



# Liberal Studies

## 2014 Newsletter

### From the Chair

Greetings Friends and Alumni of the Department of Liberal Studies.

#### Happy New Year!

According to the Chinese lunar calendar, this New Year will fall on January 31, which ushers in the Year of the Horse. In the Chinese zodiac the horse is a symbol of energy and a wish to travel to see new parts of the world.

We see a great deal of that in this department. An example featured in this newsletter is the travels of Tara Hoyt to Korea!

Please join the department on Facebook, to help us keep up with *your* adventures!



Scott Pearce



### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- ♦ **TARA HOYT'S ADVENTURES IN KOREA**
- ♦ **THOUGHTS ON LITERATURE BY MILT KRIEGER**
- ♦ **LIBERAL STUDIES LECTURE SERIES CONTINUES IN 2014**

### Liberal Studies Alumna, Tara Hoyt, in Korea

It is early afternoon as I am climbing up the steep slopes of Mount Toham, in Gyeongju, South Korea. My goal is the Seokguram Grotto, which contains a monumental statue of the Buddha. As I slowly walk up the mountain, about halfway up, the trees open

up and the sky turns into a blanket of colorful lanterns. It is the month of Buddha's birthday and the lanterns have been hung in his celebration. The sun is shining directly above and onto the lanterns, casting colors of red, yellow, orange, blue, and green across the trees and mountain floor. As I am wandering under the lanterns, I find the mountain's spring. It's a small, rock fountain that protrudes from the mountainside, and has plastic ladles to use for drinking. To drink from the spring, you must first fill your ladle from the spout and pour it back into the pool. This cleanses your ladle from the previous person. Next, you refill your ladle, turn your-

self to the side, away from the people to be polite, and drink the spring water. It is believed that if you think the water has a foul taste your soul is not pure. But if you find the taste of the water to be satisfying, then you have a pure soul. My friends and I found the taste of the water to be very refreshing.

After about an hour of walking on a winding mountain path, I am near the summit of Mount Toham and overlooking the East Sea.



*At the mountain's top*



*Mount Toham's lanterns*

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**"I cannot yet give up this life of perpetual adventure."**



## Tara's tale, continued

After studying Buddhism in college, I longed to personally see one of the many incredible Buddha statues. One sees pictures, but nothing can compare to the sheer majestic aura that the statue presents. I'm standing in line, waiting my turn to pass through the incredible artificial cave, and finally, I get to stand before the 1200 year old Buddha. It's beautifully preserved and all I want to do is stand

there all day in the silence that surrounds me. But then I move aside and let the next person enter the grotto. After taking in the vast view of Korea and the East Sea below me, I descend the mountain and head to the Hanok, a traditional Korean guest house where I will be staying the night.

Staying in a Hanok is an experience I will never forget. It is about an hour and a half drive into the mountains, so there is no light pollution. I have never seen so many stars before, and the silence that surrounded me created an

entirely new world. I was invited, by the fifth generation Hanok owner, to join him to drink his homemade *Makgeolli*, a traditional alcoholic drink made from rice and wheat. He ushered my friends and I into a room where he told us the history and story of his family's Hanok.

The Hanok



Koreans tend to be very proud of their culture and history. No matter where I go there is a story someone wants to share, and having this man share the story of his 500 year old Hanok was humbling.

I've lived in Seoul for ten months now. Here, I am surrounded by palaces, temples and museums. And where there's a palace or temple, there is bound to be an outdoor market. Seoul's population is almost ten million—at times there is no room to walk in a line and talk with your friends, and there is no time to say "sorry" if you bump into someone because they are already down the street. In Washington state, I thought Pike Place was busy. Living in Seoul has completely changed my perspective on city life. The active life that Koreans live is where the real excitement lies. And Gangnam city is as

active as you can get.

"Gangnam is as active as you can get."

Going to Gangnam, you must ride the subway, compacted like a sardine in a can. Then, you're shoved off in an enormous wave of people, all in hope that you are headed in the right direction. In the subway station of Gangnam, you are not only surrounded by people moving in every direction, but also vendors and stores lining the walls. The entire subway station is an underground mall; you can even get an eye exam and new glasses. Once you reach your destined subway exit, one of twelve, you ascend the stairs and are thrust into the heart of the city.

Walking the neon streets of Gangnam is remarkable. You're surrounded by buildings lit up by LED windows flashing different patterns,

giant television screens promoting the newest K-Pop bands, and hundreds and thousands of advertisement signs.



Because of the massive number of shops and stores, there is constantly something to do. Gangnam is never boring or asleep.

Even after living in South Korea for ten months, I feel I have only seen and experienced a small speck of the culture and history. I have only seen a few major cities. But I have tried a large variety of traditional Korean dishes; there is food every-

where. And having lived in Korea for ten months, I have acquired many of the culture's etiquettes. Bowing my head to everyone has become natural, taking my shoes off inside, even at restaurants, and touching my elbow upon giving and receiving things. I'm sure when I go back to America I will go around automatically bowing my head and touching my elbow. I have loved my life in Korea so deeply that I even decided to extend my stay another year. I do not want to leave the friends I have made here. My Korean friends are the most caring people I have met. They go out of their way to make things easy, and introduce me to activities that I would normally be afraid to try by myself; such as *noraebang*, Korean karaoke! I cannot yet give up this life of perpetual adventure.



## Emeritus Professor Milt Krieger on African Literature

*A Month and a Day* is by the Nigerian author Ken Saro-Wiwa. Written at the end of a popular writing and TV career based in the country's everyday pidgin language that he called "rotten," the book is a field and prison diary just before his execution in 1995 and a very accessible guide to the early stage of the Niger River delta people's emerging insurrection against "big oil" in MEND (Movement for the Emancipa-

tion of the Niger Delta); a Seattle-based documentary film *Sweet Crude* brought it to local and wider attention in 2009, with a Western graduate on both the site and later production crew.

Another recent Nigerian themed work opened to acclaim on Broadway in late 2009 and found its way to Seattle with me in the house in 2013 (a film will surely follow). This is Bill T.

Jones' musical *Fela!* based on Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the late, hugely gifted and controversial *afrobeat* musician (Soyinka's cousin, his band Afrika 1970, Cream drummer Ginger Baker's major African connection, are reference points). Fela's mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a formidable nationalist leader, was fatally injured in 1977 when Nigerian troops stormed the compound where Fela had set up his Kalakuta Republic...truly the stuff of operas...

"Truly the stuff of operas..."

Read more from Professor Krieger on the Liberal Studies webpage

## Images of Harar, Ethiopia, from Liberal Studies Professor Jonathan Miran



See more of Professor Miran's Photographs from his recent visit on the Liberal Studies' webpage



Known as the '**city of saints**' and considered by its inhabitants as the fourth holy city of Islam, **Harar**, in **eastern Ethiopia**, is one of the most important centers of Islamic learning and culture in the Horn of Africa since the sixteenth century. The city is one of Professor Miran's research sites.

## Alumna Summer Satushek Spends the Summer in Jordan



There is nothing straightforward about public transportation here. The bus seats about 20 people and it leaves the station only when it is full. With about 15 on board we pulled out, but this was a false start. Just a trip to a nearby butcher to buy chickens. A half an hour later, we left the station for the second time; this time with every seat full. One more stop in the city for bread and fresh juices and we were on our way down (to Ghor).

A very different iftar awaited me in Amman... I was invited to join the Khalifah family at their home for a sumptuous spread of savories and sweets. This family belong to one of the oldest and largest tribal families in Jordan and trace their roots to the Nabateans - builders of Petra.

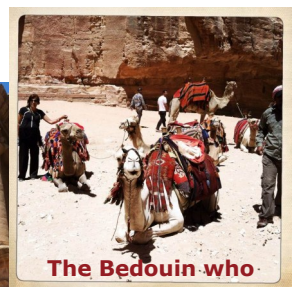


The dinner (iftar) was a delicious spread of spiced stuffed chickens and rice, dishes of tomatoes and okra, eggplant and tahini, stuffed vegetables and grape leaves, fattoush salad, and mulokhiyah soup.

### The Hidden Valley



The "Monastery" at the end of a 3 hour hike and 800 stairs



The Bedouin who lived in the caves of Petra now act as the guides to the site







Our faculty at their labors

**How do the dollars work given to the Liberal Studies Foundation by kind donors?**

**First and foremost – scholarships to encourage and help support new entrants into our field of study!**

**And then occasional support for gatherings of students, alumni and faculty at which we continue dialogue and exploration!**

## Liberal Studies Lecture Series:

### Buddhist Ethics for Moderns

This year our tradition of bringing distinguished scholars to Western will continue with a talk by UBC's Jessica Main, who will come to Bellingham to discuss Buddhist ethics in the modern world.

Save the date! March 6, 2014, from 4-5:30. We're holding the event in Fairhaven this year at Firehouse Café (1314 Harris)

There'll be a lot to think about!

## Other Happenings in the Liberal Studies

### As Always, Liberal Studies Faculty Have Been Active in Their Fields of Study

**Holly Folk**'s article "Virtual Communities": The Anarchist Press at Home, Washington, was published in the October 2013 issue of *American Communal Societies Quarterly*

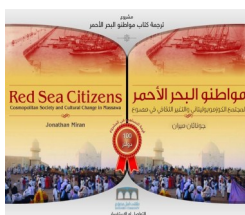
**Andrea Gogröf** had an article published in August 2013 titled "Public and Private Hygiene in Emile Zola's *La Curée*" in the book "Re-reading Zola and World Wide Naturalism." She also presented a paper, "End Game: Love, Death and offspring in Micheal Hanek's film *Amour*" at the Annual Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association

**Monique Kerman** published "Cut to the Chase: The Work of Mary Evans," in *n.paradoxa: International Feminist Art Journal* vol. 31 (2013), pp. 58-64.

**Kimberly Lynn's** book, *Between Court and Confessional: The Politics of Spanish Inquisitors*, was published in July 2013 by Cambridge University Press. She presented the book at Western's Library in October. Professor Lynn is on research leave this academic year, working in the archives in Madrid and Rome, where she gained admission to the archives of the Roman Inquisition, which the pope only opened to researchers in 1998, and which are still located in the Palace of the Holy Office just next to St. Peter's square. She also spent some time in the archives in Madrid in the fall, and was invited to present her research in a seminar at the Universidad Autónoma there.

**Sean Murphy** recently published "On the Enduring Impurity of Menstrual Blood and Semen: Leviticus 15 in William of Auvergne's *De Legibus*" in "Ritus Infidelium: Miradas interconfesionales sobre las prácticas religiosas en la Edad Media."

**Jonathan Miran** was awarded an Alexander von Humboldt research grant which will allow him to spend fall quarter 2014 at the Asia-Africa Institute in the University of Hamburg. In Germany, he will collaborate with colleagues on a project focusing on the history of slavery and the slave trade in Ethiopia and north-east Africa. *On another note, there is an initiative to translate Professor Miran's book, Red Sea Citizens, into Arabic.*



The Eritrean community in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, has begun a fund-raising campaign to cover the costs of publishing Professor Miran's book in Arabic (originally published by Indiana University Press in 2009). They've made these posters to advertise their efforts.



The Arabic text in this picture says "Make a contribution to pass on history to future generations" and "Translation project of the book Red Sea Citizens"

**Scott Pearce** completed his chapter on China's Northern Wei dynasty for a volume of the *Cambridge History of China*, and is now at work on a monograph on the same subject.

**Robert Stoops** attended the National Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion in November. He visited a half dozen museums while in the Baltimore / Washington, DC area.

### Jazz down south—

**Milt Krieger in collaboration with Western's Alumni Foundation is planning a jazz event in King County**

**Summer of 2014**

**Keep tuned for more information!**

### Something new for the Liberal Studies department this year—

We'll be linking our Scholars' Week event with the university's Back 2 Bellingham reunion

- ◆ Readings of seniors' papers
- ◆ Celebrating alumni achievements
- ◆ And lots to eat!

A gathering of the new and old down at Squalicum Boathouse, in Zuanich Park May 18, 12-3 pm

Invitations will be coming!

### Join us at Back 2 Bellingham!

