

PRISM

Educating for Lives of Thoughtful Inquiry, Service, Leadership, and Care

*A Publication of the Division of Humanities, Pacific Lutheran University
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Humanities

at



English
Languages & Literatures
Philosophy
Religion

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In the Prism

2009-2010 Dean's Reflections and Refractions

Douglas E. Oakman, Dean of Humanities and Professor of Religion

This academic year, the Division of Humanities has been busy with the usual teaching and service loads, all the while electing a new dean, conducting four searches (English, Philosophy, two in Religion), inaugurating the PLU 2020 study process, continuing discussions on general education and departmental program assessment, implementing new faculty review schedules and procedures, and providing leadership to numerous university committees and programs across campus. Not too much, eh?

The division remains energized for its highly effective work through intentional discussions about the educational mission of Pacific Lutheran University, the rich traditions of the liberal arts, and the gifts and strengths of the Lutheran heritage. If one way to state the aims of liberal education is to “free the mind from ignorance and superstition,” then divisional classrooms have much in every way to offer—within a solipsistic mass culture in the United States that instantaneously disseminates half-truths via electronic networks or to a political life that seems made moribund by dogmatic ideologies. The Lutheran educational vision focuses not just on the traditional skills of perceptive reading, cogent writing, clear thinking, and clear speaking, but also on the “intangibles” our society now seems so desperately to need. These intangibles include concern for constructive values; preparation of students to research complex questions and comprehend nuanced truths; the



Photo by Jordan Hartman

shaping of whole human beings; educating with global sensitivities and openness to different cultures; and finally giving students reason to ask big enough

questions in a world increasingly driven to the immediate, the simplistic, and the anthill of conformity.

Mark Schwehn recently argued in *The Cresset* (Valparaiso University, December 2009) that the Lutheran heritage has much to offer the university of the twenty-first century—but only if this educational vision can continue to be claimed. This type of university will be dedicated to producing “public persons” through liberal arts old and new, to academic freedom and fearless free inquiry, to dialog between all the various disciplines of study; this university will love wisdom (philosophy) and welcome the wisdom of the world’s religious traditions, will value secular reason as a check against religious fanaticism, and will continue to lift up the musical and visual arts as essential to the search for goodness, beauty, and truth.

The vision Schwehn articulates remains very much alive at Pacific

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The Humanities at Work: Three Meanings

Hannah Love, Assistant Professor of Philosophy
Co-editor, Prism

In this space, for a third year now, graduates of Pacific Lutheran University share reflections on their educational experience: how texts encountered, courses studied, and travels embarked upon opened a unique space for the apparently separate realms of the personal and the academic to commune with each other, and how such unions continue to impact their ongoing narratives in deeply meaningful ways. Four talented and creative women speak to the emergence of their authentic self, how it was not only nurtured but challenged, perhaps even awe-struck, by these moments. The integration of the personal with the academic, and the beautiful realization that one can live out such integrity through vocation, are two of the threads weaving these profiles together.

Yet those two threads weave more than these four stories together. Look closely: throughout the pages of this year's Prism you will encounter a similar pattern again and again. From current students' musings on their (sometimes uncomfortably) transformative experiences studying and living in unfamiliar cultures around the world to research collaborations between students and a professor regarding how personal attitudes toward livestock reveal and connect with metaphysical theories, a truth is revealed: the Humanities are indeed at work, unbounded by classroom walls. Perhaps that work illuminates something fundamentally valuable about a PLU education, not only after graduation but in the moment: the aforementioned union of the personal and academic into a new whole, the sum of which is clearly greater than its parts.

And so PLU's graduates and current students bring meaning to the idea of the Humanities at work, whether their study is lived out in their authentic vocation or currently challenges and transforms them (in or out of the classroom). But there is yet another group, aside from graduates or current students, for whom the Humanities is at work—the faculty who together comprise the Division of Humanities.

This past year, we (along with our faculty, administrative, and staff colleagues across the university) began the process of crafting the PLU 2020 plan: a guiding

document that, like PLU 2000 and PLU 2010, will sketch out PLU's path into the future. Part of Dean Oakman's charge to faculty was to define our unique role: what is it that we, for whom the Humanities are our work, do? Furthermore, what ought we do as we move toward 2020? We cannot answer that question fully without first looking at what it is we have done, and in these pages our current and past students embody our mutual history for us. What the essential core or self of PLU (and of the Division of the Humanities) is or should be will prove a difficult, yet crucial, question to answer. Yet the experiences collected in these pages today provide genuine and therefore invaluable evidence for at least part of an explanation.

Buddhist philosophy rejects the notion of a central essence or self. In such a theory, we are what we do. There is a lovely image offered of how a non-existent self can nevertheless affect those around it: a footprint in a bed of moss, leaving its outline and impression even though the foot is not there, the indelible imprint of something's having happened. These moments and experiences offered up in these pages are that imprint. In that way, they are PLU—they are the Humanities at work.

Maren Anderson, '09—Norwegian
Troy Storjfell, Associate Professor of Norwegian

When she began her college studies five years ago, Maren Anderson wasn't sure exactly what career path she wanted to follow. But after transferring to Pacific Lutheran University at the beginning of her junior year, she became increasingly attracted to pursuing an academic vocation in the field of Scandinavian studies. Now, well into her first year as a masters student, she speaks enthusiastically of her experience in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington, less than an hour's drive up I-5 from the PLU campus. "This is absolutely the next step in the educational journey for me," she grins. "Undergraduate education prepares you to fall in love with the



questions and to be a critically engaged thinker, but you don't really refine these skills until graduate studies."

Having so far studied topics as diverse as Norwegian and Swedish security policies in the context of NATO and European security, the Old Icelandic language of the sagas and the Eddas, and Scandinavian poetry, Maren's biggest struggle at this point is choosing between area studies, with its focus on history and political science, and the textual analysis of language and literature. Thoroughly enjoying both fields, Maren wonders if she can chart some sort of middle path between them.

As a research assistant at the UW, Maren has done bibliographic editing for two forthcoming books by Professor Andrew Nestingen, one on crime fiction and the other on Finnish filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki. "It's fun to see the publishing process close up," she notes. Maren is very clear on her own goal, which is to be a professor, and she is looking forward to getting into the classroom to teach. "To be a facilitator of knowledge would be a really awesome opportunity," she exclaims. "I enjoy the scholarship side of things, too, but I think I'll like the give-and-take of teaching even more."

Maren feels the PLU Norwegian major offered excellent preparation for her current studies. "It was such an interdisciplinary program," she says. "It challenged us to think along the model of liberal arts, but in another language, and in a globally focused way." To other humanities majors who may be thinking of graduate studies, Maren

has only words of encouragement. “Don’t be scared to apply...It is so worth it to go to grad school.”

**Stephanie Bauer, ’95—
Chemistry and Philosophy**

*Hannah Love, Assistant Professor of
Philosophy*



After her studies at PLU, Stephanie went on to receive a Ph.D. in Philosophy and a certificate in Women’s Studies from Washington University in St. Louis, where she was awarded a four-year Spencer T. Olin Fellowship for Women to support her graduate work. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alaska Anchorage, where she does conceptually fascinating yet practically meaningful work. “I teach biomedical ethics to nursing and medical students... as well as general requirements for the university (plus upper-division courses for our majors). My research has been focused on the nature of personal autonomy, but I have also been working with officials from the State of Alaska to create guidelines for ethical disaster response. The goal is to be fair with scarce resources, respect individual autonomy and ensure public safety, all at the same time.” Not only does she grapple as a teacher and researcher with philosophical concepts—Stephanie has the ongoing responsibility of changing theories given the “facts on the ground.”

Stephanie credits her PLU education for awakening and shaping her philosophical and scientific passions in such concrete ways. As she puts it, “PLU showed me that study of the humanities was more than the interpretation of abstract texts: I learned that theory and practice rightfully

belong together.” Two class experiences in particular stand out for her. The first was a course, *Evolution of Mind and Morality*, co-taught by Mugs McGinnis, Professor of Biology, and Erin McKenna, Professor of Philosophy, as part of the old Core II Program. The questions about the relationship between the workings of the brain, free will, and morality “kept me up at night”, Stephanie recalls, and “I realized that philosophy could make a difference” to “tough questions that had relevance for many people.” The second memorable course was *Exploring the Self: Individual and Community*, a J-Term trip through Scotland and co-taught by McKenna and Lawry Gold, Associate Professor of Art. During those weeks, “we...lived in a few different communities, and studied philosophers who wrote about how good communities are critical for the flourishing of individuals. It was amazing to see small, deliberate communities testing some of the very theories we were studying.”

Yet while the “living, breathing part” of a PLU education was precious to Stephanie, equally valuable was her training in “hard-core analytic skills.” Learning to engage in critical thinking and persuasive writing mattered not only to her as a student, but matters today in her career as a teacher and researcher. “I have to constantly think on my feet in leading discussions in the classroom, but I also have to listen carefully for what my students are trying to ask in class and in their papers. My humanities education taught me to look beneath the surface of words and think about their meanings and contexts, and this has been helpful in everything I do.” Whether in the classroom, delivering a conference paper, or working on resource distribution guidelines, Stephanie experiences her PLU education as continuously informing her work and providing a constant foundation for what she does today.

Mary Simpson, ’00—English

*Alison Mandaville, Visiting Assistant
Professor of English*

What can you do with a BA in English? Work in publishing? Communications? How about the visual arts? Up and coming painter, film-maker and all-around visual artist English alumna Mary Simpson offers further proof that this



familiar query is anything but rhetorical—that indeed you can do remarkable things with a PLU English major.

Mary grew up in Palmer, Alaska, and came to PLU specifically to study with English Professor and writer Jack Cady. She’d read and long admired his novels and stories about the Pacific Northwest. She calls his freshman workshop, *A Sense of Where We Are*, “one of the most profound seminars I experienced,” and credits this and their subsequent friendship (until his unfortunate passing in ’04) with teaching her “to step back and consider the place of the individual within history and art, from oral traditions, cultural and social contexts, mythology, nature, form and practice.”

Other English faculty members were deeply influential. From Barbara Temple-Thurston Mary learned “that poetics and critical practice are not in opposition but rather complementary and necessary forms of seeing and experiencing the world.” She notes that Temple-Thurston’s “work in Post-Colonial literature and theory and her embrace of folk traditions in Trinidad and other cultures continue to be essential to my art practice, and I consider her a lifelong friend.” Of Tom Campbell, who “introduced me to the brilliant works of Walter Benjamin,” she says, “he taught me about confidence in inquiry and form, and that a whole world of cultural context can be simply and beautifully expressed within one swift metaphor. And from Dennis Martin she learned “not only to consume whole works of literature from individual authors, but to also take in their idiosyncrasies and biographic contexts.” She remembers fondly how “the works of Faulkner become ever more

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Department of English

Photo by Chuck Bergman



Sea water pours off the tail of a diving humpback whale, just a few yards in front of us.

A College of Whales

Chuck Bergman, Professor of English

Three times now, I've taken a class of PLU students to Antarctica. While we learn about natural history and conservation of wildlife, this is not a science course. It's a course in literature—environmental literature. Even more, it's a course about the ways in which the written word intersects with the living world—and how, when we enter that magical and emotionally charged, we are not just blown away. We are transformed.

This past year, a small pod of four humpback whales was one of our agents of change. The whole class was in Zodiacs, small inflated rubber boats. The

Photo by Chuck Bergman



Chinstrap parent and chick: This baby chinstrap will learn that it can fly with these wings—not in the air, but under water.

plan was to explore a stretch of water near the Antarctic Peninsula where hundreds of huge icebergs had run aground in water that was fairly shallow. Antarctica often

seems unreal, fantastic, but this was like entering another imaginary world. The icebergs were eroded into all manner of strange and surreal shapes, a frozen sculpture garden of ice, glowing in eerie shades of blue. When we heard a whale rise nearby and exhale in a beautiful whooshing blow, we realized that we'd found a pod of humpback whales.

They were feeding. Two or three of the whales—50 feet long and about 48 tons in weight—would dive below the surface and blow a ring of bubbles. I realized that they were blowing “bubble nets,” a feeding technique which trapped swarms of krill inside. Another of the whales would then rise through the middle of the bubbles, jaws gaping as it gulped the trapped food. The whales dove and surfaced, rolled and splashed. Sometimes they were fed right next to the Zodiacs, rising just a few yards away. The whole thing was as powerful and moving as anything I've ever seen.

After such an experience, the world feels bigger, and you somehow also feel bigger, as if these creatures have made you more human. We could not have had a more powerful demonstration of cooperation and intelligence in another species of mammal. I remember saying that our politicians could learn from these creatures about working together for the good of the whole group. Finally we had to leave. As the Zodiacs returned to our ship everyone was yelling for joy. And I remember one student in particular, who kept saying, “I love college. I love college.”



Professor Lisa Marcus Wins PLU's Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award

Rona Kaufman, Associate Professor of English

Lisa Marcus, associate professor of English, has won PLU's campus-wide Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award for '09-'10. The award, given to one professor each year, honors and celebrates teachers who “communicate knowledge effectively,” “inspire in students a love of learning,” and demonstrate “the willingness to go ‘above and beyond’ in working with students in and outside of class.”

In their nominating letter, Lisa's colleagues describe Lisa as a “dedicated and courageous teacher” who teaches with “compassion, honesty, and rigor.” Her students' repeatedly testify that Lisa's classes are always instructive and inspiring, demanding and energizing. One student writes in her supporting letter, “Even among all the incredibly positive experiences I had at PLU, my classes with Lisa will also stand out as the ones I not only enjoyed the most, but the ones in which I learned the most—both about the world around me and about myself.” Her students also write about how Lisa's teaching connects meaningfully and powerfully to their lives outside the classroom. One student writes that Lisa “works so that each student is passionate about the subject matter, that it seems relevant and pertinent to their personal lives. She listens to her students. . . . She strives to use the curriculum as a tool to help her students understand the world we live in, the history, the problems, the inspiration, and the joys that surround us.” Another student explains that through Lisa's teaching she

“redefined academic success as being an active participant in life inside and outside the classroom. She instilled a great passion and love of learning and helped me find my voice as a writer.”

In addition to the literature courses she teaches in the English Department, Lisa also regularly teaches in Women’s and Gender Studies and the First-Year Experience Program. Almost all of her courses count as “alternative perspectives” courses dealing with issues of gender and ethnicity, injustice and privilege, which can trigger resistance on the part of many students. But as her nominators explain, “Lisa has an enviable record of creatively refocusing negative energy to produce remarkably positive results, challenging students with thorny material but supporting them as they work their way through it.” One student writes, “Lisa displayed an uncanny ability to address difficult subjects, such as rape, hate crimes or the violence of slavery in respectful and productive ways. Controversial topics could often shut down discussion in my other classes, but never in Lisa’s classroom. She did not just lead discussion but she modeled how to balance passion for a subject or position with sensitivity to other people’s viewpoints. In doing so, she created and sustained a class community based on mutual respect and trust.”

One of Lisa’s former students, now an English professor himself, writes, “Lisa Marcus is a model for the noble, and often under-sung, vocation of teaching in the liberal arts tradition. She demands much of her students and she prepares them to welcome that demand, to rise to the occasion of intellectual inquiry. She asks her student not only to comprehend ideas, but to take those ideas seriously enough to explore how they matter in the world at large.”

Faculty Excellence Awards are given in the areas of Teaching, Scholarship, Service, and Mentoring. Lisa joins other current members of the Humanities Division who have received such honors, including Chuck Bergman, Tom Campbell, and Sharon Jansen (English); Patricia Killen, Doug Oakman, and Samuel Torvend (Religion); Paloma Martinez-Carbajo (Languages and Literatures); Erin McKenna and Paul Menzel (Philosophy).



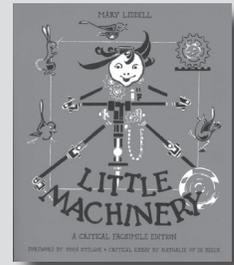
English Department Welcomes Nathalie op de Beeck

Mark Hengstler, '11

Nathalie op de Beeck, Associate Professor of English, is ecstatic about her first year at PLU. Growing up on the East Coast, op de Beeck studied at the University of Pennsylvania and graduated with a B.A. in English and Art. She then moved to New York, kick-starting her career as a book reviewer for Publishers Weekly. According to op de Beeck, it was her particular joy in reviewing children’s books that led to her interest in children’s studies. After continuing her review work in Washington D.C., she packed up her belongings and moved back to Pennsylvania, furthering her education at the University of Pittsburgh.

Upon receiving an M.A. in Literature and Ph.D. in Cultural and Critical Studies (her dissertation was titled *Readymade Antiques: The Picture Book in America, 1924-1944*), op de Beeck began work as a professor at Illinois State University. It was there that she honed her love for children’s literature and teaching, gaining plenty of experience and know-how for her current position as head of the PLU Children’s Literature program. With specialized study in both ecocriticism and gender studies, she understands the strong connection between literature and how children see the world. As interest in children’s literature classes increases, op de Beeck believes the program will eventually become a minor. Furthermore, she ultimately hopes to expand the children’s literature section at the PLU Library. This spring, along with teaching *Writing for Children*, Professor op de Beeck will offer a *Women in Literature* course, focusing on America’s rising obsession with Gothic literature.

Professor op de Beeck was instrumental in the recent re-issue of a classic 1920s children’s picture book,



Little Machinery by Mary Liddell in a critical facsimile edition (Wayne State University Press, 2009). Her award-winning article is included in this edition.

Op de Beeck: I originally heard of the book when doing research for my dissertation, and I tracked down a battered copy at the New York Public Library one summer. It perfectly captured my interest in how the literature of the 1920s combined nostalgia for nature with narratives of technological progress. I wrote about it in 2004 in *Children’s Literature* journal and received the Children’s Literature Association Article Award for my piece. Meanwhile I had taken an interest in trying to get the book republished because it is so artful and unusual, so I approached Wayne State University Press about the project; I also interviewed members of Mary Liddell’s family, including her children and grandchildren, and requested their permission to move forward with the project. Sadly, Liddell’s son Brand Wehle passed away while the book was still in the process of being reprinted. Brand had been generous and helpful in enabling me to finish the project. But Liddell’s other two children, Dell and Field Wehle, both got to see the renewed copy, for which I was very happy; they had supplied Brand’s son Jonathan Wehle with the family pictures that now appear in the book. All Liddell’s children and grandchildren (and THEIR kids) were thrilled to see their family member’s out-of-print book in a new edition, and Wayne State’s production department did a fabulous job of making the book the right size and colors.

Department of Languages & Literatures

Study Away: Our Students' Words

Carmina Palerm, Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies

For the Department of Languages and Literatures, building our Study Away programs is a crucial part of what we do, enabling our students to deepen and broaden their experiences in another language and another culture. As the following excerpts from some of our students' reflections show, however, there is no common denominator to what students bring back from these experiences. Some concretely experience phenomena they may have only studied in classes; some find that, robbed of their linguistic identity, they must "intently listen and learn"; some experience an ultimately productive but also painful cultural disorientation; some discover an intellectual passion and a career path. In each of these cases, the crucial thing seems to be that each student welcomed the considerable challenges—linguistic, cultural, and even sometimes academic—that study away presented. In this sense, participation in one of PLU's pre-approved Study Away programs is for many of our students not just a central component in their educations at PLU, but also a chance to empower themselves "for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care - for other people, for their communities, and for the earth."

Oaxaca, México (PLU Gateway Program Fall 2009)

Reed Ojalá-Barbour, '10—Environmental Studies and Hispanic Studies

The colonial architecture of the Tourist Center receded behind me as I headed for the second-class bus station in the outskirts of Oaxaca city. I would catch a bus to the Sierra Norte, a mountainous region rich in biological and cultural diversity. I was excited to learn about alternative development in four Zapotec indigenous communities through an Environmental Studies Internship with the Oaxaca Gateway Program. I would work with the ecotourism project of Pueblos Mancomunados. The mancomún or commonwealth unites eight Zapotec communities and seeks to protect their

Reed Ojalá-Barbour



Village in the Sierra Norte, Oaxaca, Mexico

natural resources while generating employment for a population devastated by migration.

As I hurried to catch the bus to take me to the first village, I became aware of the working conditions of many migrant workers. I was engulfed in the swarming chaos of Mercado de Abastos, a vast market, the hub of Oaxaca's informal economy. In these conditions, workers lack benefits and a steady salary. A lecture coordinated by Witness for Peace had told us that up to 60% of Mexicans depend upon unregistered and untaxed vending for part or all of their income. I struggled to understand why indigenous farmers would abandon their land and identity for these informal jobs in the city.

During the 1980's, Pueblos Mancomunados, the local indigenous community, addressed the need for economic development through timber exploitation. However, logging created environmental degradation and the need

Reed Ojalá-Barbour



Melquiádez and his wife who worked in Yakima during the 1950's as a migrant worker.

for alternatives. The development of ecotourism gave a new form of income and economic incentive to preservation of natural resources. With a reference in Lonely Planet guide book, the communities even seem to have a new appreciation for their environment. Tourists, biologists and anthropologists

come from as far as Czechoslovakia to see and study their everyday landscape.

The four humble communities during my Environmental Studies internship in Oaxaca I visited protect their natural resources through ecotourism, and in doing so have entered a globalized world. I continue to wonder what unforeseen consequences the thousands of international tourists who bring iPods and digital cameras will have on their culture. The villagers' horizons are now larger than their ancestral lands and fields of maize. Ecotourism is also trying to protect a culture through employment opportunities, but workers are unpaid and struggle to maintain their subsistence during the obligatory service position they are given as part of the traditional system of governance known as *Usos y Costumbres*. As an Environmental Studies student, I am caught between recognizing the environmental benefits of ecotourism and being forced to acknowledge the potential cultural impacts of this globalization. The interdisciplinary lens of Environmental Studies has greatly complicated my world view by revealing the complexity, interconnections, and tensions within such seemingly simple issues.

Freiburg, Germany 2009-2010 Learning to Live with Life Abroad

Josh Hammerling, '11—German

Despite containing bewilderingly useless bits of knowledge such as "How to tell your parents you've been expelled" and "How to sleep in



class,” the Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: College Edition has at least one redeeming feature: Mark Twain’s

famous quote, “I never let my schooling interfere with my education” appears as its epigraph. Realizing that one’s educational environment does indeed extend beyond the walls of the classroom is an essential aspect of college life. And those who adhere only to academic requirements may pass up other, equally important, educational opportunities. Whether it is simply missing a class to see a play in the city, or deciding to spend a year abroad in spite of stressful GUR requirements, the point is that it is important to be open to such opportunities, even when they may not be welcomed by the authorities beforehand. Academic counseling is by no means to be ignored, but sometimes you must personally decide whether something qualifies as an alternative homework assignment or as studying for self.

The advice of PLU’s German program left me thrilled with the prospect of a year in Freiburg, Germany, if also a bit intimidated. I was to take classes completely in German, a language I could hardly understand let alone utilize to write a ten-page academic paper—as one of my courses would require. And furthermore I knew my decision to study in Freiburg for the whole year was not encouraged by those signing off on my GUR credits. It can be hard to tell whether a program will measure up to PLU’s academic standards, but after my first semester in Freiburg it is clear to me that I made the right choice. I have not only had the opportunity to meet remarkable people from more than ten European countries, but have also been deeply humbled as a result of being put in the position of “the Other.” Not having a firm grasp of the language, I have had to spend more time intently listening and learning.

名可名非常名 Chengdu, China (PLU Gateway Program at Sichuan University) 2008-2009

Leif Nordquist, '10—Chinese Studies

Whenever asked about my life in Chengdu, China, I can never conjure up the proper response. I could provide the perfunctory wonderful, great, or amazing, but what does this really say? Although I most certainly had moments that deserve these words, to do the entire year’s experience justice I also need words like painful and destructive; but then, few appreciate such a genuine description. It is frustrating. Because if anything was wonderful during this tumultuous year, it was, in fact, the pain....

I miss being able to aimlessly explore this vibrant city-scape; to stuff myself on piles of dumplings for less than a dollar; to watch movies, play pool, go swimming and rock climb with my friends; to hear the stories of all the different people who come and go; to smell the smells, hear the sounds and taste the foods that the Chinese cherish, but that sometimes I find unsavory and bizarre.

But, as dictated by the tenets of Daoism, no thing exists without its corollary. At my worst, I was angry, homesick and nearly insane, though I do not recall specifically why. It was as if the world that I had always known suddenly vanished, that I had been placed on the divide between reality and oblivion. ...

But by the sheer grace of fate, amidst the din of my confusion, I had an epiphany. While passing a construction site, some workers must have been cutting wood, because I caught a whiff of its sweet aroma. Instantly, finding



Cityscape Chengdu, China

Leif Nordquist



Bike repair shop Chengdu, China

myself back home in my dad’s wood shop, I was in a state of euphoria: to recall so powerfully a place I had deeply forgotten—it evades description.

And the more I thought about it, the more I became aware of my own perceptions: I could feel how different the world could be, and not just for the Chinese, but for everyone on the planet. I wanted to know what sights, smells, and sounds elicit, in others, the same intense sense of home that I felt in the scent of freshly-cut wood. I wanted to understand those symbolic “webs of meaning” which make the world what it is for the Chinese, and how they compare to my own....

Athens, Greece 2008-2009

Stephanie Steinke, '10—Classics and Religion



Stephanie in Egypt with pot she reconstructed from KV48

The year I spent living in Greece was the most adventurous thing I had done up to that point in my life. Little did I know what was in store for me.

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Department of Philosophy

The Metaphysics of Farming

Sarah Curtis, '10

Erin McKenna, Professor of Philosophy

Jon Stout, '11

Dodging deer on a dark mountain road, dodging whirlpools in the cold water of the northwest, dodging chicken and cattle poop in farm fields—it was a summer of philosophical field work. Though the phrase sounds counterintuitive, during the summer of '08 this is precisely what we did when we began a study of how the metaphysical views of farmers might relate to their choices about how to farm. The research was undertaken with the help of a grant given by the Wiancko Charitable Foundation to support student/faculty research in PLU's Environmental Studies program. Our particular focus was on the farming of animals for meat and the environmental impacts of the choices about how to raise the animals. We interviewed farmers at six different operations and then analyzed the farms from the perspectives of ecofeminism, deep ecology, the land ethic, and American pragmatism.

Farming, as many are well aware, has begun to raise serious environmental issues for many reasons. The use of antibiotics in industrial farms, for instance, is becoming a cause for concern. The waste from such farms is a major environmental problem for soil, water, and air. The 2006 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report notes that animal agribusiness is the most serious cause of environmental degradation. While the operations we looked into were not nearly as large as the ones discussed above (larger operations were typically those who failed to respond to our request in any way) what we were essentially after was to examine these farmers' view of their role within their environments.

Of the farms that participated in our study, one was a fish farm, three raised cattle, and two raised multiple species of animals. Our questions consisted of the following: How do you view the human relationship with the rest of nature (animal and nonanimal)? How do these views affect your choices about how to farm? The various philosophical perspectives we placed along several continuums that we



created. These were: human domination/mastery of the rest of nature to human interconnectedness with the rest of nature; anthropocentrism to nonanthropocentrism; seeing nature as a resource to respecting nature in its own right; hides individuals to acknowledges individuals; viewing things as an industrial economy (which “encourages individualism, extraction, economies of scale, and simplification of natural systems”) to viewing things in a natural economy (which “depends on interdependence, renewal, dispersal of production, and diversity”).

Our final task was to place the farms on these same continuums based on the interviews conducted and visits made. My own particular task was to frame our findings within an understanding of ecofeminism, while Erin did the same through the framework of American pragmatism and Jon through that of deep ecology and the land ethic. Examining these farms we saw that, consciously or not, views of nature and the human relationship with nature do help to frame choices about farming practices and can help us

begin to evaluate these practices. In some cases there appears to be a rift between changing metaphysical assumptions and taking action. Where metaphysical assumptions do change, change in practices still may not occur (e.g. remaining reliant on oil, selling cattle to feedlots, buying animals and manure from industrial operations). Without such changes in views, though, changes in practice are highly unlikely. Our contradictory behavior remains invisible until we begin to think about the metaphysical views that guide our lives, and we all need to be more aware of our metaphysical views and the contradictory aspects of how we approach our food. Such an examination must include the consumer.

An important concern of the people trying to farm in ways consistent with particular views about our ecological relationships is whether or not the actions they desire to take can sustain a profit so they can move forward. This is hard to do if consumers do not wish to effect the same changes in farming practices. We need to get consumers to think about their metaphysical views. If the metaphysical assumptions of the consumers do not align with those of the farmers it will be hard to support changes in practice and outlook. Examining consumer views would further our understanding of how metaphysical assumptions have an impact on the environment and our relationships with nonhuman nature. Such philosophical conversations would themselves be a likely and necessary catalyst for further reflection and change.





Philosophy Club at PLU

Tim Guy, '10

The last few years of PLU's Philosophy Club have been a varied mixture of on and off meetings, various themes, and, in some cases, large gaps of inaction. After befriending fellow philosophy majors, it seemed PLU's Philosophy Club could take a much different route. Regular attendees of the club meetings, myself included, latched upon a central question—what is Philosophy? And it was the attempts at answering this question that gave the club this new life and new direction. Thus, this year commenced with several major changes: weekly meetings, 'readings' for each meeting, and a familiar central, semester-long focus. How these new elements would actually affect the club remained to be seen, but the outcome has been extraordinary.

Truly, the real question wasn't so much the question itself, but how to approach the question. The club took on what would be best described as a 'tour' of philosophers of the twentieth century, so that we might all become more acquainted with those philosophers with a profound effect on much of what we encounter in today's philosophical literature. And it was with these philosophers, each offering up their own approach to our question through selected excerpts of their own writings as weekly readings, that gave each and every meeting its own possibility for individual development.

Club meetings turned out to be quite a spectacle, as the influx of regulars and new attendees seemed to be affected by the flow of the semester itself, providing for a variety of discussion. In the beginning, only a few attended, but as time progressed,

membership blossomed, as did discussion—and debates. Although new members and even the regulars began to seem scarce as the weight of capstones and the worries of finals loomed, meetings did not cease, nor did the fascination with the readings selected. I hope many found the weekly meetings and readings enlightening with respect to a host of ideas and thoughts responsible for many of the questions being asked today. I have even greater hope that this active, student-driven approach with PLU's Philosophy Club will inspire future inheritors of the club to sustain this important work.

Arbaugh Endowment bears first fruits

Keith Cooper, Associate Professor of Philosophy

The Department of Philosophy received last year a generous endowment in memory of former colleague George Arbaugh. This March, the inaugural event benefitting from that endowment took place with the visit of Merold Westphal, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University.

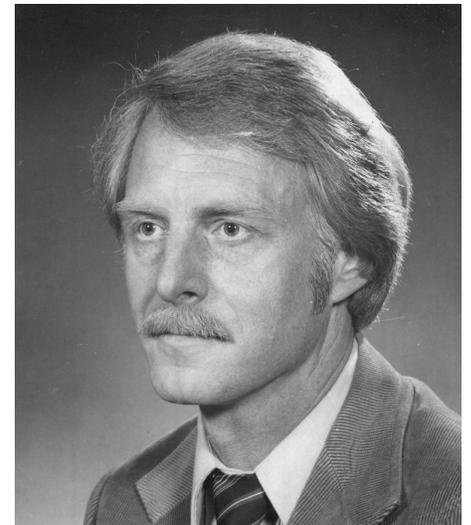
Prof. Westphal is a highly-regarded philosopher with a special expertise in the thought of the 19th-century Danish—and Lutheran—philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. In addition to three books on Kierkegaard and two on Hegel, his *God, Guilt, and Death: An Existential Phenomenology of Religion and Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism* have made a major contribution to the philosophy of religion.

In his public lecture, "Faith, Reason, and Passion" (the inaugural Arbaugh Lecture), Westphal explored how Kierkegaard would have responded to two popular arguments against religion in general and the Christian faith in particular. They hold that religion is less than rational, even irrational, because it involves not knowledge but mere subjective opinion and because it consists primarily of emotion, not rational reflection and knowledge. Westphal provided an engaging and careful exploration of the three concepts from the title of his lecture, concluding that these popular arguments simply misunderstand the nature of faith, reason, and passion or emotion.

Does faith fail to rise to the level of knowledge? Yes, Kierkegaard said . . . but is that an objection? Faith involves a relation between one subject and another, not between a subject and some truth claim. Yes, beliefs play a supporting role as essential ingredients of faith, but religious faith is not merely a form of creedal assent.

As for the claims of reason to determine the status of those religious beliefs, Westphal noted that the history of philosophy shows a pluralism of perspectives on the nature of reason. Reason, he claimed, is always "perspectival," involving interpretation, and so in a sense each version of reason rests on its own view of faith, making it hardly a neutral arbiter of religion.

Concerning passion, Kierkegaard thought faith was indeed a passion—the highest sort. ("An objective uncertainty held fast through appropriation in the most passionate inwardness," as Westphal put it.) But religion involves more than just emotional feelings; rather, emotions always involve a construal or interpretation of the world and are vulnerable to belief judgments, and so are not divorced from rational thought.



Professor George Arbaugh

The George and Donna Arbaugh Family Endowment, which made possible this lecture, is intended also to further student-faculty collaborative research and faculty scholarship within the Philosophy department. George is the longest-serving faculty member in the history of the university, and it is truly an honor to be able to continue his legacy with what his wife, Donna, and her sons have made possible through this endowment.

Department of Religion

PLU and the Religion Major

Clare Brauer-Reike, '09

Initially, thanks to my family history with the school (the Rieke name in general, my parents having met there, my brother in attendance at the time), PLU was at the bottom of my list of potential universities. My mother had to cajole me into visiting, insisting on the virtues of the school.

I decided to attend PLU because I felt the university offered me something very genuine and substantial that I didn't feel at other colleges—a sense of sincere journeying and a holistic education. The students were friendly and engaging, and the faculty especially made me feel like I was a part of more than just an academic institution. I knew I would grow immensely as a person and an academic at PLU.

I've always been interested in the topic of religion, especially Christianity. People of faith fascinate me. Growing up as a pastor's daughter, I was blessed by the experiences of our small congregation. In the already challenging teenaged years of my life, I attended a private Christian school in which my understanding of my faith grew out of adversity, as I struggled with required Bible classes that felt unscholarly and dogmatic. By the time I got to PLU, I was thirsty for the possibility

of how much I could explore in a truly academic context. Spirituality seems to me to be one aspect of the person that is incredibly stigmatized; however, I think the faith journey of each individual—and each faith community—is incredibly important to development as human beings. I wanted to know what questions were out there in the world, and I wanted to know how people were answering them: questions about God, about the Bible, about the church, about people, about ethics, and so on. I wanted to learn how to add my voice to the conversation as an informed, thoughtful, and fully engaged young adult.

It was my intention as a prospective student to major in Social Work. Aside from that one change of heart, I decided to build upon my interests rather than replace them with one another. I declared my Religion major in the spring of my first year at PLU. When I decided in the fall of my sophomore year that I was also very interested in Women's and Gender Studies, I simply declared it as a second major. As my interest in Spanish and Philosophy grew, I just added them as minors. It ended up being a hefty commitment, but I believed that the whole reason I was at PLU was to claim an education—and that's what I did.

My Religion major at PLU opened many doorways for me, like a month's study of Medieval Christianity in Italy and the opportunity to work as a peer tutor. My courses challenged me to learn new ways to think about my faith and gave me a context for deepening and complicating my beliefs and understanding of theology and doctrine. Ultimately, however, the highlight of my time in my major at PLU was the invitation and encouragement to write papers. That would sound absurd to almost any college student (including myself!),



but we read so much of other individual's great work—their creative thoughts and responses to the Bible, theological concepts, ethical dilemmas, etc—that until we are able to write our own, our educated is severely limited. To think and write, and their confidence and encouragement empowered me to really develop not only as an academic but just as a person.

This year, I am participating in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps program. LVC is a one-year program that places individuals with non-profit organizations around the country to contribute to their communities and gain experience “on the ground.” I have been placed in Seattle with an environmental non-profit called Earth Ministry. Earth Ministry engages Christian communities with environmental stewardship through education, modeling sustainable living, and environmental advocacy. My role as Outreach Coordinator is to work with individuals and congregations in our Greening Congregations program to “green” their faith communities in their worship and education, facilities management, outreach, and advocacy.

PLU—and my Religion major especially—gave me many skills that have been invaluable in my work at Earth Ministry: the basic ability to communicate thoughtfully and effectively with other people about points of disagreement or challenging topics; professionalism in written and spoken presentation of work materials; the capacity to manage weighty



work loads responsibly and reliably; and most essentially, the empowerment to question and consider ideas and concepts on multiple levels and from multiple angles. My position at Earth Ministry necessitates competence, creativity, and compassion in my work with our constituents, and my education played a large role in the development of these traits in me. I'm grateful for my decision to attend PLU and for all that those four years have done to shape who I am today.

Vocation and Service Embodied

Samuel Torvend, Associate Professor of Religion

If you're the kind of person who thinks that religion is about a private, "spiritual" relationship between the individual and the divine, you'd get a run for your money from Tim Siburg.

I first met Tim in the "Research in Religion" course I taught in the Fall Term of '07. As a student with a double major in religion and economics, Tim was very interested in linking his two majors, the study of economic systems and the study of religion. His research during the course focused on theological foundations of Lutheran Christian commitments to economic development in poorer countries.

One of the great joys of working with students who have a number of intellectual interests is the ways in which they pull faculty to think about their own disciplinary expertise. Such was the case with Tim: faculty in Religion and Economics have served as advisers to a very bright student who held and continues to hold strong personal and intellectual commitments which form a vocation, a calling, to promote the work of religious, non-governmental organizations in less-developed regions of the world.

It's not surprising that Tim would find strong support for his Economics major in the Religion Department. Dr. Doug Oakman (New Testament) is a world-renowned expert on the economic questions and challenges which faced Jesus of Nazareth in the first century. Dr. Brenda Ihssen (Historical Theology) offers a popular course on wealth and poverty in the ancient church. Tim owns a copy of my book on Luther's reinvention of social welfare in the 16th century. Such research

suggests that religion is far from an ethereal and immaterial relationship with the sacred but rather is deeply embedded in fabric of economic, political, and social life. We hope our students begin to understand that there is symbiotic relationship between religion and the many forces which shape human values and practices.

While we live and work in a part of the country where few people claim active participation in religion, we also recognize that without the dense yet often quiet presence of religiously-sponsored non-governmental agencies, many people in the region would find themselves in world of hurt. Tim's extensive research on Lutheran commitments to economic development highlights the ways in which a theological conviction or practice holds economic or political implications. In the tension between the two, there is room for lively research. And there is this: making life more humane for our fellow citizens.

Tim graduated from PLU in '09. During the past year he has been studying for the MA in Theology and the MBA in Claremont, California, continuing to hold together both economics and religion. He may soon enrich his scholarly study by adding a pastoral theological dimension as he pursues a seminary degree.

This is one Lute who clearly embodies the university's mission to link thoughtful inquiry with service in the world.



Lutheran University. "Educating for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership, and care" is not just a slogan. The Division of Humanities too embodies its own creed each day in its classrooms, each year in its publications and scholarship, cultivating "an intellectual and imaginative connection between a living past, embodied in the diverse array of cultural traditions, and the global challenges of our contemporary world." The following Prism pages will so indicate.

I have been privileged over six years to serve this division with its marvelous staff and faculty. Now the new dean James Albrecht, Associate Professor of English, will assume the mantle. He brings another strong voice for liberal education, and I am sure that he will serve the division well. I hope the reader will continue to be fascinated and enticed by the reflections and refractions in this Prism.

meaningful upon hearing the story of his pyrotechnic stint as a postal clerk.”

But how does a writer move into the visual arts? After studying creative writing at PLU, with its strong publishing and printing program, Mary began to pair images with her writing (drawings, collages and prints) in artist book formats. She says that she discovered a swift escalation in her ideas through working with these materials—drawing and printmaking led to investigations in filmmaking (through animation and live action, experimental films) and soon she’d developed a studio practice. Writing is still plays a role in her practice, critically and creatively.

She received her MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University in ‘09 and is now participating in the prestigious Whitney Independent Study program, which provides a platform for inquiry and discussion around critical theory within art practice for studio artists, critical writers and curators. This year there are 26 practicing artists, historians and curators who are studying together with such faculty as Benjamin Buchloh, Johanna Burton, George Baker, Chantal Mouffe, David Harvey and Ron Clark.

Her film practice is largely collaborative with her husband, Fionn Meade, curator of SculptureCenter, New York, also a writer (they met at the Richard Hugo House, a literary arts center, in Seattle). She has held residences at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Residency in Maine and at Centrum in Fort Warden State Park, Washington. Her work has appeared in



An installation image from my Columbia MFA thesis exhibition at the Fisher Landau Center for Art, New York, ‘09—a black-and-white Super-8 film plays on the steelwood platform I built with my prints and paintings in the background.

many shows, including at the Seattle Art Museum in ‘08 and ‘09, at the Tacoma Contemporary in ‘05 and ‘06 and at the Punch Gallery in Seattle. Most recently, her work appeared in a New York exhibition at Max Protetch Gallery in the fall of ‘09.

You can view and learn more about Mary’s work in the visual arts at her website: <http://www.marysimpson.net/>.

Jessica Thompson, ‘05— English and Religion

Brenda Ihssen, Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion

Having been raised in a home in which faith and education were genial companions, Jessica elected to attend PLU on the recommendation of her church pastor, Michael Anderson. “I was looking for a place where I could expand my faith, for a university option that could help me do that.” Her parents were supportive of her choices to attend PLU and to explore her questions of faith and meaning (as well as career options in the humanities in the fields of English and Religion, in which she would ultimately double major). “I could pursue both of them, and I needed to be free to pursue both of them; as an incoming student I was aware that I was at a transition age, a time when I was ready to ask the hard questions and do both academic homework and faith ‘homework.’”

Jessica entered PLU knowing that she wanted to be an English major, and she credits her position as a Core II student with helping her to focus on the liberal arts. Books, literature and the history “behind” the literature had always been a personal passion, and Jessica had, at one time, imagined a much different life: “I had thought I would get a PhD and be an academic, teaching and writing.” However, despite her interest in critical analysis of her own faith, she had not considered a Religion major until she engaged in the academic study of religion through a required course. When asked what ultimately drew her to the study of religion, Jessica replied without hesitation: “Doug Oakman.” Aside from her admiration of what Dr. Oakman taught and how he taught it, Jessica valued the way in which the religion courses filled the “gaps” in her education as a person of faith. “English was my academic goal; the religion major was something I was



doing for myself. And then, of course, it turned into something that I “do” everyday, which I would not have predicted.”

In her current position as Discipleship Coordinator at Mount Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church in University Place, not far from PLU, Jessica works as an associate to Pastor Dave Steffenson. Her job encompasses many tasks: she encourages and equips members of the congregation in their own service to the church and community, appropriate to their talents and time; she is an administrator for the congregation, coordinating education and service opportunities; most importantly, she helps the congregation with their own personal discipleship practices and helps other lay members become liaisons between the Church and the world.

Jessica is grateful for the liberal arts education that she received at PLU, which includes equipping students with skills that apply to multiple professional circumstances: “The most helpful thing,” she claims, “is that I have a wider awareness of how people may or may not work and serve together, and the different experiences and histories that they bring with them may compliment or complicate the situation. Also, the intensive research, study, public speaking, reporting, and critical analysis skills I gained at PLU are used everyday in my job because I am constantly looking for and analyzing resources that will be distributed to people with multiple abilities and spiritual needs. The ongoing inquiry that is part of the humanities and liberal arts really set me up to be the type of resource that I need to be, as a lay leader in the church.”



In addition to exploring the Greek mainland and islands, I would travel in the surrounding countries as well as backpack through Turkey, work on my first archaeological dig, get sick enough to be hospitalized, be accidentally tear-gassed, and go on to live and work in two more countries before the year was over.

I had originally intended to transfer schools to one with a larger interdisciplinary Classics and Archaeology program. During the process of transferring, the faculty and staff of PLU bent over backwards to keep me here and found ways to enhance my experience in the program. My interest in living abroad was piqued while on a J Term trip in January of '07. I decided on an intensive year of study abroad instead of transferring schools. It was the best decision I could have made. The professors at College Year in Athens are leaders in their concentrated areas of Classical Studies. I was able to travel the country and learn about Ancient Greece first hand and go behind the scenes in places like the American School of Classical Studies in Athens where I was introduced to cataloguing artifacts and museum work.

The summer after my year in Greece I was not ready to come home and decided to pursue field archaeology in more depth. I signed up for an excavation in Israel for the first part of the summer and ended the summer digging in Romania with a professor

from Athens. The excavation in Israel was my first experience participating in a comprehensive dig. Every day, I would waking up at five a.m. and work in 100F degree heat, catalogue the finds, and collapse into bed completely exhausted... and I loved it! While in Israel I travelled the country and visited Jordan, where I saw Petra and drove through Amman and the West Bank on my return to Israel. After the summer ended, I came back to the States for the first time in twelve months with an education far beyond books, having made good friends and met professors with whom I remain in contact.

I came back to PLU to begin my senior year in the fall of '08 and was lucky enough to go on the J-Term trip to Egypt in January '09. An opportunity developed on the trip to accompany PLU professor Dr. Don Ryan on an expedition to excavate in the Valley of the Kings in the fall of '09. Seizing that opportunity, I decided to postpone graduation in May by taking the fall semester off to dig in Egypt. Now, as I begin my last semester, the previous experience gained from study abroad will take me to even broader experiences around the world as I plan to attend graduate school in the United Kingdom.

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Rick Barot, Assistant Professor of English

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"Wildlife Trafficking: Stolen Animals are a \$10 billion business worldwide. A journey into the Amazon Basin traces the illicit origins." *Smithsonian*, 40 (Dec. 2009): 34-41. Includes twelve photos by author.

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Review of *The Bolter*, by Frances Osborne. *Magill Book Reviews/SalemPressOnline* (September 2009).

Review of *Making an Elephant: Writing from Within*, by Graham Swift. *Magill Book Reviews/SalemPressOnline* (December 2009).

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Brenda Ihssen, Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion

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Pauline Kaurin, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

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Alison Mandaville, Visiting Assistant Professor of English

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"Liquefaction." Poem. *Saxifrage*. Spring 2010. Print.

"Consolation." Poem. *Fifth Wednesday*. Fall 2009: 102. Print.

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Jennifer Smith, Assistant Professor of English
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Rebecca Wilkin, Assistant Professor of French

Women, Imagination, and the Search for Truth in Early Modern France (Ashgate 2008).

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Michael Zbaraschuk, Visiting Assistant Professor of Religion

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Bridget Yaden, Assistant Professor of Spanish

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Support Humanities Students and Programs

The uncertain stock market and sustained unemployment has impacted everyone, including families struggling to keep the dream of a college education alive for their daughters and sons. PLU is committed to working with families of current and incoming students who have been impacted by the economic downturn to ensure they can continue with their studies.

With the launch of Project Access, the university seeks to raise a total of \$1 million, to be used in support of increased financial aid commitments. This amount will provide scholarships of \$3,500 to an additional 300 students in need, including Humanities students. Each fully-funded \$3,500 scholarship can be named either in your honor or in the honor or memory of a loved one, and you also will receive a brief profile of the student

who receives your support. PLU also welcomes support in the form of a partial scholarship. At whatever level you choose, your participation is important and will continue to ensure access to PLU for qualified students.

Other gifts can help support important Humanities initiatives: the foreign language film series, study-away programs, student-faculty research, public speaker and lecture series in all departments, and the Wild Hope Project are a brief sampling of the Humanities programs and activities that enrich the lives and educations of students at PLU.

All gifts to Project Access or PLU are welcome. To learn more, go to www.plu.edu/development for a list of funding opportunities and current projects. Or, call the Office of Development at (253) 535-7177.



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Prism, the magazine of the Humanities Division at Pacific Lutheran University, expresses the scholarly viewpoints or deliberations of Humanities faculty, and occasionally others by invitation, while also announcing publications and achievements within the Division.

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