

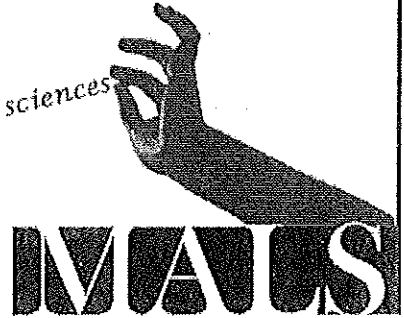
# SPECTRUM

The Newsletter for  
Oakland University's

## Master of Arts in Liberal Studies



sciences, humanities, literature and languages, social sciences



FALL MMV

VOLUME I ISSUE II

**Greetings from the Director:** MALS begins the 2005 academic year by celebrating the December graduation of the first two students enrolled in the program: Jack Burns and Holly Gilbert. Congratulations to you both! We also welcomed 10 new students and reached the 40 mark in students admitted to our program. At an Open House attended by 50 students, friends, and faculty on Sept. 16 at Professor Cole's house, we enjoyed a barbecue and raffle, raising \$250 for the American Red Cross/Katrina victims.



Holly Shreve Gilbert is a journalist who also teaches journalism at Oakland University. Her

M.A. project is a two-act play, *Walter Lippman Has Left the Building*, about W. Eugene Smith, a pioneer of American photojournalism. Smith's "words, pictures and practices provided abundant material for a fresh examination of the journalistic values of objectivity, honesty, and truth," says Gilbert. To develop the play Ms. Gilbert studied playwriting, visual journalism, art history and history of WWII. Her M.A. committee is Bruce Mann, Prof. of drama and Dean of Liberal Arts at Northern VA Community College, Geoffrey Sherman, director of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and Natalie Cole, English Dept. Playwright Kitty Dubin, Theatre Dept., also advised her.



Jack Burns enrolled in the MALS program after retiring from a successful career at Ford Motor Company.

He sought a more broad-based education, and found it in the MALS program, and particularly, in his M.A. thesis project: "The Birth, Death, and Rebirth of Eugenics." Jack says, "This project enabled me to work with three very interesting professors (Charles Mabee, Mark Rigstad, and Michael Sevilla) on a subject that requires a solution involving a new application of technology, action by the U.S. Government, and a set of clarifications from the major world religions. Whether my recommendations will ever be adopted by the U.S. Government or the major religions will take a very long time to determine, but my technology vision has been labeled 'feasible' by a major technology provider."



Teri Allbright, Jane Hellmann and Dan Brown presented their research at the national

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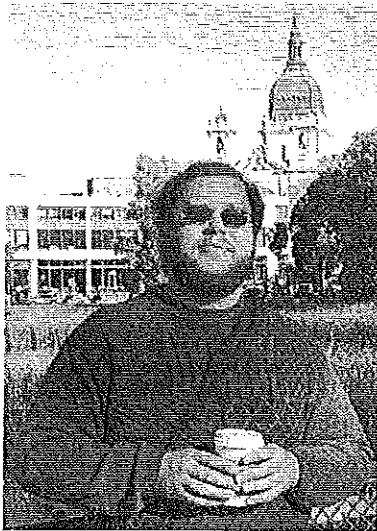
Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP) conference in Minneapolis, MN, Oct. 6-8. They were among only a handful of graduate students chosen to present work at this national conference attended by professors and administrators of programs. Teri gave a paper about gendered spaces in the old and new cities of Casablanca; Dan about the scapegoat figure in Victorian London; and Jane about the disciplinary differences between history and journalism in narratives about Detroit's racial conflicts. Oakland University's program was approved unanimously for full membership in only its third year. The external reviewers recognized the richness of our curriculum—"remarkable in such a young program"—and the "high degree of commitment to MALS and its non-traditional students" by Oakland University faculty.

Best wishes,  
Professor Cole



### Letter from the Editor

As I finish up editing the second MALS newsletter, I have to reflect on how eventful the last couple of months have been. Since September, I've presented a paper at two different conferences, one of them international, and participated in a panel presenta-



tion at the Older Persons Commission in Rochester, MI. It's been great to have these opportunities to get out and get involved in these different communities.

The highlight was certainly the trip to Cheltenham Spa, England. I attended the annual conference for the British Association of Victorian Studies there at the University of Gloucestershire. I flew into Gatwick airport from Detroit and took a four hour train east into the Cotswolds, almost into Wales.

The conference ran three days. We stayed in dorms and ate our meals on campus. When I registered, I learned I was to read my paper, *The Scapegoats of Victorian London*, which I wrote for Professor Cole's course on the city, on the last day. This gave me some time to sit back, relax, enjoy the excellent keynote speakers and listen to other papers. I also spent an afternoon exploring the city of Cheltenham and

taking some photographs.

I met students and professors from the United States, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom, from Urbana-Champaign, Tokyo, Oxford, Leeds, Cambridge, Pescara, London and Bath. We



met in between events, at dinners and over wine and beer at the student pub. It was a very friendly and interesting group of people.

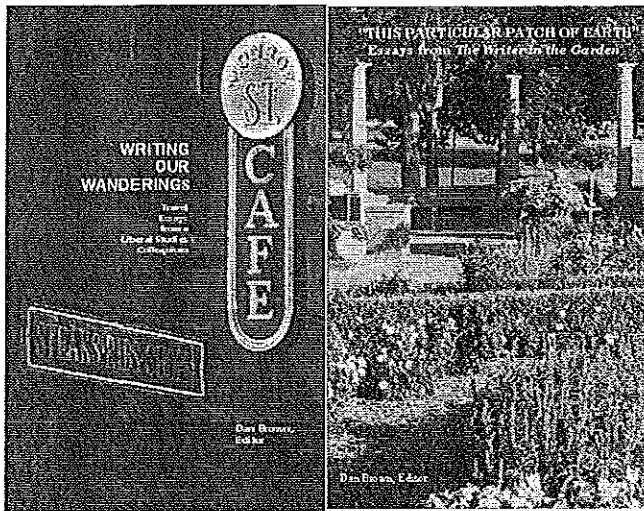
I read my paper first on the morning of the last day in a panel with two other people and a chairperson. Although I was sweating, it went well. When we finished, an audience of about fifteen people asked us questions. The chair asked me one question I had fortunately anticipated and could answer.

The conference ended after lunch that day and I said goodbye to the people I met. The trip was a memorable, worthwhile experience and I'd love to do it again.

Anyhow, I hope you enjoy the second issue of *Spectrum*. I want to thank everybody who contributed material: Professor Cole, Holly, Jack, Graciela, Cristin, Brenda, Rob, Jane and Rick.

Dan Brown, MALS Grad Assistant

## Upcoming Publications



*Writing our Wanderings: Travel Essays from a Liberal Studies Colloquium*

- 76 Pages
- \$7.00

*"This Particular Patch of Earth": Essays from "The Writer in the Garden"*

- 100 Pages
- \$7.00

## Bringing Research to the Community

OPC, September 20, 2005

Four MALS students presented their research to seniors at the OPC (Older Persons Commission) in Rochester this September. Susan Brown gave a talk (photo below) on the use of space in film adaptations of *Jane Eyre*, developed in Professor Andrea Eis's Liberal Studies core course on space in architecture, art and film.

Cristin Carlson spoke on "*New York was his town and always would be*: Music and Image in

Woody Allen's *Manhattan*," developed in Professor Cole's colloquium on the city in history, art, literature and film.

Dan Brown and Holly Gilbert brought research developed from the well-received science and religion course taught by Professors Mabee and Sevilla. Dan's paper, "Religion in a Scientific Age: Huston Smith Defends the Wisdom Tradition," and Holly's, "Tempting Scientists and Theologians: Complexity Theory and the Doctrine of a Dynamic God," provoked a rousing discussion among the audience at the OPC.

Diane Bubner, OPC's Program Manager, praised the panel and said OPC members have asked for more programs from MALS. One is planned for Spring or Fall of 2006.



## New MALS Secretary



MALS is delighted to have Ms. Graciela Osterberg as its new Secretary/Office Manager, beginning Oct. 13. She comes to us after extensive

experience in administrative support positions at the University of Arizona and Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Graciela returns to Michigan (she went to high school in Muskegon and completed 2 and half years at Oakland University) after a long absence. A native of Chile, she is bilingual in Spanish and English and, like Prof. Cole, loves dogs.

You can contact Graciela at 248-370-2154 or e-mail her at [osterber@oakland.edu](mailto:osterber@oakland.edu)



## The Writer in the Garden

By Cristin Carlson

"In my garden there is a large place for sentiment. My garden of flowers is also my garden of thoughts and dreams. The thoughts grow as freely as the flowers, and the dreams are as beautiful."

— Abram L. Urban

The Writer in the Garden, taught by the English department's Linda McCloskey, was an excellent MALS summer course. Gardeners and non-gardeners alike were able to explore both the literal and symbolic meanings of the garden through selected literature. In addition, students were able to develop their own ideas about their relationship with nature.

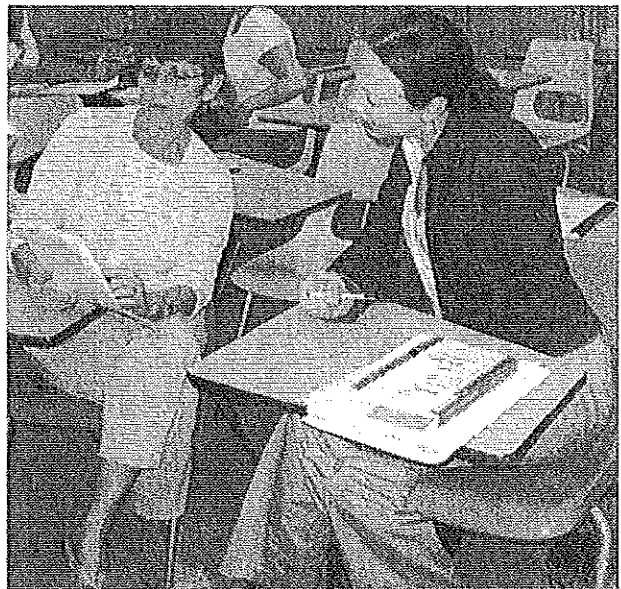
After reading the garden essays of several different authors, including Michael Pollan's *Second Nature* and Charles Dudley Warner's *My Summer in a Garden*, students were encouraged to cultivate their personal reflections about nature and the garden into an essay. Although rooted deeply in the personal experiences of the writer, most of the essays developed by students also embraced a universal meaning understood by the reader.

"I have done little personal essay writing and even less gardening, but I thoroughly enjoyed 'The Writer in the Garden,' which inspired me to do more of both," said MALS student Teri Albright. "So if the 300 bulbs I planted this fall get eaten by squirrels or fail to come up for some unanticipated reason, perhaps I can express my anguish on paper in a way that will resonate with others."

Students were exposed to the garden not only through literature but also film (Agnieszka Holland's version of the Frances Hodgson Burnett novel, *The Secret Garden*) and a walking tour of Meadowbrook Gardens. In addition to sharpening personal essay writing

skills other assignments included keeping a journal, presenting a biography on one of many garden writers featured throughout the course, and an annotated bibliography which was a favorite of MALS student Alysa Hunton. "...my favorite assignment will remain the annotated bibliography I compiled on how nature appears in jewelry. The subject was fascinating and gorgeous."

"What can I say? After 20 years of inactivity as a writer I was stunned to discover that not only did I have something to say, but it was possible to speak about the world from the small and intimate space of my own garden" said MALS student Garth Glazier. "The Writer in the Garden course was a lovely experience and may very well have started something in my case that will result in years of writing ahead and maybe, if I am lucky a published essay or two. Who knows? My hat is off to Professor Linda McCloskey who has convinced me I need to spend more time sitting on logs watching the river flow by."



MALS students Jane Hellmann and Alysa Hunton workshop their essays for *The Writer in the Garden* Course.

## Recommended Reading:

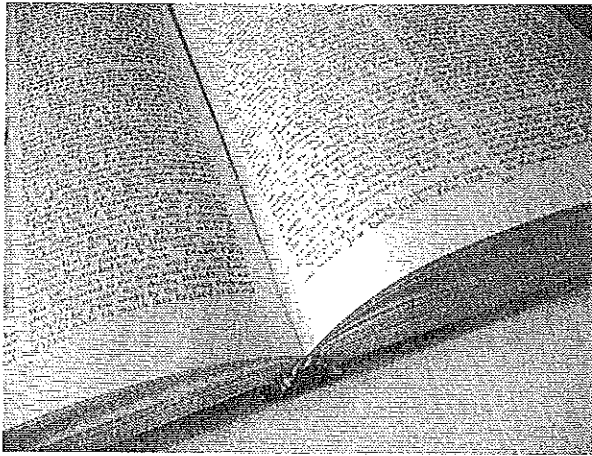


image: budgetstockphoto.com

### *Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture*

Juliet B. Schor. Scribner, 2004. 288 pages.  
(Recommended by Brenda Bujold)

Drawing on a significant body of research, including interviews with everyone from advertising executives to the kids themselves, Schor exposes what she believes to be a huge cesspool of materialism, consumerism and commercialization that could be, and perhaps already is, leading to a generation of kids with no concept of what is important and truly necessary in life. (Publishers Weekly, reproduced from amazon.com)

### *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*

Malcolm Gladwell. Adult Books, 2005. 277 pages.  
(Recommended by Rob Wachler)

Gladwell's conclusion, after studying how people make instant decisions in a wide range of fields from psychology to police work, is that we can make better instant judgments by training our mind and senses to focus on the most relevant facts—and that less input (as long as it's the right input) is better than more. (Publishers Weekly, reproduced from amazon.com)

## Recommended Viewing

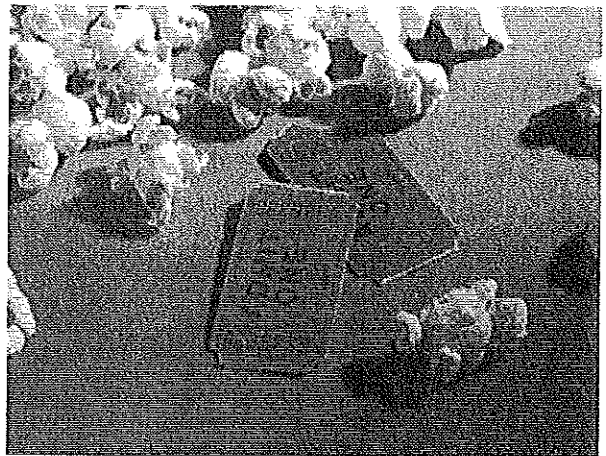


Image: morquefi/e.com

### *Junebug*

Sony Pictures Classics presents a film directed by Phil Morrison. Written by Angus MacLachlan. Running time: 107 minutes. Rated R (for sexual content and language).

A young art dealer from Chicago specializes in 'discovering' unique local art by unknown artists. Her staff locates one such artist in North Carolina, not far from her husband's hometown and family, none of whom she knows since she and her spouse met and were married a few months prior to this in the city. Her trip to sign this artist includes meeting her husband's family, but it also sets the stage for what more she learns about him - and herself as well - in the process of their short visit. (Jane Hellmann)

### *Grizzly Man*

Lions Gate Films presents a documentary written and directed by Werner Herzog. Running time: 103 minutes. Rated R (for language).

Werner Herzog's film explores the life and death of Timothy Treadwell. Treadwell lived amongst Alaskan grizzly bears for months at a time and created documentaries based on his experiences until he was killed by a bear. Herzog's fascinating portrait depicts Treadwell as an enthusiastic naturalist and conservationist as well as a troubled individual unable to cope with human society. (Dan Brown)



## Sixties Course

By Rick Kreinbring

Last spring, students in Professor Emeritus Brian Murphy's course on 1960s Culture and Literature engaged in an in-depth and personal examination of what is arguably the most contentious decade of the twentieth century. No other decade so defined and divided the social fabric of America, making exploration within the confines of one course somewhat ambitious. Those deep divisions and the slow mending of them left such lasting impressions that it is virtually impossible not to feel them at work still in the culture.

To deeply explore this time in history, students looked not just at *what* happened but *how* and *why*. Professor Murphy allowed students to draw from many different disciplines. From music and art to literature and films, the discussions were wide

***"...issues quickly became personal and many deeply held convictions were revealed."***

ranging but always focused on the lasting impact of the period. The toughest challenge for the students was determining whether movements were positive or detrimental. In a decade marked by polarizing events, including the Vietnam War, violent campus protests and riots, there were very few clear-cut issues on which the class could agree. Because of the diversity of age and experience of the class -- half of the students in the class were either small children, or not even yet born during the 60's -- the issues quickly became personal and many deeply held convictions were revealed. The greatest

challenge of the course was also its greatest opportunity: how to discuss this decade meaningfully while respecting differences of opinion.

The main text, Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, provided a basic framework and starting point for class sessions, but the real substance of the course came through the spirited discussions encouraged and presided over by Professor Murphy. The course began with an examination of the roots of the movement as laid by the "old Left" and moved quickly to how those ideals blossomed into the student movements common in the early 60's on college campuses. Gitlin's final chapters focus on how those ideals became corrupted by the violence that swept through the end of the period. In true 60's style, the format of the course defied categorization and Professor Murphy was quick to allow discussions to develop lives of their own. Student presentations took center stage in the last half of the course and cast the spotlight on different aspects of the decade. Pop Art, film studies, and discussions of comparative literature crowded against presentations on satire and the influence of Eastern religion.

Of course, no examination of the 60s could be complete without a number of discussions on music and Professor Murphy often used music as a metaphor for social movements. The Beatles' "Within You, Without You" illuminated the way that social and political issues became personal, spiritual, and eventually expressed in art or action. The role of the Civil Rights movement was examined both as a social movement and an artistic one as the role of music worked within it.

Ultimately, the class was, as Professor Murphy remembers, "No mere nostalgia trip, but an intense examination of the values and ideas of the Sixties." Students shared the same evaluation and walked away grateful for the opportunity to examine their own ideas and values through this unique lens.





**Upcoming Events:**

**Dec. 16 MALS Holiday Party**  
(Pot-luck) home of Helen  
Basberg  
hbasberg@comcast.net

**MALS Winter Trip Abroad:**  
led by Professor Tamara  
Machmut-Jhashi, Art/Art  
History, to Moscow/St. Pe-  
tersberg Feb.25-Mar.5.

**Next Fall 2006:**  
LBS 502 The Nature of Evil  
LBS 504 The Nuclear Age

The M. A. in Liberal Studies degree offers students exciting and innovative opportunities for interdisciplinary study in the humanities, social sciences, sciences and literatures and languages.

*Erase the lines: I pray you not to love classifications. The thing is like a river, from source to sea mouth; one flowing life.*  
- Robinson Jeffers, "Monument"

Please contact the MALS office at (248) 370-2539 or 2154 for more information about the program or for an application.

[www2.oakland.edu/mals](http://www2.oakland.edu/mals)

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