

Pacific Lutheran University

# Prism

A Publication of the Division of Humanities

Spring 2012

Student-Faculty Research Teams  
**Explore  
Our  
World**



# GREETINGS FROM THE DEAN



It's been another fantastic year of teaching, learning, and scholarship for the faculty and students in the Humanities Division. This year's issue of *Prism* will give you a taste of their many activities and accomplishments.

Our cover story features the exciting batch of Kelmer Roe projects underway this year – projects ranging from the role of Lutheran

theology and pastors in the Namibian anti-apartheid movement, to a modern Greek translation of the Book of Job, to the proto-feminist writer who may have influenced Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to the Chinese government's efforts to shut down alternative urban art communities. All of these wonderful opportunities are funded by a generous gift from the family of PLU Professor of Greek and Religion, Kelmer Roe.

It's been a year of big changes for us, too. We bid farewell to two beloved colleagues retiring after decades of service – Dennis Martin from the English Department and Paul Menzel from the Philosophy Department, who both move on into well-earned retirements. And, of course, with President Anderson's departure from PLU after a twenty-year tenure, we in the Division are preparing to bid Loren and MaryAnn a fond farewell

with heart-felt thanks, and to welcome our new President, Thomas W. Krise.

Across each of our four Departments, faculty have been offering innovative courses – including study-away courses in locales ranging from Antarctica to Martinique – and producing outstanding scholarship that reinvigorates the teaching they bring to all of their PLU courses. Inside you'll find updates that will catch you up on the exciting developments in your Department.

And last – but certainly not least – we've been working harder to keep in contact with you, our alumni. As we send *Prism* to press, we're finalizing plans for an on-campus event for Humanities alumni, to accompany the appearance in the English Department's Visiting Writers Series of Kathleen Flenniken – recently named Washington State's Poet Laureate, and a graduate of PLU's M.F.A. program in creative writing. We hope to see some of you there!

We need you, alums, to help us communicate the value of a PLU education, or to serve as mentors for recent graduates negotiating the transition from college to career. So please stay in touch, we'd love to hear from you. Thanks for all of your support of PLU and our Division!

With warm wishes,  
Jim Albrecht, *Associate Professor of English & Dean of Humanities*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Greetings from the Dean .....	2
Cover Story: Student-Faculty Research .....	3
Department of English .....	6
Department of Languages & Literatures .....	8
Department of Philosophy .....	10
Department of Religion .....	12
Appreciations .....	15

# Prism

## *Prism* 2011-12 Editorial Board

### Co-editors:

Agnes Choi, *Religion*  
Alison Mandaville, *English*

### Editorial Board:

Greg Johnson, *Philosophy*  
Paul Manfredi, *Languages & Literatures*

*Prism* is also available online at  
<http://www.plu.edu/~prism>

Comments or questions? [prism@plu.edu](mailto:prism@plu.edu)

*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.

© 2012 Pacific Lutheran University

# KELMER ROE STUDENT-FACULTY RESEARCH TEAMS

## EXPLORE OUR WORLD

Student-faculty research and creative projects have been one of PLU's Pathways to Academic Distinction over the past ten years – a commitment reaffirmed in our new long-range planning document, *PLU 2020*. All PLU students have the opportunity to pursue such projects within the senior capstone seminars (see details on each of our Department pages), but Humanities students, and their faculty mentors, also have the opportunity to compete for Kelmer Roe Scholarships that fund extended student-faculty research projects. In this feature, you'll learn about the four projects underway this year – and in the Religion Department's section (pages 13-14), you can learn about three projects from years past.

### Kelmer Roe



The student-faculty research projects featured in this piece are funded by scholarships named in honor of Kelmer

Roe, Professor of Greek and Religion at PLU from 1947 to 1967. These fellowships were established in 2004 through a generous gift from Professor Roe's daughter Naomi Roe Nothstein (PLU '53), son-in-law Don Nothstein (PLU '50), and son David Roe (PLU '54).

### Namibian Lutheran Theology and Church in the Namibian Independence Movement

It all started with one simple question. Word to the wise: don't ask a professor for help on a paper not related to his or her class unless you're ready to accept the consequences. In this case, my question to Dr. Marit Trelstad about some background

on the Namibian Lutheran churches for a history paper turned into a Kelmer Roe application. This project further snowballed into research that took place halfway around the globe as well as here at home in Washington.

Some background: During the fight against apartheid in Namibia, most of the key leaders of the movement were black Lutheran bishops and pastors; they are akin to Martin Luther King Jr. and his fellow religious leaders in the U.S. Civil Rights movement. Church headquarters, as in the U.S. during the civil rights movement, were bombed and, much like the Catholic Churches in Central America were involved in liberation movements in the 1970s and 1980s, Black Lutheran churches made up the bulk of the political resistance to South Africa. Thus, our research questions were: In what ways was Lutheran theology an impetus for political activism in the Anti-Apartheid Namibian Independence Movement? Was Lutheran social action hamstrung by its own doctrines? Is an emphasis on social activism inherent in the Lutheran theology of Namibians or was this activism a result of the impact of North American Black theologies on Namibians? No scholarship in Namibia or the United States had previously examined these questions.

At the end of the day, we found that Lutheran theology offered strengths to the independence struggle, but it also carried serious ethical roadblocks. We also found that the struggle, indeed, incorporated significant aspects of both Black and Latin American liberation theologies. Lutheran concepts that bolstered social action included the idea that Christians should behave like Christ in their treatment of their neighbors and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept of "costly grace." The consistently problematic Lutheran theological concepts that we found were "justification by grace" (the idea that Christians are saved by grace, not works), the "two kingdoms" distinction (that church and state are separate realms with different roles), and the "orders of creation" idea (a God-ordained assignment



of differing functions or vocations and implicit hierarchy to categories of creation, such as men, women, plants and animals, etc.). Interestingly, the Lutheran emphasis on *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) found easy resonances with Latin American and Black liberation theologies. Biblical texts like the Sermon on the Mount and the accounts of Israel's liberation from captivity were very influential for all of the Lutheran leaders, as well as for the church as a whole.

The research topic itself, that is, whether or how Lutheran theology can influence social action, was one that initially resonated with me for several reasons. I grew up in the ELCA, and I really love the Lutheran tradition. As I've become increasingly passionate about social justice, however, whether the core ideas behind Lutheranism can inspire the same social justice that I aspire to further in this world has become an integral question. Does my religious tradition have the ability to foster the ideals that I hold close to my heart?

Part of what made this research exciting for me was that the topic coincided with my semester studying abroad in Namibia. A large part of my research included an ethnographic study of some of the major Lutheran church leaders in Namibia, done while soaking up as much of the background knowledge about the history of the country and the role of Lutheran theology in the liberation struggle as I possibly could. From sitting through an eight-hour church commissioning service

in order to meet a bishop, to numerous phone call attempts to make contact with my subjects, I discovered that ethnographic research can be difficult and intimidating. Not only were my potential subjects important people in Namibia (one was even the Speaker of Parliament for ten years), but language and cultural barriers added further complications. The payoffs, however, were enormous, and worth every intimidating interview during which I was acutely aware of the fact that I was only an undergraduate student. Through this work, I was able to meet and interview individuals who, regardless of the high personal cost, had helped lead their country out of apartheid and into independence. I conducted valuable primary research that, hopefully, will help others understand the people of Namibia and their history.

Over the summer of 2011 I continued to study the Namibian Lutheran churches in their struggle for liberation. And in November 2011, I had the opportunity to present my paper together with Dr. Trelstad in San Francisco at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in the Luther and Global Lutheran Studies section.

During my time as a Kelmer Roe fellow, I have learned the importance of persevering through challenges posed by cultural differences – finding a way to fit in even in the most unfamiliar of circumstances. I learned to remain patient even through hours spent in the hot sun, and, finally, I learned about the valuable results that long hard hours in the library can yield. Doing research is not easy, but I will carry what I have learned about myself from this project throughout my life.

– Kristen Lee (PLU '12)

## Reading the Book of Job

I have a good memory. That was always my excuse, anyway. How else could I explain how I knew the name of Esther's cousin? Or how I always won those Bible games they played at the end of the Sunday school year? I certainly wasn't going to admit that I had actually, you know, *read the Bible*. I mean, I was nerdy enough already. The truth was, however, that while I had read it, I didn't always understand it.



One of the biblical books that I found particularly perplexing was the book of Job, a complex piece of literature that engages intriguing themes of suffering, justice, righteousness, and the nature of God and the universe. The text raises many more questions than it answers, and it was this seemingly inexhaustible, and profound, complexity that made me jump at the chance to investigate it further by participating in a student-faculty research project this past summer with Dr. Antonios Finitsis, a professor for whom I have much respect.

The purpose of this project was two-fold. First, we planned to examine a cross-section of research on Job and to create a critical apparatus which will be published alongside a new modern Greek translation of the text. Second, drawing on my research experience, I planned to write a paper on the book of Job for presentation at the regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in the Pacific Northwest.

Not all students would be thrilled by the opportunity to continue studying over the summer, which is what this fellowship sounded like to many of my friends. For me, however, it was so much more. I had the opportunity not only to deepen my knowledge on an intriguing subject, but also to work closely with Dr. Finitsis and to experience a taste of what it is like to be a biblical scholar. For me, this last reason was perhaps the most valuable aspect of the experience, as I was seriously considering the possibility of pursuing a career in this field myself.

Over the summer I read about Job, I thought about Job, and I talked about Job

to anyone who would listen. I laughed about Job, I ranted about Job, and I wrote about Job. Every few weeks I met with Dr. Finitsis, and we would talk about Job, but we would also talk about graduate school, academia, and my plans. I reached the conclusion that graduate school is not for the faint of heart. But I also reached the conclusion that my initial enthusiasm was not misplaced. This “research in religion” thing was something I was willing to devote more than a summer to; I was willing to devote a lifetime.

– Jessica Reiter (PLU '12)

*In Fall 2012, Jessica will begin graduate studies in Second Temple Judaism at Yale University.*

## Chai-na (Destroy This)

The *Destroy This (Chai-na)* documentary film project, carried out by Dr. Paul Manfredi and myself, has easily been one of the most rewarding activities of my academic career. Thrown into the Beijing art scene with a camera, a loose plan and just a few contacts, I managed to connect with and interview as many as thirty artists from all over China. Our focus in these interviews has been the uses of and perspectives on artistic space in Beijing. What we found was an array of perspectives, shedding light on the economic, social, and wholly personal dimensions of creative space in China's capital and “cultural center.”

As the title of the project suggests, the film is partially about the ongoing demolition of the built environment in China, particularly of art studios. More specifically, our focus has been the experience of Sichuan artist Zhong Biao, whose multi-million dollar studio in north-eastern Beijing will be among those destroyed to allow for larger and more profitable buildings in the coming years. Surprisingly, the mood among many artists appears to be one of acceptance. “Demolition is a nation-wide phenomena, and I have other things to worry about” was a commonly expressed attitude. Zhong Biao himself has said that it doesn't really matter if his studio is demolished. In his view, what he has achieved in Beijing has already far exceeded the economic cost of losing a studio; this loss is not going to slow him down.

This point of view was not at all what we expected going into the project. Originally our film was called “Destroy That” (transliteration of English “China” – China), a term used to conjure a host of land use issues in China’s contemporary urban development. Gradually, though, “Destroy This” began to work both ways, referring to the constant process of destruction and renewal of literal space, but also the challenging or “destruction” of common narratives about Chinese experience, even those included in our film.

Increasingly it becomes clear that, if any “rough truth” was to be discerned in all of this, it is by nature both fluid and fragmentary, twin themes that have increasingly become touchstones, or even the very *modus operandi* of our project. In the ultimate assemblage of a final product, we aim to maintain these fragments, still truthfully “incoherent,” but also meaningfully collected in an ongoing flow of both figurative and literal destruction and rebuilding. Grounding this collection of fragments can only be the literal sites of artists’ lives and work, facts of the landscape, if only fleeting. With Zhong Biao’s studio as central focus, we draw parallels and contrasts to other physical spaces (for instance, the world-famous 798 Art Zone, now a major art center, but also so heavily commercialized with tourism that it ceases to serve as the cutting-edge art zone it once was) in an effort to fully document the process of living and working as an artist in China today.  
– *Leif Nordquist & Paul Manfredi*



## Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Reader of Gabrielle Suchon?

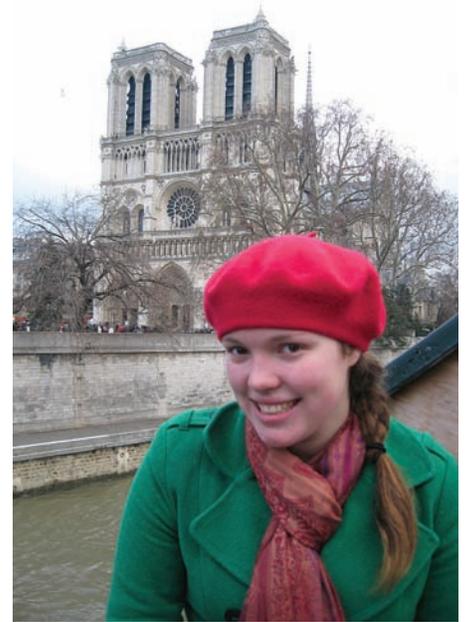
In 1693, an ex-nun living in Dijon, France published at her own expense a massive *Treatise on Ethics and Politics* in which she argued that all humans are capable of freedom, knowledge, and authority, yet that women were deprived of them at great cost. Most pro(to)-feminist works of the seventeenth century emphasized the equality of men and women and thus of women’s equally pertinent claim to advantages such as education and political authority.

Gabrielle Suchon, in contrast, crafted her argument based on the Catholic notion of free will. Freedom, she argues, is that which God grants uniquely to humans; humans thus have a natural right to enact their inherent freedom. When they are prevented from doing so, they suffer constraint. Similarly, knowledge is not a privilege, but a fundamental aspect of human development without which people are ignorant and thus, not free. Likewise, whoever is deprived of his or her natural capacity for authority remains dependent on others, subject to the authority of others. Women, Suchon argues, are systematically deprived of freedom, knowledge, and authority – in short, of fundamental human rights.

Suchon’s work was not widely disseminated in the eighteenth century. However, contemporary French feminist philosopher Michèle LeDoeuff speculates that Suchon had at least one very important reader: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who may in fact have taken his conception of rights from her. My goal with student Sonja Ruud was to verify that claim. To that end, Sonja traveled to Henry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, where she consulted the notes that Rousseau had taken while in the employ of Louise Marie Madeleine Dupin, who planned to write a history of women.

Here is Sonja’s account:

*After hiking across Austin with my heavy laptop and printed map, I stepped out of the sweltering heat into the cool refuge of the Harry Ransom Library. I never would have imagined that researching early modern French feminism would bring me to Texas in mid-July.*



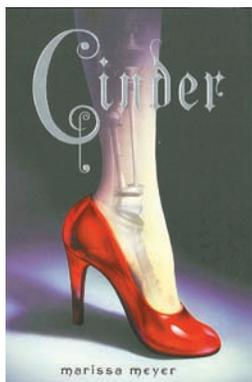
*Inside, a cheerful librarian checked my bag and guided me to a small room where I watched a 15-minute video orientation on handling historical texts before being allowed to enter the “reading room.” I sat down at a large wooden table and after a few minutes, a young woman my age wheeled in a cart piled with the document boxes that I had requested. I felt a strange shiver of excitement as I opened the first box and carefully lifted out the 250-year old notebook. I turned to the first page and stared at the handwriting of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. History had never felt so real. For the next several hours I stayed in that seat, flipping through hundreds of pages of text, identifying relevant sections to have scanned.*

*I came to realize that when working on this project on women, the “Ouvrage sur les Femmes,” Rousseau was essentially acting as a research assistant to Madame Dupin. Like me, he was, at this stage in his career, a student with the opportunity to collaborate with a professor and mentor.*

Sonja’s findings provided no evidence that Rousseau and Dupin were familiar with Suchon’s work. Instead, it seems that Rousseau gleaned several of his later ideas regarding rights from Dupin, whose work shares some commonalities with that of Suchon. Our task is now to trace a genealogy of those commonalities. Hopefully we will do better than Dupin and Rousseau and actually get this work into published form – his notes are very confusing!

– *Sonja Ruud (PLU ’12) & Rebecca Wilkin*

## A Cinderella Story



Marissa Meyer (PLU '04, English, Publishing and Printing Arts) already knew what she wanted to be when she started the college hunt. "I'd wanted to be a writer since

I was a kid," she says, "so when it was time to start looking at colleges I only considered those that had Creative Writing programs." And PLU seemed like a good fit: it was close to Meyer's home in Tacoma, and her father was a proud alumnus. What she didn't expect was PLU's renowned Printing and Publishing Arts program. After picking up a PPA pamphlet, Meyer "instantly fell in love" with the learning opportunities it provided. PLU quickly went from being a good fit to her "#1 pick."

Looking back on her time at PLU, Meyer finds it difficult to narrow the list of life-changing experiences. One of the most important lessons was learning how to write towards a deadline. "When you're in college and you have an assignment coming up, not feeling like writing isn't an option," she notes. "That's important for writers to learn . . . that inspiration often comes once you begin, and not before."

Meyer's debut novel, *Cinder*, was released this January as the first in a four-book series. The story is a futuristic take on the classic *Cinderella*, with the heroine cast as a cyborg mechanic. *Cinder*'s success has also enabled Meyer to start a full-time writing career, which fulfills her "ultimate goal." Fairy tales have always been an obsession for Meyer, and she lists Doctor David Seal's "Fairy Tales and Fantasy" as "one of the highlights" of her PLU education: "As a writer, the class taught me to keep overarching themes in mind as I revised my novel. Though I never want 'themes' and 'deeper meanings' to eclipse the importance

of entertaining a reader and telling a good story, I do think these things need to be considered at some point if a story is to have depth and lasting value." According to Meyer, the class taught her to read fairy tales – a lifelong passion – with "an evolved appreciation."

– Nicole Lee (PLU '12)

## Pursuing Justice through Nonfiction

This morning Josh Hammerling (PLU '11, English, German) woke up at dawn in ten below weather to interview a rancher. Then he spoke to a Fire Chief and an elderly piano teacher who lives a stone's throw from a new oil refinery. The next two hours were spent in a Walmart parking lot interviewing people who live in their cars.

"It was a great day," he says with an aura of relentless energy. Hammerling looks like a long lost member of the Beach Boys and his enthusiasm is contagious. He speaks in excited circles, weaving between a formal seriousness and easy laughter. He is the type of person who gets picked first for a team.

Hammerling is halfway through his trip to Williston, North Dakota where he and a small group (including his father and



photo by Roy Hammerling



photo by Roy Hammerling

brother) are capturing a filmic portrait of the town in the midst of the second oil boom. This documentary is Hammerling's first major project since he graduated from PLU in May 2011 with a double major in English Writing and German.

His time at PLU, Hammerling explains, helped him to develop a critical framework and a deep passion for learning. Some of the Humanities professors with whom he studied were English professors Rick Barot, Matthew Levy, David Seal, and Barbara Temple-Thurston, as well as Languages and Literatures professors Jennifer Jenkins and Carmiña Palerm. Through their courses and his "Peace Journalism" course with Communication and Theatre professor Clifford Rowe, he found the space and motivation to pursue his interest in social justice.

Hammerling explains, "There are always these ideas of social justice that motivate what I do. At PLU I found I looked at my assignments in that way. I want to tell stories about those who we would be quick to judge or overlook."

One of his articles on social justice will be published in the next issue of *Fast Capitalism*. Inspired by his Peace Journalism trip to Dubai, Hammerling

wrote the piece, entitled “The Hyperbole of Dubai,” for his Creative Nonfiction Writing senior capstone project. He describes this project as a critical analysis of and the current debates about contemporary Dubai, shaped by his personal experience there. In Dubai, Hammerling found that he was overwhelmed with the side-by-side extreme affluence and exploitation that has fueled the rapid growth of the city. It is this sense of ultra-exaggeration, he says, that inspired him to approach both the culture of Dubai and its description in the press using the trope of hyperbole.

Hammerling is now pursuing his Masters in Media Philosophy at the European Graduate School in Saas Fee, Switzerland. As he studies with philosophers that he read throughout college, he states that this graduate program has been both wonderful and humbling. He explains, “As I go through each class, I come to realize that obviously this is not the end, but merely the beginning of an ongoing process that pushes critical inquiry.” He hopes to use the Williston oil rush project as part of his interdisciplinary thesis for EGS.

“Everyday it is a question of how you can do justice to reality,” he says of the documentary project, which combines his love of film, photography, and nonfiction inquiry. Hammerling continues, “I want to explore the idea of community as well as I possibly can and tell the stories of the people here in a way that’s true.”  
 – Anna Rasmussen (PLU '13)

## “I Am” – Exploring Tensions of Religious Identities



During the last academic year I had the opportunity to participate in Dr. Lisa Marcus’ course on Jews and Jewishness in American

Literature. Through texts written both by and about Jews, we considered the variety of experiences and understandings of what

it means to be Jewish and American. At the end of the course, having thoroughly complicated our notions of identity, Lisa challenged us to think about and somehow represent our own identification with a group or “tribe” (an exercise based, in part, on the film *Tribe*, by Jewish film-maker Tiffany Shlain).

Thinking about *one* (singular) tribe was painful for me. I realized how desperately I wanted to have a tribe, and how heartbroken I was that the death of my mother, the rejection of my Presbyterian identity by my more evangelical Christian peers, and my sense, after considering conversion, that I wasn’t quite Jewish, had left me without a sense of familial or religious community. Half-in and half-out of several different tribes and struggling to make sense of Christian anti-Semitism, I was inspired to describe episodically – in a poem entitled “I Am” – the moments during which I had been confronted by questions of identity within Christianity and/or Judaism. The poem, as a whole, is an attempt to rectify those moments with one another. By the end, it’s an acknowledgement and acceptance of the tension.

In the spring of 2011, at the annual Powell and Heller Holocaust Conference held at PLU, four students were asked to comment on their exploration of the question, “Can there can be poetry after Auschwitz?” In lieu of formal comments, I read my tribe-project poem from Lisa’s class. Afterwards, I was encouraged by Rabbi Bruce Kadden to submit it to the *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*. The poem was accepted for publishing and will appear in a forthcoming issue.

My work as a student at PLU exploring religious and cultural identity and tensions confirmed for me the need for revisionist histories and constructive theologies that more responsibly deal with issues of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism embedded in the Christian (and “American”) traditions. I am currently working on a Master’s of Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary, where I continue to explore inter-religious tensions, environmental ethics, and ethno-religious identity in literature.

– Alison Burchett (PLU '11, *English, Religion*)

## Excerpt from “I Am” By Alison Burchett

Poland.  
 I am colder than cold and empty.  
 I am with my best friend, but I am alone.  
 He is alone, so I must be alone.  
 I am watching as he is watching his history. Separated by clear glass from them. Their life. Their Death.  
 I am watching as he is watching his history. Blue and white, tattered and torn from pain, death, suffering, horror.  
 Horror.  
 It is silent.  
 I am watching as he is watching his history. Hills of hair. His mother’s hair, his daughter’s hair, his grandmother’s hair, his grandmother’s mother’s hair, his grandfather’s wife’s, his grandfather’s wife’s mother’s mothers  
 nieces  
 daughters  
 wives  
 menoras. Enough for 1800 days of light. But there is no miracle here.  
 I am watching as he is watching his history. What does he see?  
 I am colder than cold and empty.  
 I am alone. He is alone.  
 I am watching. I am a voyeur, a perpetrator, a seer, a Christian who did not see, a Christian who did not know how to see, a Christian who does not see, a Christian who does not know how to see.  
 I am colder than cold and empty.  
 I am alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am 22 years old driving home in the rain and thinking about writing this poem, I am thinking about who I am. I am crying. I am the daughter of a father who lets me question, who lets me fight, who throws his hands up and accepts that I am what I am. That I am what I will be. I am a daughter without a mother. I am lonely. I am lost. I am anxious. I am listening.  
 I am hearing nothing.  
 I am a Christian without a Christ  
 a Lutheran without a heritage  
 a Presbyterian without condemnation  
 a Jew without a lineage or a homeland or a tragedy or a people.  
 The wipers beat the windshield. I am having trouble seeing. I am almost home.

I am that I am.  
 I am that I will be.

# DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

## The Capstone in Languages and Literatures

The capstone is the culminating course for majors in the Languages and Literatures Department as well as interdisciplinary programs of Scandinavian and Chinese area studies. The course provides a guided foray into critical theory, research methodology, and scholarly writing and presentation. Together and from the multiple perspectives of their given areas of expertise, students strive to understand the major schools of literary and cultural

theory and explore ways in which these perspectives can be used in their own research. The critical approaches explored in this course stem from a wide array of disciplines and fields of study, including Marxism, psychoanalysis and feminism, a variety of formalisms and structuralism, each offering the opportunity to move beyond unexamined “common sense” assumptions when considering not just literature, but all sorts of discourses

(political, commercial, scientific, etc.). Our goal in the class is to *practice* literary theory together so that we may gain confidence in our collective ability to use the critical vocabularies we adopt. At the same time, students work individually, developing their own language-specific original research projects. At the end of the semester, students present their projects in a formal setting to peers and professors, family and friends.

## A TASTE OF THE 2011-2012 LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES CAPSTONE PROJECTS

### Mercedes Begley, “Market Feminism and Microblogs: Feminine Identity Expressed in Contemporary China”

Throughout the past decade, 微博 (*wēibó*, or microblogs) have allowed the notion of identity to be shared and examined across a wide spectrum of individuals in the People’s Republic of China. This work will use Li Xiaojiang’s “market feminism” to identify how feminine identity in particular is expressed through *wēibó*. After considering the number one Chinese microblogging website, 新浪 微博 (*Xīnlàng Wēibó*, or Sina Microblog) and how women in China are finding greater autonomy in expressing their identity, one can see how *Wēibó* showcase these expanded freedoms by allowing women to explore their important role as consumer. *Wēibó* thus allow women to express their complex and conflicted identity in China in the twenty-first century, where 3,000 years of patriarchy and tradition intersect with the consumer-driven economy of the modern period.



### Teresa Brna, “Identity in the Eyes of Cultural Trauma and the Holocaust”

The theory of cultural trauma argues that events are not traumatic in and of themselves, but a construction of society. In Bernhard Schlink’s *Der Vorleser*, one may observe how German culture and national identity were directly and indirectly shaped by the Holocaust through an analysis of the main character’s reaction to traumatic events. I will argue that the reader can see how the main character’s identity forms and how a new identity begins to emerge for the German nation by taking the traumatic events of the Holocaust into account.

### Jhanica Ching, “Commodity Fetishism as a Form of Symbolic Protest”

Many critics believe that Chinese society has moved far from the political ideology and idealism of the early People’s Republic of China, into the corporate world. China’s contemporary art scene reflects this shift. I will examine three contemporary Chinese artists’ view of consumerism through the use of Chinese art from 1978 to the present with the intent of demonstrating that artists are still socially committed and are protesting the shift to consumerism through commodity fetishism.

### Tina Gibson, “The *Selbstbiographie* of Heinrich Schliemann: An EPIC Attempt with NOVEL Characteristics”

I will apply the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin’s discussion of the differences between an epic and a novel to Heinrich Schliemann’s autobiography and will argue that it is a work of prose that sits between the two genres. Schliemann wrote in a hyperbolic

manner and described his life in the grandeur of an epic; however, according to Bakhtin’s assumptions Schliemann’s inability to disconnect his life story from the contemporary past places the self-made man’s story closer to the genre of a novel.

### Audrey Lewis, “Vaginas in China: A Post-Mao Feminist Critique of the Chinese Vagina Monologues”

My study uses post-Mao feminist theory to analyze the implications of two productions of the Vagina Monologues in China, namely the first and unsanctioned production by Ai Xiaoming at Fudan University and the first Main Stage

production directed by Wang Cheng. The intentions of the directors and the resulting effects are compared and contrasted. I will argue that an Occidental anti-violence campaign can be applicable to Chinese women and will consider whether, as V-Day hopes, having a vagina is enough to unite women.

### Gretchen Nagel, “Ostalgie’ in the Face of Simulated Realities”

“Ostalgie” suggests a nostalgia for the reality of the former East and a past that was taken away through reunification; however, the postmodern theorist Jean Baudrillard would argue that this concept creates a reality, simulated or produced to fit the desired situation. Through a study of the role that the concept of “Ostalgie” plays in both the novel *Zonenkinder* and the film *Good Bye, Lenin!* I will analyze how, through social

constructs and the concept of “ostalgie” itself, reality becomes merely constructed. Through an analysis of two examples of simulated realities I will argue that “Ostalgie” manifests itself differently and emphasizes contrasting aspects of the former German Democratic Republic (or East Germany).

### Meagan Wehe, “Exploration of the Scandinavian Self: Henrik Ibsen’s *Brand* and Søren Kierkegaard’s Ideologies of Self”

Henrik Ibsen’s *Brand* plays a pivotal role in uncovering widely accepted traits in Scandinavia through the use of story. By applying a Kierkegaardian perspective concerning the discovery of one’s self to *Brand*, I will study how the use of language can express important ideals of Scandinavian culture from Norwegian and Danish perspectives.

## Ebenezer Scrooge, Martin Luther, and the Power of the Past and of Language

There’s something strange that goes on with texts, readers, writers, and time. I mean, look at you: there you are, reading this now, in the spring of 2012. And here I am, in your past, and it’s not even (technically) winter 2011. I’m sitting next to the

Christmas tree (as yet untrimmed), finals and graded papers drifting around the sofa like flocking on the floor, typing away at my *Prism* contribution and trying to finish up my fall duties as Chair before

the holidays have actually passed. Strange, isn’t it? There you aren’t, and here I am; but when *Prism* eventually gets published – poof! – our places will be reversed. I will not be there, but you and this text will be.

Texts are powerful and mysterious creations. They can circumvent and change time.

Through even this modest text, the writers in this volume of *Prism* will reach out to you from your past to exercise a certain power over your present. We will command your attention, insert our thoughts into yours, and take up your time. We may even change your future. You never know. And even if you choose to leave *Prism* lying around to read some other day, that’s okay: we’ll be here, waiting. The past will still have something to say.

The potential that lies in the past appears at this (that is, my) time of year in Charles

Dickens’ famous story, *A Christmas Carol*, in which a miserly and miserable Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. Of these, the most powerful is the Spirit of Christmas Past, who sets the groundwork for Ebenezer’s eventual transformation.

Not that he was all that interested, at least in the beginning, in changing. Scrooge was mired in his understanding of his past and

*Languages taught at the university also needed to enable students and scholars to engage in an ongoing critical examination of, and dialogue with, the original texts from the past that have shaped and influenced our – and others’ – present. Without this, the university only produces what Luther called “unlettered preachers of the faith”*

in his ways, and not at all happy about being forced into a review of them. But an alternative to his dismal future was always there, lying around in the past like an old copy of *Prism*,

waiting for him to re-enter and claim it. Once he did, Ebenezer found his better future not by changing the parts of his past that he understood, but in being changed by the parts that he hadn’t. Scrooge couldn’t change his past, but it could change him, and through it Scrooge found the means to change his present and his future.

Luther had an experience similar to Ebenezer’s, you know. And, like Ebenezer’s,

it changed his future – and the world. Learning Greek guided Luther back to revisit the texts and ideas that shackled his present to a foregone conclusion. What he

discovered, there, was that these ideas were not determined by truths that he could not come to grips with: rather, he found that they had been imposed by the limitations

of his own language. The Reformation was the result.

The original language of a text harbors, ironically, its greatest potential and greatest vulnerability. Languages change over time, and it may soon take considerable effort and study to understand an original text. Translation is an incomplete, and temporary, solution. Each translation becomes a new text. Each loses and alters elements of the original through the medium of a different language in the hands of a different author. Without the ability to read a text in its original language, the original is lost to us.

Luther’s experience, and his realization of the ongoing role of languages in liberating our past, enabling our present, and reshaping our future, had a profound effect upon how he insisted languages should be taught at a university. Luther valued languages for their present and future use in our practical business and in the pursuit of what we call, in the PLU mission statement, “service and care” in the world. But his ideas of vocation gave this language study a particularly Lutheran twist: language study was not about being enabled to transform the world as much as it was a part of being transformed *for* the world. Learning the

language of others takes us out of our own frame of reference and places us into theirs, enabling us to understand, serve, and care for others where

and as they are, not where and as we want them to be, or as they make themselves available to us.

*Luther’s experience, and his realization of the ongoing role of languages in liberating our past, enabling our present, and reshaping our future, had a profound effect upon how he insisted languages should be taught at a university.*

*continued on page 11*

# DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

## The Capstone in Philosophy

In the of Fall 2011, seven seniors majoring in Philosophy explored the topic "Political Ethics and Realism." They developed their understanding of an area of political philosophy that questions

more dominant forms of thought, such as political liberalism, and asks whether these leading models are too ahistorical and abstract to adequately account for the realities of political life. Students read

books and essays that posed questions and offered responses. Among the highlights of texts students read and discussed were those by Raymond Geuss (*Philosophy and Real Politics*), Alain Badiou (*Ethics: An*

## 2011-2012 SENIOR PHILOSOPHY CAPSTONE STUDENTS

**Alexandre (Alex) Alm-Plouff** is a Philosophy and Religion double major. He participated in the Running Start program, which allowed him to take Community College classes while still in high school and graduate from Enumclaw High School with his Associate of Arts degree from Green River Community College. His approach to philosophy is to stay open and skeptical, letting come what will. The skills gained by studying philosophy as an undergraduate have helped him, he says, to come to terms with his particular existence and his effect upon the world. Outside of philosophy, he has a serious interest in music, especially the drums. He intends to follow his intellectual curiosity and hopefully work in a field that continues to stimulate that interest.

**Kathleen (Katie) Farrell** is a fourth-year student who would major in everything if she could. She limited herself to philosophy and political science out of pure necessity. She is just beginning to question every philosopher she reads, and believes this is a good thing. Katie is also a B-movie enthusiast, lover of South Indian food, and is easily charmed by most things Eastern European.

**Marvin Gold** is a first-generation college student who has lived in Parkland his entire life. He started school at Brookdale Elementary, which was when he first decided that he wanted to study at PLU.

He found his calling to Philosophy during his sophomore year, and is interested in political theory and various applied ethics. His goal is to go to graduate school where he hopes to earn a Ph.D. in philosophy and eventually become a professor.

**Simon Johnson** was born in Minnesota to two missionary parents, Phil and Rene Johnson. He spent eleven years of his childhood in East Africa playing soccer, blowing things up with firecrackers, and indulging in typical boyish shenanigans with his younger brother Neal. Stemming largely from personal religious inquiry, Simon knew he wanted to study philosophy long before entering college, and will spend Spring 2012

studying philosophy at St. Catherine's College at Oxford. He intends to continue studying philosophy in graduate school, and eventually become a professor or a reality television superstar.

**Robert (Rob) Sievertsen** attended Pacific Lutheran University from 1964 until 1968. He never finished his last semester at PLU, so returning to PLU is a quest to take care of unfinished business. He ended up in Vietnam in 1969 and survived the experience. He spent most of his career in the wood industry where his PLU education served him well. He has been involved in the Scouting program for most of his life and is, along with his son, an Eagle Scout. He has three grandchildren, and is currently active with the Greater Tacoma Peace Prize, the Hilltop Artists, the Pierce County Center for Dispute Resolution, and St. Mark's

Lutheran Church. He says that it has been a remarkable experience to go back to school and to rekindle the discipline necessary to keep up with contemporary classmates.

**Thomas J. (T.J) Suek** is the twenty-two year old son of Phil and Julie Suek. He was a member of the PLU football team for four years and was an All-League player for one of those years. In his free time, he enjoys working in ceramics (claiming to have a special affinity with Patrick Swayze in *Ghost*), sampling microbrews, and playing soccer. His favorite philosopher is Nietzsche and his favorite

author is Orson Scott Card. He plans to attend law school.

**Erin Whitaker** is a Philosophy and English (Writing) double major. She has lived in the cities of several states, including Washington, but ultimately prefers Los Angeles. She is an artist who enjoys painting, drawing, and all things creative. She also flies planes, but not while reading Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*. Philosophy allows her to bring together a passion for writing with a sustained attempt to engage questions that matter to her experience. She is enthralled with Nirvana, the BBC show "Absolutely Fabulous," and seriously thinks that Prada might well be the answer to existential angst.



Front row, L-R: Marvin Gold, Alex Alm-Plouff, Katie Farrell, Erin Whitaker Back row, L-R: Simon Johnson, T.J. Suek, Rob Sievertsen, Greg Johnson



*Essay on the Understanding of Evil*), and Samantha Powers (*Chasing the Flame: Sergio Vieira de Mello and the Fight to Save the World*). The latter introduced

the group to the political life and thought of the UN ambassador to Iraq who was killed in 2003.

The capstone is a unique course. It is the culmination of the work that philosophy majors have done during their careers at PLU. As such, it requires of students the highest levels of reading, thinking and writing. For fifteen weeks, this course is high-octane, always in overdrive, traveling at breakneck speeds toward a destination called “The Final Paper.” This paper represents each student’s efforts to create a sustained argument advancing philosophical claims through relentless engagement with critical question. Students then present their findings as they would at a scholarly conference. The rigor of the course – reading, final written paper, and presentation – can be a recipe for stress, anxiety, frustration. Yet, this fifteen-week marathon of “living the questions” enables students to cultivate an independence of philosophical thinking, share in collective philosophical work, and produce work that not only reflects the demands of the course, but also will always remind each student of their personal participation in their chosen field of study.

The Senior Capstone, then, is not just one of the last courses that majors take at PLU. It is, in an important way, the first course that they take as they head their separate ways, into a variety of contexts and pursuits. It is a course that will forever remind them of the work that they can do. For the person who asks, “What do you do with a philosophy major?” I invite you to find a capstone student and give them your ear.

## Departmental News

**Hannah Love** on teaching Environmental Methods of Investigation (ENVT 350): Sitting quietly in a nature preserve and enduring a chilly November drizzle is not my typical teaching experience. But due to a new collaboration between the Environmental Studies program and the Department of Philosophy, I had a special chance to spend the afternoon out in the field at the contrasting environments of Naches Trail Preserve with students in ENVT 350. As part of their ENVT 350 research, students present a public talk outlining their findings.

In their talks, students spoke to the uniqueness of experiencing Naches Trail Preserve through lenses of value, as opposed to simply approaching it as a research site, and they noted the dissonance between a seemingly undisturbed natural space surrounded by homes, fences and roads and skimmed over by crackling power lines. As a philosophy professor, it can be difficult to know whether the theories I teach affect the ways people experience the world, so it was particularly gratifying to hear attending community members (many of whom have been attending ENVT 350 research talks for years) express their excitement at seeing philosophy included for the first time.

**Greg Johnson** published “Delicious Despair and Nihilism: Luther, Nietzsche and the Task of Living Philosophically,” in *The Devil’s Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition* published by Fortress Press (2011).

**Pauline Kaurin**, published “Provocateur for the Common Good: Reflections on the Vocation of an Academic Philosopher,” in *The Devil’s Whore: Reason and Philosophy in the Lutheran Tradition* published by Fortress Press (2011).

**Erin McKenna** received the Faculty Excellence Award in Service at the December 2011 commencement. She is the past recipient of the Faculty Excellence Award in Research.

## *Ebenezer Scrooge (continued)*

However, according to Luther, languages taught only for such purposes are dangerously incomplete at the university. For what we call, in the PLU mission statement, “thoughtful inquiry and leadership,” languages taught at the university also needed to enable students and scholars to engage in an ongoing critical examination of, and dialogue with, the original texts from the past that have shaped and influenced our – and others’ – present. Without this, the university only produces what Luther called “unlettered preachers of the faith”: well-intentioned and well-versed purveyors of ideas that they have accepted but have no means to investigate or to transcend. Luther’s insight applies to articles of faith that are secular as well as sacred, and to those which are others’ as well as our own. Without this ability we remain, like Jacob Marley, shackled to a version of the past and doomed to drag its chains into our future, pausing here and there to shake them angrily at others and at the world around us.

These two orientations for language study, one future-present and the other past-present, are both crucial and distinctive in Lutheran Higher Education. And you can see them at work in the two remarkable faculty-student research projects in the Department of Languages and Literatures, “Chai-na” and “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Reader of Gabrielle Suchon?,” which have been generously funded by Kelmer-Roe fellowships and the Wang Center for Global Education.

And what about you? Has the learning of a language somehow surprised and changed your life? Perhaps learning a language changed the way you understood your own past, culture, or ideas. Perhaps it provided the means to bring you into contact with people who took you out of your own framework and broadened your perspective. And maybe learning a language has taken you into an unforeseen future. If so, we’d like to hear about it. To echo Dean Albrecht, please send us your stories! No matter how short or long, they will become texts for us to use as we develop our programs and communicate what languages can do for our present students in the future. We also hope to share some of your stories on our web pages and in our other publications. So tell us about your own language past and present, and help shape the future of languages at PLU.

– Eric Nelson

# DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

## The Capstone in Religion

Scholarly work is conducted within a community. Scholars share their early ideas with friends and colleagues, their drafts with anonymous reviewers, and present their findings to their professional guilds. In the Religion Department, the capstone process models work within a scholarly community.

The work begins in the Fall of senior year, when students take a class on

Research in Religion to learn a wide range of methods, read classics in the study of religion, and write a literature review on a topic of their own choosing. In the Spring capstone course, students delve deeper into that topic, creating their own original work, editing and reviewing one another's drafts, writing a polished piece of scholarship and making a formal public presentation.

The study of religion at PLU is widely diverse, ranging from Biblical to Buddhist research, from ancient history to contemporary theology. The work of the capstone honors this diversity, as each student develops a unique project, but also creates a community in which they can support, challenge, and learn from one another.

## THE RELIGION CAPSTONE PROJECTS OF 2011-2012

### Alexandre Alm-Plouff, "The Primary Purpose of the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John"

In his capstone project, Alexandre, a Philosophy and Religion double major, used the historical critical method to understand the character of the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John. He argued that the primary function of the Beloved Disciple was to convey to John's readers the proper methods of behavior for members of the Johannine community.

### Jordan Cockle, "Rebel With a Cause: The Deviance of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew"

The Jesus that is presented in the Gospel of Matthew challenges both normative social boundaries and breaks Pharisaic law; this reflects the friction that was present between Matthew's community of Jewish Christians and the religious leadership. Jordan studied passages in Matthew that reflect the deviance of Jesus and discussed the implications of these interactions for modern Christians.

### Seth Daniel, "Emperors and Priests: Scholarly Disagreements on the Causes of the Maccabean Revolt"

Seth considered the historical context of the Maccabean Revolt that took place in ancient Palestine in the second century B.C.E. and discussed the theories proposed by various scholars on the causes of the Revolt.

### Amanda Davis, "The Critiques Behind the Criticism: A Look at the Controversy Surrounding the Holocaust Pope"

Amanda considered the controversial role of Pope Pius XII during the holocaust and argued that criticism of Pius have been used as a platform to address other controversial issued within the Roman Catholic church.

### Robert Denning, "The Birth of Wahhabism and the Formation of the First Saudi State in the 18th Century"

Robert considered eighteenth-century Muslim reform and the foundational birth of the Wahhabi Zeal. In reaction to diluted Muslim traditional practices, Sunni Wahhabi founder Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab asserted the notion of "absolute monotheism" (Tawhid) as the most important aspect in the worship of Allah.

### Bethany Fenton, "Embodied Harmony: The Implications of Taoist Interconnectivity"

Bethany reviewed how the Taoist idea of interconnectivity impacts the view, treatment, and destination of the Taoist body. According to the Taoist creation story everything has a common

origin which is the Tao. Because of the common origin all is connected on a macrocosmic and microcosmic level, impacting how Taoists treat their bodies. This is important because we are all embodied creatures and should treat our bodies in a way that will enhance its potential harmony with the rest of the universe.

### Emily (Akira) Ibarra, "Praying to the Divine Pillar: Asherah, Ancient Judaism, and Private Religion"

Akira studied the juxtaposition of the monotheistic practices of the state and the worship of the Caananite goddess

Asherah within ancient Jewish family religion, as evidenced in the amulets, pillars, and wooden icons to the fertility goddess.

### Maryn Johnston, "One True Religion? The Influence of History and Politics on Karl Barth's Theology"

Maryn explored the shift in Christian theologian Karl Barth's ideas regarding the potential salvation of non-Christian religious traditions (pluralism). Having lived through WWI and WWII, Barth's theology on pluralism reflects the historical context



and political reality of his time. In our globalized world, we are confronted increasingly with the pluralist question. Maryn argued that Barth gives us a prime example of how to utilize our own historical context and political reality to shape our religious understanding.

### **Kristen Lee, “Bonhoeffer and Birth Control: Ecclesiological Insights for Contemporary Discourse”**

Bonhoeffer’s writings on the nature of the church’s relationship to society can, and should, influence the church’s participation in political discussions about laws that the government makes regarding access to birth control. Bonhoeffer suggests that Christians have an obligation to confront the state on any action that the church finds morally questionable and offer support to victims of any policy by the state.

### **Loriel Miller, “Gregory’s Rome: From Wealth Disparity to Social Welfare”**

Loriel’s project considered Gregory the Great, the pope from 590-604 C.E. She focused on Gregory’s work in transforming the reliance of wealth disparity into organized welfare centers and considered how Gregory’s monastic training equipped him for his work with the poor.

### **Jessica Reiter, “Prophetess or Pariah? The Implications of Interpreting the Miriam Narratives”**

Jessica’s capstone project focused on Miriam, a prophetess from the Bible. Miriam is one of the few biblical women who appear as both a religious and a political leader. In her project, Jessica demonstrated how the story of Miriam has implications for twenty-first century women seeking positions of leadership both

within and outside of religious communities.

### **Anna Stewart, “Christianity and Animal Abuse: How Can Christians Defend Animal Rights?”**

Anna explored animal rights in the Christian tradition and the relationship that humans have with animals as fellow creations of God. Since Christianity upholds love and compassion, then how can Christians allow animal cruelty and abuse to continue? Anna argued that a creation-centered perspective (as opposed to an anthropocentric perspective) defends animal rights through the Christian values of love, hospitality, and inclusivity.

### **Trina Togafau, “Paul’s Use of Love in Response to the Problem of Spiritual Gifts”**

In her project, Trina considered Paul’s celebrated passage on love (1 Corinthians 13). She studied this passage in its historical and literary context, asking two questions: 1) If the problem in the Corinthian church was the use of spiritual gifts, then how was Paul’s discussion of love the solution to this problem? 2) Was love a spiritual gift that the Corinthian Christians should have sought?

### **Thomas Voelp, “Heresy and Harmony: Cyprians ‘De Unitate’ as a Defense Against Schism”**

Thomas’s project examined “On the Unity of the Catholic Church,” a foundational work on the organization of the Christian church written by Bishop Cyprian of Carthage in 251 C.E. Scholars have demonstrated that this work developed from the chaos and aftermath of the persecution decreed by the Roman Emperor Decius (249-251 C.E.). Thomas argued that a reading of this text in its historical context reveals Cyprian’s exclusion of “schismatics” (heretics) from the church.

## **Social Dimensions in Religious Scholarship: Three Kelmer-Roe Projects**

In honor of Kelmer Roe’s contribution to the study of Religion, the Kelmer Roe fellowships have featured projects within the Department of Religion. Here is an overview of some of the wonderful projects pursued by Religion faculty and their students.

### **The First Kelmer Roe Research Fellowship: Does Anyone Care About Hunger in Pierce County?**

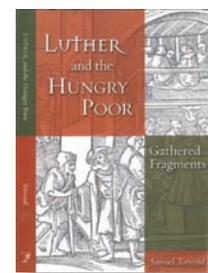
In 2004, Dr. Samuel Torvend (PLU ’73) and Mr. Matt Tabor (PLU ’05) received the first Kelmer Roe Research Fellowship. Throughout the summer of 2004, Tabor and Torvend researched the growing incidence of malnutrition and food insecurity in western Washington and Pierce County as well as the responses of

local religious communities to the startling growth of hunger among the working poor.

Drawing on research compiled by the state, the county, and the Emergency Food Network of Pierce County, they discovered that four groups suffered the most: elderly persons on fixed incomes, military dependents (spouses and children), parents working at minimum wage (and frequently working two jobs), and persons dismissed from state hospitals (and thus rendered homeless and with no medical supervision) due to government funding cuts. Drops in federal and state funding only exacerbated the growing incidence of hunger which had shifted over the past twenty years from states in the Deep South to western and south central states.

Their research also revealed that Jewish and Christian communities in the region were responding tenaciously to what was (and remains) an ever-growing number of hungry poor. They collected and examined synagogue and church statements on food

relief, interviewed religious leaders in the county who supervised food collection and the growing number of food distribution sites in the area, and studied the history of religiously-inspired food relief in recent America. Their work contributed to an article published in the journal *Seattle*



*Theology Review* and to one of Torvend’s books, *Luther and the Hungry Poor* (2008). They also helped in the development of a new PLU course on food and hunger in the Christian tradition, a J-Term course in Rome on early Christian responses to famine and food insecurity.

Does anyone care about hunger in Pierce County? Indeed, it seems that hundreds of people do – people whose work never makes it into the media coverage of the region.  
– Samuel Torvend

## Q, Literacy, and the Galilean Jesus Movement in Social Perspective

In 2005-2006, I had the privilege and pleasure of working with Ronan Rooney (PLU '07) on a Kelmer Roe project entitled "Q, Literacy, and the Galilean Jesus Movement in Social Perspective." "Q" designates the earliest tradition of the sayings of Jesus of Nazareth. We wanted to know whether the tradition was reenacted orally until it was finally written down (independently) by Matthew and Luke, or whether Q was, from the beginning, an independent document that was written in stages and used as a source for the writing of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

Rooney put in many hours studying scholarly articles related to the subject. He was not just a research assistant. We would both work through articles and then meet for detailed discussion each week. Since Rooney always came well prepared, these discussions were among the best that I have ever had with a student. Moreover, as professor and student, we became genuine partners in the shaping of an argument; Rooney's background in debate helped to define the "on the balance" strategy that we adopted in evaluating the evidence.

After this process of inquiry and discussion, together we composed and presented the final paper, which was well-received at the regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 2006 at Gonzaga University (Spokane, WA). This co-authored paper became an article that appeared in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* (2008).

Our conclusions? In the article, we argued that "Q" is best understood as a written document and that Jesus scholarship must account for this document's several important socio-cultural transitions, notably: from Jesus-sayings in oral (Aramaic?) form to written Greek form; from a non-elite origin to documentation by scribes in the service of elites; and from being Jesus material with specific political significance within Herodian social relations to polemical theological material within Judean political religion.

– Douglas Oakman

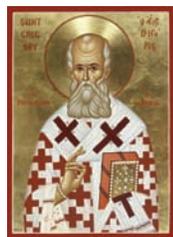
## Natural Disasters as Moral Lessons: Nazianzus and New Orleans



*Kelmer Roe Fellow Anna Duke is now working in Shanghai.*

In their Kelmer-Roe funded research, Anna Duke (PLU '10, Religion), Dr. Kevin O'Brien, and Dr. Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen combined their diverse academic interests to consider what a fourth-century bishop can teach the twenty-first century about responses to natural disasters. Their research, presented at the American Academy of Religion Regional Meeting in 2010 in Victoria, BC (Canada), culminated in an article, entitled "Natural Disasters as Moral Lessons: Nazianzus and New Orleans" (*The Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* 6.1). In this article they considered the responses of three religious figures to natural disasters of their day.

Prompted by the authors' shared interest in responses to Hurricane Katrina, the article highlights a gulf between the response of televangelist Pat Robertson and that of liberation theologian Anthony B. Pinn to the suffering of residents of New Orleans. While Robertson claims that individual victims are responsible for their own sins and therefore deserve suffering in order that they might repent, Pinn asserts that claims such as Robertson's are "theological distortion" (2006). He claims that this use of the notion of "God's justice" to explain away disasters distracts from a collective human responsibility to act against racist and unjust systems that contribute to the suffering caused by natural disasters.



*Gregory of Nazianzus' theology supports and encourages care for others and the earth.*

The authors analyze these divergent responses to Hurricane Katrina in light of the theological claims of Gregory Nazianzus, a fourth-century theologian and bishop whose own response to the suffering of his day demonstrates that belief in God's role in nature does not

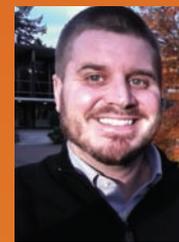
abrogate personal responsibility of one human for another and for the earth.

The Kelmer-Roe grant allowed Duke, O'Brien, and Ihssen the opportunity to consider how, in a world shaped by climate change and environmental degradation, religion, and religious thinkers make sense of disaster and suffering.

– Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen

## Religion Department Welcomes New Professor

Dr. Seth Dowland, Assistant Professor of Religion, comes to PLU from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, where he completed a Ph.D. in Religion in 2007 and taught for four years



in Duke's interdisciplinary writing program. His research focuses on the intersection of religion and American politics, religion and gender, and the history of evangelical Christianity. He is finishing a book entitled *Family Values: Gender, Authority, and the Rise of the Christian Right* (University of Pennsylvania Press). The book examines how conservative evangelicals crafted a political agenda in the 1970s and 1980s around the concept of family values. In addition to more conventional topics like the Christian right's fight against abortion and gay marriage, the book provides a history of the Christian right that covers some unusual terrain – such as the growing home-school movement.

At PLU, Dr. Dowland teaches courses on American church history, Islam in America, religion and gender, and religion and politics. He has appeared as a guest expert on KIRO-FM's "Ross and Burbank" radio show. When he's not at work, Dr. Dowland enjoys running and playing golf, and he has enjoyed exploring the natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest in his first home away from the American South.

## APPRECIATIONS

### Dennis Martin Department of English



Professor Dennis M. Martin, of the English Department, is retiring this spring, after completing thirty-five

years of teaching and service at PLU.

Dennis earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles and began teaching at PLU in 1976. He has provided leadership and service to the University in numerous capacities. He served as Dean of the Division of Humanities from 1981-1986; as Vice-Chair of the Faculty from 1996-1998 and Chair from 1998-2000; as Chair of the Integrated Studies Program; and on numerous University Committees, including the Rank and Tenure Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee.

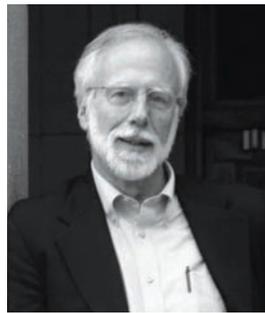
But Dennis has always been a teacher, first and foremost. He has brought his passion for American literature to several generations of PLU students – teaching books and authors he loves, from nineteenth-century greats like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman, to twentieth-century writers like William Faulkner and Tennessee Williams, to contemporary post-modern writers like Toni Morrison, Thomas Pynchon, and Dave Eggers.

Dennis's enormous success as a teacher springs less from his love of great books than from his love of students. He is warmly and genuinely interested in his students' thoughts, experiences, and feelings, a teacher who welcomes students into college-level inquiry and gets the best out of them. When Dennis, a few years back, addressed graduates at a Commencement ceremony, he characteristically focused his remarks on the lessons *he'd* learned from his students over the years. He distilled those lessons into wisdom that captures the spirit of Dennis' profession as a teacher: "I've learned to stay curious about the world,

and taken the example of my students' curiosity to think about most everything I see," he wrote. "It's the world right here around you that is always the hardest to see," he noted, and he exhorted those graduates to stay curious about the everyday people and places in their lives, *and* about big problems and big ideas: "If you all stay curious about the diseases that plague mankind," about "why war persists and why so many of our fellow humans go to bed hungry every night," then "maybe one of you will find new answers to old questions."

Colleagues of Dennis's, like myself, who have had the pleasure to share an office suite with him, will miss the tireless enthusiasm with which Dennis heads off at the start of each new semester, and for each separate class meeting. A teacher, a colleague, a friend, with such talents and such a passion for his calling is a gift, indeed.  
– *Jim Albrecht*

### Paul Menzel Department of Philosophy



Paul Menzel will retire at the end of the Academic year. To write a brief description of his illustrious career is nearly impossible.

Paul came to PLU in 1971 and entered his fifth decade at PLU beginning Fall 2011. Unlike most at the end of their formal careers in academia, Paul continues to play a vital role in his department, the university, and research areas. If you know Paul, you know his energy and excitement for life are the very traits that mark him as teacher, scholar, university citizen, and friend.

Paul is a master teacher. He takes what is often raw material and works with it patiently, carefully, and compassionately to bring forth the beauty that lies within. Many students have stressed how his courses have changed their lives, re-orienting them to ways of living that are faithful to the mission of PLU, which Paul so brilliantly embodies in his

teaching. His interest in liberal learning, his commitment to interdisciplinary inquiry, and his devotion to philosophy reflect an ethos at PLU that many trace back to Paul. One might think this would be enough. Not for Paul.

Long before it was fashionable to speak of "applied ethics," Paul was hard at work applying his philosophical insight to issues of war, life, death, and others. He has received national and international recognition for his groundbreaking work in the field of Health Care Ethics, as reflected in his recent book collection *Prevention vs. Treatment: What's the Right Balance* (Oxford University Press, 2011), co-edited with Halley Faust, to which he also contributed two chapters. As evidence of his standing in the scholarly community, Paul was invited to the prestigious Rockefeller Center in Bellagio, Italy to contribute to national and international working conferences on current topics including growth hormone treatment, insurance discrimination based on individual genetic information, and the prospect of cross-species transplants. Remarkably, this broad recognition and scholarly engagement seemed only to intensify his commitment as a teacher and university citizen. The more he wrote, the more he revered his students and became excited about his classes. Even as his scholarly projects often took Paul far from PLU, he somehow found the time to devote himself to the university in new and inventive ways.

The innumerable ways he served PLU leaves an indelible imprint, not only on individuals whom he encountered, but on the very conditions that have enabled PLU to flourish. Whether in his role of Chair of the Philosophy Department (1987-1991), Dean of Humanities (1991-1994), Provost (1994-2002), or as Project Director of the Wild Hope: Exploring Vocation (2003-2007), Paul served the university mission with dedication, encouraged faculty to do and be their very best, and extended compassion and generosity of spirit to all he encountered. It is no surprise that the most common refrain heard about Paul at his retirement has been, "He is such a good man." In Paul, PLU could not have received a better gift, and, as he enters this new period of his personal and professional life, we wish him well.  
– *Greg Johnson*



**Prism**  
Division of Humanities  
12180 Park Ave. S.  
Tacoma, WA 98447

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
TACOMA, WA  
PERMIT NO. 416

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## Support Humanities Students and Engage the World

With 40 percent of our student body participating in at least one study-away program (compared to the national average of 3 percent), the numbers speak for themselves. Add in the students who study away near campus, and more than half the PLU community studies somewhere beyond campus boundaries.

For this reason, PLU has made a conscious decision to talk about “study away” rather than “study abroad”; when South Puget Sound is so richly diverse, students need not travel more than a few blocks to have a cross-cultural experience. That fact was reinforced when PLU received the 2009 Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization,

a prestigious award that honors outstanding efforts on and off campus to engage the world and the international community. So prestigious, in fact, PLU was the first and only private college in the West to receive the honor.

As you have read in these pages, the lives of Humanities students (and faculty) are enriched by ongoing opportunities to engage not only the world but their own beliefs and experiences through texts. All gifts to Engage the World or PLU are welcome. To learn more, go to [www.plu.edu/development](http://www.plu.edu/development) for a list of opportunities and projects. Or, call the Office of Development at (800) 826-0035.



“Pacific Lutheran University seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care – for other people, for their communities and for the earth.” – PLU’s mission