Claire Gerkins is a French major with minors in chemistry and biology from Knoxville, Tennessee. As a first-year student, Claire played Trinculo in the FRE 349 Winter Term production of Aimé Césaire’s Une Tempête. Claire studied abroad in Montpellier, France, in the spring of her sophomore year. She is a member of the National French Honor Society Pi Delta Phi and the French Club. As an Honors Fellow, Claire combined her passion for French with her love of animals in her thesis: “L’Humanité des êtres animaux et l’animalité des êtres humains: Une analyse littéraire et socio-philosophique de la subjectivité animale dans trois mémoires contemporains français” where she argued that contemporary French authors of memoirs about animals have imagined a form of animal subjectivity. After graduation, Claire will be working at a veterinary clinic in Knoxville before applying to vet school to pursue a career in veterinary medicine.
Chinese professor Binnan Gao began the online half of Spring 2020 with goals to maintain the same pace and rigor as before and use proper technologies to ensure the number of interactions and communications necessary for successful second language and culture learning. One thing she insisted on was keeping the workload and due dates the same. Thanks to WebEx, she has been able to have online classes synchronously and students could practice with their classmates in smaller groups much like they could in a classroom. Students can make cultural presentations online and answer questions from their fellow students all on Moodle. However, even though the class tried the best they could, the learning experience was not the same as in a real classroom due to the limitation of technology. However, in the meanwhile, students have taken greater ownership of their learning. For example, they have been correcting their own character quizzes before submitting online, which gave them another opportunity to learn. Each student has also had an important role in building the learning community by helping each other with technical issues, sharing with each other some learning apps, and contacting students who were late in showing up for a class.

The challenges have been to find what technology can and cannot do and accept its limitations. Without Webex and Moodle, it would have been more difficult to create this interactive learning environment. Without Whiteboard students would not be able to write on the whiteboard together, though much more slowly than on a real board. We have realized that online classes cannot replace classroom learning, at least not for second language learning. But we are making the best use of it to serve our purposes right now, and without it, we could not have been in even more dire situations.

“I believe that students appreciate it that the classes of WLC, with Chinese language courses included, are conducted synchronously. That they need to go to online classes at fixed times every week have helped build structure in their learning. The interactions between me and the students and among themselves were crucial for them as learners who need encouragement, feedback, and communications. Lastly, it fits with the model of language and cultural learning, which needs lots of face-to-face communication. In other words, I have strived to bring interaction part of the classroom learning to online learning as much as possible, which is essential for language learning and important to the learners' cognition, motivation, and affection.”

Binnan Gao.
THE SPRING OF 2020 WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE HIGHLIGHT OF MY COLLEGE CAREER. IT IS MY LAST SEMESTER AT ELON UNIVERSITY, A PLACE I HAVE CALLED HOME FOR FOUR YEARS, WHERE I HAVE MADE COUNTLESS MEMORIES, PURSUED MY MOST ARDENT PASSIONS, AND MET PROFOUNDLY SPECIAL PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED ME GROW AS A STUDENT AND MORE IMPORTANTLY AS A PERSON. HOWEVER, MY LAST SEMESTER AS AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HAS NOT GONE AS I IMAGINED IT WOULD. I CURRENTLY FIND MYSELF FAR AWAY FROM MY HOME AT ELON, WORKING REMOTELY AND PREPARING MYSELF FOR A MONTH’S WORTH OF ONLINE CLASSES. THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC HAS BROUGHT MY FINAL SEMESTER AT ELON TO A HALTING STOP, BRINGING WITH IT CLOUDS OF UNCERTAINTY THAT HAVE MADE IT ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO FOCUS. MY LAST CLASSES AS AN ELON STUDENT HAVE BEEN MOVED ONLINE UNTIL APRIL 20TH, THE DATE DESIGNATED BY THE UNIVERSITY WHEN RESIDENTIAL LIFE ON CAMPUS AND IN-PERSON CLASSES COULD POSSIBLY RESUME.

THE TEMPORARY DATE OF APRIL 20TH FEELS LIKE A DISTANT DREAM BUT OFFERS A GLIMMER OF HOPE FOR SENIORS LIKE ME TO RETURN TO LIFE ON CAMPUS AND CARRY OUT MY FINAL DAYS OF LIFE AT ELON CELEBRATING WITH FACULTY, CLASSMATES, AND CLOSE FRIENDS ALIKE OUR MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS WELL AS OUR DREAMS AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE. UNTIL THEN, MY FELLOW CLASSMATES AND I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE PREVENTIVE MEASURES TAKEN BY THE UNIVERSITY AND THE SLOWING OF THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS AROUND THE COUNTRY WILL GIVE US SENIORS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE OUR FINAL MOMENTS AS STUDENTS OF ELON UNIVERSITY AND TAKE OUR HIGHLY ANTICIPATED GRADUATION PHOTOS UNDER THE OAKS PROUDLY WEARING OUR CAPS AND GOWNS.
Sarah Barron (left) has excelled as a Spanish major with a K-12 teaching certificate and double minors in Business Administration and Latin American Studies. While at Elon she completed two semesters of study abroad—one in Seville, Spain, in the spring of 2018 and the other in Oaxaca, Mexico, in spring 2019. She has completed her student teaching at East Chapel Hill High School teaching Spanish III and AP Spanish—successfully transitioning to online teaching halfway through the semester. She’s incredibly compassionate, having volunteered at the Center for New North Carolinians in Greensboro where she cultivated a passion for working with immigrants. She has been awarded a Fulbright in Madrid, Spain, and will serve at a community organization that provides extracurricular programming for the gitano, or gypsy, community beginning in January 2021.

Fullbright Scholar Taylor Garner (right) will be traveling to Colombia next spring to teach English to university students in the country, and she will also be conducting a side project to contribute to her undergraduate research: Looking at women’s memories of political violence and whether there is visible mobilization. After studying abroad in Argentina, she became engrossed by the culture, people, and language, leading her to want to explore more parts of Latin America. Taylor was drawn towards Columbia because of its multiculturalism, rich civil history, and the recent immigration situation from Venezuela, and she hopes to learn more about these aspects first-hand. Taylor is excited to immerse herself in the local culture, practice her Spanish, and listen to the stories and diverse perspectives of members from the local community.
This spring I was supposed to teach COR Capstone course in Florence, Italy. As the COVID-19 spread, hitting Northern Italy in particular and then the US, our experience there was abruptly interrupted. Elon withdrew all of its students from Italy and closed the study abroad program for the entire term. The fast pace of this development, plus the realization that we all had to return to the US, was extremely hard to process for the entire group, particularly for students who had planned to spend 4+ months in Florence for several years. Many of the students chose Elon precisely because they hoped to study abroad for a semester. So, what happened was heartbreaking and traumatic for all of us. In terms of the course, it was on the topic of hospitality, titled: Private and Public Life of Hospitality. In a way, what happened with the spread of the pandemic gave us an opportunity to reflect critically and through our own, very personal and very painful experience, about the meaning and the value of the tradition of hospitality, and the roles that hosts and guests play through this reciprocal relationship. Students got an additional opportunity to think of AEF (Accademia Europea di Firenze) as our host and reflect on the importance of being hospitable, i.e. accepting and welcoming of guests in Italian culture; as well as an opportunity to think of their role and that of Elon as guests, considering how hospitality was playing out on individual, personal, then institutional, national and cultural levels, I think students convey best what the experience meant for them, so I will give you some examples from their reflective writings: “It has taken me some time to get to the point where I can even think about my life in Florence after the very abrupt and sad goodbye. I would be lying if I said that I was not still trying to process and deal with my emotions...” “The best lesson I got in hospitality was in those last 36 hours in Florence. I look at Antonio and the rest of the AEF staff as a picture of selfless, genuine hospitality. Though they were clearly upset that we were leaving and likely frustrated by Elon’s decision, they committed to making sure we had anything we needed before our departure. Antonio said to us on Wednesday morning, “We will make miracles for you all.””

“Having the semester end up like this was truly traumatic and has taken a serious toll on my well being. One of the hardest pills for me to swallow, is all of the once in a lifetime experiences I lost.” “I experienced a feeling of being lost, [...] when were all sent home, we were separated from the people who understood our feelings on the matter. It’s an isolating feeling, even when I have a loving family who tried to connect but they just couldn’t. I just felt so lost at home...” “This experience has taught me so many lessons about hospitality and host/guest relationships. To hear and see how distraught some of the AEF professors were when they heard the news about our program means that they deeply valued their role as hosts and genuinely appreciated us as guests in their school and their country more broadly. In other words, this traumatic experience taught me that hospitality has the unique ability to connect us all on a deep emotional level. Moreover, this experience has taught me how important hospitality is in creating a sense of belonging for people in an unfamiliar place. As I sit here in my home and reflect on my experience in Italy, I not only miss the sheer beauty of the country itself, but I also deeply miss the people that made this experience so worthwhile and memorable for me. It is this feeling of warmth and belonging from AEF and Italians in general that motivates me to return in the future and create memories that will last a lifetime.”
Madison Aycock decided to major in Classics because of how interdisciplinary the field can be; I have a wide range of interests and I get to explore them all through studying antiquity. She felt most comfortable sticking to one learning process before entering the Classics department but is now becoming more comfortable navigating new pathways of thinking. One thing that Madison would like to say to first-year students who are thinking of becoming classics majors is that “Classics is much more than ancient cultures and languages, but about different ways of thinking, living, and approaching the world we are a part of. More than that, you'll always find yourself surrounded by a very supportive and enthusiastic group of mentors and friends who care about your growth and success.”

Madison loves being able to freely explore a topic that interests her, specifically one that she doesn’t get to learn much about in the classroom, hasn’t been looked at in such a way, and combines her love of both art and anthropology. In the future, Madison plans to use my studies in Classics to pursue a career in Classical Archaeology, excavating, and studying ancient artifacts to uncover more about life in the ancient world. However, she thinks that the skills and content she’s learned – as well as the contemporary relevance of Classics – will always be significant to whatever career she finds herself in.
Hebrew Professor Boaz Avraham–Katz has adapted his courses to the new online teaching format and still supports his students despite working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of his class materials such as forums and other activities were already online for students to access during classes, so the transition was relatively easy for students to access the coursework at home. However, the hands-on courses had more of a difficult transition to the online format. For Professor Boaz, the hardest transition was his Falafel Nation class because of its emphasis on cooking, group activities, and working with Elon Dining. In order to adapt to remote learning, Professor Boaz created new assignments labeled “Cooking in Quarantine”, where he introduced his students to different recipes. If it was safe for students to go out and buy groceries, they would cook at home with their families and post pictures of their food on Moodle. Professor Boaz makes sure to meet with his students once a week as a class, and other times he meets one on one. He understands that some students may be struggling to learn and study in their home environment, and so he checks in regularly with his students to connect with them and help with assignments.
Graduating high school and moving out of the house to college can be daunting. How about the boldness to rise to this challenge and take on not a second, but a third language? This is a challenge that Diana Calle, winner of this year’s Italian Studies Excellence Award took on starting the day she stepped foot on Elon’s campus. After four years of dedication in Italian language and culture studies, Diana says that now she is fully confident in her skills of reading, writing, and speaking the language. She continued to explain that, “Italian became my refuge and my passion.

It led me to think of the way we communicate with one another and the world in a different perspective”. As a Strategic Communications major, Diana interned at an events company in Italy and had the opportunity to write in Italian for their blog and magazine while she studied abroad in Sorrento. Clearly, Diana Calle is not afraid to venture outside of her comfort zone and find new avenues of professional and academic growth.

Diana understands that learning Italian means far more than grammar and translation but rather it means exploring another culture. She sees beauty in language. Professor Essary describes Diana’s work ethic, “She help set the ‘gold standard’ for excellence in participation—whether reading, speaking or writing—in ITL 375, Italian Literature and Video Games.” This outstanding passion and dedication to learning makes Diana a deserving winner of this award.

By: Lilly Rothschild
Latin professor Tedd Wimperis has found a way to continue teaching and supporting his students despite working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Adapting to remote teaching in an online format was not an easy process, considering that collaborative problem-solving and group dynamics are important aspects of the classroom. For Dr. Wimperis, the transition to an online course has meant finding a balance between maintaining the pace and work expectations, while also making the course flexible to fit the new online medium. Students are experiencing pressures from the impact of the global crisis in addition to adapting to online learning, and with this in mind, Dr. Wimperis has structured his online courses with simplicity and flexibility as guiding principles. Each week there are two lesson and assignment clusters, with a single weekly deadline for all submitted work, and lectures are recorded with Kaltura so that students can view them on Moodle anytime. There are also optional scheduled “Homework Hangouts” on Zoom for anyone who wants to do work or ask questions in a group setting. Using quick surveys helps Dr. Wimperis connect with his students, get a sense of how the online change is affecting them, and helps him be more responsive to students’ circumstances. Dr. Wimperis hopes that learning Latin and exploring ancient Greece and Rome can provide something stable, affirming, and engaging for his students in this difficult time.
French students from abroad

Gracie Moore studied abroad in Paris, France, this spring and had the most amazing experience. She stayed with a host family in the suburb of Colombes, and she connected with many professors and students in the program. Gracie fell in love, not only with the city of Paris, but also with her boyfriend who she met at Jardin du Luxembourg, a beautiful public garden near where she took her classes. As the COVID-19 pandemic grew worse, Gracie's plans drastically changed. When she returned from her winter break in Barcelona, she and many other abroad students were told that they needed to leave France and return to the United States as soon as possible. Devastated, Gracie left for home in Wichita, Kansas, on March 16th, where she self-isolated herself for weeks to ensure she had not contracted the virus. She has been continuing her classes online, but online classes are not the same as being with the professors in person and immersing herself in the French language and culture. Gracie stays in contact with her classmates and boyfriend, and she hopes to return to Paris this summer or fall. While discussing the COVID-19 situation with people she had met in France, many responded with “C'est la vie!”, or “That's life”. Gracie hopes to keep this attitude during quarantine, and hopes to be able to return to the country she grew to adore.

By: Elli Knowlton
Olivia Kendrick ’20, a German Studies and IGS major, is the winner of this year’s Marsilius von Inghen award. The award, named for a founder of the University of Heidelberg, is given annually to a high-achieving student of German. In deciding this year’s award, the German faculty cited Olivia’s impressive language abilities, her appreciation for human difference, and her upbeat personality, describing her as this year’s outstanding student in the German program. Olivia’s German Studies senior thesis explores the evolution of the Heimat concept in German film between 1945 and 2015, and was accepted to present at SURF 2020. Olivia spent spring 2019 in Berlin and has lived in Stuttgart and Munich. She has been an advocate for all things German throughout her four years at Elon, and was the president of the German Club in 2019/2020.
“Sin Embargo” is a documentary created by our Periclean Scholars Class of 2020 during their 10-day trip to Cuba over Winter Term. This short narrative includes the voices of 17 residents of Cuba and it explores Cuban culture, history and the relation with the US by the cohort. The title can be literally translated as “without the embargo”, however the word embargo also means “however” in Spanish. This project was seeking to explore the diverse histories and needs of the people of Cuba, and develop a deep understanding about these elements. When in Cuba, students went to various venues with many different groups to gather as much information about Cuba as possible, as the Periclean Scholars have spent the past 3 years studying Cuban culture, history and relations with the US. Most importantly, they have been learning about the remarkably complex history and political relationship with the US, as these challenges combined with the travel restrictions, put a strain on communication of the people of both countries. Despite the differences between governments, they believe the interaction between people is invaluable, which is why they focused on connecting with Cubans at a human level and encouraged dialogue between both nationalities. Lastly, April Roberts, the leader of the Periclean Scholars and the trip, distinguished a few Scholars for their dedication to this project.

“Whitney Miller was involved in helping to create the smaller documentaries and used her Spanish to help translate. Also, Jonathan Connolly helped in the transcriptions and translations. Natalie Omodt helped, too. We had other students who helped but I think these are the only students who are Spanish minors. I’ve copied them on this email in case you want to ask them a specific question. I can tell you that we had to transcribe all of the interviews we acquired in Cuba first before translating them so that we could come up with our storyline. It was very difficult in some cases because the Cuban accent can be challenging to understand and it can be hard to catch references to unfamiliar names, places and events.”
Chris McCollough, 2020, International Business major and Asian Studies minor. Chris lived in Shanghai, China for 6 years and spoke Chinese fluently before coming to Elon. Since then, he has taken Chinese consecutively for four years. The last two years has seen Chris’ Chinese progressing by leaps and bounds and he is now able to talk about abstract topics in business. Chris has also become a deep critical thinker with international perspectives, benefiting from his training in International business and internship experience in China. Chris will be working as a Project Management Analyst at MUFG Union Bank in September 2020.

Irisgzel Cheong, 2021, Business Analytics major with minors in computer science, data science and Asian Studies. Irisgzel lived in Beijing, China for 17 years and spoke Chinese fluently before coming to Elon. Since then, she has taken Chinese for three consecutive years. Ambitious and meticulous, Irisgzel has made steady progress and all her four skills in Chinese have reached advanced level. Irisgzel’s leadership skills have been shown in Asian Pacific Students Association as well as a Business fellow. She will work at FactSet this summer as a Global Client Solutions intern.

Written by: Olivia Kendrick
KATHRYN GERRY (TOP): Kathryn is a Political Science and International and Global Studies major (concentration Middle East) minoring in Asian Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Interreligious Studies. Kathryn has served as President of the Arabic Language Organization, secretary of Zeta Tau Alpha Fraternity, and has been actively involved with Lunch Buddies volunteer organization. As a Multifaith Scholar, Kathryn has conducted an intensive two-year undergraduate research project that examined the influence of migration from South India to the Gulf and subsequent shifts in the economic, political, and social landscapes in India. She has taken seven semesters of Arabic at Elon, beginning in the spring of her first year. She has also studied Urdu for a semester while studying abroad in Varanasi, India. Kathryn was awarded the Critical Language Scholarship for the summer of 2020, and plans to complete the online option of the language study that the scholarship currently offers. She was also awarded a Fulbright Research Grant to Bahrain for 2020-2021, and plans to accept it and pursue her research there in the fall if permitted. Kathryn plans to continue her Arabic studies with the hopes of utilizing the language in her professional career. As a graduating senior, Kathryn was recently received the PERCS Outstanding Ethnography Award and the International and Global studies Citizen-Scholar award.

TAYLOR GARNER (MIDDLE): Taylor is an International and Global Studies. Her concentrations in Latin America and the Middle East propelled her to take Spanish and Arabic during her four years at Elon. In addition, she conducted independent research in Nablus, Palestine where she was able to advance her Arabic proficiency and cultural awareness. This research specifically investigated women's intergenerational memories of political violence in Argentina and Palestine. This research earned her one of two national awards for academic achievement abroad. On-campus, Taylor served as a coordinator for the Immigrant and Refugee Outreach Club. She recently received the Critical Language Scholarship to Amman, Jordan and a Fulbright fellowship to teach English in Columbia. Taylor was also accepted into the Peace Corps. Currently, she plans to seek employment over the summer while continuing online Arabic classes, the travel to Colombia in the fall for her English teaching assignment. After completing her fellowships, Taylor plans to pursue a Master's degree in International Development in the US or the UK. Her final career aspiration is to work as a Foreign Service Officer or with USAID or other UN organizations. Taylor attributes all her achievements and plans to her foreign language studies and looks forward to a future of cross-cultural understanding.

HOLLY CARDOZA (NOT PICTURED): Holly is a first-year double-majoring in Political Science and International & Global Studies. She is actively involved in the Arabic Language Association on campus and was recently elected the Parliamentarian of Elon's delegation of the North Carolina Student Legislature. Holly plans to continue her study of the Arabic language throughout her time at Elon, and she hopes to further strengthen her skills and explore different cultures through studying abroad in an Arabic-speaking country. Holly started Arabic as a first year in the fall of 2019 and has been a star student in both elementary level classes that she has taken over the fall and spring. Holly's exert remarkable effort in studying the language and pursues every opportunity to engage the culture and practice her speaking. Her positive demeanor in class is inspiring and her willingness to speak up contributes to a vibrant class interaction.

By: Robert Maruca
Due to COVID-19, SURF had to be cancelled in person this year, leaving us to celebrate the accomplishments and research of over 247 students virtually. Spanish professor Pablo Celis-Castillo was the mentor for Lily Sobalvarro this year, and we asked him to describe this incredible experience.

“Presenting at SURF is the culmination of a long process that starts with a conversation. Lily Sobalvarro’s project, for instance, began when she came to my office in the Fall of 2019 to discuss how literature has been able to reflect upon the problems of corruption and violence in contemporary Mexico. Lily selected Emiliano Monge’s El cielo árido as the primary source for her project and, through several months, created a fascinating reading of the text. Although this year’s SURF was not able to take place, she did an outstanding job presenting her work at the online panel held by the Spanish section in late April and, as a mentor, I felt incredibly proud”

BY: PAOLA IEGER GAESKI