

# THiNK

MAGAZINE

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS | *Spring 2011*



**PURDUE**  
UNIVERSITY





*Members of the Purdue Contemporary Dance Company "meet@midnite" in a performance choreographed by professor and program chair Carol Cunningham-Sigman. Presented in December as part of the annual Winter Works Dance Concert, the performance depicts urban youths experiencing a night of adventure and freedom among the invisible ruins of a decaying structure full of abandoned hope. Photo by Mark Simons*



# THiNK MAGAZINE

Volume 4: 2011

Published by the College of Liberal Arts  
for alumni and friends

Produced by Purdue Marketing  
and Media

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**ON THE COVER.** An exhibit piece at the Nairobi National Museum in Kenya, one of the numerous stops made by anthropology professors Ellen Gruenbaum and Laura Zanotti during a visit to Africa in 2010. *Photo by Laura Zanotti.*

| C O N S I D E R   T H I S |



I wrote last year that change is a constant and desirable part of the university culture, and I'm very honored that one of the changes since then has been my appointment to serve the College of Liberal Arts as the Justin S. Morrill Dean. The appointment has given me the opportunity to continue to work with and for our faculty, staff, and students and to continue to meet many of our alumni and friends.

Our college is strong and vibrant, but of course I want to find ways to make it even better. To that end, I am consulting with faculty, students, and alumni. As I talk with faculty members about the types of research, learning, and engagement going on in our college, I am excited at the ways that we are channeling our rich human, intellectual, and cultural resources to address the grand challenges of our times. I am convinced that the College of Liberal Arts has the artists, educators, and researchers in

the arts, humanities, and social sciences to change the future for the better.

You remain an integral part of creating that future. Your generosity helps us recruit and retain students, making a Purdue education affordable for the most outstanding and deserving. We are particularly excited about the Future Purdue President's Scholarship Challenge to which many of you have responded so positively.

We are busy! This issue of *THiNK* offers you just a peek at some of the work and accomplishments of our faculty and students. You will see articles that show how anthropological research contributes to conservation efforts in Africa; how English is adapted and used as a world language; and how liberal arts students benefit from combining learning in their courses and learning in the community. I know you'll enjoy reading them.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irwin Weiser".

IRWIN WEISER  
*Justin S. Morrill Dean*



**TELL US WHAT YOU *THiNK!***

Did an article in this issue move you, make you think, or raise a question?

We're interested in your thoughts, comments, or suggestions. E-mail us at [thinkcla@purdue.edu](mailto:thinkcla@purdue.edu) or write to *THiNK Magazine*, College of Liberal Arts, 100 N. University Street, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2098. Letters may be edited for length or clarity, and we regret that we may not be able to print all letters.

**F**irst, congratulations on a beautifully designed magazine. But, I have to pick a bone (actually two) with your writing and editing.

In "Monuments and Moments," the author tells the reader the history behind Felix Haas Hall, but doesn't tell us who Felix Haas was, or what he had to do with the train wreck. Neither does he tell the reader the name of the hall before it was renamed in 2006.

In "Boys Will Be Boyz," the writer takes us back to *Rebel Without a Cause* as an illustration. She was okay until she referred to the movie as "a black and white classic." Classic, yes. Black and white, no. It was very definitely a color film.

**STEVE NIENABER**  
BS 1964

*Thank you for bringing these important details to our attention. Felix Haas, Purdue's Arthur G. Hansen Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, has no connection to the train wreck. Instead, he holds the distinctions of being the first dean of the School of Science and helping to establish the nation's first computer science department. The Memorial Gymnasium eventually came to house that growing program, and was unceremoniously renamed the Computer Science Building in 1985 before being renamed again in Haas' honor — not in his memory — in 2006. We regret the omissions and error.*

**C**ongratulations to you and your staff for creating *THiNK*. It is truly a wonderful magazine. As an alumna, I was particularly delighted to read the article about Purdue's industrial design program in the most recent issue.

"But Wait ... There's More" tells a great story, but you missed an opportunity to point out that industrial design at Purdue has a half-century of excellence. Beginning in 1964, Professor Victor Papanek stressed socially relevant design decades before it became cool.

I believe that it is not an exaggeration to assert that Victor Papanek was one of the founders of modern industrial design, and that you should take pride in pointing out his affiliation with Purdue.

**JACQUELINE M. ULLMAN**  
BA 1969, Industrial Design  
MA 1972, Photography



*Victor Papanek*

**T**hrough Jacqueline M. Ullman, I learned of *THiNK* and found the spring 2010 issue online. I am impressed with the visual quality and writing of your fine publication.

As Victor Papanek's close friend and colleague at Purdue from 1966 until we both left in 1970, I certainly agree with Mrs. Ullman's comments about the importance of Victor Papanek to Purdue's proud tradition of firsts. He deserves some ink in *THiNK*.

**AL GOWAN**

Cambridge, Massachusetts

*Steve Visser, industrial design professor and program chair, shares your sentiments. "Victor Papanek, one of the founding faculty members of industrial design at Purdue, has inspired countless young people. On a personal level, he is the person responsible for my entering the design profession. As a young artist I found his book, Design for the Real World, which he wrote while a professor at Purdue. After reading it, I applied for graduate study in industrial design."*

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# THiNK

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## Sign up now for *THiNK* e-updates!

Too long between issues of *THiNK*? You can now read *THiNK* in a new Web-based format. Beginning with this issue, you can find *THiNK* at [www.cla.purdue.edu/think](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/think) and sign up for quarterly *THiNK* e-updates.

Each *THiNK* e-update will include stories and content that you'll find only online, including photo galleries, video, and other interactive components. You'll also be able to post comments, submit class notes, and link to related sites.

If you already have a valid e-mail address registered with Purdue or the College of Liberal Arts, look for your first *THiNK* e-update to arrive in your mailbox in August. If not, send your current contact information to [thinkcla@purdue.edu](mailto:thinkcla@purdue.edu) today!



## Abroad in Africa

Observation is a hallmark of anthropological research, and this spring several Purdue students will have a unique opportunity to hone their perceptual skills. For the first time, the Department of Anthropology is offering a study abroad experience in Eldoret, Kenya, through an internship exchange program with Moi University.

“All of the grand challenges we’re trying to address have a human element,” says Ellen Gruenbaum, professor and anthropology department head. “How do we use our understanding and knowledge of different cultures to improve the human condition?”

As part of the three-week program that begins in May, students will participate in community development projects supporting education, youth empowerment, sustainable development, natural resource management, food security, and e-commerce. Students will spend part of their stay with a host family in a local village and collect life histories of the older adults.

“The students will learn about daily life in an African village and really engage with these families in a deeper, more meaningful way,” says Gruenbaum. “I had my first

study abroad experience as a sophomore in college, and it changed my life. I became so excited about how different the human experience could be.”

Gruenbaum and Laura Zanotti, assistant professor of anthropology, traveled to Kenya last summer to meet with faculty from Moi University and explore opportunities for study abroad related to social and cultural contexts. While there, they visited a women’s farming cooperative (above), a community center, and a girls’ boarding school — all with links to Moi. Faculty from the university will be responsible for guiding the Purdue students’ experiences as they participate in some of these community projects.

The program is open to all majors at Purdue, not just students studying anthropology. Both Gruenbaum and Zanotti agree that the lessons to be learned can be beneficial to any student, regardless of major.

“We really feel that a student program like this is key to supporting Purdue’s strategic plan,” Zanotti says. “The first step in trying to solve global challenges is understanding and valuing diverse cultures.”

*By Tammy Weaver-Stoike. Photo by Ellen Gruenbaum.*

# Graphic Details

Look, it's a bird! It's a plane! It's another graphic novel or serial comic headed for bookshelves and Hollywood!

Those of us who followed the heroic adventures of Superman in our youth already know the appeal of print media that combine stories and pictures. And if you're a regular moviegoer, their increasing adaptation onto the big screen is equally apparent.

The medium is gaining readers, too, most recently peaking with the release of more than 3,400 graphic novel titles in 2008. Comic-book characters dominated the box office that year with 11 movie adaptations — a 12 percent market share led by 2008's top-two grossing films, Batman's *The Dark Knight*, and *Iron Man*.

Although print and screen revenues dropped slightly during the recent recession, it's already on the rebound thanks to an *Iron Man* sequel in 2010, which earned the year's fourth-highest movie ticket sales, and the critical success of TV's *The Walking Dead*.

What's behind the current wave of popularity?

"Graphic novels and serial comics have a long history, but their mainstream success reflects the maturation of a relatively young medium," says comparative literature doctoral student Steve Gooch. "As people get increasingly weary of what corporate-controlled, mass-media offers, the do-it-yourself nature of comics becomes more appealing."

Along with English professor and comparative literature program director Charles Ross, Gooch helped organize a 2010 conference at Purdue that addressed how comics and graphic novels address politics, religion, gender, race, class, and other social issues.

Gooch also participated in November's annual Cancer Culture & Community Colloquium, which used Harvey Pekar's award-winning 1994 graphic novel *Our Cancer Year* to explore how arts and literature provide an outlet of expression to those struggling with cancer.

Purdue University Galleries presented original illustrations from the graphic novel in the Stewart Center Gallery, while a second exhibit in Pao Hall showcased classroom projects inspired by the work, including the collaborative mural pictured at right, drawn by students in Art and Design II.

"The fact that comics and graphic novels in the United States are largely associated with superheroes gives them a unique angle for stories about cancer," Gooch says. "Cancer is the ultimate villain, and battling the deadly disease involves superhuman feats by more ordinary heroes."

By Eric Nelson. Photo by Mark Simons.





## Writing Right

**Y**ou might think that an English professor, especially one who directs a renowned writing lab, would be outraged by students' overuse of social network communication tools. The texts, tweets, emoticons, and other shorthand assaults on traditional style could drain any grammarian's red pen. That's not the case for Linda Bergmann.

Bergmann, an English professor and director of Purdue's Writing Lab, believes that by playing to students' tech-savvy strength, their reasoning, research, and writing skills can improve. A two-year, \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will help Purdue test that theory in more than 20 U.S. school districts.

Working with the Center for Applied Special Technology in Wakefield, Massachusetts, and the Minority Student Achievement Network at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL) will offer an independent, interactive site known as H-OWL that students can use not as courseware, but for writing. Through social networking and certain aspects of gaming, high school juniors and seniors can work toward national writing requirements and transition to college-level writing, says Bergmann.

But will teenagers adept at putting YouTube videos on the Web really use those fun aspects to achieve the core standards? It's an uphill battle. The 2007 Nation's Report Card on Writing reported that only 24 percent of 12th-graders wrote at proficient levels, and the Pew Research Center reported that only 39.6 percent of 18- to 24-year olds enrolled in college in 2008 perceived themselves as being as prepared as possible for college-level writing.

"It's a matter of channeling energies," says Bergmann, who sees texting as a very creative endeavor. "It's like they've invented their own language in which they're highly literate and often quite witty. And because it's not a 'grownup' language we tend to look at it as being bad English. It's really not. It's just their English."

For folks in OWL, which fielded more than 160 million page requests last year, the interactive environment provides a perfect opportunity to help bridge the gap between informal and formal writing.

Now that's something to tweet home about.

*By William Meiners. Photo by Andrew Hancock.*



## On the Move

Liberal arts majors, extracurricular activities, athleticism, and a love of travel are not the only things that Pauline Laorden and Michael Burbano have in common.

Both first-year students are among 30 recipients of Purdue's first Emerging Urban Leaders Scholarships, which focus on students from Indianapolis Public Schools; public schools in Hammond, Gary, and East Chicago; and the Chicago Public Schools Corporation.

In high school Laorden, of Merrillville, Indiana, was involved in sports, student government, and civic organizations. During her junior year, Laorden served as president of STAND (Socially Together And Naturally Diverse), a club that promotes diversity within school and community through service and volunteer work.

"My involvement with STAND helped me focus on issues of culture and diversity in my community," Laorden says. "It helped me realize that I want to be a leader and an example." Laorden, who is majoring in communication and photography, has joined the Purdue Filipino Association and the Photography Club.

Burbano, of Chicago, also was involved in high school activities. He participated in soccer, wrestling, and cross-country; mentored freshman students; served as second vice president of the school's Ecuadorian club; and ran for president of his senior class.

"Even though I didn't win, the experience of running for class president made me realize I want to be a leader," says Burbano, who is studying law and society. "The process let me know I can go the distance even if what I'm working toward is difficult."

Burbano, who is now a member of Purdue's Salsa Club, a Latino Cultural Center ambassador, and an international conversation partner, says leadership comes naturally, as his younger brother often looks to him for guidance.

"I'm really honored to be part of the first year of this scholarship," Burbano says. "I'm just trying to return the favor by giving back as much as I can on campus."

Adds Laorden, "I'm proud to represent Northwest Indiana and all its diversity. I want to take what I've learned about leadership and apply it to my time in college and beyond."

*By Mackenzie Greenwell. Photo by Mark Simons.*





# Blurred Lines

There are points in all important representations of history and its figures — from Eva Perón to Mozart — when fact and fiction begin to blur.

“We’d like to think there is a very clear line that separates one from the other, but no matter how diligent you are as a historian, you can’t return the past and reproduce it,” says biographer and Purdue professor Susan Curtis.

“From a pure causality approach, the best you can do is to make an informed assumption that is rooted in documents and textual evidence.”

What falls between and beyond is usually a matter of inference and imagination. And as the methods and purpose of historical research continue to evolve, so too does the recognition that literature and other fictional media can supplement official records.

## Lingering mysteries

Presented in November by Purdue Theatre, *Amadeus* is more than a portrayal of genius and the arousal and jealousy it provokes, says department chair Richard Stockton Rand.

“In Peter Shaffer’s telling, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart channeled a beauty that could only be experienced as an expression of the divine,” says Rand. “His story is funny and subversive, majestic and mysterious, innocent and dangerous.”

But Mozart’s story is from the point of view of composer Antonio Salieri, Mozart’s rival. In the play, Salieri confesses to Mozart’s murder, fictionalizing a rumor that surfaced after Mozart’s death and serving more as a symbol of stifled genius than historical fact.

Kristine Holtvedt, who directed Purdue’s production of *Amadeus*, helped her students and cast recognize the lines between fact and fiction in Mozart’s story by drawing a comparison to a more contemporary musician, Michael Jackson.

“Both were child prodigies and considered eccentric, both changed the musical landscape, and both died relatively young under mysterious circumstances,” she says.

*LEFT: A dying and remorseful Antonio Salieri, played by first-year MFA acting student Mark Sherlock, begs for forgiveness from God for his actions against Mozart. Photo by Mark Simons.*

*ABOVE RIGHT: Popularized in the 1978 musical Evita, Eva Perón remains one of the most controversial figures in Argentina’s history. Public domain photo.*

# Blurred Lines

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Conclusive evidence of what took Mozart's life has not been found, but it was almost certainly from natural causes, not Salieri's self-alleged poisoning. First-person descriptions of his symptoms that have been analyzed by historians have led many forensic experts to conclude he died from rheumatic fever.

Such mysteries may draw the biggest share of fans to the story of Mozart, but in Holtvedt's interpretation of *Amadeus*, the truth behind his demise is less important than the play's representation of 18th century Europe and the age of reason and enlightenment.

"In the tradition of classical Greek theatre, it raises two of humanity's most universal moral questions: what is our relationship to God and what are our responsibilities to one another? It also introduces younger and unacquainted listeners to his exquisite music, which will outlive us all," Holtvedt says.

And whether or not every audience member comes away from such productions with the same grand questions is less important than what the experience can provide, she adds.

"The story of Mozart is operatic in its scope and much more than a revenge play or murder mystery," Holtvedt says. "When we watch a historical drama, we see human beings overcoming challenges, which gives us courage to overcome our own. It gives us a sense of comfort to know that obstacles can be surmounted, relationships can be healed, and the future can be changed for the better."

## Meaningful rhythms

Associate professor Ariel de la Fuente, who specializes in Latin American history, adds to Holtvedt's musical metaphor.

"For a historian, literature is like a machine for producing harmonies," he says. "There are things we know,

*Mozart, portrayed by senior Matt Webb, cavorts with his love interest and eventual wife, Constanze Weber, played by first-year MFA acting student Elizabeth Krane. Photo by Mark Simons.*



perceive, and understand about certain public figures that cannot be demonstrated through the rules of strict research. Novelists, playwrights, and other fiction writers, who are freer to use their own creativity, can present a more accurate portrait and provide greater insight into personality.”

De la Fuente describes fiction and history as being “different moments on a continuum of the search for an expression of a perception, reality, society, or human condition.” Although many people view fiction as fabrication, de la Fuente believes most authors write to create a sense of truth.

In some cases, there are ample facts to support this lofty goal. As a court musician playing to an audience of European nobility, for example, Mozart left behind hundreds of timeless compositions as well as an archive of letters, notes, public records, and official documents.

But there is often a lack of reliable data related to people outside the circles of power and influence, especially women and ethnic, religious, and political minorities.

In shaping *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, her biography of African-American composer Scott Joplin — a musician born more than a century after Mozart — history professor Susan Curtis had no traditional archive to draw upon.

“I even examined film representations of Joplin, most of which weren't very accurate,” she says. “What I was able to piece together from newspapers, census materials, and personal reminiscences painted a much different picture of his life.”

As a result, the book became a study of cultural history within a biography. “My intention was to deepen our knowledge and understanding of Scott Joplin by contextualizing him in the communities where he lived and worked,” she says. “I tried to frame his activities and productions within the world of turn-of-century America.”

The Purdue historian's most recent book, *Colored Memories: A Biographer's Quest for the Elusive Lester A. Walton*, also began with traditional research efforts, but morphed into an even deeper search for personal and cultural discovery.

Walton, an African-American journalist, social critic, diplomat, and political figure, was well-known to the public during much of the twentieth century, but had become largely forgotten in death. Curtis wanted to know why.

“I had 200 manuscript pages from preliminary research about Walton's youth and family, and I was making the typical inferences about employment, neighborhood,



*A lack of credible archival information led history professor Susan Curtis to use unconventional techniques in her biographies of Scott Joplin and Lester Walton.*

and class when I found evidence that tore the narrative to shreds,” Curtis says. “I could have published a perfectly acceptable biography that followed all the rules of the historian's craft, but it would have been totally fabricated.”

Instead, she began a writing experiment that placed her academic pursuit of the truth alongside Walton's muted history of record, creating what some reviewers have called “a post-modern ghost story” and “experiment in life writing” that explores how America's racial obsessions have cast shadows over its true colors.

“Authors are unquestionably implicated in their work, but often their role is hidden behind scholarly convention and the ideal of objectivity,” Curtis says.

“Once I realized that I couldn't write a traditional biography, I decided to present the fragments within the frame of the research process,” she explains. “It is as much about how I sought the unknown as it is about what I discovered.”

But what if the writer, the composer, or the artist becomes a public figure in the same culture he or she strives to interpret? And what if the historian plays a role in the very events subject to documentation?

In de la Fuente's native Argentina, Jorge Luis Borges was more than the country's most celebrated writer, essayist, and poet of the twentieth century. He also gained fame as a lecturer and political activist, accepting the presidency of the Argentine Society of Writers (SADE) in 1951 and directorship of the National Public Library in 1955.

Though his short stories and verse tended more toward

# Blurred Lines

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*In A Universal History of Infamy, Jorge Luis Borges used historical facts to create fictional short stories that enhanced the most despicable personality traits of real-life individuals. Public domain photo.*

the surreal, especially as progressive blindness replaced his powers of observation with those of imagination, Borges' skill at weaving the factual and the fantastical are on full display in his *A Universal History of Infamy*, which de la Fuente frequently incorporates into class readings.

In addition to forgeries and hoaxes that Borges had earlier published as translated passages from famous but infrequently read literary works, the book includes fictional short stories telling essentially true biographical narratives.

"He used the official archives documenting some of history's most infamous individuals to imagine various aspects of their lives and enhance the most despicable elements of their personalities," de la Fuente says.

Through SADE and essays for various journals, Borges also articulated the opposition to the populist regime of Argentina's three-time president Juan Perón and his wife, Eva, whose story premiered on stage the year before *Amadeus* in the 1978 musical *Evita*.

Although neither Borges nor his likeness are characters in *Evita*, his public comments describing her as "a common prostitute" and his scathing essays on her husband's politics contributed to negative public opinion about the couple, the passion for which was equaled only by those who still consider them among Argentina's greatest heroes.

Borges refused to spare even his own life from fictionalization, writing a personal history embellishing his most notable traits and experiences. For de la Fuente, arguments over such subjective details obscure the larger meanings.

"It would be unfair to ask any of us to speak with complete objectivity, not because we're dishonest, but because our memories are inherently selective," he says. "We all have perceptions of what has happened in our lives that are different from those of our family, our contemporaries, and the rest of the world."

## **New realities**

Curtis' approach to biography and de la Fuente's views on fiction and other literary genres are further extended by William Palmer, professor emeritus of English, whose research continues to advance the field of "new historicism."

"New historicism challenges fallacies that scholars had embraced in their teaching and writing for centuries,"

Palmer says. “As soon as an event, historical personage, or conversation passes from one individual to another, and especially as it passes from pen onto paper, it has already changed completely in relation to the original reality.

“There may be no conscious agenda operating in writers’ minds, but the style itself and the very words that writers choose have already biased their view of history.”

Like Curtis, Palmer thinks it is critical for scholars to examine history not only from the victor’s perspective, but also from the perspective of those who were defeated or overlooked by the forces in power.

“History is an attempt of the present to give voice to the past,” he says. “And yet for centuries, history often ignored some of the central figures who participated in that past. New historicism comes from the ground up and gives voice to ordinary people.”

When sufficient archival evidence is unavailable or too tainted by bias, Palmer believes that all writers — from scholars and biographers to playwrights and novelists — have both the right and the responsibility to view history with informed creativity.

“In *Colored Memories*, Susan Curtis created a narrative arc, put herself within it, and made it clear when she leapt from relatively objective inferences to imagination,” he says. “As long as they’re used properly and not hidden from readers, those types of literary techniques can bring a much richer and deeper understanding of history.”

Palmer practices the craft himself. In addition to numerous scholarly publications, he is the author of four historical mysteries in the “Mr. Dickens” series, which blend his academic studies of Charles Dickens with fictional journals purportedly written by nineteenth century novelist Wilkie Collins.

Though purists may take issue with such techniques, the creative approach taken by Palmer and other writers is necessary when attempting to bring history from academia into popular culture.

“Erik Larson’s *The Devil in the White City* is a perfect example,” says Curtis. The 2004 bestseller tells the alternating tales of two real-life figures behind the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair — Daniel Burnham, the fair’s brilliant chief architect, and H.H. Holmes, a serial killer who prowled



English professor emeritus William Palmer has authored a series of historical mysteries that blend his academic studies of Charles Dickens with fictional journals purportedly written by nineteenth century novelist Wilkie Collins.



the fairgrounds for victims in the guise of a friendly doctor.

“The events truly happened, but Larson’s telling of them is much more novelistic and dramatic than most scholarly books of history,” Curtis says. “Historians can read the footnotes for documentation, but a much larger audience will read it simply because it’s a compelling story.”

Palmer, who has taught courses in film studies, believes that movies, television, and other dramatic productions can share a role with literature and textbooks in the exploration of history, though only with the proper direction.

“A growing majority of people are getting their history from Hollywood and other popular culture sources rather than from scholarly or academic sources,” he points out. “For the most part, anything that engages today’s youth in their cultural origins has some merit, but I think we all agree there is a point where that trend can be damaging.

“There has to be some measure of objectivity, some degree of fact on which to base any story rooted in the past. As teachers, we need to provide our students with the sophistication and knowledge that’s required to understand and interpret those critical distinctions.”

In the end, it comes down to our role as readers. As we navigate between the sometimes murky lines of objectivity and artistic license, we learn to listen to the stories of those whose voices, while not always finely tuned or loudly heard, still sound notes of truth.

By Eric Nelson

# Access Maker

In 1961, the award-winning writer William Saroyan came to Purdue as an artist-in-residence. His professional peak perhaps two decades in his past, Saroyan was seeking opportunities to get out of debt — as well as contribute to the aesthetic development of young Boiler-makers.

Despite a penchant for drinking and gambling, Saroyan produced a three-act play later known to some as *Hanging Around the Wabash*. His student rehearsal assistant, however, distinctly remembers a different name for Saroyan's Purdue drama.

"We knew it as *High Times Along the Wabash*," says Brian Lamb, now the CEO and founder of C-SPAN, the Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network. "*Hanging Around the Wabash*? That can't be right."

Lamb's memory is dependable. A detailed researcher who prepares carefully for every on-camera conversation, and called by one *Washington Post* journalist "America's most original and innovative interviewer," Lamb is perhaps best known in his adopted hometown of Washington, DC, where the cable television network he dreamed up in 1978 has changed the way political candidates are elected and government operates.

Lamb received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civil award, at a White House ceremony in 2007, and C-SPAN has been recognized dozens of times for its editorial and programming excellence.

But awards are never the focus of the Lafayette native, who graduated from Purdue in 1963 with a degree in speech and received an honorary doctorate in political science and government from the College of Liberal Arts in 1986.

Lamb appreciates it when C-SPAN's employees are lauded, but he doesn't like the network to compete for journalism prizes. In 32 years, he has never introduced himself on air. He'll say that's because he's not the focus of the interview, a radical view in today's media carnival. He'll also say C-SPAN is different from commercial TV because it has no advertising, so there's no need to compete for

sponsorship dollars. What he doesn't tell people is that he designed it to be that way.

Lamb has explained C-SPAN's founding principles using different examples. One story stems from Vietnam protests like the 1967 march on the Pentagon, recounted in Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*. Lamb was serving in the Navy at the time, detailed to the Pentagon's public affairs office, and watching within spitting distance as Mailer and other protesters were arrested.

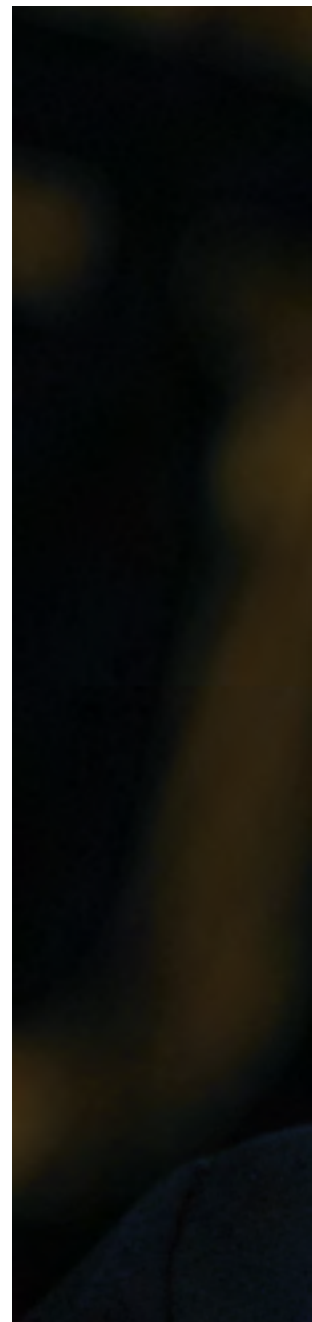
The march on the Pentagon, like other Vietnam protests, was widely covered by the three major television networks. Lamb later described how young people would arrive at such protests with their signs, waiting patiently for leaders to arrive. They often milled about calmly, quietly organizing. It was when the television cameras showed up to cover the event that their behavior changed.

"My mother watching the evening news in Lafayette wasn't getting a clear picture of what was really happening," Lamb later said. He wished at the time there was a way for Americans to see an entire event in context, not edited by the networks.

Insatiably curious, Lamb is more interested in those he meets than in talking about himself, a trait he honed at Purdue when he met celebrities visiting campus and interviewed them for radio. The Kingston Trio lives forever in his heart because the folk-music group agreed to tape an interview, and after it was over, Lamb realized in a panic that he hadn't been recording. He sheepishly asked the singers if they'd agree to a do-over, and they did. He's never forgotten their generosity.

If there was an event during his days on campus that could have foretold Lamb's career, it was his involvement in Purdue's mock political conventions in the spring of 1960. On the Democratic side, there were at least seven candidates vying for the presidency, still months away from the national convention that would formally select Massachusetts Senator John Kennedy as the nominee.

Purdue students prophetically nominated Kennedy,





which was such a big deal to the candidate that he personally called the mock delegates to thank them for their support. “It wasn’t just that we nominated Kennedy,” Lamb recalls. “It was also that we paired him with Lyndon Johnson, which no one nationally was doing at that early stage.”

Lamb thinks students should consider conducting mock conventions again. “I learned so much by going through that process,” he says.

Imagine who might emerge from such an experience,

and what that student might dream up years later. As Lamb’s historic career proves, the most profound changes in society often begin with simple ideas and singular events.

*By Maura Pierce. Photo by Steven Yang.*

**About the Author:** *Maura Pierce (BA '86, American Studies) is a visiting clinical professor in Purdue's Department of Communication and professional-in-residence at the Purdue Exponent. She worked at the C-SPAN Networks in Washington, DC, for 13 years.*





# Learning Through Serving

**R**ecognizing the importance of theory meeting practice, Purdue and the College of Liberal Arts have placed a growing emphasis on service-learning programs across the curriculum. In courts and classrooms, hospitals and homes, in West Lafayette and beyond, students gain real-world experience, and sometimes surprising personal insights, through an array of opportunities that stretch beyond the bounds of campus.

## **A symbiotic exchange**

JoAnn Miller, associate dean for interdisciplinary programs and engagement, believes that service-learning helps the community, while simultaneously creating profound learning experiences for the students involved.

Miller has guided students into service-learning experiences since 1987, when she developed her own community engagement class on law and society. Since then, about two dozen law and society students go into the field each semester to work with the county jail, the prosecutor's office, and local judges.

With Miller's leadership, faculty members and the college work hard with their community partners to establish programs that offer valuable service-learning opportunities for the students and provide benefits for the participating organizations. And there is a growing body of evidence that shows the value of such efforts.

According to research funded and gathered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, service-learning has a positive effect on personal and interpersonal development, enhances students' sense of social responsibility and citizenship, improves their ability to apply what they have learned, and contributes to career development, among numerous other benefits.

"Students need real-world experiences," Miller says. "Service-learning essentially melds academics with real-world challenges in a symbiotic way. You bring something to the community while learning something from the community, and students take those lessons back to the classroom and into their careers."

*LEFT: Ashley Hebda (BA '10, political science and comparative literature) puts her skills to the test for Teach for America, which places college graduates in urban and rural low-income schools across the country for a two-year teaching commitment.*

*Photo by Mark Simons.*

*ABOVE RIGHT: Anthropology students take to the field in Frankfort, Indiana, to serve the community's Latino population through the Purdue Extension Office in Clinton County.*

*Photo by Mark Simons.*

# Learning Through Serving

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*Liberal Arts graduate Kim Vawter (above and lower right) joined the faculty of a charter school in California after completing her Teach for America commitment.*

## Unexpected outcomes

Ultimately, service-learning courses give students a deeper appreciation of the subject and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. A third and equally important outcome is that of personal reflection by the students who connect what they have learned with who they are and want to be.

Anthropology professor Evelyn Blackwood, who spent nearly two years living in Indonesia studying the matrilineal Minangkabau of West Sumatra, uses such a model in her Comparative Social Organizations class. Designed as an engagement experience that allows students to study a minority culture within a larger but still local community, the course focuses on “identity formation in a mobile world,” she says.

“Archaeology students have field schools and bio-anthropology students do research in rain forest sites,

but cultural anthropology and general majors didn’t have an option,” Blackwood says. “We needed to get students out of their comfort zones so they could gain a better understanding of good citizenship and go beyond media images to see in person that what they are reading about actually occurs in the real world.”

Last fall, eight of Blackwood’s students spent the first half of the semester in the classroom before taking to the field in Frankfort, Indiana, to serve the community’s Latino population through the Purdue Extension Office in Clinton County. Three hours a week for six weeks, they worked with the English as a Second Language Program, helped with daycare for immigrant families, and assisted adults in a computer competency class.

For students like Steph Silva and Alysha Latvis, classroom readings and discussions on topics such as understanding “whiteness” as an ethnicity and the

## SERVICE SPOTLIGHT: TEACH FOR AMERICA

As a young girl, Ashley Hebda dreamed of a career as a Disney cartoonist or marine biologist. As a college student, she zeroed in on reading, writing, and the desire to enact social change. As a corps member with Teach for America, she is putting all her skills to the test.

Teach for America places college graduates, who commit to teach for two years, in urban and rural low-income schools across the country. They receive full salaries and benefits from the school districts.

Hebda (BA '10, political science and comparative literature) is using the creativity of an artist, the discipline of a scientist, and a natural bent for language arts to help high school students in Indianapolis realize positive change.

"I wanted to be a part of some sort of tangible social change when I graduated," Hebda says. "After serious consideration and research, I came to the conclusion that our country's education system lay at the root of so many of this nation's social, political, and economic problems and was closely related to poverty."

Now a teacher at George Washington Community High School in Indianapolis, Hebda calls the experience "the most utterly rewarding, yet humbling, at times defeating, and draining experience I have ever been through."

"I anticipated that teaching would be a lot of work, but there is so much more to it. Investing these students in education and their future exhausts you on another level."

On the other side of the country, Purdue graduate Kim Vawter (BA '08, psychology and photography) also put her degree to good use with Teach for America, which allowed her to satisfy both an interest in human behavior and a desire to improve lives.

After joining the corps in 2009, Vawter was placed in a large middle school in central Los Angeles. Upon completing her Teach for America commitment, she became a founding



"We may sit in college courses and talk about how we need to change the world, but until people put themselves in the trenches, they won't really see what is involved in making that change."

— Ashley Hebda

teacher at a new charter school in the San Fernando Valley.

"Teaching has really shown me the potential that young students have to make change a reality in their communities," she says. "My students overcome so many struggles in their personal lives to be successful at school — they inspire me to work hard and they motivate me on a daily basis." Vawter hopes eventually to open a charter school either in Los Angeles or her hometown of Indianapolis.

Hebda spends her free time in the classroom, pursuing a master's degree in education. She has deferred acceptance to law school, where she plans to study immigration law/education law and public policy.

"I have a new perspective on what it means to accept someone without judgment," Hebda says. "I have students reading close to six grade levels behind in some instances."

"I have also gained a sense of how difficult it is to remedy social injustice, and how much stamina is involved in chipping away at complex societal problems. We may sit in college courses and talk about how we need to change the world, but until people put themselves in the trenches, they won't really see what is involved in making that change."

*By Linda Thomas Terhune*





LEFT AND BELOW: Tim Olin spent two years in the Kyrgyz Republic with the Peace Corps and another year doing service work in Afghanistan before starting his doctoral studies in history at Purdue. Photos provided.

## SERVICE SPOTLIGHT: PEACE CORPS

In September 2005, Tim Olin departed for the Kyrgyz Republic to begin a two-year assignment in the Peace Corps. Among the other recruits was a woman headed to the northern part of the country to teach elementary school. Olin was destined for the south to teach English at the International University of Kyrgyzstan. Before parting ways, they agreed to keep in touch.

Olin, now a doctoral student in history at Purdue, joined the Peace Corps on a whim. He'd spent a year in Munich after college and loved to travel. Curiosity drew him to a recruiting session at the University of Wisconsin, where he had earned a bachelor's degree and was completing a master's in German literature. Impulse led him to sign on quickly and to request placement in Central Asia. Experience as a substitute teacher in his hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota, landed him in a teaching position.

His stay began, as most Peace Corps assignments do, with a two-month residency with a local family. He then settled in Jalal-Abad, a city of approximately five million people located in the Ferghana Valley, near the border with China.

Home for two years was a Khrushchev-era apartment in a building with no heat, an infrequent water supply, and a tendency towards gas and electricity shortages. In the two years that Olin was overseas, he chose not to return to the United States. Instead, he took a month off to travel in Southeast Asia and then signed on for additional service work.

During one summer, Olin taught English in Kabul, Afghanistan, in the Youth Exchange and Study Program, a Department of State-sponsored program designed for high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations. Olin spent another seven weeks in the program in 2010, teaching English in Punjab along the India-Pakistan border.

Peace Corps assignments and volunteer work in Kabul and Punjab might not be for everyone, Olin acknowledges. But it was perfect for him, a self-described adventuresome spirit who is willing to get out of his comfort zone and who is intellectually curious.

"It was great," he says. "There is no doubt it is a large commitment of time, energy, and brainpower. You really have to want to do it. It's not easy. It's not a vacation, but there is no doubt that it will change your life."

Change indeed, in more ways than one might anticipate — the fellow corps member with whom Olin shared the plane ride is now his wife, Tana Olin. Though assigned to different parts of the country, they stayed in touch, flew back and forth on old Soviet planes to see each other, worked together in Kabul and married on July 4, 2009. Some day, Olin says, they may sign up again, this time heading overseas as a couple.

By Linda Thomas Terhune



# Learning Through Serving

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experiences of ethnic groups in the United States came into focus during the service portion of the course.

“In class, we talked about the hostility experienced by many Latino immigrants, whether undocumented or documented,” says Latvis, a junior from Maine majoring in genetics. “Working at the center and helping students who were respectful and genuinely wished to learn really brought home the obstacles they face in their daily lives.”

The class had an even more profound effect on Silva, increasing her understanding of her own ethnicity and influencing her personal values and feelings of civic responsibility.

“Before this course,” Silva says, “I always confusedly checked the ‘other’ box on forms asking for my ethnicity. Ethnicity seemed like a mysterious experience that I wasn’t a part of. Now I see my ethnicity as an experience of whiteness, which not only is an ascribed status, but also my own countenance of unearned privileges.”

Silva, a senior sociology major who plans to study deviant-labeled sexuality in graduate school, previously thought her only career option would be as a college professor. She may now consider using her writing and teaching skills in a more service-oriented way.

“Seeing how issues you learn about in class are

affecting and being experienced by other individuals brings ethnography and sociopolitical context to life,” she says. “It opens your eyes to new possibilities and gives you a deeper understanding of how to offer better service to a community.”

## An eye toward change

Laurie Graham, assistant director of the Women’s Studies program, reports similar positive outcomes from a service-learning practicum course she created with the YWCA Greater Lafayette’s Domestic Violence Program.

“The course fits well with women’s studies, which besides being academic and theoretical is very much change-oriented,” Graham says. “We want to create a better world. We’re activist as well as theoretical.”

Because of the sensitive nature of domestic violence and the need for victim privacy, students were required to complete intensive crisis center training and shadow staff members before working up to 10 hours a week with the local domestic violence program.

“Many women’s studies students want to do social work or go into family law,” Graham says. “This helps them really get a feel for it.”

*By Linda Thomas Terhune*

*A rancher drives cattle along a road in the Ferghana Valley region of Jalal-Abad Province in Kyrgyzstan, where PhD student Tim Olin spent two years serving in the Peace Corps. Photo provided.*



JUSCO  
吉之島

黃埔號  
THE WHAMPOA

海名軒辦公大樓  
HARBOURFRONT LANDMARK OFFICE FLOORS

海名軒  
Harbourfront Landmark



# Flattening the Globe

Professor Margie Berns makes sure she turns on a television set whenever she is traveling internationally, not because she is missing a favorite show, but because it is crucial to her research interests. She wants to see if the local news, syndicated sitcoms, and movies are being broadcast in the country's native language or in English.

"Just noting if the shows are dubbed in English or subtitled can tell me a lot about the contact each population has with English," explains Berns, a scholar in world Englishes. "When English is prevalent — through film, TV, or advertising — its presence becomes very natural."

For example, she explains, a cell phone in Germany is called a "Handy" because of a successful advertising campaign that employed this English term in a new way.

"Other English speakers may not use 'Handy' this way, but appropriating the language for local use is normal," says Berns, who studies Western European teenagers' access to media and how these influences, such as song lyrics or advertisements, affect the English they learn and how they use it. "Borrowing an English word as a marketing strategy is an example of how non-native speakers are learning English and that they are learning how to use the language in a different way."

## Extending internationally

English found its way to places such as India, America, and Hong Kong during the height of British colonialism in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. It is relatively easy to understand why former British colonies now speak English, but what explains its use elsewhere?

Hundreds of other countries are experiencing a proliferation of English. Experts in the field of world Englishes call these "expanding circle countries." Some governments embrace the language to support tourism in their countries or global businesses, while others challenge it because they want to preserve the native language and national identity.

"While English is taught as a foreign language in hundreds of countries, the reasons why are so different," explains Berns, who examines attitudes toward English and those who speak the language. "To understand the reasons, we need to go deeper than the language.

"More specifically, I look at the sociolinguistic profile of English in a given country or region, which includes information such as how the language is taught, political issues related to the language, and its use in teacher

*LEFT: Following a biliterate and trilingual policy, Hong Kong recognizes both English and Chinese as official languages, with Cantonese and to a lesser extent Mandarin being accepted as the spoken variety of Chinese.*  
Public domain photo.



## Flattening the Globe

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

CLA professor Elena Benedicto and a team of Mayangna linguists work on a dictionary as part of a participatory research project. Pictured from left are: Demetrio Antolin, Benedicto, Gloria Fendly, Modesta Dolores, Tomasa Gomez, and Susana Budier. Photo provided

### PRESERVING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

While some languages are growing, others are in danger of being lost.

Elena Benedicto, associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts' Department of English, has a lot to say about endangered languages — and the importance of saving them.

Benedicto, who teaches syntax at the graduate and undergraduate levels, is the director of the Indigenous and Endangered Languages Lab (IELLab) at Purdue.

She has worked on a National Science Foundation (NSF)-sponsored project centered on an "at-risk" indigenous language of the Sumu people living on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and Honduras.

"The Mayangna Project is part of an on-going project to write a grammar of the Misumalpan languages, of which Mayangna is a member," says Benedicto, who travels to Nicaragua twice a year to support the project and conduct participatory research.

"The project includes collaborating as a team with local institutions to produce lexicographic and other material useful in bilingual schools," she says. "We also work in collaboration with Mayangna Yulbarangyang Balna, local teachers who have become part of the Mayangna linguists team."

"Scientific linguistic research can be conducted in a way that actively involves and empowers the community," she says.

"We have found that when a native speaker is the linguist it helps ensure the language's survival by increasing the number of active speakers."

A language is considered to be at risk or endangered when the population of speakers dwindles and fluency in younger generations diminishes. External pressures to conform — economic, military, religious, cultural or educational factors — and the colonization of indigenous people are among the primary culprits that threaten linguistic diversity.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that there are about 6,000 active languages today and that as many as 43 percent of the languages spoken in the world are endangered.

Benedicto believes linguistic diversity is intrinsically worth having and fostering.

"Our mission helps counterbalance the forces endangering languages so they can survive and thrive," she says. "Language diversity is a treasure chest and each language conveys a unique culture. Just as biological diversity is beneficial, so is linguistic diversity and it is important that this diversity continue."

With any luck, thanks to Benedicto and her team's zeal and research, the Mayangna Project will not be the last word on preserving and protecting the world's endangered languages.

By Grant Flora

preparation and textbooks. Other characteristics are language policy, politics, ideology, Internet availability, and education and income levels. It's fascinating to look at."

For instance, the countries of China and Turkmenistan have taken completely different approaches to the increase in English in their countries.

"Both are considered to be expanding circle countries," Berns says, "but China encourages its citizens to learn English, and is introducing it to younger students earlier than ever before. Turkmenistan, on the other hand, does not promote English, fearing cultural and linguistic damage to the native Turkmen language, as well as to the country's national identity."

Another expanding circle country is Lebanon, where one of Berns' graduate students, Fatima Esseili, is studying the spread of English and its influence in this trilingual country. People there speak Lebanese Arabic, French, and English, and the country's printed materials are mostly in Modern Standard Arabic. Historically, a Lebanese person's language was reflective of his or her religion, but that is changing.

"Today, French is associated with culture and prestige, while English is the language of science, business, and technology," says Esseili, who is from Lebanon. "By using a second language in daily communication, other than Lebanese Arabic, a typical Lebanese person may be distancing himself or herself from the Arabic culture and trying to come closer to the West. You are trying to give a certain image of yourself; that could be modernity, education, or refinement."

Esseili and other young people from her culture are consistently incorporating different variations in their communications as they "Arabize" the English word. For example, Esseili might say, "Sayyavit emailak?" which means, "Did you save your email?" In this example, the last word, "email," has an Arabic suffix "-ak," which means "your," she explains. The first word, "sayyavit," contains

a variation of the English word “save,” but the entire structure of the word is Arabic. “It will be interesting to see 20 years from now what is going to happen to the language,” she says.

### **Adapting to change**

What are the effects of a new language on a civilization? The proliferation of a new language can be destructive. English replaced many of the native languages spoken by American Indians, and in fact many linguists believe that by the end of this century we will have lost half of the languages now in the world.

“Even Irish is being affected by the English syntax so the language moves away from its original monolingual form,” explains Shaun Hughes, professor of English, who studies and teaches colonial literature in areas of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. “There are two perspectives about the global reach and impact of English. One is positive because it enables most of the world to communicate with each other. There is a negative perspective because some argue that expanding English is harmful to linguistic diversity, and some even call it linguistic imperialism.

“But calling it linguistic imperialism implies that someone is controlling the language, and language can’t be controlled. It is dynamic, self-sufficient, and takes on a life of its own.”

That life is fueled, in part, by technology, especially the Internet, which is one of the biggest challenges to the countries trying to halt the spread of English. Even though Arabic and Chinese are emerging more on the Internet, English has been the primary virtual language to connect the world. YouTube videos, Websites, and e-mail are some of the forces pushing English to more audiences.

When they study the linguistic profile of English in a particular country, Berns and other scholars are interested in knowing the availability of the Internet in that country.

“Because technology is contributing to the spread of

English, it underscores that the English language belongs to those who use it,” Berns says. “It’s not our language, no one owns it and no one should tell people how to use it. Other countries, especially those in the expanding circle, don’t have to see themselves under the watchful eye of the native speaker because the native speaker isn’t relevant in terms of setting standards or norms for their use.

“English is in a different place now than any other language has been, and we all need to adopt tolerance and understanding of the differences in our communication. It’s a two-way street: American and British Englishes are no longer the only standard varieties of the language.”

As the language continues to evolve, so too will its speakers’ understanding of the world.

*By Amy Patterson Neubert*

*The research of professor Margie Berns examines the changing attitudes toward English and those who speak the language. Photo by Andrew Hancock.*





MOHAN DUTTA

## Leveling the Field

Using the power of information as leverage, health communication professor Mohan Dutta hopes to arm African-Americans in Indiana with a knowledge base and a meeting space to improve heart health in their communities and drive research specific to their individual needs. A technology hub funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is becoming a key tool in the grassroots effort.

Dutta and his research team are collaborating with the Indiana Minority Health Coalition and its affiliates in Lake and Marion counties throughout the three-year project. Known as CUAHD, or Communities and Universities Addressing Health Disparities ([www.cuahd.org](http://www.cuahd.org)), the hub uses a Web portal environment developed at Purdue, HUBzero, that allows patients and partners to post information, collaborate online, offer feedback, and build technology-based community infrastructures.

“To understand the story of the technology hub, we need to understand the broader context of heart health among African Americans, where the inequities are tremendous,” Dutta says. “The question becomes, ‘How do we develop solutions that tie in with heart health and are actually meaningful to the community?’ African-American voices, cultural representations, and understandings are often overlooked when we address health problems.”

Dutta uses a case study discussed at one of the first advisory board meetings in Gary as an example. An

African-American woman with high blood pressure asks her physician about the effects of day-to-day racism on stress and heart disease. The physician dismisses her question, saying there is no research to support such a correlation. This scenario creates a power imbalance between a patient and doctor on a playing field that is already unbalanced, according to Dutta.

Dutta says the platform of the hub is to create a collaborative space for the academic, the practitioner, and the patient to share resources, but the space will gradually transfer power to the community.

That starts with taking the large-scale clinical data published by the AHRQ and allowing the CUAHD partners and advisory board to create messages and strategies to share the information with the community.

Sometimes it is a matter of translating the research. Assumptions about how research affects communities are often wrong, Dutta says. “As researchers, we often do not think about our work as a way of listening. I envision this technology as becoming a way to listen to communities.”

For Dutta, the hub’s creation is activism that can lead to better results on a number of levels — from patient and doctor relationships to the broader work with insurance agencies and policymakers. The goal is not only to make the latest clinical research digestible, but also to chart the course of future studies.

*By William Meiners. Photo by Andrew Hancock.*

## Distinguished Company

Professor John Duvall has distinguished himself internationally as one of the leading scholars on Nobel Prize-winning novelists William Faulkner and Toni Morrison. He's now earned another distinction.

In February, the Purdue Board of Trustees approved Duvall's appointment as the Margaret Church Distinguished Professor of English. A member of the Purdue faculty since 1998, he has written four books and edited or co-edited six other books that explore American fiction from the latter half of the nineteenth century to the present.

Since 2002, Duvall has served as the editor of *Modern Fiction Studies*, the English department's journal of literary criticism, which focuses on modernist and contemporary British, American, European, and postcolonial fiction. He's also been recognized by the English department's excellence in teaching committee and is the department's nominee for the College of Liberal Arts Teaching Award.

Duvall notes that, given his work at *Modern Fiction Studies*, he is particularly honored to hold this professorship named in the memory of Margaret Church, who was one of the original advisory editors of the journal when it was founded in 1955. "I'm sure she would be pleased with the prominence the journal has achieved," Duvall says, "as well as with the range of topics we now address. At present, we're putting together an issue that explores the fictional response to 9/11."



JOHN DUVALL

## Life-giving Information

An estimated 7,000 people die each year while waiting for an organ donation, and only 35 percent of American citizens are registered donors. Susan Morgan, professor of communication, says this reflects a lack of information among donors more than a lack of willingness.

"Deep down, many people feel that signing up to be an organ donor is a noble thing to do, but they have fears and they feel silly sharing them," Morgan says.

Morgan has found that many fears and misconceptions are related to compelling but false storylines on TV and in movies. She now works with a media advocacy group in California to share the truth about organ donation with Hollywood writers and producers.

In addition, Morgan and her research team have led several campaigns focused on intervention through the workplace. "When a person sees a co-worker sign up to be an organ donor it often makes him or her feel better about approaching the topic," she says. "This is the principle of social proof in action."

To read more about Morgan's research, which has received more than \$9 million in funding, visit [www.purdue.edu/differencemakers/morgan.html](http://www.purdue.edu/differencemakers/morgan.html).

*Photos by Andrew Hancock.*



SUSAN MORGAN

## Teaching Students to Think

Like all great teachers, Liberal Arts faculty members Josh Boyd and Keith Dickson share not only a passion for learning, but also a unique devotion to their students.

Those qualities were formally recognized last year at the University's Celebration of Teaching Excellence, where Boyd and Dickson were honored with 2010 Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Awards in Memory of Charles B. Murphy and inducted into Purdue's Teaching Academy.

Boyd, associate professor of communication, is praised by students who take Critical Perspectives on Communication, a course he created and has taught himself since 2002. This large-lecture, writing-intensive class is required for prospective communication majors. Boyd's goal is for his students to learn how to express their ideas persuasively in writing.

"My primary goal is certainly to help students learn," Boyd says. "But in most of my classes I also focus on helping students gain skills that will equip them in life — thinking critically, writing cleanly and clearly, and examining and interpreting messages thoughtfully."

Each semester, he invites his top students to dinner at his house, and later adjusts his courses based on their suggestions and critiques.

"My interaction with students is most rewarding when I feel like I am helping to equip them for the next chapter in their lives,"



**"My interaction with students is most rewarding when I feel like I am helping to equip them for the next chapter in their lives."  
— Josh Boyd**

he says. "For me, this goes far beyond the lessons and concepts taught in class."

Dickson, associate professor of classics, also encourages students to take a different approach to learning. His memorable lectures on everything from comparative and classical mythology to science, medicine, and magic have been inspiring undergraduates for more than 20 years.

The classroom provides a stage for Dickson to perform. "I enjoy playing with ideas in front of audiences," he says. "It entertains me, and I have hope that it's also useful for my students."

Dickson's integration of multimedia and Internet sources to supplement course teachings is notable. He maintains one of the largest online image databases for Greek, Mesopotamian, Mesoamerican, Hindu, Chinese, and Celtic myths as well as the most comprehensive bibliography of texts on comparative mythology available online at <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~kdickson/mythbibl.html>.

For Dickson, a "willingness on the part of both teacher and student to take risks" is the most important part of any great lesson or lecture. "The most valuable kind of learning is often learning to unlearn what you've been taught," he says. "I hope my students will learn from me how to question what I tell them."

*By Mackenzie Greenwell. Photo by Mark Simons.*



## Questions of Belief

**W**hat happens when you die? Is there a God? How do you know what you know? Why do we believe and why do we sometimes also doubt? The answers to these and other “Big Questions” do not yield easy answers — which is exactly what makes them compelling.

Tucked away in Beering Hall’s labyrinth of corridors and offices, CLA professors Michael Bergmann and Patrick Kain are examining such queries as part of their three-year project, “Knowing in Religion and Morality.”

Bergmann, professor of philosophy and the project’s lead investigator, and Kain, associate professor of philosophy and co-principal investigator, were awarded a \$350,000 grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

“The John Templeton Foundation is very pleased to support the work of professors Bergmann and Kain,” says Michael J. Murray, the foundation’s executive vice president of programs and vice president of philosophy and theology. “Purdue is one of the leading institutions for research in philosophy of religion worldwide, and we are hopeful that this project will help the program continue to build its reputation as a hub for exciting scholarly breakthroughs.”

“Philosophers spend time thinking about perceptual skepticism,” Bergmann says. “In the movie *The Matrix*, for example, people have computer-produced perceptions that are illusory but seem exactly like the real thing. They begin

to question whether their own perceptions of the world are trustworthy and not illusory.

“I want to consider whether philosophers’ responses to this sort of perceptual skepticism, a kind of skepticism almost no one takes seriously, can be useful as guides in responding to moral and religious skepticism, which are much more common.”

Objections from evolutionary theory are also on the philosopher’s mind. “Is there an evolutionary origin of moral and religious belief and, if so, does this invalidate such belief?” asks Bergmann. He says the project will explore these and other issues from a variety of perspectives and disciplines and examine whether our skepticisms are related.

Fifteen participants are currently being selected for a 2011 summer seminar at Purdue led by Bergmann, a recognized authority on epistemology and philosophy of religion. Seminar topics will be based on the monograph he is preparing as part of the project, *Perceptual, Moral, and Religious Skepticism*, which defends moral and religious belief against skepticism.

Participants will work on writing projects related to the seminar’s topics, the best of which will be selected for presentation at a conference to be held at Purdue in September 2012.

*By Grant Flora*

***American Freak Show:  
The Completely Fabricated  
Stories of our  
New National Treasures***

Willie Geist  
New York, NY: Hyperion

*Review by Adrian Del Caro  
Professor and Department Head,  
Foreign Languages & Literatures*

A lot is riding on this review, since Willie Geist's father penned a blurb for the book jacket: "I just hope this leads somehow to Willie moving out of the basement." Here goes.

Step right up, ladies and gentlemen! The freaks included in this pithy little volume may not like the designation, and ogling freaks is clearly not politically correct, but it is American and Geist has hauled forth a wonderful magic mirror into which readers will stare with disgust and fascination. This book is not for the faint of heart. There's an honesty to it that stands in contrast to its absurdly fictional content.

Geist goes after all freaks, minor and major, and he doesn't pander to anyone — not even to Oprah, who has the power to make or break him with the mere mention of his first book. Within Geist's universe, the *Harvard Theological Review* pronounces Oprah to be God, and she candidly endorses the scholarly findings. (If Geist were smart, he would have just kept his mouth shut about Oprah, unless of course she doesn't get the joke.)

We don't have to accept Geist's premise that America has become a freak show, but it calms the bewilderment many of us have had over the years. By elevating ourselves to oglers of freaks we are supposedly distancing ourselves, but is this even possible in an age when entertainment and education are indistinguishable? How does he know so much about freaks anyway? How do we look to the rest of the world? Are we in fact a planet of freaks?

Geist is hilariously clever when satirizing figures such as Tiger Woods (addicted to sex), Sarah Palin (addicted to herself), Hillary and Bill Clinton



(a charmingly loving couple), Lindsay Lohan (rather vapid), Cheney living in a bunker beneath the White House and running the country while Obama takes the heat, John Edwards pleading his case before Saint Peter (and losing), and Bernie Madoff being welcomed to hell by Pol Pot. Adding value to this clever and engaging commentary is bonus apparatus for professors and other boring people: a glossary of hip-hop terms, an index of people Geist wishes were in his book, and a recap of 15-minute hall-of-famers to remind us of how time flies in America.

Like it or not, this is our nation, and Geist has tons of funny and mostly outrageous things to say about it. Get some boxes, Willie, you're moving out of your father's basement!

*Photo by Mark Simons*

## Are You A Champion?

If you are reading this issue of *THiNK*, it's probably safe to assume you are affiliated with the College of Liberal Arts in some way, shape, or form. Maybe you are a graduate, a Purdue parent, a faculty member, a student, or a friend of the college.

The mission of the CLA Alumni Board is to engage CLA alumni, students, staff, faculty, and friends with the college and the University, while fostering their sense of pride for Purdue and liberal arts.

We are champions for the College of Liberal Arts. A champion is an advocate or defender, someone who fights for others. Being a champion isn't reserved for alumni board members alone. You, too, can be a champion for the college.

The College of Liberal Arts has much to be proud of. Did you know, for example, that the College of Liberal Arts has an endowed deanship named in honor of Justin S. Morrill? It is one of only four such college deanships at Purdue. Morrill was a driving force in the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, which created the foundation for universities such as Purdue. The legislation is now known as the Morrill Act in his honor.

The college also has a strong reputation in research. Eight CLA PhD programs received high rankings in the recently released National Research Council (NRC) evaluation of doctoral programs comparing programs within their disciplines and fields of study.



MARTY WELCH (BA '78, SOCIOLOGY)  
IS PRESIDENT OF THE 2010-11 CLA  
ALUMNI BOARD AND DIRECTOR  
OF ACCOUNT DEVELOPMENT FOR  
AMERICAN EXPRESS COMPANY,  
LEADING A SALES FORCE ACROSS  
EIGHT MIDWESTERN STATES.

Doctoral programs in American studies, communication, comparative literature, and linguistics were ranked in the top 20 (fifth percentile rankings) for research productivity.

In addition, CLA's Patti and Rusty Rueff School of Visual and Performing Arts is home to a graduate program in interaction design, one of only five in the United States.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* ranks the philosophy department's Philosophy of Religion program No. 4 in the country in its Top Research Universities Faculty Scholar Productivity Index.

These are just a few of CLA's many distinctions.

Liberal Arts is one of the largest colleges at Purdue, with more than 250 tenured or tenure-track faculty, more than 4,600 undergraduate students, and 860 graduate students. Many of us came to Purdue knowing our future resided in CLA. Others found our way to Liberal Arts after taking one of its many class offerings. In many cases, we found our passion, our career, or our life's work.

I encourage you to invest in CLA. Invest yourself, your time, your talents, and your expertise. Learn about the great work, programs, and research being done today in CLA. Get engaged, whether it is serving CLA in a leadership capacity, participating in its numerous programs, or being active in alumni clubs and events.

Spread the word about the College of Liberal Arts and begin to "Distinguish Yourself" as one of its champions today!

**1965**

DANIEL ANGEL (PhD, Organizational Communication) is president of Golden Gate University in San Francisco. He has served as president for a total of six colleges and universities over the past 32 years.

JOANN DiGENNARO (BA, Speech) has been appointed to the Virginia State Council on Higher Education by Governor Robert F. McDonnell.

**1967**

PENELOPE S. FARTHING (BA, Social Sciences) was recognized by the Maurer School of Law as one of six outstanding alumni chosen to be inducted into the Academy of Law Alumni Fellows, the highest honor the law school can bestow.

HARRY SHARP JR. (PhD, Organizational Communication) is now fully retired after 40 years in higher education. He stays busy with his county's civil grand jury.

**1969**

WILLIAM (BILL) R. SMOOT (BA, Philosophy) recently published his book, *Conversations with Great Teachers*.

**1971**

JAMES V. BRUNO (BA, English) completed his MSS at Bryn Mawr College in May, received his LSW license in June, and will practice social work in the Philadelphia area. While pursuing graduate studies, he was employed by a psychiatric hospital as a group therapist for adult patient populations with mood disorders and major psychotic illnesses.

DIANA L. (HAMPTON) HADLEY (BA, English) is the executive director of the Indiana High School Press Association (IHSPA) and a lecturer of journalism at Franklin College. She was recently recognized by the Indiana State Teachers Association (ISTA) with the 2010 Phillip Carey Award for Human Relations.

**1974**

LEON SCHWEIR (BA, History) has been hired by Versus as executive producer and senior vice president of production.

**1976**

KATHLEEN TIGHE (BA, Political Science) was recently nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the Senate as the inspector general of the Department of Education.

**1977**

VICE ADM. CAROL M. POTTENGER (BA, History; HDR, Social Sciences, 2007) has been appointed by the United States Navy as deputy chief of staff for capability development, Supreme Allied Command Transformation, Norfolk, Virginia.

**1978**

RANDALL S. SIPE (BA, Communication) was recently named president of Smart Connections Inc. of Indianapolis, a creative services consulting company.

**1979**

MARK K. ABBOTT (MA, History; PhD, History, 1985) was honored with a Governor's Humanities Award for exemplary community outreach for his work towards understanding the unique qualities of various neighborhoods in the Saint Louis area.

PHOEBE L. BAILEY (PhD, English) is the director of education at the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in Atlanta, Georgia.

BILL WIGGLESWORTH (MA, Organizational Communication) retired from ExxonMobil Corporation after 31 years of service in a number of managerial and executive positions.

**1980**

ELIZABETH STUCKEY-FRENCH (BA, Sociology; MA, Creative Writing, 1989) will publish her third book in 2011, the novel *Revenge of the Radioactive Lady*.

FRANK H. WADSWORTH (BA, Interior Design) was recently appointed as dean at the Indiana University-Kokomo School of Business.

**1981**

ELIZABETH E. DUNN (BA, History; MA, History, 1983) was named dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Indiana University-South Bend.

**1983**

CELESTE DAVIS (BA, Communication) is the acting regional manager for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights-Region V in Chicago.

STUART D. JONES (BA, Communication) was named the vice president for enrollment management at Averett University.

**1984**

JAY FEHNEL (BA, Communication) was promoted to senior vice president and chief operating officer of entertainment products at Tribune Media Services.

BRADFORD ANDERSON (BA, Communication) was appointed associate dean of the Orfalea College of Business at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California.

GRANT E. MABIE (BA, History) former editor of *Liberal Arts Magazine*, now serves as managing editor at Hilton Publishing Company in Indianapolis.

**1985**

TODD JAY LEONARD (BA, History; MA, History, 1987) received the Frank P. Forwood Award for Academic Excellence in Presented Research.

**1987**

COLONEL P. MICHAEL PHILLIPS (BA, History) recently completed his assignment as International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) chief of liaison to the Pakistan Army in Islamabad. He has been reassigned to the Joint Staff as Chief, Political-Military Affairs, Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell.

**1988**

LORIN B. ARNOLD (BA, Communication; MA, Organizational Communication, 1991; PhD, Communication, 1996) has been named dean of the College of Communication at Rowan University.

PATRICIA A. FLESHER (BA, Political Science and Government) is the director of communications for the Portland Cement Association in Skokie, Illinois.

**1989**

SHARON VERSYP (BA, Communication), Purdue's head women's basketball coach, has been inducted into the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame.

# Honoring Tomorrow's Leaders

The College of Liberal Arts honors three talented and driven young alumni each year as recipients of the Emerging Voice Award. This award was created to recognize recent graduates who are achieving their career goals, serving their communities, and representing the college's mission by shaping today's world while imagining a better one.

For a complete list of past recipients, and for information about nominating a Liberal Arts alumnus/alumna for the EVA, please visit [www.cla.purdue.edu/alumni/awards/emergingvoice](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/alumni/awards/emergingvoice).



## Stephen Maynard Caliendo

MA 1995; PhD 1998, Political Science  
Professor of Political Science  
North Central College

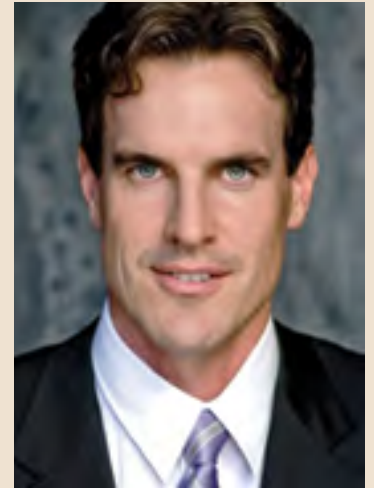
Now a professor of political science at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, Stephen Caliendo attributes much of his success to his Purdue education. "Overall, my time at Purdue prepared me to be a scholar and teacher," he says. "The positive mentors I had have helped me to be an advisor to my own students." Stemming from a special interest in human rights, Caliendo is also co-director of The Project on Race in Political Communication (RaceProject.org), which seeks to provide information to the public about the way race and politics interact with language. He has published dozens of papers and his second book, *Inequality in America: Race, Poverty and Fulfilling Democracy's Promise*, was released in January.



## Kenya Davis-Hayes

PhD 2005, American Studies  
Asst. Professor of American History  
California Baptist University

For Kenya Davis-Hayes, a liberal arts education gave her the intelligence as well as the practical skills necessary to succeed as an educator and researcher. "A liberal arts education allows for personal depth," she says. "While other disciplines can double as vocational training, a liberal arts education provides the tools to thrive in a variety of venues through critical and cultural literacy." Currently she is an assistant professor of American history and the resident U.S. historian at California Baptist University. Outside of the classroom, Davis-Hayes serves on the California Council for the Humanities, appointed by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2007. Last summer she traveled to Shanghai to analyze the cultural messages at the 2010 World Expo.



## Gerritt VanderMeer

BA 1996, German; BS 1996,  
Engineering; BA 1997, Theatre  
Professional Actor

Although Gerritt VanderMeer began his Purdue education in engineering, he explored other interests through courses in the College of Liberal Arts. "I did not anticipate that one of those courses would change my life's direction, but that is what happened," he says. VanderMeer fell in love with acting and immersed himself in Purdue Musical Organizations and Purdue Theatre. Now pursuing a career as a professional actor, he has appeared as Harold Hill in a national tour of *The Music Man* and worked opposite Whoopi Goldberg on the Web series *Stream*. Inspired by faculty at Purdue, VanderMeer helps aspiring actors by teaching university-level classes. He also returned to Purdue in 2008 as the interim director of the Glee Club and led the group on its first concert tour to South Africa.

TWANDA DeBORDE (BA, Communication) celebrated her 10-year anniversary of being the founder and president of her search firm, CMD and Associates Executive Search.

ERIC RAMSEY (BA, Communication; MA, Philosophy, 1993; PhD, Organizational Communication, 1994) was appointed associate dean of Barrett, the Honors College at the West Campus, at Arizona State University.

### 1990

JENNIFER ROBINSON-WEGH (BA, History) recently finished her MA in human resources management and is working in labor and employee relations for United Technologies Corporation in Hartford, Connecticut.

ANTHONY J. BILLER (BA, Political Science) was selected to join the fellows of the American Bar Foundation, an elite group of attorneys, judges, and law professors. The organization recognizes those who have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the welfare of their communities and the highest principles of the legal profession.

### 1991

JOE BALITEWICZ (BA, Political Science) joined In Context Solutions as its first chief operating officer. In Context Solutions is a full service marketing research firm specializing in virtual store research.

KEVIN MAYER (BA, Communication) has been named director of advertising and sales promotion at Chevrolet.

### 1992

JASON T. CONNELL (BA, History) joined New York Air Brake as vice president of sales. He is responsible for North American sales of freight car brake control products.

MATT SMITH (MA, English; PhD, English, 1997) has been appointed interim dean of arts and sciences at the University of Saint Francis.

KEITH M. HEARIT (PhD, Communication) was named vice provost for strategic enrollment management at Western Michigan University.

### 1993

DIANE IMEL (BA, Sociology) was named manager of Regions Bank in Lafayette, Indiana.

SHEILA E. JOHNSON (BA, Communication) is serving as a regional director for Regent Education, the leading provider of financial aid management software solutions for higher education institutions.

ANTHONY WEBSTER (BA, Anthropology) recently published his first book, *Explorations in Navajo Poetry and Poetics* (University of New Mexico Press).

### 1994

KENDRA L. CARPENTER (BA, Sociology) is an attorney with Campbell Hornbeck Chilcoat Veatch LLC and was selected by *Business First* as a "Forty Under 40" honoree for 2010.

### 1995

ALICIA BLACK (BA, Communication) was the road manager for Lady Gaga's 2009 "The Monster Ball Tour."

### 1996

TANYA N. JORDAN (BA, Communication) is the director of stewardship at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California.

### 1997

DERREK A. SCHROEN (BA, Communication) is an associate attorney with Brady, Connolly & Masuda PC. He will be practicing in the area of workers' compensation defense.

### 1998

JEFF BODZEWSKI (BA, Communication) accepted the position of director of social marketing with Aspen Marketing Services.

### 1999

BARRY PADGETT (PhD, Philosophy) has been named the James Medlin Chair of Business Ethics at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee.

JENNIFER BARNETT (BA, Communication) opened a restaurant/bar, "Barney's Boathouse," in the heart of Arizona State University's campus.

### 2000

KENDRA MONTGOMERY-BLINN (BA, Political Science) is the first executive director of the North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission, the first of its kind in the United States.

LINDSEY (SEWARD) TRAUSCH (BA, Communication) and her husband, Chris, (BA, Technology, 2000) opened Iron Aces Speed Shop, an online retailer of Harley-Davidson parts and accessories.

### 2001

KATHERINE CURRIN (BA, Communication) was named communications director at One Hope United, a nonprofit human service agency in Chicago.

KRISTEN DeWITT (BA, Communication) accepted a position as director of talent and development at Performics in Chicago.

CAROL BISHOP MILLS (PhD, Communication) was elected to the board of directors for the National Down Syndrome Congress.

LETHA McDOWELL (BA, Political Science) was promoted and made partner in the law firm Oast and Hook PC, where she practices elder and tax law in Virginia and North Carolina.

### 2002

CHRISTI BROOKS (BA, Communication) completed Peace Corps Zambia in August 2008 and will serve as a volunteer again beginning April 2011 in Sub-Saharan Africa.

MOLLY MARTIN (MA, English; PhD, English 2007) published *Vision and Gender in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Boydell & Brewer).

Are you a fan of Liberal Arts at Purdue on **FACEBOOK**? Join today to receive updates about faculty research, student activities, and special events.

Be **LINKED IN** to the College of Liberal Arts! Join the CLA group on LinkedIn and connect with fellow alumni and students to discuss jobs, internships, and careers.

MEGAN SIMPSON (BA, Communication) joined The Arnold Agency in Charleston, West Virginia, as client services coordinator for the Subway account.

ANDRIJA SAMARDZICH (BA, English) is an associate at the law firm of Williams Kastner in Portland, Oregon.

A.J. WESSELER (BA, Communication) was recently named senior human resources generalist at Apex Tool Group LLC.

### 2 0 0 3

SOPHIA VORAVONG (BA, Communication) is a reporter for the *Journal & Courier* and won third place in "Best News Coverage with No Deadline Pressure" in the Hoosier State Press Association journalism contest for an enterprise story about a social program that helps families reunite.

### 2 0 0 4

RYAN DEARINGER (MA, History) received his PhD in history at the University of Utah in 2009 and is an assistant professor of history at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Oregon.

KEVIN HONOLD (MFA, Creative Writing) won the 2009 Ohio State University Press/The Journal Prize in Poetry for his book, *Men as Trees Walking*.

JEREMY CLARK (MFA, Theatre) starred in *Prairie Love*, an independent film that premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

### 2 0 0 5

SABRINA COOK (BA, Communication) serves as vice president at BLASTmedia, a technology public relations agency based in Indianapolis and San Francisco.

STEPHANIE MATHES (BA, Communication) was named director of community relations for the Indianapolis Colts.

JOSEPH A. PINTER (BA, Communication) graduated with a JD from the John Marshall Law School. He will continue to serve as director of client services at Acme World Sports LLC in Chicago.

MEREDITH CANTRELL (MS, Communication) joined Saint Luke's Health System in Kansas City, Missouri, as manager of marketing and public relations.

### 2 0 0 6

JOHN D. DUCKWORTH (MA, Communication) received the professional designation of Certified Financial Planner (CFP) by the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards.



## 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... Lift! Show your Support

Life membership in your Purdue Alumni Association is an easy way for you to show your support of Purdue while we gather the resources to do the lifting. Your membership dues provide funding for programs and services, student scholarships, and activities hosted by local alumni clubs, colleges, and schools. Plus, a portion of your membership dues is tax deductible.

Just as the tradition of the Big Bass Drum has endured for years, your Purdue Alumni Association has been the voice of alumni since 1878. Will you make a lifelong commitment as well? Loyalty lives here.

PURDUE **P** ALUMNI

**Express your loyalty today  
by becoming a life member.**

Call us today at (800) 414-1541  
or visit [www.purduealumni.org/member](http://www.purduealumni.org/member).

# *Distinguished Alumni*

*For more than 25 years, the College of Liberal Arts and the CLA Alumni Board have recognized the outstanding achievements of our graduates through the Distinguished Alumni Award program. Recipients of this award have made significant contributions to their professions and society. Their accomplishments, affiliations, and careers honor the legacy of excellence in the College of Liberal Arts at Purdue.*



JENNIFER A. LANCASTER

*BA 1996, Political Science*

For Jennifer Lancaster, the path to success was anything but direct. Her time at Purdue included dabbling in various majors, and by her own account, majoring in fun. It was in political science that she found herself truly engaged. There, she discovered abilities she did not know she had in terms of both writing and processing information. Little did she know that a few years after graduation, her dot-com bubble would burst, and force her to find her way down a road not yet traveled. First through her blog and then through five witty, hilarious memoirs, she made her way from the unemployment line to the *New York Times* best-seller list. In addition to her work as a *Chicago Tribune*-syndicated columnist, she completed her first novel in early 2011, opening the next chapter of her writing career.



MICHAEL L. RADELET

*PhD 1977, Sociology*

Throughout his academic career, Michael Radelet, professor of sociology at the University of Colorado-Boulder, has worked actively to shape more just and humane policies on capital punishment. His research focuses on the issues of erroneous convictions, racial bias, public opinion, and medical involvement. He works closely with international organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International on death penalty issues. He has worked with scores of death row inmates, participating in last visits with several dozen individuals and testifying in 76 death penalty cases in a dozen states. More recently, he works with and learns from the families of murder victims where the cases have not been solved.



## GINGER THOMPSON

*BA 1986, Communication*

For nearly 15 years, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ginger Thompson served as Mexico bureau chief for the *New York Times*, providing indispensable reading for those who want to better understand the relationship between the United States, Mexico, Central America, and Haiti. Now, as a national correspondent for the *New York Times* in Washington, DC, she focuses on enterprise and investigative stories, including reports on military corruption, the role of private security contractors in war zones, and how immigration has changed America. As a reporter in New York, she contributed to coverage on the racial strife that was ignited after the shooting of an unarmed African immigrant. She then wrote her Pulitzer Prize-winning series, "How Race is Lived in America."



## JOSÉ H. VILLARREAL

*BA 1975, Political Science*

José Villarreal's political involvement and service culminated with his appointment as commissioner general for Expo 2010 Shanghai, after which President Barack Obama accorded him the personal rank of ambassador. When not representing the United States abroad, he is an attorney in San Antonio, where he is a senior advisor at Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld. His political background includes senior roles in a number of presidential campaigns. He also has served on the governing boards of numerous organizations. Currently, he is on boards of the Center for American Progress and the New America Alliance, an organization of distinguished American Latino business leaders dedicated to philanthropy.

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Visit [www.cla.purdue.edu/alumni/awards](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/alumni/awards) for more information about the 2011 Distinguished Alumni or to nominate a Liberal Arts alumnus/alumna for next year's awards.

**2007**

GRETCHEN STEELE PRATT (MFA, English) won the 2009 Anhinga Prize for Poetry. She also recently published her book, *One Island*.

**2008**

LAUREN GABA (BA, Communication) accepted the position of program director at the City-County Athletic Complex CCAC in Warsaw, Indiana.

SARA N. JACOBS (BA, Communication) is attending DePaul University College of Law with a JD expected in 2013.

**2009**

SUCHITRA SHENOY (PhD, Communication) was elected secretary of the Intercultural Communication Division of International Communication Associates for 2010-12.

MEGAN JAHRLING (BA, Communication; BA Fine Arts) is serving as a multimedia intern for the University of Dayton athletics department.

**2010**

KATHRYN KIDULAS (BA, Fine Arts; BA, Communication) joined AlphaGraphics as graphic design specialist at its Elkhart, Indiana, location.



**BIG - SCREEN SUCCESS**

The College of Liberal Arts and the Patti and Rusty Rueff School of Visual and Performing Arts congratulate alumnus Jeremy Clark (MFA '04, Acting) and the cast and crew of *Prairie Love* on their world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival.

A quirky love story set in North Dakota, *Prairie Love* was one of 118 films selected from 10,000 submissions to the 2011 festival, and one of just 40 narrative feature films accepted.

Clark, an actor and executive artistic producer with Ka-Tet Theatre Company in Chicago, plays the lead role of "The Vagrant" in the film, which continues to generate positive buzz among critics. "I had a great time on the shoot and at the festival," he says. "It was a lot of fun."

For more information on the film, visit [prairielove.com](http://prairielove.com).

**MOVED? NEW CAREER? NEW NAME?** To update your information with the College of Liberal Arts or to submit personal or professional accomplishments for this section of *THiNK Magazine*, go to [www.cla.purdue.edu/alumni](http://www.cla.purdue.edu/alumni) and click on Alumni Information Update.



*A crowd gathers at Duncan Hall in Lafayette for a red-carpet celebration of Purdue's film and video studies program during Experience Liberal Arts month in October. In addition to awards for outstanding faculty and alumni, the evening showcased clips from the year's best films and events. Photo by Andrew Hancock.*

## DISTINGUISH *yourself*

It's what you do with a degree from the College of Liberal Arts. *Distinguish yourself* embodies the college's promise of a liberal and practical education at a world-renowned research university that empowers students and alumni to change their world. *Distinguish yourself* makes a statement and challenges faculty, staff, and students to attain new heights.

*Laura Zanotti, assistant professor of anthropology, captured the simple symmetry of an African marketplace during a recent trip to Eldoret, Kenya, to explore study abroad opportunities for students. Photo by Laura Zanotti*

THiNK  
MAGAZINE

