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OU professor hits the books, again

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Carlo Coppola, professor of Hindi-Urdu and linguistics at Oakland University, is the embodiment of the maxim "throughout life, you never stop learning."

Coppola earned his doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Chicago, where he also completed coursework for doctorates in linguistics and Sanskrit. Since 1968, he has taught Asian and Middle Eastern studies at OU and is the director for the Center for International Programs. Since 1963, he has served as co-editor of the "Journal of South Asian Literature" and has published scores of articles on and translations of South Asian literature, particularly modern Urdu.

As if this weren't enough, Coppola somehow found the time to earn an associate's degree in culinary science in 1986 and gave an Honors College senior colloquium in the early 1990s, titled "Culture and Cuisine." Now, he is pursuing a third degree, this time a master's in counseling at OU.

"I've always had an interest in psychology, even in high school when one of the people I admired most was the director of the mental hospital in a nearby town," said Coppola, who will graduate in May. "I had thoughts of becoming a psychiatrist, but my compromised abilities with math prevented that."

However, the desire to study psychiatry remained with Coppola. About 10 years ago, he became active in the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute and Michigan Psychoanalytic Society through two local South Asian psychoanalysts. With them, he helped plan and present programs on South Asia from a psychoanalytic perspective. After several years of program involvement, Coppola was invited to become a candidate for the four-year analyst-in-training program at the institute.

"I knew that when I retired, I would certainly continue to research and write in my field. But I also wanted to continue with the kind of advising and mentoring that I enjoyed as much as I did my classroom work. This morphed into my desire to become a mental health professional," Coppola said. "I decided to do something a bit more modest than becoming a board-certified psychoanalyst. I opted to apply for the MA in counseling at Oakland, was accepted, and have had a remarkable intellectual journey with some of the best, most caring teachers I have ever had and with some fellow students whose brilliance has awed me."

As part of the counseling program, Coppola is fulfilling an internship requirement at OU's **Graham Health and Counseling Center**.

"I'm one of 10 interns at Graham and will continue serving there into July of this year," Coppola said. "I've been doing individual counseling as well as career testing and counseling. It's turning out to be a sterling experience for me."

The experience of sitting on the other side of the podium and viewing classes from a student's perspective also has been refreshing for Coppola.

"I've made friendships with some of these students who are my age and younger, even much younger than my two children," said Coppola, who also is teaching "Intro to Asia" this semester. "I tried very hard to keep my status as a student separate from my position as a teacher and think I've succeeded. A couple of times I felt that people's expectations from me were a bit beyond what I could deliver...I had to study just as hard as everyone else, maybe even harder, given the increasingly sieve-like nature of my once reasonably sharp memory. I joined study groups, contributed to joint research projects, and, I think, held my own."

Becoming a student once again also has given Coppola more insight into the art of teaching. He incorporates much of what he's learned into his own courses.

"Going through the counseling program has made me aware of different ways of approaching the classroom environment, students and material," he said. "I think that every teacher in every college and university should be forced by contract to take an undergrad course for credit every five years or so just to remember what it's like being a student and to lighten up!"

Coppola plans on retiring from OU within the next year or two after completing his post-master's specialization in family

counseling. He and his wife will relocate to Los Angeles to be near their grandchildren. He plans to continue his studies by researching blended families and multicultural counseling with immigrants, particularly with young South Asian-Americans. He also has several books in the works, including one on the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, and is contemplating producing a documentary film about the cuisine of China's Silk Road and another about the 1935 international anti-fascist writers' conference in Paris.

The Master's Degree Program in Counseling at Oakland University sets forth a 48-semester-hour curriculum designed to foster both personal development and the acquisition of a broad range of knowledge and skills. Initial courses introduce the theoretical and professional components of the field. Later courses emphasize research and clinical skills. Finally, students are supervised intensively as they apply their knowledge and skills in courses that use on-campus laboratory facilities and approved field training sites. For more information, visit the **Department of Counseling** Web site or call them at (248) 370-4179.

SUMMARY

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