First Japanese Studies Majors Graduate

UW Oshkosh students Kala Bathke and Kiel Bereiter are among the first students to graduate with a Japanese Studies Major this semester at UWO. “It feels really nice to be one of the first Japanese Studies major graduates,” Bathke said. “It’s like being a pioneer.”

The Japanese Studies major helps students develop an understanding of Japanese Studies by focusing on the language and culture of Japan and its role in the global community.

“I not only took classes that taught me more language skills, but also classes that taught me more about the history and culture of Japan,” Bereiter said. The best part of the classes Bereiter took was that they more language intensive because they were taught in Japanese, which helped him improve his Japanese proficiency.

“I will take away my speaking skills I have learned,” Bereiter said. “I will be able to confidently travel to Japan and relate and communicate with the locals in their own language.”

Bathke said the program has been really interesting and also helped improve her confidence in the Japanese language. “It is a really rewarding feeling when you look at something that is entirely in Japanese and you are able to read it as if it were [in] English,” Bathke said.

Bathke thinks that the Japanese Studies program is important because she has acquired an amazing ability and hopes to use her Japanese Studies major after graduation in her personal life, for example, when traveling to Japan or translating written or spoken Japanese.

“After graduation I would like to get a psychology-based career, [but] if I can get a psychology job where I get to use my Japanese skills that would truly be amazing,” Bathke said.

Bereiter hopes to use the skills gained through his Japanese Studies major to obtain a teaching job in Japan after he graduates. “As of now, I am hoping to enter the Japanese Exchange and Teaching program,” Bereiter said. “But if that is not a possibility, I plan to find a job in Japan that will hire me as an English teacher for any grade level.”

Both Bathke and Bereiter would recommend the Japanese Studies program to other students. “I would recommend this program to anyone interested in the Japanese language and culture who wishes to pursue a career with it,” Bereiter said. “It is a great program with great teachers and it is fun.”

Kiel Bereiter

Kala Bathke
Spanish Professor Creates New Course on Sustainability

UW Oshkosh Spanish professor Rocio Cortes has created a new course on sustainability, Sustainable Development Discourses in Colonial Latin America, which was offered for the first time in spring 2012 and was taught in Spanish.

“I designed [this course] because of the sustainability workshop that I did in May,” Cortes said, which sparked her interest in the subject.

In this course, students will focus on how European and native writers perceived landscapes and how they created a new sense of place.

When Europeans came to the Americas, they created a sense of place through European eyes, with a belief that nature serves man. Indigenous populations thought otherwise; they believed they were a part of nature and needed to take care of it.

“The students see how that vision of ownership was invented and how in our time we have to deconstruct that vision,” Cortes said.

Students will read texts written by European and indigenous writers that will show how both peoples interpreted the environment and each other. Readings on secondary criticism on the environment and eco-criticism will also be discussed.

“Colonial literature, it is maybe a very interesting subject, but if it doesn’t have anything to do with our life and our situation, I don’t think the students can get much out of it,” Cortes said. “There’s a lot that we can bridge from colonial times to our times, we can learn so much.”

To bridge these views from the past to the present, students will write two short papers, “reflexiones,” to relate the course to Winnebago County.

One reflection requires students to pick a location in Winnebago County and create a verbal sense of place of it with past and present eyes. Students will tour each location “so we all can have a sense of each pick and why it’s important,” Cortes said.

The other reflection requires students to interview a Native American of Winnebago County to discover their views of the environment and connect what we learn from indigenous peoples to our lives.

There will also be a final project that involves researching the earliest European writings about Winnebago County and discovering the perceptions explorers had of indigenous peoples.

“It’s a very experimental class,” Cortes said. “I am experimenting with a lot of theory and text.” Cortes hopes students can learn what can be done for the environment.

“You can do something in our times, you can become a critic, you can find avenues to change things, that is what I want them to know,” Cortes said.

This class is only being offered this semester, but “I’m excited about it and I hope that I can teach it again and in English,” Cortes said.

UWO Alumni Working With Peace Corps in Guinea

Fredrick Banaszak, a UW Oshkosh alumnus, is currently in the Peace Corps and stationed in Guinea, West Africa and is starting a fruit tree plantation for the community where he is staying.

“Our three goals as agronomists are [to] increase food security, improve agribusiness and manage natural resources,” Banaszak said. “This plantation will touch on all three and greatly benefit the village.”

Other side projects Banaszak is working on are teaching villagers food conservation techniques, improving mud stoves and planting a school garden.

While at UW Oshkosh, Banaszak majored in Spanish, but says Spanish has become a thing he used to do in the past because the people in West Africa speak French and SouSou.

“My French after four months here might be just as good as my Spanish was after four years,” Banaszak said. “But, it has been a lot easier to assimilate into these new languages with the formal training and education received in Oshkosh.”

Banaszak said his career aspirations are still undecided and his life perspective is undoubtedly going to change in the next few years.

“I may return to the States and continue graduate studies in Natural Resources and from there

Please see Banaszak/Page 4.
UWO Student Studies Abroad in Germany

During January 2012 interim, Devan Strebig, a UW Oshkosh junior majoring in Marketing and minoring in Global Business, traveled abroad to Fulda, Germany, to study international business.

“I have always wanted to study some place other than Wisconsin,” Strebig said. “Once I saw the opportunity to study abroad for a short time with the business school, I immediately decided I wanted to go.”

After returning from her trip abroad, Strebig said she learned how firms in other countries differ in doing business. “Almost everything is different compared to how Americans do business,” Strebig said. “Different cultures require different business tactics when trying to connect with people inside and outside of their business.”

Things that were different in Germany were the custom of shaking hands when meeting people, a more formal dress code and what kind of feedback is received after a presentation, for example. Strebig visited Berlin while abroad and took a four-hour walking tour around the city to learn its history from a German native. This was one of her favorite experiences during her trip. Under communist rule, the Berlin Wall was built in 1961 as a way to divide West Berlin from East Berlin. It took 28 years for the wall to come down and for East and West Berlin to unite again. “I never knew that the division of the city had the effect on them that it did,” Strebig said.

Strebig also visited a blind museum that led one through darkness in order to experience blindness. “That tour was very moving,” Strebig said. “You really don’t know what it is like to be blind unless you experience it.”

Another thing Strebig enjoyed about Germany was the bakeries with fresh bread on every corner. Strebig said she would recommend studying abroad to every student. “Even though I only stayed for two weeks, I made memories to last a lifetime,” Strebig said.
Banaszak (cont.)

try to work with the National Park Systems,” Banaszak said. But for now, Banaszak said he is happy living a simpler life in Guinea.

“I have more appreciation of certain amenities [from] back home,” Banaszak said. And “I’m learning what patience really is. Life moves slow here, which works for me, but sometimes it’s too slow.”

Weekly French Conversation Hours Held

Weekly French conversation hours were held this semester by Dr. Nadia Louar and a STEP Program French major every Friday from 12:30-1:30 p.m. at Mi Taza Café in Reeve. Students who attended spoke in French and got to know one another.

Foreign Language Department Holds End Of Year Party

The Department of Foreign Language and Linguistics students and faculty gathered at the Pollock House to celebrate another year completed on April 26, 2012. The event kicked off with a number of awards given to students in the Spanish, Japanese, German, and French programs. The awards were followed by student presentations. Julie Leu and Paige Anunson acted out a sketch in Spanish that got the crowd laughing. Jesse Goetsch gave a presentation on Japanese history from the Tokugawa Era. Other presentations included two poems read in Spanish, another sketch in Spanish, and a French presentation on how social media and art affected the Arab Spring uprisings in North Africa. After the presentations, faculty and students enjoyed food from a variety of cuisines and socialized.

Above- Julie Leu and Paige Anunson presenting their sketch in Spanish. Above- Jesse Goetsch presenting his information about Japan’s Tokugawa Era.

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