Imagine enrolling in a French class and needing to learn the entire language before being able to say “Bonjour.” Absurd? That’s how students used to learn computer programming until the advent of Java. Now, a new textbook by computer science professors Kim Bruce, Andrea Danyluk and Tom Murtagh is helping change the way this programming language is taught and learned.

**French Beyond Borders**

Professor Kashia Pieprzak’s interest in French literature and culture extends far outside the borders of France—and of her classroom. “French literature is not one big, happy family, and I like that,” she says. “It’s diverse, and it’s constantly in conversation.”

For the last two years, the assistant professor of Francophone literature and French language has continued that conversation with a French African film series at Images Cinema in Williamstown. Last winter, the theme was “Beyond the Femme Fatale: Leading Women in New French & Francophone Film,” organized with French professor Brian Martin. Films included *Moolaadé*, a look at female circumcision in Burkina Faso, and *8 Femmes*, a musical comedy about gender roles, starring Catherine Deneuve. The series was sponsored in large part by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy and the French Ministry of Culture.

In 2005 the film series examined “Border Crossings,” a subject Pieprzak understands from personal experience as well as her research. She was born in Poland to scientist parents whose oil industry jobs took them around the world. She spent her childhood in southern England before moving to Houston. At Rice University she majored in Slavic studies, English literature and French. She has a doctorate in comparative literature from the University of Michigan, giving her, she says, “a lot of freedom to go beyond certain borders.”

This summer, Pieprzak is heading to Turkey and Greece on a Getty Summer Institute fellowship to research museum representations of the Middle East, specifically, “how the Turkish government and other institutions have faced the challenge of narrating the past in the region,” she says.

**Courses taught by Kashia Pieprzak:**

“Introduction to Francophone Literature: Roots, Families, Nations” reviews important North African authors, such as Algerian Assia Djebar—recently elected to the Académie française—and Moroccan Driss Chraibi, as well as those from West Africa, the Caribbean and Vietnam.


“Writing Islands” discusses themes such as utopia, shipwreck and exile in *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Tempest* and their Caribbean and African rewritings.

**Language Lessons**

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**Top to Bottom**

Before Java, computer programming courses at Williams generally focused on Pascal, which had some limitations. Known as a “top-down” language, Pascal required programmers to plan and have a complete understanding of the task they were asking a computer to do—or, calculate a bank balance—before they could start writing any code, which meant it might be weeks before students could test their programs to see the fruits of their labor. Then came Java, created in 1995 by Sun Microsystems, which allows programmers to make use of existing bits of code that can be strung together to perform a function (a “bottom-up” approach). That means students can start writing and testing a program right out of the gate.

**Filling the Gap**

As Java became the language of choice, “we found that we needed to change the very way we presented programming to our students,” says Danyluk. “In order to get them to think in a way that best matched the new language, we had to teach differently.” She and her colleagues began redesigning their “Introduction to
Look at a rowing shell on the water and you’ll see eight bodies moving in unison to guide the boat forward—each person duplicating the movements of the one in front of him or her. Such motion may look effortless, but determining what combination of athletes will make the fastest boat is complicated. Getting the lineup right is perhaps the biggest challenge.

So how does a coach choose eight individuals and transform them into one unit, led by the coxswain who best motivates them? In “Coaching Leadership,” Justin Moore, coach of the Williams women’s crew team and assistant professor of physical education, explores the question using applied leadership theory.

Moore’s paper, originally written as part of his graduate study, was published in Encyclopedia of Leadership, Vol. 1, edited by Williams government professor emeritus James MacGregor Burns ’39, a pioneer in leadership study, and Al Goethals, the Williams Dennis Meenan ’54 Third Century Professor of Leadership Studies.

Moore also has examined other factors that have a bearing on the success of individual athletes and teams. He published the article “Think you are over-trained? Perhaps you are under recovered?” on the USRowing Web site and presented his research at the December 2005 annual USRowing convention. In the article he demonstrates why some athletes are able to fully recover between workouts while others are not. An athlete who spends the day after a morning training session doing physical labor, for instance, will be much less rested than one who spent the day sitting at a desk.

Moore’s work on leadership in coaching and his successes with the Williams team also have attracted notice. (The women have qualified for NCAAs four years out of five, including this year, and won the first-ever Div. III Women’s Rowing Championship in 2002.) This month Moore begins a sabbatical working in Canada alongside one of his mentors, Al Morrow, coach of the Canadian national women’s rowing team and a former Olympic coach.

When it comes to coaching, women’s rowing captain Meaghan Rathvon ’06 says Moore is equally good at his job, whether it’s a rebuilding year or a championship is within reach. He “has a way of bringing boats together,” she says, “of figuring out exactly what the boat needs and executing it.”

—Jennifer Grow

Group Effort
As they set out to write what became Java: An Eventful Approach, Bruce, Danyluk and Murtagh hoped to transform course materials into a complete textbook. But much of what they discussed in class never made its way into lecture notes. Moreover, “we had to write [the book] in such a way that would guide other faculty in the direction that we like to take things but give them enough flexibility to teach in their own way,” Danyluk says. Meanwhile, different opinions on minor technical issues kept the team arguing late into the workday. “There were fights, but I can’t imagine having written a book that turned out as well as this one if I’d had to do it myself,” says Bruce, who now works at Pomona College. “I learned so much from collaboration with Tom and Andrea that I hardly know what my own contributions were when I look back at the book.”

—Reported by Kipp Lynch and Jennifer Grow

To see lessons covered in Java: An Eventful Approach (Pearson Education Inc., 2005), visit eventfuljava.cs.williams.edu/index.html