

THE AMBASSADOR

THE DEPARTMENT OF WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

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Notes from The Chair

Dear Students, Colleagues, and Friends,

Welcome to the 2025 Fall semester in the Department of World Languages and Cultures! As the leaves begin to turn and the semester comes to life, I am delighted to see our classrooms, hallways, and shared spaces filled with the energy of learning, discovery, and community.

Our department continues to celebrate the rich diversity of languages, literatures, and cultures that shape our world. Whether you are studying Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Russian, ASL, or are thinking about joining one of these classes, you are engaging in the vital work of building bridges across cultures and perspectives.

This fall, we are excited to host 6 International Instructors from France, Egypt, Germany, Argentina, Taiwan and Japan. They are busy planning and hosting many cultural events and providing opportunities for engagement. From film screenings, language conversation hours, talks, food demos and more - our instructors consistently show their commitment to connecting the classroom to the wider world. I encourage each of you to take part, to explore something new, and to share your experiences with others. You will find more information about them and their activities inside this issue of the newsletter.

On behalf of the faculty and staff, I wish you a rewarding, inspiring, and joyful fall semester.

Warm regards,

Dr. Marzia Caporale

Department Chair

Adjunct Faculty Spotlight

By: Jeffery Maume

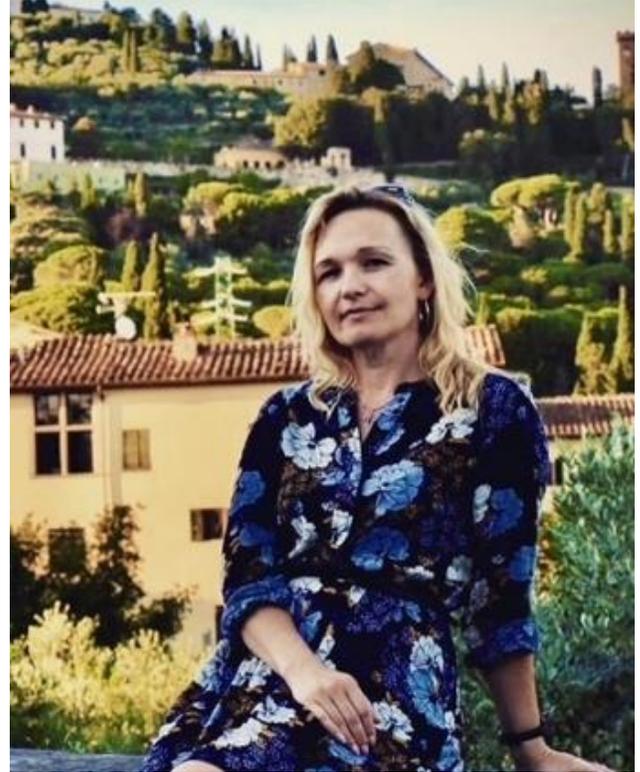
Professor Anastasia Vladimirovna Maume ▪ Russian Language Instructor

Mrs. Anastasia Vladimirovna Maume brings a rich tapestry of global experience and linguistic expertise to her role as a Russian Language instructor at the University of Scranton. Originally from Khabarovsk, Russia, Anastasia began her academic journey studying Art before shifting her focus to education and language. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Post-Secondary Education and a Master's in Linguistics from Khabarovsk Pedagogical University.

Her life has been marked by international adventure and cultural immersion. After living in South Korea, she moved through Okinawa, Guam, and Italy before settling in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania. Fluent in Russian, Korean, and English—with some Italian as well—Anastasia brings a multilingual perspective to her teaching that resonates with students navigating the complexities of language learning.

At the University of Scranton, she teaches Russian Language I and II, and is known for her appreciation of the students' dedication and the welcoming campus atmosphere. She enjoys the region's four distinct seasons and the sense of community among fellow transplants.

Outside the classroom, Anastasia is an adventurer at heart. She's an advanced scuba diver, has jumped out of a plane, and cherishes time spent



on the beach. Her advice to students learning a new language is simple yet profound: “Languages are a very hard thing to learn and studying is an important part.”

With three children and a life full of stories from around the world, Anastasia Maume is a vibrant part of the University of Scranton community—bringing both depth and inspiration to her students.

Spring Russian Course Offerings

Intensive Intermediate Russian RUSS 210 (CF,D) ▪ 5Cr MTWRF 10:00am-10:50am

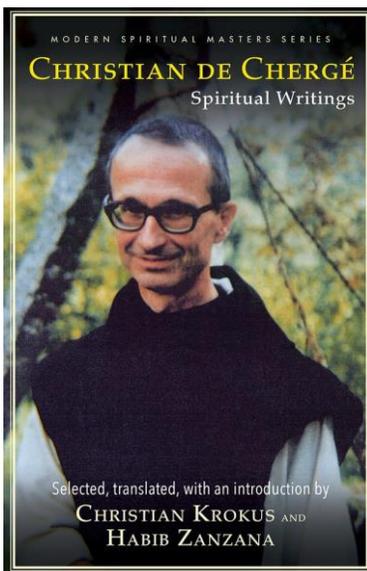


Faculty Scholarship

Dr. Habib Zanzana

Scholarship

- Dr. Zanzana will be presenting a paper titled, " Between Page and Screen: Trauma, Memory, and Embodied Narrative in The Diving Bell and the Butterfly, December 7, 2025, organized by the University of London.
- Dr. Zanzana will also be presenting a paper titled, "Debt, Dignity, and Dispossession: Money and Gendered Violence in A Fantastic Woman (2017)" for Money and Gender: An online Symposium, December 12-13, 2025.



- Dr. Zanzana published a second book, titled, Christian de Chergé: Spiritual Writings, with Christian Krokus of the Theology Department at the University of Scranton, April 2025 (pictured left).

Beatified in 2018, Christian de Chergé, a French Trappist monk was prior of Our Lady of Atlas Monastery in Tibherine, Algeria when in 1996 he and six members of his community were kidnapped and killed. The film "Of Gods and Men," depicted their decision to remain with their Algerian-Muslim neighbors, even when knowing their lives were at risk.

Here, in writings available in English for the first time, readers can discover that de Chergé's significance extends far beyond the events of his last days. His was a Christian spirituality rooted in hope, conversion, humility, constancy, and what he called the martyrdom of love.

Dr. Marzia Caporale

Scholarship

- Book review for Women in French Studies of a book entitled Arab Women's Revolutionary Art by Nevine El-Nossery, Fall 2025.

- Conference paper/article entitled: Writing the Unspeakable: Negotiating Cancer and Death in Michela Murgia's Late Narratives. Online conference on Medical Humanities, June 2025

- Conference paper/article entitled: All in the Family: Unveiling Familial Sexual Abuse in Contemporary French Autobiography. Conference on Trauma and Healing, Nice, France, July 2025 (pictured above, right).



Faculty Scholarship, *continued*

Dr. Virginia Picchietti

Scholarship

- Dr. Virginia Picchietti, Professor of Italian, presented her essay, “Marianna Sirca, Alexandra Bergson, and Marie Tovesky Shabata: Understanding Grazia Deledda and Willa Cather’s Female Protagonists through Berthe Morisot’s Impressionist Paintings,” online at the 15th edition of the Festival internazionale di promozione del libro e della lettura (Università di Sassari, Sardegna, Italy), June 4, 2025.
- She is co-organizer of the panel, “Deledda and Rome: One Hundred Years Since the Nobel Prize in Literature,” for the conference of the American Association of Teachers of Italian, Rome, Italy, July 2026.
- Dr. Picchietti was a discussant on the panel, “Umberto Eco: A Library of the World,” at the University of Scranton’s Schemmel Forum, March 31, 2025. The panel discussed the documentary *A Library of the World*—which explores Umberto Eco’s life and legacy as a scholar, novelist, and philosopher—as well as Eco’s deep commitment to knowledge and the written word.
- In Spring 2026, Dr. Picchietti will teach the course, “Global Aesthetics of Care,” which explores how the concepts of “care” and “caring” are articulated through narrative modes (literature, film, and music) across the globe

Dr. Yamille Silva

Scholarship

- Dr. Silva’s annotated edition Mejía, Abigail and Yamille Silva (Ed). *Entre Frivolidades* was accepted to be published by the academic Spanish press KRK in Oviedo. It will be released in May 2026.
- Silva presented “Feminismo y antiimperialismo: El pensamiento de Abigail Mejía frente a la invasión estadounidense” at the conference *Tramar la(s) democracia(s) en América Latina: perspectivas transdisciplinarias*. Sapienza Universidad de Roma, Italy, June 25–27, 2025.
- Her talk proposal “Feminismo dominicano desde Barcelona: La escritura de Abigail Mejía (1895-1941) en El Día Gráfico.” was accepted to be presented in *LASA 2026: Republic and Revolution*, Paris, France, May 2026.

Service

- Jury Selection Committee Member, Premio Victoria Urbano (Best Monograph Category). 2025.
- External Reviewer: Candidate for Full Professor position at Marquette University. 2025.
- External Reviewer: Candidate for Tenure and Promotion at Williams College, 2025. ■

2025 - 26 Fulbright FLTAs and Visiting Instructors Introductions

Eva Grohs, Fulbright German FLTA from Germany



"Hallo or Servus, as we say in Bavaria! My name is Eva and I am from Munich, Germany. I am going to be teaching German at the University of Scranton this upcoming year, and I am already looking forward to getting to meet many different people in my classes.

I live in a village about an hour away from the beautiful city of Munich, where I studied Teaching English and Politics for upper secondary schools, as well as currently still study Teaching German as a second language. I hope to be able to convey a picture of the rich cultural diversity of Germany and show you how fun learning a language can be.

In my free time, I love doing all kinds of crafts and creative things, as well as baking. Additionally, I love exploring the outdoors and going on walks (which I do with my dog back home). Another thing I am very interested in is trying new foods, so if you know of any good spots in the Scranton area, let me know!"

Kazumasa Fujita, ALEXX Foundation Instructor From Japan

Hello! こんにちは！ I'm Kazumasa Fujita from Tokyo, Japan. Have you ever been to Japan before? Japan is the world's fourth-largest economy in the world and has 4 seasons which have great scenery and events in a whole year.

I started my teaching career as a language instructor in Korea, and worked there for a year. Then, I had been working in some Japanese language schools in Tokyo. After a few years, I decided to go to the Philippines to teach Japanese to the people who work as a care-giver and nurse in Japan.

Before teaching Japanese in the university of Scranton, I was in Bangkok, Thailand and working in high school for a year.

My hobby is travelling the world, I've been more than 40 countries so far. However, I've never been to the cities in the USA, so please let



Professor Fujita enjoys scuba diving and traveling the world.

me know about good sightseeing spots here !!!! Also, I'm into scuba diving, I love to explore a new ocean that I've never been yet.

My favorite Japanese concept is 「一期一会(いちごいちえ/i chi go i chi e)」, which means "once-in-a-lifetime encounter" in English. I'm looking forward to meeting you and studying Japanese together soon!!! Please visit my office if you are interested in Japanese language and culture.

ありがとうございます。

Mohamed Saleh, Fulbright Arabic FLTA from Egypt



Hallo! **مرحبا** Hello everyone! My name is Mohamed Saleh, the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant for Arabic. I'm delighted to be part of the Department of World Languages & Cultures at the University of Scranton.

I'm from Cairo, Egypt, and I live near the amazing Pyramids, whenever you're in the area, feel free to stop by and see me!

I have a degree in translation and language teaching from Misr International University. My academic interests include Arabic-English linguistics, translation studies, and the use of technology in language learning. I enjoy reading, traveling, listening to music, and exploring different cultures. I also love learning new languages—right now I'm working on Spanish. Spending time with family and friends is especially important to me, and I have a wonderful daughter named Aline who brings so much joy to my life. I enjoy opportunities for cultural exchange and building community. I look forward to meeting new friends at Scranton and contributing to a warm and dynamic environment! ♥

“Language learning works best when it is interactive, culturally-grounded, and student-centered.”

-Mohamed Saleh El-Ghanam

“Humor...[is] a powerful tool that helps students relax, engage, and remember what they learn.”

-Mohamed Saleh El-Ghanam

Agustina Santivañez, Fulbright Spanish FLTA from Argentina

Hi everyone! 🙋 My name is Agustina Santivañez and I'll be your Spanish Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant for the 2025-26 academic year. I'm originally from Caleta Olivia, a small windy city in Santa Cruz, Argentina—way down south in Patagonia. If you picture penguins, endless skies, and lots of wind, you're not too far off! 🐧 🌬️

I'm an English teacher, a certified Scientific-Literary translator, and I recently finished my Bachelor's degree in English. So yes... I really, really like languages (maybe too much 😊).

In my classes, you can expect an atmosphere that's dynamic, supportive, and hopefully a little fun. I love when students ask questions, share their ideas, and even challenge me with their curiosity. Basically, the more you participate, the more we'll all enjoy ourselves. My goal is that you don't just learn Spanish, but also leave with skills and memories that will stick with you outside the classroom.

And when I'm not teaching? You'll probably find me listening to music, trying out new recipes in the kitchen (sometimes they work, sometimes... not so much 😬), or spending time with friends. I'm super excited to get to know all of you this year! So get ready to speak lots of Spanish, laugh a little, and hopefully enjoy the ride! ✨

¡Nos vemos! - Agustina Belén Santivañez



*Fulbright FLTAs and Visiting Instructors, continued***Marion Rousseau, Fulbright French FLTA from France**

My name is Marion Rousseau, I am the 2025-26 Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant for French. I am currently pursuing a Master's degree in French as a Foreign Language (FLE) at Sorbonne Nouvelle University (Paris 3), where I also plan to complete a Master's in International Studies (Anglophone area). I previously worked as a French language assistant in the Basque Country, Spain. My goal is to teach in different countries, deepen my understanding of cultural diversity, and enrich my multicultural teaching approaches. I love and need nature! Take me back to my natural habitat! 🌲



Chih-Yi Wu, Taiwanese Ministry of Education Mandarin Instructor

你好(Nǐ hǎo)! My Chinese name is 吳芝頤 (Wú zhī yí).

This little blue thing is the cutest TA in the world - Capoo! Capoo and I are from Taiwan. We love to share Taiwanese food, festivals, and any cultures back home. We have been here for a year and made some friends.

The St. Patrick duck (the little green guy by Capoo's neck) is an awesome pal to be in class, and Capoo's godmother, Dr. Amy Kuiken, the person who gave him this chick T-shirt, is the best in the team. I used to teach Mandarin at West Point as a Fulbright FLTA in 2022-23.



If you are interested in Taiwanese/Chinese cultures, languages, or issues, you are welcome to meet me at O'Hara 304 or join my events! ■

Professor Wu speaking at her recent Taiwanese Cultural Event in the Kane Forum on October 1, 2025



Student Spotlights

By: Ashley Paulino

Gerald Perez

Year: Senior

Major: Accounting

What inspired you to learn a language?

I did not end up learning a new language but reinforcing on my pre-existing foundation in Spanish. I came to terms with the fact that my Spanish was sub-par at best and needed some serious work. As such, taking these classes allowed me to develop my skills to a very reputable level.

What has inspired you to learn more about different world cultures?

A language can't truly exist without its culture. A culture gives context and a deeper look into the subtle nuances of the language. A language's culture is inherently infused to the language.

How has knowledge of different cultures impacted your life?

Learning different cultures is not only fun, but also valuable to growing as a person. Taking part in a liberal arts school is about adding many different facets of knowledge to your person. These different cultures allow for me to add valuable knowledge and experiences that will surely help me in the future.

What role does your culture play in your life?

The different cultures I learned help me throughout my present life as well. They allow me to relate to other people better and to have a higher understanding of the world around me.

How do you plan to incorporate these skills and knowledge into your future career?

When I reach my future career, I will inevitably encounter people from every part of the world. As such, even knowing a little about these cultures will allow me to connect with them a little better than another person. As a future accountant, networking with others is a vital skill that will allow me to push my career to greater heights.

What is one piece of advice you would give to first- and second-year students regarding learning a language?

Learning a language is difficult but will always have a *significantly* greater return in the effort you put in. It is indescribable the sense of enrichment you receive when you can connect to a language and its culture on a deeper level. As an added bonus, knowing a language and its culture will always benefit you in the future.

Can you share a favorite memory connected to world languages at the University of Scranton?

I always enjoy the many different events here at the LLC. Maybe my favorite one would be the open house that takes place in the LLC. It's always fun to see the different cultures and trinkets.



Leslye Luna Matos

Year: Senior

Major: International Business

What inspired you to learn a language?

Knowing there are people that can't communicate with others due to language barriers. That inspired me to learn a language. I want to be the voice for those who don't have anyone to help them.

What has inspired you to learn more about different world cultures?

I come from a different country and while living here I came across people from different parts of the world and I just love learning about different cultures. I also like when people reminisce about how their life was back home and it just brings a sense of connection and appreciation for our experiences. As for language, I love how unique yet similar they can be.

How has knowledge of different cultures impacted your life?

Since I am an International Business major, knowing about different cultures is very important. It makes me more aware when talking to people from different backgrounds because what's normal here might now be normal somewhere else.

What role does your culture play in your life?

My culture plays a huge role in who I am today. It shapes my values, my work ethic, and the way I connect to others. It reminds me where I come from and motivates me to represent my background proudly wherever I go.

How do you plan to incorporate these skills and knowledge into your future career?

Like I mentioned, I'm majoring in international Business so learning a new language is very important if you plan on doing business abroad. The same goes for understanding cultural differences; you need to know how people handle business relationships, punctuality, and even how to dress when meeting business partners.

What is one piece of advice you would give to first- and second-year students regarding learning a language?

Do it!!! Being able to communicate in two different languages opens so many doors for you. Imagine being able to communicate in more than two?! And for my LinkedIn lovers—writing "Bilingual" on your resume is the best feeling ever.

Can you share a favorite memory connected to world languages at the University of Scranton?

Since I've been working at the Language Learning Center since my very first day of freshman year, I've made so many great memories. If I had to pick one, it would be our open house events. You get to meet all of our wonderful tutors and connect with professors outside of the classroom. ■



Study Abroad Spotlights



Philip Huffman Studied Abroad In Kaohsiung, Taiwan!

This summer I had the chance to study Mandarin language in Kaohsiung, Taiwan (高雄, 台湾). Kaohsiung is an industrial coastal city in the south and has over 1 million people. During my time in Taiwan, I greatly improved my Mandarin language skills and got to experience all different aspects of Taiwanese culture. People in Taiwan are incredibly hospitable and welcoming to foreigners. I remember one time when traveling on a small island a few miles off Taiwan, I was invited by random strangers to eat dinner. Another time I met a man in a 7-11 (小七) who tried to teach me Taiyu (台语). It was authentic experiences like these that allowed me to better my Mandarin and better understand the Taiwanese people.

I definitely think that some of my best experiences were going to mass in Taiwan. When I would go to mass in Mandarin, I was able to use my language skills to understand the Bible readings, and because the mass follows the same format in Taiwan as it does almost all over the world, I was able to follow along and guess at new words. When I went to mass in English, I was able to meet various Catholic missionaries and meet the migrant communities that lived in Taiwan. I think the most impressive people I met in Taiwan were the missionaries: One was a Jesuit Afrikaner priest from South Africa who had come to Taiwan to work and learn Mandarin. Another was a priest from India who spoke over 7 languages who had worked amongst the indigenous tribes in Taiwan in the mountains for over 14 years. Mandarin is one of the hardest languages in the world (it takes years of study to become fluent), so to see priests like these who had traveled thousands of miles to learn this difficult language in order to work amongst a foreign people in a foreign land, just as Jesuit missionaries such as Matteo Ricci or Francis Xavier, was deeply inspiring to me.

Taiwan is a beautiful island with jungles and mountains, and heavily developed urban areas. Its cuisine is superb and almost every day I find myself craving xiao long bao (小笼包), pork braised rice, pig feet, scallion pancakes, and beef noodles (牛肉面) Did you know that Taiwan is the birthplace of boba tea (珍珠奶茶)? In major cities you barely have to walk 100 meters before you find 5 boba tea shops all next to each other that each sell some unique or bizarre boba tea mixture for \$2 or less.

Mandarin is a skill that is in high demand today. There are 1.4 billion speakers of Mandarin, which is 1 of every 8 persons in the world. Knowing Mandarin puts you apart from your peers and opens up opportunities in business, education, politics, travel, and international relations. Scranton has the only Mandarin program in all of Northeast Pennsylvania and every year there are fewer and fewer students of Chinese in the US. I would ask any student interested in a foreign language to consider Mandarin Chinese since there are fewer students of the language, those who actually master it become even more valuable. China is not going away anytime soon and will continue to be a major player on the world stage. Part of the reason why there are fewer students of Mandarin is due to worsening US-China relations, but it is in times like these that Chinese language skills are even more valuable. In order to meaningfully engage and cooperate with China, we need people that can develop personal relationships with the Chinese people. Learning Chinese is a challenge, I should know as I am still studying the language! However, the pros of Chinese fluency can far outweigh the cons as it opens whole new worlds of opportunities.

Study Mandarin. Visit China. Understand the world as it is. ■

Evangelina Paisi Studied Abroad In Rome, Italy!



Last semester, I had the incredible opportunity to study abroad in Rome, Italy, through the Loyola Chicago John Felice Rome Center.

Living in such a historic city felt like stepping into a classroom that never closed. I loved starting my mornings with a cappuccino before heading to class, and on weekends, I explored different parts of Italy, from the ancient ruins of Rome to the colorful streets of Florence.

I was also lucky to travel to Ireland, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Malta, and each place taught me something new about its culture and people.

The most important lesson I learned was to stay open to everything, whether that meant meeting new people, trying unfamiliar foods, or visiting places I had only ever read about. Traveling and living abroad helped me grow more independent, confident, and curious about the world. It showed me how much we can learn when we step outside our comfort zones. Studying abroad in Italy changed me in the best ways, and I would do it all over again without hesitation. ■



Alumni Spotlight

Jamie Santiago

Graduating Class: 2024

Major: International- French Business & Philosophy B.A

In what ways have languages and cultures impacted your life?

In my life, I quickly gained an appreciation for the differences cultivated in our perspectives through the frameworks of language. Born in Puerto Rico, I grew up immersed in Spanish for my first couple years of life before moving to Pennsylvania, where I experienced a change of both language and culture. Within that period, I began recognizing how language functions as a product of culture and history, new meanings evolving with the collective. I felt like two different people while I navigated both languages, but despite the gaps,

I have progressively recognized the universals of the human experience through my semantic studies.

Language is often misunderstood as just what divides us or that which classifies difference. While it does highlight uniqueness, it's also a fundamental opportunity to discover oneness through universalities. Indeed, language has allowed me to connect with different groups of people, giving me access to stories that have enriched my life forever. Learning French at the University of Scranton has exposed me to Europeans, Haitians, and Africans all with remarkably distinct life paths, and yet, these encounters managed to bring me closer than ever to everyone around me. More than anything, language has taught me about meaning, a place where we may discover truthfulness and be reminded of our shared humanity beyond culture and words. ■

“Language has taught me about meaning, a place where we may discover truthfulness and be reminded of our shared humanity beyond culture and words.”

– Jamie Santiago, '24

World Languages & Cultures: A Love Story

Paul & Naoko Sampson



How did your personal journey with languages shape your path to living and working in the U.S.?

Naoko: I studied English for my college entry examination, but I didn't know how to converse in English until I was 24 after spending 10 months in Australia as an assistant Japanese language teacher at an Australian school. After that, I was working in Japan, but I wanted to make my English stronger. I knew that learning English at school was not going to get me to the level of conversational ability that I wanted so I decided to quit my job and join the ALLEX program to teach in the U.S.

When you first came here as an ALLEX Foundation Japanese Language Instructor, what role did language play in helping you build connections?

Naoko: I came here as a Japanese language teacher and there were 5 other teachers from different countries. We all had to use English to communicate, but we talked a lot about our culture and how language was connected to our backgrounds. So our relationship was using not just English but also learning words like "habibi" which means "sweetheart" in Arabic.

For Naoko, what has it been like to see your partner studying Japanese now at the Language Learning Center?

Naoko: すごいなと思う！ I think it's amazing. If I was starting a totally new language now as an adult with totally different sounds and grammar, that would be so difficult. So I think it's amazing that Paul is really enjoying his experience learning and I really like hearing about what is going on with the other students and the new instructors in the Japanese class. It's so cool that a 37-year-old professor can learn alongside students in their early 20s!

How do you see language and culture as inseparable, do you think one can ever truly be learned without the other?

Naoko: If you watch Japanese animation, you can learn a lot about Japanese culture. Or you can read about Japanese history and visit Japan. But if you want to learn a language, you are automatically learning culture, because it can't be separated from the language. And learning a language makes your cultural understanding so much deeper and allows

you to connect with people of that culture in a much more direct way.

What has been the most rewarding or surprising part of navigating life between two cultural and linguistic worlds together?

Naoko: I thought American and Japanese culture were totally different. I assumed that American people would always say their straightforward feelings and not hide their real feelings. (Japanese people often do this). But I found out that American people actually do the same thing as Japanese people and often say positive things while hiding their real feelings. American people also work really hard, just like Japanese people. This is another surprising thing.

Paul: I think Japanese culture really emphasizes the need to say "sorry" and "thank you" all the time. Sometimes it feels like too much, like when you must apologize for even just entering a house, but I really appreciate how careful Japanese people are about being polite and I think it has helped me to be more thoughtful about what I can do to help make others feel appreciated and considered.

Congrats on your new baby! With respect to language and culture, what do you hope for your child as they grow up?

Naoko: I want him to have experience in both countries. I want him to be able to go to Japanese schools and American schools and make friends in both cultures so he can have a sense of community in both countries."

Paul: I think I care more about him learning Japanese than Naoko does. That's kind of a joke, but I just really want him to have a strong grasp of both languages in order to have the experience that Naoko is describing of being able to participate in both Japanese and American communities. That is our goal for ourselves as well! ■



COMMENTARY

STUDYING LANGUAGES IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Language study in the United States has historically been tied to shifting U.S. strategic interests[†]

The position that “Language is fundamental to what it means to be human” (Lawes, 2018, p. 122) and can broaden “peoples’ horizons and to break down barriers between people” (p. 122) has routinely underpinned arguments for the study of world languages (WL).

In addition to these appeals to one’s humanity, more specific arguments for WL study have also been made, such as findings that L2 learning can positively impact learners’ capacity for analysis (J. Jiang et al., 2016), creativity (Galante, 2020; Piccardo, 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002), and critical thinking (Liang & Fung, 2021). The list goes on; Gallagher-Brett (2004) produced a sweeping compilation of “more than 700 reasons to study languages” (p. 2) based on research conducted by the UK Subject Centre for Languages as part of campaign in the United Kingdom and European Union to “encourage more people to learn languages in and out of school” (p. 2).

Widespread support for WL learning was not always the case in the United States. In the early 1920s, public WL instruction was outlawed in 34 US states (Hartmaier, 2021). WL study came briefly to the fore in public schools in the aftermath of World War II (Hartmaier, 2021). However, English usage was so prevalent at the time that many Americans came to regard WL learning as “unnecessary” (Hartmaier, 2021, p. 52). This attitude would begin to change during the Cold War as a result of growing competition between the United

States and the Soviet Union (García et al., 2019; Hartmaier, 2021). Hartmaier (2021) noted that “for the first time in decades, Americans perceived multilingualism as a valuable skill” (p. 52).

Given the relationship between societal attitudes and language education policies (Hartmaier, 2021), it was perhaps only a matter of time before the U.S. Government enacted legislation to support WL instruction. In 1958, the National Defense Education Act (Public Law 85-864) guaranteed support to states and local school districts for “modern foreign languages, and other critical subjects” (de Brey et al., 2021, p. 413). The reversal of the trajectory of WL instruction in the United States cannot be understated; compared to the 1920s when it was banned in public schools in over half the country, by the end of the 1990s non-English instruction was offered by all public school districts, with 40 U.S. states also mandating that a minimum of two years of WL be made available to learners (Hartmaier, 2021). All other states had requirements in place for students going to college to study at least one other language (Hartmaier, 2021).

Following the height of Cold War, WL study continued to be popular (Hartmaier, 2021), although any arguments for multilingualism seemed to be increasingly tied to specific languages, particularly with respect to a language’s perceived economic competitiveness (see C. Mitchell, 2017). As people turned their attention

toward the United States’ biggest economic competitors, interest in certain languages such as Japanese arose (Hartmaier, 2021).

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, arguments for WL instruction in strategic areas would continue to hinge on strategic issues, particularly those related to national security (Hartmaier, 2021).¹ Klein and Rice’s (2014) views in a report titled US Education Reform and National Security encapsulate this:

Americans’ failure to learn strategic languages, coupled with a lack of formal instruction about the history and cultures of the rest of the world, limits U.S. citizens’ global awareness, cross-cultural competence, and ability to assess situations and respond appropriately in an increasingly interconnected world. ... However, the opportunity to learn [strategic languages] and about the people who speak them should be available to many students across the United States, and all students should have access to high-quality foreign language programs starting in the earliest grades.² (p. 47)

As the next generation of students in the U.S. face a continually evolving and increasingly interconnected global landscape, language study may be more critical than ever. ■

Sources/further reading: see page 15

[†]Adapted from Kuiken, A. E. (2024). *Security Mindset Fundamentals and Second Language Learning* (Order No. 31555833). Available from ProQuest Central. (3092179839).

¹ Those who have espoused more liberal views of the value of WL study, such as its contributions to breaking down barriers between people, have often nevertheless recognized the utility of putting forth practical arguments (see Frantz, 1996).

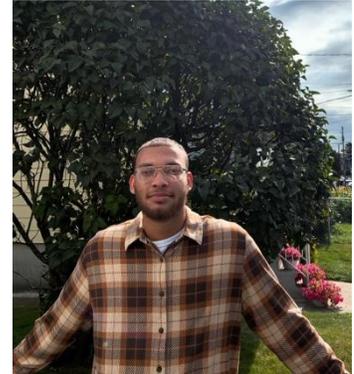
² The Task Force went on to recommend that “governors ... collectively create expectations for language learning and world culture and history, which would boost the next generation’s cross-cultural competence and practical ability to communicate” (Klein & Rice, 2014, p. 47).

Where Are They Now?

Former GA Spotlights

Luis Vasquez

Luis Vasquez was the Fall 2024 Graduate Assistant of the Language Learning Center. He earned his bachelor's degree in Counseling and Human Services in 2023 and his master's in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling in 2025 from the University of Scranton. Since then, he has become a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC) and Licensed Associate Professional Counselor (LAPC) in private practice. He also serves as Program Coordinator for the Counseling Learning Experience and Applied Research (CLEAR) Program at Geisinger Commonwealth College of Health Sciences.



Luis is the founder of **Optimust Intelligence**, an innovation hub dedicated to building ethical and practical AI tools for counseling and healthcare. Its lead project, *Optimust Connect*, focuses on bringing culture, context, and privacy to machine translation in sensitive counseling and healthcare settings. He is also a current participant in the TechCelerator program with the Chamber of Commerce and tecBRIDGE, a regional nonprofit that supports technology-driven entrepreneurship in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Luis lives by the motto: "No matter what you're doing in life, optimism is a must."



Andrea Navarro



Andrea Navarro was the Spring 2025 Graduate Assistant of the Language Learning Center. She completed her undergraduate degree in Accounting and her MBA in Accounting at the University of Scranton. After graduating, Andrea Navarro began her career at Ernst & Young (EY), one of the Big 4 accounting firms, where she has been able to apply everything she has learned and continue growing every day. For Andrea, it has been a rewarding experience to see her dedication and late nights finally paying off.

She recently passed the Financial Accounting & Reporting (FAR) section of the CPA exam, one of the most challenging parts, and is now preparing for the remaining three sections. Balancing a full-time role at EY with CPA studies has been difficult at times, but Andrea feels it has helped her grow tremendously both personally and professionally.

Every day at EY brings her new learning experiences and opportunities to strengthen her skills. As she reflects on her journey so far, Andrea says, "I'm proud of how far I've come and excited to keep moving forward on my path to becoming a licensed CPA."



PHOTO SPOTLIGHT

Can you guess where in the world this photo was taken? *Answer found on page 20.*

Do you have a photo you would like to submit?
Email Dr. Amy Kuiken at amy.kuiken@scranton.edu

Recent and Upcoming Events

WL Study, Continued from page 13

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Recent Events

Taiwanese Cultural Event

October 1, 2025 in The Kane Forum (Leahy 235)

Thank you to all for supporting the Department of World Languages & Cultures' first International Instructor Event of the semester and for helping us get the word out.

On Wednesday, October 1, Professor Chih-Yi Wu delivered an engaging presentation on Taiwanese language and culture. The interactive evening featured snacks, competition, and prizes; those lucky enough to be able to attend left with an appreciation for the past as well as the present.

Almost 60 students, faculty, staff, and community members attended this event. World Languages & Cultures is grateful for Professor Wu's ability to connect with her audience and to connect her audience with the beauty of Taiwan!



Above: Boba tea served at the Taiwanese Cultural Event

Below: Participants at Professor Wu's event pause for a selfie



Photo credit: Diego Sanchez

Events, continued

Fall 2025 World Languages Open House



Language Learning Center Staff Leslye Luna Matos and Ashelly Alas Romero (left to right above) welcome Open House guests

The Department of World Languages & Cultures (WLC) held their annual 2025 Fall Open House on Monday, October 6 in the Language Learning Center (O'Hara Hall 306). More than 100 participants explored this year's interactive stations created by WLC instructors at the University of Scranton from Argentina, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and Taiwan.

Students, staff, faculty, and community members at the Open House tried their hand at origami with support from this semester's Japanese language classes. Many sampled French syrups (mint and lavender flavored for the adventurous), pizza and refreshments, and sweets from Argentina, Germany, and Taiwan. Karaoke and games offered learners a variety of additional avenues for acquiring and practicing vocabulary and cultural concepts. The LLC Coordinator, Dr. Kuiken, drew on her linguistics background to help learners investigate the etymology and meanings behind their own names. Participants won prizes by correctly guessing how many languages one of the University's maintenance and facilities staff members, Angel Vargas, was able to greet people in. (The list is impressive: English, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, Portuguese, Sudanese, Italian, French, Korean, and Mandarin.)

Guests were also given an exclusive opportunity to explore Optimust Connect, a secure, real-time

translation and contextual analysis platform developed and piloted by Scranton alumnus Luis Vasquez ('25). Originally conceived during his time as a counseling student at the University of Scranton after wondering how AI can address problems in his field, Vasquez's project helps counselors, educators, and healthcare providers communicate clearly across languages while protecting privacy and preserving the meaning of sensitive conversations. He also shared the LifeLanguage glossary, a crowdsourced database defining terms and phrases across multiple languages that acts as the "brain" of his tool. A banner hanging over his station at Open House read, "Words Build Bridges."

WLC work study staff used the event to highlight Spring 2026 WLC course offerings—such as SPAN 101 and ITAL 101 for beginners—along with other WLC



Students pick up a few words—and some new friends—at the Japanese language and culture station during the Department of World Languages & Culture's 2025 Fall Open House on Monday, October 6. Pictured above left to right: Haley Fahey, Nurun Islam, Dominic A. Liberatore Jr., Itsuki Yajima, and Nisarg Modi.

courses conducted in English, Arabic, ASL, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Russian. Students additionally shared the benefits of joining the Theta Iota Chapter of Alpha Mu Gamma, the National Collegiate Foreign Language Honor Society (deadline to apply is Feb 22, 2026; contact Dr. Zanzana for details).

Eventgoers left with a unique souvenir—a multilingual "Songs Without Borders" playlist compiled by WLC staff and students from around the world (stop by O'Hara 306 for access!).

Events, continued

Scenes from WLC Fall 2025 Open House



Events, continued

Egyptian Movie Night

Fulbright Arabic FLTA Mohamed Saleh El-Ghanam recently kicked off the Department of World Languages & Cultures' series "Egyptian Movie Night" which will take place regularly in the Language Learning Center (O'Hara 306) this year. For more details, please contact Professor El Ghanam at mohamed.elghanam@scranton.edu



Professor Mohamed Saleh El-Ghanam had the audience laughing and learning as he screened *Losos Laken Zoarfa* (“Thieves, but Kind-Hearted”), a black-and-white Egyptian comedy from the 1960s that he personally subtitled into English. In just one hour, viewers got a taste of Egypt’s comedic style—quirky, playful, and full of heart. This showcased Professor El-Ghanam dedication to sharing his culture with us. Students called it an “old funny movie” and were struck by how the humor, though rooted in another time and place, still felt relatable today. More than just a film showing, the event was a reminder of how cinema, translation, and a passionate professor can bridge cultures and bring people together through laughter.

Upcoming WLC Events

This year, the Department of World Languages and Cultures is proud to host the following Fulbright TA and Visiting Instructor events, which are held in Leahy 235 (Kane Forum). All events will be hosted in the evening on the date listed between 4:30 – 6:30 PM. (As exact event times may vary, please confirm the start times in advance by visiting https://royalsync.scranton.edu/events_list)

- Wednesday, October 29, 2025
German Cultural Event - Insight Into Bavaria
 Eva Grohs – German FLTA from Germany

- Wednesday, November 19, 2025
Argentinian Cultural Event
 Agustina Santivañez – Spanish FLTA from Argentina

- Wednesday, March 11, 2026
Egyptian Cultural Event
 Mohamed El-Ghanam – Arabic FLTA from Egypt

- Monday, April 13, 2026
Japanese Cultural Event
 Kazumasa Fujita – ALLEX Foundation Japanese Instructor from Japan


Stay tuned:

- 2026 TA Talk #1: Thursday, April 2, 2026
11:30 AM – 1:30 PM
- 2026 TA Talk #2: Tuesday, April 28, 2026
4:30 PM – 6:30 PM
- 3rd Annual World Languages Day,
Thursday, March 5, 2026

Spring Course Offerings World Languages & Cultures

SPANISH

- SPAN 101 Elementary Spanish I (CF)
- SPAN 102 Elementary Spanish II (CF)
- SPAN 212 Intermediate Spanish II (CF, D)
- SPAN 312 Spanish Composition (CF, D, EPW)
- SPAN 314 Latin American Cultures & Civilizations (D, EPW)
- SPAN 315 Spanish for Health Professions
- SPAN 335 Service and Hispanic Community (D)

FRENCH

- FREN 102 Beginning French (CF, D)
- FREN 212 Intermediate French (CF, D)

GERMAN

- GERM 102 Beginning German II (CF)

ITALIAN

- ITAL 101 Beginning Italian (CF, D)
- ITAL 102 Beginning Italian II (CF, D)
- ITAL 212 Intermediate Italian II (CF, D)

ARABIC

- ARAB 102 Elementary Arabic (CF)
- ARAB 212 Intermediate Arabic II (CF, D)

MANDARIN

- CNS 102 Elementary Chinese II (CF)
- CNS 212 Intermediate Chinese II (CF)
- CNS 312 Advanced Chinese II (CF, D)

JAPANESE

- JPN 102 Elementary Japanese II (CF)
- JPN 212 Intermediate Japanese II (CF, D)
- JPN 312 Advanced Japanese II (CF)

RUSSIAN

- RUSS 210 Intensive Intermediate Russian (CF, D)

ASL

- ASL 102 American Sign Language II (CF)

LITERATURE

- LIT 105 Intro to World Lit (CL, D)
- LIT 107 Global Aesthetics of Care (CL, D)
- LIT 225 Monsters, Aliens, and Superheroes (D, EPW)

Language Learning Center

The Language Learning Center, located in O'Hara 306, offers language learning support for students and community members learning Spanish, French, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and English. Services available include language conversation hours, a computer lab, language tutoring, a database of language resources, and more. The LLC also offers English tutoring to adult English language learners in the community and hosts events for local students and community members such as the annual TA Talks, various cultural events hosted by our Fulbright TAs, and high school immersion days.

This year, the Department of World Languages & Cultures welcomes Ashley Paulino, our 2025-2026 LLC graduate assistant. Ashley completed her undergraduate degree in accounting at the University of Scranton and is now pursuing her MBA in international business. She has two younger sisters and a dog, all of whom are adorable. Currently teaching herself Portuguese, Ashley speaks Spanish and English fluently; in her free time, she enjoys reading and running. She is passionate about supporting others and looks forward to making a positive impact through her role as the LLC GA this year. Please stop by and say hello to Ashley! She would love to meet you!



Curious about how the Language Learning Center can help you learn a language or improve your language skills? Contact Dr. Amy Kuiken at amy.kuiken@scranton.edu or 570-941-4711.

Social Media

Stay up to date with the Department's activities, events, news, and highlights by following the World Languages and Cultures Department's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages listed below!



<https://www.facebook.com/uofsworldlanguages>



https://www.twitter.com/uofscranton_wlc



https://www.instagram.com/uofs_worldlanguages/

Photo Spotlight challenge on page 14: photo taken from Bynac-et-Cazenaq, France looking at Chateau de Fayrac across the Dordogne Valley in May, 2025