

# Graduate Humanities



students and faculty collaboratively exploring  
the arts, history, culture, and literature in an  
open experimental multidisciplinary environment

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## “So What Can You Do With A Humanities Degree?”

By Trish Hatfield, Program Assistant

He is giving me his full attention. I mean face-on, eyes focused, body rigid. Maybe he's stopped breathing? There's something regarding what I'm saying about the Graduate Humanities Program at Marshall that has connected with him. I knew the second the presentations were over that I would grab my lunch, sit beside him, and find out what he was thinking. Turns out he loves history and writing. He grins. Been writing since he was eleven years old. Journaling mostly. The more we talk about his interests, the more the Program seems a good fit for him. And then he asks, “So, what can you do with a humanities degree?”

The answer I would like to tell this young man is an answer I heard secondhand attributed to a recent Humanities graduate: “Whatever I damn well please.” Which echos the notion of philosopher and author, Ralph Perry. In his classic book, *The Humanity of Man* (1956), Perry defines “‘the humanities,’ then, to embrace whatever influences conduce to freedom . . . . By freedom, I mean the exercise of enlightened choice. I mean the action in which habit, reflex or suggestions is superseded by an individual's fundamental judgments of good and evil; the action whose premises are explicit; the action which precedes from personal reflection and the integration of interests” (Perry, 27). Writing in the *Graduate Humanities* newsletter (Fall 2007),

Gabriella Williamson offers a similar explanation. “When people ask me in what area I am getting my M.A., their next question is invariably what will I do with a Humanities degree. My answer to that is anything my heart and mind desires to create: this is the gift of the Graduate Humanities Program, that if you can create it, it can be a reality. The field is wide open for those with backgrounds in liberal arts, and with diverse life experiences such as mine.”

And what about other fields of endeavor – science, for example? Story Musgrave, 30-year veteran of NASA with all the required scientific degrees in math, chemistry, biophysics, and medicine, was a US Marine Corps aviator and free-fall parachutist. He helped repair the Hubble Space Telescope in 1993. Musgrave told John Yemma, Editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, that he “sat in an evening literature class at the University of Houston and kept three notebooks open – one for the lecture, another for what the ideas meant to him, and the third for how he might apply those ideas to the experience of spaceflight.”

See **What You Can Do? Page 4**

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“The humanities are addictive. Song and story, music and dance, words and ideas—once you let these things into your life, you can never live without them. And you should never have to.”

RICHARD JANARO AND THELMA ALTSHULER



### New Program Assistant

Wish Mom and Dad could see me now. Growing up on the plains of Colorado in a small ranching community, one of my earliest memories was of Mom leaving the house at 5:00 AM to attend a Great Books Discussion Group that met monthly. Mom was a classic lifelong learner. Dad was a businessman, selling Michelin and Good Year tires to ranchers and farmers. They served on numerous committees and non-profit boards. My life contains the essence of theirs.

I have a BA ('77) (woodblock printing, pencil drawing, and weaving, along with a broad critical inquiry into the study of the humanities) from Metropolitan State University (Mpls, MN), and a Masters in Humanities (MUGC '08). I also have my own business with the big hairy audacious goal of helping work places and communities to be humane and engaging so that people and organizations can prosper. My personal vision is to be fully present to the best in each of us so that we experience the peace and power to act in the

interest of equality, inherent worth and self-governance . . . if I didn't know any better, this sounds like someone with a Humanities background to me.

How this all plays out professionally is that I am primarily a facilitator for non-profit boards and groups interested in finding new ways of moving forward. I endeavor to position myself from a strength-based perspective with the goal of developing community on multiple levels. Personally, I love to read, write, dance, garden, change tires (just kidding on that last one), and deliberate in good company.

Assisting Dr. Lassiter and the Graduate Humanities Program pulls all of this together: critical thinking, freedom of choice, art, philosophy, literature, history, culture, community – and happiness in the making.

My email is hatfield32@marshall.edu and my phone number is 304/746-1931. Please don't hesitate to connect with me about any thing at any time.

### New Brochure

You may need a magnifying glass to read this; however, our intent is to show you a teaser. A full scale version will be available soon and we will happily mail it if requested. We've had a positive response to its prototype and we hope it will serve you well.

**Marshall University**  
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Master of Arts in the Humanities  
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Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter, Director  
304-746-2022  
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www.marshall.edu/humn

Marshall University Graduate College—South Charleston Campus  
100 Angus E. Peyton Drive  
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**GRADUATE HUMANITIES PROGRAM**

# Spring 2012 Seminars

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

## **A&S 600 – SpTp: Film Music: Magical Tunes from Wagner’s Valkiries to Williams’s Wizards (Kay Lawson), Thursday, 7 – 9:50 p.m.**

Richard Wagner’s ideas for creating the total work of art by merging music and drama have influenced more than a century of composers and film makers. The study of a variety of film genres and the impact of their musical scores on audiences is the basis for examining the history of this popular art form.

## **CULS 611 – Appalachian Studies: Themes and Voices (Chris Green), Wednesday, 7 – 9:50 p.m.**

This interdisciplinary course orients students to the significant issues and research in Appalachian studies. Important political, social, and cultural issues will be considered. Research areas are introduced.

## **CULS 600 – SpTp: Globalizing Foods (Bob Maslowksi), Tuesday, 7 – 9:50 p.m.**

From *Homo erectus* to McDonalds, this course will cover the history of food from hunting and gathering and agricultural societies to the modern industrial food chain with an emphasis on Appalachia. It will incorporate tastings and field trips to give students a better understanding of where food comes from, what people eat and how food preferences develop.

## **HUMN 650 – Special Topics – Independent Studies 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 (Luke Eric Lassiter), Arranged**

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

## **LITS 600 – SpTp: Reading & Writing Memoir (Fran Simone), Monday, 7 – 9 p.m.**

Memoir is a story from a life. It is about how our past selves continue to inform our present selves. The class is organized around discussions and workshops which are designed to help writers transform life stories into engaging narratives. Students will read and discuss selected works. They will participate in writing workshop, draft and revise narratives and reflect on their writing process.

## **CI 677 – Writing for Publication (Luke Eric Lassiter), Wednesday, 4:30 – 6:50 p.m.**

GSEPD doctoral seminar: For professional educators and students who wish to study and practice writing articles for publication in scholarly journals in the field of education. Humanities students may register for the seminar by permission only. Contact Lassiter for more details.

After all these years, I have begun to wonder if the secret to living well is not in having all the answers but in pursuing unanswerable questions in good company.

RACHEL RAMEN

## What Can You Do?

Continued from Page 1

“Musgrave attacked the humanities in the same way he attacked extravehicular activity. Why? Because if you don’t prepare yourself, ‘the inner experience is not going to happen.’” He related to Yemma that, “Too many members of the space-traveling fellowship told him that they regretted . . . losing the whole amazing experience in the tasks at hand.” (John Yemma, Editor’s Blog, “The Astronaut Who Learned How to See,” *Christian Science Monitor*, posted May 16, 2011.)

With one end of a continuum being to do “anything my heart and mind desires to create” and the other end being to enhance spaceflight, I am curious where you,

the reader, would place your answer to “So what can you do with the humanities?”

To this end, Dr. Lassiter and I are excited about continuing with the research of alumni started several years ago by asking graduates what the study of the Humanities has brought to their lives. Stay tuned. We’ll be sharing what we discover in subsequent editions of *Graduate Humanities*. If you’d like to tell us what you’ve “done” with the humanities, how it has informed your sense of freedom (or not), please contact me at [hatfield32@marshall.edu](mailto:hatfield32@marshall.edu).

### Recent Graduates

**Katherine Thaxton Clark.** Cultural Studies/Appalachian Studies.  
Project Title: “Belle Prater’s Boy’: Where I’m From.”

**Mike Miller.** Appalachian Studies Certificate.  
Project Title: “Vestiges of Knowledge.”

**Kevin Pruitt.** Literary Studies/Historical Studies.  
Project Title: “The Major Woodram House: A Project in Historical Preservation.”

**Chris Reed.** Cultural Studies/Appalachian Studies.  
Project Title: “Understanding the Needs of Appalachia: Clay County, West Virginia.”

**Adrian Scott.** Cultural Studies/Appalachian Studies.  
Project Title: “Family, Flowers, and Fancies: The Essence of Appalachia in the Poetry of Rose Burton Isaacs.”

## WHAT’S HAPPENED ELSEWHERE?

### Carrie and Michael Kline received the Friends of Old Time Music and Dance 2011 FootBridge Award

From gathering countless oral histories of the people of West Virginia and other parts of Appalachia, to collecting and performing traditional coal-mining songs, to gathering and recording the local songs of Hampshire County for its 250th anniversary celebration, Michael and Carrie Kline have devoted their careers to preserving the music and culture of the region. For more information, see their website, “Talking Across the Lines: Celebrating Black History, Ethnic Heritage & Family Folklore,” [www.FolkTalk.org](http://www.FolkTalk.org).

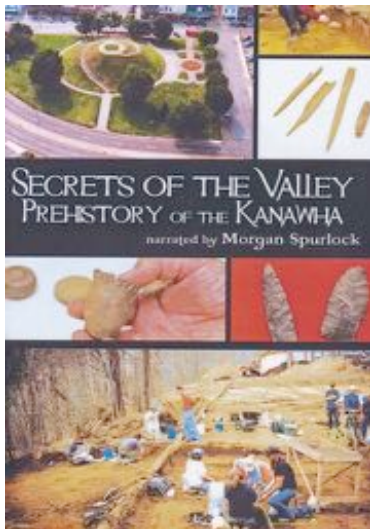




## What's Been Happening?



**Annual Meet-Eat-Greet Potluck Picnic** included Dr. Eric Lassiter and Annette Kirk ('09).



### Local Artists Installment

Staci M. Leech-Cornell poses in front of one of her favorite creations during her exhibition, "A Most Curious Coop," which is on display in the MUGC South Charleston Library until October 21. Her whimsical portraits of feathered friends are made of found or recycled paper



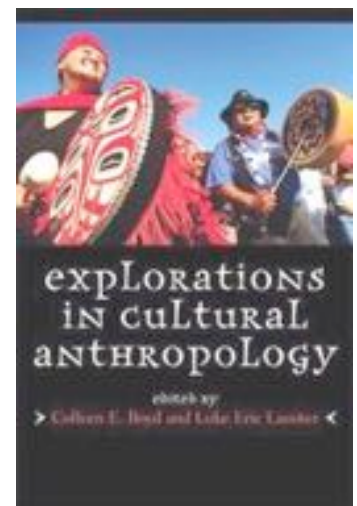
that she hand cuts or folds in the Asians origami style with black ink details. Every six weeks for a year now, visitors to Marshall University Graduate College – South Charleston campus have been able to enjoy a new exhibition of original artworks by local artists curated by Mark Tobin Moore. More information can be found at [www.marshal.edu/humn](http://www.marshal.edu/humn).

Dr. Robert Maslowski, Faculty of Cultural Studies, is the executive producer of a new documentary, "Secrets of the Valley: Prehistory of the Kanawha." Through a series of archeological digs stretching ninety-seven miles from Gauley Bridge in the center of the state to Point Pleasant at the western edge, "Secrets" explores the lives of Paleo-Indians, as well as Archaic, Woodland, and Fort Ancient people. While the focus of the film is on an archeological dream find of seven occupations in one site at the Marmet Locks and Dam, the film also examines the historic St. Albans dig and the Criel Mound excavation in South Charleston as well as many others.

The project which was eight years in the making was sponsored by the US Army Corps of Engineers. With the help of experts from Cultural Resources Analysts, its goal is to make archeology and West Virginia history not only come alive, but be more accessible to the general public. Narrated by West Virginia native Morgan Spurlock, "Secrets of the Valley" is the last of a trilogy of films. The previous two films, "Red Salt and Reynolds" and "Ghosts of Green Bottom" are available to watch on the Archaeology Channel website: [www.archaeologychannel.org](http://www.archaeologychannel.org).

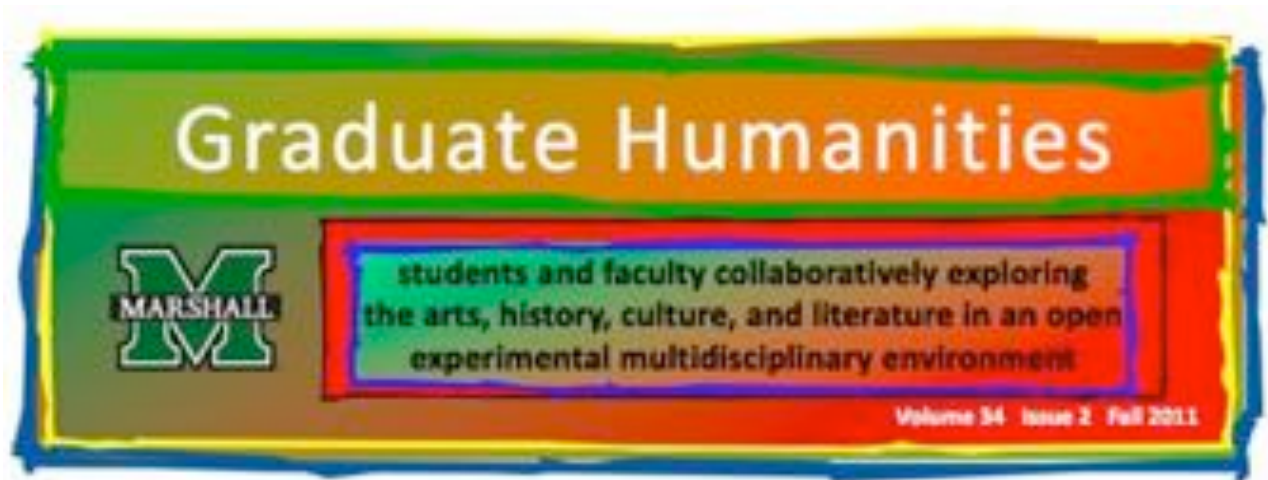
Dr. Lassiter is the co-editor of a new book, *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology*, a collection of essays written by anthropologists and other scholars about anthropological themes current in the field such as language, kinship, gender, and belief systems.

Lassiter developed the book along with Dr. Colleen Boyd, a colleague of Lassiter's when he taught at Ball State University before coming to Marshall in 1995. *Explorations* developed as an outgrowth of one of Lassiter's previous books, *Invitation to Anthropology*, which Boyd uses in her anthropology courses. Several of the readings are classic anthropological essays, but most are contemporary writings on topics ranging from the ethics and politics of cultural relativism to scientific and folk ideas about heredity to marriage to the anthropology of virtual worlds. More information may be found at [www.altamirapress.com](http://www.altamirapress.com).





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