

# Studying Languages at University

School of Modern Languages  
and Cultures  
Durham University



Professor Marcela A. Cazzoli  
[marcela.a.cazzoli@durham.ac.uk](mailto:marcela.a.cazzoli@durham.ac.uk)

# This session

- Why languages?
- Why Durham?
- Overview of your four years at Durham
- Student ambassador Eleanor Betts
- Q&A

# Languages: the most capacious subject of all

---

Access to infinite cultural perspectives: they unlock worldviews, traditions, and ways of thinking

---

Complex structure & expression: express infinite thoughts, emotions, and ideas across all fields

---

Cross-disciplinary relevance: essential in law, science, art, and technology

---

Fosters personal and social growth: builds empathy, adaptability, and global connections

---

# Why study languages at university?

- Gain access to a world of ideas and experiences in an additional language
- Communicate with others in their native language, at home, or while traveling
- Enjoy a year abroad in at least one other country
- Build resilience and communication skills through the experience of language learning. No other subject fosters the same level of adaptability, persistence, and mental agility as studying languages.

# Changing world of professional skills

- Robert Goldstein, chief operating officer of Blackrock: 'It's that diversity of thinking, and diversity of people, and diversity of looking at different ways to solve a problem that really fuel innovation.'
- Ginni Rometty, the former CEO of IBM: 'In business, the ability to communicate in different languages shows not only respect for others but an understanding of the global nature of today's economy.'
- George Lee, co-head of Goldman Sachs' global institute: 'the skills that are really salient to cooperate with this new of intelligence in the world are critical thinking, understanding logic and rhetoric, the ability to be creative.'

# The importance of intercultural skills

Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo: 'The more you can be authentically global in your perspective, the more you can embrace different cultures, the more you can respect how business is done around the world, the more successful you will be.'

# Why Durham?



# Complete University Guide 2025

- Italian 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Asian Studies (Chinese & Japanese) 3<sup>rd</sup>
- German 4<sup>th</sup>
- French 5<sup>th</sup>
- Russian 5<sup>th</sup>
- Hispanic Studies 5<sup>th</sup>
- Arabic 6<sup>th</sup>
  
- Durham overall: 5<sup>th</sup>



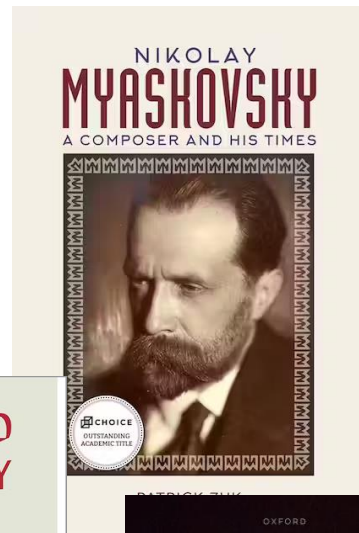
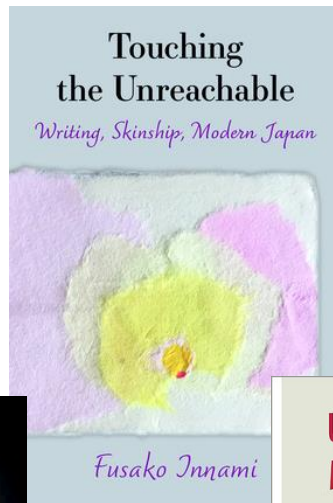
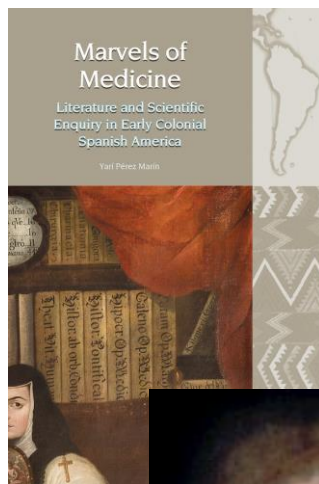
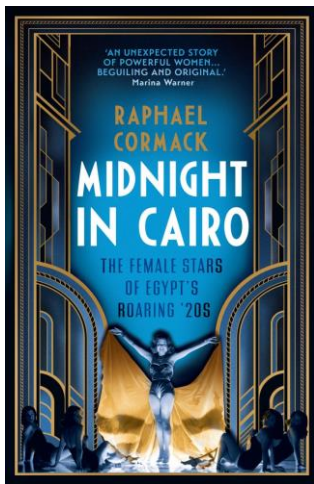
# Combination of languages and cultures

- High-level language skills in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, and Russian.
- All languages available from scratch (*ab initio*) in year 1.
- Advanced understanding of the cultures in which your chosen languages are spoken.
- Intercultural competence means you can operate effectively in the target culture(s) and move between them.



# Staff who enable you to thrive

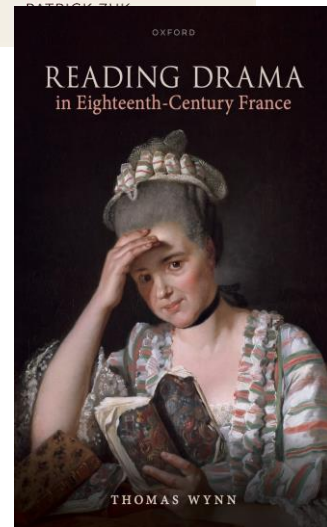
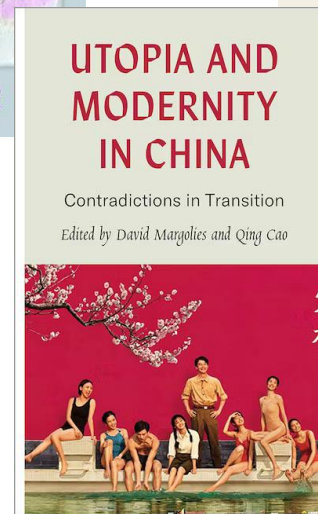
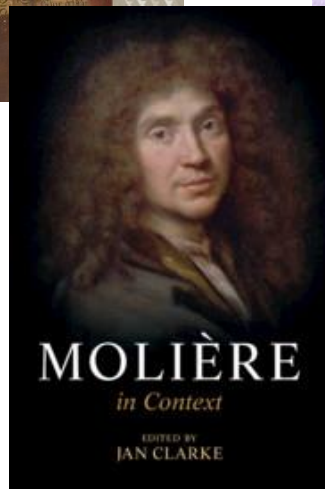
- Around 95 staff
- 8 languages
- Specialisms incl. politics, visual art and film, literature, music, theatre, translation, history etc.
- Expertise from across the globe, and from the Middle Ages to now.



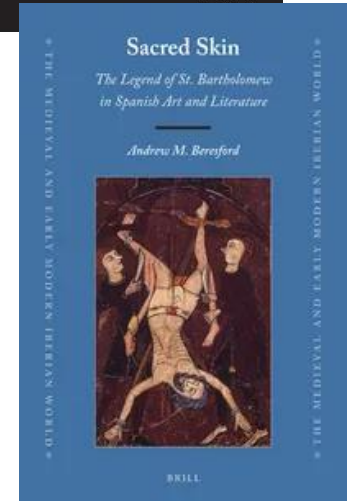
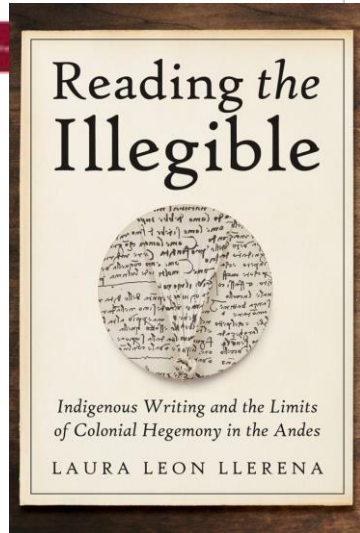
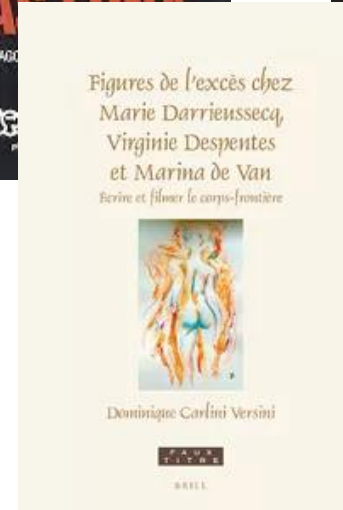
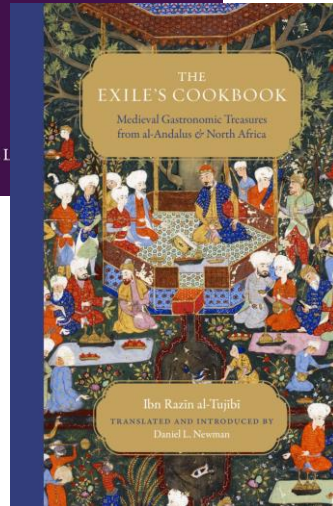
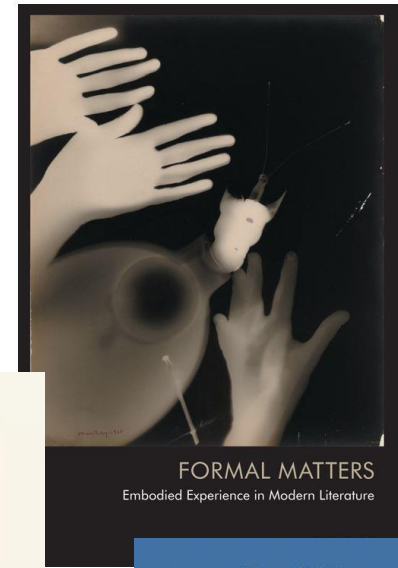
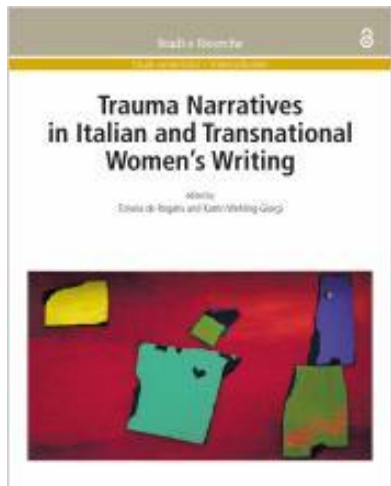
ÉMIGRÉS

*French Words That Turned English*

RICHARD SCHOLAR



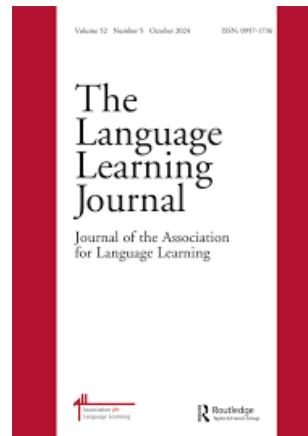
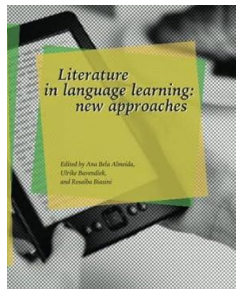
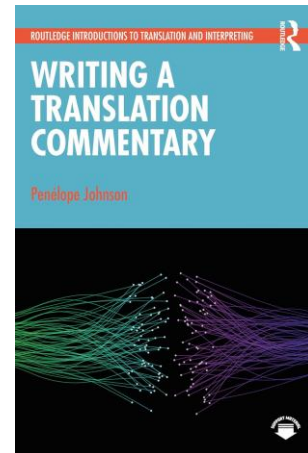
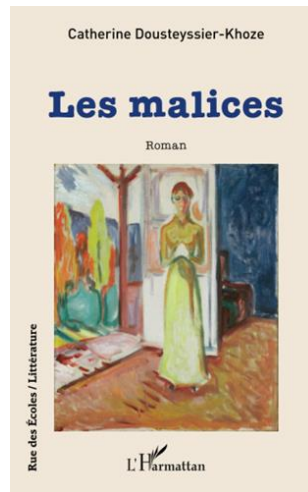
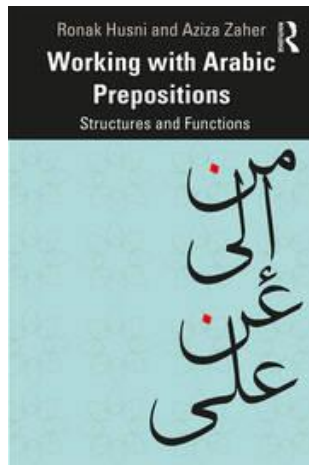
# Research-led teaching



# Research-led teaching



Research expertise:  
language teaching  
translation  
creative writing



# Student testimony

The course provides a huge element of flexibility - I have been able to study a breadth of subjects and cultures, many of which I never would have considered studying before coming to Durham.

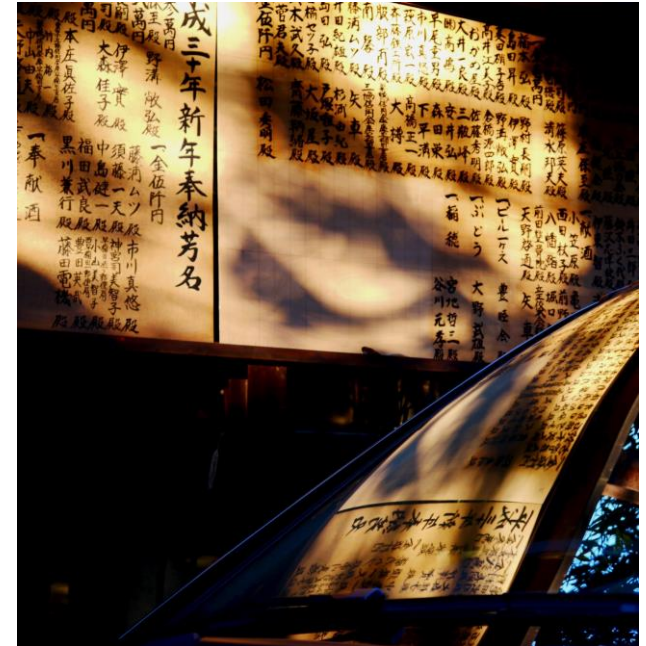
Eleanor

# Your four years at Durham



# Our degree programmes

- BA in Modern Languages and Cultures
- BA in Chinese Studies
- BA in Japanese Studies
- BA in Visual Arts & Film
- BA in Modern Languages & History
- BA in Liberal Arts
- Combined Honours in Social Sciences





# Year 1



Core language  
classes



Optional /  
cultural modules



Aim: to equip you  
with skills and  
knowledge

# Some first-year modules

---

Introduction to Middle Eastern Cultures

---

Introduction to Chinese Culture

---

The Invention of France

---

Identity and Politics in the German-Speaking Countries

---

Italy and the Arts

---

Introduction to Japanese Culture

---

Conflict and Violence in the Spanish Speaking World

---

Understanding Russia: Arts and Ideology

# Year 2



Language  
classes



Cultural  
modules



Aims: to deepen and broaden  
your knowledge; to hone your  
skills; to develop your voice

# Some second-year modules

---

Middle Eastern Cinema

---

Chinese Cinema

---

Modernity and its Disenchantments (French)

---

Negotiating the Past in the German-Speaking Countries

---

Narratives of Fascist and Postwar Italy

---

Introduction to Anime: Aesthetic, Technology, Seriality

---

Icons and Myths of the Hispanic World

---

St Petersburg-Petrograd-Leningrad: culture, memory, mythology

---

# Year abroad: teaching

- Teaching in a school as a British Council language assistant
- Option available to those studying French, German, Italian or Spanish



# Year abroad: studying

- Exchanges with universities:  
Belgium, China, France, Germany,  
Italy, Japan, Spain, Estonia
- Established links with universities in  
Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon,  
Chile, Colombia, Argentina
- <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/modern-languages-cultures/undergraduate-study/study-abroad/>







# Year abroad: work placement

- Wide range of existing placements advertised through the School
- Possibility to source your own placement, subject to approval
- Recent examples: law internship; banking; real estate; computer development; translation agency; property management; language schools; refugee support; internship in embassy; journalism.

# Year 4



Language  
classes



Cultural  
modules



Dissertation on subject of  
your choice (12,000 words)



# Recent and current dissertations

---

Gen Z and language use in Morocco

---

Representations of hippies in German visual culture

---

Bridgerton and the romanticisation of the Regency

---

Regionalism and nationalism in Spanish football

---

Sudanese women and writings of exile

---

Indigenous languages and identities in Québec

---

Prostitution and art in nineteenth-century Paris

---

The Changing Perception of Stalin in Russian print media from 2005 to 2015

---

Intellectual disability in recent Spanish cinema

# Languages beyond the classroom

Regular language cafés, giving you the chance to practise your language skills with native speakers in an informal setting.

Buddy schemes, pairing you with visiting students who are native speakers of the languages you study.

Student-led conferences, social events and societies (Spanish tapas, Italian cookery lesson, ballet classes in French).

‘Where are we  
now?’

Student-led art  
exhibition

Spring 2024



# Professional benefits of languages

- ‘Those possessing the ability to speak and understand a second language boost their salary and job prospects by as much as **35 percent**’ (*Forbes Magazine*, 2023)
- According to the UK’s Higher Education Statistics Agency, Modern Languages graduates have the **highest rates** of employment across all subject areas, exceeded only by medical disciplines and law.
- Recent research at Oxford University (2023) suggests that Modern Languages graduates have **joint-highest** flexibility in job market.

# Your career after Durham

- Average earnings of £28,000 within 15 months of graduation (higher than English or History).
- Joint 3<sup>rd</sup> for graduate income levels 5 years after graduation
- Occupational areas include: law, business and finance, politics, cultural sector, management consulting, accounting, publishing, academia, marketing and PR, translation, teaching, property, journalism, information technology.
- Employers: public and private sector including Deloitte, Ernst & Young, Goldman Sachs, British Council, Grant Thornton, Proctor & Gamble, Bloomberg, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, NHS, Natural History Museum.

# Student testimony

Studying Modern Languages has given me an array of transferable skills that prepared me for work after university. Aside from using my languages on an almost daily basis as I work in a global company with international clients and colleagues, the research, writing and interpersonal skills that I gained from my studies and the year abroad have been invaluable to me.

Daria, employed at Accenture



# Some final information



# BA in Modern Languages and Cultures

## Typical Offers:

- **A level:** AAA
- **BTEC:** DDD
- **IB:** 37

- Four-year course (Year 3 spent abroad)
- 6 languages:
  - Arabic (plus Persian), French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish (plus Catalan)
- Very flexible
  - One, two, or three languages in Year 1; maximum of two thereafter
  - All languages available from scratch in Year 1
- Six modules per year in Years 1, 2, and 4
  - Core language
  - Cultural modules (culture, history, politics)
  - One or two modules outside of MLAC if doing single honours



# BA in Chinese Studies

# BA in Japanese Studies

## Typical Offers:

- **A level:** AAB
- **BTEC:** DDD
- **IB:** 36

- Four-year course
- No language entry requirement
- Combining language and culture with other disciplines (incl. history, international relations, economics)
- Three thirds system: one third language; one third culture/history; one third other options
- Year 3 abroad: study at university in China or Japan
- Dissertation

# BA in Modern Languages & History

## Typical Offers:

- A level: AAA
- BTEC: DDD
- IB: 37

- Four-year course
- Joint honours programme taught in collaboration with the Department of History
- Combines the study of History with one post A-level or beginners' language from: French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian
- Year 3 abroad

# BA in Liberal Arts

## Combined Honours in Social Sciences

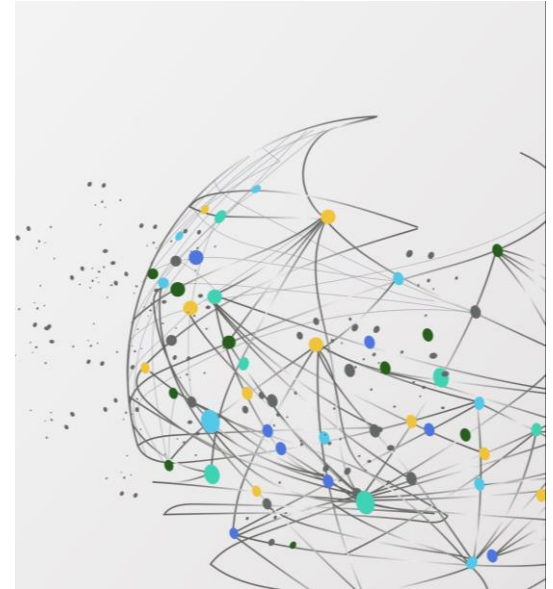
### Typical Offers:

- **A level:**  
A\*AA
- **BTEC:** D\*DD
- **IB:** 38

- Four-year course
- Bespoke degree programmes
  - Study three, or four subjects (can be narrowed down as you progress)
  - This can include a language, or two in the case of Liberal Arts
  - Liberal Arts: Arts and Humanities-focused
  - Combined Honours: Social Sciences-focused
- Year 3 abroad

# Helen Sharp Scholarship

- To help with tuition, living costs and any other associated costs of study; maximum of £4,000 per annum for up to four years.
- To be eligible, you must:
  - Be in need of financial assistance at the time of application
  - Have been educated at a state-maintained UK school, college or other secondary education provider for the whole of your education
- <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/modern-languages-cultures/undergraduate-study/scholarships/helen-sharp-undergraduate-scholarship-in-modern-languages/>



# Student ambassador

Eleanor Betts  
3rd year



Session	Room	Time				
		9:30	10:50	12:10	13:30	14:50
MLAC	TLC106	X		X		X
VA&F	TLC106		X		X	
Arabic	TLC039		X	X	X	
Chinese & Japanese	TLC040		X	X	X	
French	TLC129		X	X	X	
German	TLC117		X	X	X	
Hispanic Studies	TLC101		X	X	X	
Italian	TLC116		X	X	X	
Russian	TLC124		X	X	X	