GEORGIA COLLEGE
GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

This Week

Prepared by Office of University Communications April 19, 2022

World Language & Culture students translate immigrant letters for refugee ministry

Three Georgia College students are learning about the struggles of immigrants detained in the United States at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia. They engage personally by translating letters written by immigrants in Spanish–but also by listening to stories of their teacher's experience.

Dr. Virginia Terán, a lecturer of Spanish in the department of world languages and cultures, is an immigrant too. She's going back to Argentina in a few months to comply with a two-year rule for Fulbright exchange scholars and satisfy visa requirements.

"I am passionate about teaching students to think critically about controversial topics that affect Hispanics," Terán said. "I feel it relates to me because I am an immigrant too. I am a privileged immigrant–that's what it's called when we come from privileged backgrounds. But even I want to come back to the United States to have a more decent lifestyle."

"A lot of Americans live in bubbles," she said, "not aware of the problems going on around us."

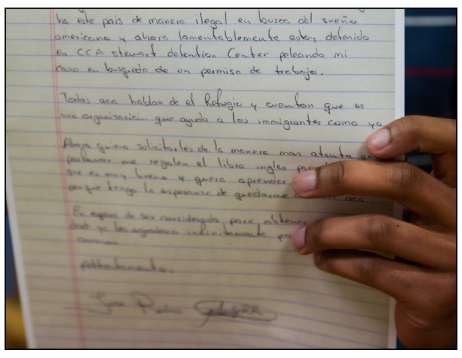
Terán reviews these problems in Spanish with students as they strengthen vocabulary and conversational skills. As a C-bEL component to the class–Community-based Engaged Learning–students translate letters through the "Reimagine Project." It's part of a ministry called "El Refugio" in Lumpkin that's building a digital archive, documenting the lives and experience of immigrants detained at the Stewart Center.



Junior Jaylon Brooks.

Nearly 250,000 people were detained in the U.S. in 2021, according to information on the El Refugio website.

Prior to COVID, Terán's students visited immigrants in person at El Refugio. Since then, they've sent Christmas cards, in addition to translating letters. The letters are written by immigrants asking favors of volunteers at the ministry and thanking them.



Junior communication major and Spanish minor Jaylon Brooks just translated a letter written by an immigrant his age, 19, from El Salvador. The letter acknowledges he entered the U.S. illegally to obtain a better life.

"In his own words, he says he's looking for the American dream. That's what he's pursuing," Brooks said. "He's hopeful to get a visa and work here, so he can continue living in this country and thrive."

"This assignment has made immigration so real to me," he added. "He's literally just another guy, like me, in a really bad situation. Detention centers aren't the best place to be in. They're basically prisons."

Despite being interned and isolated, many immigrants express gratitude in their letters, Terán said. Many come from "terrible conditions" in Central America. They leave their families and homes behind for a better chance in life.

Terán understands these feelings of gratitude. She came to America on a scholarship to get a master's, then got a job at Georgia College in 2019. Going back to her homeland means less safety and longer working hours, but she's also excited to reunite with family.

"We need to change some things in the U.S., of course. It's not a perfect country," Terán said, "but it's also very good in many aspects, like a stable economy. So, yes, I want to come back someday, because I want to have a more decent lifestyle than I can get in my country."

"And imagine, if I'm telling you I want a more decent type of lifestyle, and I'm a professor, right? The reality is, things are really hard back in our countries," she said.

Argentina has an annual inflation of 50%, compared to 7% in the U.S. Walking the street isn't safe there. Cars aren't safe parked on the street. Passerbys steal cellphones right out of people's hands. Being robbed is a constant threat, and laborers work "insane" hours.

Terán believes strongly she has a responsibility as an educator to expose her students to immigration issues like these. Through her own story and letters from immigrants, she gives them a powerful lesson: Why immigrants risk everything to come to the U.S.

Sophomore biology major Alexandra Furney is getting a minor in Spanish. Translating the letters of immigrants has been a "transformative" experience for her. Learning about the immigration system makes her want to volunteer at El Refugio once her Spanish skills improve.

Reading a letter is like meeting the writer. Furney translated the letter of a young man who also sought a better life in America. Once here, his few items of clothing were worn and tattered from traveling to the U.S. He felt embarrassed by his appearance and asked El Refugio for help. He hoped new clothes would help him get a job back home if he's deported.

"I definitely empathize with him," Furney said. "He said he feels he has lost a lot of his dignity, which was something that really tugged at my heartstrings. Because that's not ever a good feeling, for sure."

All student in the class have been inspired to help detained immigrants in the future.

This was Terán's goal: for people to see the suffering of real immigrants and care.

"When you study the root causes of migration, when you can put a human face to immigration by translating letters, then you begin to see this immigrant is not 'illegal.' This immigrant is a human being," she said.

Outstanding Graduate Assistants recognized for service

The Graduate School at Georgia College recently awarded the Outstanding Graduate Assistant Award to five students for the 2021-2022 academic year.

The award recognizes the outstanding contributions graduate assistants provide in supportive roles to students, faculty, staff and the university while pursuing graduate studies.

Graduate assistants are nominated by faculty, staff and administrators.

"Graduate assistants are an integral part of the institution," said Dr. Holley Roberts, associate vice provost for academic affairs. "They provide research and teaching support, which proves to be very impactful for the graduate assistant in their growth and development while also positively influencing the university community."

At the April 7 ceremony, the recipients award package was announced, which includes $200 cash from the Georgia College Foundation, a framed certificate and an official letter.

This year's winners are:

Teresa DiMauro is pursuing a Master of Management Information Systems. She served as the graduate assistant for the College of Business's graduate program.

Casey Elliot is the graduate assistant for the School of Nursing working with graduate nursing clinicals. She is pursuing her Doctor of Nursing Practice.

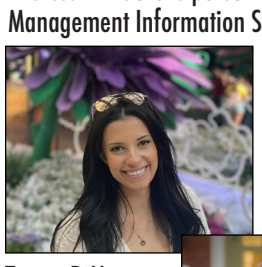
Hanna Jane Morrell is working towards her Master of Science in Criminal Justice and is the graduate assistant in The Women's Center.

Savannah Rawdin has assisted in the Dean's Office of the College of Education. She is working to complete her Master of Education in Early Childhood Education.

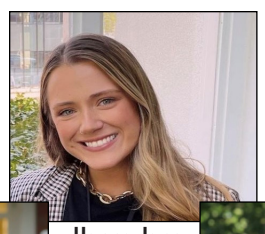
Hannah Rockecharlie is pursuing her Master of Accountancy and worked as a graduate assistant in The Learning Center.

To be considered for the award, graduate assistants must be currently enrolled in a graduate degree program, in good academic standing and registered in a minimum of six graduate credit hours.

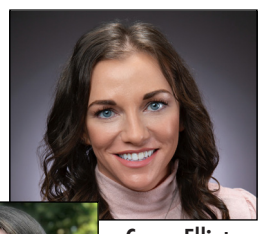
Students are nominated based on their good work ethic, attitude, and their willingness to go beyond the jobs requirements and take on additional responsibilities.



Teresa DiMauro



Hanna Jane Morrell



Casey Elliot



Hannah Rockecharlie



Savannah Rawdin

Did you know?



Andalusia: The Home of Flannery O'Connor will host the third lecture in the Front Porch Lecture series for the year. This lecture, given by Lauren Rhoades from the Eudora Welty House and Garden, will take place at Wednesday, April 20 at 6 p.m. on Zoom.

Rhoades is the director of the Eudora Welty House & Garden, a literary house museum in Jackson, Mississippi, operated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. She studied English literature at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and received her MFA in creative writing from the Mississippi University for Women.

Email cassandra.munnell@gcsu.edu for a link to the virtual event.

Tunes fill the spring air for annual Music at the Mansion event

Join us for a celebration of spring as Georgia College's music ensembles gather on the lawn of Georgia's Old Governor's Mansion Saturday, April 23 for the "Music at the Mansion" concert at 6 p.m.

Free and open to the public, this annual concert features the university's Wind Symphony, Women's Ensemble, Max Noah Singers, University Chorus, Saxophone Quartet, Imposter Trio, String Trio and Jazz Combo. Enjoy great songs like Billy Joel's "The Longest Time," Bruno Mars' "Just the Way You Are" and Stephen Foster's "Under the Willow."

Bring snacks, drinks, tables, chairs and games for the kids.

In the event of rain, the concert will be inside the Mansion. You can also view this concert livestreamed at facebook.com/GCMusicDepartment. A $5 donation is encouraged. Online donations can be made at alumni.gcsu.edu/music.



Teresa

All proceeds benefit music scholarships or the GC Department of Music or the Old Governor's Mansion through GCSU Foundation, Inc. For more information, please email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/calendar

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
19 1-3 p.m.- Justice Week Nonprofit Panel and Open Discussion in the Arts and Sciences auditorium. Participating organizations include Southern Center for Human Rights, The Brighthouse, Athens Area Homeless Shelter, and others. They will be answering questions about their work in the local community and surrounding areas. 4 p.m.- GC Baseball vs West Georgia. 7 p.m.- GC Jazz Jam Session at Amici's Cafe. 7:30 p.m.- Students in Georgia College's Music Therapy Program will perform original songs they've composed in Max Noah Recital Hall.	**20** 7:30 p.m.- Please join us in Max Noah Recital Hall or on facebook.com/GCMusicDepartment for a Senior Recital, featuring Alex Ragan as violinist and lecturer. The title of his lecture is "Changes in Violin Technique in the 18th Century." Alex will perform violin pieces by Bach and Mozart, with pianist Dr. Lev Ryabinin.	**21** 9 p.m.- Woofstock is a public event being held at Capital by GC Shelter Buddies. A percentage of the entrance fee will be given to the club.	**22** 10 a.m.-noon- Law enforcement recruitment event at Centennial Center. Hosted by the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, this event will include recruiting staff from agencies such as local county and city departments, DEA, ATFE, Secret Service and more.	**23** 6 p.m.- Music at the Masnion.