

## **Romance Languages: End-of-Year Report 2007-089**

### **Course Enrollments and Students:**

Student enrollment in Romance Languages in 07-08 was 1, 374 students; 389 in French (the same as the previous year) and 935 in Spanish (a decrease of 85 students from the previous year).

Twenty-four courses were taught in French (up from 23 in 06-07); 54 courses were taught in Spanish (up from 48 in 06-07). The increase in the number of courses offered in Romance languages was a direct result of receiving extra FTE in order to bring the enrollment in all sections of French and Spanish 231 and 232, the entry points for most incoming students wishing to complete their FOL in French and Spanish, to 19 or under. With one exception (one section of Spanish 231 in the spring in which the actual enrollment figure of 20 did not match the records kept in the department of drops and adds), we were able to keep all 231s and 232s to 19 or under. Limiting course enrollments at the 231-232 level seems to account for 40% of the decrease in enrollments in Spanish; a total of 499 students enrolled in Spanish 231 and 233 in 07-08 compared to 533 in 06-07.

The addition of extra FTE that allowed smaller sections of French and Spanish 231 and 233 had immediate and greatly appreciated pedagogical benefits. Class dynamics improved as the smaller average class size permitted students to get to know each other more quickly and feel more at ease “performing” in a foreign language in front of their peers. Faculty reported being able to give students more personal attention in and out of class and provide additional and quicker written feedback as a result of the smaller class size. Finally, the reduced class size allowed faculty to try out some new teaching techniques and class activities that couldn’t easily be used when intermediate-level classes had enrollments of 25-30.

The department offered four interim courses abroad in January of 2008: French 233 in Martinique, French 275 in Paris, Spanish 233 in Ecuador, and Spanish 234 in Costa Rica. The four interims had healthy enrollments.

Nine students graduated with French majors this May; 20 students graduated with Spanish majors. The number of majors in French has been steady since 1995. The number of Spanish majors, which averaged 14.7 between 1995 and 2004, has increased steadily in the past four years, ranging between 20 and a high of 31 in 05-06.

### **Staffing:**

For this academic year, FTE was 4.00 in French and 9.00 in Spanish. Because of teaching assignments out of the department (Maggie Broner, Education 353), reduced loads (for Clare Mather and Hervé Pensec), sabbaticals (Jolene Barjasteh and León Narváez each had half-year sabbaticals), and released time for administrative duties for the chair, there were six faculty needed in French and 10 in Spanish to cover the FTE assigned to each program. Clare Mather again provided excellent leadership in the department as French Section Head this year.

We hired five new faculty for the 07-08 academic year. Amine Bekhechi (one-year full-time position) and Clare Halbur (one course in spring 2008) in French, and Luis Guadaño, Michael Kidd, and Gemma Puntí (all one-year full-time positions) in Spanish. Amine Bekhechi has been rehired for two-year term position to begin in September of 2008.

### **Major Departmental Projects and Initiatives:**

#### **Joint or Department-Wide Projects**

Tenure-Track Search: The college approved our request to conduct a search for up to two tenure-track positions in Spanish during 07-08. A very complex and lengthy search resulted in the successful hire of Alberto Villate-Isaza, a Latin Americanist, who finished all requirements for the Ph.D. at Boston College in May 2008. He will join our faculty in September of 2008. Conducting this search was the most important task completed by the department this year.

Task forces: A variety of task forces worked on the following projects throughout the academic year:

- *Distinction:* A task force composed of Wendy Allen (convener), Sylvia Carullo, and León Narváez wrapped up the work begun in 06-07 to produce new guidelines for Distinction in French and Spanish. Their proposal was brought to the department in the fall, and we approved the new guidelines on October 8, 2007.
- *Governance:* A task force composed of Clare Mather (convener), Gwen Barnes-Karol, and Maggie Broner set up in 06-07 to look at new ways of distributing work to be done in the department vis-à-vis the need to search for a new chair for 08-09 and beyond presented its initial findings to the department in February 2008. The task force's recommendations that the positions of French and Spanish Section Heads be discontinued and that the work assigned to these positions as well as some tasks done by the chair in the past be redistributed across several faculty members became the point of departure for a series of discussions regarding the reconfiguration of the position of Chair of Romance Languages. Discussions continued with the participation of Charlie Wilson, Associate Dean for Humanities.
- *Intended Learning Outcomes:* Wendy Allen (convener), Jolene Barjasteh, Maggie Broner, and Ariel Strichartz comprised a task force that produced a draft of ILOs for Romance Languages after initial department-wide conversations in the fall of 2007. The final ILOs were approved in March 2008 and forwarded on to the Curriculum Committee.
- *Teacher Education:* Wendy Allen, Jolene Barjasteh, Maggie Broner, and León Narváez have begun work on a Teacher Education task force as a follow-up to work done for the MN Board of Teaching recertification of licensure in World Languages at St. Olaf. As the BOT has changed its standards for licensure from a course-based system to more a competency-based system, issues have arisen regarding our students' acquisition of language proficiency and their ability to demonstrate other competencies. This task force will continue its work in 08-09 and make recommendations about how to work more effectively with teacher licensure candidates across their four-year career at St. Olaf.

MN Board of Teaching Recertification: Jolene Barjasteh (French), Gwen Barnes-Karol and Maggie Broner (Spanish), and Maggie Broner (Education 373) worked with the Education department from November to March to prepare all materials for the BOT's recertification of teacher licensure in these areas of World Languages at St. Olaf.

GE Recertification: We submitted materials for (re)certification of French and Spanish courses that carry FOL, MCS-D, MCS-G, ORC, and ALS-L credit. All courses were approved by the Curriculum Committee in May of 2008.

Romance Languages "Transition" Workshop: We held a two-day workshop on May 27-28, 2008, to begin implementation of the new distribution of work to be done in the department during the 08-09 academic year. Faculty focused their attention on creating detailed descriptions of tasks to be completed, with accompanying explanatory materials. Materials created during the workshop will be revised over the course of the academic year, with the goal of creating an updated version of our (now out-of-date) departmental handbook by the end of 2009.

Assessment Grant for 08-09: On behalf of the department, Wendy Allen submitted an assessment grant proposal for 08-09, which was approved. This grant, a follow-up to work done on ILOs in French and Spanish and revisions to the college-wide FOL requirement passes by the faculty in April, is intended to facilitate a "culture of assessment" in Romance Languages. Activities will include the reading (fall semester 2008) and discussion (spring semester 2009) of two major works in second language acquisition (Lightbown, Patsy, and Nina Spada, *How Languages Are Learned*, Oxford UP, 2006, and Kern, Richard, *Literacy and Language Teaching*, Oxford UP, 2000) as a springboard for examining our French and Spanish curriculums in light of assessment.

Departmental Programming: Members of the department organized or co-sponsored several events to directly support our curriculum this year, as listed below, in addition to our routine co-curricular programming (weekly French Film Series and periodic events at the Maison Française and Casa Hispánica).

- This was the fifth year of our summer student-faculty Spanish book club. Discussion of Francisco Jiménez's *Senderos fronterizos*, this year's selection, was held on September 20, 2007.
- Hispanic Studies and Romance Languages (Spanish Section) co-sponsored a bilingual poetry reading by Francisco Aragón on September 26, 2007.
- Romance Languages hosted presentations on employment opportunities for foreign language majors at Concordia Language Villages on November 23 and 25, 2007.
- The French Section sponsored a mini-series on "Africa and the World Bank." Events included a showing of the film *Bamakow* on April 6 and 8, 2008, and a lecture by Mohammed Bekhechi, Lead Counsel at the World Bank, on April 10, 2008.

### **Faculty Activity:**

The faculty in Romance Languages is very involved in a variety of college-wide activities, including the following assignments in 07-08:

- Assessment Sub-Committee – Wendy Allen
- Curriculum Committee – Sylvia Carullo
- Director of Hispanic Studies – Sylvia Carullo
- Director of Linguistic Studies – Maggie Broner
- FLAC Steering Committee – Gwen Barnes-Karol
- Foreign Language Sub-Committee – Gwen Barnes-Karol
- Advising for study abroad – Wendy Allen (programs in France and Senegal), Gwen Barnes-Karol (Spain, fall 2007), León Narváez (Spain and Costa Rica, spring 2008)

In addition, the faculty in the Department of Romance Languages is a diverse group whose scholarly and research interests are wide-ranging: second language acquisition and the teaching of French/Spanish; Hispanic linguistics; French, Francophone, Spanish, and Latin American literature, culture, and film. Several of our faculty presented at the Language and Literature Group this year: Amine Bekhechi, Sylvia Carullo, Luis Guadaño, Michael Kidd, and Gemma Puntí.

The following faculty members provided information about papers presented at professional meetings, presentations made at pedagogical institutes, and articles published in 07-08.

Jolene Barjasteh

“Phone Messages for Literatures in English,” “Francophone Messages: Who’s Calling? Identity and Language Choice,” Literatures in English conference, St. Olaf college, June 9, 2007.

“Literature and Terrorism,” “The Making of a Terrorist in Yasmina Kahdra’s *Sirens of Bagdad*,” St. Olaf Theme Year: War and Terrorism, September 20, 2007.

“The Making of a Terrorist in Yasmina Kahdra’s *Sirens of Bagdad*,” Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, University of Kentucky (Lexington), April 17-20, 2008.

“War and Peace in Yasmina Kahdra’s *Sirens of Bagdad*,” Cincinnati Conference on Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Cincinnati, May 7-10, 2008.

Gwen Barnes-Karol

“Spanish – An Imperial Language Goes Global,” “Phone Messages for Literatures in English,” Literatures in English: A Conference at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN, June 9, 2007.

“Focusing on Content and Form in the Classroom: A Model for CBI in Post-Secondary Contexts” Workshop with Maggie Broner, Center for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition Summer Institute, “Focusing on Learner Language: Second Language Acquisition Basics for Teacher,” University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, July 20, 2007.

Maggie Broner

Instructor, week-long Center for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition Summer Institute, "Focusing on Learner Language: Second Language Acquisition Basics for Teachers," University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, July 16-20, 2007.

Sylvia Carullo

"Lucrecia, Judith, Jael: Feminine Archetypes in *Esclavos de Chatham*," accepted for publication in the Ecuadorian literary journal *Letras del Ecuador* 193, to appear May 23, 2008.

"The Female Figure in *La casa del sano placer*: Between the works and the Rebirth of the Suffering and Devoted Wife," Latin American Studies Association (LASA) XXVII International Congress, Montreal, Canada, September 5-7, 2007.

Luis Guadaño

"Bridges/Borders on the Aesthetic," Foreign Language Film Conference: Cultural Correspondences and the Camera, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, October 11-13, 2007.

"Playing the Same Roles: Immigrants and Spaniards in Spanish Film," 39th NEMLA, Buffalo, NY, April 10-13, 2008.

León Narváez

"Maintaining Cultural Identity in Spite of 'Americanization,'" North Central Council of Latin Americanists (LCCLA), October 2007.

Discussant for a panel titled "19th Century National Identities," North Central Council of Latin Americanists (NCCLA), October 2007.

"Un rompehielos para clases de español," Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures (MCTLC), October 2007.

Ariel Strichartz

"The Recuperation of Memory and Identity in *Pri: Una tragedia urbana* by Cecilia Propato," VII Conference of Latin American Theatre Today, Blacksburg, VA, March 27, 2008.

Review of *Teatro y contexto teatral*, Osvaldo Pellettieri, ed., *Latin American Theatre Review* 41.1 (Fall 2007).

### **On-Going Challenges for Romance Languages**

Romance Languages will undergo a transition in 08-09 with regard to distribution of work in the department, already outlined above. We are delighted that León Narváez and Wendy Allen have agreed to chair the department in 08-09 during this initial transition year; León from June 1, 2008

– January 31, 2009, and Wendy, starting on February 1, 2009, when she returns from leading the Global Semester. Wendy will then begin a regular three-year term as chair, June 1, 2009-May 31, 2012. It is our hope that the reorganization of work within the department will permit the chair to focus on the matters that most need the chair's attention (e.g., staffing and personnel issues), provide a more equitable distribution of work across all full-time faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty), and help faculty develop new leadership skills in the process.

The major challenge for Romance Languages continues to be the on-going issue of lack of stability in staffing in both French and Spanish. We have several complicated on-going staffing issues (faculty on reduced loads and faculty with course releases for administrative duties and to teach in other programs) that have a continuous impact on staffing. Furthermore, we again had significant turn-over in staff this spring for a variety of reasons, and we are still in the process of hiring for two positions for the 08-09 year.

Amine Bekhechi and Kris Cropsey have both been given two-year term appointments (2002-2010), which will provide additional stability in French and Spanish for the next two years. The addition of our new tenure-track hire in Spanish, Alberto Villate-Isaza will greatly enhance our program and contribute to long-term stability. We look forward to conducting an additional tenure-track search in Spanish (the second position approved for the search conducted this year) and requesting approval to conduct a tenure-track search in French (to replace Hervé Pensec, who retired in May 2008) in the very near future. We hope to conduct both searches in 2009-10, when we have a full contingent of faculty available to be part of the search committee(s) (Gwen Barnes-Karol and Ariel Strichartz will be back from full-year sabbaticals, and Wendy Allen, incoming chair, will be on campus all year).

In closing, we appreciate the support of Charlie Wilson, our Associate Dean, in our on-going process of hiring and in representing our concerns about staffing, enrollments, and enhancing the academic quality of our program to the Dean's Council.

Gwendolyn Barnes-Karol  
Former Chair, Department of Romance Languages  
June 20, 2008