It’s hard to believe that 2023 is already coming to a close. It has certainly been an eventful year. In May, Professor Emeritus David Dinneen passed away. You can read his obituary at the end of the newsletter. When I first became chair, David set up a fund with KU Endowment to provide scholarships to students studying abroad in France. Over the years, I have enjoyed going to see David from time to time and have often brought him thank-you cards from students who benefited from his generosity. I was getting ready to do this again in May when I learned from his family that he had entered hospice care. I was able to deliver the cards to one of his daughters who was able to read them to him. What a legacy. I think David would have approved that I missed his funeral because I was leading a group of KU students through Normandy and Brittany, just as David had done so many times.

Speaking of legacies, also in May I received word that two wonderful alumni, Ron Scrogham (MA in French) and Christi Ivers (PhD in Spanish) were setting up a fund in memory of Allan Pasco. The fund is intended to support graduate students, just as Allan had supported them when they were at KU. While Ron was at KU before my time here, I had the honor of serving on Christi’s doctoral dissertation committee. This marks the first time I have been involved with a fund set up by a student I have known during my time at KU.

More recently, another former student, Colby Brown, whom I remember fondly from my first years at KU, reached out to say that he would like to establish a fund in memory of Jan Kozma, the person who led the Italian program for many years at KU, as well as serving as chair of the department. What a treat it was to share stories about Jan with Colby. Once his fund is set up, it will be the first fund that will be exclusively dedicated to supporting students studying abroad in Italy. This is truly exciting. Interactions with people like Ron and Christi and Colby are unquestionably a highlight of being chair. I never stop being surprised and impressed by alumni generosity and I love hearing about the ways that various department faculty had a meaningful impact on their students, an impact that is still felt many years later.

Even in our small department, things ebb and flow with departures and arrivals. Last December we feted Tom Booker’s career at KU, and this December we are doing the same for Gillian Weatherley, who is retiring. This past academic year, we conducted a search and were able to hire Sophia Mo, a Francophone specialist who works on North Africa and who completed her PhD at Columbia University this past summer. Welcome, Sophia! Speaking of legacies, also in May I received word that two wonderful alumni, Ron Scrogham (MA in French) and Christi Ivers (PhD in Spanish) were setting up a fund in memory of Allan Pasco. The fund is intended to support graduate students, just as Allan had supported them when they were at KU. While Ron was at KU before my time here, I had the honor of serving on Christi’s doctoral dissertation committee. This marks the first time I have been involved with a fund set up by a student I have known during my time at KU.

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Message from the Director of Graduate Studies

by Van Kelly

As we close the fall semester, it is a pleasure to review the accomplishments of our graduate students in French and Francophone Studies. This fall, we welcomed an outstanding international class of three M.A. candidates and one Ph.D. candidate: Laurel Aspegren who did her undergraduate degree(s) in French and Italian at KU before entering the M.A. program in French (with a minor in Italian); John Gorman, aspiring pâtissier chef and creative writer who graduated from KU with majors in French and English; Michelle Roesner, another Jayhawk who received her B.A. in French and Anthropology and who has an outstanding record of community service and teaching; and Kamba Kombat who did his undergraduate studies at the Wineba University of Education in Ghana, and an Erasmus M.A. in French from the Université de Strasbourg and the University of Thessalonike before matriculating to the Ph.D. program at KU. Members of our M.A. class of 2022—Zoe Chan, Cesar Fluckiger, Mathis Philippe, and Seth Middleton, are busy making very good progress on their course work and on the revised and Francophone Studies.

Our graduate students have been very active in the field of French and Francophone Studies. Ousmane Lecoq Diop travelled to Dakar, Senegal in December 2022-January 2023 to pursue research on his dissertation on contemporary Senegalese languages and literatures. He interviewed novelist and editor Boubacar Boris Diop as well as filmmaker Moussa Aba Sene. Ousmane is studying Arabic this year in KU’s Department of African and African-American Studies, and as the recipient of prestigious Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowships from the U.S. Department of Education. He also presented his scholarly paper, “Oral Tradition as a Palimpsest in the Senegalese Cultural, Literary, Artistic, and Audiovisual Creations of Raoul Peck’s, Orcel’s L’ombre animale” at the upcoming 20th and 21st Century International French and Francophone Studies Colloquium at Villanova University, as will M.A. candidate Seth Middleton, whose paper is entitled “Harnessing Chaos in a Crazy World in Ananda Devi’s Pagli.” Seth also served as the graduate teaching assistant for our pre-pre-Olympics 2023 Summer Language Institute in Paris. Rebecca Wetzel received a KU Graduate Studies Summer Research Fellowship to work on her dissertation on Renaissance essayist Montaigne.

Congratulations to all these graduate students, whose activities continue to be impressive and impactful. They represent us well in the university community, nationally, and abroad. At the graduate convocation in May 2024, we will have many more reasons to be proud of our students, as they further our longstanding excellence in French and Francophone studies.
It feels like 2023 has been the first fully normal year since the pandemic. The French program has continued in its recruitment activities such as the French Open House in the fall and on a more personal level with different faculty reaching out and meeting motivated students in the first few semesters of taking French. This provides an opportunity to talk about study abroad and the scholarships we offer, in addition to extra-curricular activities. We continue to promote study abroad, particularly our two sponsored programs during the summer in Paris or a semester (even a year) in Angers. In advising, students are sometimes surprised that they can fit in a French major or minor when doing a demanding first major by studying abroad and our generous scholarships have enabled this possibility to become reality for so many students who then get to practise and perfect their French outside of Fraser and Wescoe.

French Table meets every Thursday during term and has been attracting up to a couple of dozen participants, including members of the local community and French-speaking ex pats. Other events include the weekly Pause Café in Wescoe, the annual Alpine Party, a volleyball game, a pétanque/bocce icebreaker on Watson lawn, a French vs. Italian soccer match, and a Jeopardy trivia game. French students were also able to take advantage all this year of the Ciné Club organized by MA student Mathis Philippe – our thanks to him for providing such great programming.

We had a number of visiting speakers this year, one highlight being the April visit of Prof. Simon Bréan from Sorbonne Université, Paris, a world-renowned specialist in French science fiction. Prof. Bréan taught Paul Scott’s hybrid undergraduate/graduate class on science fiction, gave a Hall Center lecture, met with graduate students at an informal lunch, and spoke at an outreach event at the Spencer Research Library joined by our alumna Christina Lord, assistant professor of French at UNC Wilmington. He rounded off his visit with a trip to the Tallgrass Prairies with Paul Scott, Christina Lord, and affiliate faculty Kij Johnson, where he saw bison in the wild followed by his first experience of meatloaf (verdict = “délicieux!”).

I am so grateful to have been able to spend four months in Angers this fall. Through my study abroad semester, I built meaningful friendships, vastly improved my French skills, and pushed myself out of my comfort zone. I know I will miss the boulangeries, the fresh produce, and the convenient public transportation! My time in France has shown me just how transformational travel can be, and I can’t wait to return to Europe.

- Naomi James

Postcards from France

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- Naomi James
I can’t begin to describe how grateful I am for this program. I took away two very important lessons. First, I am much more capable than I ever thought. It is not easy to be a part of something so new and unfamiliar, but you can and will get through it. Second, the world is filled with opportunity. I had the opportunity to improve my French, learn about another culture, and make so many new friends that I continue to keep in touch with. I encourage others to experience this and hope they have as amazing a time as I did.

Best,
Alexia ‘AJ’ Watson

I have always planned to study abroad in college and I’m so glad that I finally got the opportunity! Spending 4 months in Angers, France has been one of the most fun experiences of my college career. The French classes that I’ve taken at KU were wonderful, but I’ve learned twice as much being immersed in the language while studying at the Université Catholique de l’Ouest! While I’ve enjoyed every moment of the experience, building a relationship with my host family has been my absolute favorite part. This short stay in the Pays de la Loire has inspired me to explore graduate study options in Europe, so I know this will not be my last voyage en France!

-Tyler Hausthor

Studying abroad for a summer in Paris was an amazing experience and I absolutely can’t wait to go back as soon as possible! Not only did my confidence in French greatly improve, I got to try French food from a legit French chef (my host dad!), see all sorts of amazing things, and meet some lovely people at KU (pictured). Having the opportunity to live in another country for a month, eating the food, living with a host family, and studying at a French language school was absolutely life-changing, and the memories that I’ve made will linger with me for a long time.

-Lucy Axmann

This past summer I was able to study abroad in Paris. Despite the program being a month long, I became attached to the city and everything it had to offer. I got to improve my fluency in French and learn about the culture like I never would have in a classroom. I will forever be thankful for my time abroad and I can’t wait to visit France again.

-Emily Locke
Bonjour from Paris! My name is Mallory Wells and I did the Paris program this past summer. I am still in awe of the experience, and it was such an immense privilege to be a part of this study abroad program. Having the opportunity to learn French by immersing myself in the culture and the language was one of the most challenging but also profound experiences that I have had in my life. From the salty air of Étretat to Monet’s sunset water lilies, this trip was full of beautiful moments that I will cherish forever. It was hard to leave Paris by the end of the trip, however I am lucky to have made so many wonderful and enduring friendships with my fellow travelers. I am so thankful to the French department at KU for facilitating this amazing experience.

Hello,

My name is Sofia Quintana and I am a student at the Université catholique de l’ouest for Fall semester 2023. Since I was little, I always wanted to study abroad. Studying abroad in Angers, France is truly special. The city and way of life here are truly magnificent. This program has shown me a new culture, new experiences, and has helped my French skills immensely. I’m forever grateful for this program and can’t wait to visit France again.

Bonjour de Paris! My name is Dana and I had the absolute honor and privilege to study abroad in Paris this summer. This experience abroad was the only way that I was able to finish my French degree from KU because I work as a teacher and so I cannot take regularly scheduled classes. Living in Paris was an incredible experience and one I am so grateful to have had. I am eternally appreciative for the time that I spent learning and speaking French with my peers, teachers, and my host family. It had been a dream of mine for roughly 20 years to visit Paris and to see the Eiffel Tower, and to have been able to do that AND finish my degree is so special to me. This is an experience I will never forget, and one that I think about quite often. I definitely cannot wait for my next trip back to the City of Lights!

My time in France was one of the most valuable experiences of my life. It allowed me to not only improve my knowledge of French and French culture immensely but also allowed me to expand my worldview. Finally, I have made many wonderful friends that still remain close to me even after the program has ended.

Best,
Mahen

Getting rained on while visiting the Eiffel Tower with a couple friends I met outside of the program.

My bedroom view in Paris.

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2023 marked an extraordinary milestone for the Italian Studies Program at KU. For the first time in our history, we received a visit from the Consul General of Italy in Chicago, Thomas Botzios, and the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Chicago, Luca Di Vito. Thanks to them, the Italian Program received the necessary support for the creation of two new online courses in asynchronous mode: Elementary Italian, designed by Dr. Francesca Beretta, and a course devoted to postwar Italian Cinema, designed by Dr. Edward Bowen.

As is customary, over the course of the year, we organized a series of international events. In April, we celebrated National Poetry Month with a bilingual poetry reading and open discussion on ecopoetry, translations, and artistic collaborations in the company of Italian poet and scholar Maria Borio and our very own Megan Kaminski (Professor of English & Environmental Studies). In September, we celebrated the release of a book of Italian poetry, co-translated by Dr. Patrizio Ceccagnoli, at the Raven Book Store in Lawrence. Meanwhile, our film specialist, Dr. Bowen organized a couple of events: first, a lecture by Dr. Damien Pollard (University of Cambridge), who spoke about The Political History of the Voice in Italian Cinema, and, then in the Fall, the screening of the Italian documentary The Jungle, followed by a Q&A with the director, Christian Natoli.

Like every semester, in collaboration with our dynamic Italian Club, we participated in a various array of initiatives: two film series, outdoor games, and, of course, the Italian Tavola, run weekly by Dr. Beretta at Wheatfields Bakery. The Italian team returned to victory in the fundamental October Poetry Event at the KU Natural History Museum.

Studying abroad in France was life-changing! Not only did living in France convince me that I should start drinking coffee, but it has helped develop my world view. With the opportunity to study and research Paris, I was able to find parts of my identity and the values that I hold. Speaking French in Paris was fun and rewarding, and it greatly developed the complexity of my French. I definitely want to visit again!

Au revoir,
Matthew Hoopes
Studying abroad in Florence was such an incredible and rewarding experience. This program exceeded all my expectations. Our host family was so supportive and welcoming. It genuinely felt like a home away from home. Moreover, our host mom was a fantastic cook! The cultural immersion helped improve my Italian language skills substantially and allowed me to have a more authentic experience of Italian life and culture. With the help of our amazing teacher, Massimo Ferrara, we were able to travel to many different cities in Italy that I had dreamed about visiting! I’m so lucky to have participated in KU’s truly unforgettable study-abroad program!

- Alyssa Witzgall

My summer in Italy is one I’ll never forget. I had many great adventures both organized with a group and by myself. There are so many cities and towns within a day’s reach that made for great day trips either on weekends or after class. I walked past the Duomo every day for class, and it never ceased to amaze me. All the instructors were amazing and seemed to truly care about their students. I met so many wonderful people, some now lifelong friends, from all over the world.

- Greta Hayden
Christine Bourgeois has had an enchanted 2023. She was lucky enough to receive a Hall Center Resident Faculty Fellowship for the Fall Semester and this has allowed her to dedicate herself full time to research. Most specifically, she has been moving her monograph through its final phases, and could not be more grateful to her colleagues in FFIT and at the Hall Center for making this possible. Of course, this means that she does not have as much to report on the teaching front as usual. Stay tuned in 2024 for more on her (hopefully) glorious return to the classroom.

Edward Bowen enjoyed teaching ITAL/FMS 331: Mafia Movies in Spring 2023 to a highly engaged group of 52 students. Attendance was strong, in-class participation exceeded all expectations, and students enjoyed conversing with several high-profile guests. In March 2023, Edward had a wonderful experience giving an invited talk at the University of New Hampshire, titled “Long Takes and Use of Space in Ettore Scola’s Films”. In April, he received the Jessie Marie Senor Cramer & Ann Cramer Root Research and Teaching Award. He would like to publicly thank the donors for these generous research funds, which allowed him to buy a new computer and conduct research in Rome for over a week at the Luigi Chiarini Library. From mid-June to mid-July, Bowen co-directed the study abroad program in Florence. Some highlights included visiting the Opera del Duomo Museum, seeing a Luca Giordano exhibit at the Palazzo Medici-Ricciardi, and spending a beautiful day exploring the Tuscan hill town Arezzo. In September, Edward submitted the manuscript for a forthcoming volume that he co-edited with Damien Pollard titled Film Exhibition: The Italian Context (Oxford: Legenda, 2024). He is currently working on a new online course, FMS/ITAL 332: Studies in Italian Cinema, that will be offered this coming summer.

Francesca Beretta joined KU in the Fall of 2022, and since then, she has been devoted to reshaping lower-division language curricula. She is particularly interested in applying micro-learning and human-centered design to enhance the post-COVID student experience. A significant portion of her time this year was devoted to developing the online asynchronous Italian Elementary course (ITAL110), set to launch in the Spring 2024. Additionally, she collaborated on the textbook Dieci for English Speakers by Alma Edizioni, a leading Italian publishing house specializing in books and materials for teaching Italian to foreigners. The volume was unveiled at the ACTFL conference held in Chicago in November 2023. During the Summer of 2023, Francesca co-directed the KU Study Abroad program in Florence alongside Dr. Bowen. She eagerly anticipates the opportunity to guide students there once again in the Summer of 2024.

Patrizio Ceccagnoli is glad to report a very productive year as he published three books (one edition and two translations) and one article. In Spring 2023, along with former MacArthur fellow Susan Stewart, he co-authored the first English translation of Antonella Anedda’s most recent book (Dieci for English Speakers). He published an article on the most celebrated poem of poetry, Historiae, which was released with New York Review of Books. Almost at the same time, in Milan, two other books were released: Ceccagnoli’s edition of Anne Carson’s masterpiece Glass, Irony and God (Vetro, Ironia e Dio; Crocetti Editore) and the first Italian translation of Carson’s Decreation (Decreazione; Utopia Editore). In Summer 2023, he published an article on the most celebrated poem by Anne Carson, The Glass Essay, which appeared in Poesia. In May, he was thrilled to attend a symposium in honor of his amica geniale (“brilliant friend”), Susan Stewart, at Princeton University. Ceccagnoli was selected as the recipient of the Hall Center Professorship for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

2023 was a fairly eventful year. In March, Bruce Hayes was able to attend the annual conference of the Renaissance Society of America held in San Juan, Puerto Rico. A highlight was getting to meet the actor Peter Weller, aka Robocop, who also holds a PhD in Italian Renaissance Art History. Dr. Weller also has a Lawrence connection, having visited our town multiple times to see his friend William Burroughs, whom he played in the film version of Naked Lunch. Future collaborations are in the works. In April, he published “Rabelaisian Satire and Conciliation in the Satyre Menippee” in a volume in honor of the French Renaissance scholar Jean-Claude Carron. At the end of May, he was able to take a group of students to France for the Paris Summer Language Institute, his first time to co-direct the program since 2016. In October he traveled to Austin for a weeklong visit as a Big XII Faculty Fellow at the University of Texas, where he had the chance to do a presentation on the department’s recruiting and retention efforts. He has just submitted a chapter for the forthcoming Brill Companion to Humour in Early Modern Europe on Laurent Joubert, who was the personal doctor of Louis XIV, and has just completed a book on Laurent Joubert, who was the personal doctor of Louis XIV. In November, Dr. Weller traveled to Chicago to attend the ACTFL conference, where he presented a paper on the politics of the film Naked Lunch.

Hanging out with Dr. Peter Weller at the Renaissance Society of America conference.
Mary Byrd Kelly continues teaching courses on 300-level French grammar and is enjoying teaching phonetics as well this fall. She looks forward to teaching her course in English on France and the French this spring. It is always satisfying to share French history and culture with a broad range of students, even some who do not speak a word of the language. In addition to her teaching, Mary worked this past summer on the translation of a journal article written by a French magistrate on the scientific and cultural uses of sealed evidence by the Memorial Museum of Terrorism, which is planned to be open in Paris in 2027.

Van Kelly attended two professional colloquia, the 20th and 21st Century International French and Francophone Studies in March at the University of Arizona, where he presented his paper “The Language Desert: Jubilation and Barrenness in Saint-John Perse’s Anabase and Lorand Gaspar’s Sol absolu,” and in November the African Studies Association convention in San Francisco, where, aside from having a much-anticipated céebu jënt at Bissap Baobab®, he presented “National Healing and Spirit Possession Ceremonies: Ndëpp as Model for Individual and Collective Action in Ken Bugul’s Cacophonie, Rue Félix-Faure, Aller et Retour, and Le Trio Bleu.” In the spring he taught one of his favorite courses, Francophone Postcolonial Cinema, to a class of excellent French majors, minors and French graduate students, and in the fall he taught the celebrated French 326 where twelve French majors and minors received their introduction to French drama, novel, and poetry (especially poetry).

Catherine de’ Medici and Henri III, as well as chancellor of the School of Medicine in Montpellier. In 1579, Joubert published the first-ever treatise on laughter, a fascinating and forgotten document. In January he will be heading to Philadelphia for the annual MLA conference, as he will be starting a five-year term on the executive committee of 16th-century French studies.

You never know where the next adventure in medieval studies will take you... This year was yet another busy one, and while most of Caroline Jewers’s free time was spent in the archives, there was some travel, too. In the spring semester she attended the Renai in San Juan, Puerto Rico with Professors Bruce Hayes and Jayhawk alumnus Jeff Kendrick (VMI), where she spoke on Renaissance novels based on medieval romances of chivalry. In San Juan, she even got to see a rare example of medieval architecture in the New World. In May she attended the Mediterranean Studies conference in Brno, Czechia and spoke on a new line in research on the rise of French detective fiction, and the contemporary mystery writer, Fred Vargas. Finishing up old projects and seeding new ones took up all the available space in 2023, and she looks forward to new articles and projects in the New Year.

Paul Scott directed the Paris portion of the Paris Summer Language Institute this summer with 15 students. The Paris SLI began a month earlier from its traditional start and will continue to take place from late May to the end of June because of the record-breaking summer temperatures in recent years. After the summer program, Paul spent 7 weeks in Iceland on two writing residencies at the Gullkistan Center for Creativity in Laugarvatn and at the UNESCO Cities of Literature residency at Gröndal’s House in Reykjavik. He was able to see July’s spectacular volcanic eruption at close quarters only a few hours after it appeared. This year saw Paul’s promotion to full professor. He was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society in recognition of his continuing work on South Korean science fiction and he has been actively learning Korean this year in anticipation of next summer’s research trip to Busan (a fitting location for a zombie scholar!).

As for her research, Sophia has been concentrating on securing external funding for her book project, Rescripting Liberation from the Margins: Women’s Emancipation and the Global Anticolonial Struggle in the Revolutionary Periodicals of Algeria. This is a feminist historiographical study of periodical print culture during the Algerian Revolution (1954-1962) and Algeria’s first post-independence regime (1962-1965).

Sophia Mo is a new faculty member at KU. She very much enjoyed teaching an enthusiastic group of undergraduate students in her intermediate conversation course. Her mixed graduate and undergraduate course, Roots & Routes: Francophone African Literature, was also a great source of intellectual fulfillment for Sophia. She looks forward to teaching her next graduate course.

Van Kelly and Paul Scott during his Iceland residencies.

Sophia Mo in the archives at Gröndal’s House during his Iceland residencies.

Gillian Weatherley continues to enjoy working with Kim Swanson, primarily supporting the instructors at the intermediate level. Their work with their students and the effort and care they put into their teaching is wonderful. Dr Weatherley continues to get a kick out of teaching and loves to see students relax and improve. Using TalkAbroad has been a wonderful tool to encourage students to use the language they are learning with native speakers. The open access book Le Pont has been a success and more and more people from other institutions have inquired about it. It encouraged her to modify it significantly to provide an open access fourth-semester text Communiquons, which provides additional grammar practice as well as listening and vocabulary exercises. This year also was the occasion for the first family holiday in twenty years with all members meeting in Colorado. Lovely not to have the humidity!

David Dinneen earned a BA in French from Queens College in 1952, an MA in Romance Languages from the University of Kansas in 1954, and a PhD in Linguistics from Harvard University in 1962. While earning his doctorate, he worked on machine translation at MIT with Noam Chomsky, whom he respected as a linguist and came to agree with on geopolitics as the 1960s and 1970s unfolded. David was a Professor of French and Linguistics at the University of Kansas for four decades, serving as Chair of the Department of French and Italian, Chair of the Department of Linguistics, and energetic critic of administrators. He mentored hundreds of graduate students in the art and style of teaching foreign language and led multiple summer study abroad trips for undergraduates; he remained in close touch with many former students throughout his life.

David hated traveling. He was quite the worrier. But he loved living in new places. Summer sojourns as a youth at Camp Rising Sun in upstate New York cultivated his appreciation for cultural diversity, and he sought that for himself and his family throughout his adulthood. He lived and worked in France, Spain, Corsica; traveled throughout Italy, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, North Africa; he and Nancy eventually bought a home in the village of Kersell, on the coast of Brittany, France, where family, friends, students, and colleagues enjoyed Muscadet, langoustines, croissants, and rousing games of boules with the neighbors. Though Nancy’s disability cut short their Kersell years, David’s affinity for the region never faded. In the weeks before he died, in fact, he finished translating the memoir of a priest from the village who had worked with the French Underground during the German Occupation.

To read full obituary go to warrenmcelwain.com/obituary/david-allen-dinneen/