

# APUNTES

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University of Wisconsin  
- Milwaukee

Volume 6, No. 1  
December 2010

## Meet Our New Portuguese Professor: Dr. Ricardo Vasconcelos

### --Tell us about your academic and pedagogical interests.

As a teacher, researcher and student, my interests have been mainly in two broad areas: literature and language teaching. I completed my B.A. ("licenciatura") in Portuguese and English at the University of Porto, in Portugal, received my credentials as a teacher of those languages, and obtained my M.A. in Portuguese Modern and Contemporary Literature while I taught Teaching Methodology and supervised the training of new teachers. In 2005, I moved to the United States to get my Ph.D. in Lusio-Brazilian Literature at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

My published research has focused mostly on twentieth-century Portuguese poetry, a period I believe is fascinating, but I also wrote in other areas which are of great interest to me, such as nineteenth-century prose, Brazilian poetry, and the literary relationships between Portugal and Brazil, as well as other fields in which I have a secondary interest, such as literatures in Spanish and translation from English to Portuguese. I began by trying to under-

stand the *how* of some contemporary poetry and poets in Portugal (particularly Luís Miguel Nava), in a more hermeneutic approach, and in the meantime I engaged with other critical approaches, more sociological and theoretical, to analyze the dynamics of the fields of cultural production and how poets' creations are articulated with it. In my Ph.D. I studied the role of anthologies of twentieth-century Portuguese poetry in the active shaping of the literary field and the distribution of value by poets themselves, and the contribution of anthologies to the presentation of Brazilian poetry in Portugal. I am now preparing this book manuscript – to be titled *Who's Afraid of Anthologies?* –, and look forward to bringing this to a broader public since there is very little research on the topic, whereas more and more poets are choosing to present their work through anthologies. Ours could in fact be called "a time of anthologies," both in Brazil and Portugal.

In the area of education, I began by working with teaching methodology, as I said. Since I arrived in the United States, I have focused mostly in Portuguese as a

Foreign Language, which I have taught for the last five years, and have conducted research specifically on the use of multimedia tools in that field, particularly the use of course management programs (programs such as D2L) to teach and coordinate language classes.

(continued on p. 2)



Dr. Vasconcelos, middle.

## III Ibero-American and Latino Studies Colloquium

On October 20th, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese hosted the III Ibero-American and Latino Studies Colloquium. The purpose is to foster graduate student participation and professional dialogues with area scholars.

From UWM, **Alicia Johnson** presented: "El proceso de la transculturación y la muerte en *Pedro Páramo* por Juan Rulfo," and **Michael Martínez Jr.** presented: "La lucha para una cultura marginalizada: Lenguaje literario y la igno-

rancia del imperialismo en la *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias.*"

From UW-Madison, **Michael Rueter** presented: "The *Liber scale* and Aljamiado Accounts of Muhammad's Ascension to Heaven."

The **Keynote Speaker** was **Professor Armando González-Pérez**, from Marquette University. His talk was entitled: "Ethnicity, Identity and Santería Rituals in Pura del Prado's Poetry."

The event was coordinated by Prof. Nancy Bird-Soto.

Special thanks to all who attended the Colloquium!

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### NEW! FOR FALL 2011:

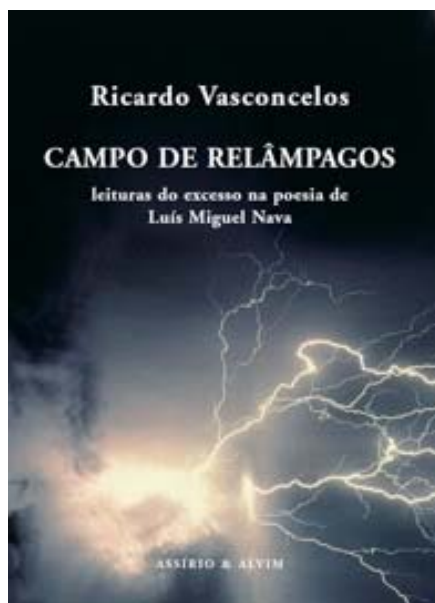
The Department of Spanish and Portuguese will be offering two LLC (Living Learning Community) Classes in Fall 2011. One section of Spanish 318 (Advanced Speaking and Listening) will be taught by **Ester Suárez-Felipe** in Cambridge Commons, and one section of Portuguese 103 (Beginning Portuguese) will also be offered. The classes will be open to freshmen and sophomores living in the residence halls, and all students in the class will live in the same area so that they can converse in the target language and work on class projects and assignments together outside of class. There will also be a Spanish-speaking RA living in the dormitory and a student mentor who will facilitate extra-curricular activities related to the language and culture activities.

## Portuguese (continued from p. 1)

**Tell us about your recent book publication. What is the main focus of the research presented?**

My first book is titled *Campo de Relâmpagos – Leituras do Excesso na Poesia de Luís Miguel Nava*, and was published in Lisbon, by Assírio & Alvim, sponsored by the Portuguese National Book Institute. Luís Miguel Nava was born in Viseu in 1957 and died in Brussels in 1995. His poetry, published essentially between 1979 and 1994, is amongst the most original of his time and contains features that are highly innovative in the Portuguese lyrical tradition. This is the first book dedicated to the works of this poet. It studies Luís Miguel Nava's understanding of poetry as an experience of excess and his position in Portuguese contemporary literature. I analyze Nava's use of metaphor, allegory, simile and catachresis as his main poetic strategies, and so a lot of attention is given to aspects of literary rhetoric. *Campo de Relâmpagos* also focuses on the strong influence of Francis Bacon's paintings in Nava's poetic discourse and discusses its evolution from an open homoeroticism to a visceral representation of the body, unique among Portuguese lyrical tradition.

I feel very lucky and honored that the publisher that has been my favorite for years before I even thought of writing this book, and which is amongst the best in poetry publishing in Portugal, published my study and that the Portuguese National Book Institute, from the Ministry of Culture, sponsored it, making it available to a broader audience.



**--What do you envision for the Portuguese program at UWM within the next few years?**

I envision that the Portuguese program will grow substantially and reach a size that is commensurate with the importance of this language as the fifth most spoken in the world, by hundreds of millions of people. This solid growth, quantitative and qualitative, is bound to happen. Every week since I arrived at UWM I have had students contact me because they wanted to take Portuguese classes and wanted to know what opportunities were out there – in my opinion, that illustrates well the current interest in Portuguese.

The most immediate goal is to give more visibility to all classes and to the Minor in Portuguese and make both grow. In the long run, I believe the creation of a Major and a graduate program makes complete sense, particularly since UWM is one of the only two universities in Wisconsin that teach Portuguese.

My utmost priority is that students have the opportunity of learning Portuguese at a variety of levels, and about the cultures and literatures of the eight Portuguese-speaking countries, particularly Brazil and Portugal. Our department has been offering courses in all of those topics, including a study abroad, and new ones will be created.

The experience in all these courses *should* be fun, a pleasure that results from learning something you want to know and that is a challenge to you, and results also from the commitment of all present in the classroom, starting with the instructor.

I want this program to perform a clear service to UWM students, who have multiple reasons for learning Portuguese, and a service to the community of Milwaukee, generally speaking: there's a clear need for learning Portuguese in the areas of trade, industry, business, health and others, and UWM should cater to it.

**--If a student asks: "Why learn Portuguese?," what would you say?**

The reasons are truly many!

In a world where global studies and knowledge of other cultures are increasingly important, learning a foreign language is crucial. Portuguese is the 5<sup>th</sup> most-spoken language in the world, the most widely spoken in the southern hemisphere, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> most-spoken in the Western world. More than 230 million people speak it as their first language. Besides being the language of Brazil and Portugal, it is an

official language in Angola, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé e Príncipe. It is also spoken in other territories within larger countries, such as China and India. There are large Portuguese-speaking immigrant communities in the United States, and even here in Milwaukee you find a large Brazilian immigrant community.

Besides being fun, learning Portuguese is also a smart decision. The United States government considers Portuguese a language of critical need in the United States. An emerging economic power, Brazil is the fifth most-populous country in the world and represents half the population in South America; Portugal is a gateway to the European Union; most African and Asian Portuguese-speaking countries currently experience exponential growth. If you are interested in literature, Portugal has an 800-year rich literary trajectory, Brazilian writers are amongst the most renowned in world literature, and African Lusophone countries have their own new exciting literatures. At UWM you can also study the music and cinema of the Portuguese-speaking countries.

From a pragmatic standpoint, if Portuguese is your first foreign language, the grammatical affinities with English make it possible for you to develop basic competence in communication only after a year of study. If you already speak a romance language (such as Spanish, French or Italian), that will also dramatically facilitate learning Portuguese, and UWM offers accelerated courses for you.

I also want Portuguese to provide a good service to UWM graduate students in Spanish. I would like them to be able to learn Portuguese not only for the obvious affinities of the languages and cultures of Portuguese and Spanish-speaking countries, but even taking into consideration their own professional interest. I leave the suggestion that they access job listings and, selecting "Spanish," write "teach Portuguese" as keywords... Many schools are hiring experts in Spanish who may be able to teach Portuguese, which of course owes both to the growth of this language in the United States and to an economy that asks teachers be as flexible as possible. Learning Portuguese, for them, can also be a very smart thing to do.

Finally, let me just reiterate my complete availability to talk with anyone who would like to know more about the Portuguese program at UWM.

## Faculty and Teaching Staff News

**Nancy Bird-Soto** has published the article: "Subversivo y sin verbos: 'Acto de fe' de Mayra Santos Febres." *Entre las "ruinas" y la descolonización. Reflexiones desde la literatura del Gran Caribe*. Ed. Silvia Valero. *Tinkuy: Boletín de Investigación y Debate*. 13 (2010): 123-130. Print. She also presented at the Latin American Studies Association International Congress in Toronto, Canada, and at the Congreso Escritura, Individuo y Sociedad at the University of Puerto Rico-Arecibo. She participated at a Conversatorio about language and gender at the UPR School of Public Communication on November 22nd.

**César Ferrera** published the article: "Un escritor peruano en Texas." *Alfredo Bryce Echenique: una vida de novela*. Lima: Aguilar, 2010: 100-104. He also presented: "Las máscaras de Rubem Fonseca," 67th Annual Meeting, South Central Modern Language Association, Fort Worth Texas (October 2010).

**R. John McCaw** presented at the Congreso Escritura, Individuo y Sociedad at the UPR-Arecibo.

**María del Pilar Melgarejo** published the book: *El lenguaje político de la regeneración en Colombia y México*. Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2010. She also published a review entitled: "Review of Literature, Testimony and Cinema in Contemporary Colombian Culture Spectres of La Violencia by Rory O'Bryen". *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* (2010): 512-515. Print.

**Jeffrey Oxford** presented: The 'Autobiographical' Makings of a Novel: Reyes Calderón's *Los crímenes del número primo* – SCMLA Annual Meeting (Ft. Worth, TX – October, 2010) .

**Amanda Romanski** received a 2010 Summer FLAS Fellowship to study intensive Portuguese through UCLA in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.

**Ester Suárez-Felipe** has been invited to give a ten-minute presentation, entitled: "Teaching a Foreign Language Online: Beyond D2L to the On-line and Blended Teaching Users Group meeting on Friday, February 11th.

## Featured article:

### Los extremos de la cultura gallega: autodestrucción

By: Jodi Elias

La cultura gallega no se define fácilmente. Galicia es un lugar donde las culturas del campo y de ciudad se mezclan en una manera casi indescifrable. Por un lado, Galicia constituye una cultura campesina donde la tradición dirige la vida pero por otro lado es una región moderna donde la gente vive fuertemente como si fuera el último día de la vida. Sobre todo, hay una diferencia notable entre los estilos de vida de la gente del campo y de la gente de las zonas urbanas. La población gallega se compone por gente autodestructiva, consciente de su propia muerte y otros que mantienen las tradiciones de épocas pasadas, a quienes les importa muchísimo mantener los aspectos distintos de la cultura gallega.

Conocí a un hombre en un café que trabajó como camarero en un bar que se llama A Reixa durante seis años. El hombre me dijo que la gente de Galicia tiene ciertas tendencias autodestructivas.

Quando le pregunté por qué piensa así me dijo que cuando trabajaba como camarero vio a muchísima gente metiéndose cocaína en el baño del bar, y que Galicia está entre los peores sitios del mundo en cuanto al narcotráfico, tras Colombia, los Estados Unidos y Japón. Ya conozco a mucha gente que me dice esto, pero todavía no puedo creerlo porque los otros aspectos culturales (y no peligrosos) de esta región no encajan bien con las expectativas de una zona de narcotraficantes. En cuanto a la tendencia autodestructiva, el hombre opinó que ver con el tiempo aquí en Galicia. Me parece similar al tiempo de Seattle en los EEUU y me acordó de la situación de la heroína en la ciudad de Seattle. Lluve mucho en las dos ciudades y durante todo el año hay días con un cielo gris. Como la gente gallega tiene una conexión fuerte con la naturaleza, no me sorprende que el tiempo tenga un efecto profundo en cuanto a la felicidad de la población. También, en Santiago de Compostela, que es una ciudad bastante pequeña aunque sea la capital política y cultural de Galicia, hay movida nocturna todas las noches. Llevo solamente dos semanas y media aquí y ya he conocido a gente que se emborracha casi todos los días sin pensar en conseguir un trabajo ni hacer nada productivo con su tiempo libre. El hombre a quien conocí en el café opinaba que la falta de oportunidad y el choque entre las culturas del campo y de la ciudad hacen que la gente gallega sufre una crisis de identidad y suele no resistir la tendencia de autodestruirse a través de la abundancia de bares y discos en Santiago de Compostela.

En mi opinión, sí hay ciertos vicios y tendencias autodestructivas presente en la cultura gallega, sin embargo, aunque tenga que ver con el choque entre las culturas del campo y calle, creo que también tiene que ver con la conciencia de la muerte. Santiago de Compostela me parece una ciudad que abraza al concepto de la muerte. Dicen que la plaza de Quintana es un lugar donde durante la noche se puede ver vivos y muertos sin diferenciar entre los dos. Las leyendas que se tratan de la muerte son abundantes en la cultura gallega y es muy diferente que la manera en que tratamos la muerte en los Estados Unidos. Allí, la muerte es algo espantoso que intentamos esconder bajo la tierra y que dejamos en la memoria. Aquí en Santiago de Compostela, la muerte no se esconde tanto. La conciencia de que la vida es corta se ve en el comportamiento diario de la gente (por ejemplo, la tradición de la Santa Campaña). Conocí a una fotógrafa aquí que me dijo "...en cuanto a nacer, empezamos a morir...hay que aprovechar de cada momento". Según las leyendas celtas, esta región es un destino para las almas de los muertos. Algunas personas dicen que el Camino de Santiago es una reflexión de esta creencia celta. Quizás la conciencia de la muerte, que me parece siempre presente en los pensamientos de los gallegos, influencia el comportamiento y las tendencias autodestructivas.

Al otro extremo de la cultura gallega, en los pueblecitos del campo, hay una tendencia de mantener las tradiciones agrarias y culturales aunque no sean las maneras más fáciles de vivir. El martes, vi un documental sobre el estilo de vida en las aldeas en Galicia. La gente de las aldeas tiende a vivir en la misma manera que la de sus antecesores para mantener la cultura gallega. En la película, se trata el tema de que la gente de las aldeas abandonan los pueblecitos para vivir una vida más cómoda en las zonas urbanas. El documental mostró las costumbres agrarias y las tradiciones de las aldeas. La gente del pueblo usaba técnicas agrarias que me recordaron a películas de los años 1930. Unas chicas del campo que vinieron a Santiago de Compostela para estudiar hablaban de lo difícil de la vida del campo y la falta de oportunidades. Me impresionó porque parecía tan diferente del estilo de vida a que estoy acostumbrada.

Después de la película, tuvimos una especie de debate entre los estudiantes del curso de gallego. Una chica de Extremadura estaba bien enfadada porque en su opinión el documental no representa bien la situación actual en las aldeas en Galicia. Ella dijo que en los últimos diez años la situación ha mejorado tanto que ahora la gente de costumbre se queda en las aldeas en vez de irse a las zonas urbanas. Opinó que el documental representaba la manera en que vivía la gente hace diez o veinte años. Sea cual sea la causa de las diferencias, la gente del campo y la gente de las áreas urbanas vive de maneras diferentes. Realmente no sé si lo que me dicen sobre el choque de culturas es cierto, porque no he pasado tiempo en las aldeas, pero lo que sí reconozco en los gallegos es un reconocimiento de la muerte, la brevedad de la vida, y la necesidad de aprovechar cada momento.

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## Apuntes

Welcome!  
New Sigma Delta Pi  
members:

Chrystal Amini-Hajibashi  
Joshua Brammer  
Amy Dillon  
Allison Dunne  
Mark Hanson  
Jillian Koenen  
Abigail Navarro  
Erica Lisette Ramírez  
Laura Schlageter  
Matt Schwister  
Angela Tabrizi  
Crystasany Turner  
Sean Urness



Dear Alumni and Friends of the Department,

One of the benefits of being chair of the department is the vantage point from my office. The accomplishments of our students, faculty, and staff are evident to me, and I look forward to highlighting them for you each semester. Here are just a couple of examples of the great things happening in your home department of Spanish and Portuguese:

Assistant Professor, Dr. Melgarejo-Acosta's book *El lenguaje político de la Regeneración en Colombia y México* has been published and was promoted at the Feria de Libro in Bogotá, Colombia.

Last spring the department awarded the first Alumni Scholarship to undergraduate Jodi Elias. Our ability to award this scholarship annually is based on your generous gifts to the Department. We thank you. To see a fine example of her scholarship as a student on the study abroad program to Galicia, read her essay on page 3.

In order to continue to be an institution of access and excellence, we need your help! In this season of giving, please consider supporting scholarships either online at

<http://www4.uwm.edu/alumni/foundation/epay.cfm>, by calling the UWM Foundation at 1-800-654-0434 or 414-906-4640, or by sending a check or money order payable to "The UWM Foundation" at 3230 E. Kenwood Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53211. Please *indicate your support for Spanish and Portuguese – Alumni Scholarship (Account 67650)*. Your tax-deductible donation can be even more valuable if your employer matches your gift.

Additionally, we would love to hear from you and certainly hope that you will stay involved with our department and learn about our news and activities by visiting our web site and reading our future on-line newsletters at <http://www4.uwm.edu/letschi/spanish/>. We also have a Facebook group page, so be sure to join us there as well.

The great successes we have had can be attributed to the great support we receive from you and our community. Thank you for considering supporting the department.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Oxford  
Professor and Chair, *Department of Spanish & Portuguese*

**Congratulations and best wishes  
to our December 2010 graduates!**