

Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

University of Florida



Welcome to the Fall Newsletter!

This edition offers a snapshot of the department’s activities, including student engagement, innovative research, teaching initiatives, and accomplishments by our faculty and staff.

This Fall semester has been a period of transition marked by new arrivals. Since stepping into my role as Chair of the Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Department, I have been deeply grateful for the support from both faculty and students. I would especially like to thank Akintunde Akinyemi for his leadership during his tenure and for facilitating a smooth and gracious transition.

We are thrilled to welcome Hannah Kelly and Sam Jones, both of whom have shown commitment and enthusiasm. Additionally, I am delighted to introduce two new faculty members who bring much expertise to their respective programs: Haruna Kyomoto and Guelden Olgun.

This fall has been productive, and I’m looking forward to the Spring semester. Happy holidays and best wishes for 2025!

Alioune Sow

New Staff and Faculty



Sam Jones, Administrative Specialist and Office Manager has been working for UF since 2021 and recently joined our department as the Administrative Specialist. "I'm a transplant from south Florida who came up to visit and never left! Gainesville is such a great place to live, and the university is full of wonderful faculty and staff that are always so welcoming. I look forward to getting to know everyone in LLC."



Hannah Kelly, Academic Assistant has joined the department in October as the new academic assistant. "I am so excited to be joining the amazing faculty and staff here. I originally am from the Panhandle and just relocated this year, but this place already feels like home. I am eagerly anticipating spending many more great semesters here at UF!"



Haruna Kyomoto joins the department as an **Instructional Assistant Professor in Japanese** after graduating with an MA degree from Indiana University Bloomington.

"Hi (or 'Konnichiwa', in Japanese). This Fall '24 semester has been my first experience as a full-time faculty member. While it has been hectic, it has been incredibly rewarding! I've thoroughly enjoyed my time here and truly grateful for the support from my wonderful colleagues! I am excited to get to know each of you better, learn more about the department, and discover the hidden gems in Gainesville!"



Dr. Guelden Olgun joins the department as **Instructional Assistant Professor in German**. Dr Olgun research focuses on the representation of marginalized communities, particularly exploring the intersection of migration and cultural expression in film and literature. Her research interests also include German language curriculum and instruction, foreign language pedagogy, migrants and refugees in the German and global context, diaspora and cultural production, minority cinemas, and minority and immigrant representation. Dr Olgun is an experienced language instructor, specializing in teaching German through chunk-based methods and interactive-communicative approaches. She designs exercises tailored to these strategies. She holds a PhD in Comparative literature from Binghamton University and a Master's degree in teaching German as a foreign and second Language (DaF/DaZ) from Kassel University in Germany.

Faculty News and Publications

Hélène Blondeau

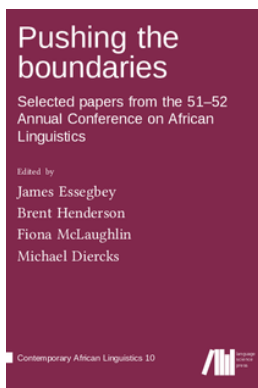
Presented two co-authored papers on lexical and morphosyntactic variation in French spoken in Montreal and Welland, Canada, at the New Ways of Analyzing Variation conference (NWAV 52) in Miami.

As part of the French for All Initiative (French in Higher Education program), and in collaboration with partners at Washington University Johns Hopkins University, the University of Virginia, Hélène Blondeau helped the French program secure a grant from the French Embassy in the United States to enhance connections between global health and the study of French.

The grant will help fund an upcoming U.S. lecture tour with professionals from Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières, providing students with firsthand insights into humanitarian medicine, particularly as it is practiced in French-speaking regions. In addition, the grant will fund the creation of a shared pedagogical platform for universities to develop and exchange resources on French for Health Professionals. By blending the acquisition of language skills and cultural knowledge with real-world medical experience from the field, this interdisciplinary initiative will prepare students for tomorrow's careers in global health.

For more information, visit <https://franceflorida.clas.ufl.edu/promoting-global-health-and-french-studies-2024-2026/>

James Essegbey and Fiona McLaughlin



Pushing the boundaries: Selected papers from the 51-52 Annual Conference of African Linguistics, edited by James Essegbey, Brent Henderson, Fiona McLaughlin and Michael Diercks.

"This volume contains some of the papers there were presented at ACAL 51-52, which was organized virtually at the University of Florida. A couple were accepted for presentation at ACAL 51, which was canceled because of COVID-19. The theme of ACAL 51-52 was African linguistics: pushing the boundaries. There are 18 papers and an introduction: two phonetics papers, five phonology papers, nine syntax papers, one sociolinguistics paper and one typology paper."

Matthieu Felt

Columbia University, "Meanings of Antiquity: Myth Interpretation in Premodern Japan," November 21, 2025

January 10, 2025 MLA Annual Conference, "Notes, Paratext, and the Quest for Hidden Meaning in Japanese Myths," January 10, 2025

Florida State University, "Myths in Motion: Creation Narratives in Premodern Japan," February 6, 2025

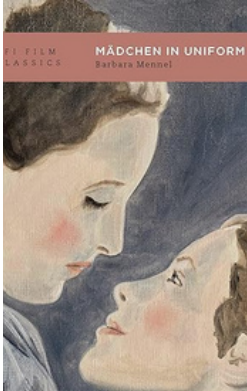
AAS Annual Conference, "Centripetal Verse: The Nativizing Power of Poetry in Japanese Myths," March 16, 2025

Fiona McLaughlin

Published two chapters in *The Oxford Guide to the Atlantic Languages of West Africa*, edited by Friederike Lüpke (2024): "Atlantic consonant mutation" and "Ajami writing practices in Atlantic-speaking Africa." She also published a chapter co-authored with Karim Ouaras (University of Oran 2) entitled "Extreme landscapes (with an example from the Algerian hirak)" in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Linguistic Landscapes*, edited by Robert Blackwood, Stefania Tufi, and Will Amos (2024). In collaboration with Adib Bencherif (U of Sherbrooke) she has organized a roundtable on "(Post)nomads in global Africa" at the 2024 Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association in Chicago.

Barbara Mennel

Barbara Mennel published *Su Friedrich* in 2023 and *Mädchen in Uniform* in 2024. She gave invited talks at Texas A&M and Utah State University, discussed her work in the virtual series *Conversations Across Screen Cultures*, and presented at *Visible Evidence* in Udine, Italy. In November 2024, she served as a facilitator for the Humanities Center Leadership Boot Camp at the National Humanities Center.



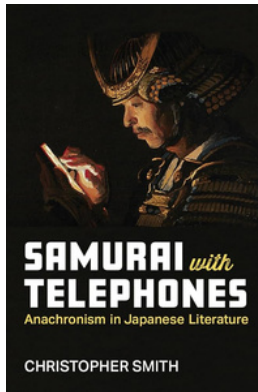
For her current book project *The New Tiny: Reinventing Miniatures in the Digital Age*, Mennel received the Humanities Scholarship Enhancement Fund and the CLAS Research Spark Grant, which enable her to travel to museums, exhibitions, model villages, and interview artists and modelmakers during her current sabbatical. For her discussion of the return of handcrafted models in cinema, she has visited the studios of Wes Anderson's modelmaker Simon Weisse in Berlin and puppet maker Andy Gent in London. She is currently tracing the influence of Frances Glessner Lee who created "Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death" in the mid-twentieth century to train detectives in forensic science. The gruesome dioramas are held by the Office of the Medical Examiner of the State of Maryland, where they are used in the annual Frances Glessner Lee Homicide Investigation Seminar. Mennel participated in fall 2024 as part of her research on the reappearance of murder miniatures in twenty-first-century television shows from the English *Midsummer Murders* to the American *CSI* and *American Rust*.

Kensaku Ogata

"Self-Study Project for Enhancing Learners' Motivation, Innovation, and Language Skills", October 2024, Foreign Language Association of Virginia (FLAVA) 2024 Annual Conference: Navigating a Changing World with Languages, Norfolk, Virginia, USA.

Christopher Smith

What is going on when a graphic novel has a twelfth-century samurai pick up a telephone to make a call, or a play has an ancient aristocrat teaching in a present-day schoolroom? Rather than regarding such anachronisms as errors, *Samurai with Telephones* develops a theory of how texts can use different types of anachronisms to challenge or rewrite history, play with history, or open history up to new possibilities.



By applying this theoretical framework of anachronism to several Japanese literary and cultural works, author Christopher Smith demonstrates how different texts can use anachronism to open up history for a wide variety of different textual projects. From the modern period, this volume examines literature by Mori Ōgai and Ōe Kenzaburō, manga by Tezuka Osamu, art by Murakami Takashi, and a variety of other pop cultural works. Turning to the Early Modern period (Edo period, 1600–1868), which produced a literature rich with playful anachronism, he also examines several Kabuki and Bunraku plays, kibyōshi comic books, and gōkan illustrated novels. In analyzing these works, he draws a distinction between anachronisms that attempt to hide their work on history and convincingly rewrite it and those conspicuous anachronisms that highlight and disrupt the construction of historical narratives.

Richard Wang

"The Rise of Quanzhen Daoism at Maoshan." Invited paper presented at the "Future Prospects and Proposals for the Study of Daoism & Daoism in Cliffs, Caves, and Inscriptions" conference. Arizona State University, December 7, 2024.

"Local Daofa in the Ming Daoist Ordination." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR). San Diego, November 24, 2024.

The panel "Song, Jin, Yuan Inscriptions," at the "Future Prospects and Proposals for the Study of Daoism & Daoism in Cliffs, Caves, and Inscriptions" conference. Arizona State University, December 7, 2024, as discussant.

Learning Experiences

Virtual Tabadul, Salah Algabli and Soraya Bouguettaya

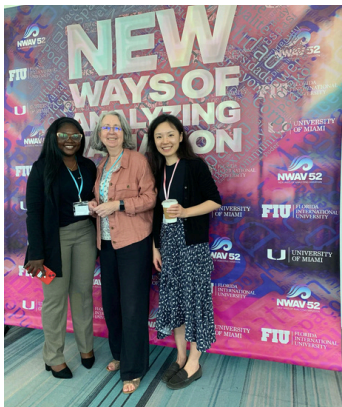
This Fall semester 2024, the Arabic Studies Program launched Virtual Tabadul, a unique virtual reality program that enables UF students enrolled in Arabic language courses to connect with peers in Morocco and Algeria. This initiative provided more than 82 students at UF at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels to enhance language learning experience with regular exchanges with students at Constantine 1 Frères Mentouri University in Constantine (Algeria) and Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra (Morocco). The project was led by Professors Salah Algabli and Soraya Bouguettaya. Each participant accessed a virtual reality platform, allowing them to explore Arabic cities while interacting with Google cardboard. Additionally, students gained access to Canvas pages with various activities and lessons to support them during this unique experience. By immersing themselves in real-life language practice and cultural experiences, students enhanced their language skills and gained firsthand insights into the diverse cultures of the MENA region.

Choix Goncourt US, Nathalie Ciesco

For the second consecutive year, UF students in French will participate in the Choix Goncourt US, an innovative experiential learning initiative led by the Cultural Services of the French embassy in Washington DC. Implemented by Dr. Alioune Sow in Spring 2024, and led this by Nathalie Ciesco, Choix Goncourt US read, aims to promote contemporary French and Francophone literature within the United States through institutions of higher education. It also develops students' abilities to read, analyze, interpret, and critique novels in French. At the end of April 2025, one UF student will travel to New York to join student representatives from other universities to deliberate and select the Choix Goncourt US 2025. For this fourth edition, UF will be participating alongside 9 other universities: Columbia, Duke, Harvard, NYU, Princeton, University of Illinois, Yale, UCLA, and the University of Southern California. The 2025 Choix Goncourt novels are: Sandrine Collette, *Madelaine avant l'aube*; Kamel Daoud, *Houris*; Gaël Faye, *Jacaranda*; H el ene Gaudy, *Archipels*.

Alumni Update

New Ways of Analyzing Variation (NWAV 52) in Miami



Two UF Alumni, a current MA student and Dr. Blondeau were in Miami last November for the New Ways of Analyzing Variation (NWAV 52). Modupeola Lawal, a current MA student in FFS, participated in the Project Launch poster session with her MA project Translanguaging practices and perspectives among multilingual novice teachers of French in the USA. Delin Deng (MA in French and Francophone Studies, 2017, UF Ph.D. in Linguistics 2023), who currently held a postdoctoral position at Vanderbilt University, presented a paper entitled Phonological Evidence for the Grammaticalization of genre in Swiss French. Geoffrey Tacinelli (MA in French and Francophone Studies, 2023), who is now a Ph.D. student in French Linguistics Student at Indiana University, presented a paper entitled Panic! At the pronouns: Syntactic parsing of French neopronoun 'iel'. For more information, visit: <https://www.nwavmiami.org/program>

Events



The visitors were: Volodymyra Havrysh (student), Veronika Rashko (student), Danyil Kostenko (student), Svitlana Alieksieienko (principal of the Nizhyn Lyceum), Nadiya Kresan (asst. principal and teacher of English and German as world languages), Pavlo Kindiev (STEM teacher, robotics, coding).

Ingrid Kleespies and Pavlo Antonenko (Professor of Educational Technology and Director of the NeurAL Lab in the School of Teaching and Learning, College of Education) welcomed a team of Ukrainian educators, local politicians, and high school students who visited the UF College of Education and P. K. Yonge on October 30. The team has worked with the P. K. Yonge Robotics Club on a collaborative drone project measuring effects of the conflict on the natural environment, specifically bodies of water.

The event in Pugh Hall was a meet-and-greet for the Ukrainian team with Ukraine Rebuilding Initiative students, Gillian Lord, Michael Kung from the UFIC Office of Global Engagement, Alioune Sow, Lauren Poe, Director of the Greater Gainesville International Center, and Mayor Harvey Ward.



Alioune Sow: On November 20, author Michael Roch visited UF. The visit included a talk to UF students and faculty on science fiction, aesthetics, Afrofuturism, co-futurism and the Caribbean and a seminar with students of Francophone Cultures. The visit was sponsored by the Villa Albertine, the cultural services of the French embassy and the France Florida Research Institute



Theresa Antes: Six students from French and Francophone Studies were inducted into the Mu Omega chapter of Pi Delta Phi, the national French honor society, on December 5, 2024. Pictured from left to right are Salome Almeida, Kristin Soulliere, Virginia Bisiaux, Hannah Gallagher, Victoria Osorio and Jessica Burdette.



Salah Algabli - Sorraya Bouguettaya: Three UF students—Sandy Abdelmassieh, Samih Samaan, and Haadi Gill, all Arabic minors—were selected to participate in the US National Arabic Debate, led by Professor Salah Algabli, held at the University of New York in October 2024. The competition featured over 44 university teams competing for a spot in the top four. The debate focused on current events, culture, and global issues, providing the students with an opportunity to enhance their Arabic language skills, particularly in speaking and critical thinking. **(left)**



At the Arabic Celebration Ceremony 2024 over 100 students participated in this lively celebration featuring traditional dishes, cultural exhibits, performances, and games from across the Arab world. **(right)**

Upcoming Events

Rori Bloom: The France-Florida Research Institute, a center of excellence in French studies supported by the French Embassy, is pleased to announce the following events for Spring 2025 as part of our Environmental Humanities and the Francophone World program:

January 22: Dr. Jean-Luc Guichet (University of Picardie) will present a lecture entitled "Sensitivity to the Environment in the Eighteenth Century: A Missed Opportunity?"

March 5: Dr. Amanda Vincent (Wake Forest University), Mr. Alexander Reford (Reford Gardens in Canada), Mme. Chantal Colleu-Dumond (Director, Chaumont Gardens in France) will participate in a roundtable on "Gardens on the Move."

March 24: Dr. Julia Frengs (University of Nebraska) will present a lecture entitled "Protecting Moana: Literary Ecologies of Oceania."

April 3: Musician Christine Alicot will present a concert of French classical music in conjunction with our annual Night of Ideas organized around the theme of water.

Please see the FFRI website for further details: <https://franceflorida.clas.ufl.edu/>

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