

The Center for Teaching and Learning



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Our Mission

Dedicated to building a learning-centered community, and to improving student learning by supporting faculty in ways that make teaching a more satisfying, and productive activity, the Center for Teaching and Learning coordinates, consolidates, enhances, and expands existing faculty development services at Western Oregon University. The Center offers:

- Individual assistance and confidential consultation to faculty.
- Campus discussion groups and workshops to promote a multidisciplinary exchange of insight.
- Practical advice on the integration of innovative pedagogies designed to improve instruction.
- Support for research, scholarship, and creative activities, as well as other related professional development activities.
- Support for joint student-faculty research and the scholarship of teaching.
- Assistance in integrating instructional technology to improve teaching.
- A collegial environment of shared purpose and mutual support to cultivate a conversation about teaching and learning on campus.

Inside This Issue

- Collegiality in Argentina 2
- Life and Culture in Spain 3
- Technology Resource Center 4

Teachers as Learners

Many of our faculty continue to grow and learn right along side their students, seeking new challenges and opportunities to invigorate their teaching. In this issue, we highlight three such faculty, Maureen Dolan, Professor, Sociology, Eduardo González-Viaña, Professor, Modern Languages, and John Rector, Professor, History. Dolan, González-Viaña, and Rector were all abroad during the Fall quarter, teaching in Chile, Spain, and Argentina, respectively.



“Teaching abroad encourages a new kind of instructional creativity and innovation,” notes Michele V. Price, Director, Study Abroad and International Exchanges. “An added bonus is that faculty and students get to know each other in a different way, in a new educational and cultural environment.”

Price explains that WOU faculty may apply to teach abroad through our partners: Northwest Council on Study Abroad/AHA International (NCSA/AHA) and the

(Continued on Page 3)

An Academic Immersion Experience in Chile

Maureen Dolan taught in Valdivia Chile with the Northwest Council on Study Abroad (NCSA) program. The first social scientist to offer courses as a visiting professor at the Universidad Austral de Chile, Dolan described her courses as “paralleling an academic immersion experience.” Students completed all the coursework in Spanish.



Being in a new environment at a different university and educational system fosters a freedom for faculty to explore teaching in new ways. Dolan’s innovative teaching included linking musical performance and poetry to understand the Chilean experience through literature, and taking full advantage of the unique opportunities available in Valdivia.

In her course “Literature and Society: The Chilean Experience,” students read the poetry and prose of major Chilean writers as well as their memoirs and new works of literary analysis by Chilean critics. The authors included Chile’s two Nobel Prize winners, Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral, as well as Isabel Allende and Violeta Parra. Dolan observed that students had a high level of comprehension, analysis and appreciation of the original texts and a solid understanding of the socio-historical context in which they were written. Dolan invited Chilean students from the university to play the music corresponding to Violeta Parra’s poetry, helping students understand the cultural context of the poetry. “The performance conveyed the love Chileans have for their poetry and culture,” she noted. Students gained much from this creative learning opportunity.

(Continued on Page 2)



Collegiality and Idea Exchange in Argentina

For me the collegiality of the staff was one of the experiences I valued most about the Rosario program,” John Rector observed. Rector was the first professor to teach at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario. “During my first visit in 2005, I met most of the staff. This introduction helped me work with them on a familiar basis. We exchanged teaching materials, discussed educational issues, and traveled together on excursions.” This warm hospitality enabled Rector to adapt “as seamlessly as possible” to the culture.

Working with the teaching staff in Rosario gave Rector new ideas and an opportunity to implement them in his courses. “The dedication and quality of the teaching staff is remarkable,” he noted. “They use a variety of educational methods and are energetic and well prepared. When the students were tired and unresponsive they managed to wake them up and get them learning. I appreciated the suggestions and educational materials they shared with me.”

Rector taught a course on “The Crisis of Latin American Economic Development Models” (in English) and “Visiones del indio en America Latina” (in Spanish). He noted, “The curriculum gives students a wide variety of courses to choose from yet keeps class sizes small, a real positive.” Rector collaborated with History professor Hernán Kruse in the class. “Kruse offered a valuable Argentine perspective to a number of discussions.” The course stimulated discussions that Rector characterized as “some of the best ever in my teaching career.”

Rector tailored his course offerings to the location and “immensely enjoyed” teaching the course “Visiones del indio en America Latina,” in Spanish. “Spanning four centuries, it



(Continued on Page 4)

Congratulations to . . .

. . . **Dr. Laurie Carlson**, History, winner of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) book prize for the biography, *Thomas Edison for Kids: His Life and Ideas*. Chicago Review Press.

(“Academic Immersion” - Continued from Page 1)

Dolan structured powerful learning experiences in her “Women and Politics in Chile” course. Her students participated in a Seminar on “Gender and Politics in Chile” sponsored by the Law School. “This seminar was an example of the highest level of academic and civic participation in the university,” she noted. “The panel was introduced by the Dean of the Law School, and participants included members of the law school faculty, representatives of the government sponsored women’s organization SERNAM, as well as professionals from various academic organizations and think tanks.” Dolan also invited a panel of Chilean women students from the Anthropology class to participate in the course. “In our follow-up classes, I was pleased to hear a very detailed and precise analysis of the major points presented in the lengthy presentation, supported by an interesting exchange of ideas,” she commented. “This outcome was exciting, because students were able to use their critical thinking skills to analyze complex social phenomena in Spanish.”

While in Chile, Dolan and her students also had the opportunity to visit several Mapuche indigenous communities. They met with students and instructors in a Mapuche rural school utilizing an intercultural curriculum to provide proactive indigenous cultural orientation as a basis of K-6 grade instruction. “This is an example of advances Chilean society has made in recent years which are not generally covered in the news or even in academic journals, to date,” Dolan noted. “An important result of my teaching abroad experience is that I am able to share this type of very up-to-date information with WOU students and to open new opportunities to students based on this unique experience. I am currently working to identify students who might be interested in working in a Mapuche intercultural school at a practicum level.”

While in Chile, Dolan contributed to the university community in a variety of ways, including sharing information on assessment with faculty in the Engineering program, and providing translation and technical support for other faculty. Her lecture to the Anthropology department on “Comparative Analysis of Social Movement Theory” was published in the *Social Science Journal* published by the Social Science Division.

“Teaching in Valdivia, Chile has renewed my commitment to providing a global analysis within the teaching of my sociology courses,” Dolan commented. “Oregonians are connected in multiple and complex ways to Latin America. My goal is to demonstrate this relationship in my courses, particularly those that deal with theory and research methods, as well as those that have a specific area studies orientation.”

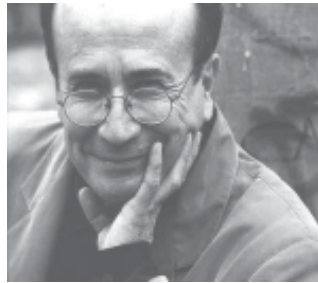
Cooperative Center for Study Abroad (CCSA). Both programs cover transportation and lodging costs. NCSA/AHA offers term-length teaching opportunities in Argentina, Austria, Chile, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Mexico, and Spain, during which faculty continue to receive salary and benefits. CCSA offers short term teaching opportunities in English speaking countries, in summer and between fall and winter terms, in Ireland, Belize, Ghana,

Scotland, Australia, London, Canada, and India. More information is available from Price and on the web, at www.wou.edu/studyabroad.

Price comments, "I love seeing how our students and faculty are transformed by international teaching and learning experiences." I hope that learning about these experiences inspires you to explore the many benefits of international study. ~Niki Young

Living the Life and Culture of Spain

Eduardo González-Viaña taught at the Universidad de Oviedo in Spain with the AHA International Program. He taught "Latin American Poets and Poetry in Spain." González-Viaña's teaching goals were ambitious: 1) to acquaint students with the poetic work with the poetic work of the



Chilean Pablo Neruda and the Peruvian Cesar Vallejo, who are considered the most important poets of the Spanish language during the 20th century.; 2) to introduce students to the political and society contemporary history of Spain and Europe, particularly during the Spanish civil war and the World War II; 3) to familiarize students with the ideologies in the confrontation: the Fascism and Nazism against the Socialist republic which had been chosen in democratic elections; 4) to offer students the skills for literary social and ideological analysis of texts ; and 5) to provide an intensive practice with oral and written Spanish.

To achieve these goals, González-Viaña first needed to assess students' language abilities. "During our first class, we engaged in a sincere conversation about our objectives and backgrounds," he explained. These early conversations allowed González-Viaña to assess student's listening comprehension and oral expression. "University credits and levels don't give you a complete picture of a students' language ability," he noted.

Taking a college class in another language can easily intimidate students. Candidly addressing these fears on the first day enabled students to succeed. "I pointed out to students that the class was going to be dictated in Spanish only without English translations. The students decided to overcome their handicaps and accepted the challenge," he explained.

"Watching students rise to the challenge was extremely rewarding," González-Viaña remarked. "Class attendance was 100%. Students came to class with assignments read and prepared." The students achieved the learning outcomes of the course, becoming skillful readers who enjoyed analyzing poetry and prose.

"Instructors who teach abroad can offer students fantastic opportunities to fully immerse themselves in the history and culture," González-Viaña observed. "During our excursions we

visited the Metro Subway System of Barcelona, where the Catalan people took shelter against the Nazi and Fascist bombardment. Students visited the plaza in Oviedo where Garcia Lorca presented his plays. They were able to explore the places in Galicia where the war took place." These learning opportunities stimulated students to think deeply with course content and engage it through provocative questions and insightful comments. "Students came away with a much deeper understanding of Spain, its national ethos, character and history," he noted.

González-Viaña's experience was rewarding. "Watching the students develop language proficiency and confidence is amazing. There are so many benefits to international study. These students are building a bridge between the United States and the world. This is going to be one of the great experiences of their young lives."

In addition to teaching, González-Viaña—who is also a renowned novelist and has been published in Spain—contributed to the University of Oviedo in many ways. He gave several public lectures and classes for Spanish and other European students on a variety of topics, including, "Methodology for the education of Spanish language and culture," "Modernism in Spanish Literature," "Teaching Latin American Literature," and "Literature and Immigration." He also organized a series of literary readings at the Universidad de Oviedo. González-Viaña's contributions were recognized by the University, which declared him an "Honorary Professor," and conferred two academic diplomas to him for his research.

Working with international students from all over Oregon gave González-Viaña new insights about students as well. "One challenge for students is their limited knowledge of world history," he noted. He would advise students interested in studying abroad with this knowledge in mind.

For González-Viaña, "traveling to Oviedo was like a trip to my own past," reconnecting him with his days as a student, studying and living in Spain. "I have always lived with love and passion for Spanish history," he noted. "This was a wonderful and enriching experience, combining tremendous challenges and rewards at a beautiful stage in my life."

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