



# Graduate Humanities

Graduate Humanities Program  
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Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter  
Director

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*Students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds collaboratively explore interdisciplinary intersections of the arts, historical, cultural, and literary studies within an open, exploratory, and experimental graduate-level educational environment.*

## Everyone has a story

In this issue, our recent graduates illustrate Eric's premise of the mutual benefit of "cooperative endeavors" in his interview.

As you'll read, Beth Carroll and Stacy Scudder took advantage of seminar offerings created out of our partnership with the Historic Glenwood Foundation. Rhonda Marrone's final project supported our partnership with Step By Step. Jay Thomas's "memoir" was inspired by listening to oral histories from a water crisis project sponsored in part by the West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy. On the back page, Sarah Horwich's "Guide to Rural Living & Local Folkways" originated in a folklore seminar. It serves the community she lives in – an example of an informal partnership between a citizen and her community. As is the collection of oral histories and artifacts of St. Albans Baseball assembled by our newly retired secretary, Carolyn Quinlan ('13) for her final project.

– Trish Hatfield ('08)  
Program Assistant

## Learning Together: Academic & Community Partnerships



### Interview with Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter

*Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter has been the Director of the Graduate Humanities Program since 2005, when he*

*came to us from the Department of Anthropology at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. For over two decades, much of Lassiter's teaching and writing has focused on how academics and community groups can work together to develop collaboratively researched understandings as well as community-based change. Many of his authored and co-authored books have focused this approach, including The Power of Kiowa Song, The Other Side of Middletown, The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography, and Doing Ethnography Today. As he describes in his book, Invitation to Anthropology, these ideas*

*stretch back to when he was an undergraduate, and then a graduate student, pursuing degrees in anthropology.*

*As a young man, Eric had developed a close relationship with Kiowa Indians in Oklahoma, including a well-known and long-serving Kiowa Tribal Chairman, Billy Evans Horse. When the time came to write his doctoral thesis on Kiowa song, Horse challenged Eric to write a dissertation that worked outside the norm of books written by anthropologists and others that were often more about the needs of those authors and their fields of study, and less about the Indian community. Horse collected dissertations and other books that he often showed Eric, many of which were so specialized that he couldn't use them in any way to help his people. "Research for whom?" Horse asked repeatedly. ▶ NEXT PAGE*



**Many thanks, Carolyn.** For your quick smile and willingness to help others in your fourteen years as Administrative Secretary Sr. for the Graduate Humanities Program. And for your inspiring example of attaining a Masters in Humanities four years short of retirement. Oh, and your invaluable service as "Eagle Eyes" in editing our newsletters... xoxo



1) Trish, Eric, and Carolyn at retirement party; 2) Retirement cake; 3) Carolyn and granddaughter, Arika, at graduation receiving her MA in Humanities; 4) Carolyn painting the wall in her St. Albans, West Virginia, baseball museum.

## Lassiter from page 1

As Eric describes in *The Power of Kiowa Song*, Horse's questioning of the immediate relevance of research was an issue also on the minds of many anthropologists of the day. So with the encouragement of his doctoral committee, he initiated a project on Kiowa song with Kiowa song experts (which included Billy Evans Horse) who not only served in the research process, but also reviewed, commented on, and added to the dissertation as it was written.

Although he could not know it at the time, researching and writing a thesis in the space between a doctoral committee and various committees of Kiowa people reading and reviewing the developing dissertation initiated Eric's long and current interest in the possibilities of "collaborative ethnography." His mission was to make anthropological and other kinds of research "deliberately and explicitly" collaborative, so that the research was relevant and useful to the often so-called "subjects" of research.

Today, because he's widely shared his ideas and experiences through teaching, speaking, consulting, and published writings, Eric is known internationally for promoting a kind of anthropology that "may include the collaboration of multiple authors (professional researchers or otherwise), but that establishes as a main goal the inclusion of local community consultants as active collaborators in the process," particularly in the writing that comes after the initial research.

*It's notable that this fundamentally respectful philosophy and practice, first shaped by many conversations with Billy Evans Horse and then with others in many projects since then, became a defining characteristic of the way Eric relates to students and community leaders attracted to this approach, because it benefits them as well. Billy Evans Horse would be proud.*

**Eric, when you became Director you wrote in the August 2005 newsletter that "one of your biggest areas of planned growth concerns finding ways to expand existing connections to community- and regionally-based initiative." Do you still have this vision of "planned growth" for the Program?**

As our Program nears its 40th anniversary of its official founding in 1979, graduate humanities at Marshall University continues to grow and evolve. Though programs like ours have faced increased challenges over the past several years, support for our programming, its faculty and staff, the seminars we offer, and our many community outreach and engagement efforts remains strong.

Among our greatest strengths is the Program's past and present focus on partnership and collaboration with external groups, programs, and organizations who have similar goals: to promote dialogue and understanding of people and issues through the lens of humanities-based learning and scholarship. In these cooperative endeavors, students, faculty, and

community partners come together to research, read, write, and learn.

**Can you give us examples of what these projects looks like? And who are the "external groups, programs, and organizations?"**

Projects like the Glenwood Project, Major Scholar Seminar series, the Water Crisis oral history, the West Virginia Activist archive—with others—link us with organizations like the Historic Glenwood Foundation, West Virginia Humanities Council, West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, and Step by Step. Partnerships like these have helped create community-university collaborative projects that promote learning, research, and civic engagement across academic and community lines.

**How did you arrive at this unique appreciation for community-university collaborative projects?**

Many years ago I had the great privilege to be a Fellow at the Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry (VBC), a university-based center in Indiana that encouraged faculty, students, and community partners to engage in common research, writing, and other collaborative projects. The effort transformed both local and academic ways of knowing and acting through partnership and collaboration.

One of the Center's goals was to explore how these partnerships might stir and renew academic work flow from one often insulated within rarified academic silos to one engaged with

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*"The humanities" as defined by Ralph Perry, American Philosopher*

Ralph Perry, *The Humanity of Man* (New York: George Braziller, 1956), p. 26.

*The humanities embraces whatever influences conduce to freedom (enlightened choice).*



*"The humanities' is not to be employed as a mere class name for certain divisions of knowledge or parts of a scholastic curriculum, or for certain human institutions, activities and relationships, but to signify a certain condition of freedom which these may serve to create...."*

*"By freedom...I mean the exercise of enlightened choice. I mean the action in which habit, reflex or suggestion is superseded by an individual's fundamental judgments of good and evil; the action whose premises are explicit; the action which proceeds from personal reflection and the integration of interests...."*

## **Lassiter** from page 2

community partners who, in turn, directly impact research, teaching, and learning. My experience as a Fellow there radically changed how I understood how academe could engage local communities. That's a perspective that I have continued to practice since I came to Marshall University over 12 years ago; it's work that continues on a daily basis with each new challenge and possibility our Program encounters.

**You joined the Program with a sense of possibilities regarding these unusual collaborations. Have you discovered anything that you didn't anticipate learning about during the last 12 years?**

Although we might debate the success of our collaborative efforts, one thing is for sure: our work together and with others is incredibly important and significant. After leaving the VBC, and while writing a book about collaborative research and writing possibilities, I happened upon an idea that I have never forgotten: academic units and programs that directly and regularly engage local community partners—partners invested in that program—are more likely to succeed during times of stress than those that don't.

I first read about this idea in a National Task Force document on the role of public humanities published by the American Council of Learned Societies. The Task Force advised that when vulnerable academic units face

challenges, the addition of community partners opens up a broader range of solutions. I had seen this firsthand at the VBC, and have seen it happen here in the Graduate Humanities Program more than a few times. Indeed, our students, faculty, and community partners have accomplished extraordinary things when tackling challenging goals (the Water Crisis oral history comes to mind, for example).

Perhaps among their greatest contributions is the promotion and preservation of a humanities perspective at a time when we need it the most. ■

*Learn more about collaborative projects, programs and seminars on our website, <http://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/>.*

## Spring 2018 Seminars

See [www.marshall.edu/humn](http://www.marshall.edu/humn) for more information, including seminar classroom assignments.

**CULS 600: SeITP: Glenwood, Charleston, and West Virginia Histories (Peyton) T, 7-9:50 PM.** This seminar will meet at Glenwood, an iconic 1850s estate that stands in the hills of Charleston's West Side. Students will get up close and personal with the past as they utilize elements of the historic Glenwood collection to examine the history of West Virginia and the development of Charleston from a small 19th century village into a modern 21st century capital city. Sponsored in part by the Historic Glenwood Foundation. **Graduate Humanities Program students enrolled in the MA Program who complete the course with an A or B will receive a scholarship stipend from the Historic Glenwood Foundation.**

*Dr. Billy Joe Peyton is professor of history at West Virginia State University. He is the author of *Historic Charleston: The First 225 Years*, and has researched and written extensively on the history of Charleston and West Virginia.*

**HIST 585: Coal Mine Life, Work & Culture (Workman) Th, 7-9:50 PM.** This course provides students with a better understanding of the continuing economic, political, environmental and cultural impact which the extraction of coal has had on West Virginia. *Michael Workman worked in the underground coal mines of southern West Virginia before earning degrees in political science and his doctorate in history at WVU. He has written and published on coal and labor history, and currently is Associate Professor of History at West Virginia State University.*

**HUMN 602: Historical Studies (Lassiter) W, 7-9:50 PM.** Core course acquaints students with problems of historical

ADVANCED REGISTRATION AVAILABLE  
Currently enrolled: November 6 - November 17, 2017  
New Admits and Readmits: November 20, 2017

knowledge, changes in the interpretation of history, nature of historical forces, and methods of historical research. This course will be taught in conjunction with CULS 600 and HIST 585, and students will be encouraged to apply their knowledge gained in one or both of these courses to issues in Historical Studies. It is not recommended that a student sign up for this course only: i.e., if registering for only one course for the semester, then it is recommended that you register for either CULS 600 or HIST 585. *Dr. Eric Lassiter, director of the Graduate Humanities Program and professor of humanities and anthropology, has authored and edited several books involving community-based oral history and ethnography. His latest book, *Doing Ethnography Today*, co-authored with Elizabeth Campbell, explores the complexities of doing collaborative ethnography in dynamic and shifting fieldwork sites.*

**HUMN 650: Selected Topics as independent study arranged between instructor and student (Contact Director to arrange course).** For students who need to conduct independent research and/or reading in a specific topic in the humanities, the Program will offer independent studies in those topics as funds allow. Contact the Director for more information. Examples of Special Topics might include: Film Criticism, Museum Studies, Studies in Appalachian Music, Studies in Poetry, Language and Communication.

**HUMN 680 Independent Research Symposium, arranged with Program Director.** A pro-seminar required of all Humanities degree students who are beginning their thesis or final project.

## RECENT GRADUATES & Their Community Partners

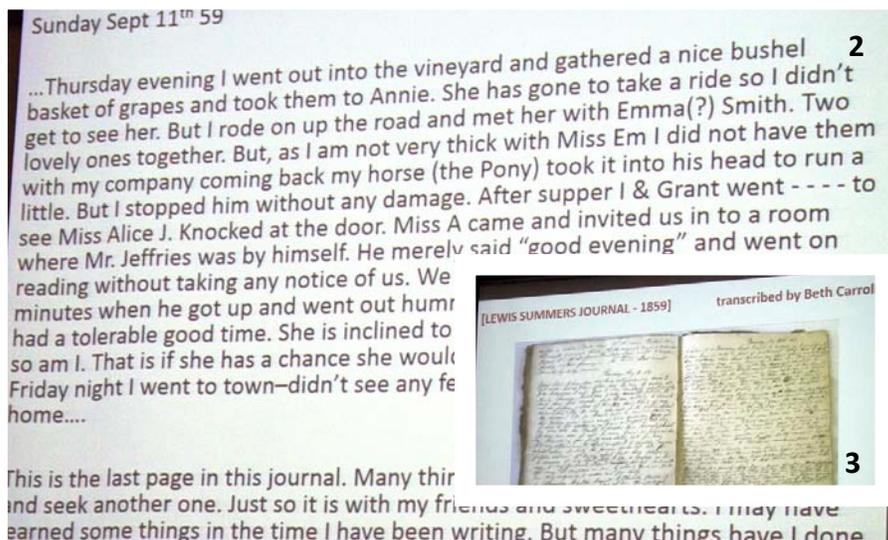


**Beth Carroll '17**  
Major Emphasis:  
Historical & Cultural  
Studies  
Project Title:  
"Influenza 1918."

**TRANSCRIBING HISTORICAL LETTERS & JOURNALS** In 2014, Dr. Billy Joe Peyton, author of *Charleston: Then & Now*, taught a seminar at the Glenwood Estate. Preparing for actual archival work, students studied selected readings about the history of Charleston. This supplied a historical context for transcribing portions of the Lewis & Lucy Summers letters and journals. Note: Another "Glenwood, Charleston, and West Virginia Histories" seminar will be available in the spring. See Schedule in this issue.



1) Using cotton gloves, Beth Carroll (r.) holds the journal open so Dr. Peyton can take a picture. 2) Powerpoint slide of Beth's transcription for a public presentation at the end of the semester. Question mark and dashes indicate indecipherable words. Further research may reveal context to help add what's missing. 3) Lewis Summers' journal.



**Stacy Scudder '17**  
Major Emphasis:  
Literary & Cultural  
Studies. Project  
Title: "Pedagogies  
of a First-Year  
Seminar Course."

**While reading *Navajos Wear Nikes*, I saw parallels between growing up on the reservation and growing up in Appalachia. ...The first, most notable similarity is how the two cultures are seen from the outside. ...When author Jim Kristofic [an 'anglo'], first moves to the reservation, he has all his 'otherness' pointed out by the kids in his classes. They call him names in Navajo, bully him, and do basically everything they can to let him know just how different he is.**

Just like in the book, we county kids finally found our own way. By high school, we'd all managed to find a group we could belong to. Sometimes that group was only one or two other people. Sometimes it was more, say a sports team or the band. And then we graduated...



Dr. Clyde Ellis (r.), Professor of History, Elon University, taught our 2016 Major Scholar Seminar on "Native Identities in Contemporary America." Dr. Lassiter, Stacy (l.) and classmates Beth Carroll and Ashley Dennison are Skyping with a colleague of Dr. Ellis (r.) during class.

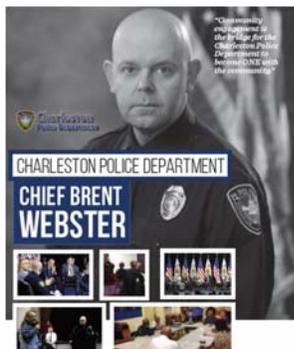
Even though I was born and raised in Pikeville, Kentucky, when I started school there, I didn't fit in with the other kids.... Being a county kid in the city school system was a lot like being Kristofic in the reservation schools – the natives can always find a way to let you know how different you are, and different is not always a good thing.

In the book, Kristofic talks about how some of the Navajo try to act stereotypically Mexican or black, or like they're in a gang. I guess I was out of school before that was a thing in Pikeville. ...You haven't seen strange until you've seen some white, country kid from up a holler try his hand at rapping. When I read about Kristofic being asked The Question—Are you an Indian?—to me, it was like the people were really asking where he belonged. I got the feeling that no matter where he is, he belongs to the reservation. Just like I will always belong to Appalachia no matter where I end up next. – Excerpts from Stacy's reflection paper on *Navahos Wear Nikes* by Jim Kristofic.



**Rhonda Marrone '17**  
 Major Emphasis:  
*Literary Studies and  
 Arts & Society*  
 Project Title: "West  
 Virginia Activist  
 Archive Project."

When I took the "West Virginia's Activists: Stories of Social Change" seminar in Spring 2016 I [expected] the usual college class of reading a lot from books, writing a long paper, and getting a grade at the end of the class. But instead the seminar was a lot of interacting with the people.... We became immersed in the on-going West Virginia Activists Archive project...and created posters highlighting the activists' work. It was a fantastic experience.... The projects made the activists feel as though their work was making a difference in a way not experienced or seen before. For instance, I didn't get to interview the Grubbs [for their activism in fighting opioid addiction], and I didn't talk to them at the fundraiser. But I could see that the poster was successful: they cried when they saw it.... The other activists glowed when they saw their posters and said they loved them. Possibly, seeing your life put into a work of art is different than seeing your life put into a newspaper article.... – Excerpts from Rhonda's final project writeup. For more information see our website, <http://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities>. Also, a reflection essay by Rhonda, "Choice, along with confidence," was published in the Fall 2016 newsletter which can be read on our website.



Rhonda interviewed Corporal Randall and Chief Webster for the *Our Children Our Future* non-profit affiliated with Step By Step. They were honored for their racial and civic justice activism, along with with other activists, at a public event held on the WVSU campus. Rhonda isolated quotes, conducted research, and secured photos for the posters. Beverly Surratt, Senior Graphic Designer in MU Printing Services, designed the posters.



**Jay Thomas '17**  
 Major Emphasis: *Literary  
 & Cultural Studies*  
 Project Title: "Charleston  
 Water Crisis."



took the opportunity to get a haircut. Strolling around downtown I spied a somewhat rough-looking hair salon that looked like me. Sure enough, I immediately noticed a guy considerably younger, but with the same haircut....He brushed off the seat, I sat down, he started my haircut....

Turned out Ben the barber knew more about what was happening in Charleston than I did. He had a television on...with news reporting information on the spill....For the first time, I experienced a sense of fear....

Ben was also an environmental science graduate. As he cut my hair, he talked about how at least half of the environmental students change majors... once they realized the futility in trying to change the way most industry does business.

Ben used a nearby dry-eraser board to draw chemical compounds, talking about isotopes and stuff I hadn't studied in 30-some years. I learned about "dilution to treat pollution" and other industry "approaches" to chemical contamination as he cut my hair during breaks in our conversation.

He predicted (correctly) that the company responsible would file

bankruptcy immediately. That was the longest haircut I've ever had. I gave him a generous tip, and left with my fear starting to turn to anger. – Excerpted from Jay's Chapter 3, "Blues BBQ," of the "I'm Afraid of That Water" book project.

Jay took the 2014 seminar, "Charleston Water Crisis Oral History & Documentary." Hearing the oral histories in the seminar prompted him to write up his experience of running a business during the Charleston water crisis for his final Master's project. Read an interview with Jay about being a businessman and a graduate student in the Spring 2014 newsletter. This interview was conducted several months before the water spill. For more information on the book project and Jay's 2014 interview, see our website, [www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities](http://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities).

Update: By the time this goes to press, Jay will have sold his business. In a personal communication with Trish, Jay wrote that, "on the way home from Shepherdstown. I ranted to a friend that this [spill] was the last straw. Kind of cemented our decision." He hadn't thought about selling at that point but "leaving was inevitable."

We hate to see you go, Jay and Honor. For years, Blues BBQ has been our go-to hole-in-the-wall for many humanities related meetings. You'll be sorely missed. Wishing you all the best.

I own Blues BBQ in Charleston. On the ninth of January, 2014, the [chemical] spill's "official" beginning, my wife, Honor, and I were driving our daughter, Daisy, to Shepherdstown University for her orientation. About 7:30 p.m., Vincent, an employee, called to tell us that there was [a] water problem, and we would have to shut down immediately....Honor and I, hardened toxic warriors that we are (we've lived in Charleston for many years), figured it... would be over by morning.

We arrived in Shepherdstown, had some dinner, and talked about what we didn't know. [On the third day there], I



## Graduate Humanities

Students and faculty from a variety of backgrounds collaboratively exploring interdisciplinary intersections of the arts, historical, cultural, and literary studies within an open experimental, exploratory, and experimental multidisciplinary environment.

Marshall University South Charleston  
Campus Graduate Humanities Program  
600H One John Marshall Drive  
Huntington, WV 25755



**Sarah Horwich '17**  
Major Emphasis:  
*Literary & Cultural  
Studies. Project Title:*  
*"Guide to Rural  
Living & Local  
Folkways: Life in  
Spencer, Roane  
County, WV."*

### Welcome to Spencer!

This is a handy guide to help you navigate local folkways and help you adjust to rural living (it's different from the city!).

Don't be surprised if people seem to know you before you know them. News that someone has moved in from outside the area travels fast. Many of the adult social groups are made up of family, extended relatives and friends of the family—many of the connections go way back—so this might make us seem cliquish, however we can be quite welcoming.

**Folklore is all around us** and, while it does consist of old-time stories and handicrafts, it is found in present-day culture and in even the smallest social groups and settings.

Folklore has more to do with the transmission of knowledge than with the *actual* knowledge. For example, how people in a certain culture learn to weave baskets is folklore. The basket is not necessarily the focus of folklore, but its creation and the meaning ascribed to it are the focus. That is part of what folklore studies.

Since learning the actual definition of folklore, I have been looking at things around me differently. I have become more aware of how my family interacts, more aware of how people in my community act and more aware of how I interact within these groups and society (as a whole). And not only the how but also the why. Why do we consider one

object "art" but a similar object a "folkcraft?" How is the designation made and who determines it? Why does my family have the traditions that it has and how did they come about? What is the significance behind those traditions and how have they changed over the years?

This class had some of the best discussions I have experienced in my graduate career! The Humanities program is filled with students who have a love of learning and this class was no exception. My classmates were engaged and contributed thoughtfully to the discussions. Many of their interjections were insightful and aided in allowing me to think about the topics in a way that I had not thought of before. The excitement they felt for their research projects was tangible and made the class more enjoyable as a result. — *Excerpted from Sarah's reflection essay on the seminar, May 3, 2017.*

*Excerpt from Sarah's draft trifold, "Guide to Rural Living & Local Folkways"*