



# PRISM

Spring 2014

A Publication of the Division of Humanities  
Pacific Lutheran University

## TEACHER- SCHOLARS

Faculty Work Inside and  
Outside the Classroom

# GREETINGS FROM THE DEAN



Greetings from PLU, where it has been another busy and exciting year for the faculty, staff, and students of the Humanities Division.

highlighting how it directly shapes and invigorates our teaching.

Our Departmental pages will give you updates on other news: new faculty who've joined our ranks, scholarly achievements, as well as what's happening in our classrooms.

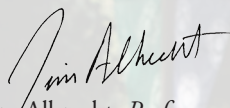
With President Krise in his second year, all units have been working on strategic initiatives to move us towards the goals spelled out in *PLU 2020*. For us in the Humanities Division, that includes working to strengthen foreign language study at PLU; working to integrate the values of diversity, justice, and sustainability throughout our programs; developing new ways to promote our programs to the various constituencies we serve; and, as always, refining the ways we approach our central job in the classroom.

In this year's *Prism*, you'll get a taste of some of the exciting things we've been up to. PLU is an institution committed first and foremost to excellent teaching. But we also understand the centrality of scholarship to our educational mission: through their scholarly work, our faculty not only stay up-to-date in their professions, but also produce works that add to their disciplines and re-vitalize the way they teach their courses. Our Humanities faculty are master teachers and respected and active experts in their fields. Our cover story showcases a few examples of faculty scholarship,

Lastly, we've got a feature on you—our alums! Every chance I get, I tell you that you are the best advertisement for the enduring value of a PLU education. You answered our call to "share your stories," and the result is a new set of alumni profiles featured on our Division and Departmental web-pages. We've included just a handful in this issue, to whet your appetite, and invite you to check out the whole set online ([www.plu.edu/humanities/action/home.php](http://www.plu.edu/humanities/action/home.php)).

And keep those stories coming! We'd love to hear from you—or even better, see you in person on campus. This past fall, we held an alumni mixer to accompany an exciting Svare-Toven lecture on Norway's approach to peace-building. We'll continue to plan similar events in the future. Keep an eye out for invitations and announcements, and we hope you'll join us soon.

With warm wishes,

  
 Jim Albrecht, *Professor of English,  
 and Dean of Humanities*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Greetings from the Dean.....	2
Cover Story: Teacher-Scholars.....	3
Education for Life! Humanities Alums at Work .....	8
Department of English.....	10
Department of Languages & Literatures .....	12
Department of Philosophy .....	14
Department of Religion .....	16

### Prism 2013-14 Editorial Board

#### Co-editors:

Agnes Choi, *Religion*  
 Christian Gerzso, *English*

#### Editorial Board:

Michael Schleeter, *Philosophy*  
 Tyler Travillian, *Languages & Literatures*

*Prism* is also available online at [www.plu.edu/~prism](http://www.plu.edu/~prism)  
 Comments or questions? [prism@plu.edu](mailto:prism@plu.edu)

*Prism*, the magazine of the Humanities Division at Pacific Lutheran University, expresses the scholarly viewpoints or deliberations of Humanities faculty, and occasionally others by invitation, while also announcing publications and achievements within the Division.

© 2014 Pacific Lutheran University

# TEACHER-SCHOLARS

## Faculty Work Inside and Outside the Classroom

At PLU, we are deeply committed to the mission of educating students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care. Being excellent teachers is job-one for our faculty—and the Humanities Division is stocked full of innovative and dedicated teachers who challenge and inspire their students.

But we also deeply value scholarship at PLU. Scholarship keeps faculty engaged with the latest developments in their fields. It allows faculty to model for students the practices of inquiry and

communication that we teach in our classrooms. And, through their scholarship, faculty explore new issues and materials that will become the focus for new courses—or reinvigorate existing ones.

Faculty in the Humanities Division are incredibly active and highly-respected scholars. (See the box on the next page for a list of recent books published by our faculty!) In this feature, you'll learn about the scholarly projects a few of our colleagues have been pursuing—and how this scholarship directly enriches their teaching.

## CUNEIFORM TO KINDLE: WRITING AND TEACHING THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK



Students in “Book in Society” (J-term 2012) visit the PLU Archives with Dr. Solveig Robinson.

PLU has long been a leader in an important and growing area of scholarship: the history of the book. Sometimes called the “history of print culture,” it studies the importance of books in and to history. Book historians look closely at the material book, considering it as a cultural artifact whose form holds clues about a culture’s values and organization. But they

also consider books as containers of ideas, vessels for conveying what is known and thought about the world.

PLU’s Publishing & Printing Arts (PPA) Program, established in the 1980s, is one of the oldest undergraduate programs on the history of print culture. Its establishment has been remarkably prescient: the number

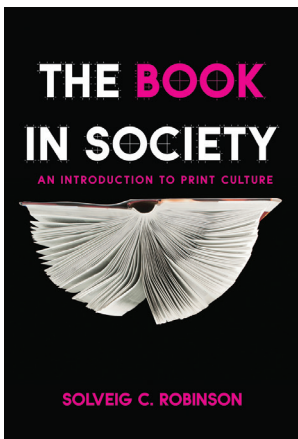
of undergraduate programs in book history and publishing studies has been increasing in recent years due to an active international community of scholars and teachers recognizing the interest and potential of the new generation of students. PLU was a pioneer in this area from the very start.

However, one brake on developing such programs has been the lack of appropriate textbooks. Most of the books on the topic are aimed at professional- or graduate-level study, and don’t translate well to undergraduates: there’s either too much theory, or the text itself is too daunting—too much information, presented in too great detail, and often without illustration.

After teaching PLU’s “The Book in Society” course for ten years, Dr. Solveig Robinson, PPA Director and Associate Professor of English, had been working around the lack of good textbooks for a long time, mostly by cobbling together other materials. So when Broadview Press suggested that they were interested in publishing an undergraduate-level textbook on book history, she took a deep breath and said, “I’ll do it.”

The result—after two years of research, writing, and revising—was *The Book in Society: A History of Print Culture*, published in November 2013. Since it was intended for

*continued on next page*



undergraduate readers, Robinson resolved from the first to involve her “Book in Society” students in the project. Students in her J-Term and Fall 2012 classes worked

with draft chapters, an online image bank, and a class wiki project, with their research and feedback helping to shape the final manuscript. “The students were very frank about examples and prose that didn’t connect with them,” Robinson explained. “And when something didn’t work, I went back to the drawing board.”

As the book moved into production, it served as teaching material for another class: the Spring 2013 “Publishing Procedures” course. While the students read about the various stages of book production, Robinson’s text was actually moving through those stages. “It was really useful to have these real-life examples of transmittal letters, copyeditor’s comments, cover design mockups, and other

documents that testified to the publishing process,” Robinson said. “And students who had been involved in the manuscript development were nearly as excited as I was to see the project coming closer and closer to fruition.”

Brandi Smith, a senior pursuing the minor in Printing and Publishing Arts, greatly appreciated the scope of the PPA Program, as well as the vocational skills it offered. She was in one of the “Book in Society” classes that used early drafts of the textbook, and participated in giving feedback about how to improve it: “It was really great because, from the beginning, she encouraged us to let her

know not only what *was* working, but what *wasn’t* working.”

As a whole, Brandi enjoyed that all of these diverse topics were collected into one text: “It provided a good survey of both historical information and industry information, and provided the background and context that you would need to form your foundation [in publishing]... and I felt that it was written and organized in such a way as to make it easy and interesting to read. I know not every class has such a great ‘foundation’ book, and as a student, to have one book that you can refer to and keep on your shelf was really great.”  
— Christopher Mahon (PLU ’14)



## RECENT BOOKS BY HUMANITIES FACULTY

*Reconstructing Individualism: A Pragmatic Tradition from Emerson to Ellison*, by James M. Albrecht

*Want* (selected poems), by Rick Barot

*Red Delta: Fighting for Life at the End of the Colorado River*, by Charles Bergman

*Translation of the novel Pakkis*, by Claudia Berguson with Ingeborg Kongslie

*A Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*, co-edited by Agnes Choi

*Coming Full Circle: Spirituality and Wellness among Native Communities in the Pacific Northwest*, by Suzanne Crawford-O’Brien

*Visions and Eschatology: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Zechariah 1-6*, by Antonios Finitsis

*John Moschos’ Spiritual Meadow: Authority and Autonomy at the End of the Antique*, by Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen

*They Who Give From Evil: The Response of the Eastern Church to Moneylending in the Early Christian Era*, by Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen

*Elements of the Utopian*, by Greg Johnson

*Achilles Goes Asymmetrical: The Warrior, Military Ethics and Contemporary Warfare*, by Pauline Kaurin (forthcoming)

*Caribbeana: An Anthology of English Literature of the West Indies, 1657-1777*, edited by Thomas W. Krise

*Modern Poetry in China: A Visual-Verbal Dynamic*, by Paul Manfredi

*Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, by Erin McKenna

*An Ethics of Biodiversity: Christianity, Ecology, and the Variety of Life*, by Kevin O’Brien

*The Political Aims of Jesus*, by Douglas E. Oakman

*Suspended Animation: Children’s Picture Books and the Fairy Tale of Modernity*, by Nathalie op de Beeck

*The Book in Society: An Introduction to Print Culture*, by Solveig Robinson

*Hustle* (a novel), by Jason Skipper

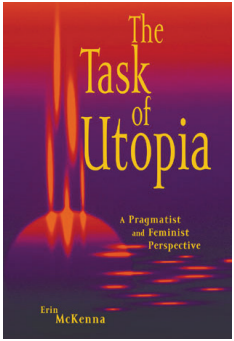
*Flowing Water, Uncommon Birth: Christian Baptism in a Post-Christian Culture*, by Samuel Torvend

*Cross-Examinations: Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today*, edited by Marit Trelstad

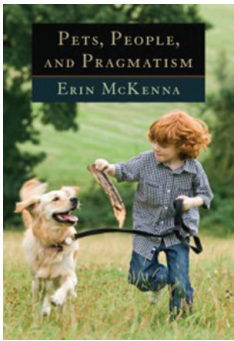
*A Woman Who Defends all Persons of Her Sex: Selected Philosophical and Moral Writings of Gabrielle Suchon*, co-edited by Rebecca Wilkin

# BEING A SCHOLAR-TEACHER AND A TEACHER-SCHOLAR

If you read the acknowledgements of the books that I've written, you will notice that I always thank some group of students for their help and insights. With *The Task of Utopia*, I thanked a particular class of students who were taking social and political philosophy with me as I made the final revisions on that book. While I did not teach the book itself, we discussed and debated many of its central topics and I tried out arguments in class.



In *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*, I thanked the students in a particular Writing 101 class that focused on the topic of pets. In this class we read books presenting an array of views of pets and discussed the various positions. I presented a draft of one chapter of my book to the class. At first I did not tell them it was my book and had them do peer reviews of the chapter just as they regularly did with each other's work. One reason I think it is so important for teachers to be scholars is that writing and having others critique one's work is what we ask students to do. In a writing class, where we emphasize the process of writing as one that



entails feedback and revision, it is especially important to introduce students to the fact that this is true for writers at all stages of their careers. In other writing classes, I have brought in reviews of journal articles, and once the pet book was complete and I had received my final reviews, I showed those reviews to a class as well. The book had been accepted for publication and been through one process of review already. Students were interested to learn that even at that stage, a reader could offer productive critiques, corrections, and suggestions. Such work is never really finished. The important point is to realize that one can only do their best work with input from others. Once students see how faculty do peer review for each other, I find that they often take their own peer reviews and writing process more seriously.

*A History of American Philosophy: From Wounded Knee to the Present* (forthcoming from Bloomsbury Press) will be marketed as a textbook. And so, in Fall 2013, I provided an online draft of the text for my Pragmatism and American Philosophy class. It provided important background information for the figures we studied and the texts we read. The students provided valuable feedback on how the book read and what they got out of it. They, of course, will be thanked in the final version, as will all the other students who have taken that class in the past and helped inspire the book in the first place. Teaching the class over the years helped me to see some important themes in this philosophical tradition. It also helped me to learn what kind of background information students needed in order to

engage the tradition in an informed and productive manner. So, in this case, teaching resulted in writing and the writing was used again in teaching.

Even now, as I prepare for a sabbatical, my teaching and work with students is in play as I prepare to start writing a book on farm animals. Years of teaching on the ethics of food in Ethics and the Good Life, teaching on ecofeminism in Women and Philosophy, and teaching Philosophy, Animals, and the Environment will all figure in the position I will present in that book. The fact that I have been thinking and writing in these areas also means that I can expose the students to new and emerging ideas and arguments in the field.

I can often put them in contact with authors we're reading. I have also worked with some students who have done well in these classes in conducting student-faculty research on a variety of animal-related issues. This work outside the classroom has resulted in collaborative projects that have been presented at conferences and published in books and journals. For me, scholarship and teaching are fluid aspects of one process and they regularly blend into each other. I would like to thank all the students who have taken classes with me for contributing to this part of my job.

— Erin McKenna, Department of Philosophy



---

## INDIGENIZING THE ACADEMY

One of the things that studying Indigenous stories and situations has shown me is that knowledge isn't neutral. Our systems of knowledge grow out of our ways of being in the world and are all culturally-specific—that is, they are all created by particular cultures. The modern university system, with its distinct disciplines and its emphasis on empiricism and objectivity, is a product of a very specific European cultural foundation. The problem, though, is that we

are trained to pretend that these culturally specific ways of knowing have somehow moved beyond the limits of the culture that produced them. What this really means is that Western tradition ends up being seen as universal, and all other systems of knowledge are seen as lesser, as culturally-specific exceptions to the norm.

Seen from my perspective as a Sámi—

*continued on next page*



Professor Troy Storffjell listens to a panel discussion on Sami culture at PLU on Wednesday, Feb. 6, 2013.



Drs. Troy Storfjell and Kikki Jernsletten in Divtasvuodna, Norway, the site of their place-based project.

that is, as a member of the Indigenous people of northern Scandinavia—this is a problem. This arrangement has some very negative impacts on Indigenous peoples and other groups who don't share the cultural framework that the university privileges. The philosophies and intellectual traditions of non-privileged peoples are seen as simplistic, primitive, or limited, and the "truth" about these groups is then defined by scholars trained in the western academic tradition. One cultural perspective is empowered and elevated to define all others. That inevitably leads to marginalization and oppression.

Several years ago, I began collaborating with colleagues in Scandinavia on developing Sámi approaches to scholarship with the goal of creating a Sámi space within academia. After co-teaching a doctoral-level course in Indigenous methodologies at the University of Tromsø in January 2011, my sabbatical stay there during the 2011-2012 academic year allowed me to do more work on this with Sámi colleagues and Indigenous scholars from other nations. Currently, I am involved in two major research projects: a place-based study on competing and collaborating stories and perspectives with Dr. Kikki Jernsletten, a

Sámi colleague in Norway, and a project on Indigenous aesthetics with an international group of Indigenous scholars including Sámi, Cree, Maori, and Native Hawaiians. Both projects involve developing critical scholarly approaches deriving from Indigenous ways of knowing.

This research focus has led me to a new project at PLU, too. I'm really fortunate to be working with a wonderful group of faculty and staff on developing an interdisciplinary program in Native American and Indigenous Studies here. My PLU colleagues in this project are Professors Suzanne Crawford-O'Brien (Religion), David Huelsbeck (Anthropology) and Carmiña Palerm (Hispanic Studies), as well as Angie Hambrick, Director of the Diversity Center. Working with partners and fellow educators in several Native American tribes in the area, we hope to build a cooperative program that meets local needs and provides a space for Indigenous ways of knowing at PLU. This won't be about framing Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples as the object of study. Instead, it will be about empowerment and about building an education based on an Indigenous paradigm.

— Troy Storfjell, *Department of Languages & Literatures*

## TEACHING RELIGION AND HEALING

In 1881, sixteen year old Ellen Grey was attending the mission school on the Skokomish reservation when she became seriously ill. As traditional people, her family attributed her illness to spiritual



Robert Ellofson, Lower Elwha Tribal Director of River Restoration, at the Elwha River.

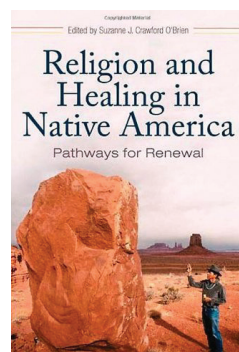
causes, and sought out a spiritual healer. Nevertheless, the Indian Agent enforcing attendance at the mission school wanted to protect Ms. Grey from the influence of such "superstitious" ways. He "took charge of her, moved her to a decent house nearby, and placed white watchers with her so that the proper medicines should be given and no Indian doctor brought in." She became listless and depressed until one night she "took cold and would not make any effort to cough or clear her throat." By morning, she had died. Congregationalist missionary Myron Eells dismissed Ellen's untimely passing as "a tolerably clear case of death from imagination," in a short rhetorical flourish reducing Native views of health and wellness to mere fancy.

I continue to return to this tragic story, finding within it inspiration and motivation for my teaching and scholarship. Ellen

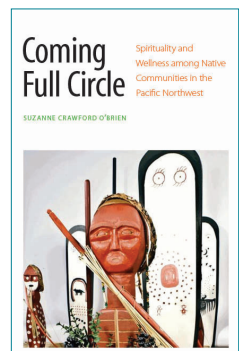
Grey shows us that the failure to consider culturally distinct ways of viewing health and healing can have tragic consequences, consequences that are played out on people's bodies and souls. To better understand these consequences, I undertook a study of the history of health and healing in and around the Puget Sound and the lower Columbia River, looking at the impact of epidemics and missionization, and the contemporary revival of indigenous religious and healing practices throughout the region. This work involved spending time in archives, reviewing texts produced by tribal members, Native healthcare providers, and academics. In addition, it led me to volunteer with and work alongside local South Puget Sound tribal wellness programs.

When I am asked to describe my field-research method, my first response is always: "I wash a lot of dishes." I am

committed to a post-colonial methodology of scholarship, which means that the community in question determines what questions are asked, and how scholarship is done. By the same token, it means recognizing that the people *themselves* are the experts. I consider myself a life-long learner, advocate, and someone committed to supporting the community in their own work. My job is to listen, and to help ensure that their stories are heard. Often, that listening happens in the midst of a wellness retreat, or a community supper. And so, I wash a lot of dishes.



Much of this work culminated in books: *Religion and Healing in Native America: Pathways for Renewal* (Praeger, 2008) and *Coming Full Circle: Spirituality and Wellness among Native Communities in the Pacific Northwest* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014). The latter



looks at the history of health and healing in this region from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I work to place this local study within national and global contexts, considering religion and healing as part of a broader comparative conversation, considering how what it means to be “well” is culturally contingent and deeply informed by one’s religious orientation. Looking at different religious approaches to healing invariably challenges any assumption that spiritual and physical health are separate concerns.

This work culminates on a weekly basis in my classrooms. In classes such as *Religion and Healing*, *Religions of the African Diaspora*, *Native American Religious Traditions*, and *Native Traditions of the Pacific Northwest*, we explore broader questions of what it means to be well, how ritual, ceremony and storytelling can become vital pathways for wellness, and how for many of these traditions—and indigenous cultures in particular—health depends upon a sense of



Students from *Native Traditions of the Pacific Northwest* (Spring 2013) visit the Elwha River. From left to right: Evan Hildebrand, Joanna Kraft, Jessica Zimmerle, Ashley Dell'Osa

deep engagement and interrelationship with the natural world.

In *Religion and Healing*, students explore a variety of religious traditions’ approaches to health and wellness. The course works to provide students with a greater appreciation for religious diversity, and to challenge students to think beyond the individual “healthy” body. Instead, we consider how health has to do with a “working identity,” that is, the ability to engage in the “give and take” of one’s community. And that requires a broader sense of wellness that includes mental, physical, spiritual, and relational health.

In *Native Traditions of the Pacific Northwest* (Spring 2013), our focus on the interrelationship between indigenous cultures and their native landscapes led us to consider how healing landscapes can in turn heal communities. Our class (along with Dr. Jenny James’ writing course and Dr. Amanda Taylor’s archaeology course) journeyed to the

Elwha River to learn about how the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe is working to restore the river and the native salmon runs that once dominated the region. As the dams have been removed and the waters have receded, places sacred to the Lower Elwha have been once again brought to the surface, and salmon have once again begun to climb the rapids. It is a powerful testimony to the way in which healthy ecosystems are tied in profound ways to the spiritual and physical health of the Elwha and their identity as people of the River.

For me, teaching and scholarship exist in a symbiotic relationship. My own scholarly perspective grows and is shaped and informed by the questions and challenges brought by my students. I am always working to grow in my own inquiry and reflection, continually motivated by the knowledge that what I do matters for the people with whom I work and for my students.

— Suzanne Crawford O'Brien, Department of Religion

# EDUCATION FOR LIFE!

## Humanities Alums at Work

A PLU liberal arts education helps students learn to think critically and imaginatively, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively with others. These skills equip our graduates to pursue a variety of careers, and to continue to learn and grow throughout their lifetimes, helping them adapt to the

challenges and opportunities in our rapidly changing society.

There is no better evidence of the continuing relevance of a PLU education than the exciting variety of career paths our alumni take.

### **JACOB FREEMAN** (PLU '05)

*Major: English (publishing and printing arts minor)*

*J.D., Harvard Law School, 2011*

Associate, Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, New York

Clerked for Chief Judge Sandra Lynch on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit in Boston



My job as an attorney requires first and foremost the ability to think critically. Not only must I be able to counter opposing

parties' arguments, I must also be able to objectively analyze and find the weaknesses in my own clients' positions in order to present their cases most effectively.

In addition, the ability to write and communicate clearly, attention to detail, and a willingness to change gears quickly are all important. The most rewarding part of my job is working with intelligent and hardworking people. The time commitment required of lawyers at my kind of firm can be challenging.

Although I never considered going into law until after I graduated from PLU, my time there certainly helped prepare me for both law school and my career. As an English major, I learned how to write clearly and effectively, how to make cogent arguments, and how to critically analyze others' and my own points of view. In particular, my

classes in the Publishing and Printing Arts program taught me editing skills that I used as an editor of the Harvard Law Review and continue to use as a practicing attorney.

### **MATT VANCIL** (PLU '05)

*Major: Classics and English*

Filmmaker (writer/director) with Zombie Orpheus Entertainment  
Writer at Z2 (video game studio)  
Seattle Instructor in screenwriting, Seattle Film Institute

The only constant in my career is flux. The nature of the industries I work in is always changing, always iterating into different forms for different media outlets. But the root needs stay the same, and the one thing all forms of narrative media require—from the feature film to the web series, from the game on your computer or phone to the transmedia ARG—is a good story, well told. That's what's both

most challenging and rewarding about my work: making accessible stories that work for any audience, regardless of medium or genre.

The training in Classics and English (writing emphasis) I received at PLU have proven invaluable. What I learned on the writing side is that the root of all storytelling is emotion, and being in touch with your own, as difficult as that can be, is the key to making any story relatable. Classics directly led to my first job in the video game industry (they were looking for a writer with a history in myth and antiquities), and to getting my first book published: a dictionary and grammar guide for a fictitious language I cooked up for a web series currently in development on its third season. I could never have built a functional conlang without the foundation in Latin and Greek, or the understanding of how and why languages evolve over time, that PLU's Classics program gave me.





**ANGELA JORDAN** (PLU '11)

*Major: Philosophy*

Research archivist, University Archives, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



My profession faces the twin challenges of preserving the records of today and making them accessible for tomorrow. As an archivist, I must be equally adept working with decades old materials and electronic records created just last week.

Philosophy sharpened my critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which allows me to recognize various perspectives and potential solutions when faced with complicated issues in the workplace.”

**ALLIE LOW** (PLU '10)

*Major: Religion*

Peace Corps Youth Development Volunteer, Costa Rica

As a Youth Development Volunteer, I work with schools, the Ministry of Health, and other local organizations to plan and implement projects focused on developing fundamental life skills in youth and on preventing school dropout, drug and alcohol use, and teenage pregnancy.

The most important skills for my position are creative problem solving and resourcefulness, and the ability to adapt to new situations and environments.

The challenges of working with young people and youth service providers in a developing country certainly keep you on your toes, but the rewards are profound and uniquely gratifying.

There is no doubt that the holistic education provided by PLU and the Religion Department led me to where I am today—not only by preparing me intellectually to share my skills and talents with the world, but by inciting a global consciousness that encouraged me to use those skills to serve others and the common good at home and



abroad. The ubiquitous PLU mantra that “vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world’s greatest need” is not just an encouraging catchphrase to aspire to someday; thanks to my PLU education, it is a daily challenge and compass for my work and actions.

**SEMELLE FORD ABRAHAM** (PLU '04)

*Major: English*

Relationship Manager, SS&C Technologies, Inc.



The Humanities and the Arts are really my natural passions (I started at PLU as a Vocal Performance major), and

as such, the biggest challenge I face in my career is overcoming what feels like an unnatural passion for technology. However, as a Relationship Manager, I really get to marry my love for communication, writing, organization, and project management with a growing appreciation for technology and the ways in which it can make my clients’ work much more efficient and exact.

I feel so accomplished when a client calls or emails to let me know that my assistance or recommendation has made their work lives easier and happier.

I was truly able to cultivate a respect and affection for writing and the beauty and power of its mechanics through my work in the English Department at PLU. I was encouraged to think, speak, and write boldly and unapologetically. And most importantly, I was given the tools, foundation, and faculty support to flourish during and long after my time at PLU.

Many of you have answered our call to “share your stories” with us. A series of brief profiles of Humanities alumni are now featured on our Divisional and Departmental web-page. Here is a brief sampling! You can check them all out at [www.plu.edu/humanities/action/home.php](http://www.plu.edu/humanities/action/home.php).

If you’re willing to share your story, please e-mail us at [huma@plu.edu](mailto:huma@plu.edu).



# THE TWO DESKS

When I was a graduate student at the University of Iowa, the classicist and writer Anne Carson came to campus to give a reading and a colloquium. During the colloquium, she was asked how she navigated among the wild variety of scholarly and creative projects that she was engaged in, and she answered that one of the ways she kept things organized was by having two desks—one desk for her creative work, another for her scholarship and teaching. Even then I knew, of course, that the scholarly and the creative were false categories. A poem was as much the result of a poet's deep critical study of poetry as it was the result of inspiration. In the same way, the best scholarship that I read at the time—Richard Poirier on Robert Frost, Helen Vendler on Wallace Stevens, and Carson herself on Paul Celan—had a dazzling creativity of insight that made scholarly writing as artful as the works being explicated. But Carson's image of the two desks was useful in a number of ways. First, the notion of two desks gave me a kind of permission to revel in having two strong identities in the first place, without having to strictly adhere to one or the other. And second, pointing out the boundary between the creative and the scholarly made me see that

shuttling back and forth between the two was energizing to the work that was done at both desks. To be divided was not a loss, but a boon.

In the teaching that I do, particularly in creative writing classes, the notion of the two desks is a central element of my pedagogy. For many, the idea of a poetry-writing class probably draws on a caricature of people having a therapy session in a vaguely bohemian atmosphere, complete with candles and patchouli. This is an image of creativity as self-indulgence, dependent on the idea that poetry—not to say all of art—is only ever about a poet's feelings. But anyone who has ever taken a poetry-writing course knows that the making of a work of art may begin with the artist's feelings, but to be any good it has to be brought into the realm of craft. In the poetry-writing classes I teach, I like to imagine the members of the class wearing lab coats—which is to say that the analytical work involved when we discuss each other's poems is vital to a thorough understanding of how those poems work. As William Carlos Williams pointed out, a poem is a machine made out of words. In the classroom, then, the poem can be discussed the way machines

are discussed, with reference to the technical features that make the machine what it is. To speak of poems in this way, however, requires a scholar's commitment to studying the genre's history, its masters, as well as its formal and thematic dynamics. In my poetry-writing courses, it turns out that reading and studying poetry end up taking more time than the actual writing of poems. Perhaps without quite knowing it, each student is building a writing practice that has two desks in it.

Still, as emphatic as I am about the importance of craft in the writing of poems, I also know that art, in addition to the technical effort involved, also involves a kind of alchemy. The best poems seem made of a magic that no discussion of craft ever quite captures. Regardless of the vigorous, almost-scientific discussions we have about craft, the numinous is the context in which those discussions happen. It's then that I have to remind my students that even though our primary definition of craft may have to do with *technique* and *making*, another definition of craft is *cunning*. A poet is a maker, but he or she is also a kind of trickster.  
— Rick Barot

# RESEARCH BY ENGLISH PROFESSORS ON THE WORLD'S STAGE

## Pride and Prejudices Conference: Women's Writing of the Long Eighteenth Century

Chawton House Library  
Alton, United Kingdom



With the support of a Karen Hille Phillips Regency Advancement Award, I had the opportunity to attend the *Pride and Prejudices Conference: Women's Writing of the Long Eighteenth Century*

at Chawton House Library in Alton, United Kingdom in Summer 2013.

Chawton House, formerly owned by Jane Austen's brother, Edward, was turned into a library and research center in 2004 with the mission of supporting research on early modern women's writing. The conference was held to celebrate the institution's tenth anniversary and I was fortunate enough to be among the delegates.

I participated in a panel entitled *Political Animals, Philosophical Animals: the challenge of other species in Wollstonecraft, Hamilton and Shelley*, presenting my paper, "Species Thinking: Animals, Women, and Literary Form in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*." In this paper, I examined how Wollstonecraft's famous call for "a revolution in female manners" charts woman's vexed relationship to the conceptual categories of "the human" and the animal in eighteenth-century writing.

This experience was unforgettable: the keynote speakers, Isobel Grundy and Cora Kaplan, have written crucial work advancing the celebration of women's role in the development of English literature and thought; I engaged with cutting edge scholars in my field; as if this were not enough, I read my paper in the same room where Jane Austen likely engaged in as intellectually demanding conversation as I did the warm, summer morning of my panel's presentation.

— Adela Ramos

## International Baldwin Conference

Montpellier, France



With the support of the Karen Hille Phillips Regency Advancement Award, I will present my accepted paper "London Calling: Dislocated Kinship and Transatlanticism in Baldwin's *Just*

*Above My Head* (1979)" at this year's International Baldwin Conference in Montpellier, France. This conference includes a number of leading Baldwin scholars and will be focused on exploring Baldwin's life and work as a "transatlantic commuter."

My paper has two main goals: first, to consider Baldwin's time in London in the tumultuous year of 1968 as a crucial and overlooked site from which to study the exilic nature of the author's life and work; and secondly, to analyze the impact that transnational travel had on Baldwin's portrayal of what I call a "dislocated kinship," most significantly seen in his last novel *Just Above My Head* (1979). In this project, I hope to show how the concept of "dislocated kinship" provides a new perspective on Baldwin's literary representations of blood and chosen families, while also offering an alternative theoretical framework for understanding kinship more generally in twentieth-century American literature.

— Jenny James

## The 19th Annual Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization, The Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University

Evanston, Illinois, USA



I was selected as a Fellow for the nineteenth annual Holocaust Educational Foundation Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization.

This intensive two-week course of study held at Northwestern University is designed to broaden and deepen the background of current and prospective Holocaust educators.

The Institute curriculum consists of seminars and lectures taught by leading scholars on the following themes: the religious practice and history of European Jewry, problems in Holocaust interpretation, the Holocaust in literature, art and film, the Holocaust and modern ethics, gender and the Holocaust, and the pedagogy of the Holocaust. Faculty for the 2014 Summer Institute will include Professors Doris Bergen, Alan Berger, Roger Brooks, Gershon Greenberg, Dagmar Herzog, Paul Jaskot, Stuart Liebman, and Barry Trachtenberg.

I am excited to significantly deepen my study of the Holocaust, which will also enrich my own teaching, particularly in the new minor in Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

— Lisa Marcus

## ENGLISH ALUMS WRITE-ON!

Our English graduates are continuing their studies beyond PLU and are being admitted into the most competitive MA and MFA programs:

Kaisa Edy, MFA at Warren Wilson College

Hanna Gunderson, MFA at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Kolby Harvey, MFA at the University of Colorado, Boulder

Mark Hengstler, MA at the University of Vermont

JP Kemmick, MFA at the University of Montana

Anna Rasmussen, MFA at the University of Minnesota

Amanda Schmidt, Master of Arts Program in the Humanities at the University of Chicago

Jonathan Stout, MFA at the University of Iowa MFA

Congratulations!

— Compiled by Jessie Ehman (PLU '14)

## LITERATURE VIS À VIS HISTORY: A GLIMPSE INTO A HISPANIC STUDIES LATIN AMERICAN COURSE

As a scholar, my research—rooted in the study of memory and trauma—has systematically informed my teaching. My 400-level Latin American literature courses invite students to consider the general topic of memory in the context of post-dictatorial countries of the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) by means of analyzing the region's cultural production written by women. Whether discussing fiction, testimonial writing, or film, students taking these courses embark upon an analysis of artistic representations of violence from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing concepts from history, sociology, and cognitive psychology.

They engage with such questions as:

*In what ways do gender and genre shape the literary corpus being studied?*

*What is the result of juxtaposing ethical motivations with aesthetic principles in a literary production of this nature?*

*How can individual memory be negotiated within the framework of collective memory?*

*Is it legitimate to speak of fiction as document?*

*What are the limitations of testimonial genre and what is its potential for social change?*

*What does it mean and what does it entail to represent violence?*

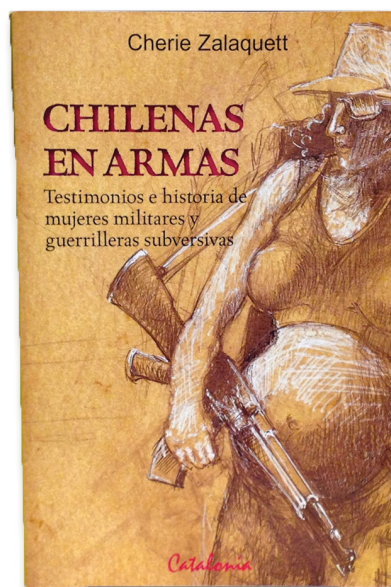
*What responsibility is placed on us when we read or watch such representations as in the case of film?*

From this broad set of questions students reflect on such specific notions as social memory, the connections and divergences between history and literature, victim and perpetrator, pain, and the (im)possibility of its representation, exile, rape, torture, post-violence identity reconstruction, and the body.

In discussing the aforementioned topics, I constantly challenge both my students and myself by reminding us of our respective positions with respect to the material. As a person who lived through the historical period depicted in the texts we analyze, I am conscious of

the weight that my personal experience carries for my students. At the same time, my students bring to the discussion an intellectually informed perspective of these texts that were not written for an audience in a different culture. They undertake the analysis of the primary sources after having extensively studied the period those sources depict. Nonetheless, their position is essentially that of an outsider. The permanent fluctuation between both sides and the reflection on that very fluctuation has been key in maintaining a highly intellectually challenging conversation. While our work addresses texts produced as a result of specific historical and political episodes that took place in the 70's and 80's in the Southern Cone, the nature of our discussions highlights an issue present in a much broader context, geographically and chronologically speaking, namely, the complexity inherent in narrating, explaining, and sometimes even justifying the past as well as the power dynamics at the core of such narration.

— *Giovanna Urdangarain*



# DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES WELCOMES NEW PROFESSORS



**Dr. Emily F. Davidson** returns to PLU and the Pacific Northwest after completing her Ph.D. in Spanish at the University of California, Davis in 2013. As a Washingtonian and former Lute, Dr. Davidson is thrilled to be home again.

After graduating from PLU with a B.A. in Spanish and Political Science (PLU '98), Dr. Davidson moved to Vermont and then to Spain, to pursue her M.A. in Spanish at Middlebury College (2000). Dr. Davidson lived in Madrid for five years, where she worked in international music production for Walt Disney Records. From 2003 to 2008, Dr. Davidson taught at PLU as a Visiting Lecturer of Spanish. This experience solidified

her decision to pursue doctoral studies in Latin American literary and cultural studies. At the University of California, Davis, Dr. Davidson received the Margrit Mondavi and Hemispheric Institute on the Americas Fellowships to conduct research in Panama for her dissertation entitled *Canal Memories: Race, Space and the Construction of Modern Panama*. In Panama, Dr. Davidson's fieldwork took her not only to print and film archives, but also to cultural and educational institutions where people craft and share their own "canal memories." Dr. Davidson's dissertation, which she is currently adapting into a book manuscript, examines how Panamanians construct national and racial identities through and against their national symbol and patrimony: the Panama Canal.

Whether analyzing the nationalist novels studied in high schools, the oral histories at the West Indian Museum of Panama, or the testimonial short stories of survivors of the 1989 U.S. Invasion of Panama, Dr. Davidson asserts the centrality of narratives in negotiating the human experience.

Dr. Davidson's teaching interests encompass a wide range of subjects, from her specialties

in Caribbean, Chicano/Latino, and Transnational American Studies, to general interests in studies of gender, race, space, migration, and memory. When Dr. Davidson is not teaching or writing, she enjoys music, hiking, and cooking.



**Dr. Tyler T. Travillian** comes to PLU from the University of Dallas, where he was a Visiting Affiliate Professor in the Department of Classics from Fall 2011 to Spring 2013. Raised near Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Travillian earned a B.A. in Classics in 2005 from the University of Dallas, before moving to Boston, where he earned both his M.A. in Latin in 2006 and his Ph.D. in Classical Studies in 2011 from Boston University.

*continued on page 18*

## MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF THE SCANDINAVIAN CULTURAL CENTER

The Division is delighted to welcome Dr. Elisabeth Ward as the new Director of PLU's Scandinavian Cultural Center (SCC).

Dr. Ward has a Ph.D. in Scandinavian Languages and Literatures from the University of California, Berkeley, and she brings a wealth of curatorial experience to her position as SCC Director, having worked for six years as a curator at the Smithsonian Institution, and for seven years as the Program Director for Vikingaheimar Museum in Reykjanesbær, Iceland.

Dr. Ward has worked with faculty and units around campus to design a number of exciting exhibits this year: "Embracing Peace" (focusing on Scandinavian peace movements from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present), "Us Local People" (focusing on the Sami, the indigenous people of Northern Scandinavia), and the current exhibition, "Piecing Together the Scandinavian Immigrant Experience," which will run until late July. An exhibit on "Scandinavian Sustainability" is planned for the fall—along with a special traveling exhibition celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Norwegian Constitution.



Stop in and see the latest exhibit next time you're on campus!

### THE SCC'S OPEN HOURS ARE:

**Summer:** Sundays, from 1 to 4 p.m.

**Academic Year:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m.

## PLU HONORS AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY

The International Honors (IHON)-Oxford Program in Social Justice embodies PLU's longstanding, historical commitment to educating lives for service, and the spirit of innovation and creativity that characterizes *PLU 2020*. It bridges academic inquiry with practical application.

The J-term and Semester program takes place in Oxford, England, a city of approximately 165,000, and home to the 39 colleges that constitute Oxford University. PLU students will have associate visiting status with Regents Park College. This relationship provides library privileges, including the world-famous Bodleian Library, as well as meals and membership in what is called the Junior Common Room. The latter is the student-led organization that organizes social activities important for student life.

The program takes up sustained engagement with questions pertinent to social justice. In particular, students examine the concept of social justice from a variety of disciplinary perspectives; explore the practical implications of various concepts of social justice; and engage in service learning as a way to bridge multi-disciplinary theory with practice.

Classes are held at Regents Park College and include required seminars offered by the site director, individualized tutorials taught by Oxford scholars, and frequent visits by local scholars and practitioners affiliated with the University of Oxford.

The program takes place over three, interrelated sessions. Session I (Oxford



Dr. Greg Johnson headed to high table at Merton College.

Hilary Term) is a PLU-led common seminar designed to introduce students to foundational issues in social justice from a Humanities perspective. Session II (Special Topics) is a four-week intensive course that examines issues in social justice relating to both common seminars (such as war, violence, and conflict). In conjunction with this course, students participate in a service-learning project designed to introduce them

to the ways institutions and agencies engage in social justice practices. The aim of service learning is to connect the academic study of social justice with the concrete practices of specific groups. For example, students will engage with groups such as Oxfam, Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, and other groups that try to address issues of social justice. Session III (Oxford Trinity Term) consists of two components. First, there is a PLU-led common seminar designed to introduce students to foundational issues in social justice from a Social Science perspective. Second, students take an individual tutorial of their choice, the primary mode of undergraduate education at Oxford.

Finally, as a part of essential co-curricular learning, the class will participate in activities essential to the international "Oxford experience." Among these are visits to The British Museum of History, The National Portrait Gallery, Parliament, and plays and theatre performances.

This is a signature program at PLU. The only other program on the West coast of its kind is offered by Stanford University. As a result of innovative thinking, PLU is forging the relationship with Oxford and continuing to demonstrate how it is academically distinct.  
— *Greg Johnson*

For more information, contact anyone of the following:

**Dr. Greg Johnson**  
Professor of Philosophy  
Director, IHON Oxford Program  
[johnsogs@plu.edu](mailto:johnsogs@plu.edu)  
(253) 535-8306

**Dr. Carmiña Palerm**  
Director, International Honors Program  
[palermca@plu.edu](mailto:palermca@plu.edu)  
(253) 535-7756

**Tanya Ulsted**  
Study Away Coordinator  
Pacific Lutheran University  
[ulstedtj@plu.edu](mailto:ulstedtj@plu.edu)



Haley Ehlers (PLU '16) participated in the IHON Oxford Program in Social Justice in Spring 2014.

# REMEMBERING GUNNULF MYRBO

Although it has now been twenty years since Gunnulf Myrbo took early retirement from his work in the Department of Philosophy, his colleagues from those days remember his intellectual vigor, good humor, and connections with his students. Gunnulf died on September 1, 2013, at the age of 75. We are honored to remember him in these pages.

Born in Oslo, Norway, he emigrated to British Columbia with his family as a teenager. He first studied philosophy at the University of British Columbia, beginning his graduate studies there, but ultimately earning his Ph.D. at Cambridge University, working with R.M. Braithwaite and Bernard Williams. Hired into a tenure-track position at PLU in 1970, he served as department chair from 1986 to 1992 and retired in 1994.

Teaching philosophy was Gunnulf's first love. He taught a wide range of philosophy courses in his 24 years of service, including value theory, aesthetics, a special January course on religious sects, and frequently the department's senior capstone seminar. His courses in applied ethics joined with those of his colleagues, especially Paul Menzel and Curt Huber, to forge what is now the department's central curricular strength. Gunnulf pressed his students, in a good-natured but firm way, to think carefully about their core beliefs and to be open to following where the best reasons led. Despite resistance at times from religiously conservative students, he succeeded in focusing attention on questions of lasting importance and on the value of careful rational inquiry, always undertaken in full awareness of the richness of contemporary thought.



Dr. Myrbo became deeply involved with Scandinavian Studies, as well as philosophy. Beginning in 1975, he chaired the Scandinavian Studies Committee and served as the first coordinator of the Scandinavian Area Studies program in 1978-80, then again from 1983-85. He was also part of the committee that led to the creation of the Scandinavian Cultural Center, an important connection with the university's heritage and a striking example of PLU's community outreach. He continued his involvement with the Scandinavian Cultural Council even after retirement, serving on its executive board for several years, including one year as president. His international involvement included a visiting professorship at the University of Reykjavik (1988-89), which was part of an exchange program that brought an Icelandic philosophy professor to PLU for the year.

He also contributed to the Integrated Studies Program from its inception (precursor of the current International Honors Program), teaching several courses, most notably "The Emergence of Mind and Morality," co-taught with Richard McGinnis (Biology). As president of the Northwest Conference on

Philosophy for 1987-88, Dr. Myrbo delivered the presidential address entitled "Perils of Rationality," which was revised for publication in *Prism* as "Peril in Rationality" (Fall 1989).

His involvement with the University Scholars Association and Faculty House (now called University House) began in 1975 and continued into his retirement. He took the opportunity that early retirement afforded to ski and hike, to spend time with his children and grandchildren, and—especially—to visit Norway. Even in his final illness, his lengthy summer visit to Norway with his partner, Alice, provided deep satisfaction.

As Paul Menzel wrote at the time of Gunnulf's death, "He had a combination of exceptionally fine training in careful philosophical thinking and a willingness to examine his colleagues' views and arguments with the same rigor." He enjoyed life fully and always appreciated the company of others. A "good, kind, and joyous person" (Menzel), Gunnulf Myrbo and his adventuresome spirit enriched the university, his department, and his students.

— Keith Cooper

## SPORTS, MANHOOD, AND CHRISTIANITY— STUDENT-FACULTY RESEARCH

As fellow sports nuts and scholars of religion, we have found ourselves drawn to a joint research project on the intersection of American sports and Christianity. Today, we often see Christian professional athletes praising God after a great game. One hundred years ago, similar scenes played out in YMCAs around the country, as Christian amateur athletes gathered after a game of basketball to sing a hymn together. The differences in these scenes testify to the changing shape of what scholars have called “muscular Christianity.” Whereas the early muscular Christians emphasized sports as a way to build character among rank-and-file believers, modern-day muscular Christians use sports as a celebrity platform to share the gospel with legions of fans. We’re interested in researching how muscular Christianity evolved over the twentieth century.

Dr. Seth Dowland began researching the connections between sports, Christianity, and notions of masculinity about five years ago. In January 2012, he offered a course entitled “Gender and Religion in American History.” Clayton Bracht successfully completed this course during his sophomore

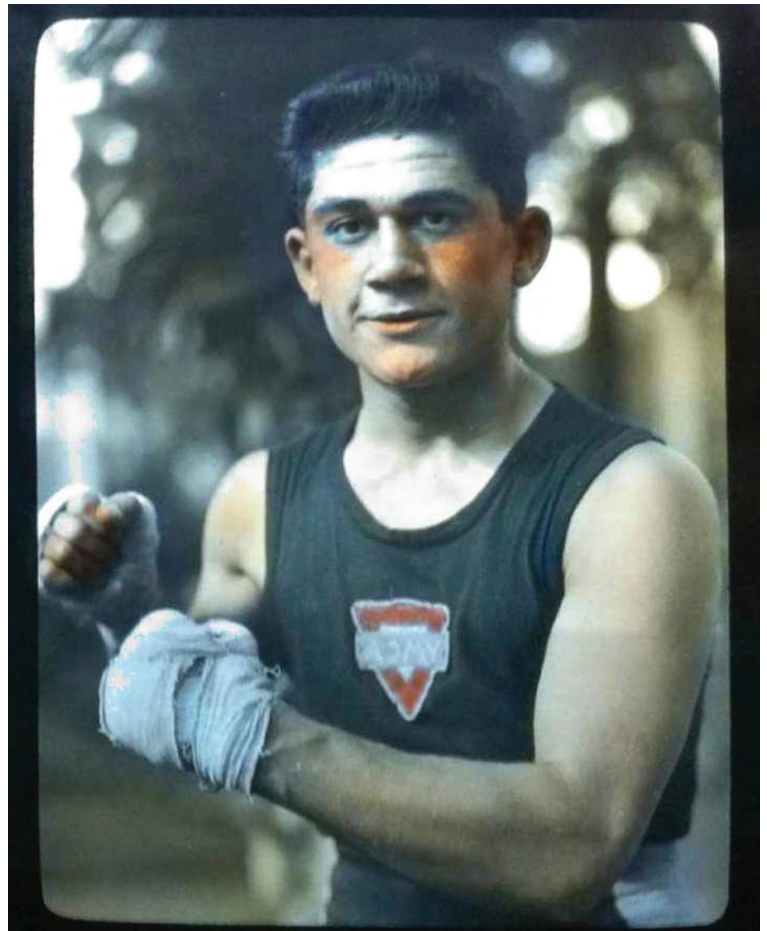


Dr. Seth Dowland and Clayton Bracht collaborate on religion, sports, and masculinity.

year. In this class we read books about Catholic women’s basketball and the early-twentieth century muscular Christianity movement among liberal Protestants. Clayton found himself fascinated by the intersection of gender, religion, and sports.

Clayton continued this research on gender, religion, and sports during his junior year, when he completed his Religion major capstone project on the popular football star, Tim Tebow. Tebow used the platform afforded to him by his athletic success to preach messages about positive Christianity and manhood. As Clayton worked on his capstone, Dr. Dowland continued his research on the intersection of masculinity and Christianity in American history, which has already resulted in a journal article in *Religion Compass* entitled “War, Sports, and the Construction of Masculinity in American Christianity” and a conference presentation at the annual meeting of the American Society of Church History in 2012.

The confluence of our research interests led us to apply for and receive a Kelmer Roe Research Fellowship from the Humanities Division in 2012-13, which provides year-long support for faculty-student research collaboration. Clayton drew on this support



A 1920 poster of a YMCA boxer posing in Rio de Janeiro, courtesy Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota (Y.USA.47 Box 7).

to visit the Kautz Family YMCA Archives at the University of Minnesota in Summer 2013. Using the material that Clayton collected, along with resources that Dr. Dowland gathered on trips to the YMCA archives in 2010 and 2012, we are crafting a narrative that will demonstrate how the YMCA’s conception of “Christian manhood” changed over the course of the twentieth century. We will present this research in May at the Pacific Northwest regional meeting for the American Academy of Religion. Thanks to the support of the Humanities Division—along with our shared interest in religion, sports, and masculinity—we have developed an exciting program of faculty-student research that has enriched the PLU experience for both of us.

— Seth Dowland and Clayton Bracht (PLU ’14)



# CHRISTIAN TRAITORS TO THE STATE?

In August 2013, I gave a paper on Christian orientations toward care for the earth at an international conference in Würzburg, Germany. My partner, Sean Horner (PLU Sakai), and I were delighted to be with Dr. Gordon Lathrop (conference president and former PLU university pastor), who served as our host at the conference banquet.

After the heat and humidity of northern Bavaria, it was a relief to find ourselves in Berlin, staying not far from the Ku'damm. On a sunny morning, we took a cab to Charlottenburg, a western residential suburb of the city, and were welcomed at the home of Cornelia and Harald Grossmann. Harald is a retired banker and Cornelia is a gifted musician who, in her youth, studied at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio. She is the daughter of Klaus Bonhoeffer, Lufthansa legal counsel and member of the resistance movement that plotted the failed assassination of Adolf Hitler. Frau Grossmann is also the niece and goddaughter of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor, theologian, and member of the anti-Nazi resistance movement.

We had come to their home in order to hear Cornelia Grossmann's memories of

the Second World War and its aftermath. Indeed, she and her husband had prepared an entire day of conversation and touring Berlin. As we sipped mimosas, Frau Grossmann told us about the occasional visits made by her father, Klaus, to the remote location where, during the war, he had sent his wife, Emmie, and their children: "We did not know at the time that our father, that Dietrich, that Rudi (Klaus' brother-in-law), that Hans von Dohnanyi (another brother-in-law) and our cousin, Paul von Hase, were all members of the resistance movement and could be arrested at any moment ... as you can well imagine, the Nazis did terrible things to the families of those arrested for 'treason' against the state. And so we were hidden." By the end of April 1945, only a few weeks before the end of the Third Reich, her father and all of her relatives who plotted against the Nazi regime had been arrested and executed upon orders from Hitler: "Let none of the conspirators live!"

That afternoon, we spent time at the Dorotheenstadt Cemetery in Berlin's Mitte neighborhood, not far from the Charite Hospital where Cornelia's grandfather had directed the department of neuropsychiatry. There, she and Harald

showed us the memorial for family and others who were murdered by the SS.

The inscription is a quotation from the Gospel of Matthew: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10, The Sermon on the Mount). It was a poignant moment when Frau Grossmann said: "They could have let them live – the Russians were at the eastern suburbs of the city and all was lost for the Nazis. They could have let them live. So close! So close. But no, no ..."

We spent the rest of the afternoon in the Memorial to the Resistance at the Bendlerblock where the army officers who had planned the last and failed attempt to assassinate Hitler and his colleagues on July 20, 1944, were shot by the SS. It was at this memorial that Cornelia Bonhoeffer's mother, Emmi, gave the memorial speech many years later at the annual July 20 commemoration of the few Germans who had resisted the National Socialist government. "It's ironic," said Frau Grossmann, "that we consider our family members courageous Germans but that, in fact, many Germans today consider them traitors to the state."

— *Samuel Torvend*



Photo credit: Samuel Torvend

# CONNECTING THE LIFE OF SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF TEACHING

Academic conferences provide a significant opportunity for scholars to have informative discussions with their peers and advance knowledge in their field. Generally, scholarly discussions in these conferences are tailored to the expertise and training of a given scholar and, as such, focus on sharing the fruits of academic research. An illustrative example of such a conference, for a Religion professor, is the joint meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) that takes place each year. However, over the past few years, more and more sessions in this meeting are devoted to topics around teaching and learning.

Teaching is an essential part of the job of any professor. In fact, it is the sole job trait that all professors have in common. PLU has historically emphasized the importance of the teacher-scholar paradigm and Religion professors at PLU are very sensitive to issues pertaining to the craft of pedagogy. Thus, I proposed a new joint panel for the Spring 2014 regional meeting of the AAR and SBL in the Pacific Northwest (PNW). The title of this panel is: "The Challenges of Teaching Religions with Sacred Texts in a Contemporary Context."

The purpose of this cross-disciplinary session is to generate discussion and interaction among scholars from different fields. The unifying thread that will catalyze this discussion are the pedagogical challenges of teaching religions with sacred texts. This session will bring together teacher-scholars from the fields of Asian and Comparative Studies, Islam, Mormon Studies, New Testament and Hellenistic Religions, and Hebrew Bible to discuss challenges and solutions that transcend disciplinary specialty.

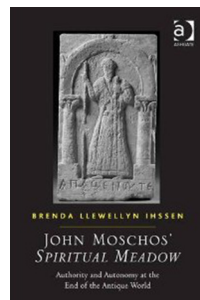
This discussion will consider two questions facing teacher-scholars: What are the challenges and strategies of teaching

a Religion with sacred texts that are usually viewed through multiple layers of interpretation? And what are the challenges and strategies of teaching a Religion with sacred texts that are usually written in languages inaccessible to a wide audience? This project has three goals at this juncture. First, it calls participants to share their pedagogical insights into the challenges and strategies of teaching a religion with sacred texts. Second, it invites participants to engage in a dialogue with teacher-scholars from other disciplinary units of the PNW region. Third, it seeks to strengthen the vocation, as well as the effectiveness of teacher-scholars in the PNW region.

In this discussion, professors will draw insights from the intersection of their disciplinary expertise and their teaching experiences. Hence, this panel will serve as a brainstorming opportunity that will enhance the breadth of vision for everyone who teaches a religion with sacred texts in a college or a university. The chairs of the units involved in this project welcomed the opportunity to participate enthusiastically and encouraged their constituents to submit presentations. This session will benefit the scholarly and professional lives of teacher-scholars in our region by putting to good use their wealth of experience, as well as their erudition.

— *Antonios Finitis*

## RECENT BOOKS BY THE RELIGION FACULTY



*John Moschos' Spiritual Meadow: Authority and Autonomy at the End of the Antique*, by Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen

*John Moschos' Spiritual Meadow* is an important source for understanding late sixth-early seventh

century Palestinian, Syrian and Egyptian monasticism. This monograph highlights the way in which Moschos' tales address economic, healthcare and burial practices among Byzantine Christians, as well as the sometimes hidden tension between individual ascetics, laity, and authority figures.

## DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES WELCOMES NEW PROFESSORS

(continued from p. 13)

From September 2010 to July 2011, he lived in Rome, Italy where he held the Arthur C. Ross pre-doctoral fellowship in Ancient Studies at the American Academy in Rome.

Dr. Travillian's primary areas of interest are Latin poetry and historiography of the late Roman Republic and early Empire, especially how gender and sexuality are represented in poetry and how historians assert claims about truth and reality in their texts. Dr. Travillian is particularly excited about teaching courses on Roman Civilization, in which students will critically approach the making and writing of history in order to better understand what life was really like for Roman men and women.

Dr. Travillian is currently working on a student's text and commentary on book 7 of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. Book 7 is Pliny's anthropology of man, in which the historian categorizes what it means to be human in particularly Roman terms. Specifically, Pliny circumscribes man (always male) by his extremes: who had the best hearing, the best sight, who could run the farthest, who suffered the most, etc. Humanity, for Pliny, is defined by men of action.

When Dr. Travillian is not working, he enjoys designing, assembling, and binding books by hand, reading contemporary American poetry, and watching horror films.

## Support Humanities Students

With 40 percent of our student body participating in at least one study-away program (compared to the national average of 3 percent), the numbers speak for themselves. Add in the students who study away near campus, and more than half the PLU community studies somewhere beyond campus boundaries.

For this reason, PLU has made a conscious decision to talk about “study away” rather than “study abroad”; when South Puget Sound is so richly diverse, students need not travel more than a few blocks to have a cross-cultural experience. That fact was reinforced when PLU received the 2009 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization, a prestigious award that honors outstanding efforts on and off campus to engage the world and the international community. So

prestigious, in fact, PLU was the first and only private college in the West to receive the honor.

As you have read in these pages, the lives of Humanities students (and faculty) are enriched by ongoing opportunities to engage not only the world but their own beliefs and experiences through texts. All gifts to PLU are welcome. To learn more, go to [www.plu.edu/development](http://www.plu.edu/development) for a list of opportunities and projects. Or, call the Office of Development at (800) 826-0035.

*The Kathlyn A. Breazeale scholarship fund at Pacific Lutheran University has been established for students committed to justice, diversity, and sustainability. Gifts and memorials in her honor would be best directed toward this scholarship.*



PACIFIC  
LUTHERAN  
UNIVERSITY

“Pacific Lutheran University seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care – for other people, for their communities and for the earth.” – PLU’s mission



**PRISM**

**Division of Humanities**

12180 Park Ave. S.

Tacoma, WA 98447