Acing Your Language Class
Tips & Best Practices

Eating Authentically in Boston
Restaurant recommendations and recipes to try

Faculty Spotlight

Language of the Month Film Discussion

Add to Your Playlist and Watchlist
Songs and Movies

Study Abroad

Literature and Authors

"So we'll just let things take their course and never be sorry."
-F. Scott Fitzgerald

ISSUE NO.14
PRACTICE ENGLISH with the ERC

The ERC offers Language Link for English! Language Link hosts several informal, half-hour discussions each week. Sessions are led by a native speaker and are offered at two different levels: intermediate, and advanced.
BU students can study abroad in Los Angeles, California, and Washington, D.C. In both programs, academics and practical experience are intertwined and students benefit from the real-life knowledge of their professors. Visit Study Abroad to learn more.
Korine is a PhD candidate in English and American Literature. She is currently writing a dissertation on how American masculine archetypes, like the cowboy, are pathologized in post-World War II film and popular fiction. In addition to teaching at BU, Korine also serves as the Intern Coaching Specialist for the Goddard Space Flight Center. She is a huge advocate of expanding how we think about the relevance and accessibility of English as a subject and a degree path.
What tips do you have for people learning English?
It always helps to tie pop culture into your language learning process. Listen to music in the language(s) you’re learning, watch shows written or dubbed in that language, and try reading books that are already familiar to you in your first language. Animated Disney movies and soundtracks are one of my go-to’s when I’m just starting to learn a language. And, of course, put yourself out there! Practice speaking the language you’re learning whenever possible, especially with native speakers. Boston has an awesome, diverse community—take advantage of it! If/when your budget and the pandemic allows, plan a trip somewhere where you’ll get to immerse yourself in the language. The more it’s a part of your life, the quicker you’ll pick it up. Finally, practice translating a text into the language you’re trying to learn. This applies much more to reading than speaking a language, but the process of researching words you don’t know and thinking deeply about how to express certain ideas can 1) help you understand your first language better and 2) help you appreciate the richness and variance in the different vocabularies and grammars of other languages.

Why should students attend the Nightmare Before Christmas film discussion?
We all have someone in our life who complains that you’re just “overthinking” a movie—sometimes we’re that person ourselves. I think that complaint comes from a concern that the film was not made to stand up to deeper analysis and that criticism ultimately damages our filmgoing experience, especially when we’re discussing something like an animated Disney movie. However, that perspective limits our opportunity to experience the joy of getting to take popular culture seriously. Students should come to the film discussion if they want to think about how Nightmare Before Christmas became a Disney movie (and a Hot Topic icon); what has historically connected Halloween and Christmas; what the broader lessons of Nightmare Before Christmas are; and what we can get out of the film from an American cultural context. Plus, it’s so fun! And the music is infectious.

Is there anything else you would like to share?
English is a major that is often stereotyped as impractical or non-lucrative, but an English degree is about learning problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptive communication skills that are applicable well beyond your ability to summarize The Odyssey. Davidson has a great article debunking some popular myths about English majors, and in 2019, The Washington Post highlighted the importance—and employability!—of English majors. I am so excited by the recent boom in undergrads majoring and minoring in English, and I hope more people have the opportunity to take weird or intimidating courses in the department. Even if you don’t major in English, take advantage of your liberal arts education and challenge yourself in new arenas! If you’re on the fence, reach out to me anytime.
Chanukah (pronounced: KHAH-nuh-kah), is a Jewish festival that celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after it was desecrated by the Seleucid Empire in 164 BCE. After recapturing the Temple, the victorious Jewish rebels could only find enough consecrated olive oil to fuel the Temple’s candelabra for one day. The eight days of Chanukah commemorate that this tiny amount of oil miraculously lasted for eight days, allowing enough time for additional oil to be produced.

Today, the defining ritual of Chanukah is lighting a menorah each evening after dark. With each passing night, a new candle is added until all eight candles are lit on the final night of Chanukah.

Christmas is celebrated on December 25 and is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing Christmas with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. Christmas Day—has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

Beginning on December 26, millions throughout the world’s African Diaspora begin the weeklong celebration of Kwanzaa. There are daily ceremonies with food, decorations, and other cultural objects, such as the kinara, which holds seven candles. At many Kwanzaa celebrations, there are also African drumming and dancing. Kwanzaa is a time of communal self-affirmation when famous black heroes and heroines, as well as late family members, are celebrated.

Kwanzaa lasts for seven days and was founded in 1966 by Maulana Karenga, a professor, activist, and chair of black studies at California State University to help build stronger bonds between African-Americans and their communities.
DISHES TO TRY

Because oil is central to the story of Chanukah, Jewish communities around the world celebrate Chanukah by eating fried foods such as sufganiyot, bimuelos, and latkes.

The Bûche de Noël is a log-shaped cake meant to evoke the Yule log that once burned in European homes throughout Christmas. Click here for a collection of Christmas recipes you can try this holiday season.

SYMBOLIC FOODS FOR THE 7 DAYS OF KWANZAA

1. UMOJA: Dates, Figs and Milk
2. KUJICHAGULIA: Seasoned Olives
3. UJIMA: Caribbean sorrel
4. UJAMAA: Pink Party Punch
5. NIA: Sauteed Pecans
6. KUUMBA: Molasses Water
7. IMANI: Spicy Vinegar

The 6th Day of Kwanzaa falls on December 31 and is celebrated with a large feast called Karamu. Any dish can be included as part of Karamu.
Films
Click on the Movie Title to Watch Now

Black Candle
The first feature film on Kwanzaa, Black Candle traces the holiday's growth out of the Black Power Movement in the 1960s to its present-day reality as a global, pan-African holiday embraced by over millions of celebrants.

An American Tail
A young Russian-Jewish mouse, Fievel, flees persecution by cats. As the movie begins, Fievel and his family are celebrate Chanukah, and his father teaches him all about the great United States. America, his father tells him, is supposed to be a place where cats can't attack the mice. Although there are cats everywhere in America, Fievel still perseveres. An American Tail is an important analogy for the realities of anti-Jewish discrimination as told through a children's movie.

Full-Court Miracle
Inspired by the true stories of Joe Bryant and Lamont Carr, Full-Court Miracle tells a fable of five Philadelphia Jewish kids and their quest to win a local basketball tournament. The film interweaves the story of Chanukah with the team's journey from underdogs to winners.

Call Me By Your Name
The love story between Elio and Oliver is also a tale of self-discovery and acceptance. Elio's family, like many American Jews, aren't particularly observant. But through his relationship with Oliver, who wears his massive Star of David with pride, Elio begins to reexamine his lapsed faith. The movie ends with a Hanukkah scene in which housekeeper Mafalda makes latkes, Elio plays with gelt, and there's even a menorah with seven lit candles.
Watch Christmas Favorites

Click the play button for the watchlist
Language of the Month
Film Discussion

In collaboration with BU Libraries, the ERC presents The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993) with special guest Korine Powers, Senior Teaching Fellow and PhD candidate in English and American Literature. Event is open to current BU students, faculty, and staff.

Friday, December 10 at 3:00 PM ET | Register via Zoom

The Nightmare Before Christmas

The film follows the misadventures of Jack Skellington, who has become bored with the same annual routine of frightening people in the "real world." When Jack accidentally stumbles on Christmastown, filled with bright colors and warm spirits, he gets a new lease on life! He plots to bring Christmas under his control by kidnapping Santa Claus and taking over the role. But Jack soon discovers even the best-laid plans of mice and skeleton men can go seriously awry.

Boston University Libraries
and Educational Resource Center
Each evening, after lighting the menorah, many Jewish families sing traditional Chanukah songs in Hebrew, including **Hanerot Halalu** (These Chanukah Lights), **Maoz Tzur** (Rock of Ages), and **Al Hanisim** (For the Miracles).

There are also many popular Chanukah songs in Jewish vernacular languages from around the world! A classic Yiddish Chanukah song, which has been adapted into English, is **Chanukah, O Chanukah**! In the Sephardic Jewish community, a popular Ladino song is **Ocho Kandelikas** (Eight Candles). **A Puppy for Hanukkah** by Daveed Diggs reflects the struggle of parents to meet their kids' high expectations over eight nights.
Holiday Activities

**KWANZAA**

There's nothing like nestling in to read a good book, especially during the holiday season. So, this Kwanzaa, check out some of the books suggested by the Smithsonian!

**CHRISTMAS**

Get your family or invite your friends to build a gingerbread house! If you need inspiration, here are a few designs you could recreate.

**CHANUKUKAH**

A dreidel is a spinning top with four Hebrew letters. Dreidel is played in Jewish homes across the world on Chanukah. Here's how to play!