

ENGLISH @ PLU



Department News

While we race to finish the semester, we'd like to take a moment and look back at a productive fall filled with good news.

Great news started pouring in early with the arrival of Juniper Kaufman, Dr. Kaufman's beautiful baby girl. Dr. Kaufman is happy to report that Juniper recently found her thumb, recognized her face on a selfie, and is currently enjoying time with her grandparents back in Pittsburgh. Dr. Kaufman will return from maternity leave in the spring to continue chairing the Department. We look forward to seeing a lot of Juniper once she's back!

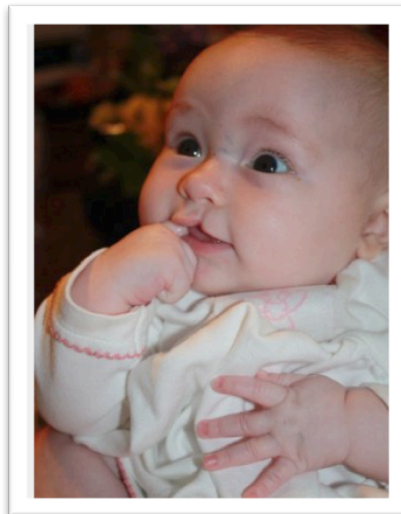


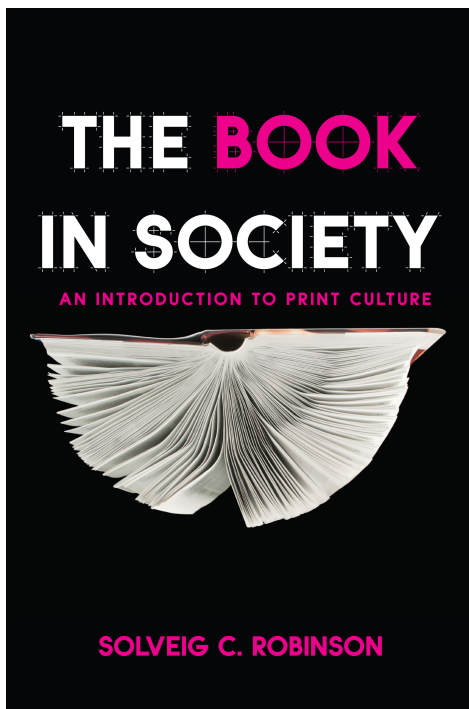
Image: Jost Amman 1568, Workers in a print shop.

We end the semester, as we began it: with great news. Dr. Solveig Robinson's new book just hit the stands. In this issue, she shares her experiences writing the book as well as her thoughts on the current debate over e-readers and print books.

Below we also feature scholarship news from our faculty members, our bedside reading titles, and a look forward at the spring's exciting events.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS and HAPPY 2014!

Solveig Robinson's *The Book in Society*: From the Classroom to the Press.



On a crisp morning in the fall of 2011, Solveig Robinson, Associate Professor of English Literature and Director of PLU's Publishing and Printing Arts Program, walked into The John Rylands Library (Manchester, UK). In the gothic reading rooms of this library, with no access to Internet, Prof. Robinson wrote her new book, titled *The Book in Society: An Introduction to Print Culture* (Broadview Press 2011). This textbook history of print culture comes at a crucial moment in the history of print culture, as readers, writers, and scholars all over the world engage in a heated debate over the place of the print book in an increasingly digitized society.

The study of print culture has always been relevant to understand how knowledge is disseminated across time and space, how reading habits have changed through history, among other crucial questions. But it was

over the past three decades that it became a widely studied field due to its relevance for a range of disciplines, such as history, literature, and media studies. The central questions driving print culture research and teaching are, among others, "What exactly is a book?" "Who produces it, who reads it, and why?" "What effects have books had on the societies into which they have been introduced, and how have those societies in turn shaped the kind of books produced in them?" And it is with these questions that Dr. Robinson opens her textbook.

The project to write and publish *The Book in Society* began after she bumped into her publisher at a conference. He asked her if she'd be interested in writing a textbook history of print culture; she agreed, sent out a proposal, it was accepted, and the book is now published. But Prof. Robinson says that the broader project for this textbook really began in her "The Book and Society" course where, with the help of students, she tested the material for the project. Without their interest in the material and their feedback, Prof. Robinson says, it would have been harder to envision and complete the project. *The Book in Society* is Dr. Robinson's second book. Her first book, *A Serious Occupation: Literary Criticism by Victorian Women Writers* (Broadview 2003), is an anthology of essays by women written and published between 1830-1890. What is the main difference between writing an anthology and a textbook? Audience. While in compiling and editing *A Serious Occupation*, Dr. Robinson had to imagine an audience of her colleagues, she wrote *The Book in Society* with her students in mind.

I was curious to know Prof. Robinson's position on the grand debate over the e-reader and the print book. These days, the topic can raise a literary scholar's blood pressure, since for some, it conjures up apocalyptic images of a world without bookcases. But I was comforted by Prof. Robinson's shrewd answer. Drawing from the depth and breadth of her knowledge on this subject and from conversations with her students, the younger generation of readers, she calmly stated: "We use e-readers to consume literature; we read print books to internalize literature." Her own book is now available in electronic and print forms. Take your pick!

--Adela Ramos.

"This textbook is the essential pedagogical tool that book historians have always needed. It covers all important developments in book culture in every part of the world and throughout history, from cuneiform to Kindle. For undergraduates with no prior knowledge of the subject, it explains everything with striking clarity and intelligence. It has no peer, and it can serve as the foundation of any introductory course in book studies." --Jonathan Rose, Drew University.



Rick Barot: Professor Barot's essay "Morandi Sonnet" was on the list of "Notable Essays" in the "Best American Essays 2013" anthology, published this year. In addition, his third book of poetry, *Chord*, was accepted by Sarabande Books and will be published in 2015. Professor Barot has given a number of poetry readings this year, including one the Gig Harbor Public Library and at Hugo House in Seattle.

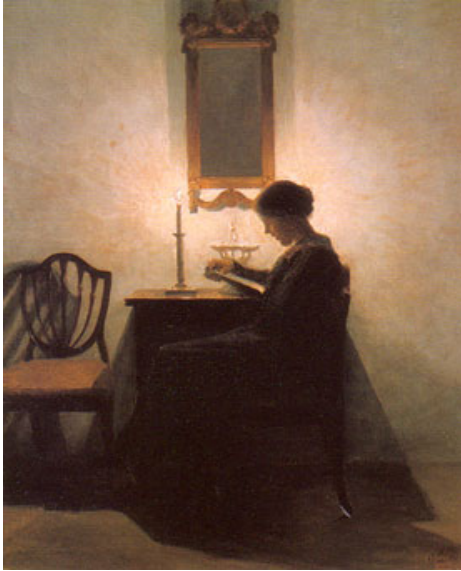
Chuck Bergman: The Winter 2013 Issue of the PLU Scene Cover Story features the work of Professor Bergman and his student Nev Granum, who worked to release wild parrots from captivity in Uganda, in collaboration with Jane Goodall. Professor Bergman published an article about this experience in the November 13th, 2013 issue of Slate.com entitled "Jane Goodall and I Set the World's Smartest Birds Free." Slate.com, Nov. 13, 2013

Christian Gerzso: Professor Gerzso co-organized a seminar with Martin Harries, Professor of English (UCI) on "Capital(s) of Avant-Garde Theater," at the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), to take place in New York in March 2014. In the seminar, Professor Gerzso will present the following paper: "'Lost amidst the chaos': Radio, Foreign Capital, and the Politics of Xavier Icaza's Avant-Garde."

Jenny James: Last June, Professor James presented a paper entitled "Improper Witness: Reading History in Mad Men" at the Futures of American Studies Summer Seminar at Dartmouth College. This essay explores how the television series Mad Men looks back to the history of the 1960s. At this coming MLA 2014 convention, she will present a co-authored paper on "responsible reading" and the works of Toni Morrison. This paper is part of a panel Professor James organized, entitled "Vulnerable Readers and the Post-1945 American Novel."

Rona Kaufman: Professor Kaufman composed a paper entitled 'Practical Righteousness': Composing Cookbooks and Re-Forming American Judaism in Early Twentieth-Century Seattle" for the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference that took place at Stanford this September. She couldn't attend because of the happy work of taking care of her new baby, Juniper, but had a colleague give the talk instead.

Adela Ramos: Professor Ramos won a Regency Award to attend the Pride and Prejudices Conference hosted by the University of Winchester at Chawton House Library in July 2013. She presented the paper, 'Species Thinking: Animals, Women, and Literary Form in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.'



BEDSIDE READING

There's nothing like finally getting under the covers at the end of the day to pour over one of the many books piled on the bedside table. Here are some of the titles our faculty members currently look forward to reading after a long day.

Before falling asleep...

James Albrecht is reading Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals*.

Callista Brown is reading Steingraber, Sandra. *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 2010; Loori, John Daido, Ed. *The Art of Just Sitting: Essential Writings on the Zen Practice of Shikantaza*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004; Tucillo, Dylan, Jared Zeizel, and Thomas Peisel. *A Field Guide to Lucid Dreaming*. New York, New York: Workman Publishing, 2013.

Tom Campbell is reading Wayne Koestenbaum, *My 1980s: And Other Essays*; Alice Munro, *Dear Life: Stories*; Glenway Wescott, *A Heaven of Words: Last Journals, 1956-1984*; Ann Patchett, *This is the Story of a Happy Marriage*; Christopher Hennessy, *Our Deep Gossip: Conversations with Gay Writers on Poetry and Desire*.

Christian Gerzso is reading Ackroyd, Peter, *London: The Biography*; Auge, Marc, *No Fixed Abode* and Bakewell, Sarah, *How to Live: Or A Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer*

Jenny James is reading Joan Didion's memoir of enduring her husband's death, *The Year of Magical Thinking*.

Jenny James is reading Joan Didion's memoir of enduring her husband's death, *The Year of Magical Thinking*.

Rona Kaufman has two books on my nightstand right now: *Longbourn*, by Jo Baker (it's actually on the Kindle on my nightstand--my first novel on a Kindle! We'll see how it goes) and *Healthy Sleep Habits, Healthy Child*, by Marc Weissbluth (in good old-fashioned paper).

Lisa Marcus is reading Susan Choi, *My Education* (I picked up this novel over the summer and never got to it. I plan to read it once the semester's work ends, even though *Slate* just reported that it was nominated for The Literary Review's worst sex writing of the year award); *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory*, edited by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler; *Vegetable Literacy*, by Deborah Madison (Okay, I don't have this yet, but I hope to acquire it soon.); stacks and stacks of old copies of the Sunday edition of *The New York Times*.

Adela Ramos is reading Dona Tartt's *The Goldfinch*, Lyanda Lynn Haupt's *The Urban Bestiary*, and is looking forward to reading Elizabeth Gilbert's *The Signature of Things* as well as cathing up on a pile of *New Yorkers* over the winter break.

Solveig Robinson: My "worthy" book is *A Great Idea at the Time: The Rise, Fall, and Curious Afterlife of the Great Books* (2008) by Alan Beam, which is an account of the rise of the "Great Books" curriculum in the early to mid-20th century at the U of Chicago and elsewhere. The multi-volume set of books published by the Great Books Foundation was prominently displayed in my childhood home (and, so far as I know, never read), so I thought it would be interesting to learn more about its publishing history. My "fun" book is *My Life* (2013) by Sir Alex Ferguson. It's really, really badly written, but essential reading for a Manchester United fan!

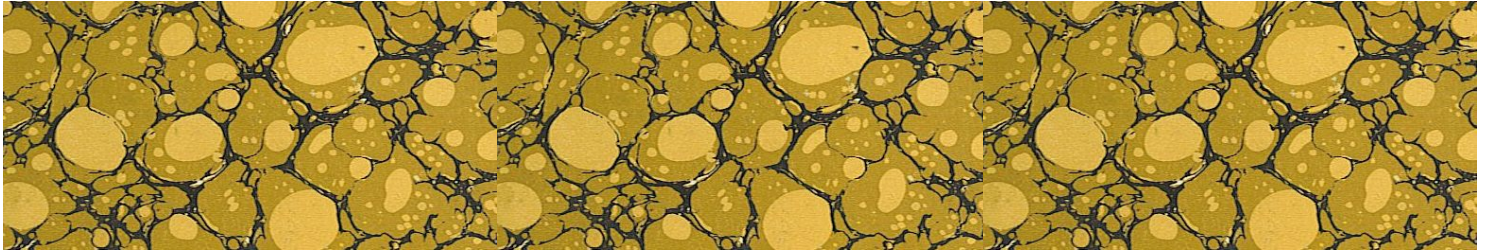
Falling Asleep over the Aeneid'
Robert Lowell

The sun is blue and scarlet on my page,
And *yuck-a, yuck-a, yuck-a, yuck-a*, rage
The yellowhammers mating. Yellow fire
Blankets the captives dancing on their pyre,
And the scorched lictor screams and drops his rod.

Jason Skipper is reading Ben Fountain, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*

Kate Slater is reading Gillian Flynn's *Dark Places*.

If you are a student or faculty member interested in contributing events, news or focus articles for future newsletters, please email jamesja@plu.edu and ramosam@plu.edu for more information.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS: NOTEWORTHY SPRING EVENTS

VISITING WRITERS SERIES

February 25, 2014: Rainier Writing Workshop Anniversary. Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Rainier Writing Workshop MFA at PLU. Writers include Stan Sanvel Rubin, Judith Kitchen, Kelli Russell Agodon, and Kate Carroll de Gutes.

April 8, 2014: Award-winning author and naturalist Lyanda Lynn Haupt is at the forefront of the movement to connect people with nature in their everyday lives. She is the author of *Rare Encounters with Ordinary Birds*, winner of the Washington State Book Award.

A CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

Dr. Lisa Marcus will be offering the Spring semester's scholarship talk.

MILTON IN LATIN AMERICA

D. Mario Murgia from the National Autonomous University of Mexico will be visiting our campus and offering a lecture, class, and workshop:

Lecture, February 26: "Translating Milton in Latin America"

Class, February 27: "Early Modern Sonnet Writing"

Workshop, February 28: "Translating Contemporary Mexican Poetry into English"