In February 2014, the Board of Trustees approved the new School of Interdisciplinary Studies in the College of Liberal Arts. Interdisciplinary programs now enroll 442 undergraduate majors and minors and 119 graduate students, making it one of the college’s largest academic areas.

The School of Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS) consists of 15 interdisciplinary programs: African American Studies, American Studies, Asian Studies, Asian American Studies, Comparative Literature, Film & Video Studies, Global Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American & Latino Studies, Linguistics, Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Peace Studies, Philosophy & Literature Ph.D. Program, Religious Studies, and Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies.

Three programs - American Studies, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics - offer Ph.D., M.A., and B.A. degrees. Eleven programs offer the undergraduate major or minor. In addition to the eleven programs is a minor in Native American and Indigenous Studies.

The Interdisciplinary Studies programs together represent an academic unit with its own faculty, resources and budgets, and representation on the Council of Department Heads.

It is now even easier to donate to the Interdisciplinary Studies Program using Purdue-gift. Purdue-gift makes it simple to make a gift by credit card to Purdue. Go to the following web address:

http://donate.purdue.edu/

Click on "Make a Gift," choose "Other" from a dropdown menu, then type "Interdisciplinary Studies-CLA" in the text box, enter some information about yourself, submit your payment information, and the transaction is completed through Purdue’s secure server. Make your gift now in three easy steps. It takes just a few minutes.
African American Studies

Dr. Venetria Patton, associate professor of English and director of the African American Studies and Research Center (AASRC) in collaboration with Renee Thomas, director of the Black Cultural Center (BCC) coordinated a trip to Ghana for students during Maymester this year. Patton, already working to revitalize study abroad as a regular part of African American Studies, worked with Thomas to design a study abroad trip that had parallels with the planned BCC fall 2013 research trip related to Gullah culture in the Low Country of South Carolina and Georgia. There, ancestors of enslaved Africans have retained many West African cultural traditions. Ghana, an area where many African ancestors passed through during the slave trade, made sense to both.

Pictured left, students on the AASRC and BCC co-sponsored study abroad tip to Ghana enjoyed learning about West African Adinkra symbols.

American Studies

In January 2014, American Studies welcomed its new director, Dr. Rayvon "Ray" Fouché. As a cultural historian of technological invention and innovation, Rayvon Fouché explores the multiple intersections and relationships between cultural representation, racial identification, and technological design. As a scholar and public speaker, he has actively worked to clear away the misinformation about black inventors. Prior to this appointment, he was an Associate Dean of the Graduate College, Associate Professor of History, Associate Professor in the Information Trust Institute, and a faculty affiliate of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies.

American Studies also hosted its 49th Annual American Studies Graduate Symposium on the theme “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: American Exceptionalism in the 21st Century.” Historian Dr. Kevin Gaines, a core faculty member of the University of Michigan Afroamerican and African Studies department, provided the keynote address, entitled “New York is Like Johannesburg: Global Dimensions of the Postwar African American Freedom Movement.” The American Studies faculty, staff, and students are excited to celebrate its 50th anniversary next year and look toward the future of American Studies at Purdue and as a field.

Asian Studies

Eighteen speakers from around the world met at Purdue October 30-31, 2013 for a conference titled, “Global ReOrient: Chinese Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements in the Global East.” The conference was organized by Purdue’s Center for Chinese Religion and Society and supported by the Asian Studies program. The number of Christians in China has exploded from 4 million in 1949 to 65 million in 2012.

Professor Yi Gao of Beijing University presented a lecture on “French Revolutionary Violence and Modern Chinese Nation-State Building” on October 22, 2013.

The Asian Studies program held a reception for students and faculty on November 5. Dean of International Programs Mike Brzezinski spoke to the students in Chinese, and Asian Studies Director Mark Tilton spoke to the students in Japanese, to promote study abroad opportunities for Asian Studies majors.

On February 18, 2014, two visiting Japanese artists performed to a packed house of wildly enthusiastic Purdue students. Ryūtei Saryū performed traditional Japanese rakugo, or humorous storytelling with just enough English super-titles to help the audience not get lost. He was accompanied by three Purdue students who also performed rakugo. Hayahiya Niraku performed kamikiri, or “paper cutting,” a lightning-fast art of creating intricate designs with nothing but a piece of paper and scissors.

Margaret Tillman, a modern China historian with a special emphasis on the sociology of children and childhood, will join the Asian Studies program in the fall of 2014.

Purdue Political Science Professor Daniel Aldrich presented a lecture on March 10, 2014, on “The Challenges of Survival and Recovery from the 2011 Tsunami in Japan.”

The outstanding senior in Asian Studies for 2014 was Kendra Morris. Kendra traveled to Japan during the summer of 2013 for a three-week Japan Foundation language and cultural program.

On June 4, 2014, former Japanese ambassador to the United States Ichiro Fujisaki, accompanied by two students and two business executives from Japan, met with a group of eighteen students at Purdue on June 4, 2014. Topics of discussion included student culture, the state of the Japanese economy, and security issues in East Asia.
Comparative Literature

This past year the English Department, in conjunction with several interdisciplinary programs, took a step forward in extending its work in modern fiction to include Chinese literature. During a trip to Beijing, Angelica Duran met Professor Wang Ning of Tsinghua University, who every few years selects an American University to host a Comparative Literature Conference. In the past this event as taken place at Harvard, Princeton, and Duke. This year, Purdue hosted the 6th Annual Sino-American Comparative Literature Symposium on the theme of “Comparative Literature, Religion, and Society.” As a result of the conference, in 2016 Modern Fiction Studies will devote its first special issue to twentieth-century Chinese fiction.

In her role as director of the IDIS program in Religious Studies, Professor Duran enlisted the cooperation of Charles Ross, also of the English Department and director of the Comparative Literature Program, to bring ten scholars from China for three days to meet with a variety of specialists in Chinese literature and culture, including Howard Goldblatt, who gave the conference keynote address on his work as the translator of Noble Prize winner Mo Yan. As there were several papers on Mo Yan, Professor Duran has been able to assemble the best ones into a volume titled Mo Yan in Context: Nobel Laureate and Global Storyteller, edited by her and Comparative Literature graduate student Yuhan Huang, which will be published by Purdue University Press. It includes Professor Ross’s paper, “World Literature, Religion, and Alexandre Dumas’ The Count of Monte Cristo, with Notes on Mo Yan.”

As a result of the conference, John Duvall, editor of Modern Fiction Studies and member of the English Department, agreed to a proposal for a special issue of the journal to be edited by Wang Ning and Charles Ross.

Joining the English Department in sponsoring the conference were Asian Studies, Asian-American Studies, the Confucius Institute, the School of Languages and Cultures, the College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University’s International Programs, Tsinghua University, the Center on Religion and Chinese Society, and the Purdue University Libraries, which provided a display of books relating to China, including a 1950 Purdue dissertation by a Chinese student who returned home as a professor of atomic physics.
Jewish Studies

Highlights from Spring 2014
Jewish Film Series (organized by Alon Kantor; akantor@purdue.edu)
1) La genèse (1999) (Genesis)
2) The Golem (1920) (The Golem: How He Came Into the World / Der Golem, Wie er in die Welt kam)
3) Green Fields (Grine Felder) (1937)
4) Jacob the Liar (Jakob, der Lügner) (1976)
5) Bruriah (2008)

The 14th Annual Graduate Student Symposium
"Merging Borders: Language, Literature and Communication in Cross-Cultural Contexts"
Keynote speakers: Dr. Dov-Ber Kerler, Indiana University and Dr. Karen Thornber, Harvard University
http://www.cla.purdue.edu/slc/main/graduate/Graduate_Symposium/Keynote_Speaker.html
March 7-8, 2014

The 33rd Annual Holocaust Remembrance Conference: "Hidden Within"
April 6-8, 2014
Full program details: http://www.glhrc.org/

Highlights from Fall 2013
Klatch Jewish Arts Series Presentation
Monday, October 28
Daniel Asia, Composer and Professor of Music, University of Arizona
"Breath in a Ram's Horn: The Jewish Spirit in Classical Music"
6th Annual Larry Axel Memorial Lecture in Religion

Thursday, November 7
Wendy Furman-Adams, Professor of English, Whittier College
"Visualizing Paradise: Artists Representing Eden Before and After Milton's Paradise Lost"
Co-sponsored by the Purdue Jewish Studies and Religious Studies Programs

Wednesday, October 2
Saul Lerner, Professor, Department of History and Political Science, Purdue University Calumet, "Creating a Master Race: American Eugenics and Nazi Racial Policy"

Wednesday, November 6
Peter Kern, Winner of the 2013 Edward Simon B'nai B'rith Barzillai Lodge No. 111 Prize in Jewish Studies, "Moses Hess: His Influences and Influence"

Dr. Venetria Patton, Director of the African American Studies and Research Center, with Alexandra Hoff. Alexandra was named the 2014 Outstanding Senior for AASRC and IDIS. She was also inducted into the National Council for Black Studies' Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society. Photo by Stephen Hoff.

Heather Moore, a doctoral student in American Studies and teaching assistant in African American Studies speaks with Michelle Alexander, left, an associate professor of law at Ohio State University and bestselling author of The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. Alexander spoke at the annual Cummings-Perrucci Lecture on Class, Race, and Gender Inequality, programmed in 2013 by the African American Studies and Research Center. Photo by Venetria Patton.
Religious Studies

Last year, my first year as Director of Religious Studies, was both hectic and exciting. Our program sponsored many stimulating events on and off campus. Throughout the year, the “Bridging Cultures-Muslim Journeys: Let’s Talk About It” series at the West Lafayette Public Library continued to garner audiences of students, faculty, and folks from around our community. This was also true of the many presentations arranged the Aquinas Educational Fund, such as Professor Emeritus James Davidson’s talk, "American Catholics and Their Church: Fact and Fiction," held at St. Tom’s last September. In October we held our Open House at which there was much conviviality as well as treats and free t-shirts for our students. It was there that we announced the formation of our new Religious Studies student’s association.

Among the many highlights of last year was the conference, “Global ReOrient: Chinese Pentecostal/ Charismatic Movements in the Global East” and the annual Larry Axel Lecture in which Professor Wendy Furman-Adams (Whittier College) guided us through a virtual feast for the eyes with her PowerPoint show, “Visualizing Paradise: Artists Representing Eden Before and After Milton’s Paradise Lost.” Nearly 100 students and faculty attended that event.

And there were also many smaller events that remind us of just how important our faculty is to our students. One example is Professor Stuart Robertson taking his students in "The Evolution of the Bible and its Revolutionary Effects" up to the Newberry Library in Chicago to look at various editions of the Bible from around the world including the first English translation, the Coverdale Bible of 1514 and an Algonquin translation of

Women’s Studies

Written By Tesha McKinley

Women’s Gender, & Sexuality Studies has become an international program when our first study abroad course was launched in Uganda last year. Our move to internationalize has shifted into full gear, we are currently working on developing additional study abroad courses in Iceland, Cuba and India. Under the LGBT Minor there was also an additional study abroad class with travel to New York, Paris and Amsterdam. In November we also had our faculty trip in Cuba for the U.S Women’s Delegation to Cuba, a program built around feminist activism.

Since adding our new minor, undergraduate enrollments have grown exponentially. This year we incorporated an new aspect of our awards ceremony by conferring Graduate Certificates to those students who have earned it. This year we conferred 16 certificates. Wow, it is great to see how our program is growing!