

Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

University of Florida



Welcome to the Spring Newsletter!

Our department had an exciting, innovative and productive Spring semester. This latest newsletter showcases Faculty research achievements, publications and grants, students' engagement and awards. LLC Faculty have initiated new courses and collaborations with other units on campus, such as teaching languages and literatures in the age of AI and new technologies.

Ongoing initiatives continue to provide LLC students with opportunities for experiential learning, outreach and study abroad programs. These activities reflect the dedication and the commitment of our faculty.

Hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

I wish you all a restful summer.
Alioune Sow

Faculty News and Publications

Gabriele Belletti

In collaboration with Delaney Johnson (Honor Student), Belletti developed a University Scholars Program (USP) course that explores the intersection of Italian and Floridian ecopoetry and their translations. This interdisciplinary initiative delves into ecological and cultural narratives through literary works from both Italy and Florida. The course fosters an understanding of environmental issues from a cross-cultural perspective. The article stemming from this project will be published in *Delos: A Journal of Translation and World Literature*, in the upcoming 40.1 issue next year.

Belletti is also leading the interdisciplinary SHINE project (Sciences Humanities Intelligence Nurturing Emotions), supported by the SPARK Grant. This project explores the intersection of ecopoetry, virtual reality, AI, and neuroscience to foster emotional engagement with climate change, contributing to ongoing efforts in Environmental Humanities and AI-related initiatives.

Together with Dr. Daniel Maxwell from UFIT, Belletti is developing a virtual reality language learning experience, integrating AI and environmental themes. He is also exploring collaborations with Alma Edizioni, an Italian publishing house, to expand these efforts in language education.

Gabriele Belletti also received the following grant awards:

Humanities Scholarship Enhancement Fund – This grant will support the final stages of his book *Poetiche per l'ambiente* (Ecological Poetics), which focuses on contemporary Italian poetry and its engagement with environmental issues. It will also assist in completing the bilingual anthology of Italian ecopoetry, contributing to the international dissemination of these works.

Library Enhancement Grant in the Humanities – This grant aims to enhance the library's collection with ecopoetic works from various languages and cultures. It will specifically focus on texts that address urgent environmental challenges, particularly from the past three decades. The grant award was received by Gabriele Belletti and H  l  ne Huet.

Matthieu Felt

Matthieu Felt published “Decolonizing the origins of (pre)modern Japanese literature” in *Japan Forum* 2025.

He also presented the following:

Centripetal Verse: The Nativizing Power of Poetry in Japanese Myths” on the panel “Threads of Myth-Information: Clashing Lineages and Changing Stories in Japanese Mythology” presented at the Association of Asian Studies 2025 Annual Conference in March.

"Creation Narratives in Premodern Japan" presented at Florida State University in February, 2025.

“Notes, Paratext, and the Quest for Hidden Meaning in Japanese Myths” on the panel “Hidden Figures and Secret Meanings: Visibility and Invisibility in Premodern Japanese Texts” presented at the *Modern Language Association* 2025 Annual Conference in January, 2025.

Matthieu Felt received the following recognitions from the *American Association of Religion* in 2024:

Shortlisted finalist for “Best First Book in the History of Religions”

Shortlisted finalist for "Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion: Textual Studies"

Michael Gorham

Michael Gorham published a peer-review article, "Prime-time Solov'ev: Rhetorical Strategies of a Wartime Propagandist," in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*.

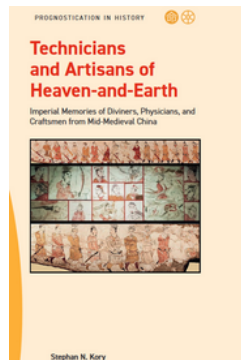
He also taught a live webinar on the politics of Russian-language internet for over 800 K-12 teachers nationwide as a part of the National Humanities Center's "Humanities in Class Webinar Series."

Michael gave an interview to a syndicated public radio show on the U.S.-Russian relations ["Russia Claims Victory After Trump's Call with Putin...," with "Background Briefing with Ian Masters." KPKM-FM radio, Los Angeles [19 March 2025]]

He also hosted an invited workshop at Columbia University's Harriman Institute, presenting on a draft chapter from his forthcoming book, *Networking Putinism: The Rhetoric of Power in the Digital Age* (Cornell U.P.)

Stephan Kory

Stephan has an upcoming manuscript publication entitled, *Technicians and Artisans of Heaven-and-Earth: Imperial Memories of Diviners, Physicians, and Craftsmen from Mid-Medieval China* that will be published by Brill. The blurb for the book is as follows:



"Technicians and Artisans and Heaven-and-Earth reconstructs memories of significant but often overlooked figures from a remarkably diverse yet understudied period of Chinese history. The book includes translations of three biographical collections from the official dynastic histories of the Northern Wei, Northern Zhou, and Sui featuring the lives of "technicians and artisans." Through a comparative, intertextual, and literary analysis of these works, Stephan N. Kory not only sheds light on the roles and functions of diviners, physicians, and craftsmen in the imperial courts of mid-medieval North China but also provides us with fascinating insights into medieval Chinese court life and society."

The publication is expected to be out this summer, 2025.

Kole Odutola

Kole was awarded the Green Gator of the Month Award. This award is given to those who, in the words of intern Jessica Cohen, are "committed to promoting sustainability." Kole teaches a Quest course entitled, "Is There Culture in Architecture?" (Course code IDS2935.) Cohen writes that in it, "Dr. Kole Odutola guides students to look beyond the physical aspects of buildings or design and instead recognize the sustainability, history, and identity behind them." Kole says that his core green habits include: using the Gainesville RTS bus system daily, conserving natural resources and energy, living alongside nature, and carpooling with colleagues to minimize carbon emissions. Kole states that, "I believe that if we are kind to nature, it will be kind to us in return."

Guelden Olgun

Guelden Olgun's journal article entitled, "From 'Woman's Thigh' to 'Lover's Lips': Deconstructing Gender in Turkish Food Culture Through the Art of Mehtap Baydu," has been accepted for a special issue of *Feminist German Studies*.

She has been appointed Affiliate Professor at the UF Center for European Studies.

Chris Smith

Chris recently published the following articles:

Smith, Christopher. "Sharks and Revolutionary Girls: The 'Imperial Us' in Kaneko Mitsuharu's 'Same' and Ikuhara Kunihiro's *Shōjo Kakumei Utena*." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 51, no. 1 (January 1, 2025): 109–44.

Smith, Christopher. Review of *The Tale of Genji through Contemporary Manga: Challenging Gender and Sexuality in Japan*, by Lynne K. Miyake. *Pacific Historical Review* 94, no. 2 (May 1, 2025): 222–24.

Chris also presented "You Can (Not) Restore: Ecocritique and Intergenerational Ecological Conflict in *Evangelion*" at the 2025 Society of Cinema and Media Studies conference, Chicago IL, April 6, 2025 and at the 2025 Association of Asian Studies conference, Columbus OH, March 16 2025.

Richard Wang

Richard presented the paper “The Jingming Cult on the Move,” at “China on the Move,” the 6th Annual Meeting of the Southeast United States Scholars—Friends of Late Imperial China (SEUSS-FLIC). UNC Charlotte, February 28, 2025.

Mary Watt

Mary Watt, Interim Dean of CLAS, published:

“Writing and Reading the Way to Rome” in *Pilgrimage in the Twenty-First Century: A Kaleidoscopic Inquiry*. Ed. Ian McIntosh. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024. 201-212.

“Le Camino de Dante: Un voyage vers l'ouest jusqu'à la fin du monde” in *Interroger les chemins de Compostelle au XXI^e siècle*. Toulouse: Presses des Mines, 2024. 99-109.

She also received the Slater Research Fellowship, Durham University, Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, January – March 2026.

Teaching and Learning Experiences

New Collaborative Japanese Language Program

The Japanese Studies Program partnered with the College of Engineering to develop a new interdisciplinary study abroad program in Kyoto, combining courses in engineering and Japanese language and culture. The program is now recruiting for Fall semester.

High School Outreach Teachers' Workshop

In coordination with Gainesville Area High School Outreach and the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia, a workshop was held by Matthieu Felt for high school teachers on March 8th, 2025.

Japanese Department Lecture Series

A new lecture in the lecture series, "What are your Professors Up To?" was recorded and shared with Florida high school Japanese programs. The lecture was entitled, "Staging Anime: Performance Conventions in Kabuki Adaptions of Anime," a talk by Dr. Christopher Smith, April 4th 2025.

Italian Department Courses

In spring 2025, Gabriele Belletti and Deborah Amberson collaborated with colleagues across the Florida State University System to co-teach "Honoring the Ocean." This interdisciplinary experiential honors course sponsored by the Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO), a statewide institute supporting ocean research and education, offers faculty and students from 6 Florida universities the opportunity to explore humankind's interaction with the ocean in a virtual classroom and on an adventure aboard a research vessel on the Gulf of Mexico. Deborah and Gabriele were delighted to participate in the teaching and the voyage.

Italian Environmental Humanities Course: Belletti developed and taught the Italian Environmental Humanities course, which introduces students to Italian ecopoetry, fostering an understanding of the intersections between literature, nature, and environmental crises. As part of their final project, students created a book that serves as a compilation of their work, with the students acting as the editorial board. This project allowed them to take on a collaborative role in curating, editing, and presenting their ideas on ecopoetry.

Students in Beginning Italian II, taught by Sherrie Nunn, had the opportunity to participate in a linguistic and cultural exchange with their peers at the University of Padova (Italy). Meetings took place virtually and covered such topics as culinary traditions and dining out, vacations (including spring break for Florida students and Easter break for Padova students), university exams, and graduation traditions. Response from both sides of the exchange was overwhelmingly positive. The students were delighted to learn from each other and were inspired to keep the conversation going!

Italian Program in Collaboration with the English for Everybody Program

The English for Everybody program, initiated 17 years ago, is a collaborative effort between a group of state schools in the province of Brescia and surrounding areas in Italy, and universities in the UK and the USA. The program focuses on providing linguistic and cultural immersion experiences for English-speaking university graduates who serve as English language assistants in Italian schools. Participants assist teachers, primarily focusing on pronunciation, workbook exercises, and creating lesson plans in various subjects using CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodologies. The program also encourages assistants to develop their teaching skills through collaboration with educators, thus enhancing the learning experience for both the students and the assistants. Grace Romano, who recently graduated with a major in Italian, participated in this program, gaining valuable experience in an Italian educational setting. In spring 2025, several seniors graduating with a minor in Italian applied to join this initiative in the upcoming academic year, offering them further opportunities for professional development and cultural exchange both in Italy and the USA.

Student News and Awards

Students who completed a Japanese Honors Thesis and graduated with Honors are

Sarah Douglas graduated Magna Cum Laude

Brianney Torres graduated Summa Cum Laude

Kakehashi Project for Hispanic-American Young Leaders

Aly Vargas-Garzon and Viviana Gimon were invited by the Japanese consulate in Miami to travel to Japan to participate in the Kakehashi project.

Association of Florida Teachers of Japanese Speech Contest

Student Amelia Garvey [Level 6] was the winner of the speech contest.

Association of Florida Teachers of Japanese Promotional Video Contest

First place was awarded to the following group of students:

Noah Lunberry

Ciel Tsuruta

Erika Wangia

Emma Goodall

University Scholars Program

Jayda Killinger, a Dual Language major in Italian and French, completed a University Scholars Program project under the supervision of Deborah Amberson. Focusing on a single year in the history of Turin, capital of Italy from 1861 to 1865, Jayda identified and explored a series of tensions that defined the social, cultural, and political life of the city in 1863. She presented her work at UF's Undergraduate Research Symposium, and she submitted her essay for publication in the *Journal of Undergraduate Research*.

Southern Conference on Slavic Studies' Annual Student Essay Contest

Hannah Bogard (née Harris) (UF '24) as the winner of the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies' Annual Student Essay Contest on the basis of her LLC/Russian Studies Honors Thesis, "Language Policy in Education: A Comparative Evaluation of Russian-Speaker Integration in Estonia and Latvia."

Gainesville-Nizhyn Virtual Exchange Students

The following article linked here, recognizes two graduating virtual exchange students, Mikhail Mikhaylov and Grace Wright, who completed minors in Russian Studies. Both students are also leaders of the student organization, "Ukraine Rebuilding Initiative." Their faculty advisor is Ingrid Kleespies.

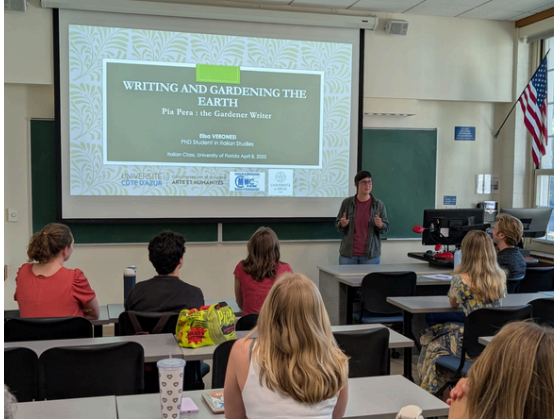
Alice Zirger Recipients



Two outstanding students were each awarded the Alice Zirger scholarship. Lance Mallari (left) was awarded the scholarship for Japanese studies, and Kadence Reichard (right) for Chinese Studies. The scholarship event included a luncheon and award presentation ceremony, with special guests Mr. Zirger and his daughter.

Events

Italian Studies Program Events



Elisa Veronesi, a PhD student affiliated with the Centre de la Méditerranée Moderne et Contemporaine (CMMC) at Université Côte d'Azur, spent a month with us in LLC.

Her project focuses on Mediterranean gardens as spaces of ecological collaboration, and works in connection with our Environmental Humanities initiatives.



France-Florida Research Institute Events

The France-Florida Research Institute has held a number of events this spring. These are listed below:

Public Lectures in our Environmental Humanities series by Dr. Jean-Luc Guichet (Universite de Picardie) and Dr. Julia Frengs (University of Nebraska)

Visit of Doctors Without Borders guest Hunter Keys. More information may be found at our website: <https://franceflorida.clas.ufl.edu/about/>

The Second Annual Night of Ideas with Dr. Deborah Amberson, Dr. Gabriele Belletti (pictured right), Bernard Cardenas Lailhacar, Dr. Terry Harpold, Dr. Eleanor Laughlin (University of Florida) and local guest artists Christine Alicot, Carlos Beltran and Margaret Tolbert



Villa
Albertine



Roundtable on Gardens in Movement with Mr. Alexander Reford (Reford Gardens in Quebec) and Dr. Amanda Vincent (Wake Forest University)



Choix Goncourt US 2025



On April 19, Isabel Ribeiro and Siena Zicchinella represented UF at Villa Albertine in New York to select the US Goncourt Prize winner. This year, participating universities included Columbia, Duke, Harvard, New York University, Princeton, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Southern California, and University of California Los Angeles, and Yale.



Italian Department Play



On Wednesday April 23, the students of the Italian Play Production course taught by Gianfranco Balestriere gave a public performance of "La morsa," "La patente," and "L'altro figlio," three one-act plays by Luigi Pirandello. Sponsored by LLC, The Center for European Studies, and the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere, the course allowed the audience at Gator Wesley to enjoy the hard work and talent of the students of the Italian program. Pictured above.

Japanese Program Film Viewing



The Japanese department presented a film viewing entitled, *Carving the Divine: Buddhist Sculptors in Japan*, March 7th 2025. Pictured above.

“Honoring the Ocean” Honors Course



Pictured above:
Gabriele Belletti (center) with students.

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