



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Romance Studies

Romance News

Spring/Summer 2019

Letter from the Chair

My first year, my only year, as Interim Department Chair is drawing to a close.

For UNC it's been quite a year. We've seen ourselves on the national news and, at our students' request, we've carefully reconsidered some of our campus traditions. Through all of it, I've been proud to be a Tar Heel, and maybe even prouder to serve as Interim Chair of such a fine department in difficult times. Our undergraduates have maintained the intellectual curiosity and strong work ethic that make them a pleasure to teach; our grad students continue to be excellent learners and teachers; and our faculty have a wider range of interests than ever.

In my home field of French, we're thrilled to have just hired Dr. Erika Serrato, who completed her PhD at Emory University and has spent two years with us as a postdoctoral fellow. Before Emory, Erika attended the University of Oklahoma, and she has also traveled extensively in the Caribbean. She's fluent in French, Spanish, and English. She'll be teaching classes in Francophone Caribbean literature, including the works of writer/politician Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant, who was short-listed for the Nobel Prize in 1992.

We've been fortunate enough to receive UNC funding for another postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Keiji Kunigami. Following studies in Brazil, Keiji did his PhD at Cornell University; he has also lived in Japan. Fluent in Portuguese, Japanese, English, and Spanish, he does research on the cinema of both countries, from the silent era to the mid-twentieth century. This fall he'll be teaching a class on visual culture in Latin America.

Both Erika and Keiji are pleased to be part of such a dynamic and welcoming department.

I am too. Though serving as Interim Chair has been rewarding, I look forward to returning to full-time teaching and research in such a comfortably open-minded environment. The new Department Chair, Prof. Ellen Welch, whom I've known and admired since we hired her in 2008 following her doctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania, will maintain what's best about our department.

Thank you for staying in touch. Whenever you're in Chapel Hill, you're welcome in the Department of Romance Studies.

Yours,

Hassan Melehy
Professor of French and Francophone Studies
Interim Chair, Department of Romance Studies

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An Update Regarding the Carolina Conference on Romance Studies

by Jordan Bessette, PhD student, French and Francophone Studies

CCRL ==> I remember my first experience participating in CCRS (at the time CCRL) in 2014, where I encountered a warm and welcoming space of intellectual exchange and camaraderie and met new colleagues from across the country. CCRS has become an event to which I look forward every year, and a tradition I'm excited to continue next year with the help of other graduate students.

CCRS

Our conference has recently changed in a couple of ways. Organizing a conference of this size and academic rigor is an ever-evolving process and we are working hard to respond to concerns raised in recent years, specifically around questions related to language, social events, and organizational structure. This year, graduate students decided to take a year to revise organizational approaches and address the needs of the conference and its participants, so that next year's event will be as welcoming, productive, and enjoyable as possible. In an effort to create a more collaborative atmosphere and foster connections across languages and literatures, we have circulated a more specific Call for Papers and have organized panels with closely related topics. While during the last few conferences we required presentations to be given in English so as to facilitate cross-disciplinary panels, we understand that this may limit participation. This year we will also accept presentations in other languages. Our receptions and banquet are more intimate than in past years due to the smaller size of our conference; however, they remain professional, merry occasions to enjoy good food and drink with colleagues. While our conference remains graduate student-organized, we now work in conjunction with a faculty adviser to ensure that we are making the best possible decisions to deliver a first-rate conference.

I'm excited to give you a glimpse of CCRS 2020, entitled "The Body (Eco-)Politic." The conference will be held March 26-28 and seeks submissions related to how different types of environments (natural, virtual, discursive, etc.) are in dialogue with the body, decentering anthropocentric worldviews and transcending Western epistemologies. We are particularly excited to think about this topic in light of recent events, such as the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean, women's rights movements such as Me Too and Ni una menos, and the fight for visibility in the LGBTQI+ communities. We are pleased to already have confirmed two keynote speakers: Dr. Elena Past (Wayne State University) and Dr. Lina Meruane (New York University). I hope you will consider proposing individual presentations or panel sessions.

In the meantime, please reach out to me directly if you have any questions or concerns. My committee and I look forward to welcoming you in March 2020.

New Minor in Translation and Interpreting

The Department of Romance Studies and the College of Arts and Sciences are pleased to announce a new Minor in Translation and Interpreting (TRIN). This is currently the first program of its kind in North Carolina and one of few across the United States. The program is unique in curricular design with a combination of translation, interpreting, and linguistic study with community outreach and the newest applications of technology.

With the growth of populations with limited knowledge of English in North Carolina and across the country, key professional areas of specialization (such as public safety, health care, health policy, business, finance, immigration, cultural literacy, and education) and the community at large have seen a sudden increase in the demand for translation and interpreting services. The applied and professional orientation of this new minor at UNC will train our students to become professional, well-trained translators and interpreters, while ensuring equal access to quality services.

The minor is currently offered in Spanish. For more information, contact Dr. Tamara Cabrera, the Program Director, at tmcabrer@email.unc.edu.



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

Faculty Profile:

Dr. Serenella Iovino, Professor of Italian Studies and Environmental Humanities

Tell us about your research and areas of interest.

First of all, thank you for this conversation! I am very honored to be a new member of ROMS, and I cherish every opportunity to familiarize with my new colleagues.

If I have to talk about work, I would say that I am a hybrid, scholarly speaking. My appointment as a UNC professor covers two disciplines, Italian Studies and Environmental Humanities. This hybridity reflects on my research. My current book project, for example, is an attempt to read Italo Calvino through the lens of the environmental humanities. I try to show how his novels and essays were already talking about the world in which we live today, and can be approached using interpretive keys that go from landscape studies to environmental justice, from ecolinguistics to complexity theory, from biosemiotics to posthumanism.

You recently moved from Italy, where you had studied and worked for many years. What made you interested in working here at UNC?

I have—very happily—worked at the University of Turin for seventeen years, but I have never been based in Italy all the time. In fact, I have an international education: I have spent long research periods in Germany, a country with which I have many academic connections since my time as an Erasmus student (EU's exchange program), and where I have been a Humboldt Research Fellow. Over the years, I have also spent time in the US and have participated in the scholarly and cultural life of a considerable number of other countries, from Australia to China and Taiwan. Working in the US was therefore not a dramatic change of plans, but rather an exciting development of my intellectual trajectory—one that I share with my husband, who is an historian specializing in the Early American Republic. However, being appointed as a professor at UNC was a completely unexpected privilege. What I like the most here, besides the fact of it being in one of America's (and hence the world's) top schools, is the vibrant atmosphere I can feel on campus—among my students, colleagues, and across the whole academic community. For me, this is both very empowering and very humbling: one is challenged to become a better professor and a better person, all the time.

What do you enjoy most about being a professor?

When you work in hybrid fields you realize how non-self-sufficient you are. Far from being a hubristic statement of super-competence, transdisciplinarity means the necessity—and joy—of working with others, sharing expertise, and creating coalitions: it is a declaration of interdependence. This is a lesson in humility which also requires generosity. To me, being a professor means being able to give back what I have received, in terms of knowledge, mentorship, and humanity. It is a way to craft continuities, building bridges with future generations and moments of creative conviviality with those who are now with us: to me, all this is simply crucial to survival in critical times such as these.





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Department of Romance Studies
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
238 Dey Hall
CB #3170
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3170

romladmin@unc.edu | (919) 962-9093 | <http://romancestudies.unc.edu>

We always appreciate your generous gifts.

Funding from alumni donations helps support the professional development of our graduate students. Here are some highlights of recent graduate research fellowship awards:

- Debbie Schenker Fellowship: Giorgia Bordoni and Toni Veneri will travel to Italy this summer to do archival research for their dissertations. Giorgia will be researching Futurism in Rome and Toni will be in Venice to do research on “the fabrication of a maritime counterspace.”
- Richard B. Lupton Summer Travel Fellowship: Rhi Johnson will travel to Spain and Portugal this summer to access nondigitized historical documents related to female iconography and the construction of ideal femininity in public discourse, important work for her dissertation.
- McCulloch Dissertation Research Travel Fund: Emma Monroy plans a trip to Guadeloupe and Martinique this summer to do research on museum curatorial practices in connection with her dissertation on Francophone Caribbean literature.
- Isabella Payne Cooper Dissertation Research Fellowship: Tessa Bullington will travel to Venice this summer to do research for her dissertation on gender, genre, and disease at the sixteenth-century Italian court, and also to attend a Johns Hopkins University/University of Warwick joint initiative for advanced doctoral students.

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