delegate feel welcome, but also the little details such as the exhibition in Hillman Library, or the glittering sign at the airport. And as we admired or re-admired Pittsburgh’s references to the Sainte Chapelle and the architecture of the Medieval period, so delegates were left bouche bée at the Cathedral of Learning, a worthy but unsung match to the gothic of Princeton or anywhere else, but far more quirky. Roland Barthes, who in mythologising the idea of 1950s France compared the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages with the automobile, would surely have approved the reception held for Idea of France alumni that allowed us to look down upon the cars of Forbes Avenue from the fortieth floor of the neo-cathedral par excellence.

Laurence Grove received his MA in French from Pitt in 1989 and his Ph.D. in 1994. He is now Reader in French and Director of the Stirling Maxwell Centre for the Study of Text/Image Cultures at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Laurence’s son, Harry, 9, who accompanied him, currently hopes eventually to study at Pitt.

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IN MEMORIAM: Tommaso Sbarra

by Dennis Looney

The Department of French and Italian lost a great friend and supporter when Tommaso Sbarra passed away on March 29, 2012. A retired professor of language and culture, Tommaso worked actively to make the experience of being a student of Italian at Pitt as meaningful and pleasant as possible. He created internships in the Italian-American community for our students, most visibly in Italian language classes for children taught on Saturdays where Pitt students worked as teachers and language assistants. He was instrumental in bringing the monthly meetings of the Dante Alighieri Society to Pitt and he agitated the undergraduate Italian Club to participate in and help out with these events. As President of the Dante Alighieri Society, an organization devoted to promoting Italian culture worldwide, Tommaso worked tirelessly over the years to bring beneficial academic speakers and events to Pitt's campus. We will miss him greatly, but we will always remember him in the successes of our future students who stand to benefit from the fund in his honor. And when the monthly announcement arrives under the impressive letterhead we will always hear in his unmistakable voice: "Considerate la vostra semenza / fatti non foste a viver come bruti, / ma per seguir virtute e conoscenza" (Inferno 26.118-20). The Dante Alighieri Society uses these famous lines that Ulysses speaks to his sailors to symbolize its quest for knowledge. Tommaso once asked me about the word 'conoscenza,' 'knowledge,' for someone had reported to him that Dante probably used a slightly different form derived from old Provençal, 'canoscenza,' with an 'a.' Tommaso's source was right: Dante wrote it with an 'a.' Tommaso decided to leave the letterhead alone and I agreed with that decision. Whatever the precise spelling, Tommaso said, the important thing was the meaning of the word. Maybe an even more important thing is to be someone who cares about such questions in the first place.

An Alumnus’s Idea of the Idea of France by Laurence Grove

Arriving into Pittsburgh on the Memory Lane Express (well, Continental Airlines from Glasgow via Newark) one is greeted by various icons that encapsulate the Pitt experience: a Carnegie tyranosaurus reminds us of the material wealth of the city's nineteenth-century legacies; Andy Warhol's Pop Art cows show us how Pittsburgh has created its own worldwide cultural stamp; the George Washington statue tells of Pittsburgh's role on the world historical stage, although this is often overlooked; and next to him Franco Harris is the down-to-earth hometown popular culture that is nonetheless received (immaculately) worldwide. In November to these were added the flashing lights of the airport's sign welcoming delegates to The Idea of France conference: Pittsburgh looks out on the world and so to do brings the world to Pittsburgh, and French at Pitt is at the forefront of this.

I was honoured to give the conference's opening lecture, 'The Idea of France in Comics Old and New,' a subject that allowed me to explore the text/image alllies that my postgraduate studies at Pitt had opened up. For me it was a useful exercise to express the abstract notion of the Idea via concrete pictorial representations, and in some ways this transformation was the very essence of the conference. Making the abstract tangible in its various manifestations was at the heart of the keynote addresses, ranging from Olivier Duteillet de Lamothe (Conseil d'État) on the constitutional enactment of the legislature past and present, Lawrence Kritzman (Dartmouth) on intellectualisation of Jewishness, Susan Suleiman and Christine McDonald (Harvard) exploring the notion of French Global as a critical approach that is the new-generation Hollier, or David Bell (Princeton) with Revolutionary depictions of the Idea of France.

The breadth of the keynotes was matched throughout the conference as a whole, with twenty-three panels that spanned chronology, genre and critical approaches, presented by early-career as well as big-name scholars from across North America, Europe and beyond. It was a melting pot that gelled, precisely through the notion of the Idea, with participants posting out theories and findings in an intellectual enactment of the lettre à la poste upon which the design of the conference poster and programme were based. Okay, it will always be impossible to define the idea of France, but by putting forward its multitudinous manifestations the conference was enacting its goal and achieving by its own being what one could not otherwise hope to grasp.

But it was of course an Idea of France posted from the US, with the very specificity of the viewpoint that it entails. A viewpoint moulded by the material bases, cultural innovations, historical exchanges and embracing of popular culture that greet the visitor via the airport's icons. And by applying hippies to Agnès Varda, considering depictions of the French in American Revolution literature, or documenting Tarzan in the Musée du Quai Branly, to cite but a few examples, this conference embraced the trans-Atlantic and the cross-cultural, and was all for richer for it. It was the major worldwide conference in French Studies for 2011, and as such a reflection of the standing of French at Pitt. But that's not the full story. The intellectual content assembled by Todd Reeser and his team of organisers found its expression through the physical and practical creativity whereby Monika Losagio, Barbara Stolarz and the 'on the ground' team of postgrads demonstrated that Pitt has the capacity needed to go from idea to actuality so as to bring together a gathering of this scale and scope. To do this involved practicalities from coffee breaks to the banquet and from signposts to seating, friendly smiles that made every
Espresso A Mano: Matt Gebis

Originally from McKeensport, but living in Pittsburgh proper since his time studying Italian at the University of Pittsburgh, Matt Gebis has driven his independent coffee shop that opened in July 2009, Espresso A Mano, to certain success. The garage-doored façade sits on Butler Street in Lawrenceville, snug between local, up-cycling clothing boutique Pageboy and The Framery, whose business I hope is clear from the name.

Today, unfortunately, this proprietor has the onset of a cold, made clear in the croaky voice coming from behind a scruffy red beard. His busy schedule doesn’t allow him to take a day off, however. Today he will be running to the bank and post office to turn his bills in on time. Despite his rushed schedule that I am encroaching on this Monday morning, Matt’s thick, rectangular glasses and zipped hoodie over a plaid oxford give him a laid-back, approachable appearance.

This appearance doesn’t diminish the apparent efforts put into creating and running the café, however. Walking in, you relish in an atmosphere that matches the energy of the up-and-coming residents of Lawrenceville. Brick walls surround you as you enter the cavernous room with tables flanking a path to the bar. A glimmering, chrome-clad espresso machine takes centerstage in your field of vision before you reach the register just to the left, perhaps a sign of pride in the quality of both the machine and the drinks it produces.

But you may be asking, “What do Italian Studies have to do with running a café?”

Matt cites his worldview as the only justification for running a café - they avoid the often bitter taste of dark roasts and also contains more caffeine. When asked if it really matters to put this much thought into beans when most people are happy to drink Folger’s at home, he notes the trend of moving toward a more curatorial or sommelier-esque perspective on what people drink to wake them up.

Specialty coffees used to be about shots of espresso mixed with as many flavors of syrup as possible, preferably topped with whipped cream, as is the model for Starbucks. Today, it’s about understanding where the beans are coming from. In fact, the savvy consumer knows that the bean farm, its climate and location, influences the flavor of the final product. People now want to know why their coffee tastes the way it does instead of accepting the charred, bitterness that Starbucks would have you believe is what coffee should taste like.

All corporate quibbles aside, Matt’s beans come from local competition Commonplace Café, located in Squirrel Hill, as well as from Counter Culture in North Carolina and Ritual Coffee in San Fransico. He calls these distributors, “three awesome roasters.” I did try a cup while I was there, but muddled the flavor with half-and-half before I realized I should taste it first without any additives. It was quite good in my opinion, despite however I may have tarnished the pure flavor.

So if you happen to be in the area, and are looking for something to perk you up, stop at Espresso A Mano for your dose of energy-inducing liquid and support a Pitt graduate whose putting his intelligence to work while enriching a community with a quality startup business.

Why Learn Another Language? by Brett Wells

During a job interview a number of years back for a French teaching position at a small liberal arts college in Ohio, my interviewers asked me why I thought college students in the United States should learn other languages. After all, they already speak the international language. Such a question is routinely asked to determine how well French teachers can justify investment in what the remunerative-minded might consider “profitless” areas of academic inquiry. Advocating that American Anglophones undertake language study by highlighting external axis motivators, such as widened social spheres and quick economic benefits inevitably falls on understandably deaf ears. For as long as English equals Globish, marketing language study in the United States must focus on the intellectual and cognitive rewards it brings, as did a recent New York Times editorial by Mr. Yudhijit Bhattacharjee who qualified the bilingual or multilingual advantage as “more fundamental than being able to converse with a wider range of people. Being bilingual, it turns out, makes you smarter.” Such are the arguments I thought would be most effective at my job interview. I told my would-be colleagues, that learning any language was a most desirable enterprise for three reasons. First, as many researchers in cognitive linguistics have suggested, the learning of languages forces metacognition; it makes us think about thinking and thus know more about how we go about “knowing” generally, whatever the domain. Such exercises afford monolinguals, whose worldview is necessarily limited by knowledge of a single linguistic code, access to perspectives otherwise unavailable. Second, it makes us better speakers of our first language; and third, it makes learning a third or fourth language easier, which in turn further buttresses cognitive and first-language skills. Unfortunately, they did not seem convinced. But like Mr. Bhattacharjee, I hope others will be.

The Idea of France / L’Idée de la France by Todd Reeser

F rom November 10-12, 2011, the Department of French and Italian, along with an interdisciplinary advisory committee chaired by Professor Todd Reeser, hosted a major international conference titled “The Idea of France.” Through a series of talks and colloquia, the major question asked was not so much what France actually is or has been, but how Frenchness, or francité, has been imagined from a variety of perspectives and across various time periods. Those constructs of francité take various forms, expressed through language, literature, or cultural production such as film, TV, museums, visual art, or dance.

The conference took an unusual approach as we aimed to destabilize - or even disband - disciplinary and departmental boundaries, as scholars of the Middle Ages spoke to twentieth-century specialists, and as the Renaissance was in dialogue with the Enlightenment. Our approach was global and transnational: we held a discussion-based colloquium with Professors Susan Suleiman (Harvard) and Christie McDonald (Harvard) on their ground-breaking volume from 2010 French Global: A New Approach to Literary History, while anthropologist John Bowen (Washington University) led a second colloquium on his 2009 book Can Islam be French?: Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State. Scholars came from Europe, Africa, and North America to present on topics from a wide variety of disciplines: literary and cultural studies, history, political science, linguistics, film, art history, anthropology, sociology, Jewish studies, gender studies, and law, continued on page 4
Center with images of Frenchness regaled a packed Humanities cosmopolitanism versus the spoke on new universalism and Europe. Domna Stanton (CUNY) professors from the U.S. and keynote lectures by distinguished cour. The event included five Frenchness in the Ballet de Tarzan, diplomatic gifts under Concord, fairy tales, the French passion plays, animation, the Alliance Française, medieval papers included the global America, Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, Haiti, the U.S., Latin from the Hexagon or from were given on ideas of France among others. Sixty-five papers were given on ideas of France from the Hexagon or from regions of the Hexagon, as well as from places such as Poland, Senegal, Haiti, the U.S., Latin America, Morocco, Algeria, Cairo, and others. Topics of papers included the global Alliance Française, medieval passion plays, animation, the Concord, fairy tales, the French Tarzan, diplomatic gifts under Louis XIV, and even dancing Frenchness in the Ballet de cour. The event included five keynote lectures by distinguished professors from the U.S. and Europe. Domna Stanton (CUNY) spoke on new universalism and cosmopolitanism versus the French Republican subject. Laurence Grove (Glasgow) regaled a packed Humanities Center with images of Frenchness in emblems and comics. Lawrence Kritzman (Dartmouth) spoke on the complexities of modern Judaism and the French nation. Judge Olivier Durthielet de Lamothe (Conseil d’État) gave a talk in French on Montesquieu and judicial review; and historian David Bell (Princeton) filled the University Club Ballroom to deliver an illustrated lecture on French ideas of the Revolution of 1789. The conference will lead to an edited volume of the journal Contemporary French and Francophone Studies, to be published in March 2013. For more information on the conference, visit www.ideaoffrance.pitt.edu. The event was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Pittsburgh sponsors: European Union Center of Excellence and European Studies Center; Department of French and Italian; Department of History; Jewish Studies Program; Cultural Studies Program; Global Studies Center; University Center for International Studies; Faculty Research and Scholarship Program; Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences; Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences; Humanities Center; World History Center; Department of Sociology; Eighteenth-Century Studies at Pitt; Film Studies Program; University Honors College; Department of Anthropology; and the School of Law.

Above: Todd Reeser and Lawrence Kritzman (Dartmouth) Left: The Idea of France display case in the Hillman Library

Teaching Assistant Program in France: Deuxième Partie
by Danielle Marsh

For me, the idea of graduating, but more importantly of planning what to do after graduation, was most certainly as scary as it is for most seniors. Even in the middle of trying to enjoy my senior year, I constantly looked for opportunities—finding it easy to get lost in the rush of it all.

It was in the Department of French and Italian that I first heard of TAPIF, the Teaching Assistant Program in France. Monika, our department administrator, pointed me to all the information I could need on the program, and I went home to start immediately reading about it. It only took me a few hours to decide to apply.

In a few words, the application process was long, but certainly doable. I submitted my application in mid-December, a few weeks before the deadline, and found out that I had been accepted a long, four months later in the beginning of April. From then on I was in touch, off and on, with the program contact at the French Embassy in Washington D.C. It was she who told me I had been accepted, the academic into which I had been placed, the level I would teach, and the contact information for the other assistants in the area. She also put me in touch with the directors of my future académie, and who, in turn, provided me with documents necessary to obtain a visa from the French embassy.

Skipping ahead a few months, in late September I took a one-way flight to France. When I arrived I had only the name and address of my high school written down on a piece of paper: Lycée Jean Guéhenno, Flers. One of the six English professors who had been assigned to us by a professor assigned to each assistant who will resolve problems, questions, etc. She asked if I would be interested in living in the school housing, and I was surprised to find out that I had been accepted a long, four months later in the beginning of April. From then on I was in touch, off and on, with the program contact at the French Embassy in Washington D.C. It was she who told me I had been accepted, the academic into which I had been placed, the level I would teach, and the contact information for the other assistants in the area. She also put me in touch with the directors of my future académie, and who, in turn, provided me with documents necessary to obtain a visa from the French embassy.

As for the program, under my contract I am required to work 12 hours a week, doing anything from preparing and giving lessons to giving one-on-one lessons and extra help to those who need it, and from working with groups of students on creative writing to giving mock oral exams as practice to final year students about to take the Baccalauréat. One wonderful thing about TAPIF is that it gives its assistants the ability to get involved outside of their schools just as much as inside. I teach three private lessons during the week and was even able to join the adult women’s soccer team in town, in all of which give me opportunities everyday to get to know the people around me, a group of people that has been more than wonderful from the very beginning.

The best advice I can give to someone who may be interested in the program is: GO FOR IT. Yes, it is scary picking up and moving to France for a year, but an adventure lies in the thrill. Above all, this year has given me more life experience than I could have imagined, and I will forever be grateful for that.
Teaching Assistant Program in France: Première Partie
by Sara Henson

If you’re reading this newsletter, you clearly decided to make French (or Italian) part of your life. Maybe you’re thinking “when am I going to use this so-called skill?” I was in the same boat during my undergraduate career, wondering if I would ever manage to become fluent in a foreign language while living in America. But then my sophomore year I met Kate, a senior, whose plans after graduation were to teach English in France.

“What… That’s possible?” I thought. I put the idea on the backburner, but remembered the incredible draw of the possibility. So as my senior year rolled around, I applied for TAPIF, which stands for Teaching Assistantship Program in France. This program is open to everyone, at all levels of French, and you work in a school that could care less about being in class. That said, if you apply to this program, you have to go into it with an open mind and make the best of whatever situation you’re placed in. If nothing else, you’re living in France, earning 800 euro a month for 12 hours of work a week, and you get 8 weeks paid vacation. Not too shabby.

So if you’re looking to make use of your French studies, I absolutely recommend TAPIF. Not only will you be immersed into French culture, you will improve your French to the point of fluency.

You are given your specific placement. I work twice a week for 6 hours, and I have five classes of about 20 students. In the application process, you have the option to select three preferred regions in France in which to teach; I was placed in the Academy of Créteil.

Your acceptance and regional placement are determined and announced in early April, then in June you are given your specific school placement. Once you receive this, you must apply for your work visa, which takes about 3 weeks to receive. The program starts in October, but it is recommended to come in September in order to start the process of finding housing.

So why not give it a shot? You have an open mind and make the best of whatever situation you’re placed in. If nothing else, you’re living in France, earning 800 euro a month for 12 hours of work a week, and you get 8 weeks paid vacation. Not so shabby.

If you want to know more about the program, or if you’re already applied and gotten in, don’t hesitate to send me an email with any questions at shenson824@gmail.com.

by Julien Ibos-Marquant

Weight of the 2012 French Presidential Elections

Editor’s Note: This article was written before François Hollande won the second round of elections on May 6, 2012. Julien’s article still provides useful context on the stakes of the 2012 French presidential elections.

The French will soon vote for a new president and the campaign has literally taken over the French media space. Every topic gets instantly connected to it. French journalists repeatedly characterize the presidential election as “supreme”. Indeed, no election in France is thought to be as important as this one, whether by voters, political parties or politicians themselves.

Voter participation has never been higher, further proving that the presidential race is the most popular political event in France. A very high participation in 2012 (as in 2007) should not come as a surprise given that the policies of current president Nicolas Sarkozy have been controversial during his first term. Voter abstention decreased to 16 % in 2007, making it the lowest rate since 1988. Voter turnout was the direct result of a very passionate campaign lasting several months (Source: La France aux urnes, 60 ans d’histoire électorale, P. Bréchon, La Documentation Française, 2009). This rate of participation might also be explained by the trauma that most French citizens experienced in 2002 when Lionel Jospin, candidate for the Parti Socialiste (Social Democrats), failed to advance to the second round. Instead, the far right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen faced off against the more moderate Jacques Chirac, an event that continues to haunt French political life.

The two-round system of French elections is the best way for all parties to have a voice in French politics. Even those candidates who may not win decide to run because their results may allow their parties to negotiate an alliance with the two final candidates, giving them easier access to ministerial positions and seats in the Assembly. There will be ten candidates for the first round this year, the most important being President Sarkozy on the right and François Hollande on the left.

The Third and Fourth Republics in France were parliamentary regimes that gave power to a Prime Minister chosen from the majority party or coalition in the National Assembly. This structure sometimes led to governmental paralysis. The French Fifth Republic put the figure of the President back at the center of French political life, leading to such important political figures as

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French Nationality Room Re-Activation by Erin Bond

Nothing about Pitt’s campus image is more iconic than the Cathedral of Learning and the nationality rooms that it houses. Rooms ranging in styles from Welsh, to African heritage, to the newly opened Turkish, they serve as classroom spaces as well in steps for tourists, parents, and potential students. However, what many people don’t know about these rooms is that they also serve another purpose and influence more than just those who have a class in them.

Many of these rooms have a sponsoring committee, composed of members of the Pittsburgh community, alumni of the University, or anyone interested in becoming involved. Having a sponsoring committee is significant to the room’s success in many ways. For a small annual fee, members partake in events and parties in the room, decoration during the holiday season, and most importantly, the establishment of a scholarship fund for students who wish to study abroad in the country represented by the room. This is the cornerstone of the nationality rooms’ importance and has helped many students achieve the international experience they deserve.

One important room that has been without a sponsoring committee for many years is the French Nationality Room. However, this is an extremely exciting year, as Barbara Tucker of the Alliance Française de Pittsburgh has decided to re-activate this committee. Students in the French department will once again have the opportunity through the committee to win scholarships for study abroad in France. But we need your help! By becoming a member, you will help set up this fund, and will also be invited to the various events already being planned: wine tastings, a launch party, etc.

For more information on how to become a member of the committee, email Barbara Tucker at bbarbietucker@gmail.com.

De Gaulle and Mitterrand, who remain central points of reference during campaigns. The power of the President can only be balanced by the National Assembly if a majority is elected that differs from the President’s. After the electoral calendar was reformed in 2000, this situation is unlikely to happen again.

Sarkozy’s contempt for the legislative institutions have only increased the centralization of power in the presidency. Sarkozy has repeatedly invoked emergency examination procedures at the Assembly to enforce the passing of laws over the past five years. Until Sarkozy became president, the Prime Minister was traditionally responsible for the ruling of the government. Sarkozy’s efforts to become a “super President” have changed the logic of government in France. Sarkozy has tried to be omnipresent on the national and international scenes to justify his policies and he has even called the Prime Minister his mere “assistant” (“Le Premier ministre [Fillon] est un collaborateur. Le patron, c’est moi”)

Sarkozy will have to personally defend every political action that he undertook during the past five years. As François Hollande said this Saturday in Mayotte, Sarkozy is “chef de tout mais responsable de rien,” head of everything, but responsible for nothing.

Sarkozy cannot really defend the economic results of his policies because unemployment, public deficits and debt have thoroughly increased while many French have become poorer. So far, his campaign has tried to renew the success of 2007 by focusing on crime and immigration, borrowing a few ideas from the Front National. The Merah case – a jihadist who shot three Jewish children going to school – might give him the opportunity to shift the balance. On the other side, the “favorite” François Hollande (and basically every other candidate) tries to keep debates focused on economics, a major concern for most French people in these difficult times. The rise in the polls of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, running for a coalition of left-wing parties including the Parti Communiste Français, reflects the actual fears of the French voters. If Sarkozy takes the lead in the first round of the election, he is very likely to stand alone for the second.

Sesi Aliu: Fulbright Scholar by Sesi Aliu

A fter graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with a BA in French and Africana Studies, I came to Paris in October 2011 to begin a Fulbright research project on the history of mobilization and activism of West African migrants in France. Though I began by examining the role of unions in galvanizing the first wave of migrants (mostly low-wage wage workers), I soon developed interest in another phase of migrant mobilization.

Starting in the 1970s, the focus of migrants’ collective action shifted to the improvement of living conditions in their countries of origin. This shift reflects a confluence of several factors, including: the French state’s attempts to limit immigration by eliminating ‘push factors’ in countries of emigration; NGO promotion of and involvement in these policies; and a series of droughts in the Sahel region which prompted international assistance to ailing populations. While framed by these historical processes, the change in migrants’ mobilization strategies also demonstrates a certain agency by a population marginalized in French society.

Through an ethnographic research project with impressive efficacy. Having observed the dynamism and solidarity that link these transnational communities, I am convinced that migrants have a crucial role to play in developing their countries of origin and that current policies and institutional frameworks need to be reformed in order to more effectively channel their human and financial capital towards this end.
The Tournées Film Festival by David Pettersen

T
his past February, for the first time in several years, the French and Italian department and the Film Studies Program organized a Tournées film festival at Pitt. The Tournées festival is a grant program run by the French American Cultural Exchange organization in New York that seeks to bring contemporary French films to college campuses all over the United States. This year, we screened five films at Pitt: Philippe Lioret's Welcome (2008), Catherine Breilh's Sleeping Beauty (2010), Olivier Assayas' Boarding Gate (2007), Bruno Dumont's Hadewijch (2009), and Claire Denis' 35 Shots of Rum (2008). The films were loosely related to a graduate seminar I was teaching on theories of space and notions of center and periphery in contemporary French cinema. Graduate students in that seminar from French and Film Studies wrote film notes and introduced the films to audiences. They served as public humanists, sharing their knowledge with the community and generating interest in the films. We were able to screen four of the five films in 35mm on the top floor of Alumni Hall.

I like the idea of the Tournées film festival because in my mind, one of France's most important gifts to the world is a sense of film culture. It originated out of the famed 1920s ciné-clubs where individuals passionate about cinema showed films they loved and discussed them with others. Film was a communal experience that broke down barriers of race, class, gender and language. The ciné-clubs were self-perpetuating festivals where one could participate in the democratic potential of film. We are currently witnessing a profound shift in spectatorship habits away from seeing films together on a big screen towards watching digital copies of movies on small screens. Of course one can go to multiplexes, but the generic, isolated experience one has there is too far away from the communal experiences one has in festivals or club settings. We had many people attend the festival would not have been possible without Volodia Padunov, Associate Director of the Film Studies Program, Monika Losagio, Barbara Stolarz, Jen Florian, Neil Doshi, and Zach Adams. We came away from the festival with a sense of exhilarated exhaustion and we hope that this will be just the first of many French film festivals at Pitt.
New Director of Graduate Studies in French; Chloé Hogg

Chloé Hogg returns to Pitt after having previously taught here as a Visiting Assistant Professor. She earned her Ph.D. in Romance Languages (French) at the University of Pennsylvania and MA in French Literature at New York University and has taught at Miami University of Ohio and the University of California-Irvine. A specialist of 17th and 18th-century French literature and culture, Chloé is completing a historical manuscript on the making of the subject of absolutism in Louis XIV’s France. This book project challenges the spectacular politics of absolutism by uncovering the ways in which French subjects drew on affect, aesthetics, and early modern news culture to negotiate individual connections to the king outside the traditional spheres of court and ceremonies. Her next research project, “Material Classicism,” focuses on objects, consumerism, and literature in 17th- and 18th-century France. Her most recent publication is an essay in Options for Teaching Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century French Women Writers, published in the MLA Options for Teaching Series. In addition to teaching a graduate seminar (Literary Scandals of Seventeenth-Century France) and an undergraduate seminar (Literature of the French Revolution), Chloé has been enjoying her first year as Director of Graduate Studies in French.
Two Graduate Students in French Receive Prestigious Mellon Fellowships by Chloé Hogg

French Ph.D. candidates Charles-Louis Morand Métivier and Amy Romanowski were each awarded an Andrew Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship for 2012-2013 from the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. The Mellon Fellowships recognize “students of exceptional ability and promise” in select fields in the humanities, natural history, and social sciences. We are extremely pleased that two of these competitive fellowships were awarded to students from French and Italian to support full-time research and writing on their dissertations next year.

Charles-Louis earned a Mellon Fellowship for his dissertation project, “Learning from Massacres: Emotions and Nation in Late Medieval and Renaissance French Literature,” co-directed by Professors Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Todd Reeser. In his research, Charles-Louis focuses on literary representations of the aftermath of traumatic events in medieval and renaissance French history (the late fourteenth-century defeat of French crusaders at Nicopolis, the fifteenth-century battle of Agincourt, and the first of the wars of religion in sixteenth-century France) to probe an innovative reading of the pre-modern French nation and monarchy as constructed through emotions. Drawing upon new research on the history of emotions, Charles-Louis’s work offers a way of attending to both the feeling body of the king and the political significance of emotions. Amy received a Mellon Fellowship for her dissertation project, “Subject/Object: Reconfiguring Desire in Twentieth-Century French Cultural Production,” which she is writing under the direction of Professor Todd Reeser. Amy’s work interrogates theorist Julia Kristeva’s influential notion of the abject to explore the possibilities of abject desire in significant literary works and films of twentieth-century and contemporary France. Even as she has embarked upon an ambitious and exciting dissertation project, Amy has completed a Ph.D. certificate in Women’s Studies and won a competitive graduate teaching fellowship in the Women’s Studies Program in 2009-2010. She was also nominated for an Elizabeth Baranger Excellence in Teaching Award in 2012. Our best congratulations to Amy and Charles-Louis on their achievement!

Italics.” In September 2011 she was asked to participate in a roundtable on Sicilian culture at the university’s campus at Urbino University. Most recently, she was invited to Notre Dame University where she led student workshops and lectured on ethics and the butterfly in Primo Levi’s work. This summer, Prof. Insana will travel to Florence, Italy to continue researching her book-length project on Sicilian culture and what it tells us about how Sicily “belongs” to Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean.

Below Left: Charles-Louis Morand Métivier
Below Right: Amy Romanowski


David Petteerson spent the summer of 2011 doing research in Paris. He presented his ongoing work this year at conferences in Pittsburgh, Long Beach, and Lexington, KY. He organized the second Annual French Film Festival at Long Beach, with his graduate seminar on conceptions of center and periphery in contemporary French cinema. His article on Renee’s Le crime de Monsieur Lange appears in the latest issue of Studies in French Cinema. Todd Reeser was the chair of a group of faculty, staff, and graduate assistants who organized a widely-attended international conference in November called “The Idea of France,” and he is editing a volume of revised papers from the conference. In spring, he taught a new course in French majors, “Gender Politics: Reconsidering Capitalism and Sexuality in Contemporary France,” in which students studied manifestos, bandes dessinées, documentaries, youtubed videos, TV shows, films, novels, children’s literature, and other cultural artifacts. He is editing a journal on the relationship between the two....
Pitt French Club: Building a Francophone Community

A new year, a new semester— we all feel butterflies at these sorts of fresh beginnings, and the start of the 2011-2012 Pitt French Club was no different as one returning and three new officers took on the task of promoting Francophone culture at Pitt and in the community. Thankfully, about sixty new members helped these same officers keep their butterflies in check while helping foster over ten new events. One of the most successful practices this year was our conversation hour, which anyone could attend weekly on Wednesday nights in the Cathedral of Learning at 9 PM. Perhaps it would not be surprising to most, but the majority of active members in these conversations weren’t French majors, but rather future engineers, biologists, marketers, etc. who were interested in the French language and maintaining speaking skills.

As part of this year’s beginning, we, the officers, knew we wanted to reach beyond the walls of the Cathedral, beyond just conversation hours, and into the Francophone society of Pittsburgh. Two of the Pitt French Club officers, Erin Bond and Sara Vuich, were interns at l’Alliance Française, which fortified a stronger bond between our organizations. Without these two young women, the club would have not had such a great variety of speakers this past year. One of the women who spoke to us was Catherine Velle, the author of Soeurs du Chat, who was joined by other talented local speakers such as Laurence Grove, to speak at an undergraduate level about the French Bande Dessinée. Further, we invited genuine French speakers from the community like Jean-Pierre Collet to better understand the upcoming French elections and to engage in a discussion about maintaining Franco-American relationships.

These guest speakers stood out in particular, because they assisted in our aforementioned goal of working with the community to tear down the walls students sometimes build around our campus. More importantly, the guest speakers were enthusiastic, approachable, and informative.

One of the greatest pleasures this year was for the Pitt French Club to work in collaboration with the Pitt Italian Club. As our departments are combined, it only seemed appropriate that we team up. Together our two groups held a Study Abroad Panel, which included eight panelists moderated by Jeff Whitehead, the Director of the Study Abroad Office. The panel was conducted in a Q&A structure, which seemed to be beneficial to both the panelists and the students who attended. The event was a huge success and helped prospective study abroad students get a few ideas on what to keep in mind. The most prominent topics were: financial aid, housing, travelling, and branching out to make friends with native speakers.

However, the most prosperous event held by the two clubs was the Carnevale Cheese Night. In the spirit of Montmartre, the two clubs joined together to create a Cheese Night that hosted about 150 students, faculty, and members of the community. The clubs also, in anticipation of the event, held a Mask Making Night (see picture on page 20) that allowed students to come relax for a bit while prepping their Carnaval disguise.

With this academic year coming to a close, and a new one already creeping into our minds, the Pitt French Club officers have only genuine hopes to see the club continue to grow and for the sense of camaraderie with the Pitt Italian Club to continue. Individually, the clubs are strong and well equipped with incredible new officers, but together they can promote the idea of cultural cooperation and introduce their members to more than they ever could alone. The Pitt French Club is confident that the incoming officers will serve to strengthen those bonds. So to conclude, it only seems appropriate to introduce the just now beginning, new officers of Pitt French Club for 2012-2013.

President: Sara Vuich
Vice President: Frank Swan
Business Manager: Duane Stanton
Secretaries: Kate Ciohan & Jimmy Grabek
Public Relations Manager: Daisy Zhu

Email: pittfrenchclub@gmail.com
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/groups/pittfrenchclub/

* - Indicates membership in Pi Delta Phi, the French National Honor Society or Gamma Kappa Alpha, the Italian National Honor Society, respectively.

Graduation Convocation 2012 Undergraduate Honorees

French B.A.:  
- Hannah Baker, IS  
- Sarah Bemis, ILL  
- Nina Brocavich, ILL*  
- Anna Branduzzi, ILL  
- Sarah Bussanich, ILL*  
- Caroline Espgo, ILL*  
- Tomi Lynn Fernandez, ILL*  
- Brynne Hafllet, ILL*  
- Carolann Howard, ILL*  
- Elise Kuklewski, ILL*  
- Margo Lynch, ILL*  
- Katie Maietta, ILL*  
- Daniel Marchese, ILL  
- Jessica Minsky, ILL*  
- Eric Pasqua, IS*  
- Kiera Rider, ILL*  
- Lauren Sowko, ILL*  
- Alexandra Spina, ILL*  
- Mara Vento, IS*  
- Megan Vicarel, ILL*  

Italian B.A.:  
- Gabrielle Calabro, ILL  
- Colleen Baldridge*  
- Elizabeth Blazek*  
- Erin Bond*  
- Maimoonah Coulibaly*  
- Hadley Deh*  
- Gabriela DiDonna*  
- Rebecca Dugan*  
- Michelle Everson*  
- Brittney Gewolb*  
- Allison Hall*  
- Casey Hellriegel  
- Laura Kennedy*  
- Angela Kresic*  
- Tess Lierbersohn*  
- Patrick McDonald  
- Jessica Minsky*  
- Katherine Mulvehil*  
- Aleksandra Pomieck*  
- Sarah Ramaley*  
- Ameeta Schmitt*  
- Aleksandra Spallone*  
- Lauren Taylor*  
- Briana Wilson*  
- Trevor Wilson*  
- Michael Young*  

ILL indicates a degree in Italian Language and Literature while IS indicates a degree in Italian Studies.
problem is, it is not my home. When one is forced to leave their country and where they come from, they will always, until they go back, yearn to be there. For that I do not want to stay. For that I cannot say that I’m truly happy and that I feel at home. I will always be an outsider. But I would be an outsider in a more open country too, Germany, England, America...I cannot blame Italy for how I feel, I can only blame myself for coming.”

Entry Three:
Other than the occasional bike trip around the city, these last two weeks have been largely dedicated to a new refugee center, opened less than two months ago. The same signora that is in charge of Stella Maris opened this one of her own volition with little outside help. Interestingly, you can always tell how new a group of immigrants is by their common language. At this center, one hears a mixture of Arabic, English, and French. Italian, as a rule, doesn’t exist yet. After 6 months or so, I imagine that the guys will be more comfortable talking to each other in Italian instead of this confused mix. The majority of the new arrivals came from Libya, forced out because of the governmental crises that make it unsafe for an immigrant to remain in her home country (Sudanese refugees fleeing genocide in Darfur). 2) Humanitarian refugee: non-governmental crises that make it unsafe for immigrants to stay in their home country (Sudanese refugees fleeing genocide in Darfur). 3) Work: in order to get a work visa you have to offer something that neither an Italian nor an EU citizen can do. 4) Justice (a rough translation of giustizia): temporarily dangerous situations at home where it’s okay but not entirely safe yet. Residence is granted for short periods of time on the order of six months to two years (Egyptians and Tunisians may have been granted these documents during the Arab Spring). These categories are not necessarily fixed, however. After a certain amount of time, one can change his or her documents or status. The Italian government, despite having some rather questionable immigration laws and policies, has made generous exceptions for people in the past. For example, in the earlier part of the decade, as the rest of the world felt the pain of Sudan, so did Italy: Refugee centers constructed and opportunities for work and assimilation were sought out. This phenomenon could explain why I’ve found that the Sudanese immigrants seem to be one of the more settled groups here. Despite significant language barriers and a different religion, they seem to feel much more settled and integrated than, say, an English-speaking, Christian Nigerian.

At the center, between Italian “lectures” and moped lessons, I’ve been talking to the guys about their first impressions of Italy. The overwhelming consensus is that the country is “non buono”. It’s only natural that one would feel this way, coming to a new, unfamiliar place, not speaking the language, not knowing anyone. However, as they say “ancora ci vuole un po’ di tempo” [It’ll take a little time to really know].

Pitt Italian Club: A Friendly Family of Students by Marialexia Alfano

From “festini,” cheese nights, and Carnevale to bi-weekly meetings for mask making and movie viewings, the Pitt Italian Club continues to grow and thrive. In building and strengthening a group of members interested and involved in Italian culture on campus and in the city, we meet our perennial goal to participate in Italian cultural activities.

Let us reflect on the events that have led us to meet our goal of growing closer with Pittsburgh’s Italian community.

This past October, for example, we marched in the annual Columbus Day Parade in Bloomfield’s Little Italy, and that experience of being surrounded by an engaging, vivacious community was topped only by the exceptional weather.

As the fall semester came to a close, and the weather became a touch chillier, the Pitt Italian Club participated in various holiday-themed activities. In November, we represented the club at the Heinz History Center Heritage Holidays event with cookies, bookmarks and information about our organization. It was wonderful to connect with other cultural clubs and organizations in the Pittsburgh community. Many of these same organizations joined us again at the Nationality Rooms Open House in December, where we sold biscotti to fundraise for our activities.

Lastly, before the end of the fall semester, we collected beautiful photos from students who have travelled in Italy to use in creating our annual, fundraising calendar—just in time for the holidays.

As the end of the academic year, and the start of warmer weather became visible on the horizon, we started off the spring semester with a fundraising gathering—“Festino nel dipartimento.” The officers of the club prepared pasta, salad, fruit, and desserts for the invited club members, students, friends, community members, and Italian department faculty. It was great to have everyone come together, speaking Italian with each other and our professors. It created what we see as a traditional atmosphere of Italian culture—a gathering of friends on the verge of becoming family with the foods we love most.

We would like to thank the Italian department for all their help with these “festini,” as it wouldn’t be possible otherwise.
A Summer in Sicily Spent With Sub-Saharan Refugees, as Told Through the University of Pittsburgh Honor College’s Facebook Wall

text and photos by Margo Lynch

Editor’s Note: Margo Lynch, BA in Italian Language and Literature (2012) was awarded a University Honors College Study Abroad Grant in the summer of 2011 to research the attitudes and migration practices of Sub-Saharan immigrants to the Italian island of Sicily. The following are excerpts from the blog she kept of her time there.

Entry One:

Coming back to Siracusa where time doesn’t seem to exist and nothing seems to change has surprised me more than I would have thought. In the last two weeks, I’ve begun my first round of interviews, focusing on the refugee population here in the city. The majority of the work I’ve done so far has been with and through the Stella Maris Center for Political Refugees here in the city. To give a little background on Stella Maris: It is a federally funded center meant to provide temporary asylum for political refugees. It has capacity for between fifteen and twenty young men (18-30) who make, rules not being quite as strict as in the States worked hard whereas the others didn’t. The center, however, in terms of my project, has housed some of the most well-established Africans in the town. Two Sudanese men have been here for six and eleven years, and owe much of their success here in Siracusa to the center. Hussein said that, “if it weren’t for Gisella (the director) and all the support they gave us at the beginning, I would not have stayed here.” S i r a c u s a n i (people from the town) can be extremely unwelcoming but she made us feel at home, and look at me eleven years later, one could say I’m home here.” I also saw a huge change in the attitude of 26-year old Somali Ramadan. Last year he would say repeatedly how he “hated” Sicily and the people here. They are mean. A year here hasn’t completely changed his views, but knowing Italian has certainly helped him to acclimate himself better and being more involved has made him think twice about “getting out of this city as soon as possible.” I’ve noticed that arguably the most important factor in ‘comfort’ here is language. In a town where maybe 10% of natives speak a common language with the immigrants, Italian is an absolute must.

Entry Two:

During the last two weeks, my daily routine has been speckled with evenings of freestyle rap, equality discussions, and a lot of home-cooked Guinean food. In the mornings I make lunch. It’s very strange to have homes here. To give a little background on the town team included Italian as the strongest common language with the immigrants, Italian is an absolute must. They have been telling me stories from back home, recounting their nightmarish passage to Italy, and talking about how it’s way hotter here than it is where they come from. I’ll have to agree. I’m pleased that two of my contacts, Bodrián (20, Senegal) and Solomón (13, Gambia) may have signed on to play for the Siracusa Soccer Team, which, if I’m not mistaken, would be the first time the town team included non-whites. With the progression of the summer and the influx of tourists, more merchants are coming out of the cracks. Displays of sunglasses and earrings, beach towels and cover-ups, scarves and hats are tossed up and down the shores by the hearty ‘soldiers of fortune’. After stopping and speaking to quite a few of them, I discovered that this is almost a sort of rite of passage to becoming a Siracusan immigrant. Here in this part of southern Sicily (and Sicily in general) work is hard to find and even harder to keep. Before being able to work a stable job, it seems that one has to labor his or her way from the bottom up.

Entry Three:

Employment, or lack thereof, is actually one of the most sensitive topics when it comes to the natives relationship with immigrants here. Those with stable jobs are thrilled to work and they say that “they work hard, harder than some of their Sicilian counterparts” and that they “are good people who keep to themselves.” Other native contacts have spun them, however, saying that “it’s not right that they can come here and take our work when we, ourselves, can’t find a job, especially during the winter months. Why should they have special treatment?” When asked if feelings changed depending on their reasons for coming, I was simply told, “I’m sorry that they’ve come from bad situations, but it’s not my problem.” Sicilians, of course, were themselves immigrants 100 years ago to the Americans who “were foreign-looking and smelled of garlic.” When confronted with this, one man argued that all of the Italians who went to the States worked hard whereas the immigrants nowadays in Sicily, don’t want to work “for a damn.”

After spending Sunday evening prowling the market in search of knock-off Ray Bans and interviews, I welcomed Monday with a visit to the L’Ufficio Immigrazione Siracusa. Upon entering, I peered into one of the back offices to be greeted by a glimpse of pitches, piles of unorganized file folders, containing a wealth of information I hope to use. After a few moments pondering how I would tackle the files, stacked in dust and neglect, I placed myself in line behind what I gathered to be a Pakistani family of five. In typical Southern Italian fashion, the young, American female was called up to the desk well before any of the Bengali, Moroccans, or Senegalese families were told the fact that they had been waiting much longer. I stated my cause and with little enthusiasm was told to email the head administrator of the Office.

For now, then, I wait. After having gone through the process already themselves, many of the more established immigrants help newcomers in various ways. This could mean anything from lending money, opening their homes, or even translating tribunals. This coming Thursday, a Sudanese friend, who has to deal with my endless ramblings of “immigration this” and “injustice that” has offered to take me to a hearing of another Sudanese immigrant for whom he will be interpreting. These hearings are relatively standard and usually have to deal with residential status. In the case of this one, Ras, a Sudanese friend, will be interpreting for a young man who is pleading refugee status and therefore will have to recount his journey to the board in less than perfect Italian. I’m sure of many you have traveled abroad for extended periods of time and may or may not have felt a pang of home sickness. The difference is that we are/were fortunate enough to have to ability to come back. As my good friend Mogasiba (16, Guinean) put it: “It’s great to go somewhere else and do things, but to come back and to have the chance to be home again is what I’m most grateful for.” Siracusa is a great place, I have a job, I have friends, everything I could need. The