

2016 Newsletter

A Note from our **NEW** Chair:



I've been part of the department for nine years now, but this is my first opportunity to write to you — the department's alumni, students, and friends — as chair, an office I stepped into at the end of June. Quite a lot has happened in the department since our last newsletter, and the pages which follow try to give a sense of some recent developments. The department was fortunate to be able to hire Dr. Michael Slouber as an Assistant Professor in 2014 and so continue our significant role at Western in teaching about South Asia. The recent activities and accomplishments of our other faculty can be found on pages 2 and 3.

And we're continuing to sponsor a variety of events, ranging between themes as diverse as communal studies, classical Indian dance, and medieval popular culture. In 2014, the department also created a student Leadership Team, now in its second year (more about that on page 4!). And a few years ago, we started a new event at Western's growing Back2Bellingham weekend — we hope you'll join us this year at the Zuanich BoatHouse on May 15, 2016 from 12:00 — 3:00 p.m. for a gathering of current and emeritus faculty, alumni, and current students (more details to follow in the coming months). We will be working on updating our web site with more news, and we hope to hear from you this year— please do drop us a line! Finally, our department was also struck by heartbreak in July 2015, when one of our students, Meagan Elizabeth Smith, was tragically murdered. The department has now established a scholarship to honor her legacy, which is described on page 5.

Here's wishing each of you all the best in 2016,

Kimberly Lynn



Welcome Michael Slouber



We would like to formally welcome our newest tenure-track faculty member, Dr. Michael Slouber. A native Californian, Michael went to college at the University of California's Davis campus, and graduated with highest honors in his chosen field of Religious Studies. He pursued his love of Indian civilization further by studying Sanskrit and South Asian Studies at Cal Berkeley, where he went on to earn his MA and PhD degrees. During graduate school, he studied for one year in Nepal and two years in Germany, earning a second MA from Hamburg University in the process. Michael's research specialization is in early medieval religion and medicine, which he studies from rare Sanskrit texts preserved in palmleaf manuscripts. Michael teaches all aspects of Indian history, religion, literature, and culture in the Liberal Studies department. His courses include "Humanities of India" and "Religion and Society in India," as well as more advanced courses like "Traditional Indian Medicine" and "Fierce Goddesses of India." All of these courses include a focus on issues of cultural representation and gender equality or lack thereof in Indian and American societies. Such issues are approached by developing the open, yet critical, mindset necessary to adequately understand social and religious ideas that may seem very foreign at first glance.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- ◆ LIBERAL STUDIES LEADERSHIP TEAM
- ◆ LIBERAL STUDIES SPEAKER SERIES
- ◆ ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: CHRIS ISENBERG
- ◆ MEAGAN ELIZABETH SMITH MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

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

Holly Folk traveled to the Shaker Village at South Union, Kentucky, in September, to present at the annual meeting of the Communal Studies Association. She ran into one of our grads, John Sheridan (2013), who continues to research the Hutterites while pursuing a master's degree at the University of Colorado! This quarter sees Prof. Folk working with two of our student majors, Josh Daniels and Britton Johnson, on a survey project on religious congregations in Whatcom County. Our "community count" is part of a larger project being conducted at the Institute for the Study of Religion at Baylor University. Her own research – in new religious movements – is taking an increasing international direction, supported by a small grant from Western last summer to visit several religious communities in Estonia and Hungary. She is currently writing up her findings on the Church of Scientology and Hit Gyülekezet, a "Word of Faith" megachurch in Budapest.

Andrea Gogröf recently had an article on Michael Haneke's film *Amour* published in the journal *Excavatio*. In November, she gave a talk entitled "Flair du Temps: The Dandy in Michel Houellebecq's novel *Submission*" at the PAMLA (Pacific Ancient & Modern Language Assoc.) annual conference. She is serving as Vice President for PAMLA this year. Additionally, she chaired the session entitled "Contemporary European Cinema," in which Riley Jessett, a double major in Liberal Studies and English, presented a paper entitled "Is Cinema Mortal? The *Lumière* Short Films of Costa-Gavras, Haneke, and Wenders." Prof. Gogröf is on sabbatical for the first two terms of 2016 and continuing her research on surveillance.

Kimberly Lynn taught her seminar on *Don Quixote* for the third time this past spring, and she returned to her undergraduate alma mater, the College of William and Mary, in September to speak about the value of a liberal arts education. In 2015, Prof. Lynn's book, *Between Court and Confessional: The Politics of Spanish Inquisitors* (Cambridge UP, 2013) was issued in paperback, and she continued to work on co-editing a book on new trends in the study of the early modern Hispanic world.

Jonathan Miran had his article "'Stealing the Way' to Mecca: West African Pilgrims and Illicit Red Sea Passages, 1920s-1950s" published in the November 2015 issue of *The Journal of African History*, the flagship journal in the field of African history. Prof. Miran also wrote the entry "Eritrea" for the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition (Leiden: Brill, 2015). He recently accepted an invitation to write a chapter on the Red Sea for the book *Oceanic Histories*, edited by David Armitage, Alison Bashford and Sunil Sivasundaram. The volume will launch the 'Cambridge Oceanic Histories' series and will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2017.

Tom Moore 'finished' his novel, *The Heifer Girl*, which is a reimagining of the story of Io but set in the eastern front during WWII. He is now working (and working and working) with an editor to polish the manuscript. He continues to teach both with Liberal Studies and in the freshman Honors sequence, and serves as director of Western's Fellowship Office. This academic year, eight Western students won Fulbrights: Spain (2), Austria (3), Germany (1), Taiwan (1), and Thailand (1); the Fulbright winner to Thailand, Polly Woodbury, is Western's first woman of color to win a Fulbright. And he urges Liberal Studies undergrads to think about the Gilman scholarship — available only to low income students receiving the Pell Grant, it provides \$5,000 for 10 weeks of foreign study — any topic, any country.

Seán Murphy Last year, Sean Murphy had the great pleasure of working on senior theses with Rhys Gentle (Stattius in Dante's *Commedia*) and Lindsay Skinner (gender and eros in 12th-century Romance). This year, he's offering a 300-level course on the cultural history of Ireland—a first for the Department and for the University. The course begins with iron-age excavations at Emain Macha, the ancient royal seat of Ulster, and follows several trails through the sources down to the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923. In January, Prof. Murphy published "Pagans Past and Present: Righteousness and Idolatry in Academic Discussions of Ancient Religion, c. 1130-c. 1230," a chapter in *Gott und die "Heiden": Mittelalterliche Funktionen und Semantiken der Heiden* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015). Students past and present who have read Augustine's *Confessions* with him in LBRL 122 over the years will perfectly understand his motives for the first section of that chapter, where he discusses Augustine's own conflicted, retrospective reflections on his conversion to Platonism.

Scott Pearce is on sabbatical for the 2015-16 year, planning a research trip to China and working on a book project.

Robert Stoops has been active in curriculum development, especially in the area of the GURs. He is chairing the Committee on Undergraduate Education (CUE), which has oversight of the General Education and Writing Program at Western. He is also serving on the General Education Task Force, which is formulating a set of model GUR programs that will serve as a framework for the next round of faculty discussions of the need or desire for changes in Western's GUR requirements.

What do the dollars given to the Liberal Studies Foundation by kind donors help us achieve?

First and foremost, they fund scholarships to encourage and help support students in our majors & minors!

Donations also go towards occasional support for gatherings of students, alumni & faculty at which we continue dialogue and exploration!

College of Humanities & Social Sciences DEAN'S LECTURE SERIES



Our very own Professor **Holly Folk** has been invited to deliver the **CHSS Dean's Lecture** this quarter. Her talk is entitled "**Nesting Boxes: Communal Studies and the Liberal Arts**"-- join us at **7:00 p.m. Monday, February 29 at City Hall in downtown Bellingham!**

Liberal Studies Speaker Series



Dr. Fiona Somerset

Our tradition of bringing distinguished scholars to Western will continue with a talk by UConn's Director of Medieval Studies. Dr. Fiona Somerset, a professor of English and an expert in medieval popular culture, will be the 8th annual Liberal Studies Speaker. She will be delivering a public lecture that draws from her current book project on Chaucer's Clerk's Tale (in *The Canterbury Tales*) and how that fourteenth-century text wrestles with the problem of communal responsibility. **Save the Date—Thursday, April 21st.** More details to follow soon on the: [Upcoming Events Webpage](#)

Dr. Padmaja Suresh

The department looks forward to a visit from Dr. Padmaja Suresh, a world-renowned expert in the over 2,000 year old classical Indian dance— Bharat Natyam. She combines her expertise in dance with the academic knowledge of Tantra, and will give a public lecture combined with a dance performance. **Save the Date—Thursday, March 1st at 4pm in Old Main Theater.**



Congratulations to our Liberal Studies Outstanding Graduates !

2014 Outstanding Graduate

RYAN LOGAN EVANS



2015 Outstanding Graduate

LINDSAY SKINNER



News From Emeritus Faculty

David Curley was invited by Raziuddin Aquil to help edit a volume titled *Literary and Religious Practices in Early Modern and Precolonial India* which will be published by Manohar later this year; Prof. Curley's contribution looks at ballads about marriages that cross religious or caste barriers: "Ballads, Public Memory, and History in the Littoral Zone of Eastern Bengal." He has also been asked to contribute to an Oxford University on-line publication about the Mughal Empire, and in preparation gave two lectures in 2015, one in February at Assam University-Silchar, and one at Madison for a conference sponsored by the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies. Both essays look at literature performed or written by Bengali Muslims and shared with an audience of non-Muslims as well.

W. K. B. Stoever published "Godly Mind: Puritan Reformed Orthodoxy and John Locke in Jonathan Edwards's Conception of Gracious Cognition and Conviction," *Jonathan Edwards Studies*, 4/3 (2014), 327-352. The article addresses a persistent issue in Edwards studies regarding the operation of perception, affection, and cognition in personal Christian conversion, in relation to Edwards's theological heritage and use of Locke.

Milt Krieger completed his Cameroon scholarship with two 2014 books published by that country's Langa Press. *Cameroon's Contemporary Culture and Politics* introduces and reprints his short writings from the 1990s. *Victor Levine's Shorter Cameroon Writings, 1961-2007*, is a legacy edition of his primary Cameroon mentor's works. The LBRL Seminar Room now contains his 20 page text—dedicated to the memory of Ulrich Mammitzsch (1935-1990), the department's pioneer Asia scholar and teacher—*Writings and Films from "Elsewhere,"* an annotated compilation of writings and films since ca. 1950, heaviest on African content but spanning an arc from Chile to Burma and from Mexico/the Caribbean to South Africa (anyone interested can get a copy by emailing miltandjudy@comcast.net).

Meet The Liberal Studies Leadership Teams

2014-15

2015-16

Meagan Smith,
Lindsay
Skinner,
Rhys Gentle,
Marleigh
Murdoch,
Emily Ditzler,
(L to R)



Dustin
Polley,
Rose Flory,
Bryce Fields,
Riley Jessett,
Samantha
Hansen
(L to R)

Our Goal

The mission of the leadership team is to foster communication among the students, alumni, and faculty of the Liberal Studies Department, and to increase the visibility of the department's major and minor programs.

What We are Doing:

Liberal Studies Nights—We are hosting events each quarter for the Liberal Studies community to connect and to create opportunities for interested students to come and get introduced to what the department has to offer.

Alumni Connection—We're exploring ways to connect alumni of the Liberal Studies Department with current majors and minors, to give an opportunity to discuss common interests and goals, experiences and opportunities. We'd like to give current students a look into what the major can offer them and where their interests can take them. There's an alumni news form coming soon to the department web site — let us know if you'd like to get involved with current students!

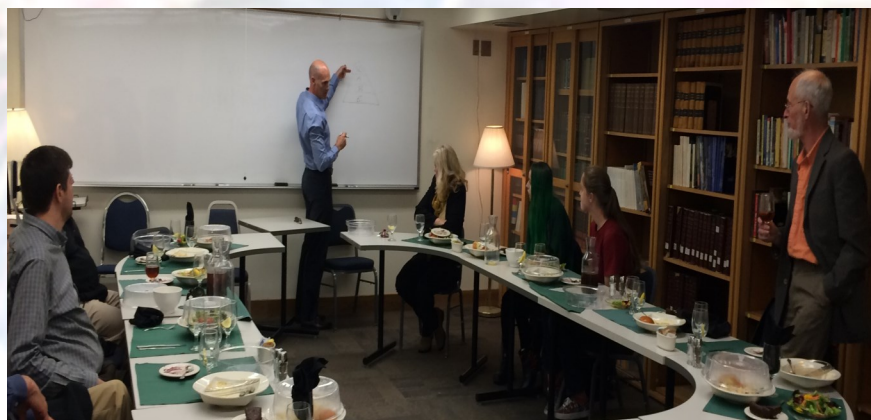


ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Alumnus Chris Isenberg Talks to Students About The Value of His Humanities Degree

Alumnus Chris Isenberg ('88), now Senior Vice President—Global Supply Chain and Procurement, Halyard Health, visited WWU last spring and talked with students about how his background in the Humanities continues to inform his approach to his work. Visiting with students in Dr. Slouber's LBRL 378 class, he told them that "I believe that any person who is going to be successful over time has a growth mindset." He sees this approach as stimulated by the study of the humanities; as Chris shared [in an interview on Western Window](#): "And my own perspective is that, people who gravitate towards Humanities tend to think of lifelong learning."



Chris joined Emeritus Faculty, Milt Krieger and David Curley, Michael Slouber and two leadership team members, Meagan Smith and Rose Flory for a luncheon during his visit.

Join us for another fun event at:



2016 Annual Liberal Studies Picnic—

Please join us for our **Back 2 Bellingham Reunion** and annual year-end party.

- ◆ Bringing together current students, alumni, and faculty
- ◆ Celebrating the department's recent achievements
- ◆ And lots to eat!

Squalicum Boathouse, in Zuanich Park, Sunday, May 15th. 12-3. More information coming soon!



Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship for Excellence in the Humanities

This scholarship honors the legacy of Meagan Elizabeth Smith (1993 - 2015). An outstanding student, Meagan was scheduled to graduate with departmental honors in December 2015, with a Humanities major, a concentration in Religion and Culture, and a German minor. She had developed a particular interest in non-Western societies, and especially in Nepal, which inspired the senior thesis she was researching on "Making Sense of Fierce Deities in Indian Religions." Meagan was a member of the first Liberal Studies Leadership Team, a musician, and an athlete, dedicated to serving the many communities of which she was a cherished part. This is the first named scholarship in the more than forty-year history of the Liberal Studies Department, designed to recognize academic excellence in the humanities.

Ways to Give:

Online at <http://alumni.wvu.edu/inmemoryofmeagan>

With a check made payable to the WWU Foundation and mailed to: [WWU Foundation 516 High Street, MS 9034 Bellingham, WA 98225-9034](http://www.wvu.edu/foundation) By phone at: 360-650-3027

*Please write Meagan E. Smith Scholarship on the memo line of your check.

For more information on ways to give, including instructions for WWU employee payroll deduction or gifts of securities, please visit: <http://campaign.wvu.edu/s/1710/campaign/index.aspx?sid=1710&gid=2&pgid=420>

*Last summer, the department suffered a heartbreaking tragedy, with the loss of our major and member of the 2014-15 Liberal Studies Leadership Team, **Meagan Smith**. Now, we're working to honor her memory with a new scholarship.*



The 2014-15 Leadership Team was asked, "Why HUMANITIES?"
Meagan's Answer—

"Discussing religions and traditions from around the globe as well as from different time periods has helped to expand my cultural understanding of the world immensely. Joining this major has given me opportunities to study a variety of subjects, as well as embarking on a study of Nepal this upcoming summer. The Liberal Studies department has opened my mind to the cornucopia of traditions existing in our world today and the impact we each have on one another."

Stay Tuned —

The Leadership Team is coordinating fundraising efforts. Liberal Studies T-Shirts with a Liberal Studies logo designed by Meagan will be going on sale in the very near future. Proceeds of the t-shirt sales will be donated to the Meagan Elizabeth Smith Memorial Scholarship. And look for details of a fundraising event in the works for early April- more details soon on : [Upcoming Events Webpage](#)