

# Wellesley College Spanish Department

## 2011-2012 Newsletter

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Dear Alums,

Fall term 2011 brought a full schedule of activities and exciting developments to the Spanish Department at Wellesley. In September we met our new *asistente*, **Laura López Nevado** from the University of Córdoba, and celebrated **Joy Renjilian-Burgy's** 2011 Outstanding Service Award from the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. With recent Pinanski Prize winner **Carlos Ramos** as our new Chair, the faculty gathered for a retreat at the Babson Executive Center to discuss future plans and directions. A week later we delighted in a visit from Hebrew University's **Michel Held** who, hosted by **Marjorie Agosin**, shared her deep knowledge of the ancient Ladino culture with the community. September also brought us copies of **Manolo Nuñez-Negrón's** first scholarly book, *Políticas del humor en América latina*, published over the summer by Ediciones Huracán.

In October **Koichi Hagimoto** welcomed UC Merced's **Ignacio López Calvo** to Wellesley to speak about writers of Asian descent in Cuba and Peru, as a complement to his new seminar on Asia and Latin America. Pacific Rim connections also shaped the international travels of our immediate past Chair **Carlos Vega** (on leave) who this term visited the *primera promoción* of students of Spanish at the CSU of Changsha, Hunan Province, China. Our trans-Atlantic ties also remained strong thanks in large part to **Jill Syverson-Stork's** second year of leadership as Executive Director of PRESHCO (*Programa de Estudios Hispánicos en Córdoba*).

November began with another record-breaking crowd for *Día de los muertos*. **Jael Matos** taught a Puerto Rican cooking class at Casa Cervantes, **Nancy Hall** gave a lecture sponsored by Alianza about space in Borges's *ficciones*, and **Marjorie Agosin** joined Mayor Thomas Menino and other dignitaries as an invited speaker at the "Ideas Boston 2011" at UMass. At Dartmouth College, **Elena Gascón-Vera** presented the Outstanding Dissertation award on behalf of the New England Council of Latin American Studies to a promising young scholar in the field of Brazilian cultural studies. Back at Wellesley, **Evelina Guzauskyte's** completed book manuscript about the naming of places as a series of literary, rhetorical and political acts documented in Christopher Columbus's ship journals, was submitted for review by select university presses. She was also reelected for a second term to the Advisory Committee to the Committee on Faculty Appointments. Finally, Duke University's **Phil Bennett**, former Managing Editor of the Washington Post and current Managing Editor of WGBH's Frontline, conducted an open class on "La crisis en España y sus efectos sociales" as part of **Carlos Ramos's** Spanish Civilization course in November.

In December the Mellon Foundation announced a grant to **Verónica Darer** for the analysis of classroom discourse in mathematics departments at Babson, Olin and Wellesley and the PEN Club of Puerto Rico honored **Manolo Nuñez-Negrón** with its top short fiction award for *El oficio del vertigo* (Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas), his first collection of stories.



*Momentos inolvidables en la Casa Cervantes, el Día de los muertos, el Centro Ejecutivo de Babson, la graduación 2011, la CSU de Chungsha, y Dartmouth College*

## Spring 2012

**New faculty** Inela Selimovic, a world traveler originally from Bosnia, taught two sections of Intermediate Spanish.

**New courses** Jill introduced "Captives, Clerics and Corsairs: Cervantes in Africa" and **Manolo** gave a new seminar, "Humor and Politics in Latin America." On tap for next year: **Carlos Ramos** will collaborate with Diego Arciniegas for "Reading and Performing Spanish Theater," and **Evelina** will again offer "Candid Cuisine: Latin American Literature and Culture" and "Maps and Minds: Inventing the Americas through Geographic Imagination."

**A major renovation of space** Plans continued for a make-over of Founders and Green. **Carlos R.** currently serves as Building Director and **Claire Fogarty '12** represented the Spanish Department majors in the consultation process.

**Speakers and distinguished guests** **Rene Scott** (U. North Florida) shared her expertise on Latin American women writers and food, and PRESHCO staffers **Encarnación Muñoz Díaz** and **Maribel Blanca Nieto**, as well as UCórdoba professor of philosophy **Rafael Cejudo** delighted us with visits. Archeologist **Leonardo López Luján**, Director of Mexico City's Proyecto Templo Mayor, gave the annual Bakwin Lecture (Art) about the recent discovery of an Aztec monolith of the Earth goddess Tlaltecuhli. **Judit Targorona** of Madrid's UComplutense, spoke on Medieval Hebrew Poets of Spain, and **Doris Atkinson** presented the Northeast premier of "Locas mujeres" an award-winning documentary about Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate Gabriela Mistral.

**Travel and study abroad.** Wellesley students enrolled in our programs in Córdoba and Puebla, and also studied in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Argentina, Barcelona, Madrid and Sevilla. During Wintersession and Spring breaks department members traveled to Puerto Rico (**Manolo, Jael**), Colombia (**Verónica**) and Spain (**Elena, Carlos R., Laura**) to reconnect with family and friends, and/or lecture. In addition **Elena** visited Perú and the United Arab Emirates, while **Marjorie** and **Carlos V.** went to Valparaíso, Chile. The Forum on Education Abroad invited **Carlos V.** to help shape their European Conference this winter, and the Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges funded his proposal to hold a workshop entitled "Bringing Study Abroad Home: Integrating the Experience Abroad with the Liberal Arts Campus" at Wellesley in the future.

**Making a difference in the world** The Creative Registry of the Canadian Association of Hispanists dedicated its Eighth Mural and Virtual Art and Poetry Expo in Ontario to **Marjorie's** work as a poet and human rights activist. **Joy** co-chaired a panel on rural women in Africa, Argentina and Armenia at the United Nations. **Manolo** helped to craft the platform of Senator Alejandro García Padilla, candidate for Governor of Puerto Rico, and **Koichi** spoke about his volunteer work in a Japanese village destroyed by the tsunami as part of the Boston premier of Stu Levy's documentary film, "Pray for Japan." The 13<sup>th</sup> printing of **Evelina's** Lithuanian translation of Isabel Allende's *La casa de los espíritus*, a favorite of book clubs and radio shows, is scheduled to appear next year.

**Scholarly research and beyond** For her honors thesis in Comparative Literature, **Claire Merrill, '12** studied Spanish novelist Benito Pérez Galdós with **Carlos R. Rebecca Rubinstein '15, Elena's** student in Spanish 242, won the 100/200 Library Research Award for "La guerra del tiempo: Una historia del *carpe diem* en la literatura hispánica." Faculty projects in literary and cultural studies included such topics as clothing and nakedness as metaphors of power and self in colonial Latin American texts (**Evelina**), Cervantes's captivity in Algiers (**Jill**), a comparative study of José Martí and his Filipino counterpart, José Rizal (**Koichi**), and the postmodern novels of Carmen Boullosa (**Nancy**). **Manolo** published his first novel, *Barra china* (Agentes Catalíticos), and plans for a festschrift in honor of Emerita colleague Lorraine Elena Roses claimed **Elena's** attention. **Joy** co-edited *Cambios y conexiones: Latinoamérica y España. Ensayos sobre literatura, lengua y tecnología en la enseñanza e investigación en español* (Regwell Press, 2012), and **Veronica** laid the groundwork for her upcoming Mellon-sponsored pedagogical research at Babson, Olin and Wellesley.

## PORTRAIT OF A SPANISH MAJOR

(Reprinted from <http://web.wellesley.edu/web>: "Passions Take Davis UWC Scholar Around the World," 3.12.12)



Wellesley College is known for cultivating women leaders who are driven to make a difference around the world. Karen "Kémi" Kemirembe '12, a double major in biology and Spanish, whose experiences as a Wellesley student include researching gene depletion in dung beetles in North Dakota to teaching English to schoolchildren in Ecuador, is an outstanding example.

Originally from Uganda, Kemirembe traveled nearly 7,000 miles from her home in Kampala to begin her first year at Wellesley in 2008 as a Davis United World College Scholar. From the start of freshman year, Kemirembe has been actively involved in biological research. Since 2009, Kemirembe has worked alongside Professor Yuichiro Suzuki and her classmates studying hormonal control in tobacco hornworms. Being part of a long-term research project has provided Kemirembe with valuable opportunities; in the past two years she has honed her laboratory skills, presented her research at national conferences with hopes of publishing her results, and formed valuable friendships with her lab mates—fellow Wellesley women from around the globe. Kemirembe has already received numerous research and internship grants, including the North Dakota State University STEM summer research grant (2011), the Wellesley Science Center Research Grant (2010 – present), and the Mentoring in the Sciences AT&T Research Grant (2009).

While Kemirembe has emerged as an accomplished young scientist, her multifaceted interests have led her to pursue multiple disciplines at Wellesley—and have taken her around the world. With a desire to augment her education with learning experiences abroad, Kemirembe spent her 2009 Wintersession in Jamaica, where she learned first-hand about the country's challenging economic and social structures; interned with Ecuador's Ministry of Education during her sophomore summer; and spent the fall semester of her junior year in Spain, where she studied Spanish cinema, archeology, and Muslim art.

Outside the lab and classroom, Kemirembe is engaged in many activities, both on-campus and beyond. She sings with Colour is Music, an international a capella group, tutors four- to six-year-olds in Roxbury as part of the Mission Hill After School Program, and volunteers with the Somalia Development Center, helping ex-refugees to study for their SATs and write college essays.

Kemirembe is grateful for the experiences she has had while at Wellesley and credits the Davis United World College Scholars program (UWC) for supporting opportunities she might not otherwise have had. She adds that the preparation provided by the UWC has helped her to cope with the challenges of balancing rigorous academic work with extra-curricular activities and volunteer work.

Kemirembe, currently in her senior year, plans to enroll in a Molecular Biology PhD program after graduation. She encourages future Davis United World Scholars to "carry on the UWC ideals" by contributing to the community through volunteer work, by teaching others about their culture, "as well as to keep excelling at academics."



**Will you be on campus for Graduation or Reunion this year?**

**You and your family are cordially invited to drop by Green 328**

**Friday, May 25: 8:30 AM, Spanish Department Graduation Breakfast**

**Saturday, June 2: 3 PM, Wine and Cheese Open House sponsored by the Spanish Department**

**¡COMUNICATE!**

**What have you been up to? We'd love to share your news in future Newsletters.**

**Please contact Jael at 781-283-2402 or [jmatos@wellesley.edu](mailto:jmatos@wellesley.edu).**

**And be sure to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter**

**¡Hasta pronto y un fuerte abrazo a todas! --Nancy Hall, Ed. ('12)**



*La Sociedad Honoraria Sigma Delta Pi, Wellesley College Club, 23 de abril de 2012*