Letter From The Chair

As we look back at a year like no other, I am awed at the agility and thoughtfulness that the entire DLCL manifested as it adapted to incredibly challenging times.

Together, we chose the high road, embracing a compassionate and ethical approach at each turn. We reinvented ourselves and the ways we work and teach. We took care of each other and ourselves, even as we went above and beyond to fulfill our educational and intellectual mission. We listened to the voice of the world calling for social and racial justice. We examined our practices and designed with heightened awareness new courses, events, and recruiting practices to do our part. We continued to advocate for the humanities, for graduate students’ funding, for residential learning in foreign languages, for gender equality and transparency. The world had changed, but not our values.

It was hard. But we persisted.

Throughout, important lessons emerged: that science, knowledge, and education are, truly, vital; that the world is one and everything is global yet culturally situated; that literature and the arts are our best intellectual instruments and remedies to make sense of the unknown. That our social mission as scholars and educators in forty different literatures, languages, and cultures has never been more relevant.

We also managed to achieve some of our long-time goals. When I became Chair of the DLCL in January 2020 (a lifetime ago!), I set out three priorities: to strengthen our sense of collective purpose, to breathe in renewed energy to our graduate programs, and to set the first stones of a new vision for the DLCL.

Strangely, we have never felt more like a tightly-knit community than during the past year, as we were scattered across the globe. We truly came together. Thank you!

Our work on the graduate education front also bore fruits. We radically transformed professionalization to prepare our Ph.Ds. to the vast array of careers where they can contribute meaningfully to society. Graduate students took the leadership in many initiatives. They sought training on inclusive classrooms, created a new Queer, Trans* and Feminist Reading Group, advocated for a wellness fund and steered research groups. Next year, thirteen new graduate students will join us, an auspicious number.

We are also reshaping the future of the DLCL with new faculty hires. Kathryn Reischl will join the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures as Acting Assistant Professor in Slavic in the Fall, and we will be conducting two searches in 2021-22, for a senior position in Comparative Literature and for a junior position in Slavic. This is great news!

As Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman beautifully wrote in “The Hill We Climb”:

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true,
that even as we grieved, we grew,
that even as we hurt, we hoped,
that even as we tired, we tried,
that we’ll forever be tied together, victorious.
Not because we will never again know defeat,
but because we will never again sow division.

Sincerely,

Professor Cécile Alduy

Mission Statement

The Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages hosts the Departments of Comparative Literature, French and Italian, German Studies, Iberian and Latin American Cultures, and Slavic Languages and Literatures, as well as the Language Center.

Together, these departments and programs champion the idea that people think, live and create in and from specific languages and cultures. The DLCL offers courses, degrees and research programs that seek to think and explore the diversity, complexity and richness of these national and transnational linguistic and cultural spheres. Our students and faculty master modern languages and use them to do research in culture, literature, history, political theory, and philosophy.

In courses on poetry, prose, drama, or film at Stanford and at the Overseas Studies Programs, our undergraduates learn to think both critically and globally about how people use languages to make sense of the world, to claim an identity and a place in history, to foster or challenge past and present representations, to create and to persuade.

Our nationally prominent graduate programs are distinguished by a commitment to interdisciplinarity, rigorous training in critical theory and various methodologies ranging from paleography to digital humanities, and early professionalization. Our Ph.D. students develop their dissertations in conversation with specialists in various world regions and cultures, and their impeccable pedagogical training equips them to teach language and literature effectively.
2020–21 Courses and Events

As we embraced (and braced for) a year of remote learning, our faculty, lecturers and graduate students revisited entirely their pedagogical strategies to find innovative ways to engage students and put them at the wheel of their own learning journeys.

From podcasts to video essays, erasure poetry to found-objects art, peer-to-peer workshops and rhetorical debates, we have never been so creative in the myriad new ways we connected to think together while afar.

Our faculty went the extra mile to make the virtual feel as warm, rich and savory as the real.

Facult Awards:
2021 Guggenheim Fellowship: Professor Vincent Barletta
Tinker Research Grant: Professor Nicole Hughes

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Faculty, Graduate Students, and Lecturers

Our faculty tackle the big questions of our times. In What Tech Calls Thinking (2020), Prof. Adrian Daub scrutinizes the keywords that the Silicon Valley has used to fashion and justify itself. In his latest book, La Catastrophe ou la vie, Prof. Jean-Pierre Dupuy dissects the ethical dilemmas brought to light by the pandemic: should the polity choose the economy over saving lives? Prof. Dupuy also gave the first Michel Serres Distinguished Lecture on May 14, 2021, on the lineage between Pascal, Leibniz and Serres.

In March 2020, graduate students Nelson Endebo (Comparative Literature), Ellis Schriefer (ILAC) and Farah Bazzi (History) launched Life in Quarantine: Witnessing Global Pandemic, a digital humanities oral history project that collected artworks and texts from individuals coming from 87 countries.
The DLCL Research Unit

The DLCL Research Unit is a unique institution in the nation. It was founded on the premise that research in and across literatures, cultures and languages will figure differently in the university and society of the twenty-first century—that besides making educated persons, these disciplines address some of the most pressing collective questions of the time.

The Research Unit currently embodies the collective work of over a hundred scholars—faculty and graduate students in our five departments and beyond. The eight Focal Groups—the Collaborative Teaching Project, Materia, the Medieval Studies Workshop, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew+ PATH+, Philosophy & Literature, Renaissances, The Contemporary, and the Workshop in Poetics—are conceived as portals that open from the Division outward to wider communities of literary and humanities scholars.

This year, our community sought to probe pressing issues and revisited the past to look for the roots of concepts, representations and misrepresentations affecting our present. Talks examined “Toxicity” and viral imagery in Argentinian narratives, scholarship and activism, contemporary Indian fiction, decolonial grammar and more.

In addition to funding research, the Research Unit publishes Mantis: A Journal of Poetry, Criticism & Translation.

It also works closely with CMEMS, The Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies. This year, their series of talks “Race in the Archives” traced medieval representations of race in Castile, Arabic epics, Genoa and West Africa, and invited pioneering scholars in the field.
IN THE 2020–21 ACADEMIC YEAR, THE DLCL AND THE LANGUAGE CENTER HOSTED:

- 5 DEPARTMENTS
- 7 MAJORS
- 13 MINORS
- 71 GRADUATE STUDENTS
- 41 FACULTY MEMBERS
- 90 LECTURERS
- 256 COURSES IN LITERATURES AND CULTURES
- 600+ LANGUAGE SESSIONS

During this extraordinary year, students and faculty lived on five continents—from South Africa to New-Zealand, from Berlin to Sri Lanka, from Mountain View to New York, and from France to Israel.

DLCL By The Numbers: 2020–21

42 languages

ONE LANGUAGE CENTER

CLASS OF 2021

10 Ph.D. Graduates

77 Undergraduate Minors

21 Undergraduate Majors
2021 Graduate Degrees

Incoming Ph.D. Students

Anne Christy Burke  
Slavic

Kim Anh Ngo  
German Studies

Björn Buschbeck  
German Studies

Shoshana Olidort  
Comparative Literature

Nicholas Fenech  
Comparative Literature

Alexis Pearce  
ILAC

Cortney Miller Hamilton  
ILAC

Peter Tellouche  
FRIT

Lakmali Jayasinghe  
Comparative Literature

Callie Ward  
ILAC

“I've been thinking a lot about hope, and where it can be found in the modern world. Does hope depend on grand narratives of historical progress or religious redemption? Do politics depend on hope, or is hope the opposite of action?” —Courtney Hodrick

“I have been struck by how little public grieving we have seen during the pandemic.” —Laura Wittman

“What exactly happens when one writes, be it a scribble or the last page of a novel?” —Romina Wainberg

“I've been thinking a lot about how much of who we are is what we imagine, and specifically about how poets have contributed to shaping our scientific understanding of our own minds.” —Lorenzo Bartolucci

“As Chair, I've been thinking a lot about how immensely helpful and practical humanistic values are to serve as a moral compass with which to sail through it all.” —Cécile Alduy

“I have been thinking about immigration, travel, the right to freedom of movement, the right to cross borders with dignity...” —Dharshani Lakmali Jayasinghe

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