

Welcome to the academic year of 2006-2007

This new academic year begins with new leadership for the MALS program. Professor Linda Benson, History and International Studies, began her tenure as the program's new director on June 1, 2006. Her message of welcome appears below. MALS also welcomes a new Graduate Assistant, Angela Kayi, a 2000 graduate of Oakland University. Read about Ms. Kayi on page 2.

Letter from the director

Welcome from the New MALS Director

I am honored to have the opportunity to lead MALS, the most innovative and creative graduate degree program in the College of Arts and Sciences. One of the great pleasures for me thus far has been meeting with MALS students whose diverse backgrounds and experiences provide such a rich environment for learning. Motivated students like you, working with dedicated Oakland professors in a variety of disciplines, make the program rich indeed.

One of the changes beginning this year is the new look of the *Spectrum*. A sincere note of thanks for the fresh new design and format goes to Professor Andrea Eis, chair of Art and Art History. Thanks also go to the new MALS graduate assistant, Angela Kayi, for her hard work as editor and page designer, and, last but not least, to those of you in the MALS program who contributed articles for this issue. I hope you all enjoy the new look and format of your newsletter.

Also new this year is the availability of writing and/or technological assistance for MALS students, provided by Angela Kayi. Her office hours and location are given on page 3. Continuing with all manner of secretarial support is Ms Graciela Osterberg. Please note that she is now in a new office, in Varner 521.

The program also begins the year with a new Executive Committee. MALS welcomes Professors George Gamboa, Deborah McGinnis, and Phyllis Rooney as new members and the continuation of Professor Barbara Mabee who has kindly agreed to another year of service. (For information on the committee, please see page 7.) I look

forward to working with this talented group in the months ahead.

All graduate programs rely on the work of many people. I would like to acknowledge and thank MALS founding director, Professor Natalie Cole, for her work to establish MALS as a strong graduate program, and for her help during the transition over the summer months. She and her family have also established the first MALS Scholarship, and I know all of you join me in expressing our gratitude for their generosity. (Please see the article on page 3.) I also want to thank Associate Dean Kathleen Moore for advice and counsel as I began my tenure as director, and acknowledge the support of the CAS Acting Dean, Ronald Sudol during these early months.

In closing, I wish all of you, students and professors alike, a terrific year ahead, filled with new and old friends, fresh ideas, lively discussions, and, always, intellectual excitement as part of the MALS program at Oakland University.

With warm regards,
Linda Benson

new this issue

- ◆ Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship for M.A.L.S. students established by Professor Natalie Cole and Family. page 3
- ◆ First trip to Greece, as part of the colloquium taught by Professor Andrea Eis. page 6
- ◆ Academic Calendar and "Save the Date" feature on the back cover.
- ◆ Winter 07 courses. pages 6-7

**get to
know our new
director**

**An Interview with Dr. Benson
by Angela Kayi**



Q. Tell us about your academic background.

A. As an undergraduate, I majored in history with minors in English and art. Following the very practical advice of my parents, I also completed course work for certification in secondary education, but my plans to teach were way-laid by my growing interest in China. That interest led me to Hong Kong—and what turned out to be a four-year stay in one of Asia’s most fascinating cities. By the end of my time there, I had earned an M. Phil. Degree in Political Science from the University of Hong Kong and amassed a growing list of research questions that arose from my master’s thesis. Instead of returning to the USA, I decided to try and answer some of those questions by pursuing doctoral studies in England at the University of Leeds. After completing my doctorate, I returned to the United States where I taught for a year at the University of Miami before coming to Michigan.

Q. Area of research?

A. My interest in Chinese policy toward its borderlands led me to focus on China’s northwestern region which is a predominantly Muslim area. My doctoral research examined the pre-1949 history of Xinjiang and the efforts of the local population to establish an independent state. Since then, my interests have expanded to include the history of China’s Silk Road which will be the subject of the fall 2007 colloquium I will be teaching for MALS.

Q. Publications?

A. Before I completed my Ph.D., I had the opportunity to co-edit a book which, as it turned out, also meant writing about 100 pages of text as well as editing colleagues’ contributions. Since arriving at Oakland, I have had three more books published, two on the modern history of northwestern China and a textbook on China. My next book, due out next year, is a study of three British women who served as missionaries in China and repeatedly traversed parts of the old Silk Road in the 1920s. In addition to books, I have written numerous articles and book chapters, most of which focus on China’s minority regions.

Q. How would you sum up the experience of living abroad?

A. One way to understand your native land is to leave it for a time. Living abroad allows you to appreciate in new ways the many benefits you enjoy on a daily basis but which are not the norm for most of the world. The right to speak freely, to travel without hindrance, and to choose a livelihood you feel passionate about are among the rights I took for granted as a student. For all our current worries over the Michigan economy and national politics, we

Americans are an incredibly fortunate people.

Q. How do you integrate teaching and research?

A. The old adage says that a teacher learns from her students. Those of us who have taught for years should, therefore, know almost everything (!) What the adage should really say is that those who teach have the marvelous opportunity to continue learning and extending their knowledge in many new and exciting ways. Reading about new findings or interpretations in colleagues’ research, collaborating on research projects, and presenting research at conferences are all part of what a professor does outside the classroom; what happens in the classroom reflects not only his or her own work but that of countless other dedicated scholars. Teaching and research are, therefore, inextricably linked for me and are truly the basis of university life.

Q. What do you bring to the MALS program and what plans do you have for the program’s future?

A. One of the most important things that I bring to MALS is my own experience in research and writing. Because I study a minority region, I have drawn on the work of scholars in a variety of disciplines. To understand the region’s Muslim society in the 1940s, for example, I read widely in religious studies, art history, archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and political history. History inevitably intersects with all these fields, and scholarly research is mutually enriched as a result.

I have, very happily, inherited a great interdisciplinary program. With an enrollment that now stands at fifty, I hope MALS will be able to offer more “graduate only” courses, in addition to the core seminars and the colloquium we already feature. Another goal is to identify sources of funding that would support more student research and/or assist with other student expenses such as travel to conferences and library collections. ■

**letter from
the editor**



I am pleased to have this fantastic opportunity to be the new Graduate Assistant in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies Program. Like many other MALS students, I came to this program after working in a professional environment. I completed my undergraduate studies at Oakland University in 2000 (Bachelor of Art and Art History with a minor in Studio Art). While still a student, I worked as a Gallery Manager for a local non-profit arts organization. In this position I spent considerable time crafting press releases, writing copy for print materials, working on budgets, as well as organizing events and exhibitions.

(continued to page 3)



Cheryl Cole Pope

This scholarship is 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.

The Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship honors Ms. Pope’s dedicated work ethic, commitment to professional excellence, service to her community and practical generosity to those in need. It commemorates her active practice of charity, delight in literature, theatre, music and film, and her lively interest in learning new things every day. She faced her death with inexplicable bravery. The Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship offers academic opportunity and the celebration of intellectual discovery in the spirit of its namesake.

Cheryl Cole Pope was a dedicated oncology nurse who appreciated literature and the arts, ardently believed in life-long 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.

Her life and death were the inspiration for the first MALS core course on Death and Dying in Literature, Art and Film in Winter 2004, and for the elective Medical Fictions course in Fall, 2005.

The Cheryl Cole Pope Scholarship awards \$1500.00 to one Oakland University student in the M.A. in Liberal Studies Program annually.

Read more about application guidelines and requirements at www2.oakland.edu/mals/scholarships.cfm or contact Professor Linda Benson, Director at benson@oakland.edu or 248.370.2539 with questions.

letter from the editor

(continued from page 2)

In my last position, I was a Program Manager at a large automotive supplier headquartered in Michigan. I was responsible for many aspects of the program including timing, engineering changes, cost save initiatives, quality, and craftsmanship. I believe that this range of professional experiences combined with academic training is typical of graduate students, and makes this program unique.

The interdisciplinary nature of the MALS program and the multiple areas of exploration are intellectually motivating. It provides an opportunity

to further my interest in art history but also allows me to explore multiple cultures and other disciplines. Those that interest me most are women’s studies, visual interpretations of literature, and the philosophy of creative activity and its relationship to the development of critical theory. In addition to allowing exploration of individual interests, the high level of work being generated by students and the dialogue that the MALS program fosters make it exceptional. It is within this environment that I will be able to explore my interests further through research and discourse with individuals who share similar interests and curiosities.

Another important aspect of MALS is the opportunity for travel. I believe that travel and first hand experi-

ence of foreign sites, art, architecture and individuals can provide a deeper understanding of political systems, philosophy and social history. Like many other MALS students, I have had some exciting travel experiences throughout Europe and the Near East. It is wonderful to learn about new places through discussions with other students. Moreover, I have found that my fellow students have a variety of perspectives that further my own understanding.

I would like to thank all of you who have contributed to the newsletter through writing articles, assisting with graphic design and proofing text.

I look forward to getting to know more of my fellow students throughout the coming year.

Regards,
Angela Kayi

tutorial assistance

Questions concerning computing, research and writing?
Contact:
Angela Kayi
Graduate Assistant
457 Varner Hall
248.370.2674
alkayi@oakland.edu
Office hours: Mon. 1-4 and Wed. 1-4 and by appointment.

LBS500

Russian Art, Film and Culture

commentary by
Vera Ruseckas



Professor Machmut-Jhashi's course syllabus for "Russia in the Twentieth Century: The 'Great Experiment' in Art, Culture, and Film" states:

"This course will examine the rich artistic and cultural history of Russia in the twentieth century, which, arguably, transformed the cultural life of the entire world....Through an interdisciplinary examination of the cultural history of Russia in the twentieth century, with an emphasis on art and film, the complexities of intellectual and artistic life during a tumultuous century will be brought to light."

I would like to share a few course highlights. My experiences, hopefully, will provide potential students an expectation of what there is to learn in this fantastic course that delivers what it promises and more.

An obvious highlight of the course is Professor Machmut-Jhashi herself. Her ability to synthesize the basic elements of the complex interplay of Russian culture in the 1900's with the unfolding and ever-changing politics of Russia's pre-and post-revolutionary periods is impressive. Other course highlights can best be represented by several of the assigned topics about which the class wrote short "Response Papers". These topics are indicative of the intellectual challenges and excitement of the course.

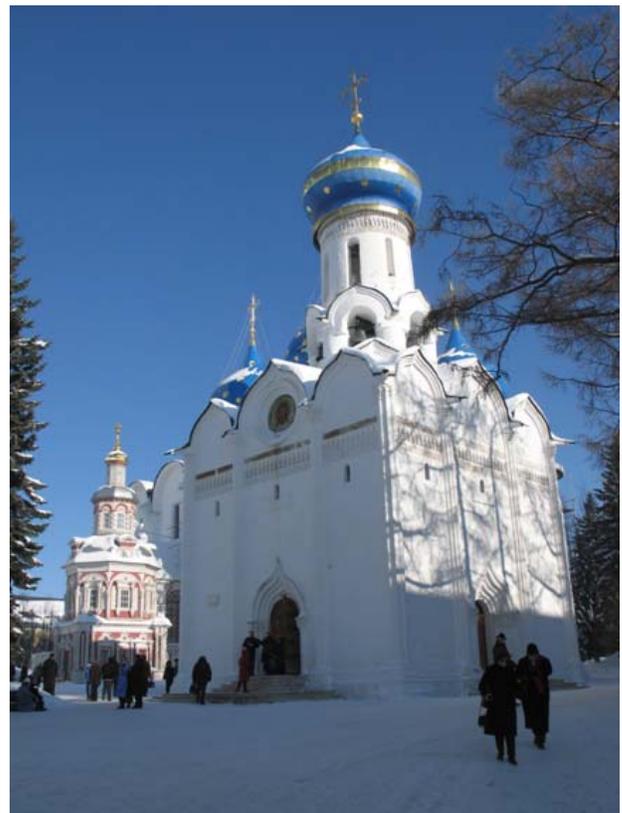
My first paper, assigned after the very first lecture which featured numerous slides that took the class through a quick background on Russia's art prior to the twentieth century, compares Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*, a famous Russian abstract art work, with *Christ Acheiropoietos*, a renowned icon dating back to the twelfth century. I encourage the reader to "Google" these images, and try to analyze the similarities between an abstract painting of a black square on a white background and a highly spiritual and traditional icon.

Many of us know Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, the depiction of an older farm couple, the stern-faced farmer holding a pitchfork and his dour-faced wife (or sister depending on some interpretations). Our assignment

was to compare this painting with the sculpture *Worker and Collective Farm Girl* from the 1930's, by the Russian artist Vera Mukhina. The sculpture shows a young and vibrant Russian couple, with a hammer in the man's hand and a sickle in the woman's. Comparing these two art forms, an assignment that appears puzzling at first, provides a delightful way of gaining a better understanding of Socialism and the assigned role of art in a Socialist society.

Yet another example of an assignment that proved to be not only intellectually stimulating, but for me personally quite emotional, was to discuss the mesmerizing Russian film *Burnt by the Sun*. This film, full of sometimes obvious and sometimes not so obvious symbolism, "overlays" Stalin's increasing paranoia, endless purges, and tyrannical policies, over the personal lives of a family and friends at a dacha in the course of a single day in 1936.

I could go on and on about the course and what it offers, but then I would spoil the fun. As the saying goes, "Try it, you'll like it." ■



Church of the Holy Spirit, c. 1476, at the Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery (near Moscow).

**L B S I 2
Vietnam War**

**An
American
Intervention
Revisited**

commentary
by
Garth Glazier

It could be said that history does repeat itself. This is just one of many conclusions that students might have drawn from this summer's course on the War in Vietnam, taught by Professor Karen Miller. Miller's comprehensive presentation of this critical and controversial period in American history provided a fascinating and timely insight into the nature of American intervention in Vietnam. The legacy of our country's military policy in this Southeast Asian country still resonates today as we grapple with another foreign intervention.

Students encountered Vietnamese culture as it emerged from the French colonial domination setting the stage for American intervention. Beginning with the Truman administration, and ending with the Clinton administration,

the course presented a panoramic view of the evolving U.S. policy toward Vietnam spanning the cold war era and beyond. Included among the selected readings for the course were articles on military policy and strategy as well as an in depth analysis of the political environment in the U.S. and Vietnam during the period of the 1955 to 1975.

The sixties culture, while memorable for its music and protest movements, was only a brief passage in a much longer relationship between our two countries.



My Tho, Vietnam. A Viet Cong base camp burning 04/05/1968.

Troubled and complex, the American involvement in Southeast Asia often reflected our own insecurities in a threatening world. Likewise, our values and goals as a nation were put to the test as we attempted to bring democracy to the South Vietnamese people.

Drawing clear conclusions

from this post-colonial period of American intervention remains difficult. With over a thousand books in print on the subject, scholars are still finding the Vietnam era to be a rich subject of further revelations and debate. The lessons to be learned for our own time may be clearer; American military power has its limits as does the support of the American people in making and sustaining

war. With this thought in mind I would highly recommend this course as required preparation for any future American policy makers. ■

**L B S I 3
Politics Through Film**

commentary
by
Andrew Drummer



This summer, MALS students were given the opportunity to participate in a brand-new class, "Politics Through Film," cross-listed with the Political Science department and taught by Professor John Piskulich. This class sought to develop a new way of teaching political concepts to students. By using examples drawn from both modern and classic films, students learned to recognize political content and bias in narrative films and documentaries, and how this content could affect the movie's audience.

The class's format consisted of one or more films each night, followed by an explanation and discussion of the political content of the films. These films ranged from entertainment films like *Bulworth* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, to documentaries such as *Bowling for Columbine*. These films were each selected to illustrate a particular political concept, which was reinforced by the assigned readings for that class. After watching the movies, we engaged in a discussion of the political merits of the films, how it was attempting to get its message across to the audience, and whether it was successful in doing so.

As for assignments, the class was asked to write a paper analyzing the political content in a film of their choosing, provided the movie had some political content to begin with. There was also a written final exam, covering the topics discussed each week, as well as asking the students to remember details from each of the films we had viewed.

As this was the first time the class had been taught there were still some kinks to be worked out of the class. On some days we watched two or three movies or short films, which frequently left little time for as much discussion as either the students or professor would have liked. Also, the class found some of the movies to be less enjoyable than others, and I am sure that the list of films will be adjusted before the class is taught again. Despite these problems, the class was still very worthwhile, and I learned a lot about politics and, surprisingly, film technique over the course of the seven weeks. I'd definitely recommend this class to anyone interested in either field. ■

LBS 500

Colloquium: Athena's Acropolis and Apollo's Delphi: Mythology and the Architectural Design of Greek Sacred Spaces

Winter 2007

Professor Andrea Eis
Department of Art and Art History

This course will explore how beliefs about the specific personas of Greek gods impacted the design and architecture of places where they were worshipped. The core of the course will be focused on the Acropolis, and its temples to Athena, and the sacred way at Delphi, where Apollo's oracle told people of their fate. The contrast between these classical sites and Mycenae – home to Agamemnon and Clytemnestra at the time of the Trojan War – will also be explored.

Interdisciplinary study will include readings from classical Greek plays that represented the gods, myths and sacred sites; readings from modern literary re-workings of the myths in which the sites are significant; explorations of the layout, site design and architectural design of the three sites; and an overview of the changing artistic representations of these mythological sites over the centuries.

The curriculum is coordinated with an eight-day trip to Greece over Winter Break, including visits to the sites in Athens, Delphi and Mycenae.

For more information: eis@oakland.edu

a few words about LBS 500

A Conversation with Professor Eis
by Angela Kayi

Professor Eis has connected with Greece since her time as an undergraduate classics major in a year abroad study program in Athens. She spent two months in Greece this past summer, on a faculty research fellowship from OU, photographing and shooting video for her artwork. Although the purpose of her trip was for her own



Delphi, Greece.
Photograph by Andrea Eis

creative and research activity, she tells us that while she was there she was able to spend some time planning and organizing material for the colloquium.

The objective of this course is to understand how formal aspects of architectural design, as well as mathematical approaches to site planning, were used to embody specific qualities of the gods.

Different sensibilities are expressed in the two classical sites to be explored: the formal sophistication of Athena's Parthenon and Acropolis, which soars prominently over Athens, and the still powerful dwelling of Apollo's oracle, clinging precariously to the mountainside at Delphi. The sophisticated standard of these sites is challenged by Mycenae, a much earlier site, its raw, forceful energy, constructed from mammoth blocks of stone, presenting none of the elegant classicism of the later sites.

If you are interested in this topic but are unable to participate in the course, Professor Eis recommends the following books: *The Earth, The Temple and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture*, by Vincent Scully; *Architectural Space in Ancient Greece*, by Constantinos Doxiadis (out-of-print; used copies available through amazon.com); *The Traveler's Key to Ancient Greece*, by Richard Geldard and above all, *Colossus of Maroussi*, by Henry Miller. ■

Greece
travel opportunity

Winter Break 2007



Parthenon, Athens, Greece.
Photograph by Andrea Eis

February 23
through
March 4

Athens

Delphi

Mycenae

Coordinated by
Professor Andrea Eis,
Department of Art
and Art History
in cooperation with
the Masters of Arts in
Liberal Studies
Program

eis@oakland.edu
248.370.3376

LBS 502**China: From Celestial Kingdom to World Power**

Humanities Core Course Winter 2007

Professor Linda Benson
History Department

China's rapid economic expansion over the past quarter century can be seen around the globe. World markets must now factor in China's growing demand for raw materials and manufactured goods as well as the broad range of items produced there and sold in the global market place. As a result of its greatly increased economic clout, China's rise as an international competitor concerns many nation states, including the United States. Yet the majority of Americans know relatively little about the country or its cultural roots, and misunderstandings that have marked the Sino-American relationship over the past century and a half persist today.

This course will provide an interdisciplinary introduction to modern China and its rise to power. Especially designed for graduate students without background on the subject, it offers an opportunity to explore China's recent past, its cultural traditions, and its contemporary society with a focus on topics of greatest interest to Americans today. These include readings on, and discussion of, recent historical events, trade relations, human rights, population policy, cultural history, and women's status. Recent films and documentaries viewed as part of the course will offer further insight into the dramatic changes which have marked the past half century. Overall, the course seeks to foster a broad understanding of contemporary China and its place in the on-going process of globalization.

As the instructor for this course, I bring both academic training and personal experience to my teaching. I have lived in Hong Kong and Taiwan, and while resident overseas, I traveled extensively in China and neighboring countries. On one recent trip, I had the opportunity to visit Mongolia on a Fulbright project grant. These first-hand experiences inform my teaching, as does my research on modern China.

Graduates from Oakland University are currently studying and working in China, as are many Americans intent on understanding this vast nation and participating in its dynamic economy. Some of my former students work for Shanghai and Beijing-based corporations, while others teach English and other subjects in colleges and in the private schools now sprouting up across China. While your own future may or may not include such experiences, understanding China is more important today than ever before for Americans, and this course is an opportunity to delve into the Chinese world and its implications for the global future. ■



Tang Yin (Tang Baihu), (1470-1523). Collection of National Palace Museum Taipei, Taiwan.

meet the new MALS executive committee

The members of the Executive Committee are appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to provide oversight and advice on administration of the program. Each faculty member represents one of the four areas in which graduate students are expected to complete course work as part of the degree requirements, namely humanities, language/literature, social science, and science. Among the committee's responsibilities are reviewing applications to the MALS program and approving student petitions and final project proposals. The names and areas of the new Executive Committee are as follows:

Linda Benson
Prof. History
MALS Director (Chair)
benson@oakland.edu
248.370.2539

Barbara Mabee
Prof. German, Modern Lang. and Lit.
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George Gamboa
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248.370.3575

Debra McGinnis
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Phyllis Rooney
Assoc. Prof. Philosophy
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248.370.3392

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| September 29 | Last day to file application for degree for fall term 2006 |
| November 13 | SAIL registration for Winter 2007 classes |
| November 23 - 26 | Thanksgiving break |
| December 6 | Study day |
| December 7 - 13 | Exams |
| December 16 | Commencement |
| December 23 - January 2 | Holiday Recess |
| January 4 2007 | Class begin |
| January 15 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday |
| January 26 | Last day to file application for degree for winter and spring term 2007 |

MAIS
Master of Arts
in Liberal Studies

save the date

Friday October 6th, 2006 Open House
Oakland Room at the Oakland Center
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Refreshments will be served