What some of our recent graduates have to say about their experience in modern languages and literatures at Loyola Chicago

Adrián Cuevas (MA, 2015): One-of-a-Kind Program

My time at Loyola University Chicago was one of much academic and personal growth. Being part of the department of Modern Languages and Literatures and working on my Spanish MA was by far one of the most gratifying and rewarding experiences I have had. Like any new chapter in life, it was a challenge at first, getting to know a new school and a new city. Yet I quickly learned that I was part of a one-of-a-kind program, one that truly cared and saw for the well being of its students. More than staff, professors, and advisors, the individuals I met and worked with have become friends, better yet, family. Their unconditional support made the challenges a whole lot easier and allowed me to better focus on my academic development.

Having been part of the Spanish MA at Loyola Chicago has truly prepared me professionally. Due to the intimate nature of the program, its small class sizes, and individualized mentorship, my academic skills in the subject matter flourished beyond my expectations. I was reading and writing like never before. I became more confident in myself and the work I was producing. I was also fortunate to have been awarded a Teaching Assistantship, which allowed me to develop my teaching style and gain experience in the classroom. The overall positive experience was one that truly fulfilled the Jesuit mission of the university and prepared me in an unparalleled way.

I truly feel that my time at LUC is what paved the path to where I am today. With a better professional and academic skill-set in hand, and the support of amazing professors, I find myself at Teachers College of Columbia University working towards a PhD in International and Transcultural Studies. It is an opportunity that I do not take for granted, nor an achievement that I only merit to my efforts. I whole-heartedly feel that what I learned and the instruction of the professors of the Spanish department at Loyola University Chicago afforded me my present opportunities.

Arelis Rivero-Cabrera (MA, 2014): Go Set the World on Fire

Studying history and literature is the strategy I have chosen to get down to the roots of the diverse cultural, political and socioeconomic realities that I have been experiencing throughout my multicultural life-journey in Cuba, Brazil, Spain, and the United States. In 2012 I began my MA in Spanish at Loyola University Chicago, a program in which learning and research harmoniously converged with the improvement of my skills as an instructor of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Literature. During these two intense and extremely productive years of immersion in an encouraging intellectual community, I had the opportunity to take courses covering a wide range of movements, genres, and authors from an interdisciplinary perspective. This approach allowed me to reflect on gender, ethnicity, religion, and identity in a dialogic relation with my background, while also opening new and exciting projects, both academic and personal.

Since 2014 I have been working toward my doctorate in Spanish at the University of California, Davis, with an emphasis in Latin American Literature and Cultural Studies. It may sound pretentious, but I think that I will succeed in achieving this new goal in my career; after all, I was –and will always be– part of the Loyola University of Chicago’s family, where students grow in knowledge, passion, and hard work. I will always remember my last day as a Loyola graduate student and Teaching Assistant. I had already passed my comprehensive exam, and once I had finished teaching my last Spanish lesson to undergrads, I silently said to myself while erasing the board: “Ok muchacha, now go set the world on fire, because no matter how big is the challenge, you are totally prepared to face it.”
Alex Korte (MA, 2015): Prepared…to Succeed

I look back on my time at Loyola with great fondness. The Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, just steps from Lake Michigan, is full of kind and intelligent faculty members whose backgrounds are as diverse as the subject matter they teach. Under their guidance I explored worlds of reading, writing, theory, and literary analysis. Their support helped me cultivate my skills as a professional academic and student of Hispanic cultures and literatures. The most enjoyable work I studied was *El Cid*, a medieval poem about a heroic Christian soldier who, unjustly exiled into enemy territory, fights in the name of God and king to reestablish his honor.

While reading works like *El Cid* was fun, the program is also very demanding and—in a word—difficult. The course work and expectations of the faculty are on par with the rigors and rewards of a career in professional academia. I kept busy with a full class schedule, while teaching undergraduate grammar courses and working in the Language Learning Resource Center at the same time. Currently, I’m serving as a Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene volunteer for the Peace Corps in rural Perú. When I start applying for doctoral programs after my service, I will do so with the confidence that my time at Loyola Chicago prepared me to succeed in the next phase of my professional development.

Marie Bold (MA, 2014): Language is a Powerful Thing

It's funny how things come full circle. I loved language as a young child, even keeping small binders full of words in different languages I picked up from books and movies. When I had the chance to study a foreign language in middle school, I opted for French. As it turned out, it was at the same time as orchestra practice, so I took Spanish instead. Little did I know how much that "detour" would effect the rest of my life.

After studying Spanish in high school, I studied Spanish and Global Studies in college, and realized that I might want to teach Spanish as a profession. I was profoundly impacted by my professors and their commitment to their students, academic growth, and social justice. After graduation I was able to teach abroad in Málaga, Spain for one year, and then began my MA in Spanish program at Loyola Chicago.

I will always be grateful to Loyola for giving me the chance to dive deep into teaching, giving me a real, holistic experience as an instructor. I am grateful for the examples of my professors, especially Dr. Deni Heyck, who truly invested in me and my personal and professional growth. Her passion for learning, her work in Latin America for social justice, and her example of drawing out students, helping them make discoveries by empowering their voices, have greatly inspired and encouraged me in my own career. I recently accepted a job at All Saints School Portland, in Oregon, teaching all levels of Spanish. It is a challenging and exciting environment, and I am very fortunate to work with enthusiastic colleagues and students. I especially enjoy doing cultural units and employing the communicative method for teaching foreign languages, which I learned as a student of teaching methodologies at Loyola. I think often of that class and the techniques and strategies that we were taught. I find myself and my students encouraged and excited to experience measurable language growth as we seek out authentic examples of spoken and written language, and find practical, contextualized ways to speak in class.

I am so privileged to work alongside students as they move forward in their learning processes. The teaching models, use of technology, content, and commitment that I saw in my colleagues, professors, and mentors at Loyola University Chicago have made me a better educator and global citizen. Language is a powerful thing!