

SUTER SCIENCE SEMINARS 2026-27

Towards a Spanish of Harrisonburg: A Study of Sociolinguistic Attitudes Among Young Hispanic Adults in the Shenandoah Valley

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Friday, November 13, 2026

10:15 a.m. • Science Center, room 106

As part of his doctoral studies at the University of Salamanca, Dr. Shank investigated the sociolinguistic attitudes of Spanish speakers between 18 and 31 years of age in the Shenandoah Valley as part of the broader effort to draw recognition to the emerging accent of Spanish in the United States. Shank will discuss the personal experiences that drew him into this field and present the results of his study which included an open guise test and mental map exercise within the field of perceptual dialectology.

Dr. Wendell Shank is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Eastern Mennonite University and was born and raised on a turkey farm in Dayton, VA. During his undergraduate studies at EMU, he participated in two different intercultural semesters in Latin America, and after graduation lived in Mexico for a year volunteering with a group of evangelical pastors. Shank has used Spanish professionally in Virginia for the past twenty-four years and his research draws on the Latinization of the Shenandoah Valley that he has witnessed. He holds a Masters in Education from James Madison University, a Masters in Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language from the University of Salamanca, and a Doctorate in geographical variation of Spanish from Salamanca.



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