

# LANscapes





# Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *LANscapes*, a newsletter of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Illinois State University where we celebrate our annual accomplishments fostering multilingualism and intercultural understanding—in and out of the classroom.

First off, a few 2024 highlights for our talented faculty: a collective total of 18 scholarly articles, one book, 25 conference presentations, two journals edited, one John A. Dossey Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Tenured Faculty Member (see below in the French Section news!), and five student-nominated faculty members given Impact Awards for having a positive influence on their academic success: congratulations to Angela Bailey (Spanish), Ryan Davis (Spanish), Jennifer Howell (French), Kazumi Hartry (Japanese), and Marcela López (Spanish).

This year student leaders in LAN clubs and honor societies joined forces as LAN Exec Board to organize activities for all language students: our internationally-themed float in the Homecoming parade won first place for the third year in row and in March we celebrated Languages Week. Students decorated the hallways of Stevenson and held events all week:

At **Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society's** Pintxos y Pinceles, students learned about the Basque tradition of "pintxos" (small appetizers) and painted their own masterpieces. **La Tavola Italian Club** learned about Carnevale traditions in Italy and made masks. **German Club** hosted a game and trivia night. **Japanese Club** hosted a workshop in Japanese calligraphy. **Spanish Club** organized traditional games from Latin America. **Latin Club** held a night of Racy Roman Poetry. **Francophone Club** made mardi gras masks over conversation and concluded the week with a

brilliant panel of multilingual Francophone speakers from Haiti, Morocco, France, Ghana, and Burkina Faso who discussed using different languages in private and public spaces, language and identity, language and culture, and language and power - affirming our understanding that the future is multilingual.

Our department has been reiterating this message not only to students and colleagues at ISU, but also to high schools. We hosted students on campus to learn about how to earn college credit for language skills, bilingual advantages for any career, and what language classes are like in college--on campus and abroad. Jim Pancrazio delivered a keynote lecture for Thornton Fractional High School's Spanish honor society--invited by [award-winning Teacher Ed alum Jordan Oliva](#). Laura Edwards and Julie Lynd spent a day connecting with world language students at Amos Alonzo High School and enjoyed seeing recent alum Evelyn Pereira. If you are a high school language teacher and would like to connect your students to our program, please reach out!

We love hearing from our alumni in any field--we were happy to see local attorney and Spanish alum Matt Butler talk with Legal Studies students about the professional value of bilingual skills. We welcome your stories and would love to share them with students and reconnect with you. You can easily get in touch on the [Alumni section of our website](#).

Read on to learn about what our programs in French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish have been up to. With each issue we will spotlight some of our talented students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and share the best of our department news.



# East Asian Studies

Dr. Roger Thomas and Michiko Thomas, longtime Japanese professors at ISU, retired in 2023. Since then, Kazumi Hartry has taken over teaching Japanese courses, from JPN 111 through JPN 232. Enrollments in Japanese continue to be strong and Japanese club has a considerable student presence, as well. Japanese Club meets every Tuesday at 6pm. Each week has a different Japanese theme or cultural presentation. To find out more about what Japanese club does, follow them on Insta: @japanclub.

Every semester, a number of ISU Japanese and students in other majors/minors study at Kansai Gaidai University in Hirakata City. There, students take courses in Japanese language, literature, design, music, Asian history, religion, and philosophy, media, law, business, finance and communication. Students live in the dorms and can have a Japanese host family. They have many opportunities to travel around Japan, be exposed to cultural events and experiences, and live Japanese life. Many students return wanting to continue taking Japanese at ISU and most are active participants in Japanese club. Alums of the East Asian Studies minor find that the skills they learned in our Japanese courses are recognized by their employers and are even at times the reason that they get their job. Ashley Woolard, ('24 – East Asian Studies: Japanese minor and alum of the Kansai Gaidai study abroad) shared this: “I just wanted to let you know that I got a job with the Japanese company Aisin, and they primarily considered me because of my Japanese minor. While job hunting, multiple positions were presented to me because of this Japanese language background. I thought you might like to hear that my language education is already opening doors for me, and I would like to thank you for the role you played in that education and pushing me along in Japanese language.”

Sadly, our program in Mandarin Chinese is on pause starting in Fall 2025. We hope to reopen classes in the future.



Ashley Woolard during her study abroad in Japan



# French and Francophone Studies

Congratulations to Professor Jennifer Howell who was awarded the John A. Dossey Award for Tenured Faculty by the ISU College of Arts and Sciences! She also published the book chapter, "Gender Equality? Hshouma! Women, Sexuality, and Comics Activism in Morocco," in *Drawing (in) the Feminine: Bande dessinée and Women*, ed. by Margaret C. Flinn, Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2024.

LAN French alum Julia Martin ('20) won the James L. Fisher 2024 Outstanding Thesis while completing her MS in Teaching and Learning ('24). Her thesis "When curriculum comes to life: Making French language (L2) acquisition a lived experience and the effects of students' progression toward proficiency" investigated the Interactive Comprehensive (IC) Method for teaching French as a second language, focusing on a curriculum model by Steven Langlois.

Two French students were awarded scholarships that enabled them to participate in the summer session at Université Grenoble Alpes. Adyson Bradley won the Catherine O'Leary Endowed French Scholarship and Joel Pandess the Petrossian-Tarrant Scholarship. Here is what they had to say:

"My name is Adyson Bradley. This is my 4th year at ISU, and this scholarship allowed me to go to Grenoble, France for the summer and to experience the culture that I've been studying since my freshman year of high school. In Grenoble, I experienced life with a host family, learned how to navigate public transportation, and got to explore different cultures and cities. For this, I am very thankful to have received this award."

"Hello! My name is Joel Pandess, a senior student studying History Social-Science education and French. I have always been fascinated with the complex history of France, so it was wonderful being able to go there and study it myself! This experience was breathtaking. My French improved to a point where I feel perfectly comfortable speaking with native interlocutors. I also experienced French culture through food, games and physical spaces. I even was able to go to historical museums like Vizille, the museum of the French Revolution (on my birthday no less)! I am so glad to have gone to France because of ISU and the scholarship's help. I truly want to return there one day and show my appreciation for such a wonderful country."

Students can practice their French at Francophone clubs conversation hours twice per week and cultural events once per month. You can read the latest Francophone Club and Pi Delta Phi updates in their [self-published newsletter](#) and follow them on Instagram during the academic year [@isupideltaphi](#).



Francophone club celebrates its members with fun awards...



# German



Lauren Norkus in Berlin.

The German program continues its strong tradition of student involvement in clubs, stammtisch, scholarship, and study abroad. Exemplifying this spirit, German Major Lauren Norkus is study abroad student extraordinaire! She spent a semester in Lüneburg, Germany, returned to campus and served as president of German Club, and has returned to Germany this Spring to spend her final semester on the German program's new partner program in Munich. Lauren was the recipient of this year's David J. Parent Scholarship and had this to say:

"Receiving the David J. Parent Scholarship for the Fall 2024 Semester contributed greatly not only to my college expenses, but also to my confidence in German. I have been learning German for about seven years, and I am extremely proud of myself that I have gotten this far and retained the same passion for learning German! It makes me feel great that I am being acknowledged for my dedication and all the time and effort I have put into mastering this language, and I hope to see more opportunities like this scholarship in my future. I am extremely grateful and honored for being nominated for this scholarship. Thank you."

German faculty also hosted ISU alum Maureen Fandel, German teacher at Metamora Township High School, along with twelve of her German students, to visit campus and learn more about pursuing language study in college. They attended, and participated in, a German 112 class with Dr. Nic Heckner. Ms. Fandel had this to say after the visit: "I just wanted to say thank you again for putting together such a wonderful experience for my students. It really went together well, and my students really enjoyed it. I even heard some students on the bus ride home talking about where they will live when they attend ISU. "



Metamora H.S. students participate in German 112 class.



# Italian

Italian Professor Jonathan Druker retired in December 2024 after 24 years at Illinois State. Jonathan was instrumental in creating the Italian Studies minor and adding the two advanced Italian courses to the curriculum. He is a scholar of holocaust literature, with particular emphasis on the seminal work of Primo Levi - an Italian Jewish holocaust survivor, resistance fighter, and brilliant intellectual.

The Italian faculty-led ISU in Bologna summer program completed its third successful year in Summer 2024. Students also chose the semester-long study at Lorenzo de Medici in Florence. Learn more about these studies abroad in the latest installment of the Italian club newsletter, which you can find here: [Spring 2025](#).

The Italian Club La Tavola hosts twice-weekly conversation hours, monthly cultural events and three Italian films per semester, all with strong and enthusiastic participation. Some of this year's cultural events included: making homemade pasta, Italian renaissance painting night, a presentation on the Arbëresh people, language, and culture, and celebrating Pasquetta, and honoring our laureati with hand-made laurel crowns, which symbolize the hard work, dedication, and achievement of the graduate's intellectual success. Read more about La Tavola in the club's [newsletter](#) and follow their weekly updates on Instagram during the academic year [@isu\\_italianclub](#).



Students gather for Pasquetta on the quad for an Italian-style picnic with pasta, caprese salad and an authentic dessert flown in from Italy! They followed the feast with a treasure hunt (in Italiano, of course!)



# Latin

The Latin section (Coordinator Dr. Katie Jasper, Professor of History; Dr. Aaron Smith, Professor of English; and Dr. Jonathan Martin, Associate Professor of German) offers courses in beginning and intermediate Latin. Dr. Jasper also offers a special course in Research in Latin, where students work with illuminated manuscripts. Milner Library recently acquired a ledger that records court cases from a town in northern Italy that dates to 1275, the oldest object held in special collections. This spring students read from the ledger and also transcribed and translated a fifteenth century manuscript.

Latin Club has an active and enthusiastic membership. They meet monthly to recreate ancient Roman recipes, make their own laurel wreathes and Roman armor, and read scandalous ancient poetry. Latin club has even opened its own merch store with graphics from the club's collaborations, which you can find here: [Latin Club Shirts | Bonfire](#).

Students also have the opportunity to use their Latin on Dr. Jasper's archeological field school program in Gradoli, a four-week archaeological dig of a massive Roman monumental fountain in the Lazio region of Italy along Lake Bolsena. The dig gives students hands-on experience in excavation of an ancient site. You will find more information on the program website, here: [Valle Gianni – Northwest Bolsena Archaeological Project](#).

The Latin section was pleased to welcome Dr. Jonathan Martin to the team this past year. Dr. Martin already teaches German, but as a medievalist specializing in Europe during the Middle Ages, Dr. Martin has extensive training in Latin as well.



ISU students and archeological dig participants of the field school program in Gradoli, Italy.



# Spanish

Study Abroad is alive and well in Spanish! Dr. Bruce Burningham is leading the Avila Study Abroad summer program this year, and our majors can be found around the world this semester in Spain, Costa Rica, and Chile. The Spanish Club organized an International Field Trip to Cartagena, Colombia during Spring Break. While there, they participated in language immersion classes, took cooking and dancing classes, explored the city, and even did some volunteering.

Spanish Club's trip to Colombia and the always successful annual Fiesta Latina event garnered Spanish Club the special designation of RSO of the month in April! At Fiesta Latina, ISU President Aondover Tarhule presented the national President's Volunteer Service Award to Executive Board members Elisa Cruz (Gold); Monica Nuñez and Melyssa Aragon (Silver), and Xochitl Martínez (Bronze) for hours of certified service to the community.

The Eta Upsilon Chapter [of Sigma Delta Pi continued its streak of earning the prestigious "National Honor Chapter" designation for the tenth year in a row](#) for their work promoting cultural awareness through community service. This year, they have participated in volunteer clean up activities at the ISU farm, hosted an OPI Prep workshop for teacher education students, worked with high school AP Spanish classes to prepare for the AP exam, among other activities.

Beginning with the 2025-2026 academic catalog, LAN is launching an Accelerated Spanish sequence that will enable students to take graduate level courses that will count towards both their undergraduate and graduate careers. In this sequence, students may complete their undergraduate degree and an MA in Spanish in just five years. We look forward to having our first cohort as early as Fall 2025.

Congratulations to Spanish Teacher Ed alum Jordan Oliva ('17) who is a finalist for the 2025 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching! He is currently teaching at Thornton Fractional South High School in Lansing, Illinois where he has built a strong heritage language program.

In faculty news, Dr. Ryan Davis returned to LAN this year after spending a semester as a Visiting Scholar at Brigham Young University. While there, he was working on a book-length study on representation of Mormons/Mormonism in modern Spain, drawing from their prominence in popular periodicals and 30 "Mormon Westerns." In Fall 2025, Dr. Bruce Burningham will deliver a talk as the next College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Lecturer.

Spanish Teacher Education major, Maci Dunn, and International Business Major/Spanish Minor Shaelyn Page pose for a photo during their Spring 2025 study abroad program in Chile.





# LAN Featured Alum

## Isabella Loparco-Siemsens ('23)

My time at ISU has been truly transformative, playing a pivotal role in shaping me into the professional I am today. I am proud to have earned my bachelor's of arts in Spanish language, along with double minors in Italian language and Latino studies during my years at ISU. One of the most rewarding experiences during my time at ISU was serving as the president of La Tavola Italian Language Club throughout the 2022-2023 academic year.

Growing up, I was fortunate to be surrounded by both Spanish and Italian languages within my family, sparking my passion for delving deeper into both cultures and languages. Through my studies in the language department, I had the incredible opportunity to partake in a [three-week study abroad program in Bologna, Italy](#) with the Italian Language program and Dr. Laura Edwards. This experience allowed me to further connect with my Italian heritage and sparked my interest in exploring the possibility of obtaining Italian dual citizenship.

Following this new pursuit, I decided to seek employment working with other Italian Americans who shared my journey. I am currently proud to serve as an Italian dual citizenship case manager and marketing specialist for the Italian Citizenship Assistance Program in the northern suburbs of Chicago. My experience at ISU has not only deepened my understanding of languages and cultures but has also greatly contributed to my professional growth.

I am truly grateful for the enriching experiences and opportunities that ISU has provided me, allowing me to bridge my personal and professional aspirations while expanding my horizons.





# LAN Teacher Education

The department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures has welcomed a new Coordinator of World Languages Teacher Education. Mary Tackett joined the department in 2022. She has held leadership positions in the non-profit sector and has varied experiences teaching in bilingual and dual-language classrooms in western Illinois and abroad.

For the last two years a group of ISU World Languages Teacher Education and Spanish faculty have been involved in developing a World Languages Resource Center. The goal of the Resource Center is to build a support network for pre-service and in-service teachers by providing a high-quality undergraduate program in world languages teacher education, a graduate degree, a graduate certificate in instructional technology, and continuing education and professional development.

The Resource Center is still developing, but so far, we have hosted two professional development opportunities for area teachers. We have revived the department's tradition of offering PD for area world language teachers, kicking off with a workshop on the background, best practices and ideas to implement Comprehensible Input in a World Language classroom. We have also hosted a PD event on technology in the World Language Classroom with an interactive presentation on low-prep lesson-plan ideas to engage learners. Our Saturday PD Workshops include language conversation tables and opportunities for teachers to use their multiple languages in a professional setting. Both professional development days provided a wonderful opportunity for World Language teachers to connect, collaborate, and learn skills to better their practice. Be on the lookout for more professional development opportunities to come! Follow [World Languages Teacher Education at ISU](#) on Facebook for updates.

Another element of the World Language Resource Center is to provide online resources and information for teachers, preservice teachers, and the community. Our website now houses a [World Languages Teaching Resources](#) page that hosts links to professional development resources, information on World Language educational policy, advocacy materials, and information on ISU's World Language Teacher Education program. Please reach out to our department if you would like a hard copy of any of these materials and/or if there are other materials we may be able to provide you with as you advocate for language study with students, families, and administrators. We look forward to continued opportunities and growth as we develop our World Languages Resource Center.

French and Spanish Teacher Education major, Adriana Rosales, (now an alum and practicing teacher!) talks with prospective students at the Future Teachers Conference.





# Undergraduate Program

In 2024, the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures awarded scholarships to 13 students. These include scholarships for students pursuing majors in French, German, and Spanish. Among the awards this year were the Paul Carlson Spanish Teacher Education Fund and the Roger R. Ruddy Memorial Endowment.

The Paul Carlson Spanish Teacher Education Fund offers scholarships to students planning to become Spanish teachers. Our awardee in 2024 was Maci Dunn, a Spanish Teacher Education student in her second year at ISU (featured on the Spanish page). Below, Maci describes how she chose this major and what she plans to do after graduation:

“I’m a Spanish Teacher Education major. I chose it because I took Spanish classes all four years of high school and it was the only class that I consistently loved every year. I also had two amazing Spanish teachers in high school who inspired me (gracias Señora Johnson and Señora Stoneberg). I am now in my second year at ISU and preparing to study abroad in Chile, and I could not be more excited. I plan to graduate in 2026 and become a high school Spanish teacher.”

Finally, the Roger R. Ruddy scholarship is similarly awarded to students enrolled in Spanish language education. The winner for 2024 was Jasmine White, a junior and Spanish Teacher Education major. The following quote from Jasmine highlights why she loves teaching and how she contributes to ISU and to her community:

“I am from a small rural town, and I grew up in a mixed household of Mexicans and Americans. I am also the first generation to go to a four-year college. I am close to my family, especially my grandma, who only speaks Spanish and from whom I got my love

for the language. I am currently teaching Spanish to high school students in my hometown under my mentor there. This experience is a blessing because it reinforces my reason for being an educator. I want to ignite the spark of interest in another language in students and see the students get excited when they start to understand a grammar topic. My career goal is to hopefully continue to teach in my hometown high school or at least a rural town high school, as well as to continue my education to get my master’s in Spanish and maybe even more.”

Congratulations to Maci and Jasmine, and all our 2024 scholarship awardees!

Please consider a donation to one of the scholarships offered in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. The list of scholarships and link for making donations can be found at the following webpage: [Giving | Illinois State](#)

Jasmine White receives the  
Roger R. Ruddy Scholarship  
from LAN Chair, Dr. Juliet  
Lynd.





# Graduate Program

LAN is proud to congratulate Stephanie Orozco, Yaritza Serna Maldonado, Dorcas Akorkor Apaflo, and Hevelin Macnider on their successful completion of the M.A. in Spanish program this academic year. Stephanie and Yari graduated in December 2024, while Dorcas and Hevelin graduated in May 2025.

In May 2025, Hevelin Macnider (BA'23, MA'25) was awarded the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures' Charter Department Award for Excellence. Graduate Students who demonstrate academic achievement and/or service are nominated for this award by the Spanish Graduate Faculty and Hevelin was the unanimous choice this year. One of her nomination letters stated that she "exemplifies the critical insight, intellectual maturity, and originality that this award seeks to recognize", while another spoke of how "she consistently did excellent and original work." Hevelin and her husband, David, also welcomed Baby Jude to the family while Hevelin was working on her Masters Degree. Jude was on hand to witness her mom's amazing accomplishment.

The department is looking forward to welcoming five new full-time graduate students and one new part-time graduate student this Fall. New students will be joining us from the local area as well as from Spain and Ghana.

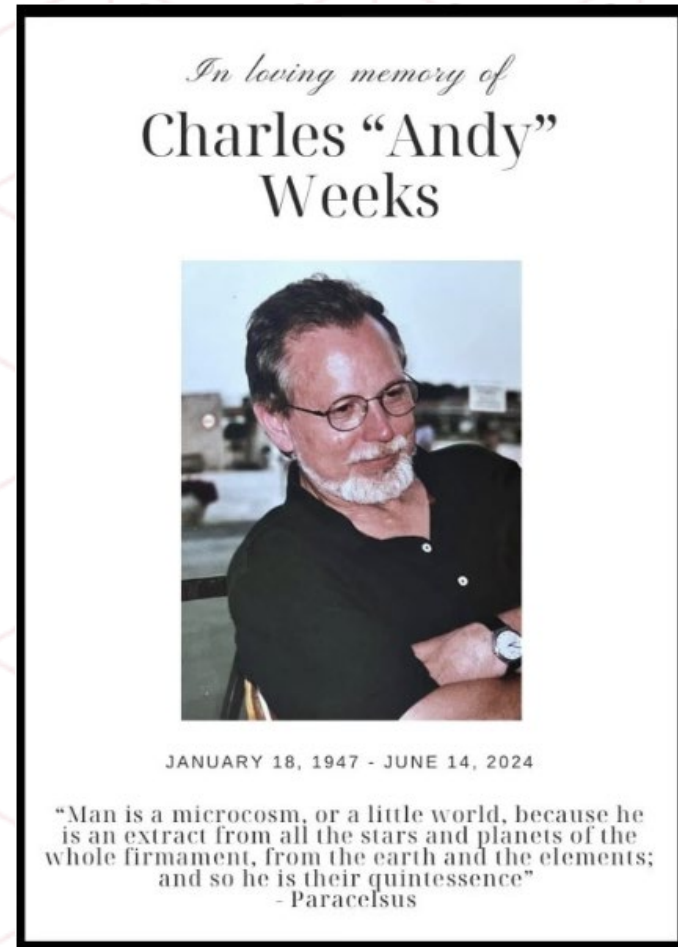
Graduate Director Dr. Patxi Lascurain presented the Charter Department Award for Excellence to Hevelin Macnider (and her daughter, Jude.)





# In Memoriam

It with a heavy heart that we share that on June 14, 2024, Emeritus Professor of German Dr. Charles Andrew “Andy” Weeks passed away peacefully in his home from complications of ALS. Dr. Weeks was a Professor of German in Illinois State University’s Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures for 27 years (the Department of Foreign Languages when he first arrived as Assistant Professor in 1994). When he retired in 2018, he had published nine books and 35 scholarly articles, and he continued to write, publish, and present on German literature and culture until the very end. Notably, he co-organized a conference in France in 2022 and published two co-edited volumes. He co-authored a monograph released just days after his death, with another book project on the way, which his collaborators Urs Leo Gantenbein and Didier Kahn will be sure to publish posthumously. Not only was Dr. Weeks a prolific scholar of early modern German literature, but he also wrote on all matters he found inspiring, from teaching strategies to politics, including anonymous contributions to various anti-war and social justice efforts over the years. Dr. Weeks was a devoted professor of German, having taught every level from Beginning German through graduate seminars at ISU, and having held teaching positions at Middlebury College, with study abroad programs in Germany and Austria, a visiting professorship at the Universität Graz in Austria and a Fulbright Teaching and Research Fellowship at the University of Marburg in Germany. Throughout his time at ISU, he could be found in lively discussions with students, colleagues, and friends at Stammtisch—held weekly for years and to this day at Medici—and most recently he was mentoring former student and dear friend Andrew Pfannkuche, who provided companionship, support, and intellectual camaraderie during Andy’s final visits to Paris. Dr. Weeks’ insatiable curiosity about the world led him to travel extensively, from Mexico City in his youth to an epic train journey through Russia and Siberia and road trips through the American south after he retired. Having fully mastered German, he was also a devoted student of French and Russian, and he dabbled in others, including Esperanto. Andy Weeks is survived by his wife Veronika Weeks-Strotzka and his children Hannah and Sander, extended family, and many, many friends, colleagues, and students.





# Certified Green Workplace

During summer 2024, the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures became just the third unit on campus to be awarded the Green Workplace Certification from Illinois State University's Office of Sustainability. This designation recognizes our department-wide commitment to prioritizing eco-friendly practices in our everyday work through recycling, composting, responsible resource consumption, and other sustainably-minded efforts.

We have proudly displayed our certification in the LAN Office, have added a digital certificate to our website, and look forward to continuing our efforts to preserve our planet and its resources. We thank our award-winning Office Manager Nikki Dalbey, recipient of the 2023 Scott M. Elliot Award for Outstanding Civil Service, for her dedication to this initiative!





# Contact Us

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We love hearing from our alumni in any field. We welcome your stories and would love to share them with students and reconnect with you. We would love to hear from you! If you have news to share with us or would like to get in touch for any reason, you can do so on the [Alumni section of our website](#).

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