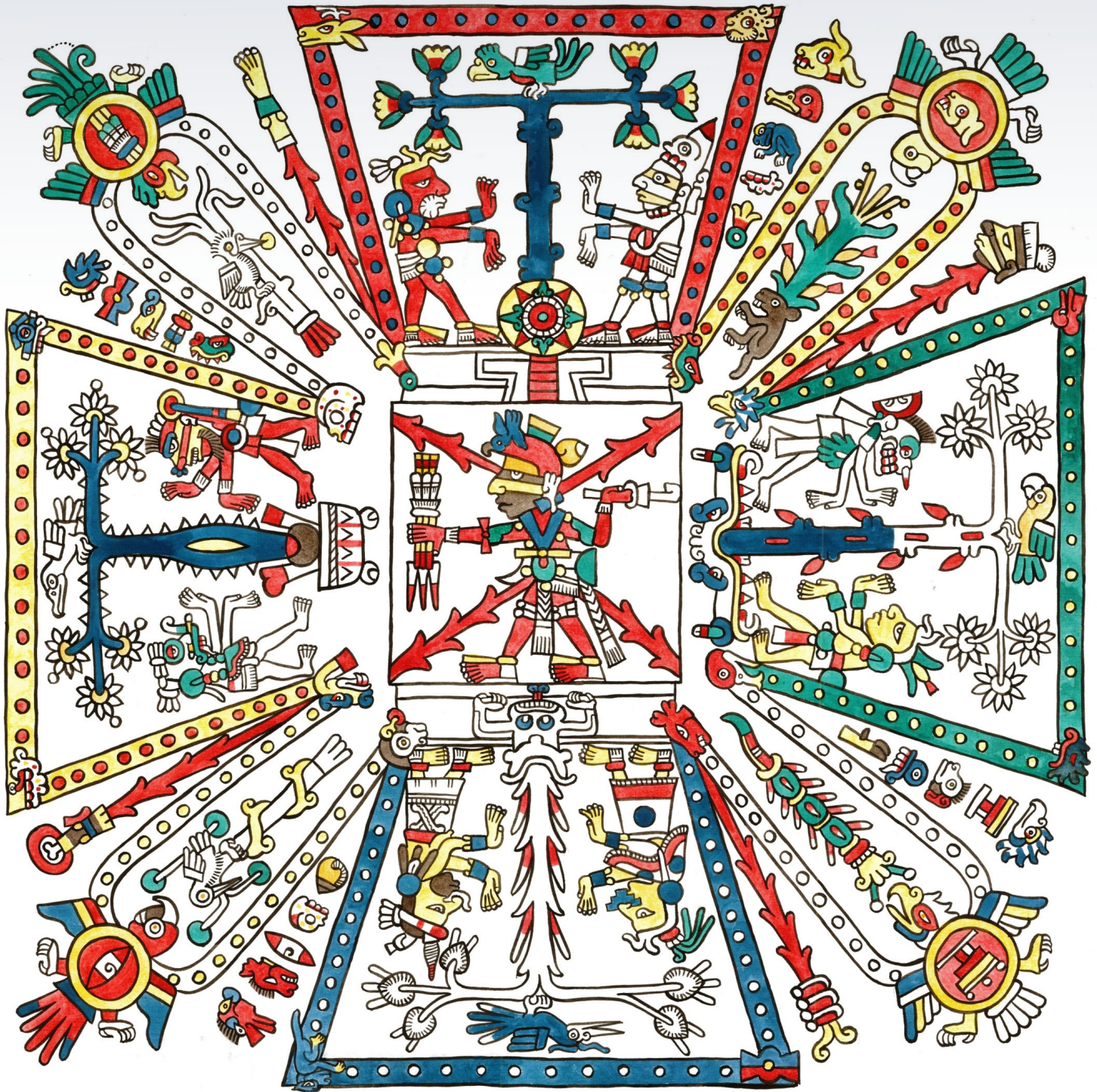




# Hispanic Studies

FALL 2018 DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER







# Hispanic Studies

FALL 2018 DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

## Faculty

Aníbal Biglieri, Professor  
Alan Brown, Associate Professor  
Ruth Brown, Senior Lecturer  
Heather Campbell-Speltz, Assistant Professor  
Moisés Castillo, Associate Professor  
Irene Chico-Wyatt, Assistant Professor  
Mónica Díaz, Associate Professor  
Matt Losada, Assistant Professor  
Georgie Medina, Senior Lecturer  
Carmen Moreno-Nuño, Associate Professor  
Yanira Paz, Professor  
Dierdra Reber, Assistant Professor  
Ana Rueda, Professor  
Haralambos Symeonidis, Professor

## Staff

Brent Sebastian, Department Manager

## Emeritus Faculty

John Allen  
Michael Impey  
Margaret Jones  
Joseph Jones  
John Lihani  
Daniel Reedy  
Edward Stanton  
Enrico Mario Santí

## Teaching Assistants

Ana Alvarez  
Daniela Contreras Perez-Sosa  
David Cortes Ferrandez  
Alvaro Cuellar  
Darryl Dedelow, Jr.  
David Delgado  
Maria Julia De Leon Hernandez  
Silvia Encinas  
Kelly Ferguson  
Juan Fernandez Cantero  
Brittany Frodge  
Kacie Gastanaga  
Alex Gomez-Hanks  
Raymond Jones  
Alicia Juncos Zori  
Sharrah Lane  
Kiersty Lemon-Rogers  
Francisco Luque  
Lilia Malave Gomez  
Marlee McCloud  
Sandra Nava Nieto  
Jacob Neely  
Abraham Prades Mengibar  
Ariel Ramos Villamil  
Guillermo Rivas Prado  
Rafael Felix Rodriguez  
Morgan Stewart  
Jakob Turner

## Cover Photo:

From the UK collection of Mesoamerican painted books exhibition in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Greetings from Department Chair Yanira Paz **3**

A Sense of Coming Home: Dierdra Reber, UK's newest Latin Americanist **4**

Where a Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies Can Take You: Alice Driver **5**

Awards and Distinctions **6**

Dr. John Jay Allen: A Golden Scholar **7**

Giving Opportunities and Thanks to Our Donors **8**

Scarlett Hutchins at the Festival de San Fermín **9**

Young Alumni Spotlight: Brittney Woodrum (B.A. '15) **10**

Upcoming Events **12**

## Stay Connected...

You can keep track of department events, our contact information, and alumni events via the department web page: [hs.as.uky.edu](https://hs.as.uky.edu)

## And Keep in Touch!

Please let us know if your address or contact information changes. Send a note to, email, or call:



### Brent Sebastian

Hispanic Studies Department Manager  
University of Kentucky  
1153 Paterson Office Tower  
Lexington, KY 40506-00027  
[bseba2@email.uky.edu](mailto:bseba2@email.uky.edu)

[hs.as.uky.edu](https://hs.as.uky.edu)  
(859) 257-1565



## Dear Alumni and Friends,

Welcome to our fall 2018 departmental newsletter. We are excited to share some of our many successes since the last issue of Pregonero and to look ahead to the exciting news and events planned for the 2018–19 academic year. This year brings an important change in departmental structure as we welcome Dr. Mónica Díaz to her new role as our first Associate Chair. She returns full time to our department after serving first as Director of Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies and then as Director of International Studies. Her experience and expertise will support the department's endeavors primarily in three specific areas: development, grants, and the organization of symposia, all crucial elements in our work to prepare our undergraduate and graduate students for their future careers and to contribute meaningfully to the vibrant scholarly community we have at UK.

The new academic year began with National Hispanic Heritage Month, running September 15–October 15, 2018, at UK and around the United States. Our department in conjunction with UK's Young Library has prepared an exhibition of the wonderful collection of Mexican codices from Special Collections in the Margaret E. King Library. Dr. Lori Diel, professor of Art History from Texas Christian University, joined us for the opening and spoke about the importance of these fascinating artifacts. Our department will host a range of enriching activities in connection with the exhibition, including visits by local high school students as part of our outreach, community engagement and undergraduate recruitment efforts.

Later this month, friends and colleagues from around the world will join us for a Spanish Medieval Studies Symposium to honor the distinguished career of Dr. Aníbal Biglieri and celebrate his retirement. On October 18, four scholars will give presentations on Spanish Medieval

Studies, followed by a reception to recognize Dr. Biglieri's numerous contributions to our department. We look forward to seeing many of his former students as we mark the end of an era in Hispanic Studies. Save the date and contact the department if you need further information.

Yet another shift in the department worth noting, though more gradual than retirements and new positions, is the changing profile of our undergraduate students. As our country becomes more bilingual, we are seeing more science and social science majors in our classrooms, especially biology, pre-med, and pre-pharmacy students who are choosing to minor or double major in Spanish, understanding that Spanish proficiency will help them communicate with a great many people in their future professions. To meet the changing needs of our undergraduate—and to some extent our graduate—students, we have incorporated several skills-based courses, including translation, interpreting and service learning. However, we are planning even greater changes to our curriculum, to address the need for more flexibility in course offerings and a greater focus on developing proficiency in the Spanish language. A symposium planned for spring of 2019, tentatively titled “Overcoming Curriculum Bifurcation,” will examine these changes and the shifting expectations of today's job market in relation to our undergraduate majors. We will then incorporate the insights and ideas garnered from this symposium as we work toward a structured and systematic revamping of our undergraduate curriculum.

As we anticipate another productive year of teaching, scholarship and community engagement, engaging alumni in our efforts is a crucial part of our mission. Now more than ever, it is vital to the success of our students, faculty and the greater community. We hope you will consider returning to campus this year to take part in some of what we have planned. I also hope you will consider helping us achieve our goals by donating to the department via the Hispanic Studies Development Fund ([uky.networkforgood.com](https://uky.networkforgood.com)). This fund helps supply crucial funding for partial scholarships for graduate students, graduate student travel to conferences and to conduct research, and covers expenses of the visiting speakers who enrich the experiences of students and faculty across campus. This fund recently received a tremendous boost from Dr. Thomas Whyne, a professor of cardiology at UK who is passionate about the Spanish language and its culture. Please consider joining him in making UK Hispanic Studies one of your philanthropic priorities. Remember, any time you hear from UK, either by phone or letters, you can choose to designate us in your giving.

Un cordial saludo,

### Yanira Paz

Professor and Chair



# A Sense of Coming Home: Dierdra Reber, UK’s Newest Latin Americanist

By Dr. Heather Campbell-Speltz



Dr. Dierdra Reber joined the Hispanic Studies Department in the fall of 2017, in what amounts to a homecoming of sorts. The newest addition to the department’s growing Latin American faculty grew up in Massachusetts and did her doctoral work at Columbia University in New York. Before coming to work at the University of Kentucky, she was a faculty member at Emory University in Atlanta and at Northwestern University in Illinois.

“When I came for my interview [at UK], I felt immediately at home here,” said Reber. “I loved the department, I loved the collegiality, I loved the people and the grad students, and I felt like there was a kind of cooperative and collaborative and supportive structure. An openness and dialogue that I immediately saw and immediately loved.”

Dr. Reber describes her work as pan–Latin American in the sense that her focus is primarily on contemporary Latin American Literature from the 20th and 21st centuries, but is often interdisciplinary and comparative in nature, spanning many regions and time periods, as far back as the 18th century. Her monograph *Coming to Our Senses: Affect and an Order of Things for Global Culture* (Columbia, 2016), showcases that interdisciplinarity. In this book, Reber explores the nature of an epistemological shift in recent years that privileges feeling as the primary “compass” for decision-making. Her argument incorporates contemporary cultural production in Latin America and the U.S., from films and novels to social media and political discourse, and points toward the need for an understanding of how affect is driving thought processes. Her next book project, what she calls “the obverse of my first book,” will serve as an intellectual sequel of sorts. *Losing Our Minds: Free-Market Affect and the Disavowal of Reason* takes up the concept of affective discourse and its persuasive power and

explores the ensuing questions, “What have we lost? What is no longer visible? What comes into view as an absence because of that epistemological shift?”

Dr. Reber’s pan–Latin American, comparative approach is apparent in her teaching philosophy, and she looks forward to further expanding that hemispheric perspective by incorporating U.S. Latinx cultural production into the broader arch of Latin American Literature and Cultural Studies. As she puts it, “I don’t see how you can understand Latinx production without considering the Latin American influences and even sometimes vice versa.” That inclusion means encouraging students to delve into the underlying foundations of narratives in Spanish and in English-language Latinx texts.

“I am always interested in bridges between cultural spheres that are often assumed to be separate, in finding the common threads and through-lines between them,” explained Reber.

She shares that passion for intercultural and interdisciplinary teaching and scholarly activity with students across the College of Arts and Sciences through her faculty affiliation with both the Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies program and the Committee on Social Theory here at UK.

Perhaps it was some underlying foundations of her own that helped make the University of Kentucky’s Hispanic Studies Department feel like home, since it turns out that Dr. Reber’s grandmother grew up on a farm in Casey County. “I didn’t realize this,” she said, “but on that side of my grandmother’s family, they all went to UK. So, my family is from Kentucky!”

# Where a Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies Can Take You: Alice Driver—Photojournalist, Translator, Activist

Alice Driver completed her Ph.D. in Hispanic Studies in 2011 with a dissertation entitled “Cultural Production and Ephemeral Art: Feminicide and the Geography of Cultural Memory in Ciudad Juárez, 1998–2008.” Here she shares some thoughts about her time at UK and her most recent assignments as she covers the troubling events on the US–Mexico border.

My dissertation at UK on feminicide in Mexico, subsequently published as *More or Less Dead: Feminicide, Haunting, and the Ethics of Representation in Mexico* by the University of Arizona Press in 2015, led to my interest in writing about migrants. Most of the women who became victims of violence were migrants, and I wanted to understand their vulnerability. The language skills I gained in the Ph.D. program are an essential part of my journalism because I report and write in both Spanish and English, and my love of Latin American literature and culture and all that I learned during my Ph.D. inform my reporting. I’ve spent the past year-and-a-half working on a long-term project about migration with Longreads and Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting. At one point, I spent two weeks living at a migrant shelter in Juárez run by a priest. He would recite José Martí poetry from memory, and I remember thinking what a beautiful moment that was, to witness him working with migrants and reciting José Martí.

On June 18, I bought a last-minute flight from Mexico City, where I live and work as a freelance journalist, to Juárez, Mexico, for an assignment from Time Magazine. Like most major media outlets, *Time* wanted me to find and interview mothers who had been separated from their children at the border under President Trump’s new immigration policies. I had less than 24-hours to file that assignment, so as soon as I landed I met with my fixer, a local journalist, and we went to the migrant shelter, and then to areas where the deported are dropped off and processed. While I was working on the assignment for *Time*, I was also putting the finishing touches on that 11-month project for Longreads in which I had traveled with a transgender woman, Marfil Estrella, from El Salvador to Mexico as she fled assassination, and then followed her journey to the U.S. to request asylum.

While in Juárez, I got an email from editors at *National Geographic* requesting that I travel to Eagle Pass, TX, the next day to work on a week-long story on migration with Argentinian photographer Luján Agusti and Chilean photographer Tamara Merino. I spent a week traveling along the US–Mexico border in Eagle Pass, Piedras Negras, Del Rio, Ciudad Acuña, Laredo and Nuevo Laredo with a team

of photographers, fixers, drivers and a security expert. Piedras Negras and Nuevo Laredo are quite dangerous, so we had to be careful in planning how to visit certain migrant shelters and, for example, the Rio Bravo where migrants swim across the river to enter the U.S. illegally. I interviewed the priest who runs the local migrant shelter in Piedras Negras, the Sheriff of Eagle Pass, a nun who runs a domestic violence shelter in Laredo, and the director of the migration center in Tamaulipas, as well as migrants camped out on the Americas International Bridge in Nuevo Laredo waiting to request asylum. The goal was to capture scenes of the migration crisis on both sides of the border. To publish the article within two days of finishing the assignment, I slept maybe four hours as I worked to transcribe and translate some 40 interviews, most of which were in Spanish. I cried when I saw the final article published, from the weight of the migrants’ testimony, from sheer exhaustion and from the emotion of seeing these poetic, powerful photos.



Alice Driver interviewing Maverick County Sheriff Tom Schmerber of Eagle Pass TX.



I took this photo of Alfredo Hernández with his two-year-old son, Axel Alfredo, on the Gateway to the Nuevo Laredo side of the Americas International Bridge. He fled the violence in Honduras, hoping for a better life for himself and his son. “I want him to study. I want to work to give us a future,” he says. “I studied through elementary school. I would like him to be a doctor. I want something better for my son.”



# Awards and Distinctions

## Faculty Awards

**Dr. Susan Larson:** UK Hispanic Studies Research Fund Award (spring 2016–fall 2017)

**Dr. Carmen Moreno-Nuño:** UK Hispanic Studies Research Fund Award (spring 2016–fall 2017)

## Graduate Student Awards

**Maria Shroeder:** Gabriela Mistral Award, Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society (2018)

**Francesco Masala:** UK Provost’s Outstanding Teaching Award (2016)

**Dr. Ana Rueda:** The John E. Keller Endowed Professor in the Literature, Culture & Linguistics of Spain (2015–2020)

**Abraham Prades:** UK College of Arts & Sciences Outstanding Teaching Award (2016)

## 2017

**Kevin Sedeño Guillén:**  
Modernidades contra-natura: Crítica ilustrada, prensa periódica y cultura manuscrita en el siglo XVIII americano  
Director: Dr. Enrico Santi

**Constantin Icleanu:**  
A Case for Empathy: Immigration in Spanish Contemporary Media, Music, Film, and Novels  
Director: Dr. Ana Rueda

**Lee Kirven:**  
The Burden of the Past: Spectral History in the Novels of Carlos Fuentes: 1962–1980  
Director: Dr. Enrico Santi

**Joshua Martin** (*with Special Distinction*):  
(B)ordering Texas: The representation of Violence, Nationalism, and Masculine Archetypes in U.S.–Mexico Borderland Novels (1985–2012)  
Director: Dr. Susan Carvalho

**Francesco Masala Martínez:**  
The Representation of Ecuadorians in Spain: Discourse as the Expression of Power, Racism and Ideology  
Directors: Dr. Susan Larson and Dr. Yanira Paz

**Fabricio Ferreira Silva:**  
Dictadura y literatura de resistencia: Brasil, Argentina y Cuba  
Director: Dr. Enrico M. Santí

## 2016

**José María Pérez Sánchez:**  
“Situational Whiteness and Empire in Spanish Film and Literature.”  
Director: Dr. Susan Larson

**Angela Marie Postigo:**  
“Maybe She’s Born with It: Interplay of Beauty and Power in Representations of Latin Female Hierarchy.”  
Director: Dr. Susan Carvalho

**Megan O’Neil:**  
“Indigenista Heroes and Femmes Fatales: Myth-Making in Latin American Literature and Film.”  
Director: Dr. Enrico Santí

**María Jesús López Soriano:**  
“¿Pero tú qué te has creído, que la guerra es una broma?: La seriedad del humor en diferentes representaciones culturales de la Guerra Civil española”  
Director: Prof. Carmen Moreno-Nuño.

# Dr. John Jay Allen: A Golden Scholar

By Gail Hairston



Dr. Allen with his model of the theater Corral del Príncipe (Madrid, 1583–1744), based upon his own research, on permanent display in the Museo Nacional del Teatro in Almagro, Spain.

Dr. John Jay Allen, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Hispanic Studies, has been made a Corresponding Member of the Spanish Royal Academy of the Language (Real Academia Española de la Lengua). This is one of the highest academic honors in the Spanish-speaking world.

Professor Allen taught in the Department of Hispanic Studies (formerly Department of Spanish and Italian) from 1983 to 1999 and has been Emeritus Professor since 2000. His publications deal with two main fields of scholarship: Cervantes’ masterpiece, *Don Quijote*, and the archaeology of playhouses in Europe in the early modern period, from the late sixteenth- to the early-eighteenth centuries. Dr. Allen has authored major studies on Don Quijote: *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?* and *Don Quijote: Hero or Fool? Part II*, which were merged and published in 2008 as *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool? Remixed*; and *Don Quijote en el arte y pensamiento de Occidente*, co-authored with Patricia S. Finch in 2004. Dr. Allen is also responsible for the standard edition of *Don Quijote*, used by universities and centers of higher learning throughout the world. This publication has over 26 revised and updated editions. In a parallel fashion, his work on Spanish theaters of the Golden Age has earned him international renown. His books on the subject include two major studies: *The Reconstruction of a Spanish Golden Age Playhouse. El Corral del Príncipe, 1583–1744* (1983); *Los teatros comerciales del siglo XVII y la escenificación de la comedia*, co-authored with José María Ruano de la Haza (1994); and one scholarly edition of *Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s El gran teatro del mundo* (1997). In addition, between 1962 and 2008 he published some four dozen articles, primarily on Golden Age poetry, prose, and drama in top-drawer venues such as *Modern Language Notes*, *Hispanic Review*, *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, *Anales Cervantinos*, *Ínsula*, *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*, *Symposium*, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, *Edad de Oro*, and *Comparative Literature Studies*, among other.

Far from being limited to scholarly publications and lectures, Dr. Allen’s accomplishments include archaeological research.

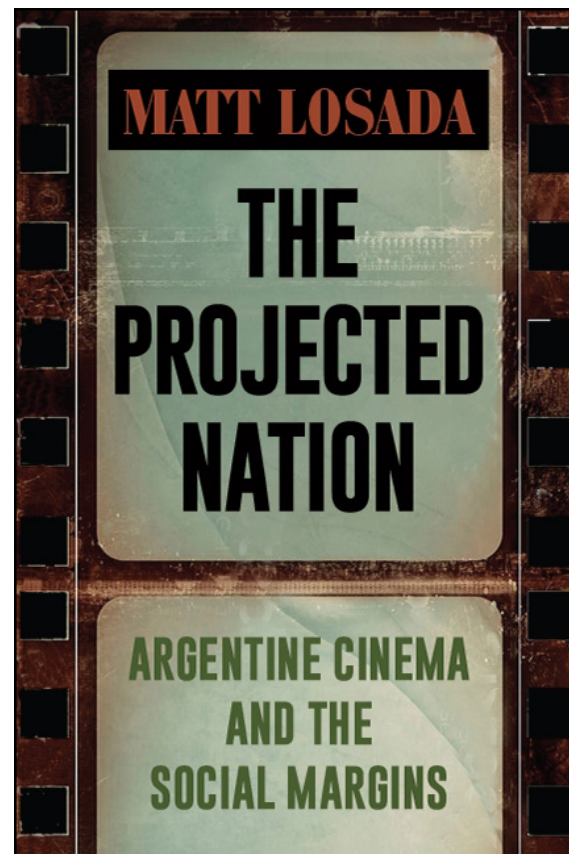
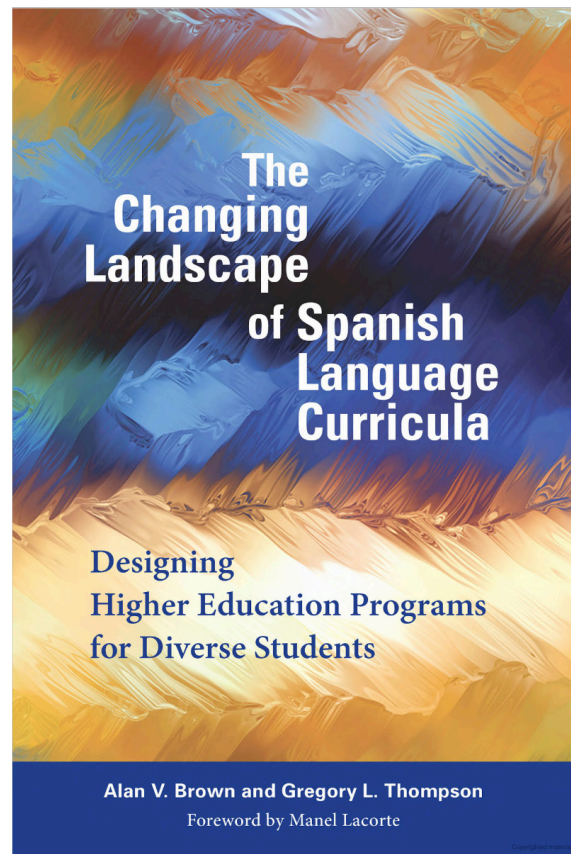
For instance, a model of the theater Corral del Príncipe (Madrid, 1583–1744), based upon his design research and commissioned by the Teatro Español, was placed on exhibit in the Museo Municipal de Madrid in 1986; it is now on permanent display in the Museo Nacional del Teatro in Almagro, Spain. Dr. Allen’s own model was on display in the Royal Castle, Warsaw, from July through October 2003, as part of the exhibit Teatro y fiestas en las tierras europeas de los Austrias, directed by José María Díez Borque of the Universidad Complutense, Madrid, Spain. In addition to serving as consultant for the redesign of the Casa de Cervantes in Alcalá de Henares, 2000–2001, his expertise was requested for the archival project titled 20 documentos cervantinos en el Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid, for which he also wrote the prologue (2001).

Dr. Allen has given invited lectures on Cervantes and on Spanish theater at more than two dozen colleges and universities in this country, including the annual Cervantes lecture at Fordham (1978), the annual Raimundo Lida lecture at Harvard (1987), and the Donald Dietz Keystone Address at the annual meeting of the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, El Paso, Texas, 2006. The list of invited lectures, as his CV attests, is vertiginous and impossible to summarize.

The most salient of Dr. Allen’s accomplishments are: NEH Fellowship for Independent Research, 1981–82; NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers, 1989; Residential Fellowship to the National Humanities Center, North Carolina, 1989–90; Albert D. and Elizabeth H. Kirwan Memorial Prize, University of Kentucky; and Doctor of Letters honoris causa, Middlebury College, 2004. He has been honored with two journal-homages, Bulletin of the Comediantes 53.1 (2001) and Cervantes 23.1 (2003), and one book, Corónente tus hazañas: Studies in Honor of John Jay Allen, ed. Michael J. McGrath. Newark, Del.: Juan de la Cuesta Press (2005). Dr. Allen was Visiting Professor at the Reijsuniversiteit te Utrecht, The Netherlands in 1977, Visiting Mellon Professor at the University of Pittsburgh in 1982, and Visiting Professor at Middlebury College in 2004. In addition, he was an Honorary Fellow for the Hispanic Society of America; Founding Editor of Cervantes, “Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America” (1979–85); and President of the Cervantes Society of America (1995–97). In 1989 the City Hall of Alcalá de Henares, Cervantes’ birthplace, appointed him member of the Commission on the Preservation and Reconstruction of the Teatro Cervantes to advise the Spanish government on matters of conservation.

Dr. Allen directed many dissertations, and his superb teaching left an indelible mark on his students. He also rendered service to the university as chairman of the department. Though retired for several years now, Dr. Allen keeps up his remarkable productivity in writing and lecturing, with occasional teaching.





2018 publications by Hispanic Studies faculty Alan Brown and Matt Losada

## Giving Opportunities and Thanks to Our Donors

The Department of Hispanic Studies aims to develop students' language skills, provide an understanding of the cultures and literatures of the Spanish-speaking world, and enhance students' career opportunities in a multicultural society. Many thanks to the following donors, whose recent generosity is an investment in the future of the department and the next generation of scholars:

Dr. Aníbal Biglieri  
Dr. Gregory Cole  
Dr. Matthew Feinberg  
Dr. J. Kay Gardner  
Mrs. Nancy W. Grove  
Ms. Anne E. Keating

Dr. Michael J. McGrath  
Dr. Yanira Paz  
Dr. R. Roger Smith  
Ms. Jasan A. Rumph  
Dr. Phillip B. Thomason  
Dr. Thomas F. Whyne, Jr.

Your gift to the **Hispanic Studies Development Fund** will provide critical resources to respond to student needs, attract world-class faculty, and provide innovative opportunities to enable our students to compete in the global marketplace. You can also make your gift in honor of or memory of a friend, relative, or faculty member. A gift to Hispanic Studies can be made online at [www.as.uky.edu/givetoas](http://www.as.uky.edu/givetoas). Please use the search box in the upper right corner of the screen and type the name of the fund. Gifts can also be mailed to:

**University of Kentucky Gift Receiving**  
210 Malabu Drive, Suite 200  
Lexington, KY 40502

For questions please contact Laura Sutton ([lsutton@uky.edu](mailto:lsutton@uky.edu)) or (859) 257-3551.

## Undergraduate News

UK undergraduate Scarlett Hutchins took this photo during an international study trip in summer 2017. A chemical engineering major with a Spanish minor, Hutchins was in Spain to study renewable energy. Hutchins described her experience at the world-famous Festival de San Fermín in Pamplona and this moment she captured:

"This is the *Suelta de vaquillas*, in which the vaquillas [young cows] come out and 'play' with the runners. It takes place in the Plaza de Toros in Pamplona, Spain, after the first running with the bulls during the San Fermín festival. The whole festival is incredible. When you see the population of a small city triple for this festival, you know it has to be. Running with the bulls in the Encierro is a tradition that has gone on for years and years. Some think it's crazy, some think it's a family tradition. I spent the whole festival thinking how dangerous it was. One by one my friends ran, and the last day I just had a gut feeling that if I didn't run, I'd regret it. So Friday the 14th [July 2017] my friend and I got to the start with hundreds of other people to join the reckless bandwagon. You move up in waves, and then you hear the sound to start. Moments later you hear the same sound signaling that the bulls have been let loose. Then, you wait. You wait for the people behind you to start moving. You wait for the ground to tremble. And then, you run and don't look back 'til you get inside the ring. I was lucky enough to be more towards the front, so we made it in and jumped to the side just in time to see the bulls run in. The Suelta de Vaquillas was another unbelievable experience in itself. Before the vaquillas are let out into the ring, five people lay down on their stomach in front of the gate waiting for vaquillas to jump over them! Once they are loose, everyone tries to taunt them and mess with them. Between six and eight vaquillas come out each day, one at a time. The festival is like something out of a dream or a book that doesn't seem possible to be real. It's like time stops for those days and the whole world just comes to party like true Spaniards."

Note: While it is undoubtedly a very real and long-standing representation of Spanish culture, this festival and others that include a corrida de toros, or bullfights, are not without controversy. Several classes offered to our undergraduate students treat this issue and look at both perspectives regarding the continued celebration of festivals that include corridas and encierros.





# Young Alumni Spotlight: Brittney Woodrum (B.A. '15)

By Julie Wrinn



Brittney Woodrum with her E.S.L. pupils in Myanmar, 2017.

Brittney Woodrum (B.A. '15) never expected to major in Hispanic Studies, or teach English to Buddhist nuns in Myanmar, or become a Fulbright Fellow. But she has done all of these things and is now in her second year as a Princeton Fellow in Asia. Connecting all of these endeavors is a love of languages, and that love caught fire in UK's Department of Hispanic Studies.

"Every single Spanish professor I've taken has been so fantastic," recalls Woodrum. She was especially impressed with a study abroad trip to Madrid led by Dr. Susan Larson. "She was a very inspiring, powerful woman. I really admired her, seeing where she went with Spanish. She was American, but she seemed so natural with the language and the culture. She showed me that you could become part of an entirely new world just with language."

Though in her high school years, Woodrum — a Governor's Scholar from Winchester, Ky. — consider career paths as varied as medical school and animation/story-telling. She began researching arts programs around Kentucky to take advantage of the scholarship offered as a Governor's Scholar, and on the advice of a high school art teacher, she discovered the Arts Administration major at UK. Upon her arrival at UK, however, Spanish unexpectedly became Woodrum's favorite class. "My first Spanish class was with Dr. Lagos, who was Chilean. We really respected him. He had this quiet authority," she said.

Compared to her high school Spanish classes, studying Spanish at UK was an entirely different experience. "It

was an environment where I was being taught in a very professional manner and had native teachers," she said. In her second semester of freshman year, Woodrum changed to a dual degree in arts administration and Spanish.

Woodrum had the opportunity to work in a number of different environments during her time at UK, including an internship in Bermuda for six months to train dolphins. "I'm so glad I did it, because I found that it was ultimately not my dream job," Woodrum said, "I found that many times. And because of those experiences I let go of this idea of a dream job. This is something I took away from arts administration and working with nonprofits: find a mission that I like and want to support, and find a group of people whom I want to work with, who are encouraging and creative and are constantly looking for ways to support that mission."

This kind of boundless imagination has become her life ideology. Back at UK, while finishing up her degrees in Hispanic Studies and arts administration, Woodrum applied for a Fulbright and was offered a position teaching English in a public middle school in Guadalajara, Mexico. It provided her the opportunity to live overseas and further develop her Spanish skills, while working with children in the public schools.

"I lived with a Mexican family, who were wonderful, and nightlife in Guadalajara was popping. It's a very young city, and I really got a taste of the culture," Woodrum said.

Next Woodrum heard of the Princeton in Latin America

fellowships and applied, but the Princeton in Asia program was much larger and older, 150 fellowships vs. 20 in Latin America. "I went into my Princeton in Asia interview totally honest," she said. "I was like, 'Look, I know nothing about Asia. But when I was in Mexico, I knew of other Fellows who were in the middle of nowhere, sleeping in hammocks, and they were the only people who spoke English in their communities. I feel like I'm ready for that next step. I don't care where you send me, but ultimately I just want to be in a very immersive cultural experience. I am willing to give all of myself to that culture and just totally dive in and learn anything and everything that someone is willing to teach me.'"

The Princeton in Asia interviewers liked what they heard from Woodrum. A new post had been launched that year at a Buddhist nunnery in Myanmar, where learning English was a crucial step in the career ladder for many of the women, who aspired to study abroad for their master's degrees in places like India or Sri Lanka, where classes are taught in English. Others wanted to teach abroad themselves some day. It's hard to imagine them finding a more enthusiastic teacher than Brittney Woodrum.

"I was so hungry to learn everything about their world," she said. "I shaved my head and went with just a backpack. I fell in love with these women. They were so gracious. I never felt ostracized at all for not subscribing to their religion. I respected it and wanted to learn."

The nuns didn't speak English, but that wasn't a problem for Woodrum, because she was such an avid learner and eager to try speaking Burmese. "I was always experimenting with the language, because I had Spanish under my belt, and so I was trying to think about it logically. For example, I thought, here is verb you can only use with people, but is there a verb you can only use with animals? And they would be crying, they would be laughing so hard. It gave us constant material to talk about."

During her second year as a Princeton in Asia Fellow, she worked with an outdoor education NGO (nongovernmental organization) in Bangkok, Thailand, called Jump. The majority of students in international schools come from wealthy backgrounds and sometimes live very sheltered lives. "At Jump School, we take them out of their comfort zone and try to expose them to the real world in places like sweatshops and minefields in Laos and Cambodia," Woodrum explained. The goal is that, when these scions become CEOs or ambassadors in the future, they'll have the seeds of knowledge and experience concerning the lives of their impoverished fellow citizens. Her language background from UK gives her a leg up in this context also since "ultimately language is about communication. And I found a really great community in UK Hispanic Studies."

## Festival Latino de Lexington



With live music, dance, visual arts and authentic cuisine, there was plenty to explore and enjoy over this two-day event on September 14–15, 2018. The festival is presented by Lexington Parks & Recreation and the Foundation for Latin American and Latino Culture and Arts.

Erika Ventura-Castellon, a nursing and Spanish student at UK, interprets for an attendee at the Latino Health Fair, an annual event that takes place in Masterson Station Park in conjunction with the Festival Latino de Lexington.





University of Kentucky  
College of Arts & Sciences

Department of Hispanic Studies  
University of Kentucky  
1153 Patterson Office Tower  
Lexington KY 40506-0027

[hs.as.uky.edu](http://hs.as.uky.edu)  
(859) 257-1565

Nonprofit Org.  
US Postage PAID  
Permit 51  
Lexington, KY

## Upcoming Events

### **Exhibit of the University of Kentucky collection of Mesoamerican painted books (códices) in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month**

**September 15–November 9**

The exhibit will be open to the public during regular library hours. Special tours for groups can be arranged. Please contact Dr. Ruth Brown at [ruth.brown@uky.edu](mailto:ruth.brown@uky.edu) for more information.

### **Spanish Medieval Studies Symposium: Honoring Dr. Aníbal Biglieri**

**October 18**

As our beloved colleague prepares to retire, we are pleased to invite scholars and friends to join us for this symposium and celebrate Dr. Biglieri's accomplishments.

### **World Language Day**

**October 26**

Hispanic Studies and MCLLC together will welcome groups of high school language students from around Central Kentucky for a day. They will experience some of the opportunities offered to language students here at UK, with the chance to sit in on classes and participate in information sessions on majors, minors and study abroad, among others.