

# Northern Accents

N M U D E P A R T M E N T O F M O D E R N L A N G U A G E S A N D L I T E R A T U R E S

**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- The Whitman building was dedicated on September 12, 1954
- Willard M. Whitman served as Superintendent of Marquette's public schools, and was responsible for the expansion and development of numerous programs there

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**WE'VE MOVED!**

In August 2003, after 13 years in Magers Hall, our Department was moved into the newly renovated facilities of Whitman Hall.

Formerly Whitman Elementary School, many of our students volunteered in this building as tutors or teachers in after school Language programs. For many, entering a familiar building and finding its contents quite unfamiliar makes for a rather surreal and sometimes nostalgic experience.

The wing closest to the Jamrich Hall houses our department offices. Our individual offices enjoy less square footage than our former offices in Magers, but they are beautiful and have lovely furnishings.



We even have a resource room for language teachers. We share a secretary (Angie Maki) with the International Affairs Office, also housed in our wing.

We have long worked closely

with the IA Office, and this arrangement simplifies things for our students who study abroad and puts us into contact with NMU's wonderful international students.

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**C'EST BIEN: FRENCH CLUB**

The French Club kicked off this year by sharing a gourmet dinner of chocolate and chees fondue, crepes, and quiche, and some French conversation. November 5<sup>th</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup> was National

French Week, and in order to celebrate, the club showed the film *Les Visiteurs*, sold crepes to raise funds, and distributed information advocating French Studies. They have begun preparations for a French or International Film Festival set for March. For the festival the

club will invite foreign filmmakers to campus to show and their films and then discuss their production.



## NEW! THE PORTUGUESE CLUB

**A**lthough regular classes in Portuguese are not offered, Dr. Martin, who holds a degree in Portuguese as well as Spanish, has been able to teach a few 101 and 102 classes. Some intrepid students at Northern have gone out to do studies in Portuguese in Brazil and Portugal.

A new language club this semester, the Portuguese Club plans to meet on the first and last Wednesday of each month at six o'clock in the evening for conversations strictly in Portuguese.

Their goals for next semester are to organize a film series and perhaps even plan a Carnival.

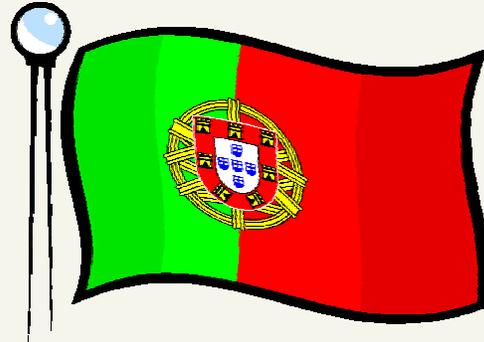


Image courtesy of  
[http://www.nuim.ie/academic/spanish/Portuguese\\_Flag.gif](http://www.nuim.ie/academic/spanish/Portuguese_Flag.gif)

*"The resolution called increased foreign language study 'vital to the economic welfare of the United States.'"*

## 2005: THE YEAR OF LANGUAGES

**T**he Year 2005 will be a celebration of Language in the United States. Under the guidance of The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Educational institutions from the elementary to university level, as well as communities, states, and the nation as a whole are invited and encouraged to participate in the festivities. The objective of the year long celebration is not only to bring attention to the benefits gained from studying other languages and cultures, but ultimately to make

changes to existing core curriculums of all educational institutions so that they include language study as a priority.

The celebration's website suggests that since

most Americans came to this continent from distant cultures speaking different languages; it's time to re-identify with our roots and promote understanding by celebrating our diversity. Hopefully, the year will be "the launching (of) a media campaign that will yield sustained attention and public awareness for years to come." Other goals for the YOL is to better support research on all aspects of language learning, and to build professional unity on National language issues.

The site also includes a link to a resolution made by congress in June of 2003, designating 2004 and 2005 as "Years of Foreign Language Study." Reasons sighted were the results of a 2000 census showing that only 9.3% of Americans speak another language fluently compared to 52.7% of Europeans, as well as higher test scores

among secondary students who had studied a foreign language. The resolution called increased foreign language study "vital to secure the economic welfare of the United States."

With a new president, Dr Wong who has made one of his major goals to "internationalize the university" the celebrations could not come at a better time. Dr. Wong has said he would like to see every NMU student study abroad, and hopefully in doing so, some will have good opportunities to acquire or improve foreign language skills. The NMU Department of Modern Literature and Languages has already become involved in this initiative, sponsoring a brown bag series called "Global Chat." We look forward to further involvement throughout the year.



WE'VE MOVED (CONT'D)



The new Whitman building

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The School of Education has also come to Whitman, which helps us continue the close relationship we have established there.

We are thrilled that several classrooms from the Elementary school remain, and we teach many of our classes in them. (I find it particularly surreal to teach in the very rooms where two of my children attended kindergarten and I participated in parent-teacher conferences.) The old gymnasium has been renovated into a

lovely "gathering place" where students can hang out, where clubs can host film festivals, and where we can hold receptions.

Please stop by to visit us and check out our new facilities. I think you'll be impressed, and I think these will be lovely and functional quarters for many years to come.

by Timothy G. Compton, Head

Written in 2003, but still news for most!

DEPARTMENT'S NEWEST MEMBER

**D**r. Jean Louis Dassier, the department's newest faculty member, is an accomplished individual. He holds two masters degrees, one in English and Foreign Language Education from University of Paris and a second in French Literature and Applied Linguistics from the University of Delaware. Following these, he was awarded the Presidents Scholarship to participate in a PhD program in Second Language Acquisition at Ohio State University. After teaching French one year as a graduate assistant, he became the supervisor of up to twenty other teaching graduate assistants a semester, improving their teaching skills with his experience.

Dr. Dassier is a passionate foreign language educator who believes one should be thrilled about what he/she

does for a living. At the University of Southern Mississippi, where he was a faculty member before coming to Northern, Dr. Dassier was successful in implementing many new study abroad programs and a masters program for language teaching. After these were well established, he felt he needed a new challenge as well as a change of scenery.

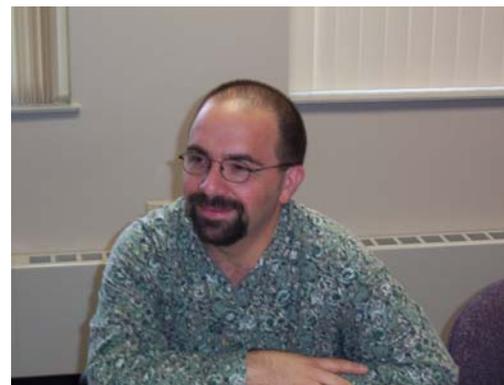
He chose Northern because he wanted to influence students who otherwise might never experience another culture in Northern Michigan's remote and relatively culturally heterogonous atmosphere. Since many students come to Northern undeclared and unsure of what they wish to study, he finds it an ideal opportunity to motivate students to discover what they are good at and also appreciates its small size which facilitates individualized learning.

This semester Dr. Dassier along with Dr. Kupper, has organized a series of sessions advocating study abroad entitled, "Planet Chat." The first of these sessions was held on Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> and achieved a substantial turn out. Three students who studied abroad last year shared their experiences and photography of their travels along with giving advice and encouragement to experience another country and see things from a different perspective.

Dr. Dassier hopes to increase participation in study abroad through North-

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*"He chose Northern because he wanted to influence students who otherwise might never experience another culture..."*





**N M U D E P A R T M E N T  
O F M O D E R N  
L A N G U A G E S A N D  
L I T E R A T U R E S**

Modern Languages and Literature  
Northern Michigan University  
1401 Presque Isle Ave.  
Marquette, MI 49855

Phone: 906-227-2940  
Fax: 906-227-2533  
E-mail: dlawson@nmu.edu

Knowledge of languages other than English and sensitivity to other cultures are becoming increasingly important as we start the twenty-first century. Efficient transportation and instantaneous communications make contact with people from around the globe more and more frequent and vital. Technological advances offer exciting new opportunities. Northern Michigan University's Department of Languages seeks to open doors to students in their wide-ranging pursuits through the study of languages and cultures.

**N E W E S T D E P A R T M E N T M E M B E R ( C O N T ' D )**

ern, as well as raise awareness to the importance of learning a second language. Regardless of a student's field of study or career aspirations, he says, learning another language is important in shaping the way one understands the world.

Dr. Dassier's research since 1999 has been related to technology, particularly in using the internet to enhance language learning. He is currently collecting data from a project in his 300 level French class. Students prepare a topic by reading documents and viewing films and then chat online with specialists in France. The current topic they are discussing is the trend in France towards higher crime rate in

the suburbs. Youth in these areas are generally deprived of opportunities and have little hope for a brighter future. The students saw a contemporary film highlighting these problems, and then went online and chatted with people living in suburbs.

The next topic they will research is the relationships between the U.S, France, and Germany. The class will explore reasons why relations have been strained among the three historically. Dr. Dassier says the specialists in France are usually surprised at how well the students

communicate despite misspellings and occasional awkward word usage.

Dr. Dassier was raised near Paris, but feels he is a product of both French and American culture due the intimate

relationship he enjoys with his "American Family" who hosted him as an exchange student in high school. Although he is comfortable in American culture he misses the simple qualities of French culture, like French cuisine, and is looking forward

to returning home for a visit in January.

