

SPECTRUM

The Newsletter for
Oakland University's

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies



sciences, humanities, literature and languages, social sciences



MAALS

WINTER MMV

VOLUME I ISSUE I

Greetings from the Director:



As we launch our first newsletter, the Oakland University MALS program has grown from two to thirty students in two years as our program heads in new directions guided by the energies of its growing student population. In 2003, Holly Gilbert and Jack Burns were the first MALS students admitted to the program; in

2005, both Holly and Jack are now preparing their M.A. thesis/project proposals and anticipate graduation in 2005.

Who are our other students? They are spread across the disciplinary spectrum, representing professional careers in business, journalism, education, grant-writing, finance, communications systems, and landscape architecture. Most work, but some don't. Our students have majors in business, journalism, art & art history, English, information science, philosophy, history, psychology, modern languages, sociology, communications, religious studies, general studies, and nursing. MALS students all seek the advantages of an interdisciplinary degree and program in a changing world, workplace and diverse culture.

During Winter Break, the MALS program continued its

tradition of offering a trip abroad with research opportunities for students taking winter MALS courses in 2005. Graduate students Helen Basberg and Dan Brown traveled to London March 4-13 with Professor Cole. Dan did research in the Museum of London and British Library on the figure of the scapegoat in 19th century London for the "City" course, while Helen researched the Holocaust Center in Nottingham as well as the Jewish Museum and Holocaust exhibition within the Imperial War Museum in London for her project for the course "The Artist in War."

The goals of MALS continue to be providing unique curricular choices for its students that emphasize interdisciplinarity and giving students out-of-the-classroom learning experiences or bringing in expert speakers

(Continued on next page)

from diverse fields, as reflected in the highlights listed below:

Highlights of 2005 include:

*Core courses on the City (Prof. Cole) and The Artist in War (Prof. Beall)

*Guest lectures by Historian and National Book Award Winner Kevin Boyle; David Poremba, Curator of the Burton Historical Collection at the Detroit Public Library; Captain Thomas R. Beall, U.S. Navy; Robert Bradley, Senior Docent, Detroit Institute of Arts; Prof. David Kidger, Dept. of Music, Theatre, and Dance.

*Field trips to Diego Rivera *Industry* murals; Meadow Brook Theatre *And Then They Came for Me*.

MALS students help invigorate the Director with their curiosity and wide-ranging interests. I look forward in this next academic year to guiding our first MALS graduates through their M.A. thesis/projects and working with other students who are at various stages in their MALS graduate careers.

All Best Wishes,

Professor Natalie Cole
Director, MALS
cole@oakland.edu

Letter from the Editor

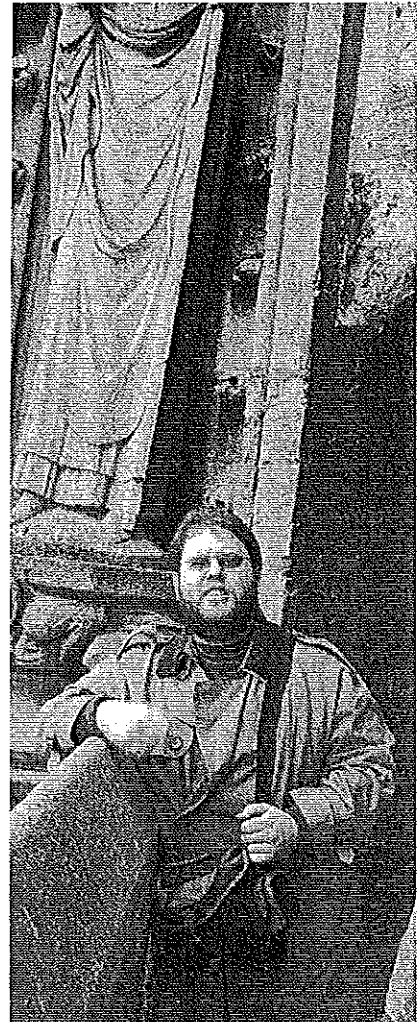
The MALS program immersed me in an exciting and challenging semester this winter. I've taken two courses – Prof.

Cole's City course and directed readings with Prof. Mabee. I've started a graduate assistantship in the MALS office which includes, among many other things, creating this newsletter. I also went on the trip to London over Winter break, which was great!

The assistantship came along at the perfect time for me. I'd just started this program last fall when I was working at a college library. When the school closed, I was out of a job and I think I heard about the assistantship the same day. Now I've been taking MALS courses full time and trying to keep up with Prof. Cole in the office. It's been a great opportunity and a great change from working a nine-to-five job.

It's amazing the variety of work I've been doing here. I've done research and photocopying for Prof. Cole's classes. I've created mailing lists, stuffed envelopes and helped with the logistics of setting up events like the Kevin Boyle discussion and the AGLSP reception. I've learned how to use our brand new digital camera and taken photos of students and guest speakers. I've run paperwork around campus. I've made trips to the grocery store. And, of course, I've created the first MALS newsletter.

We've started out big for our



first edition – 8 pages! There's been so much to cover; filling the space hasn't been difficult.

I want to thank everybody who's provided content: Prof. Cole, Susan, Helen and Alyssa and Prof. Eis for designing the logo. This is a new and relatively small program but you can see we're quite active and growing.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Dan Brown
Graduate Assistant
dsbrown@oakland.edu

National Book Award Winner, Kevin Boyle, meets with MALS Stu- dents

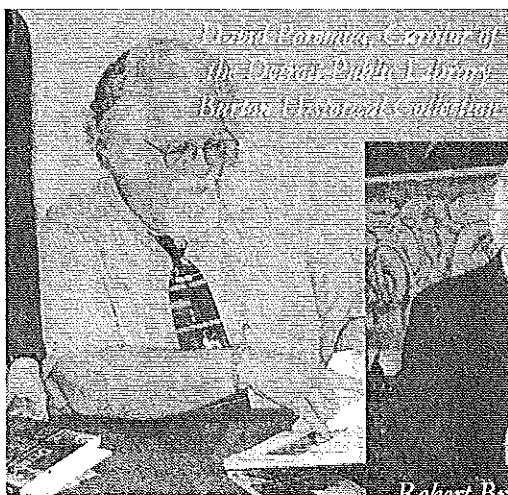
By Prof. Cole

Approximately 150 people attended the event, co-sponsored by MALS, the History Department, and the College of Arts and Sciences. An Associate Professor of History at Ohio State and Detroit native, Boyle addressed how Detroit today still faces some of the same urban and racial problems it did in the 1920s. He shared his experiences of transforming academic writing into a compelling narrative with elements of tragedy and suspense, without sacrificing historical accuracy and depth of research. He inspired his audience with his powers of story telling and answered questions with candor and humor.

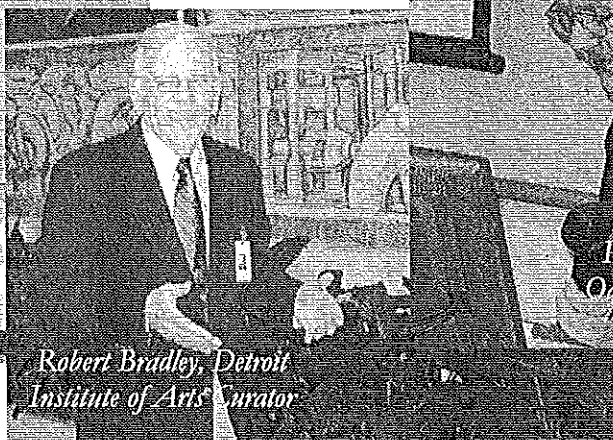
Boyle met afterwards with Professor Cole's LBS 500 class to discuss his book, offering insights into choices he had made as an author and researcher. He explained how the character of Gladys Sweet, Ossian's wife, emerged in the course of his research as a much stronger force than he had thought her at the beginning. He also said the Clarence Darrow part of his book was "the easiest" to write.



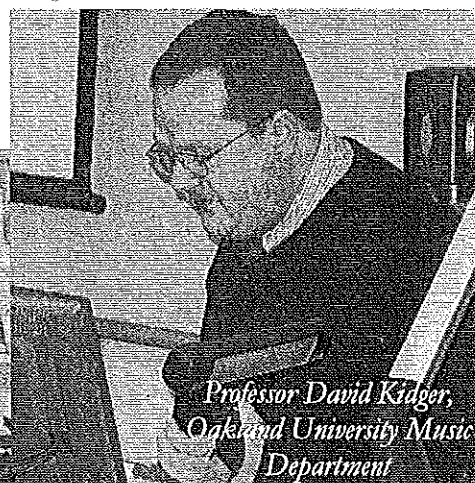
Other MALS Winter 2005 guests...



*David Pommer, Curator of
the Detroit Public Library
Burton Historical Collection*



*Robert Bradley, Detroit
Institute of Arts Curator*



*Professor David Kidger,
Oakland University Music
Department*



Form as Meaning

By Susan Brown

In Liberal Studies 502, Professor Andrea Eis utilized such diverse media as art, architecture, literature, and film to demonstrate the ability of "the human impulse to embody ideas in physical form and to use form as a complementary mode of conveying meaning." Form and meaning are tangible concepts, intricately intertwined, mutually supportive, dependent on one another, and of equal importance in the expression of ideas.

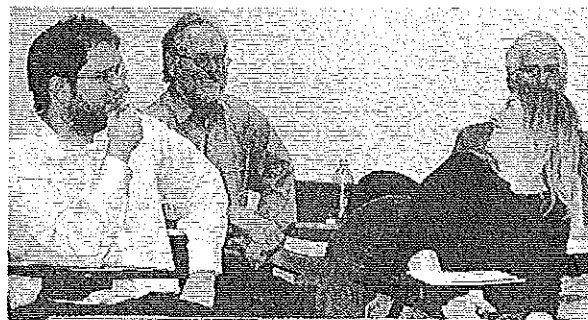
As an example, in reading Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, we approached the text in a manner other than thematic, by examining language in its recurring patterns. We considered the physical construction of the text with respect to the emotion it was able to evoke, noticing such facets as the length of clauses, punctuation, variations in sentences, shifts in trajectory -- all affecting mood, tone, attitude, and adding layers of extra meaning to the individual words.

We then viewed the film adaptation of the novel, with a focus on such aspects as editing and the rhythm of shots, camera movement, settings, costumes, body language, as a means of deconstructing the unit, investigating the parts of the whole, and appreciating the significance of the entirety. By this method, we were able to compare specific scenes common to the novel and film, and thereby ascertain the unique features of each art form in communicating the artist's sentiment.

Students used skills of observation honed in class in the linking of form and meaning to pursue individual research projects ranging from the works of e. e. cummings to Gothicism in architecture, and from Picasso's "Guernica" to costuming in Hitchcock's "Notorious." Over the duration of the semester, it became apparent that meaning is enhanced, heightened, and enriched by form, in both subtle and overt ways.

Students' views challenged in science and religion course

By Dan Brown



MALS students Dan Brown and Cristin Carlson (front) and Professors Charles Mabee and Michael Sevilla (back)

Students studied the varied and complex relationships between science and religion in LBS 504: Science and Religion. Taught by Oakland University professors Michael Sevilla and Charles Mabee, the course examined several topics in which science and religion both confront and alter our perceptions of reality. Some of these topics included evolution, consciousness and ecology.

"I was expecting to be enlightened, probably bolstered, by the religion study and to be honest I was a little anxious about the science," said MALS student Holly Shreve Gilbert. "Instead I found the scientific theories and ideas fascinating and in the end this new knowledge has had a significant impact on my spiritual convictions and insights."

A majority of the course addressed the common assumption that scientific and religious ideas always clash. Fritjof Capra's, *The Tao of Physics*, reveals a surprising overlap between the two disciplines. In this work, Capra uses quotes from quantum physicists and Zen mystics to show the similarities of language used by both to describe the unity of all things.

(Continued on Page 5)

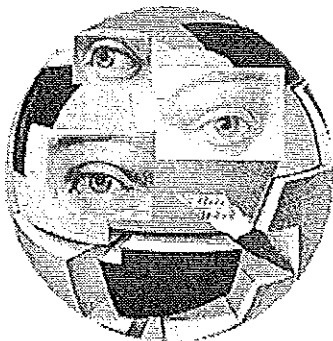
(Continued from Page 4)

Professors Sevilla and Mabee originally taught the course in lecture format to Oakland University Honors College students. After receiving concerns that the course was too heavily focused on lectures, they modified it to discussion based format. This was their first time teaching the course in the MALS program.

"We hoped the class would be challenging to student notions about God, the universe and our place in it," said Sevilla, who teaches chemistry at Oakland University, and was recently named one of the University's Distinguished Professors, "But we found that the MALS students were up to our game and challenged our own preconceived notions. From the positive responses from student course reviews, it is clear that this dialogue-based course was truly inspiring for students and faculty. Charles and I hope to hold this seminar course again in the future."

"The professors' technique was truly inspired," said Shreve Gilbert, "They did a brilliant job weaving science and religion into a coherent dialogue that opened a world of possibilities

for, I think, many of us, who come from conventional religious and academic backgrounds."



"The Seminar in the Sciences class was a wonderful experience, which allowed students to research

and explore different fields related to Science and Religious studies," said MALS student Anelia Petrova-Hristova. "The interdisciplinary nature of the Seminar matched perfectly the concept behind the MALS program and motivated the students to investigate issues, which integrate two quite controversial disciplines, such as Science and Religion."

Recommended Reading:

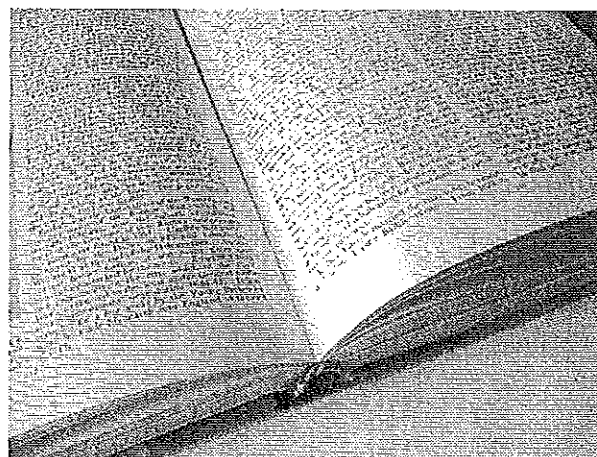


image: budgetstockphoto.com

- *Guns, Germs and Steel...*
By Jared Diamond
W. W. Norton & Company, 1999
480 Pages
- *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*
By Susanna Clarke
Bloomsbury USA, 2004
800 Pages
- *Status Anxiety*
By Alain de Botton
Pantheon, 2004
320 Pages
- *Sixteen Acres*
By Philip Nobel
Metropolitan Books, 2005
304 Pages

London - 2005



Highlights

By Helen Basburg

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

- Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*



I began my exploration at Kensal Green Cemetery, founded in 1830 and the burial place of Mary Scott Hogarth, Charles Dickens's beloved sister-in-law; poet and humorist Thomas Hood; and novelist William Makepeace Thackeray. My research took me to Beth Shalom, the Holocaust Center in Nottingham and the Winston Churchill War Rooms. I couldn't resist a visit to Sherlock Holmes' famous address, 221 Baker Street. Westminster Abbey was also a must-see.

At the Imperial War Museum, Prof. Cole and I wanted to see paintings by Paul Nash, but they were not on display! We asked and the receptionist found Mr. Moody, a research and information officer. He led us into the bowels of the Museum where many paintings were stored to make room for a special exhibition on William Orpen. He found us three of Nash's paintings. It was so wonderful to see them. It was even more thrilling to see them there, in storage, surrounded by so many other masterpieces. Mr. Moody also gave us free entrance to the Orpen exhibit.

Also, Dan Brown, Prof. Cole and I had high tea with David Parker, the former curator of The Dickens House Museum, at the Russell Hotel. Finally, we saw three brilliantly acted plays: *A Life in the Theatre*, starring Patrick Stewart; *National Anthems*, starring Kevin Spacey and a musical adaptation of Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*.

"Every Picture Tells a Story, Don't It?"



By Alysia Hunton

As a guest in Professor Eugenie Beall's "The Modern Artist and War" class on Thursday night, April 7th, Mr. Bob Bradley, Senior Docent at the Detroit Institute of Arts, turned the reins over to the class. First, he showed us slides of paintings, illustrations, photographs, pencil sketches, sculpture and even some poetry and cartoons. One work juxtaposed against another. The hum of the projector was the only sound in the room until we began reacting and posing questions. All comments were considered. There were no wrong answers. Mr. Bradley guided us through the slides, periodically asking questions and giving background information on world history and on the artists themselves.

Paul Nash's "We Are Making a New World" was viewed alongside photographer Christine Spengler's "Bombing of Phnom-Penh." Nash's deeply surreal painting was so well rendered, I at first thought it was a photograph. It depicts a choppy, yet graceful terrain of bright, egg-yolk-yellow, jellyfish-like objects, from which stretch forth straight, spindly, black branches (or are they skeletal arms with bony fingers?) that reach towards a horizon of

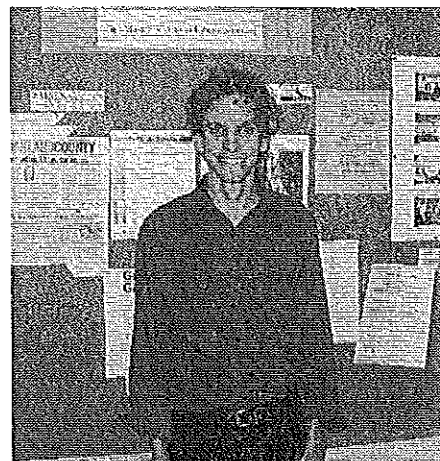
brilliant, almost cheerful, bloody red with either a moon or sky peeking out from above. Spengler's black and white photograph featured thick, hazy smoke that still could not conceal the devastation wreaked by a bomb during the Vietnam War. A different terrain was seen in this work; nothing but deep muddy water filled craters covering an earth where nothing will ever grow again. The photograph was made even more overwhelming when we learned from Mr. Bradley that it was actually shot with color film. Much like the old Rod Stewart song, "Every Picture Tells a Story, Don't It?" each piece of art told a story and showed an artist's view of war. The works could be historical as well and document without words what was going on in our world at that time.

Eventually the question came up that we'd been pondering all term – is this really art? And what is art? We've yet to come up with a final, all inclusive answer and I wonder if we will. But this is truly what makes a MALS class so intriguing and unique. It's not about "the answer" or having the "right" answer. The MALS program is about learning - studying two, three, and sometimes even four seemingly incongruous subjects, examining their differences and their similarities, and making connections to understand the diverse relationships that exist in the world in which we live.

New MALS Students for 2005



New students, Heather Zelle (right), Carol James (center) and Rob Wachler (left) in the LBS 500 "City" class.



Andrew Cartwright

Upcoming MALS Courses

Spring 2005:

LBS 512: The Culture of the 1960s

Topics in the Humanities

M, W, 6:30-9:50p.m.

Prof. Brian Murphy, Department of English

bmurphy@oakland.edu

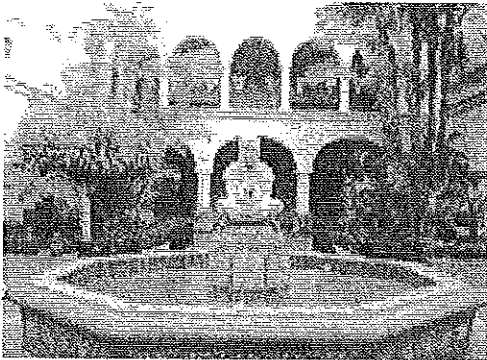


Image: morguefile.com

Summer 2005:

LBS 511: The Garden in Fiction, Essay and Film

Topics in Literature and Language

T, TH, 6:30 - 9:50p.m.

Prof. McCloskey, Department of English

mcclosky@oakland.edu

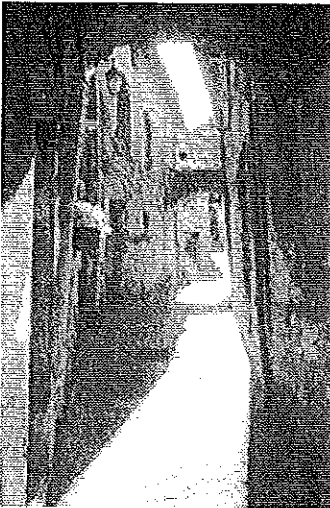


Image: (c) FreeFoto.com

Fall 2005:

LBS 502: Crossroads of Cultures: Windows and Alleyways on the Middle East

Core Seminar in the Humanities

TH, 6:30-9:50p.m.

Prof. Ben Hoffiz, Department of Modern Languages & Literatures

LBS 503: Inequality in America

Core Seminar in the Social Sciences

W, 6:30-9:50p.m.

Prof. David Maines, Department of Sociology

maines@oakland.edu



Image: (c) FreeFoto.com

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

221 Varner Hall

Rochester, MI 48309-4401

(248) 370-2539

www2.oakland.edu/mals

* See Print Shop ->
@ clarity of image.