



Graduate Humanities

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

Volume 38 Issue 2 Fall 2014 Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program

Everyone has a story to tell . . .

Our first interview is with Dr. Billy Joe Peyton, Associate Professor at West Virginia State University, and Graduate Humanities Program Associate Faculty. Dr. Peyton teaches many of the West Virginia History and Appalachian History classes on our campus and at the Glenwood Estate.

Both Dr. Peyton and Dr. Lassiter joined the MU Graduate Humanities program in 2007, an auspicious moment as was borne out by the announcement in this July of the newly organized, but several years in the making, Glenwood Center for Scholarship in the Humanities. Read more about the Center at www.marshall.edu/glenwoodcenter/.

Our second interview is with visiting scholar, Dr. Arijit Sen, who is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. During the Fall 2014 semester, Dr. Sen is teaching "Reading American Landscapes" via a combination of Skype conferences and a face-to-face meeting when he joins us here for an onsite visit in early October.

While teaching at Ball State University, Dr. Sen collaborated with an anthropologist and fellow professor, who is now well known to us as the Director of MU Graduate Humanities Program. Perhaps not coincidentally, Dr. Sen's seminar is the first of our Major Scholar Seminars – see our website for more information.

– Trish Hatfield ('08)
Program Assistant

Connecting Past and Present

Interview with Billy Joe Peyton Faculty, MU Graduate Humanities Program



Billy Joe Peyton. Born and raised on the West Side in Charleston, West Virginia. His background is eclectic which, he proudly proclaims, makes him a classic example of a humanities scholar. He starts out thinking he wants to be a banker. After five years of working at a downtown bank and taking accounting classes, he attends West Virginia University full time. A simmering love of history emerges in a class taught by Dr. John Maxwell, who inspires him to study history even when it means getting up oh-so-early for an 8am class. After earning his Doctorate he works in fields as diverse as

Public History, History of Technology and Industrial Archeology, and the last New Deal process to document historic buildings. He currently teaches at West Virginia State University and in the MU Graduate Humanities Program. He also co-directs the new Glenwood Center for Scholarship in the Humanities with Dr. Lassiter.

Billy Joe, tell us about what you do.

I'm on a crusade to try to convince people that history is not unique here – it's part of the whole national experience – and to help folks see the relevancy of the past for today.

I try to give to my students at West Virginia State University and in the Graduate Humanities Program an appreciation for the past academically and an understanding of its importance to everyday life today. To help them make a connection between the past and the present.

For example, my dad was a fifth generation West Virginian. He met my mother in Germany during the occupation in the 50s and brought her here after retiring from the military. My father was a decorated veteran of World War II and was a POW from Fayette County, West Virginia, so all his family lived nearby.

I have always been inquisitive about local history from the time I was a kid and I think part of that is because my mother was German and all her brothers fought for Hitler and the Nazis. All the family photos on my mother's side from that era, if you look closely, somewhere in the picture there were always swastikas, at weddings, graduations, just hanging out on the porch with a beer...somewhere, someone's in a uniform. I had an uncle on my dad's side who actually worked on the Hawk's Nest Tunnel project and as a kid I remember going to visit him in Glen Ferris and hearing stories from him and my dad so I knew all about the silica disaster long before it was known publicly. All this was part of my ► SEE BILLY JOE PEYTON, PAGE 4

**Interview with
Arijit Sen**
p. 2

**Spring 2015
Seminars**
p. 3

**Glenwood Estate
Happenings**
p. 5 - 6

Answering the “So What?” question

Interview with Arijit Sen, Visiting Scholar

Arijit Sen. Born in Kolkata, Sen grew up in multiple cities across India. He moves to the United States in 1989 to earn a graduate degree in Architecture at Iowa State University and a PhD in Architecture from the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Sen currently teaches architectural design, urbanism and cultural landscapes at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (senspeaks.wordpress.com). This fall, he is joining our program to teach “Reading American Landscapes” via Skype meetings and a visit in early October.

Arijit, what is it you teach?

In all my classes, whether a Ph.D. theory class or entry-level design studio, I try to make all students aware of the everyday built world as reflecting our cultural practice, as a cultural artifact. We often take our environment for granted. Nevertheless it is an active agent that frames, forms, and informs us as to how we should behave and who we are. I am interested in exploring the reflexive relationship between place and people.



How is this approach going to work when you're in Milwaukee and the students are here in South Charleston?

First, we will explore ways geographers and cultural landscape scholars read common spaces and places. Second, we will try and see how public historians uncover political processes that frame places. Third, we will explore how designers and architects study the formal and visual character of our cultural landscapes. We will compare these real places and test the methods suggested by the three groups of scholars. We will interpret familiar, ordinary, urban places that students will select as case studies. Our goal is

to uncover and understand the way we personally “read” our physical and social landscapes.

The reason I use the word “reading” is to compare our method of reading the built environment with the way we analyze text. You can do deep reading of text to uncover its symbolic meanings. You can analyze grammar and syntax that gives meaning to text and study informal use of words and language, vernacular inflections and transformations that come out of everyday usage. Reading buildings and built spaces alerts us to recurring themes just like we repeatedly find common story lines and central tropes in folklore.

I teach American cultural landscapes but I was not born in America. I came here in 1989. So for me, I am an outsider. What I like about teaching these classes is that I ask students who grew up in the United States to teach me how they read their landscape. People from different neighborhoods in the same city read their landscape in very different ways. It is important to understand how individual backgrounds and points of view frame the way we read, interpret, and act in this world. Thus, an individual’s approach towards negotiating and experiencing his/her world around him/her is important to me. This is what I mean by reading the “American cultural landscape.”

Do you anticipate an Appalachian perspective to surface?

I believe what’s going to happen is that some of the local cultural traditions will be reflected in the way the students read that landscape. I’m interested in the choice, the appropriate choice, of an urban location that the students agree to “read.” It has to be a place that is so ordinary that they don’t look at it twice.

When we talk about Appalachian cultural landscapes, it could be about very special and distinct places. But it could also be about everyday life and spaces that are common across the country. I don’t know what we will get out of this process. I know about Milwaukee cultural landscapes now having done this for about eight years and I’m really looking forward to learning more about places in West Virginia.

One of our faculty, Dr. Billy Joe Peyton, stresses that our history in West Virginia echoes everybody’s history.

Yeah, yeah. I find everybody’s history important and relevant to study. I have degrees in architecture and cultural landscape studies but that’s not really the reason I teach these classes. Two things happen in my classes. One is that this class allows students and teachers, to situate themselves, within a larger context. Could be the context of their home, their street, their city, the region, the country, and the world itself. We’re unique, yes, we’re individuals. But at the same time we belong, we participate in a drama which is larger than ourselves. A class such as this allows us to explore this larger whole and situate ourselves within it. The second point is that our class discussions make us more critically aware of our role in society. What happens is we tend to look at government, politics, business, and economics and we think that there’s not much we can do. How can we be agents of change when we are just specks within these overwhelming systems? But when you actually relate yourself as part of larger systems, you also realize that your actions are important. That our small and mundane actions, our lives and choices within everyday spaces may sustain the very system we are critical of. My goal is to create a public discourse in various settings, from classrooms to field schools.

►ARIJIT SEN, PAGE 5

The Graduate Humanities Program gave me a broad background that helps me deal with students. What I’ve found is that students need someone to care. I learned how to care in the Program.

- Adrian Scott ’11, Visiting Instructor of Developmental English
New River Community & Technical College in Beckley, West Virginia.

Spring 2015 Seminars

See www.marshall.edu/humn for more information, including seminar classroom assignments.

ADVANCED REGISTRATION AVAILABLE
Currently enrolled: November 10 – November 21
New Admits and Readmits: November 24

CULS 600: Fight The Power: Can Pop Music Foster Social Change? (Major Scholar Seminar: Lauren Onkey) Electronic/Skype meetings on Thursday, January 15, 7-9:50 p.m.; Thursday, February 26, 7-9:50 p.m.; and Thursday, March 26, 7-9:50 p.m. CLASS LIMIT: 3. By permission of the Director only.

Popular music has been associated with social change and even protest ever since rock and roll exploded in the 1950s. The music, and its integrated fan base, helped fight racial segregation. At times, musicians and activists have put the music to use specifically to further a cause or advance a message. At the same time, pop music is viewed by many as irresponsible, apolitical, simply too unruly to advance a political agenda. This course will explore how pop music has been used--by musicians, fans, and social activists--to fight, disrupt and conserve social norms of all kinds.

Dr. Lauren Onkey is the Vice President of Education and Public Programs at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, Ohio. Onkey is executive producer of the Museum's American Music Masters series. She conducts interviews for the Museum's many public programs and teaches rock and roll history courses at Case Western Reserve University.

CULS 611: Appalachian Studies: Themes & Voices (Cat Pleska) M, 7-9:50 PM 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.

Ms. Pleska earned her MFA in creative nonfiction writing at Goucher College in Baltimore and is an essayist for West Virginia Public Radio. She also is the Editor-in-Chief of Mountain State Press and book reviewer for The Charleston Gazette. Her latest book, Riding on Comets: A Memoir, is published by West Virginia University Press.

HIST 600: Charleston Water Crisis Oral History & Documentary (Luke Eric Lassiter) W, 4 - 6:50 PM By permission of the Director only This seminar will produce a digital documentary on the January 9, 2014 chemical spill in Charleston, West Virginia, an event affecting the drinking water of over 300,000 people—the largest disaster of its kind in American history. The documentary will pull from the oral history research of three different research projects, carried out by the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, University of California-Berkeley researcher Gabe Schwartzman, and Charleston-based documentarian Laura Harbert Allen. In addition to the documentary, seminar participants will produce conference papers and other essays. The project will be facilitated by Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter

(Graduate Humanities Program Director) in collaboration with Schwartzman and Allen.

Dr. 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 605: Western Traditions & Contemporary Cultures (Anne McConnell) T, 7 – 9:50 PM Using primary materials from different cultural periods, as well as contemporary critical analyses, this core course explores epistemo-logical questions that underlie conflicts between cultures.

Dr. Anne McConnell teaches world literature, critical theory, and writing in the English Department at West Virginia State University. Her recent book, Approaching Disappearance, published by Dalkey Archive Press, explores the work of Maurice Blanchot, Jorge Luis Borges, Franz Kafka, and Nathalie Sarraute.

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.

LITS 600: Creative Hybrids: A Writing Workshop (Kent Shaw) W, 7 - 9:50 PM. The lines separating out the various genres have continued to blur. The "short short" or "flash fiction" is often indistinguishable from the prose poem. Additionally, the lyric essay, a term originally coined by John D'Agata has developed into its own subgenre. But is it a subgenre of poetry? Of the personal essay? This course will explore both these blurred spaces and lead seminar participants with prompts for writing the lyric essay and flash fiction. By the end of the course, participants will have a full lyric essay, a series of short short's, and the start of a lyric essay as well.

Dr. Kent Shaw teaches in the English Department at West Virginia State University. His first book Calenture was published by University of Tampa Press. His work has since appeared in The Believer, Ploughshares, Boston Review, Witness, TriQuarterly and elsewhere. He regularly reviews books at The Rumpus and is a poetry editor at the online magazine Better: Culture & Lit. ■

up-bringing. Having this multicultural background opened my eyes to world events and the importance of knowing the past and knowing history and how it influenced who I am.

One thing I try to stress in my teaching is that our history in West Virginia echoes everybody's history. There are twists and turns along the way that make us unique and different and, being an Appalachian state, we have our unique Appalachian heritage, but overall everything that's happened locally needs to be understood against the backdrop of larger events.

Part of the perception that this region is different comes from the stereotyping of the Appalachian Region that started in the 1880s and 90s. The region became synonymous with poverty and deprivation from the Great Depression on. I tend to think it's partly our national ignorance about our own history and our own geography that we think this place is "*in* America but not *of* America." In the class recently held at the Glenwood Estate in South Charleston, we talked about the Civil War and how it affected Glenwood and the history of Charleston.

I come at history from both the academic and practical aspect. My background is eclectic. Before teaching, I made a living for a number of years as a public historian, taking history out of the classroom and into the streets where it belongs. It can take the form of working for a local historical society, doing archival management research, working for a place like the Glenwood Estate in Charleston as a historic property...with the end product not being a publication or a classroom setting but something the public can do.

Part of Glenwood's unique history is that it was a slave plantation along with four other properties on the West Side of Charleston. What we don't have much of is documentation of plantation life. In other

parts of the South, including Monticello and really topnotch history sites, they have been dealing with the relationship between blacks and whites during the slave era for going on 25 years.

One of the issues we have at Glenwood is that we do not know the details of African-American life at Glenwood. Scholarship will reveal what happened and it's not that we don't have a general idea, but we don't have the personal stories and personal interactions.

At the very least, we could put a face on slavery at Glenwood in this area by trying to talk with descendants of African-Americans who were enslaved. I'm positive there are folks around who have a story to tell and we just haven't found them or haven't looked for them yet through genealogy research.

Sometimes people ask why do we keep bringing up slavery? What I always say is, "Imagine, if as far back as you can go, let's take the whole owning of a human being out of the equation for the moment, you only get to 1865 and that's it." You know how people pride themselves on their family heritage, for example, "our family goes back to the Mayflower." But what if you're lucky if you can go back just to 1865 and prior to that, there's nothing. Or if there is a record, it would be a number, gender, black or mulatto designation, a name, and that's it.

We hope people in this area will come out and share some of their family history. I'm convinced the best way to deal with racial issues is to confront, in a positive, engaging way, the relationship between slave owners and their slaves. And Glenwood is a perfect venue to do that.

The newly organized Glenwood Center

I tend to think it's partly our national ignorance about our own history and our own geography that we think this place is "*in* America but not *of* America."

for Scholarship in the Humanities is an exciting opportunity to really promote humanities scholarship in all its forms. Dr. Eric Lassiter and I will be co-directors and one of the first events we will have, probably in the spring, will be to bring in a speaker on a timely topic.

There are several options for inaugural projects: for example, the centenary of Booker T. Washington's death is coming up so it will be interesting to look at him in a new light. Washington has been kind of forgotten over the last 50 years. To really understand the role of someone like Washington and their time you have to understand what was going on back then and how they fit in.

Or possibly we could have something on World War I because we're also in the centenary of World War I – "the war that changed the world" – and some historians are now saying that World War I and World War II were one event. It's not a new interpretation but it's gaining credence. The two wars were separated by 20 years but World War I was directly responsible for Hitler and Nazi Germany so in that way they are a continuing series of events.

Glenwood is a great venue for exploring all aspects of the humanities. It was an important part of this area's history and I think we can resurrect it in memory of folks.

The Graduate Humanities Program fills a very important need to understand our place in the world. And to celebrate our really unique nature and to hopefully understand more of the differences that make us all human. Our goal is to share some of those common experiences.

The comments I've read of graduates are that the program made them a better person – able to understand themselves and the world. ■

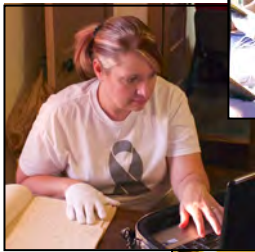


Congratulations Dr. Simone!

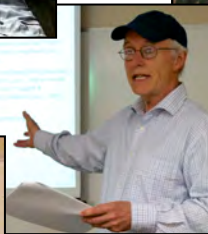
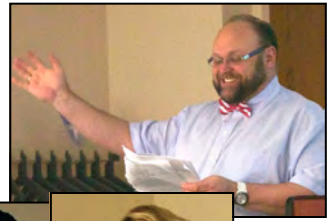
You taught many of us to write about a slice of life from our own lives and in our own voices, with emphasis on "to show, not tell." And now we have in our hands your newly signed book, *Dark Wine Waters: My Husband of a Thousand Joys and Sorrows*, to show us how you did it. Bravissimo! And thank you.

See The Charleston Gazette, Wednesday, August 6, 2014, Living Section (1D) for an interview with Dr. Simone.

Glenwood / History of Charleston Seminar & Public Presentation



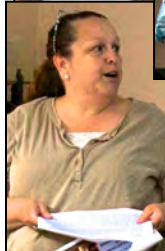
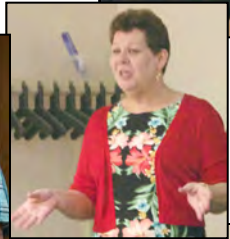
Working with primary documents



Presenting slideshows of transcriptions of letters and journals in the Glenwood collection.



Seminar members on porch of Glenwood Quarters building.



► Arijit Sen from Page 2

At Ball State, I learned a lot from Eric. He has really made me think of the world very differently. When Eric did *The Other Side of Middletown* project, he had undergraduates work on a real problem, a real project, and let them take ownership of their education. This is exactly why I do the field schools. And it never fails.

Tell us more about your field schools.

My classes always have an application component where students explore issues in real life in the field. My students conduct asset mapping and archival research, exploring unique strengths that exist within small, local neighborhoods (see thefieldschool.weebly.com). They document voices that never get heard in official histories.

The first time I heard the words, “asset mapping,” someone asked “Why do you always have to have a problem?” I realized that when your story of a place is built around problems, you see the residents as victims, you find problems, and your story is singularly negative. And when I realized this, it was a huge moment in my life.

Here history is important. Some old buildings are more flexible. They have accommodated different kinds of residents and responded to societal change over time. Many of our inner city neighborhoods are actually resilient spaces that survive major disinvestments. These places can teach us a lot about stewardship and sustainability. The government tends to see these older neighborhoods as problems. This single story – a narrative of failure – is really troubling. How do we get out of that? If you examine

those neighborhoods from an asset-based perspective you will be humbled by the amount of work and care put in by residents in order to live and raise families and keep their turfs safe. A really brave community will survive despite its problems.

Any final words you’d like to say?

I trouble my students all the time by the “So what?” question. And then they start troubling me too with the “So what?” question! So what’s relevant? Why are we doing all this? Incessant questioning, doubting, and critiquing keep us on our toes. It helps us remain real and pragmatic. It stops us from slipping into that comfortable zone of intellectual lethargy. I hope the students taking this class will keep asking me the “So what?” questions. I sure will be asking them that! ■

A NEW IDEA IN AN OLD PLACE
~Glenwood Center for Scholarship In the Humanities~

ANNOUNCING



Glenwood Estate, home of the new Glenwood Center for Scholarship in the Humanities

A new Public – Private Partnership between the MU Graduate Humanities Program, the WVSU History Program, and the Historic Glenwood Foundation.

Major Scholar Seminars 2014 - 2015

Engaging Graduate Humanities students in scholarly activity with major outside scholars and public intellectuals. Within the framework of small, intensive reading seminars, scholars meet with students over the course of a semester via electronic conference media and at a face-to-face meeting during a campus visit.

Reading American Landscapes

Fall 2014 (In Progress) Dr. Arijit Sen, Associate Professor of Architecture
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

Fight the Power: Can Pop Music Foster Change?

Spring 2015 Dr. Lauren Onkey, Vice President of Education
and Public Programs
Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Cleveland, Ohio

More information on the upcoming seminars and campus visits is posted on www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/major-scholar-seminars/.



Graduate Humanities

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

Graduate Humanities Program
Marshall University Graduate College
South Charleston Campus
100 Angus E. Peyton Drive
South Charleston, WV 25303

www.marshall.edu/humn
304-746-2022

Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter
Director

Carolyn Quinlan '13
Sr. Executive Secretary

Trish Hatfield '08
Program Assistant

Nonprofit organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Charleston, WV
Permit No. 1093