



EVENTS FALL 2016

September

Classical Week hosted by CMLL and Honors College

1st CMLL Symposium, "Displacement in Language, Literature, and Culture"

Guest speakers:

Luis Hernán Castañeda

Sebastián Suki Beláustegui

October

CMLL Fall Picnic

German Club Halloween Movie night

November

Guest speaker Louise Dupré will read excerpts of her works followed by roundtable discussion

ISOLC language tutoring:

Wednesdays 5:00-6:00pm in Lee Hall 003

FROM RED DEVILS TO MAROON BULLDOGS: THE CLASSICS JOURNEY OF LIEN VAN GEEL

Raised in Tessenderlo, a small village in Flanders, Belgium, Lien van Geel grew up surrounded by various languages. Flemish, French, and German are the three official languages in Belgium. She realized early on that her interest in languages extended beyond fulfilling the requirements of the government. She liked the semantics, lexicon, syntax, and other aspects of language learning, but beyond that, she simply enjoyed being able to express herself in a new language. This is why she opted to study Latin in her first year of secondary school.

"I think that Quintus Ennius (239-169BCE) illustrates quite well why one should expose oneself to different languages: being trilingual, able to speak Latin, Greek, and Oscan, he apparently claimed that he had three hearts, which is how I feel about my ability to speak and read multiple languages as well."

–Lien van Geel

Lien came to MSU on a tennis scholarship but realized that fully focusing on academics would be a better fit for her. She majored in Classics and English. The most enjoyable aspect of the Classics degree was the personal approach of the faculty. The professors' efforts to combine the CMLL requirements with the rigorous Cursus Honorum of the Shackouls Honors College had a major impact on her undergraduate career. The low student-teacher ratio of the department meant that students were mentored very well, and the classes were created to precisely fit each student's needs. The professors aimed to prepare students wishing to apply for graduate degrees as well as possible, which resulted in a rigorous but satisfying program.

While studying in the CMLL department, van Geel was able to travel abroad on several occasions. She studied at Oxford University in 2014 for a summer program organized by the Shackouls Honor College and in 2015 for a semester. She recalls this experience as one of the most rewarding and transforming things for her as a student. It exposed her to a "different learning environment and unbelievable academic resources." The study abroad programs resulted in her Honors thesis, which focused on Ovid's influence on Shakespeare in certain plays, in particular concerning the treatment of female characters. This experience also helped her decide that she wanted to continue her studies. She is currently studying Classics as part of a PhD program at Columbia University: another step toward her goal of becoming a university professor.



Lien van Geel in front of Butler Library at Columbia University.

MAROON AROUND THE WORLD: CMLL STUDY ABROAD

You spend a semester preparing for the trip. You worry about having documents in order, money in the bank, clothes in your suitcase, dictionary in your pocket. You get to the airport, say goodbye to your family, pass the passport control, and finally, you find yourself 40,000 feet in the air, sitting next to 200 passengers heading to the same destination. That is when you realize that nothing can prepare you for this adventure. You have heard your teachers, parents, friends, advisor tell you about their experiences abroad, but they were not in your seat, they were not in your school, they did not live with your host family. And that is why study abroad is something you have to experience for yourself, because what *you* live through will be unique.



MSU students in Salamanca, Spain 2009

Since Fall 2008 nearly 1000 MSU students travelled to over 70 countries to study abroad. In the summer 2016, CMLL students travelled to Canada, Germany, Nicaragua, and Spain. For many, the trip was their first international experience. Some benefits of studying abroad are obvious: students get the chance to practice a language and improve their listening and speaking skills. Students, as well as teachers, agree that studying abroad allows students to go beyond the classroom experience, be a part of the culture, and learn the language in context of everyday situations. As Dr. Karina Zelaya points out, “classroom learning is subjected to the instructor’s pedagogical practices.” Even though the teachers try to imitate real life situations, the setting is always simulated. When students stay with a host family, they get a chance to “witness and participate in the cultural practices of the host country,” says Dr. Zelaya.

“Whether it’s taking a weekend trip to Prague or trying a questionable looking food, it can never hurt you to try it just once. There is a reason you decided to study abroad, and you have to remember to take advantage of every single opportunity.” –David Sides, Germany 2016

Beyond the language experience, studying abroad gives you “the chance to find out what a person is made of, whether mentally, emotionally, or physically, and potentially a possibility of working out insecurities, finding out what you want to do with your life in the long run, and creating memories that will stick with you forever,” says Dr. Brian Davisson. While abroad, students are faced with daily problems they have to solve. These range from having to go to the market to buy produce or doing the laundry, to organizing a weekend trip including making hotel reservations and buying train tickets. Tackling and overcoming these tasks, though they may seem ordinary when we are in the safety of our native country, give the students a sense of confidence and independence.

“This trip taught me how to be independent and do things for myself. I was thousands of miles away from home but would still love the days where we would get lost in a new city and learn about it.” –Elizabeth Bueche, Spain 2016

In terms of language proficiency, students who participate in study abroad programs are consistently better at understanding and speaking the target language. They are also more enthusiastic about their education and have a clearer understanding of their educational and professional goals. Students come back with a better cultural understanding of the world which prepares them better for upper division courses. Dr. Silvia Arroyo points out that those who overcome their initial hesitation and intimidation of being abroad, come back “more empowered, more confident, and more mature.”

Perhaps the most attractive aspect of study abroad is the simple joy students get from discovering the world. Students who participated in the CMLL study abroad programs this year experienced the beauty of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, saw Masaya volcano in Nicaragua and St. Lawrence river in Canada, got a taste of traditional Spanish tapas, admired 2000-year-old aqueducts in Segovia, Spain, visited Berlin, Erfurt in Germany, and Québec province in Canada, and explored museums of art and history around the world. These sights, flavors, and friendships are memories for life. You will realize, as Elizabeth Bueche did, that “there are things you learn about others and yourself that will astound you.”

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: DR. KEITH MOSER'S QUEST TO UNDERSTAND THE MODERN WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE AND DIE MORE FULLY

Dr. Moser joined MSU in 2007 and has since had more than sixty publications. He is a specialist of 20th/21st Century French Literature with a strong interest in Philosophy. His latest book was published in August 2016. We asked Dr. Moser to tell us more about his research and latest publication, and this is what he had to say:

The Encyclopedic Philosophy of Michel Serres: Writing the Modern World and Anticipating the Future is the first comprehensive study that attempts to explore the complex nuances of Serres's interdisciplinary philosophy from 1968 to the present. Specifically, my book investigates how Serres's "encyclopedic" vision of philosophy has made him uniquely suited to be one of the most important voices that the twentieth century has bequeathed to the twenty-first. According to Serres, a philosopher is someone with an extremely broad base of knowledge that tries to anticipate the future directions that a particular phenomenon might assume in the coming years based upon the current trajectory of humanity. For instance, this highly original and unorthodox approach to engaging in philosophical inquiry led him to theorize at the end of the 1960s that global society would soon be entering into an age of information. While his more traditional colleagues were promoting outdated theories about a world that would soon cease to exist, Serres began to ponder what these decisive changes would mean for human civilization on multiple levels. He realized that it was time to rethink the essence of everything in order to prepare for the world of tomorrow. A few years later, Serres would become a pioneer in the field of environmental ethics for the same reasons. Decades before it was fashionable to discuss the anthropogenic ecological crisis and all of its potential repercussions, Serres began to promote a more sustainable way of being and living in the world. His latest theories are just as important and bold. In his most recent texts, he posits that the rise of virtual technology and the advent of modern medicine have ushered in a new type of humanity. At the dawning of a new millennium, Serres endeavors to comprehend the magnitude of these sweeping changes that make us a very different human animal in comparison to our not-so-distant ancestors. In this regard, I demonstrate that he has positioned himself to be one of the most relevant philosophers of the future.

CMLL SYMPOSIUM ON LANGUAGES, LITERATURES, AND CULTURES

In its most literal sense, "displacement" refers to the act of moving or being put out of the usual or original place. As such, displacement may be perceived as voluntary or involuntary and can take many forms, depending on the contextual circumstances in which it happens. Migration, desertion, exile, diaspora, exodus, eviction, banishment, travel, discovery, imprisonment, escape, among others, are all different forms of displacement and, as such, these conditions might share many traits. Displacement frequently forces subjects to confront a sense of loss, alienation, and disorientation, but it may also lead displaced subjects to experiment a taste of newly gained power and freedom. In any case, the displaced undergo a process of transformation and renewal that involves a (collected or distraught) re-fashioning of identity. As a metaphor, displacement can also describe a wide range of phenomena, from social mobility to imperialistic conquest, intellectual retreat, marginalization, and gender crossing.

The 2016 Classical & Modern Languages and Literatures Symposium focuses on the topic of displacement, in all of its potential manifestations.

Luis Hernán Castañeda will give the keynote address at the CMLL Symposium. He is a novelist with seven books published: *Casa de Islandia* (2004), *Hotel Europa* (2005), *Fotografías de sala* (2007), *El futuro de mi cuerpo* (2010), *La noche americana* (2011), and *La fiesta del humo* (2012), among other work. He is also Assistant Professor of Spanish at Middlebury College, Vermont. His address is titled *The Art of Losing a Country*, and will be given on September 30th at 4:00pm in Room 1 of The Mill.



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The Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures at MSU, consisting of faculty members in Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Russian, and Spanish, offers Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts Degrees in Foreign Languages with concentrations in Classics, French, German, and Spanish.

East meets West, Classical languages converge with Modern languages giving our students the experience that will allow them to embrace diversity, while maintaining a solid sense of their own historical identity.

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