

**WHAT'S NEW
IN THE
HUMANITIES
PROGRAM:**

- March 30– April 3: Advance Registration For Summer Session for Currently Enrolled Students.
- April 6: Advance Registration for Summer Session Open to All Admitted/Re-admitted Students.
- April 13– April 24: Advance Registration Fall Semester for Currently Enrolled Students.
- April 27– May 8: Advance Registration for Fall Semester Open to All Admitted/Re-Admitted Students.

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Dr. John Richards Remembered

By Annette Conner

*Oh, I've seen fire and I've seen rain
I've seen sunny days that I thought would never end
I've seen lonely times when I could not find a friend
But I always thought that I'd see you again.*

-James Taylor, "Fire and Rain"



For the rest of my life, or at least for the next few years, I will have mixed feelings about this song. It was the song that played at the funeral service of a dear friend and mentor of mine, Dr. John Dale Richards. It painfully states "but I always thought that I'd see you again." Sadly, that will never happen. Dr. Richards passed from this world on December 22, 2008 at the absurdly young age of 50.

To know Dr. Richards was to worship him. That is the simplest way for me to describe him. He was wonderful—the most intelligent and caring person I have ever met. I highly doubt that there will ever be anyone else in the world like him. Dr. Richards is who I want to be like when I grow up, though he thought "growing up" was a little overrated.



The acclaimed novelist Sharyn McCrumb said at his service that "John's death is equivalent to a library burning down." She was painfully right. Within him were stores of information that he was willing to share with everyone. He was not the type to hoard his knowledge and lord it over others. When talking to Dr. Richards, it seemed that you were the only person that mattered to him at that moment. If he could help you out, he would. No matter how busy or how many projects he was involved with at the time, his students and friends came first.

If you read his obituary, you might imagine how amazing he was. From meeting the Dalai Lama to attending Pentecostal serpent-handling services, his life was fascinating. He was an ordained priest in the Orthodox tradition and a black belt in Karate. He was learned in Appalachian folk magic, religion, and medicine. He was also a superb dulcimer player. I could fill pages about what a wonderful asset Dr. Richards was to WVSU, MUGC, and the world.

On a personal note, I first met Dr. Richards in the fall of 1999. I took his "World Religions" course during my first semester at WVSU. It was academic love at first sight. I took every class he offered, and sometimes more than once when I had the spare electives. I learned something different each time. I hung to his every word, treating it as if it were sacred doctrine and repeating it to anyone who would hear—at times to the annoyance of those around me.

Dr. Richards was scheduled to perform the ceremony at my upcoming wedding in October. He was teaching me how to play the mountain dulcimer, and helping me finish my Master's Degree in Humanities here at MUGC. I gleaned everything I could from him. He was a fountain of knowledge! But at the end of the day he was still a human being, and a humble one at that.

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Radio Tribute

For a tribute for Dr. John Richards by Cat Pleska, please visit:

<http://www.wvpubcast.org/newsarticle.aspx?id=7916&terms=Cat+Pleska.asp>

Of her radio essay on John Richards, she says: "I felt compelled to write an essay tribute about John. His whole life was an inspiration for everyone."

Pleska lives in Scott Depot with her husband Dan, cat Zoe, dog Lexi, and has a grown daughter, Katie.

Pleska is a '98 Humanities graduate, with an emphasis in Literary Studies. She is an essayist for West Virginia Public Radio and a regular contributor to Wonderful West Virginia magazine.

She says of her Humanities degree: "It's important for writers to have a broad background of knowledge from which to write. The humanities degree provided me with that, plus it gave me the confidence to pursue work as a university instructor, and as a freelance writer and editor."

Dr. Richards



Photos courtesy of Annette Conner

Dr. Richards was also my thesis advisor, and we worked together on the dulcimer tradition in Appalachia. Recently, he, his wife Susan, and I took a trip to Virginia to meet Ralph Lee Smith, who is considered an expert in the dulcimer field. It was an experience I will treasure forever. Dr. Richards was so excited to meet Ralph that he reminded me of a young man who was meeting his idol for the first time. When he played his dulcimer for Ralph, his hands were shaking from nervousness. I remember thinking how odd it was for him to be nervous—Dr. Richards was perfect!

When I think about that moment, I realize I was right. Though humble, Dr. Richards was still perfect. He was what a human being is supposed to be. He was smart, but willing to share his mind. He was busy, but willing to give his time. He was wise beyond his years, but still able to tease you like an adolescent. He held fast to his own ideals, but was able to explore the world with an amazingly open mind. It seems that for many people, the mind closes with age. Not so for Dr. Richards. He taught me that one could always have new ex-

periences, and as a result, our old experiences could be seen in a different light. His mind was open and tolerant. He was caring and willing to give his all to those who needed him.

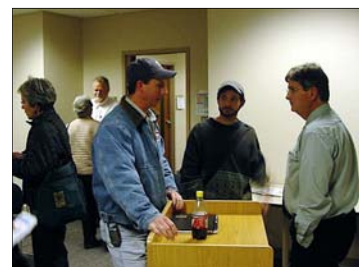
Several people have asked, "Why? What is the reason for this?" I wish I had an answer. I wish someone could give me a reason good enough as to why of all people in the world that *this one*, this one great human who was needed by so many was taken. His death makes me angry on a level I have never experienced. I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for an answer. Death answers to no one.

Going back to the song that started this short but incomplete tribute, I want everyone to realize the truth in the lines. We always think that we will see the ones we love again—that we can call them back later because right now we're just too busy. Or maybe we're mad at them because of something small (or huge), and we just can't seem to talk to them now. But we are not guaranteed that luxury.

I can't help but think, "Why didn't I go to that dulcimer Christ-

mas party? I could have seen him again. Why didn't I call with my list of research questions I had prepared about the dulcimer instead of just waiting until I saw him for our lesson? Or better yet, why didn't I just call and say 'let's go get lunch and discuss this?'" For those little questions I will always feel remorseful. I don't want this to turn into a sermon, but I want people to realize that we are never promised tomorrow. Mortality has a way of smacking us in the face when we least expect it.

From now on, when I am trying to be the best I can be, I need only look to the memory of Dr. Richards. I will model myself after him and pray that I can learn as much, care as much, and give as much—in general, mean as much. It's a lofty ambition, to be sure, but what if we all worked at it?



SUMMER 2009 COURSES

MU GRAD COLLEGE
(SOUTH CHARLESTON)

ARRANGED

HUMN 680-431—Independent Research Symposium (Lassiter)
CRN 4150
KANGC

A pro-seminar required of all Humanities degree students who are beginning the thesis or final project. Arranged with the Program Director.

CULS 600-431—Food and Culture of Appalachia (Maslowski)— Summer 1
CRN 4108
Tu, 6-9 p.m. KANGC 323

Appalachia is a unique region in

terms of its geological age, biological diversity and cultural conservatism. This is reflected in Appalachian food history and food preferences. Through readings, lectures, and field trips, the class will delve into the prehistory, history and modern food preferences of Appalachia. From backwoods to gourmet, moonshine to cabernet, students will learn what Appalachians eat and drink.

HUMN 600-431—Introduction to Study in the Humanities (Lassiter)—Summer 1
CRN 4149
Th, 6-9 p.m. KANGC 323

Interdisciplinary core course addresses questions/concepts central

to the humanities. Texts from philosophy, history, literature, the arts and the sciences provide insights into selected historical periods.

LITS 600-431—Women Writers of Appalachia (Simone and Olson) -- Summer 1
CRN 4161
M, 6-9 p.m. KANGC 323

This class will focus on contemporary women writers in Appalachia. Specifically students will engage in discourse about cultural and gender identity and ways in which writers portray experiences and events unique to Appalachian culture.

SUMMER LINEUP:

- *Independent Research Symposium*
- *Food and Culture of Appalachia*
- *Introduction to Study the Humanities*
- *Women Writers of Appalachia*

FALL 2009 COURSES

MU GRAD COLLEGE
(SOUTH CHARLESTON)

ARRANGED

HUMN 680-131—Independent Research Symposium (Lassiter)
CRN 2652
KANGC

A pro-seminar required of all Humanities degree students who are beginning the thesis or final project. Arranged with the Program Director.

A&S 600-131—20th Century Collage (Moore)
CRN 1004
Tu, 7-9:50 KANGC

This course will combine classroom and studio-focused instruction to explore the evolution of collage in 20th century fine art. Studying with renowned artist Mark Tobin Moore in his Charleston-based studio, students will learn to create works of art referencing specific periods of collage production. All that is required is an interest in art. Everyone welcome!

CULS 600-131—Contemporary Issues in Native North America (Lassiter)
CRN 1987
W, 7-9:50 KANGC

This seminar will focus on the exploration of issues facing Native American communities today, including but not limited to those of culture and identity, language, education, economic development, health, religious rights, and tribal sovereignty. The course will take up these and other issues within the diverse interdisciplinary framework of American Indian Studies, with fields of study ranging from English, history, political science, anthropology, and folklore to artistic, literary and cultural studies.

HIST 600-131—West Virginia and Appalachia (Peyton)
CRN 2509
M, 4-6:50 KANGC

Using a seminar format, participants will read and discuss recent historical literature on West Virginia and Appalachia and discuss the quality of the research, trends in historical interpretation, and areas for potential new scholarship in the field. Students will gain a better understanding of the forces that have shaped contemporary West Virginia and Appalachia, as they explore the historiography of the region.

HUMN 601-131—Literary Theory and Criticism (Campbell)
CRN 2650
Th, 7-9:50 KANGC

This core course introduces modern critical approaches, concepts and methods of research and scholarship in the broad field of literary studies.

HUMN 604-131—Expository Writing for Research (Simone)
CRN 2651
M, 7-9:50 KANGC

This core writing course develops proficiency in writing for research.

NR C&T College
(SUMMERSVILLE)
LITS 600-131—Studies in Existential Literature (Simmons)
CRN 2825
Tu, 7-9:50 p.m.

This course acquaints students with the evolution of existential philosophy as evidenced through representative literary works from Kierkegaard to Beckett and Camus.

FALL LINEUP:

- *Independent Research Symposium*
- *20th Century Collage*
- *Contemporary Issues in Native North America*
- *West Virginia and Appalachia*
- *Literary Theory and Criticism*
- *Expository Writing*
- *Studies in Existential Literature*

Glenwood Exhibit Opening

By Ashley Clark

On January 23, 2009, the normally quiet MUGC Library was bustling with activity. Instead of being filled with graduate students studying for classes, the library was host to the opening of the Glenwood Exhibit. Charleston had turned out to see the history of their West Side.

The exhibit had been in the making for several months. Two of the fall seminars in the Graduate Humanities Program were involved in the creation of the exhibit. Mark Tobin Moore taught Museum Studies and Exhibit Design. This class was responsible for the building of the display. The Historical Studies class, led by Dr. Billy Joe Peyton, collected the historical material that would be included within the exhibit. The success of the collaboration

was apparent when the exhibit was finally completed.

The exhibit opened at 5:30 p.m. to an already full room. Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter, the Director of the Graduate Humanities Program, began the opening with an explanation of the project. He then thanked all of those involved as the sponsors of the project, including the West Virginia Humanities Council in partnership with the Historic Glenwood Foundation, the Kanawha Valley Historical and Preservation Society, the Council for West Virginia Archaeology, University Libraries, and Marshall University's College of Liberal Arts and Graduate School of Education and Professional Development. He then deferred to Dr. Peyton and Mr. Moore who each briefly

talked of their experiences with the project. Then Dr. Bob Maslowski, who had taught the Glenwood Seminar in 2007 at MUGC, spoke of his involvement with Glenwood and its preservation.

The guests then enjoyed the refreshments provided. Though the opening was supposed to end at 7 p.m., many still were coming in to view the exhibit well after that time. Over 150 people signed the guestbook that night. Many more were able to view the exhibit, however, as it was on display in the library until March 6. The exhibit is now traveling to local businesses, organizations, and schools for six week increments.



Charleston Gazette Article on the Glenwood Exhibit:
<http://www.wvgazette.com/News/200901210654>



Annette Conner's Glenwood Class Blog and Videos of Opening:
<http://glenwoodproject.wordpress.com/>

The Glenwood Paradox

By Kevin Pruitt

Sometimes we experience paradoxes in the least likely of places, and I must admit I found several coming into the Glenwood Project. As a life-long resident of the southern end of the state, I had little interest in the history of the Kanawha Valley; however, Dr. Peyton's Historic Research class offered no alternative. Yet little did I realize my own prejudices would manifest themselves into ironies in my own backyard.

As for Glenwood, the historian in me couldn't help but to be drawn back into the days of the eighteenth century, when Col. Bullitt (on his way to survey the Kentucky frontier) first ripped bark off of a few trees near the mouth of Elk River, surveying what would one day become Charleston; and back into the middle of

the nineteenth century when George Washington's niece, Betty Lovell sub-divided the entire West Side, perpetuating the building of Glenwood itself; and back into the days just before the Civil War when Judge Summers attempted to save the country and avert terrible bloodshed.

Those by-gone days have great significance for me because the county I live in was named for Glenwood's most famous occupant, Judge George Summers. Paradoxically, the old house I call *home* is also an antebellum mansion (built roughly the same time as Glenwood) that had its own famous occupant, Maj. Richard S. Woodrum C.S.A. When Summers County was formed, the original name proposed was "Camp Allen Woodrum" after Maj. Woodrum's nephew, a southern flag bearer who died at the Battle of Cold



Harbor. As Dr. Peyton says, "all history begins as local history."

During the course of my research I developed a profound respect for Judge Summers. Perhaps the greatest satisfaction I found in Glenwood was the honor of copying the intimate thoughts that Amacetta Summers wrote to her husband, George. It was an absolute thrill to be able to employ some of the many period quills which occupy space on my desk. Of greater significance still, my experience with Glenwood has strengthened my enthusiasm to restore my own home, and to preserve its history, not only for the Kanawha Valley, but for all of West Virginia—both north and south.

Friends of the Humanities Update

By Trish Hatfield

Friends of the Humanities Sponsors Catherine Pancake Talk & Documentary Film.

As part of a Speaker's Series, Friends partnered with Dr. Chris

Green for his "Documenting Appalachia" Graduate Humanities Seminar to sponsor a talk by Catherine Pancake titled "Growing Up Without Television...Trials and Tribulations of Developing Visual Media

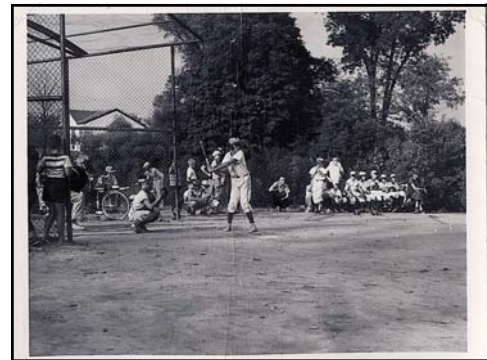
in a Culture of Oral Tradition." Pancake shared "the honest truth about growing up in West Virginia and struggling to become a visual

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"Social Memory and Oral History" Creates a Monster!

By Carolyn Quinlan



"This oral history collection has produced such a profound ripple effect that people are reconnecting with one another in a meaningful way."

Last semester, Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter and Professor Andu Meharie taught the course "Social Memory and Oral History." As a part of the seminar, each student chose a topic of interest which engaged the community in the collection of oral history. Each student collected four oral histories. Of those four, one was transcribed.

Dr. Lassiter suggested I take the course because it was "going to be fun." I considering taking the course, because it *did* sound fun and I *knew* right away that I wanted my topic to be "St. Albans Eastern Little League at Billy Dunn Field." Though I thought it wasn't controversial enough, Dr. Lassiter assured me that "not all oral histories have to be contentious."

I chose this topic because of the stories I have heard my husband tell of his experiences as a player, coach and manager at Billy Dunn Field. Early on, I knew these

needed to be recorded. This course gave me the perfect opportunity and motivation to fulfill that intention.

I chose my husband's oral history to transcribe. I had no idea how powerful an oral history could be until I listened to his voice on the recording. It had an overwhelming emotional impact on me. It was as though I was gazing into this magnificent looking-glass at his childhood, and becoming a participating member of his memories.

This course, as is true of many Graduate Humanities courses, cannot be contained in the classroom. I have contacted many in the St. Albans Little League community, as well as some who have moved away. They have been delighted to contribute to my collection of oral histories by recalling their own stories and offering memorabilia and referrals. One man even said he wanted to purchase his own recording equipment to collect the oral histories of

his parents. This oral history collection has produced such a profound ripple effect that people are reconnecting with one another in a meaningful way.

Though the fall seminar has ended, I cannot let go of doing oral history. The community's enthusiasm and willingness to participate has been humbling. I am honored that they have entrusted me with their stories. It is my intention to give back to the community in a way that will preserve these memories for generations to come.

Through this course, I have developed such a deep appreciation for oral history and its place in society. I have continued to seek advice from Dr. Lassiter on this collection specifically, and about oral history in general. He often comments, "Oh, I've created a monster!" Yes—he has!

Finding a Path in the Humanities Program

By Kathryn Santiago

Two years ago, I was sitting in my mother's office staring at a blank document, struggling to find inspiration to write my application essay for the Graduate Humanities Program at MUGC. In that essay, I had to convince the director of the Humanities Program how a master's degree in humanities would enrich my chosen career.

But I didn't have a chosen career. Mom kept suggesting career options to me, and I kept turning them down. Frustrated with my vehement objections and ready to give up, she finally yelled, "Publishing!" I grabbed onto that idea and wrote.

When I met Dr. Lassiter to set up my schedule, he mentioned that he had been waiting for someone interested in publishing. He was starting a journal called *Collaborative Anthropologies*, published by the University of Nebraska

Press, and he needed an editorial assistant. Little did he know that the dream of publishing was born in a moment of desperation to finish my essay. I had hoped to find a path in graduate school, but I didn't expect to find one in the process of applying and to have it cemented in my graduate assistantship.

My first task was to study collaborative anthropology. My first semester's work was dedicated entirely to learning about this field so I'd understand the material the journal covered. I went from studying the subject in my first semester to an intensive course on how to create a journal in half of the allotted time in my second.

Last November when the first volume of *Collaborative Anthropologies* was published, I was able to hold tangible proof of a year's work in my hands. Too often

I have taken for granted the feel of pages in a book. There, in my hands, were over two hundred pages of text that I had pored over, first in theory, then in form. There was my name in print. I had become a part of the publishing process. I'd learned a good deal about the work that goes into putting a journal together, but I also learned that I love the process.

As I look back at what I had written in that original essay to Dr. Lassiter, I realize that, whether I fully meant those words at the time, I mean them now. I adore literature, and now I adore how it comes into being. To see how literature has formed and adapted through culture, history and art has strengthened my admiration for it. This program and the support of my professors have opened a providential door for me.



<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Collaborative-Anthropologies.673970.aspx>



"Everyone has a story to tell."

Personal Narrative and Memoir

By Dr. Fran Simone

Everyone has a story to tell. And students enrolled in this course craft their stories and read those of famous writers, like E.B. White, Eudora Welty, Annie Dillard, Frank McCourt, and several lesser known ones, such as Judith Barrington and Da Chen.

In the introduction to the *Art of the Personal Essay*, Phillip Lopate writes; "At the core of the personal essay is the supposition that there is a certain

unity to the human experience." This unity both connects and sustains us. Moreover, he says that the hallmark of personal essay is intimacy. "The writer seems to be speaking directly into your ear, confiding everything from gossip to wisdom."

Although the lines between autobiography, memoir, and personal essay sometimes overlap, each has a unique

focus. In autobiography, one writes about an entire life in a forward moving line from birth to fame. However, in memoir, the focus is narrower. One may write about childhood, adolescence, or special times, like war or travel.

William Zinnser says that good memoir consists of two elements—one of art and the

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Memoir

other of craft. The first is “integrity of intention” or how we try to make sense of the world. The second is “carpentry” or the careful art of construction.

Students participating in this class focus on both elements: they draft, revise, edit and share in writers’ workshop. As they fashion a text, they try to make sense of who they are, who they once were, and what life experiences shaped them.

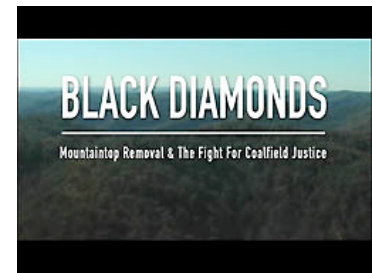


Friends Update

media artist covering her home and its context.”

Pancake’s award-winning feature documentary *Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice* was shown as an added bonus and example of her work.

Mark your calendar for the second Friends of Humanities Eat, Meet, & Greet. Friday, May 1, 2009, Little Creek Park, South Charleston.



Globalization

By Jeanette Ahangardezfooli

How would you define *globalization*? Maybe it’s the ability to find a McDonald’s restaurant on the other side of the world. Maybe it’s the gouging of oil prices we’ve recently experienced. Maybe it’s the World Market, Wall Street, and the movement of goods and people.

All of these are processes of globalization, yet the affects of this phenomenon penetrate much deeper. The nuances behind the scenes of everyday politics that occur throughout our world lend themselves, both masked and unmasked, into our everyday global environment. Globalization is more than politics, economics, and commercialism; it’s also unifying or dividing people



both within and outside their communities, cultures, and countries.

Some global influences can be regarded as a threat to different agencies. The process itself is not equal. There are individuals who push their own agenda onto others politically, economically and militarily. These agendas occur at different levels, at times contradictory or complimentary. Globalization is also met with various constraints when dealing with people and ideas based on ethnicity, religion, and other differences.

These processes are being explored in Anduamlak (Andu) Meharie’s seminar, “Linking Local with Global: Anthropology, Globalization, and Development.” These interwoven thoughts, ideas, and progressions reach beyond economic matters and delve into the social practice of everyday life.

In Andu’s class, we are investigating the benefits and conse-

quences of globalization. Through various texts, films, and documentaries, Andu is guiding us through anthropological and ethnographic concepts. Articles dealing with specific societies integrate past and current situations to demonstrate how historical incidents of globalization relate to the present and future.

The topics we are covering range from the movement of capital and people to commodities and ideologies. We are also examining the various global institutions and corporations and how their policies react, and how that reaction trickles down into (and onto) various cultures and societies.

Through reading, class discussion, and research from our individual areas of interest, each week provides us an opportunity to view the world as an interconnected system, of which we are all a part.

“These interwoven thoughts, ideas, and progressions reach beyond economic matters and delve into the social practice of everyday life.”



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Graduate Humanities Program



Would You Like to Support the Graduate Humanities Program?

Graduate Humanities Student Research and Travel Fund

The Graduate Humanities Program recently established a new travel fund for Graduate Humanities students, to be used for research and/or professional development (e.g., conference attendance). The program welcomes support from friends and alumni. Please consider making a donation to help further this fund and support Graduate Humanities students. Thank you for considering a donation to our department.

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 \$_____ Other

Please make check payable to the Marshall University Foundation (Humanities Academic Program Funds).

