

THE AMBASSADOR

Volume XXXIV

NEWSLETTER OF

Spring 2026

THE DEPARTMENT OF WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

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- Something you will remember from World Languages Day 2026: "Make Yourself More (interesting than AI)"

words have more power than I thought.

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Traditional cold remedies from around the world



Edited by Ashley Paulino & Amy Kuiken



Museo Internazionale delle Marionette Antonio Pasqualino in Sicily, January 2026 Photo by Dr. Silva

Notes from The Chair *Dr. Yamile Silva*

Dear Students, Alumni, Colleagues, and Friends of World Languages and Cultures,

As the spring semester unfolds, I find myself filled with gratitude for the energy, dedication, and spirit that define our department. This issue of *The Ambassador* celebrates the remarkable growth of our students, the achievements of our faculty, and the enriching cultural exchanges that continue to make our department a true crossroads of global perspectives — all made possible by the tireless commitment of our faculty and staff.

Before I continue, I must express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Amy Kuiken and our Graduate Assistant Ashley Paulino for their tireless work in putting together this issue of *The Ambassador*. Their dedication, attention to detail, and creative vision bring our department's story to life in these pages. Thank you both for your invaluable contributions.

Celebrating Faculty Excellence

As in previous issues of this newsletter, this edition showcases how our faculty continue to contribute meaningfully to their fields and to our community. I encourage you to explore their scholarship as well as service throughout these pages.

Continued →

Notes from the Chair, continued

Cultural Programming

This academic year has been exceptionally rich, thanks to our Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistants, Visiting Instructors, and dedicated faculty. These programs embody our commitment to fostering global citizenship and cross-cultural understanding.

This year we have had the pleasure of learning from and about countries such as France, Egypt, Japan, China, Argentina, and Germany. The department has hosted events that have engaged not only the university community, but also the broader Scranton community.

Trivia Night drew 60 attendees who participated in a lively cultural trivia competition featuring questions from around the world. The audience was wonderfully diverse, including ESL community members, university students, and high school students who have become regular participants at our events.

WLC also co-sponsored a highly successful cultural celebration with Asian Studies that attracted more than 100 people. Attendees discovered traditions from Taiwan and Japan through interactive activities including games, origami, and calligraphy — and the event received coverage on Fox 56's evening news.

On March 5th, WLC welcomed more than 210 people, including 170 guests from local high schools, for our third annual World Languages Day. During this event, our instructors and staff made a powerful case for why the study of world languages and cultures is not a luxury — not an elective on the margins of a serious education — but one of the most urgent and meaningful investments a young person can make in their future, and one of the most significant contributions a university can make to the world. (See page 13.)

Students were introduced to languages many had never heard before: Russian,

German, ASL, Japanese, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, and French. They approached the day with openness and curiosity — listening to unfamiliar sounds, attempting words in languages they had never spoken, and discovering that the world is wider and richer than they had imagined. It was a true celebration of language, culture, and human connection.

The semester is not yet over, and we look forward to continuing to host events that build bridges across cultures and communities.

Honoring Our Graduates

We bid farewell to our graduating WLC seniors with immense pride. They represent the culmination of years of dedication, linguistic growth, and cultural exploration. Their achievements reflect not only their individual talents but also the supportive community we have built together. We wish them every success as they carry their language skills and intercultural competencies into the world. In addition, we wish everything wonderful to our graduating LLC tutors.

Looking Ahead

As we look toward fall 2026, I encourage students to explore our diverse course offerings, from elementary language courses to advanced literature and culture courses. Whether you're beginning your language journey or deepening your expertise, our faculty are here to support your academic and personal growth.

Thank you for being part of this dynamic community. Your passion for languages, cultures, and global engagement makes our department a place of genuine intellectual discovery and human connection.

Con gratitud y entusiasmo,

Dr. Yamile Silva

Chair, Department of World Languages & Cultures



FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Dr. Yamile Silva's critical annotated edition of Dominican Writer Abigail Mejía's *Por entre frivolidades* (1922) will be released on May 20, 2026, by KRK Ediciones, a distinguished Spanish academic press based in Oviedo, Spain. The book will be officially launched at a scholarly event at the University of Oviedo on May 22, 2026, coinciding with the international conference "Cuidando el mundo: Nuevas narrativas de género y afectos." Two prominent Spanish scholars—one from the Universidad de Oviedo and one from the Universitat de les Illes Balears—will present this annotated edition.

- Her article "La labor de Abigail Mejía en el periódico catalán *El Día Gráfico*" will be published in *Textos Híbridos*, a peer-reviewed Chilean academic journal Vol 13.1 (2026).
- During her first year as Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Revista de Estudios de Género y Sexualidades*, she shepherded through the complete editorial process—vetting submissions, coordinating peer review, working with authors on revisions, and overseeing final publication—for five issues spanning three years: Volume 49, no. 1 (2023); Volume 49, no. 2 (2023); Volume 50, nos. 1-2 (2024); Volume 51, no. 1 (2025); Volume 51, no. 2 (2025).
- She is currently releasing Volume 51, no. 2 (2025), which brings the journal fully current for the first time in three years—a significant editorial achievement.
- Silva wrote a ten-page essay on the history of the journal for the 50th anniversary, which will appear in volume 51.2 (2025).
- As noted on the journal's website as well as in the published journal, CAS and the Department of World Languages and Cultures are now listed as official sources of support of *REGS*, providing important visibility for our institution in international academic publishing:
<https://ojs.msupress.org/index.php/REGS/about>
- Her proposal "Feminismo dominicano desde Barcelona: La escritura de Abigail Mejía (1895-1941) en *El Día Gráfico*" has been accepted for presentation at the 2026 Latin American Studies

Association (LASA) Congress: *Republic and Revolution* in Paris, France (May 2026). LASA is the premier international forum for scholars of Latin American studies.

Dr. Virginia Picchiatti

Professor of Italian:

- Will present the volume she co-edited, *Grazia Deledda's Painterly Aesthetic*, online at the Museo d'Arte di Nuoro (Sardagna, Italy).
- Picchiatti is also co-organizer of the session, *Deledda and Rome: One Hundred Years Since the Nobel Prize in Literature*, to be held at the Conference of the American Association of Teachers of Italian in July in Rome, Italy.

Dr. Habib Zanzana will be presenting the following conference papers in spring 2026 :

- "*The Buried Self: Recurring Nightmare and the Weight of History in Federico Gianotti's Chilean Drama, Leni*" 9th International Interdisciplinary Conference on Trauma and Nightmare, 26-27 March 2026.
- "*The Anatomy of Incommensurability: Mapping the Maternal Fracture in Fawzia Zouari's Le corps de ma mère*" Conference: *(In-)Visible Wounds: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Discrimination and Violence*, April 23-26, 2026 (Virtual Conference).
- "*The Pathological Legacy: Colonial Trauma, Failed Care, and Reactive Masculinity in Kamel Daoud's the Meursault Investigation*" at a conference on Toxic: Masculinities and Health/Care. An Online Symposium organized by the Arts and Humanities Institute –

Dr. Marzia Caporale

- Completed and presented a paper at SAMLA 2025 in Atlanta Georgia "Teaching Annie Ernaux in the American College Classroom: Challenges and Modes of Inquiry."
- Caporale's book chapter was published in the edited volume *Queer Identities in Popular Culture*, January 2026. Title "Queering Masculinities. Reinterpreting Gender Boundaries in Contemporary Italian Pop Culture"

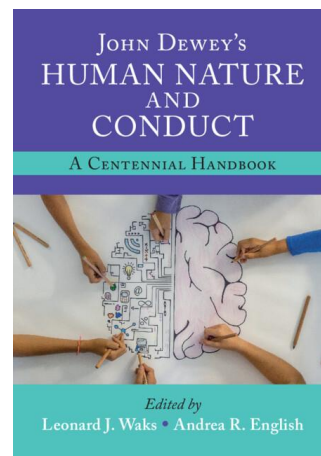
MORE WLC SCHOLARSHIP



MaryAnn Stefko, who teaches American Sign Language in the Department of World Languages & Cultures, presented at the 2026 Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Conference from March 15-17 in Jacksonville, FL with **Viktoriya Vasylynka**. Vasylynka has been learning English in the University of Scranton's Language Learning Center for the past two years. *Learn more on page 5.*

Dr. Amy Kuiken's co-authored book chapter was published in an [edited volume](#) by Cambridge University Press in January: Blanken-Webb, J., Hanna, H., & Kuiken, A. (2026). Cyber Education: A Deweyan Foundation for Security Mindset. In L. J. Waks & A. R. English (Eds.), *John Dewey's Human Nature and Conduct: A Centennial Handbook* (pp. 201–215). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuiken attended the 2025 ACTFL Annual Convention and World Languages Expo in New Orleans on November 21-23 to learn more about advocating for robust language learning programs in higher education. She is currently serving as an external reader on a dissertation committee for an Ed.D doctoral candidate at Wilkes University.



Upcoming Presentations: Kuiken's proposal "Lost in Translation: Security mindset and the hidden cost of AI translation tools" has been accepted for presentation at the 2026 Conference on Confronting the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence to be held at the University of Scranton April 16-18.



Chih-Yi Wu, Taiwanese Ministry of Education's Teaching Mandarin Abroad Mandarin Instructor at the University of Scranton, attended the 2025 ACTFL Annual Convention and World Languages Expo in New Orleans on November 21-23 (pictured left).

Wu was also recently awarded a prestigious ALLEX (Alliance for Language Learning & Educational Exchange) Foundation scholarship for 2026-2028.

University of Scranton senior and CBL scholar, **Lauren DeSantis**, is working with the Department of World Languages & Cultures to research the local impact of AI tools on English Language Learning (ELL) in the local community. DeSantis plans to survey local ELL instructors' perspectives of the use of free AI tools in their classrooms to learn more about which effective AI tools might be feasible and effective in Scranton, given the area's specific population needs and constraints. Her work will be presented at the Celebration of Scholars on May 6 in the Leahy Science Center.



Marion Rousseau, 2025 French Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant at the University of Scranton, gave an invited talk to incarcerated students at State Correctional Institution (SCI) Waymart in November. Rousseau, who is pursuing a teaching degree while focusing on incarcerated learners, spoke about French culture and cuisine. Her involvement was made possible through the University of Scranton's Prison Education Program at Waymart under the direction of Dr. Christopher Haw.

Special Feature

When Viktoriya Vasylinka and her husband Roman stepped inside the Language Learning Center (LLC) in September 2024, they were just hoping to improve their English.

Viktoriya could never have guessed that in a little over a year, she would be standing alongside University of Scranton ASL instructor MaryAnn Stefko – in front of a packed room to present *in English* to some of the most influential people in the field.

MaryAnn Stefko, an instructor in the Department of World Languages & Cultures and Early Intervention therapist, met Viktoriya through their involvement in a local program for young children.

One day, Viktoriya, a native Ukrainian speaker, asked MaryAnn if she knew where she could get ESL tutoring. MaryAnn told her about the LLC at the University of Scranton. Viktoriya and her husband Roman were soon meeting with tutors in the LLC for weekly ESL support.

MaryAnn explained what happened next: "I invited Viktoriya to present with me [at the 2026 Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Conference] since she is an integral part of our Toddler program at the

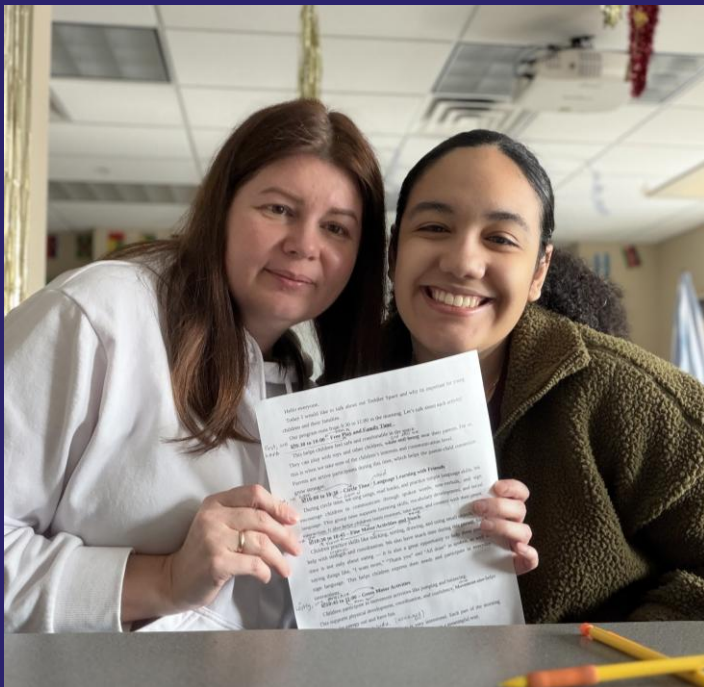
Scranton School. I know that this was VERY MUCH out of her comfort zone but that with the right support, she could do it!"

Originally, Viktoriya was reluctant. MaryAnn persisted. Viktoriya finally agreed.

MaryAnn shared that with the help of LLC tutors, "Viktoriya presented BEAUTIFULLY in front of a 'PACKED' room - it was standing room only!...she did it and did it well- because of the tutoring and support she got from [the LLC community tutoring] program!...I just needed to share what a HUGE impact you are all making in the lives of folks in our community! To be able to do this presentation - at this level – [in such a short amount of time] - is impressive!" said MaryAnn.

To the LLC program and staff, MaryAnn says: "THANK YOU for everything you do to support folks who are learning English and navigating life in a new place. Your work means SO MUCH and is so very valuable!"

Congratulations, Viktoriya and MaryAnn! – WL&C



Viktoriya Vasylylnka (left) poses with her conference notes and LLC tutor Fanelysse de la Rosa (right) in the Language Learning Center this March



Viktoriya Vasylylnka (left) with MaryAnn Stefko (right) at the 2026 Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Conference March 15-17 in Jacksonville, FL.

FAREWELL TO OUR

*Alexandra
Salina*



Amelia Muinga



*Ana Maria
Duque*



*Evangelina
Paisi*



*Fanelysse
de la Rosa*



Geraldly Perez



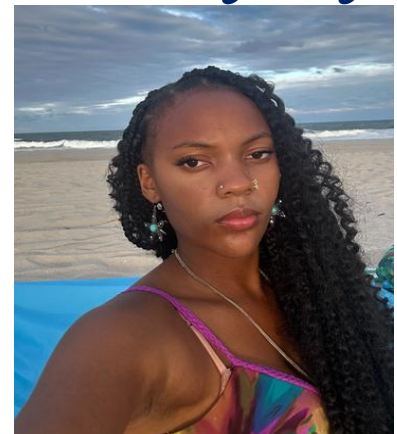
*Naveen
El-Dabsheh*



*Nohemie
Jean-Pierre*



*Shania
Hemingway*



2026 LLC GRADUATES

*Ashelly Alas
Romero*



Cheng Liu



Bianca Muinga



Leslye Luna



Madison Christianso



Maria Viola



*Zayury
Ponce-Rosas*



As the 2025-2026 school year comes to a close, we say goodbye to our graduating tutors with full hearts and deep gratitude. It is difficult to put into words how much each of you has meant to the Language Learning Center. Whether you have been with us since your freshman year or joined us more recently, your presence, kindness, and dedication have left a lasting mark on our team and on the students you supported.

You have given so much more than your time. You have shared your patience, your energy, your encouragement, and your care. Through your work, you helped create a space where language became connection, learning became community, and students felt seen, supported, and capable.

We are so proud of each of you and excited to see where life takes you next. While we will miss you dearly, we have no doubt that you will continue to do wonderful things and make a difference wherever you go. Thank you for the role you played in educating our community and in making the LLC a warmer, brighter place. Never forget that words have power, language carries meaning, and kindness—no matter how small—can change someone's day, or even their life.

With love, Ashley Paulino & The Department of World Languages & Cultures

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

Mike Dillon Class of 2007



As a University of Scranton alumnus who studied Spanish, how has Spanish shaped your life in ways you may not have expected?

Being able to communicate in Spanish has allowed a greater and richer life experience for me. I've met my wife, who is originally from Colombia; and I've been able to experience a whole new culture with food, music, family, friends...and tons of love...that I never would have known, if I didn't speak Spanish.

How has your connection to language and culture influenced the person you have become, both personally and professional?

I think that this connection has allowed me to understand just how big the world really is – and that valuing the cultures of others is important and truly makes life more enjoyable. ■ continued on next page

Alex Eriquez Class of 2025

We asked Alex to tell us about himself and his experience with his Italian minor:

"My experience studying Italian at the University of Scranton alongside Dr. Picchietti has been exceptional. I am personally a third generation Italian American who knew some Italian growing up, but continued to learn the language with the intent of staying close to my culture and being able to converse with my family in Sicily. I was unsure if I should continue my Italian studies in college as a biology major, but instantly had no thoughts of turning back upon taking courses with Dr. Picchietti. She has made my experience with becoming proficient in Italian an absolute delight, and inspired me to pursue the Italian minor from Department of World Languages & Cultures. Given the program's small size, I had the privilege to take many independent studies and readers with Dr. Picchietti to complete the minor, which provided many opportunities to practice conversation. I believe the personal interaction in Italian aided my improvement in speaking a great deal, far more than a typical Italian language classroom setting."

"With that, I am appreciative of this small classroom setting, however it was due to so few students at the University of Scranton taking higher level Italian courses. I believe more students need to consider pursuing foreign languages as minors; I always encourage my peers to continue studying a foreign language at a higher level, not just so they can fulfill a humanity requirement, but to be enriched in the ability to immerse oneself in foreign cultures in the form of language. I am currently pursuing my MBA at the University of Scranton before attending dental school in the summer, and am ecstatic to be able to continue speaking Italian even as a future dentist. Knowing how to speak a foreign language aside from English is a skill that benefits anyone, regardless of their career. I hope to see more Scranton students studying Italian at higher levels in the future, and that also goes for all other foreign languages our department offers!"

Around the World:



Pictured right: Alex in Italy

Dillon, *continued* ■

Since graduating from the University of Scranton, what path has your life taken, both personally and professionally?

Since graduating from the University, I've worked in financial services and accounting across several industries. On looking back, the transition from being a full-time student to entering the workforce and 'finding myself' was no small task. So having the backing of a degree from the U of S, and the skills and confidence that come with it have been key to my personal and professional development.

What would you want current students to understand about the lasting personal impact of learning another language?

Learning another language can open doors for you that you could never have imagined for yourself. For me, this has really been a true statement that I can't emphasize enough.

How are you doing now, and what does this season of life look like for you?

Life these days looks pretty good! Lots of travel and exploring new places with my beautiful wife. I'm still perfecting my Sancocho Colombiano and Empanada recipes though – I have a pretty tough critic at home!

Cures* for the Common Cold

- **Jamaica:** Chicken soup and an orange. – *E.A.*
- **Brazil:** Vicks Vaporub. – *M.V.*
- **United States:** Drink whiskey. – *P.H.*
- **Caribbean, Mexico:** Lime with honey, squeeze a lime and add a tablespoon of honey, mix it and drink it in one go. – *Leslye L.M.*
- **DR:** Onions chopped up into little pieces with honey, water, & fresh lime juice from a real lime. It can also be ginger tea with honey, onion, & garlic. Onions are very important because of its immune system support & nutrients. – *Ashley MP3*
- **France:** Grog (a strong alcohol heated up with spices). – *P.B.*
- **Bulgaria:** Take a black turnip, drill a funnel-shaped hole through the center from top to bottom, drizzle honey in the hole, let seep out into a cup overnight, drink the sludge mixture in the morning. – *Dr. Kuiken*
- Winter in **Russia** is long and brutally cold. Catching a cold or the flu is almost inevitable. Instead of immediately reaching for medicine, many Russians turn to traditional remedies that have been passed down for generations. These remedies may seem a bit extreme, but they offer a fascinating glimpse into Russian culture, values,

and everyday language:

Garlic:

Strong Smell, Strong Faith

Garlic is probably the most popular cold remedy in Russia. It's eaten raw chopped up. There's a phrase you'll often hear in Russia: Чеснок – лучшее лекарство. Garlic is the best medicine. The idea is simple: if it burns, it must be working.

Hot Tea Is a Must If you have a cold or the flu, someone will make you tea. It's not a request—it's a requirement. The tea is black and hot, and it's often served with lemon, honey, or варенье (jam). Tea isn't just a drink; it's a necessity. Staying warm is essential, and warmth equals safety in Russian culture.

Steam Inhalation at Home

One of the more traditional remedies involves sitting over a pot of boiling potatoes with a towel over your head. It's uncomfortable and sweaty—but that's the whole point. People may say to you: Надо пропариться. You need to steam yourself. The goal is to "sweat out" the illness, which is a very common belief behind many traditional remedies like sauna (banya) for example.

Stay warm, don't go outside, eat soup, and drink a lot of hot tea! – *Anastasia Maume*

***Not intended as medical advice. Always consult your doctor.**

WLC 2025-2026 EVENTS

Every year, the University of Scranton has hosted Fulbright Language Teaching Assistants and Visiting Instructors from all over the world who teach world language classes, offer educational events to the community, and share their cultures with the university. Register for our upcoming spring 2026 events! *Learn more on page 14.*



WLC events on RoyalSync

<https://royalsync.scranton.edu/wlc/club/signup>

TAIWANESE CULTURAL EVENT 2025-26

Taiwanese Ministry of Education Teaching Mandarin Abroad Program Mandarin Instructor
Chih-Yi "Arena" Wu

Includes Free Boba and Taiwanese Snacks!

Hosted by Ms. Chih-Yi (Arena) Wu
Wednesday Oct 1
4:30pm-6:00pm
Leahy 235 (Kane Forum)

GERMAN FULBRIGHT EVENT 2025-26

German Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant from Germany
Eva Grohs

GERMAN CULTURAL EVENT
INSIGHT INTO BAVARIA

GERMAN SNACKS, DRINKS AND
GLUPPERL-CRAFTING!

ARGENTINIAN FULBRIGHT EVENT 2025-26

Spanish Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant from Argentina
Agustina Santivañez

BIENVENIDOS A ARGENTINA

ARGENTINIAN EVENT

Wednesday, November 19th
4:30 - 6:00 pm
Leahy 235 (Kane Forum)

Snacks, drinks and prizes!

Elm Park United Methodist Church

DEC 4, 2025
5:00PM - 6:30PM

Doors open at 4:45PM
712 Linden Street
Scranton, PA 18510

ACOUSTIC PROGRAM:
"FAREWELL CONCERT"

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
ALL ARE WELCOME!

Marion Rousseau
University of Scranton • 2025 French Fulbright

AROUND THE WORLD
A MULTICULTURAL TRIVIA NIGHT

Event will conclude in time for Asian New Year celebration also on 2/19. Scan here for Asian New Year registration details!

WEIRD & WILD PRIZES

Individuals & groups welcome. Form a team before the event or at the door!
Pro-tip: The more multilingual your team is, the more chance you'll have of winning prizes!

FEB 19
O'HARA 306
Dept. of World Languages & Cultures
5-6:30 PM

ARABIC FULBRIGHT EVENT 2025-26

Arabic Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant from Egypt
Mohamed El-Ghanam

EXPERIENCE EGYPT!

RAMADAN, BASBOUSA, KUNAFAH & MORE!

AN EVENT HOSTED BY FULBRIGHT INSTRUCTOR MOHAMED SALEH EL GHANAM

WEDNESDAY MARCH 11
4:30-6:00PM
Leahy 235 (Kane Forum)

Last semester, WLC said goodbye to Marion Rousseau, 2025 French language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from France. This semester, we say farewell and best wishes to Chih-Yi Wu, 2024-26 Taiwanese Government Chinese language instructor ▪ Agustina Santivañez, 2025-26 Spanish language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from

Argentina ▪ Kazumasa Fujita, 2025-26 ALLEX Foundation Japanese language instructor ▪ Eva Grohs, 2025-26 German language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from Germany ▪ Mohamed El Ghanam, 2025-26 Arabic language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from Egypt

Left: Jaime Serrano proudly displays the prize he won at Professor El-Ghanam's Egyptian cultural event.





Multicultural Trivia Night

- Thank you to more than 60 people who came to Multicultural Multilingual Trivia Night in the Language Learning Center (LLC) on February 19. The event was hosted by the Department of World Languages & Cultures in the Language Learning Center. In addition to faculty, staff, and students, members of the community joined is as well. High schoolers and middle schoolers from the Riverside School District and ESL students from the LLC came together to form diverse teams.
- The event served as a reminder that teams made of people from a variety of backgrounds perform better and achieve more.
- Congratulations to the winning teams, who walked away with an array of prizes, including Belgian Biscoff spread, French jam, Irish butter, Swiss Toblerone chocolate, Japanese Pocky, and an invigorated sense of linguistic and cultural discovery.



Thank you to Ashley Paulino & Luiz Vasquez, current and former LLC GAs, who expertly coordinated the evening. Don't miss our [next trivia event!](#)

Asian New Year Festival & Workshop

Chopstick Competition, Prizes, Food & More

February 19 (Thursday), 2026
6:30 PM — 8:30 PM
Brennan Hall 509

Hands-on Workshop! Create Your Own New Year's Resolutions!

Japanese New Year Customs and Origami
Prof. Kazumasa Fujita

Chinese New Year Custom and Calligraphy
Prof. Chih-yi (Arenu) Wu

With student assistants from Chinese and Japanese classes,
Asia Studies, Asian Club ...

LEARN ABOUT ASIAN CULTURES!
ASIAN FOOD SERVED!
FREE AND OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY!

RSVP Required: Scan the QR code

Sponsor: Asian Studies Program, Dept. of World Languages and Cultures, & Asia Club | Questions: asianstudies@scranton.edu

Asian New Year Festival & Workshop

Right: Professors Wu and Fujita

Below: Fujita Sensei



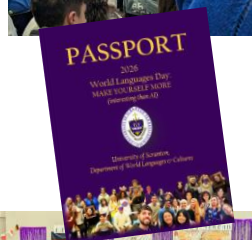
Check out [Fox 56's](#) and [Scranton Times-Tribune's](#) media coverage of this event



EVENTS CONTINUED

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SCRANTON
A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

3rd Annual World Languages Day
MAKE YOURSELF MORE
interesting than AI



3RD ANNUAL WORLD LANGUAGES DAY

The Department of World Languages & Cultures welcomed over 200 guests for World Languages Day on March 5 at the University of Scranton, providing students, faculty, staff, and 174 language students and teachers from local high schools with an unforgettable program.

Local high schools at the event:

Dallas High
Honesdale High
Lakeland
Old Forge
Riverside High
Scranton
Valley View
Wallenpaupack
Western Wayne
West Scranton

Special thanks to WLC instructors who contributed to the success of the event :

Mandarin Chinese - Professor Chih-Yi Wu
Taiwanese Government Chinese Language Instructor

Spanish – Professor Agustina Santivañez
Spanish Language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from Argentina

Japanese – Professor Kazumasa Fujita,
ALLEX Foundation Japanese Language Instructor

German – Professor Eva Grohs,
German Language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from Germany

Arabic - Professor Mohamed El Ghanam,
Arabic Language Fulbright Teaching Assistant from Egypt

Italian – Professor Franca Kelly,
University of Scranton Adjunct Professor of Italian

American Sign Language (ASL) – Professor MaryAnn Stefko,
University of Scranton Adjunct Professor of ASL

Russian – Professor Anastasia Maume,
University of Scranton Adjunct Professor of Russian

French & General Linguistics – Dr. Amy Kuiken,
Language Learning Center Coordinator

With support from WLC full-time faculty:
Dr. Yamile Silva, *Chair of the Department of World Languages & Cultures*
Dr. Marzia Caporale, Dr. Virginia Picchiatti, Dr. Habib Zanzana

Thank you to CAS Dean Barry for addressing the audience with her welcoming remarks!

Check out [media coverage](#) of this event in the Scranton Times-Tribune

LEARNERS GET THE MESSAGE: LANGUAGES MAKE US MORE[†]

“Language is not simply a tool for communication – it is the very fabric of who we are.” -Dr. Silva, WLC Chair

More than 150 students from 10 local high schools joined dozens more from the University of Scranton to hear a message about the value of World Languages. Interactive presentations were delivered in 6 different languages. Participants engaged with World Languages instructors during break-out sessions featuring American Sign Languages, Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. CAS Dean Dr. Carolyn Barry welcomed a packed room.

The theme of this year’s World Languages Day was “Make Yourself More (interesting than AI). Dr. Amy Kuiken, Coordinator of the Language Learning Center at the U, explained that “we find ourselves once again living through an era when humans need to think about how to set ourselves apart from emerging technology when it threatens to do all the things we can do.”

Kuiken said AI-driven translation apps can now “handle everything from grammar and vocabulary, to the trickier things related to tone and style...Where we used to have to...agonize over how the best way was to say something...we go straight to a translator that can increasingly handle more and more of that for us. But I think it’s important to keep in mind that if we’re outsourcing everything to an AI, we’re already replaceable by an AI.”

Kuiken maintained that those who do learn a language are investing in

themselves: “Now you’re noticing cultural, linguistic, psychological, historical, social patterns, rules, alternatives, mechanics, properties... You see the matrix. This is how you grow and make yourself more interesting than AI.”

Kuiken appealed to those “who may be thinking that language learning might be one of the first things to go in an AI age” by sharing a personal story about how language learning “can set people apart while bringing people together.” She inadvertently befriended a community-leader on social media in Tanzania after responding to a call to help translate for local French-speaking families in Scranton. This led to an international educational partnership that benefits hundreds of students today.

“We have an ever-evolving sense of what language is. People are starting to recognize that language is much more than translation, vocabulary, and grammar. It’s about context, creativity, strategy, identity, and community,” Kuiken said.

Dr. Yamile Silva, Chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures put it powerfully: “From the very first cry of a newborn to the last words whispered by an elder, language accompanies every moment of our lives. It is how we express love, resolve conflict, pass down wisdom, tell stories, and make sense of a world that is often complex and uncertain. Language is not simply a tool for communication — it is the very fabric of who we are.”

Silva pointed out that “the study of world languages and cultures is not a luxury...It is one of the most urgent and practical investments a young person can make in their future — and one of the most meaningful contributions a university can make to the world...When you learn another language, you do not simply gain a new set of vocabulary words or grammar rules. You gain access to an entirely different way of thinking...You realize that the world is wider, and richer than you ever imagined...in that realization, something profound happens you become a better thinker, a more empathetic human being, and a more effective citizen of the world.”

“You become a better thinker, a more empathetic human being, and a more effective citizen of the world.”
-Dr. Silva, WLC Chair

Silva said that “Here at the University of Scranton, we take that mission seriously. Our Department of World Languages is not simply a place where conjugations are memorized and textbooks are studied...Our students take those lessons beyond the classroom — into study abroad programs, community engagement, research, and careers that make a difference in the lives of others.

“Today’s celebration is a testament to that commitment. It is a reminder of why we do what we do.”

[†]A version of this story appeared in [Royal News](#)

Below: Scene from ASL lesson led by Professor MaryAnn Stefko at 2026 World Languages Day



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Ultimate Multilingual Multicultural Trivia Night
Thursday, April 23, 2026 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM
- 2026 TA Talk
Tuesday, April 28, 2026 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM
- Japanese Cultural Event - Monday, April 13, 2026
Kazumasa Fujita – ALLEX Foundation Japanese Instructor from Japan



ALLEX FOUNDATION

What advice do you have to anyone who wants to learn Japanese?

I believe that, not only in Japanese but in learning any language, it is important not to be afraid of making mistakes. No one can speak or write perfectly from the beginning. Even if you make mistakes, actually using the language is the best way to improve.

What parting wisdom do you want to give to your current students so they can continue to succeed in Japanese after you leave?

I would like to tell my students that continuing little by little is very important in learning Japanese. These days, there are many ways to study through the internet, so I hope they will make good use of those resources as well. Even after the class is over, I want them to keep finding their own way to stay connected to Japanese.

We know you are a man of many languages, what inspired you to learn different languages?

I have always been interested in connecting with people from different countries and backgrounds. Learning languages allowed me to understand not only the words themselves, but also the ways people think and the cultures behind them. The more I learned, the more curious I became about the world.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of experiencing different cultures?

One of the most rewarding things about experiencing different cultures is that, by comparing them with other cultures, I have also been able to learn more about my own culture. Looking at my own culture from the outside helped me notice things that I had once taken for granted. Through those experiences, I feel that my perspective has become much broader.

Instructor Spotlight Fujita Sensei

Which of the countries/destinations you have visited has been your favorite?

One of my favorite countries is the Philippines. I am always impressed by the warmth and hospitality of Filipino people. When I taught Japanese there, I was especially moved by how much the learners enjoyed doing conversation role-plays and how actively they participated. I also love diving, so the Philippines is a very special place for me because the ocean is beautiful no matter where you go.



- **Join Professor Fujita on Monday, 4/13 for his Japanese Cultural Event in the Kane Forum from 4:30 – 6:30 PM**

Curious about learning Japanese? See page 15 for more information about course offerings!

FALL 2026 WLC COURSE OFFERINGS

Do I need to take a language placement test?

Take the quiz to find out!

- 1) Did you study this language in high school? *If yes, move on to question 3. If no, move on to question 2.*
- 2) Do you speak this language at home? *If yes, you need to take the language placement test.* If no, you DO NOT need to take the test. You are ready to sign up for the elementary level class in this language.*
- 3) Do you already have transfer credits in this language (from AP exam/ another school)? *If yes, you DO NOT need to take the language placement test. You are ready to sign up for the next level above the course(s) on your transcript. If no, you need to take the language placement test.**

*Contact Dr. Kuiken at amy.kuiken@scranton.edu to take your online language placement test and discover the best courses for YOU!

ASL

- ASL 101 American Sign Language I (CF, D)

MANDRAIN CHINESE

- CNS 101 Elementary Chinese I (CF)
- CNS 211 Intermediate Chinese I (CF)

FRENCH

- FREN 101 Beginning French (CF, D)
- FREN 211 Intermediate French (CF, D)
- FREN 311 French Conversation (CF, D)

GREEK

- GRK 111 Elementary Greek I (CF)
- GRK 213 Greek Lit & Mythology (CL, D)

ITALIAN

- ITAL 101 Beginning Italian (CF, D)
- ITAL 211 Intermediate Italian I (CF)

JAPANESE

- JPN 101 Elementary Japanese I (CF)
- JPN 211 Intermediate Japanese I (CF)

LATIN

- LAT 111 Elementary Latin I (CF)

FOREIGN LIT

(taught in English)

- LIT 103X Misfits Pop Culture (CL, FYS, D)
 - LIT 105 Intro to World Lit (CL, D)
- LIT 107X Global Aesthetic Care (FYS, CL, D)

SPANISH

- SPAN 101 Elementary Spanish I (CF)
- SPAN 211 Intermediate Spanish I (CF, D)
- SPAN 311 Spanish Conversation (CF, D)
- SPAN 313 Spanish Culture & Civilizations (CF, D)
 - SPAN 320 Intro to Literacy Studies (CL)

RUSSIAN

- RUSS 110 Intense Elementary Russian (CF)

**Need language tutoring?
We've got you!**

University of Scranton | Department of World Languages & Cultures

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Graphic prepared by LLC Staff Member Fanelysse de la Rosa

THE LANGUAGE LEARNING CENTER

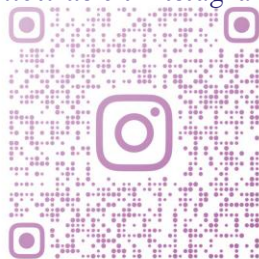
The mission of the Language Learning Center aligns with the University of Scranton's dedication to freedom of inquiry and personal development in the context of shared lives:

The Language Learning Center is dedicated to reducing barriers to language learning and cultural exchange by enhancing the quality of language learning and teaching at the University of Scranton and creating and nurturing opportunities for the University community to engage with world languages and cultures in a friendly environment. In addition, the Language Learning Center is dedicated to justice for the wider community by providing and promoting access to free language tutoring and events, and through extensive community service such as translating documents, local outreach, and interpretation.

The Department of World Languages & Cultures would like to express tremendous gratitude for our 2025–2026 LLC Graduate Assistant, **Ashley Paulino**, who has steered this ship with courage, creativity, and heart. Ashley will graduate this semester with an MBA specializing in International Business. Ashley hopes to build a life rooted in service, cultural connection, and lifelong learning. While the future continues to unfold, she knows she wants her future to be guided by helping others and continuing to learn from the people and cultures around her. We wish Ashley everything wonderful as she sets out on new adventures! – *Dr. K*



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