From the Interim Co-Director’s Desk

It’s hard to believe that only six months have passed since Sarab Al Ani and I were appointed to serve the Spanish and Portuguese Department in an hour of need. Curricular renovations are long term projects that require curriculum design expertise, a clear vision, careful planning, collaboration, problem-solving skills, as well as the disposition to learn the multifaceted aspects of the job while actually performing it.

Transitions are difficult, and more so in the COVID era. In the brief period in which I have served as co-director, I have viewed this as an opportunity to learn more about the strengths, challenges, and great potential of our program. One of our strengths that has become obvious to me in this role is the commitment we all share to offering our students the highest quality language and culture instruction. This commitment is reflected in our development of new course offerings, the labor-intensive work of revising syllabus designs with newer pedagogical approaches, participation in CLS events and fellowships, and continued engagement in faculty development through participation in programs at the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning. I feel privileged to have you all as my colleagues.

COVID-related restrictions are among the challenges that complicate community building. A newsletter cannot replace the community-building practices in which we engaged prior to the pandemic, some of which occurred through spontaneous conversations in the hallway or in the meeting room. But a monthly newsletter can contribute to building a sense of our identity as a community, as we engage in the project of curricular renovation.

The purpose of the Spanish and Portuguese Language Program Newsletter is to recognize and celebrate teaching and research excellence, as well as public engagement. The Newsletter will also feature important program updates and developments, as well as stories about program members’ initiatives and innovations. You can also expect announcements about upcoming faculty development and other program related events.

I want to give a special thanks to Sarab Al Ani, Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl, Mary Jo Lubrano, Christine Mullen, and Julia DiVincenzo for their invaluable help during this challenging period.

Luna Nájera
Dr. Maripaz García’s expertise in Spanish translation has been instrumental in the development of a digital tool aimed at detecting abuse and mistreatment among older adults. This groundbreaking, cross-disciplinary collaboration between the Yale School of Medicine and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese focuses on a project developed by Dr. Faud Abujarad, an interdisciplinary researcher whose work “focuses on the design, development, and use of Health Information Technology (HIT) tools in the domain of public health.” Dr. Abujarad designed a digital tool that surveys geriatric patients in emergency rooms and other medical settings. In addition to its questions related to elder abuse, the digital survey serves as a medium for patient education on elder abuse.

In her collaboration with Dr. Abujarad’s team, which includes Research Assistant Chelsea Edwards and NP Dalia Peña-Solórzano, Dr. García coordinated the survey translation and managed that part of the project. Her coordination work included interviewing and hiring translators. Together with Peña-Solórzano, Dr. García then synthesized the translations, a process that involved extensive discussions about the linguistic, cultural, and social aspects of the survey translations. In her account of the overall project, Dr. García describes other procedures that the survey translation entails. For example, two translators will be hired to perform “back translations” of the translated survey (translations into English of the Spanish translation of the survey). An independent committee of experts in the field will further synthesize the translation and recommend modifications needed to ensure the survey’s conceptual clarity. All of this work will be summarized and explained in a co-published article: “The Process of Translating and Culturally Adapting a Digital Elder Abuse Intervention” (The International Journal of Translation and Interpretation Studies, volume 2, no.1, forthcoming). Also, there will be a Yale Daily News article on the project soon.
News & Highlights

This month, **Sebastián Díaz** launched a Photography Contest for our Spanish and Portuguese students. The theme of the photo contest is interpretation of the definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Equality (which is contained in the Mission Statement Proposal written by our program mission statement committee in May 2021). In addition to **Díaz**, the Organizing Committee of the Photography Contest is comprised of **Terry Seymour**, **Sybil Alexandrov**, and **Rosamaría León**. Thank you, Sebastián, for creating and organizing a community-building initiative! We look forward to future updates.

**Pedagogy**

- This semester, five Spanish program members are participating in the Poorvu Center’s Learning Community. They are: Sybil Alexandrov, Ximena Gómez Parada, Luna Nájera, Ian Russell, and Sarah Glenski.
- Last semester, **Luna Nájera** was among the first language program instructors to participate in the Poorvu Center’s Pedagogical Partners Program. The program consists of a one-semester student-instructor partnership. In the fall, sophomore **Rose Bae**, a former L3 and L4 student in Nájera’s classes, observed and provided weekly feedback on Nájera’s Borders and Globalization in Hispanophone Cultures, a new L5 course.
- This semester **Ximena Gómez Parada** is participating in the Pedagogical Partners Program in the teaching of L4 Spanish. We congratulate her for her initiative.
- **Ian Russell** presented at the inaugural Pedagogy Lab, which he created. A little over half of our program members attended. We look forward to the next Pedagogy Lab!

**Research**

Congratulations to **María José Gutiérrez Barajas** for her forthcoming publications!

- “No Trauma for Artificial Women: Monsters, Cybernetics, and Anomalous Mothers in current Latin American Science Fiction.” In **Motherhood. Trauma and Recovery**. Edited by Laura Lazzari and Nathalie Segreal, Palgrave, 2021.

**Luna Nájera** presented “Agency and the Force of Medicine in an Early Modern Spanish Medical Treatise on Plague” at this year’s Modern Language Association Convention. The presentation was part of a panel called Agency and the Nonhuman in Early Modern Poetry and Prose, which she organized.

**Nájera** presented “New Media and Critical Thought in the Teaching of Language and Culture” at the MLA in a panel called Critical Engagement in Language Pedagogy, which she organized.

**Program Updates**

- The Spanish and Portuguese Program Site, which is exclusively accessible to the Chair, Director, and program members, now features a “Reports” page with data and other information about the program (e.g., enrollments, coordinators’ reports, etc.).
- The Study Abroad, Spanish Majors, and Spanish Language Certification Information Fair that took place virtually on February 1, attracted 44 undergraduate students. Thank you, everyone, for your wonderful presentations!

**Initiative: Photography Contest**

![Licensed Adobe Image](image.png)
We shall be welcoming Dr. Alexander Gil Fuentes to our Department in July. Alex Gil, as he is better known, will be joining us as Senior Lecturer II and Associate Researcher in the Digital Humanities.

In his announcement of this great news, Jesús Velasco describes Alex Gil as “a Digital Humanist (let me underscore Humanist), a Critical Thinker, and an activist, who sees his work not as the application of given computational skills to humanistic problems that are better done by machines, but as a researcher in both computation and the humanities, because such research can produce new questions that we could address in innovative ways with tools and architectures of information that need to be tailored to that end. Alex Gil is a multilingual scholar with a deep knowledge of library and archival research, and with an ability to create cross-disciplinary projects that establish new relationships within the department and beyond—in collaboration with other centers and departments across campus.”

In December, Alex Gil spoke on campus about his vision of DH. He described the multiple “scenes of learning” he creates. The sites include the space of the laboratory, scenes of learning under a moment of duress, scenes of learning outside the university, and scenes of learning in the spaces of the classroom.

Using visual media from completed and ongoing projects, Alex Gil described and discussed the projects he has led and facilitated in collaboration with faculty, graduate students, and the public. Among the highlights were workshop classes he offered during national crises (e.g., Puerto Rico Marathons for Hurricane Relief) and the teaching of DH literacy at Rikers’s Island Jail, where he taught “programming through digital storytelling.” Other amazing projects included the Style Revolution Project and the Mini Lazarillo Project. The latter introduced undergraduate “students to the full stack of skills needed to create a minimal digital edition according to MLA Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly Editions.”

In the second part of his talk, Alex Gil delivered an eye-opening class that invited participants to think critically about digital tool usage. He observed that while it is not uncommon for DH tools to be easy to use, attention needs to be paid to the role we play. As his projects demonstrate, students in his classes are viewed as creators, rather than only users of tools. The rationale for this, he explained, is the need for individuals in the humanities to play a larger role in the infrastructure of computing in the production of knowledge. Critical reflections on tools and knowledge products were also articulated in his comments on the need for producing “global objects that can be used in the global south.”

Alex Gil, we welcome you and look forward to learning from you!
A longstanding challenge for many collegiate language programs is the well-documented bifurcation between lower-level language courses and advanced literature and culture courses, which are often characterized by differing aims and pedagogical approaches. This divide can prevent language programs from envisioning a common intellectual foundation to frame their curricula and from demonstrating their relevance and intellectual connection to the larger university mission.

In this workshop, we will explore the notion of literacy as a multidimensional framing goal for collegiate language curricula, discuss how instructional objectives can be aligned with a multiliteracies orientation, and consider implications for assessment practices. We will conclude by reflecting on the benefits and challenges of implementing multiliteracies-oriented instruction.
Submissions for LIFFY 2022 will open in March and last until August. All films need to have been made within the past three years and have English subtitles. We hope to welcome all in person (with some virtual activities) for our 13th Latino and Iberian Film Festival at Yale in November.
The 12th Latino and Iberian Film Festival at Yale (LIFFY) took place from November 7 through 14, 2021. The festival is sponsored by the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies (Prof. Claudia Valeggia, Chair) at the MacMillan Center at Yale, and by a generous grant from the Kempf Foundation. There was also an inaugural activity on November 4th with the Peruvian documentary As We Are (Identidad) that was followed by a panel discussion with the filmmakers, a Peruvian sociologist, the Consul General of Peru in Hartford, as well as LIFFY staff. Despite these difficult times of COVID, our wonderful LIFFY team and student volunteers were able to achieve a very successful festival. During the week, films were screened from 20 different countries, and the activities included several discussions with filmmakers. Attendees streamed in from across the world to see the films and participate in the discussions. Over 3200 unique streams were clocked at the LIFFY streaming site. That equals nearly seventeen years of film footage consumed by attendees from Hong Kong to Buenos Aires to New Haven. LIFFY 2021 also featured two in-person events exclusively for Yale students and staff. They were both well attended and the students expressed their joy at being able to share the viewing experience on the big screen with friends.

A jury of knowledgeable professionals awarded several of the films on closing night. The feature film which captured the top prize was Iván Herrera’s Bantú Mama from the Dominican Republic. The jury commended the film “for its depiction of the enduring transnational bond of Afro-descendants to their Bantu origins and its healing process in the midst of persisting discrimination and social exclusion through excellent acting, structure and visual intertexts.”

Best first film was awarded to Los Fuertes by Chilean filmmaker Omar Zúñiga. Set on the edge of the world in a rural seaside town in Chile, Los Fuertes is a film about two men falling in love in a difficult but beautiful setting.

The winner of best documentary was Los Índalos, made by an Argentinian and Nicaraguan film-making team. The jury recommended the film for “its portrayal of multiple-generation political idealism and martyrdom in a family whose members engage in political struggle in Spain, France, Argentina and Nicaragua through oral history from surviving family members and excellent cinematography and archival research.”

All the winners of LIFFY 2021 are listed below.

**Feature Length Films**
- **Narrative:** Bantú Mama, Iván Herrera (Dominican Republic)
- **First Film:** Los Fuertes, Omar Zúñiga (Chile)
- **Documentary:** Los Índalos, Roberto Persano, Juan Andrés Martínez Canto, Santiago Nacif (Argentina/Nicaragua)
- **Best Director:** Ata tu arado a una estrella, Carmen Guarini (Argentina)
- **Best Actor:** Ex Aequo, Andrea Henry; Pólvora en el corazón, Camila Urrutia (Guatemala); El cuento, Zahir Perrín, (Argentina)

**Short Films**
- **Narrative:** Los Coleccionistas, Diana Moreno (Cuba)
- **Documentary:** Santi 17, Álvaro E. Olaiz & Segismundo Monsó Monsó Agorreta (Spain)
- **Best Animated:** War of the Worlds, Manuel Brito (Portugal) and Nuevo Rico, Kristian Mercado (Puerto Rico/USA)

We invite you to see more information about the festival and watch some of the panel discussions on our [web pages](#) and [facebook](#).

Margherita Tortora is Founder and Executive Director of LIFFY.
Using Language Forms to Communicate About Texts: A Multiliteracies Perspective

Kate Paesani

Director of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) and affiliate Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota. Her research focuses on literacy-based curriculum and instruction and foreign language teacher development, couched within the frameworks of multiliteracies pedagogy and sociocultural theory. She has published her work in numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, and is the co-author of the book A Multiliteracies Framework for Collegiate Foreign Language Teaching (Pearson, 2016). She is currently co-editor of the new open-access journal Second Language Research & Practice, which addresses postsecondary language education from theoretical, empirical, and practical perspectives.

This interactive presentation will challenge the common misconception that multiliteracies pedagogy and the instruction of language forms are incompatible. To do so, we will consider grammar and vocabulary as textual resources that prepare learners to work with texts, help them understand how texts are constructed, and improve their communicative abilities.

Using the four knowledge processes of multiliteracies pedagogy as a framework, we will discuss how to adapt and enhance your existing toolkit of grammar and vocabulary activities to infuse language forms throughout text-based lessons.