

# Celebrate World Cultures on International Day

Celebrate International Education Day at Clark with a dance lesson and a day of cultural exchange in Gaiser Student Center.

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## Clark Installed New Mural

Designed by a Clark alum for International Education Week, the mural, "Coming Together for Art and Peace" lives in Joan Stout Hall.

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## Celebrating Cultures

International Day hosted by International Programs was celebrated on February 13 with music, dancing, arts, and food.

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## Mural Painting

Clark College welcomed muralist Christian Barrios, a Clark College graduate, to lead the community in creating a mural project during International Education Week from November 13

to 15.

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# International Education Week



Clark College is celebrating International Education Week, a program of the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, with events on Thursday, November 17, and Friday, November 18. Highlights include:

## **Thursday, November 17**

**11 a.m. – 12 p.m., PUB 161:** *International Employers Panel.* Discover what it takes to operate in a global economy from representatives of major regional employers.

**12 – 4 p.m., Gaiser Student Center:** *International Festival.* This free, family-friendly event includes international food, cultural presentations by Clark College international students, live performances, and public proclamations from both Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt and Clark College President Robert K. Knight.

## **Friday, November 18**

**10 a.m. – 12 p.m., CTC 153:** *Mexican cooking class.* \$40 per person, hosted by the Clark College Spanish Club.

**1 p.m. – 3 p.m., CTC 153:** *Mexican cooking class.* \$40 per person, hosted by the Clark College Spanish Club.

**2 p.m. – 3 p.m., GHL 213:** *International Service Learning Presentation.* Hear from Clark College students about their recent service-learning trip to Mexico.

Full event listings are available online at [www.clark.edu/cc/iweek](http://www.clark.edu/cc/iweek). All events are open to the public; all except the Mexican cooking classes are free. All events take place on Clark College's main campus at 1933 Ft. Vancouver Way except for the cooking classes, which take place at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center at 18700 SE Mill Plain Blvd. Full maps and directions are available at [www.clark.edu/maps](http://www.clark.edu/maps). Anyone needing accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at (360) 992-2314 or (360) 991-0901 (VP), prior to the event.

*Image courtesy of the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*

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## Clark College Goes Global



In fall 2014, Clark College welcomed its largest-ever class of international students, many of whom will be participating in International Education Week.

On November 17, Clark College hosts its seventh celebration of International Education Week. But in many ways, Clark's celebration began months earlier, with the launching of its new Intensive English Language Program (IELP) at the beginning of this fall quarter.

This program replaces the college's former English as a Non-Native Language program, which focused solely on the upper levels of pre-college English. The IELP offers intensive English-language instruction, but broadens the curriculum to also include lessons about American culture and U.S. educational expectations. This approach better prepares international students to succeed at Clark and other American institutions of higher education. It also allows them to be admitted at Clark without submitting an English-proficiency test, as was previously required. As a result, 90 new

international students enrolled in the IELP for fall quarter, bringing Clark's total international enrollment to a record-setting 213 students from 29 different countries.

"Instituting an open admission policy that does not require the submission of a standardized English proficiency test allows Clark to compete with other community colleges and English language programs in the region that also offer open admissions," says Director of International Programs Jane Walster. "It also allows the college to recruit from a larger pool of prospective students around the world, not just those students with specific standardized test scores."

International Student Recruitment & Outreach Manager Jody Shulnak says Clark's adaptation of the IELP has helped her attract students during her international recruitment trips, which have included countries like China, Vietnam and Japan in the last year alone.



International students enjoy strong support at Clark, as well as field trips to local attractions like the Vista House in the Columbia Gorge.

"Clark offers comprehensive support services for international students, which I believe really sets us apart in the region," says Shulnak. "We also have strong university partnerships that provide students with a seamless pathway to earn their



bachelor's degree in the U.S.”

Brazilian student Paulo Giacomelli says he has appreciated his experience at Clark. “The atmosphere at Clark College is great,” he says. “It made it easier for me to attend classes, get involved in activities, and be successful.”

With its strengthened support for international students and frequent events that, like International Education Week, allow those students to share their respective cultures with the Clark community, the college is growing more and more global with each year. Currently, the college's goal is to achieve an international student population of 300.

“When students from other countries decide to study at Clark, the entire community benefits,” says Shulnak. “It is an exciting learning opportunity for everyone.”

“As global and local become more intertwined, we must all engage in the process of understanding our own culture and those of our neighbors at home and abroad,” adds Walster.

This year's International Education Week events include presentations by international students about their home cultures, an exhibition by international students and international nonprofits, and screenings of films with international flavor. Visit the event's web page for a full schedule of events.

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## **As the World Turned**



Spanish instructor Felipe Montoya, *third from left*, with members of the Spanish Club at the International Students Exhibit.

Clark College hosted a wide range of public events—including films, music, speakers, and panel discussions—during its observance of International Education Week, November 18-21. This year's theme was "The Language of Learning: Creating a Sense of Place."

International Education Week (IEW) is a joint initiative of the U.S. Departments of State and Education to highlight the importance of international education and cultural exchange. This is the fifth year that Clark has participated in IEW. According to committee member and International Student Recruitment & Outreach Manager Jody Shulnak, planning the week of activities took more than three months, and the committee is already looking forward to next year, possibly building on the success of this year's International Photography Contest by working with the Archer Gallery to create an international

art exhibit. “Stay tuned!” she said. “IEW gets bigger and better each year.”

Some highlights from this year’s IEW:



Ismet Prcic talks about writing his novel *Shards*.

### **Columbia Writers Series**

The college hosted a reading on November 18 by two highly respected writers as part of its Columbia Writers Series. Ismet Prcic and Zachary Schomburg, winners of the 2013 Oregon Book Awards for Fiction and Poetry, respectively, read from their work and discussed their writing processes. Prcic, who teaches Drama at Clark, described how writing his novel, *Shards*, served as a way to process his experiences growing up in war-torn Bosnia. The book—Prcic’s first—is semi-autobiographical (the central character is named “Ismet Prcic”) and told through a fractured composite of diary entries, recollections, and speculative imaginings of what might have been.





Former student Marisa Petry, left, introduced Spanish professor Erika Nava at the fall 2013 installment of Clark's Faculty Speaker Series.

### **Faculty Speaker Series**

On November 19, Spanish professor Erika Nava gave the fall presentation of Clark's Faculty Speaker Series. Nava spoke about her experiences building online classes to teach Spanish. She acknowledged that many people are skeptical that languages can be taught online—including students. Indeed, she was introduced by a former student, Marisa Petry, who said she was concerned about getting enough support in an online environment. Instead, Petry found that Nava's use of tools like embedded video and Skype allowed her to learn Spanish just as well as she would have in a face-to-face classroom. "Even today, I use it at the bedside," said Petry, who is now working as a nurse. "And because of her course, I had the confidence to take other online courses."

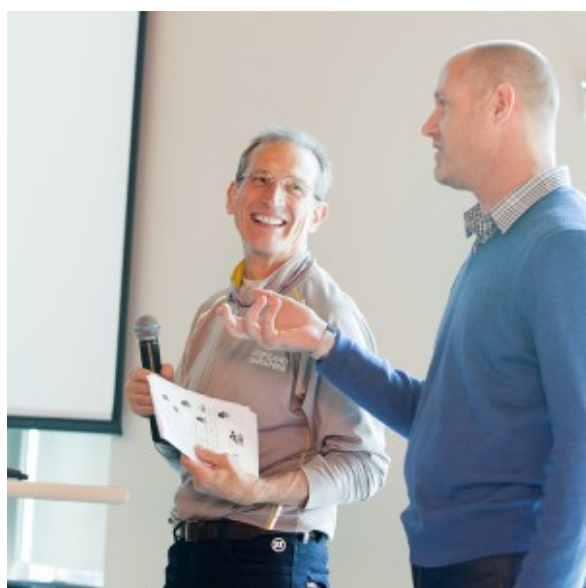
Nava said that she herself initially resisted the idea of teaching Spanish online. "My initial reaction was like many people's: 'No way, I'm not going to do that. How will I have the personal connection with students?'"

However, she found herself reconsidering that attitude after her first few years teaching at Clark. "I saw that I had a lot

of nontraditional students in my classes who were working full-time jobs and were coming in late to class, really struggling to be there,” she said.

Nava showed some of the ways she makes her online classes feel more interactive and personal. Where many online modules include written instructions, she instead inserts video of herself speaking the instructions “so I can be more present in the class.” She has also connected to students while taking live video in Mexico, providing them with a sort of virtual study-abroad opportunity. Using technology in innovative and thoughtful ways like this, she said, can keep that personal connection between students and instructor strong, even in an online environment.

*See video of Erika Nava discussing her approach to online learning.*



German professor Julian Nelson, *right*, translates the German children’s poem his student is reading.

## **International Read-In**

On November 20, poetry filled the air of PUB 161 as students

and staff read favorite pieces in different tongues. Sociology professor Carlos Castro read “Pueblo Tropical” by Nicaraguan poet Salomón de la Selva. English professor Jill Darley-Vanis read “La Beauté” from Charles Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and provided a handout showing the dramatic variations between three English translations of the poem. Student Joy Robertson-Maciel, meanwhile, read a prose passage in Portuguese from Brazilian writer Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis.

The prize for most gruesome readings, however, had to go to the students in Professor Julian Nelson’s German classes, who read from classic German children’s poems. One passage, from the classic collection *Der Struwwelpeter*, told the tale of a naughty child who sucks his thumbs—until a tailor chops them off. Another told the tale of a friendship between a cat and a dog, which ends with one of them getting shot. “There are no happy endings in German, sorry,” said Nelson with a laugh.



Saudi students Majed Alhumaidani, Saleh Almaki, and Faisal Aljubaylah talk about their country and culture.

## Saudi Student Panel

Also on November 20, three international students from Saudi Arabia spoke about their country, its culture, and their experiences living in the United States. It was clear that

life for a young person in America is very different from that of a young person in Saudi Arabia. For one thing, it's lonelier; all three students spoke wistfully about their closely knit families and about the comfort of having lots of relatives living together. "When I was home, all my day was scheduled to be about my family," said Saleh Almaki, the eldest of 11 children by his father's two wives. "But here, every day is scheduled to be about myself."

The students, all three of whom are Muslim, also expressed hope that they could help dispel American misconceptions about Islam. Faisal Aljubaylah said he wanted Americans to understand that "the first letter of Islam is 'learn'—not just 'learn about Islam,' but 'learn about other cultures and religions.'"



Students provided music during the International Student Exhibition.

### **International Student Exhibition**

On November 21, students gathered in Gaiser Student Center to enjoy art and music with an international flair. Many students from instructor Felipe Montoya's Spanish classes wore skeletal Day of the Dead face paint as they stood before the traditional Day of the Dead altars they'd created as extra-credit projects. In Mexico, these altars often honor deceased relatives—here, students created altars to celebrities passed.

One was devoted to Michael Jackson, complete with framed fingerless glove; another, honoring Elvis Presley, included a guitar.



Christian Fairchild and Amanda Murphy show off their Day of the Dead altar to Pancho Villa.

Students Amanda Murphy and Christian Fairchild sat next their altar honoring the spirit of Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa. “We were going to go with a painter, but one student in our group is blind and wanted something she could enjoy, too,” explained Murphy, who is co-enrolled at Clark and at Portland State University. “We settled on a revolutionary. That’s a theme everyone can get behind: rebellion and revolution. We can all identify with that.”

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. Erika Nava Photo: Clark College/Hannah Erickson*

More photos on Flickr.

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# Q&A with: English instructor Alexis Nelson



English instructor  
Alexis Nelson

English instructor Alexis Nelson has taught at Clark College for four years. Last year she became active in the committee that organizes the college's Columbia Writers Series (CWS), which brings accomplished writers to the college to read from and discuss their work; the next installment of the series is on Monday, Nov. 18. Nelson, who earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of California at Santa Barbara, has a Master of Fine Arts degree in Nonfiction Writing from Portland State University. Recently, *Clark 24/7* chatted with her about CWS, as well as about a new English course she's helping to develop and her own recent brush with literary fame.

**I understand you've become part of the group that organizes Clark's Columbia Writers Series. Could you tell me a little bit about that event and its purpose?**

The Columbia Writers Series brings professional authors to campus to read from and talk about their work. We bring in local and national fiction writers, nonfiction writers, poets, playwrights and screenwriters. As for the purpose of the series, last year I had a student tell me she didn't "get" poetry until she attended a CWS reading, with the poet Matthew Dickman. Hearing Dickman read his work helped this student appreciate and understand poetry in a new way, and it got her interested in attending more readings in the future. To me, that's what CWS is all about: enriching the educational experience of Clark students by introducing them to contemporary authors and by exposing them to literature in a new way. The series also emphasizes Clark's role as a center for arts and culture within the community, and it builds connections between Clark faculty, students, and members of the public.

**CWS seems to be undergoing a sea change recently. What's the thought process behind that, and what can we look forward to seeing at CWS in the future?**

There is a core group of English department faculty that is really excited about CWS right now, and we've been putting a lot of work into getting great authors to come to campus and creating more awareness of our readings. We're all writers ourselves, and we see so much opportunity to build this series into something truly special for Clark and the community. We've also been working on building stronger connections between CWS and some of the other exciting creative writing initiatives we have at Clark. For instance, last year, Clark's art and literary journal, *Phoenix*, published a fantastic interview with one of our CWS readers, Charles D'Ambrosio. D'Ambrosio is an award-winning author with a national reputation, and having that in-depth interview with him was great for *Phoenix*, not to mention a wonderful opportunity for the student who conducted the interview. We'd love to be able to do more things like this in the future, in addition to

continuing to bring in the best writers from the Northwest and beyond.

**Tell me about this coming CWS reading.**

I'm really excited about the November 18 reading for a couple of reasons. First, we're going to have two writers: poet Zachary Schomburg and fiction-writer Ismet Prcic. Zachary and Ismet both won Oregon Book Awards this year, so this is a chance to hear two of the Northwest's best contemporary writers share their work. I'm also especially excited for this reading because Ismet actually teaches at Clark—he's an adjunct in the Drama department—so we'll also be celebrating Clark's talented faculty. Ismet was born in Bosnia and his award-winning novel *Shards* tells the story of a young Bosnian immigrant, so there's also a connection between the November 18 reading and International Education Week, which will be happening at the same time.

**I know you've been developing a Creative Nonfiction course at Clark. How did that come about, and what role do you think the course will fill at Clark?**

Creative nonfiction is an important genre that has become a lot more prominent and popular in the last couple of decades. It's a diverse genre that includes things like memoir, personal essay, travel writing, and even journalistic pieces that use some of the techniques of fiction-writing such as description and scene-building. If you look at other schools that offer fiction and poetry writing courses, most of them will have creative nonfiction writing classes as well. My MFA is in nonfiction writing, and I'm a nonfiction writer myself, so when I saw that there weren't any creative nonfiction courses being offered at Clark, I wanted to design one. I think this class will help round out the creative writing offerings at Clark. It's also an important course because this type of writing is fun and creative, but it also has practical applications. If you're interested in writing for magazines,

you need to know creative nonfiction. Being able to write a great personal essay will also help with college and scholarship applications.

### **How do Clark students respond to the coursework in this class?**

When I taught nonfiction writing at Clark last spring, I had a number of Running Start students who were in their teens; there were also several returning students in their 30s and 40s. To me, this diversity is part of what makes Clark special. Particularly in a class where you're writing from personal experience, having students who have been through a lot in their lives and others who are just beginning to figure out who they are makes for a dynamic class. The students were so respectful of one another, and I think that both the older and the younger students learned a lot from each another.

### **How has teaching this course informed your own writing process?**

Teaching forces me to think about how different pieces of writing are put together, and to put into words ideas about craft that I might not otherwise fully articulate to myself. I also like to do all the writing exercises that I give my students along with them, and this can sometimes open unexpected doors for me and lead to new work. Overall, it's just great to be immersed in reading, thinking, and talking about the kind of writing I'm most passionate about. It's like breathing richer air.

### **Finally, I know you're hesitant to talk about this, but your essay, "On Love and Memory," was recently listed as a notable essay in *The Best American Essays 2013*. How does it feel to have your work recognized by such a prestigious publication? Also, since the original essay isn't available online, could you share a little about its theme?**

One of my grandmothers had dementia and the other currently has Alzheimer's; so the essay is partly about what they've

gone through and partly about my own fears of losing my memory. It also, like the title suggests, explores the relationship between memory and love. The essay is structured like a collage, with short, discrete sections that are woven together to create a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts. It's a somewhat experimental kind of writing that I've been really excited by lately.

I was thrilled when the essay was published in the first place (in a great journal called *The Normal School*), but knowing that it stood out to the editor of the *Best American Essays* series feels even better. At the same time, it's funny how quickly the initial excitement over getting news like that fades, in the sense that it doesn't make the work any easier. I'd imagine that even getting a big book deal or winning a prestigious prize would be same. Afterward, you still have to go back to your desk and figure out how to put more words on the page.

*Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*