As we complete another productive academic year, Spring semester finds us in Modern Languages and Cultures taking stock of the many achievements of students, staff, and faculty members. In this issue of MLC Newslines, we focus on faculty research.

MLC faculty members are actively contributing to Baylor University’s goal of enhancing research as expressed in the Aspirational Statement on “Compelling Scholarship” in Baylor’s strategic Vision document, Pro Futuris. The faculty members whose work is highlighted here range across several languages and areas of inquiry, illustrating the interdisciplinary reach of MLC. They are tapping into national and international trends and responding to campus initiatives such as the Grand Challenges proposal in development within the College of Arts and Sciences and the annual STEM and Humanities Symposium, for which this year’s theme was

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In February, the Baylor Japanese program sent four students to the Dallas Regional Japanese Speech contest and swept the top three honors: First—Sean Nixon, senior Baylor Business Fellows, finance major, Japanese minor; Second—Grace Lu, senior media business major, Japanese minor; and Third—Jimmy Ta, senior film and digital media major, Japanese minor. Yinjiao Li, a senior media business major with a Japanese minor, also competed in the regional meet. As first and second place winners, Nixon and Lu qualified to proceed to the Texas State Japanese Speech Contest on March 19 at Rice University in Houston. They competed against students from other Texas universities such as the University of Texas, Texas A&M University, etc. Nixon took top honors at the state contest as the first place winner and received a $1,500 scholarship from the Japan-America Society of Greater Houston. Congratulations to all of the students who competed and to Profs. Yuko Prefume and Yoshiko Gaines!
Florida junior Chase Gottlich, recipient of a prestigious Boren Scholarship, will study in Tanzania for the 2016-2017 academic year. The Boren scholarships are “an initiative of the National Security Education Program, provide unique funding opportunities for U.S. undergraduate students to study less commonly taught languages in world regions critical to U.S. interests, and underrepresented in study abroad, including Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, and the Middle East.” (See Borenawards.org.) Chase describes his interest in and goals for his study abroad below.

Growing up in Florida I had never experienced Tanzanian culture. I spent high school at a boarding school in Massachusetts and I remember being captivated by the book Things Fall Apart by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. The end of the book outraged me as I read the foreign commissioner’s ironic condescension towards the character that I had grown to respect: ‘One could almost write a whole chapter about him (the main character).’ This cemented for me the limitations of the outsider’s perspective and spurred me to develop my own experiences of different cultures.

The Boren Scholarship will fund me to spend next year in Arusha, Tanzania, intensively studying Swahili. Swahili is a piece of a culture and people that have been forgotten by most Westerners. With estimates as high as 150 million total speakers, Swahili and the East Africa region are too significant to be ignored. Through language study, volunteer work, and most importantly personal conversation, I hope to be able to gain a greater appreciation for the language and the culture in hopes to begin a long journey of working in the field of Infectious Diseases throughout the area.

“Chase ultimately intends to explore how aid systems should be reoriented to address the structure and organization of donor institutions in their work to assist local communities in developing countries,” comments Dr. Sara Alexander, Chase’s thesis advisor.

—Chase Gottlich is a University Scholar student with concentrations in Russian and biochemistry.

**BU Student Awarded Boren Scholarship**

**Note from the Chair**

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The Anthropocene, literally “the age of humans.” To learn more about the Symposium, see the website at http://sites.baylor.edu/stem-and-humanities/.

MLC students are also getting in on the action! This issue of Newlines highlights the achievements of students in the Texas Japanese Language Contest as well as one of our Russian majors, Chase Gottlich, who recently won a prestigious Boren Scholarship.

Visit our website regularly to stay up to date on what’s new in MLC. And please consider giving to MLC! Honor someone special by giving in their name. For more information, visit our website and click “Give to MLC”: http://www.baylor.edu/mlc/. We are particularly interested in directing funds to assist talented students with demonstrated financial need to pursue their dream of study abroad. With your assistance, we can help students fulfill Baylor’s mission of educating students “for worldwide leadership and service.”

—Heidi Bostic, Chair
Teresa Varney Kennedy is Associate Professor of French. Her primary research interests are in 17th-century theater, female playwrights, and the representation of women in classical French theater and beyond. Professor Kennedy has published articles in *The French Review*, *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, *Cahiers du Dix-Septième*, *Women in French Studies*, and *Neophilologus*. Classiques Garnier recently published the critical edition of Madame de Maintenon’s proverbs she co-authored with Perry Gethner. She is currently working on a book project entitled *Deliberating the Heroine in Early Modern French Women’s Theater* under advance contract with Ashgate/Routledge.

Stephen Silverstein is Assistant Professor of Spanish, who joined the faculty in 2012. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia (2012). Silverstein is the author of *The Merchant of Havana: The Jew in the Cuban Abolitionist Archive* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2016). Silverstein’s scholarly interests go well beyond the questions pursued in *The Merchant of Havana*. In several top-tier journals, he has made inquiries into matters as diverse as contemporary Cuban music, crypto-Jewish writing and religiosity in colonial Mexico, and the experimental models of subjectivity engaged with in more recent Latin American literary production.

Holly Collins is Assistant Professor of French. Collins’s main areas of research are 19th-century French literature and 20th- and 21st-century Francophone literatures and cultures. In the domain of 19th-century literature, Collins mostly studies Emile Zola and other literary naturalists. Many naturalist novels were first published as series in daily or weekly newspapers. Literacy rates soared due to education reform and these “penny” papers were made widely available thanks to new low-cost printing technology. Ideas presented in the naturalist literature were able to exert a significant influence on the public and how they saw people of color from the French colonies of the time. These ideas on “difference” remained part of European perceptions, evolved, and were handed down through prejudice and stereotype. Many authors in former French colonies have used their writing to combat such prejudice and to advocate for a self-defined identity rather than imposed stereotype. Collins studies the texts written by contemporary generations in former French colonies that not only fight against antiquated ideas on people of color, but also celebrate culture and diversity.

Abdul Messih Saadi is Assistant Professor of Arabic. Saadi joined the Baylor faculty in 2011.

Adrienne Harris is Associate Professor of Russian, having started her career at Baylor in 2008. Harris’s research investigates questions of identity and memory as shaped primarily by World War II and the fall of communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc. She elucidates the construction of national and gender identities, the creation of national myths, and the shaping of collective memory. Her longstanding interest in women and men who transcend traditional gendered expectations led to her dissertation on representations of women in World War II. Since then, she has been drafting the monograph Martyr, Myth, and Memory: The Dynamic Role of Zoia Kosmodemianskaia, a Soviet Saint, and has published articles on Soviet veteran poet Yulia Drunina, veteran memoirists’ appropriation of folk imagery, masculinity in post-communist Czech film, and post-Soviet constructions of heroism and national identity. In her most recently-published peer-reviewed journal article, she examined invented romance and the tensions that arose in hero narratives as expectations for young women evolved during and immediately after World War II. She is currently drafting an article about the role World War II heroes play in post-Soviet identity: “Constructed ‘Truths’ and Fractured Myths: Restoring Soviet Hero Narratives in Post-Soviet Russia.”

Rafael Climent-Espino is Assistant Professor in Spanish. Climent-Espino’s main research interests focus on the role that material culture plays in contemporary Spanish-American and Brazilian novels and short stories since 1950. Within this broad area, Climent-Espino works with two specific fields. His primary interest is to study the bonds between materiality of the text and literature in relation with genetic criticism. This theoretical approach deals with the reconstruction of writing processes of literary texts. Concretely, he examines original manuscripts in order to bind both writing processes and literary analysis. Climent-Espino’s book From Manuscript to Book: Materiality of the Text and Genetic Criticism in the Ibero-American Novel: 1969–1992 will be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 2016.

Within material culture studies, Climent-Espino is also interested in the field that explores the relation between food studies and literature, specifically in what has been termed gastrocriticism, which is a theoretical frame that analyzes food and its representations within the arts. He has shown in several articles that food is not a superfluous element within fiction, but an important underlying topic that contributes in shaping ethnic and personal identities, as well as social and sexual roles.

Karol Hardin is Associate Professor of Spanish and received tenure in 2013.

How does context affect language use? How do particular types of discourse vary within and across languages? How do speakers imply meaning? How can linguistics help inform current education on healthcare for Spanish-speaking patients? These questions are interwoven throughout Hardin’s research, which follows two strands: Pragmatics—the study of language and its contextualized use—and Spanish for healthcare.

Hardin’s early work in syntax evolved into pragmatics, examining Spanish television advertising, persuasion by Spanish learners, and pragmatics in sermons. She also studied context, culture, and variation in the way people express social lies in Ecuadorian Spanish and English and in complaints from letters in West Kewa, Papua New Guinea, where she was born and raised.

Hardin’s second strand of research explores best practices for teaching medical Spanish. Articles in Hispanic and Teaching and Learning in Medicine discuss textbooks and programs in an effort to inform medical and language educators. Recently, Hardin’s two apparently independent areas of pragmatics and medical Spanish have coalesced in studies on complaints and advice about health in Ecuador and the U.S. and on misunderstanding and miscommunication in healthcare discourse. All of this research emphasizes how speakers imply more than they actually state.