

Lingua Franca

News from the School of Languages and Cultures

SLC Newsletter Purdue University Vol. 3 Fall 2011

Dear all,
One more semester is over. After working on our papers and exams and finishing all of the grading of our students' exams, we are finally enjoying a well-deserved break to recharge our energy only to start all over in January. Now that we all have more time, I hope you can enjoy of this new issue of our graduate newsletter. If you would like to collaborate in *Lingua Franca* get in contact with us. Working on the newsletter is an interesting way to get familiar with what is going on in our department, and of course it is something new to include on your CV. The newsletter enables us to showcase the latest research interests and projects of our professors and our fellow students. During the semester, students involved in *Lingua Franca* get to uncover SLC's vibrant spirit. The release of the issue at the end of the semester is a way of sharing our discoveries.

In the third issue of *Lingua*



Franca, we would like to present an exciting interview with Professor Howard Mancing about his interest in Cognitive Science, a conversation with Katsuhiro Ito who is interested in Japanese second language writing, and an overview of some of our graduate students' opinions on the conference on Re-visioning Terrorism,

among other articles.

Enjoy and do not hesitate to get in contact with us if you have questions, ideas, opinions, or want to collaborate with *Lingua Franca*.

Happy Holidays to everyone!

Alejandra Vela
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INTERVIEW ON COGNITIVE SCIENCES: DR. HOWARD MANCING

Yasmina Vallejo

When was the idea of organizing a colloquium first thought of?

Actually it was back in... let's see, it was last year... Paula Leverage and I were talking with each other, and we ran into Yonsoo Kim and on the spot just suggested it. She said that that would be fine, so it must have been in late Spring of the last academic year.

How long have you been interested in cognitive sciences?

Since 1992, that was the year I resigned as head of the department. I had a sabbatical leave for a year, and I also had a semester as a reward that the Dean had given me for my years of service as administrator. So I had three semesters to read and try to get caught up on recent theory. I was first interested in reading theory, but that led into some linguistic theories, which led into cognitive linguistics. And that just opened the door to everything else.

Were you interested in the subject when you started your



career?

No, but then when I started my career, cognitive science did not exist. As an undergraduate, I had a second major in psychology, but it was behavioral psychology. I didn't like that kind of psychology, which is why I chose not to go to graduate school in that area, but rather in Spanish. I have always been interested in psychology but then when I started reading in the 90s about the possibilities, it was like a whole new world for me.

Is there any challenge in the study of Cognitive Science when compared with other fields of study?

Yes, of course. Any new field always has certain challenges. One of the problems is that we meet with a certain resistance from those people who are convinced that biology is not a major factor, and that everything is a matter of social construction. It is difficult sometimes to get past psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist, queer theory, and other approaches that make

that assumption. And it is a challenge when science is brought in, fearing as deterministic and reductionistic and that it controls human beings and dehumanizes, and a lot of things like that. There is a resistance constantly to overcome.

Are there any plans of having this kind of colloquium in the near future?

I don't know. I have mentioned briefly to Adrian Del Caro and to Yonsoo that it would be nice if either every semester or most semesters we could have some kind of theme, whether be film studies or feminist approaches or whatever might be. I think that would be a good idea.

You are teaching a class this semester that deals with the subject, how has the experience been so far?

So far very good, the students are getting more accustomed to talk in terms of evolutionary influences of Chomskian concepts of language rather than Saussurean concepts, and to bring Bakhtin in, as you know Bakhtin is my favorite cognitive scientist. I have gotten students getting truly enthusiastic about certain aspects of it and having difficulty deciding what kind of paper to write because there are so many interesting possibilities for them.

How connected and dependent on the Cognitive Science field is the study of languages?

I think it is intimately connected: how would you teach a language without knowing how the brain functions, what language is, and what some of the latest theories of language use and acquisition might be. It is important to know that at about the age of puberty the brain changes and loses those neuronal connections that made it possible for a child to learn language; so learning a new language becomes much more difficult. That suggests that we should be teaching second and third languages well before puberty not to adults who enter college. Starting Spanish or French or Japanese 101 in college is just about the worst expenditure of money that you can have. Then, using teaching methods you cannot or you should not use with someone at the university who has an adult brain because these methods are appropriate for a child who has a child brain. The implications for that are great and I do not know how well they have been worked out in departments like ours.

Any recommendations how anyone can get a better understanding of Cognitive Sciences?

The best way is to read a couple of thousand books like I did over the last decade or two but that's not always practical. There are increasingly some introductions to the topic. The book length work that I am working on right now, I think, would be one of those introductions. I would hope that my cumulative experience could be resolved in a basic presentation and some of the main ideas and recommendations for further reading.

Who is/are your favorite author/s in Cognitive Sciences?

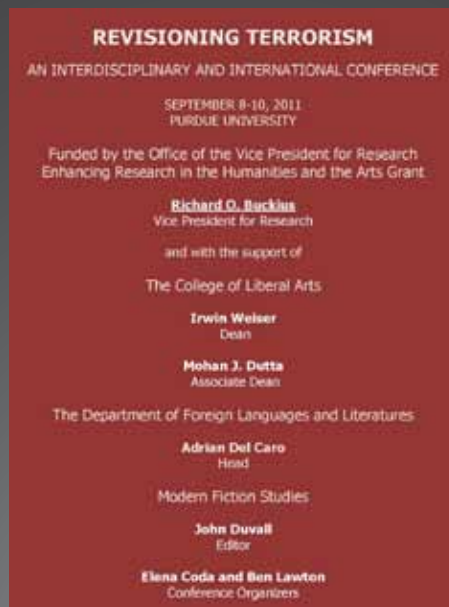
I said Bakhtin, but of course he lived and wrote before Cognitive Science came along. It is just that I find him completely at home in the embodied approach of Cognitive Science that I like. In literary studies, I think, Norman Holland is an example with his 1980s books, not his early work from the 60s and 70s, but his work in the 1980s when they discovered the brain. I find that his work is fundamental, so is Mark Turner. More recently and in more focused ways, people like Lisa Zunshine whose book *Why We Read Fiction* is the most important introduction to Theory of Mind; Suzanne Keen whose book on empathy is extremely important. More locally, I think Paula Leverage has done some brilliant proposals with Medieval French literature

REVISIONING TERRORISM FROM GRAD STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

and memory, and Jen William is working on twentieth century cinema and literature from a cognitive point of view. So, there are plenty.

What is your favorite book above all?

This is an easy one, Don Quijote of course. It is the work I discovered in graduate school. I had not read it as an undergraduate. I read a selection, but not more than that. I went to graduate school planning on working in Latin American narrative and then I took a class in Don Quijote, and my life changed. It's the only book that I go back and read and reread and reread over and over again, probably thirty or forty times that I have read it and some parts far more than that. It is always new, it is always different. It is what Borges would call an infinite text because it has no end and no beginning, and it is just constant and is always there, and it does everything. It is a comic novel, it is a realist novel, it is a metafictional novel, it is a symbolic novel, and it is a psychological novel. It is everything you want. I think in many ways those who consider it the prototype of 'the novel' are not wrong.



The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures had the honor this semester of hosting the interdisciplinary and international conference on *Re-visioning Terrorism*. This special opportunity took place September 8-10, 2011 and was funded by the Office of the Vice President for Research. The three-day event showcased research from scholars from all over the world on topics within a wide range. With more than 75 presentations in all, interested scholars visited panels in the areas of literature and linguistics as well as film, art, and many more. In attendance was not only the SLC faculty, but also graduate students from the department. Many students embraced the opportunity to attend such a large conference encompassing so many genres while being exposed to new perspectives on

the topic of terrorism. As Ronald Simoes, MA student in Spanish Literature, stated, "I was looking for voices other than 'mainstream' and found alternatives: new perspectives on what is presented as terror and who produces it." Other students looked to the experienced panelists and audience members who brought with them impressive scholarly insight. Argelia Garcia, PhD in Spanish Literature, "saw many scholars among the audience who made very insightful comments and you could see that this was a very mature audience and with a great deal of expertise in the subjects being discussed who felt free to debate, refute and expand on the topics brought up." The conference was well-received and provided a unique chance for SLC to be part of a large international community that surpasses the traditional view of studying languages. Shogo Sakaurai, PhD student in Applied Linguistics, noted that his experience at the conference was overall very positive. In fact his only regret was that not more graduate students took advantage of the conferences. "This conference was one that all students and faculty could profit from regardless what they have as research areas. Sometimes listening to an unrelated topic will open a new door into your own research that you had never before considered."

CONVERSATION WITH KATSUHIRO ITO

Miguel Ángel Rincón



What university in Japan did you go to?

I went to Nanzan University for my undergrad and Nagoya University of Foreign Studies for grad school.

Tell us about your research interests?

I am interested in second language writing, specifically Japanese because Japanese has a complicated writing system that is often challenging for learners and findings from previous literature about second language writing in European languages

may not be applicable. I think that independent research in Japanese is necessary for learners to develop their Japanese writing skills.

What made you come to Purdue University?

I came based on my wife's recommendation. She obtained a Master's degree (Japanese) from Purdue in 2005.

What is your dissertation about?

My dissertation is about providing effective feedback on students' Japanese writing and essays. As part of this I am evaluating teacher feedback (comprehensive, coded, underlined, etc.) vs. peer feedback vs. computer assisted feedback (using concordancer).

How did you decide on this topic?

In addition to the challenges of the Japanese writing system as I mentioned before, in my teaching experience, I have some concerns about error correction in student writing. I often wonder about questions such as "Do teachers give appropriate and complete feedback on students' errors in their writing?", "What kind of teacher feedback should be given on student writing?", and "Do students perceive and uptake teacher's feedback correctly?".

To put it in simplest terms, I'm very interested in what kind of feedback is the best for students' writing.

How is the educational system in Japan different from the US?

Since the Japanese educational system was reformed under American occupation after World War II, there is not a big difference. One interesting French influence that has remained is that the school year starts in April in Japan (fiscal year as well) due to the first Japanese educational system being based on the French educational system. Additionally, cherry trees blossom in April, which is beloved by Japanese people and symbolizes a new start. That is why, this difference in schedule causes some inconvenience for students in the U.S. who wish to study abroad in Japan.

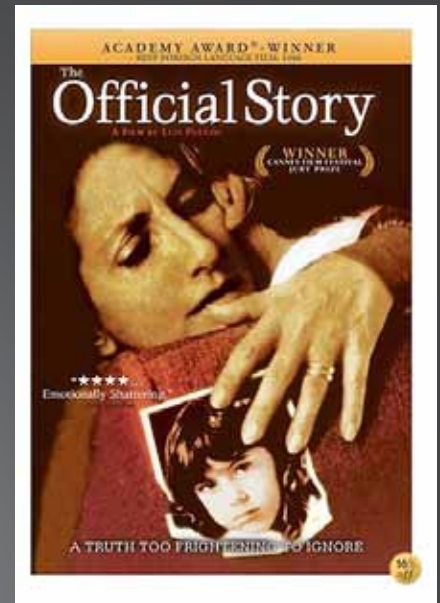
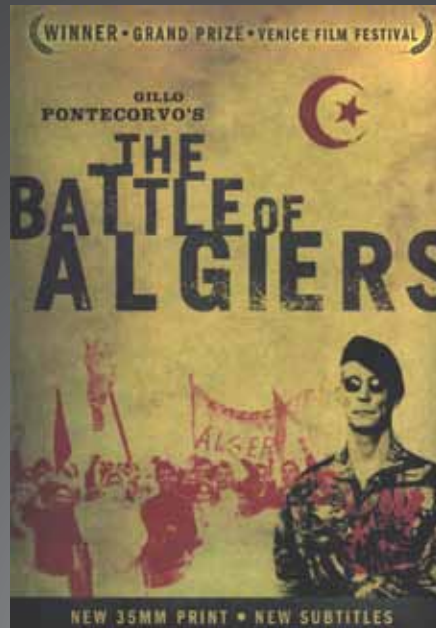
What is something that you miss about living in Japan?

To be honest, nothing really.

What is your favorite thing about West Lafayette?

I love the people living in the Lafayette and West Lafayette area, including the people from overseas. Due to the influence of Purdue, the area has a broad diversity of people and cultures. I learn many things from all of the diverse people I meet.

THE WORLD FILM FORUM: REVISIONING TERRORISM EDITION



The World Film Forum (WFF) presents a selection of films from all around the world every semester. The presentations take place at the West Lafayette Public Library and it is open to the community. According to the organizers, this event is “an opportunity for us to join in conversation with people from all around Lafayette and West Lafayette, potentially.” The overall goal of the WFF is community outreach, presentation of interesting international films, and a good conversation about them. Since the movies are presented at the end of the day, snacks are provided to help energize the audience and their discussions, which are led by members of the SLC faculty and volunteers from other departments. After the screening, interesting discussions are lead by the presenters. For more information check out their site: [http://](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/fl/main/news/World_Film_Forum.html)

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In the Fall 2011 semester, we were able to enjoy films related to the topic “Re-visioning Terrorism”. The screened films proposed new ways and viewpoints to understand terrorism, which contrast with the stereotypical positions fostered by the media. Three movies offered this semester. *Endgame* (Travis 2009) was presented by Prof. Patrice Rankine (Classics) and Prof. Ellen Gruenbaum (Anthropology). This action-style film takes place in South Africa and is about the events that led to the end of the racial apartheid system.

The Battle of Algiers (Pontecorvo 1966) was presented by Prof. Paula Leverage (French). It is a production of the Algerian gov-

ernment, and it is one of the most influential political films based on the Algerian War of Independence. The depiction of the war between the urban guerilla and French colonialists and its experimental style (simulation of newsreel and documentary footage) were highly celebrated by critics.

The third film was the Argentinian film *The Official Story* (Puenzo 1985). It was presented by Cecilia Tenorio and Prof. Ariel de la Fuente. The plot takes place in Argentina during the military dictatorship from 1976-1983. The main topic is the abduction of pregnant women who were forced to have their babies in captivity. The children were illegally given to wealthy families, sympathizers of the regime. The film won the 1986 Oscar for Best Foreign Film.

CHECK OUT THE UP-COMING CONFERENCES AND CALL FOR PAPERS

25th Annual Graduate Student Symposium: Milestones

Department of French and Italian, University of Wisconsin-Madison

March 23-24, 2012

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

Rituals and rites of passage; Journeys, travel, and migration; Literature as record or as testimony; Generational conflict; Violence, trauma, and recovery; Independence, nationhood, and post-colonialism; Bildungsromane; Memory and memorialization; Literary history and reader reception; Technological advances; Censorship and propaganda; Birth and death

Please address inquiries and abstract submissions to Rachel Tapley and Walter Scott at gafis2012@gmail.com. Abstracts must be received no later than January 12th, 2012.

TROPOS 12th Annual Graduate Student Symposium

Michigan State University Graduate Journal of the Romance and Classical

March 31, 2012

Borders & Intersections Strategies and Tensions of Liminal States in Interstitial Spaces

Presentations in Spanish, French, or English should not exceed twenty minutes. Selected papers may be considered for publication in the forthcoming issue of the Tropos Journal. Abstract Information: Submit a 200-word abstract by January 10, 2012. Proposals for individual papers and complete panels should be submitted in English to tropos@msu.edu. Please include the following information on a separate page: title, name, e-mail, and institution. Email notification will be sent within two weeks from the deadline. Conference fee is \$20.00.

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GET INVOLVED?

The Graduate Student Committee is divided into several subcommittees and we are always looking for additional volunteers. If you would like to help out, contact the committee representative to find out more:

Graduate Student Committee & Orientation Week:

Karen Morgan: ymorgan@purdue.edu

Graduate Symposium:

Jennifer Gerndt: jgerndt@purdue.edu / Ager Gondra: agondra@purdue.edu

Professionalization

Elizabeth Barajas: barajase@purdue.edu

Newsletter

Alejandra Vela: vela@purdue.edu

Social Events

Peter Dy-liacco: pdyliacc@purdue.edu

Looking for other ways to get involved with SLC?

Help out with the “Coffee & Tea Conversation Hours”. Many languages have weekly meetings: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

In addition, there are several SLC committees and student organizations for you to participate in, like The French Club or The Korean Cultural Club. An extensive list of all SLC committees, affiliations and student organizations can be found here: <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/fll/main/documents/FLLCommittees-March2010.pdf>

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