (Coração) or á (ángel)? What??? It was Kevin who figured out how to type in foreign languages with appropriate diacritics! It was still a hassle, as getting a single diacritic letter took about four keystrokes, all of which were visible on the screen, but not in the print out.

—Linda Ledford-Miller, Professor Emerita, Department of World Languages and Cultures & LAWS