

Welcome to the academic year of 2008-2009

**Letter from the
director**

Autumn Greetings from the Director

Whether you are a new or continuing MALS student, I hope that your fall 2008 semester has brought you new and intellectually satisfying exchanges in the classroom.

This issue of the newsletter marks the editorial debut of the program's new graduate assistant, Kathy Fabian. I hope you will enjoy the interviews and articles that appear on the following pages, and I thank Kathy for all her efforts to make this fall issue so visually pleasing and informative.

In mid-October of this year, I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the Association for Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP) held in Vancouver B.C. The program includes presentations by faculty and graduate students, and the latter are especially welcome as presenters.

Have you written a course paper of which you are especially proud? Please consider submitting your work for presentation at next year's meeting which will be held in Orlando, Florida. You may also want to submit a paper for publication in the national journal for interdisciplinary studies, *Confluence*. You will find details on a new incentive to do so on page 3.

Finally, please watch for e-mail in the coming weeks to keep you up to date on events planned for the coming months!

With warm wishes to you all,

Linda Benson
Director



**Travel along the interdisciplinary path and
view the bigger picture**

In this issue

- Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship, page 2.
- Interview with Angela Kayi, page 2.
- Interview with Professor Deb McGinnis, page 3.
- AGLSP Paper submission for Prize, page 3.
- Winter 09 courses, pages 5,6-7.
- Academic Calendar, on the back cover.

MALS Program Graduate Angela Kayi



I recently had the opportunity for a morning coffee break with Angela Kayi, the 2006-2007 Graduate Assistant in Oakland's Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program. While Angela's one year old daughter Emily played nearby, we chatted about Angela's work in the program, what she is doing now, and her plans for the future.

Angela came to the MALS program after working in a professional environment. She completed her undergraduate studies at Oakland University in 2000 (Bachelor of Art and Art History with a minor in Studio Art). While a student, she also worked part-time as a Gallery Manager for a local non-profit arts organization. After graduating, she was

a Program Manager at a large automotive supplier headquartered in Michigan.

Angela found the interdisciplinary nature of the MALS program and the multiple areas of exploration intellectually motivating. In her Assistantship position she edited the newsletter and assisted other MALS students with writing, organizing their graduate student work load, and computer skills. I know how helpful she can be because in our short time together she taught me a great deal about organizing my own study schedule.

Currently Angela is enjoying time with her two children and planning next year's organic garden. Her husband travels and is currently in China on business, after which he will go to Japan. Her son, Oliver, attends a Montessori school at which she volunteers. Emily is busy learning to walk!

In the future, Angela is considering completing her MBA degree and entering the professional world again.



Applications are due the first Monday in April Annually

Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship

The minimum requirements for applicants and the application process are both described on the MALS website. All materials must be submitted to Professor Linda Benson, Director, MALS Office, by April 6, 2009, for applicants to be considered. The Director and Executive Committee will make the award announcement at the end of the semester. The Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship will be awarded in the amount of \$1500.00.

The Cole Pope Scholarship was established in memory of Cheryl Cole Pope, R.N.,M.S. (1953-2002) by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. James F. Cole of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, her brother, John Cole M.D. of New Orleans, Louisiana, and her sister, Natalie Bell Cole, of Royal Oak, Michigan.

Cheryl Cole Pope was a dedicated oncology nurse who appreciated literature and the arts, ardently believed in lifelong learning, and practiced service to her community through founding the S.A.F.E. House Animal Rescue in Houston, Texas and serving as a Child Advocate in the Houston court system.

Read more about application guidelines and requirements at www4.oakland.edu/mals/scholarships.cfm

An interview with Professor Deb McGinnis

By Kathy Fabian

Professor McGinnis has always been interested in aging and the aging process. To explore her interests, she pursued a B.A. in Human Development at California State University Long Beach, which also began her exposure to interdisciplinary studies.

Prof. McGinnis received her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Southern California. At USC she worked with faculty in the Andrus Gerontology Center, which is a center devoted to the interdisciplinary study of Aging.

Growing up in the film capital of the U.S., Professor McGinnis also pursued her passion for watching films. She is fascinated by how older adults and aging are portrayed in films of all genres: documentaries, independent, foreign, and mainstream. McGinnis feels that there is a treasure of knowledge about the aging in film portrayals as well as in poetry and short stories. It is interesting to see the psychological components of aging as these relate to history, ethnicity, medicine, and the environment.

At Oakland University Professor McGinnis is a cognitive developmental psychologist and teaches courses in Developmental Psychology, Life Span, Adult Development and Aging, and Statistics.

McGinnis is pursuing several avenues of

developmental research. One involves studying language and includes adults up to and over 80 years of age. In the past she used narratives to study comprehension. Currently she is doing a study examining aphorisms and proverb interpretation. Of particular interest is why people decline, with dementia-related disorders among the correlates of the process. She also continues to pursue her Epistemological Understanding Research which examines understanding, justifying beliefs, and the reasons for those beliefs.

Currently Professor McGinnis is collaborating with Cheryl Riley-Doucet from the nursing department, and Debatosh Debnath from the Engineering Department on a method to calm agitated Alzheimer's patients.

In her spare time, (of which there can not be very much!) she enjoys a variety of outdoor activities in keeping with the time of year.

Because of her interests in interdisciplinary studies she is very excited to be teaching in the MALS program.

She is offering a course this winter in "Aging in Film, Fiction & Poetry."

For details on this new, unique course taught by an inspiring professor please see page 5.

AGLSP Announces Writing Competition and \$500 Prize

The Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP) has announced a prize of \$500 for the best paper submitted to the national interdisciplinary journal *Confluence* by a graduate student in Liberal Studies. All Oakland University students are eligible to compete for this award. In addition to the \$500, the winning article or creative work will be published in the journal and the award itself will be presented at the national meeting in fall of 2009.

That meeting will be held in **Orlando, Florida, at the Coronado Springs Resort, October 22-24, 2009**. So, make your plans now to enter this first-ever competition—and you may find yourself in Florida next fall! For more information, contact MALS Director Linda Benson.

WINTER 2009
LBS 503 Seminar in Social Sciences
Tuesday, 6:30 – 9:50 p.m.

Aging in Film, Fiction & Poetry: Psychological Perspectives

Professor Deb McGinnis
Department of Psychology



In this innovative social sciences seminar, Professor Debra McGinnis will address issues of aging using a unique interdisciplinary approach. Students will examine portrayals of aging in literature, poetry, film, and documentaries which reflect wisdom, adaptation, bereavement, Alzheimer's disease, and more. The latter are all topics psychologists examine empirically and theoretically, and in this new course the scientific approach will be combined with literary and artistic works as a means to understand the very human impact of the aging process. Among the course readings will be Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* which portrays an intergenerational relationship between a daughter and her elderly Chinese mother.

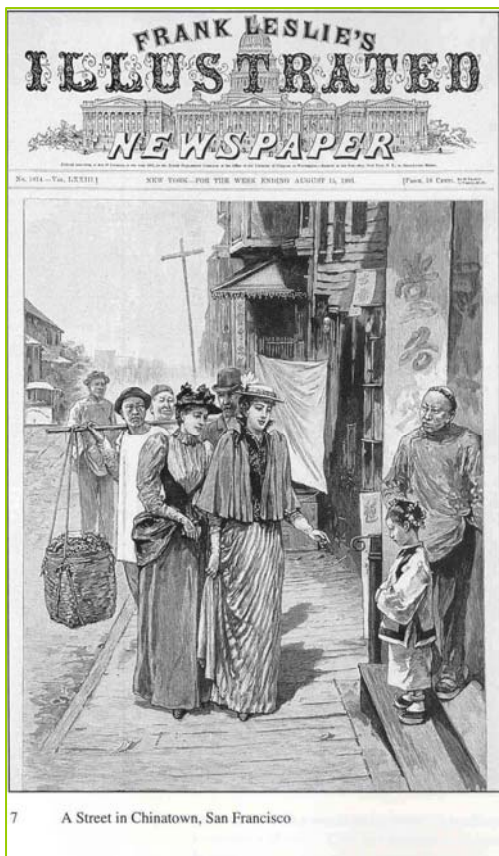
This rich exploration of aging and its role in contemporary American society offers you the opportunity for personal reflection on aging as well as a deeper understanding of how research seeks to better understand aging from a psychological perspective.

Dr. Debra McGinnis is a cognitive developmental psychologist. Her research includes studies of reading comprehension and critical thinking in adults of all ages

Winter 2009
 LBS 502 Seminar in the Humanities
 Monday 6:30 – 9:50 p.m.

East/West Encounters

Linda Benson
 Professor



This course explores the history of misinformation and cultural confusion that have marked relations between East and West from the time of earliest contact to the present day. We will examine the power that popular images and stereotypes hold over time and across cultures, and, in particular, the impact of mutual cultural ignorance on state to state relations and also at the personal level. Historical phenomenon of special interest include American fears of the “Yellow Peril” on one side of the Pacific and Chinese xenophobia that led to the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 on the other. Such incidents fueled an interest in “foreigners” but also led to racist views and caricatures found in literature, film, and the popular press, all of which constitute a rich source of materials for discussion.

Over the course of the semester, we will grapple with Western images of China and the Chinese, ranging from Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu to Suzy Wong, and then turn to China’s depiction of Westerners as barbarians and “foreign devils” as we cross disciplinary boundaries to explore the misconceptions that have divided East and West and the ramifications

of continued miscommunication in an era of increasing globalization.

Linda Benson is professor of Chinese history and director of the M.A. in Liberal Studies (MALS) program at Oakland University. She is the author of several books, numerous articles, and book chapters related to modern China. Her most recent book, *Across China’s Gobi*, appeared in 2008.

WINTER 2009
 LBS 512 Special Topic
Wednesday, 6:30 – 9:50 pm
AFRICAN HISTORY SINCE 1900
 Getnet Bekele
 Department of History



Female Figure, 19th–20th century
 Bamana peoples; Mali
 Wood, metal; H. 22 3/4 in. (57.8 cm)
 The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift

This course covers transformations in the history of Africa in the light of modernity, European colonization, African agency, decolonization, nation building, and postcoloniality in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

To be covered in class discussions, take-home assignments, term paper and final exam.

Professor Getnet Bekele joined Oakland University in 2004. In the past 4 years, he has taught several thematically organized courses on African History. His area of expertise and research include environment and development, identity and conflict studies.

Winter 2009
 LBS 513 Social Science
 Tues/Thurs. 3:00–4:47 p.m.

CHINESE POLITICS AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

Alan Epstein
 Department of Political Science

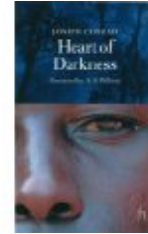


The course examines the background, institutions, processes, and momentous outcomes of the Chinese political system, while investigating the determinants, objectives, mechanisms, and consequences of contemporary Chinese foreign policy.

Texts:

- 1) Tony Saich, Governance and Politics of China (Palgrave, 2nd ed.)
- 2) Mark Leonard, What Does China Think? (Public Affairs, 2009)
- 3) Joshua Eisenman, et al., editors, China and the Developing World (M.E. Sharpe, 2007)
- 4) Robert G. Sutter, Chinese Foreign Policy (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008)

Winter Semester 2010
 LBS 503
 Core Seminar in the Social Sciences
 Time and location TBA
Politics Through Literature
 Paul Kubicek
 Professor of Political Science



This interdisciplinary seminar examines fundamental ideas in political theory through works typically classified as literature. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four*, for example, serve as vehicles for exploration of the world of politics by tracing the development of plot lines and characters as well as the creative impulse that links the world of politics with literature.

Class sessions will provide ample opportunity for debate and discussion, as well as lectures that provide context for the political theories and theorists whose ideas are reflected in each work under discussion. Be prepared to read widely as we venture into the realms of politics and literature, exploring ideas that have been the basis for political and social change and which remain part of a greater national conversation that extends into the present day.

Professor Kubicek is the current Chair of the Political Science Department at Oakland University. Recipient of a Fulbright Scholar award, Professor Kubicek earned his PhD at the University of Michigan.

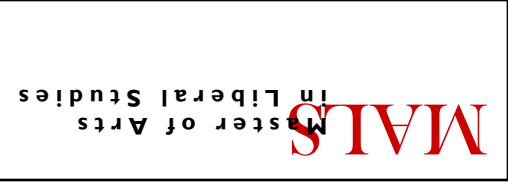


CHINA 2009

February 21—March 2

Explore ancient China
Enter the Forbidden City

Join the MALS group going to China with our expert guide Professor Shuishan Yu. See the places you have only heard about. For information please contact either Professor Linda Benson at benson@oakland.edu or Professor Yu at yu23@oakland.edu



Need Help with computer or writing?

Contact:
Kathleen Fabian
Graduate Assistant
521 Varner Hall
248-370-2154
kmfabian@oakland.edu
Office hours: Mon. 3-5 and Wed. 3-5 and
by appointment.

December 13, 2008	Commencement
January 6, 2009	Winter semester classes begin
January 19, 2009	Martin Luther King Day
January 30, 2009	Last day to file for graduation in spring 2009
February 21, 2009	Winter Recess begins
March 2, 2009	Classes resume