



# Graduate Humanities

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

Graduate Humanities Program  
www.marshall.edu/humn  
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Program Assistant

Volume 38 Issue 1 Spring 2015 Marshall University Graduate Humanities Program

## Everyone has a story

Our newsletters continue to revolve around the guiding question, "What can you do with a Humanities degree?" All of our interviews echo philosopher Ralph Perry's observation that the humanities are the "action which precedes from personal reflection and the integration of interests."

In this issue we start with Dr. Bob Maslowski, retired archaeologist from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The pictures were taken last fall during a guest speaker's presentation for Bob's seminar, "Time & Place in Appalachia," and a "shovel test" dig at Fort Blair, Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

Next is Dr. Lauren Onkey, from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. Dr. Onkey is our second visiting scholar in the Major Scholars Seminar. Her seminar, "Fight the Power: Can Pop Music Foster Social Change?" is timely given contemporary civil rights challenges. The pictures with her interview are from her talk, "Stevie Wonder's Social Vision," one of two given to the public during her visit here. (Jay Thomas, student and owner/chef of Blues BBQ catered lunch. Read Jay's interview in the Spring 2014 Graduate Humanities online at [www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/newsletter/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/newsletter/).) Both seminars included activities for which the public participated, an outcome of Dr. Lassiter's "public humanities" vision for the program.

—Trish Hatfield ('08)  
Program Assistant



### Recent Graduate

**Brenna Craig '14**  
Culture/Literary Studies  
Project Title:  
The Formation of  
Mountain State Press"

See interview with Brenna in Spring 2014 Graduate Humanities at [www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/newsletter/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/newsletter/).

## Always taking risks



Dr. Bob Maslowski (l) and student Harley Walden discuss Fort Blair excavation site.

**Bob Maslowski.** Born and raised in the northern panhandle steel town of Weirton, West Virginia. For 29 years, he was an archaeologist for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Although focused on the Ohio River Valley, his field experience extends to Israel, Cyprus, Laos, and Vietnam. He has consulted, written, edited, produced and/or facilitated three films, presented at conferences, taught, served on non-profit boards and professional organizations. He co-authored with his wife, Susan, "The West Virginia Pumpkin Festival Cookbook." He makes wine. And since 1997, he has been one of our "unusual collaborative of faculty" teaching seminars on Native Americans, food and culture, archaeology, Appalachia, and the Glenwood Estate.

### Bob, how did you get into teaching for the Graduate Humanities Program?

In 1997, I got a call at the Corps of Engineers asking if I could fill-in and teach a class on Hunters and Gatherers in the MU Graduate Humanities Program. Once I got into the course, I realized it wasn't appropriate for the Humanities. It was a graduate course designed by a Ph.D archaeologist for archaeology graduate students, so I redesigned it on the run. After a couple more classes, I developed lectures according to who was in the class and what their interests were. I like working with students because I learn a lot. Some of their questions are bizarre but reflect approaches I never thought of before.

SEE MASLOWSKI, PAGE 4



Dr. Stephen McBride, reaches into "shovel test" hole dug by student Josh Mills (kneeling on right). Community member Ben Hatfield (l) and student Harley Walden watch to see if any artifacts are unearthed.



Community members join the excavation.

# Go to the Music to Figure Things Out

## Interview with Dr. Lauren Onkey, Visiting Scholar



**Lauren Onkey.** Vice President of Education & Public Programs at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Cleveland, Ohio. It's 2008 and she's nicely settled into a tenured position in English at Ball State University in Indiana. Answering a call from a mutual friend of herself and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, he asks her to consider a position in the education department of the museum. Her response, "Are you crazy? I have tenure...." When she looked into it, she thought, "My gosh, here's an opportunity to teach about the history of this music that I care so much about and there's so much to be said about it to K-12 students, college students, the general public, passionate fans, and to get to hear the artist's stories and do interviews . . . when does an opportunity like this come along with all those kinds of audiences, sometimes in a single day? Things fell into place. Since then, she's been helping the museum reach more than 30,000 people annually. Visit her blog at [rockhall.com/blog/author/dr-lauren-onkey/](http://rockhall.com/blog/author/dr-lauren-onkey/).

### **Lauren, would you explain your passion for Rock and Roll?**

Rock and Roll is an art form that's helped me understand the world. As a young person, it helped me to hear different ideas from different people other than my family or the people I grew up around. I still go to the music to figure things out or to celebrate or to share sorrow, understand sorrow. It's always been an incredibly useful art form for me in how I define myself.

### **What's your approach to teaching this class on Rock and Roll in our Graduate Humanities Program?**

The class is about music and social change – whether popular music, rock and roll, soul

music, or rap music can actually affect change. We'll be looking at popular music from the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st century, I'm really energized by the different life experiences and responses that the students are bringing to the class.

In our first class, we talked about the theme song to the new film, "Selma," by singer-songwriter, John Legend, and the hip-hop artist, Common. The song is called "Glory." It's only been out a few weeks. I certainly haven't formed any strong opinions about it so it was really interesting to toss it around a bit. It's always fascinating to me that people will respond to a song in very, very different ways or have different interpretations because they are hearing it through their own life experience or taste, even. We can hear a song in a particular style that we love or hate, and it affects how we hear it. Everybody in the class was really open and that's always fun.

What I've found in teaching at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is that when it comes to popular music, and the music that people care about, they feel very attached to it. They feel very comfortable talking about it. They feel like experts. A lot of times people use music to help define themselves. Then it's fun to discuss because they want to argue about it. People are very, very passionate about their music because they feel that if you don't like their music, you don't like them or vice versa. I'm always interested in these questions of music and identity.

We began this class by listening and thinking about our individual responses to Billie Holliday's song, "Strange Fruit" from 1939. It's a stark and powerful song about lynching. This isn't a music-only class; we want to really dig into how the music itself helps to inform the message of the song; to get people to change attitudes, or inspire people or get people to act in some way. There are a lot of questions that revolve around this topic. If a song is a big hit, does its message get diluted? Can a really great message song be catchy enough to be a big hit?

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### **How would a song get diluted if it's really popular?**

A famous example is Bruce Springsteen's song from 1984, "Born in The U.S.A." It was critical in many ways of the U.S. government's role in the Vietnam war. But the chorus, "Born in the U.S.A.," is loud and rousing. It feels very patriotic. In that sense, people could interpret it to be pro-war. It was a huge hit. And a lot of people were saying, "Nobody was listening to the verses, right?" So were people really listening to the song or responding to the beat?

### **You said earlier that you "go to the music" to figure things out. What do you mean by this?**

Here's an example. Here at the museum, we're celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The museum is free so we'll bring in about 8,000 people. We are going to spotlight the 1971 album by Marvin Gaye, "What's Going On?" Gaye had been very successful throughout the 60s with love songs and working with Motown. This album was a change in which he was trying to find out the impact of the Vietnam war, and he was feeling a fraying of some of the advances of the Civil Rights movement where he was living, in Detroit.

I've been listening to some of the record, which still feels, unfortunately, very relevant. We had an incident here in Cleveland at the end of last year where a 12-year old boy was shot and killed by a police officer. He had a toy gun that looked like a real gun. And there it is. A shocking thing to comprehend. And on "What's Going On," Gaye has a song called "Inner City Blues" in which he has a phrase, "trigger-happy policing." I've heard that song a million times, but as I was preparing for this grad class, that phrase really stood out to me again. It prompted me to think about the historical line of this contemporary incident here in Cleveland. The issue keeps coming up and coming up.

"What's Going On?" startled and pushed me to learn more about things from the past – mull it over, stay with it, pay attention to it. I might play that record every day for a month as it keeps me thinking about it. Meditating on it. Not to forget it. Maybe music helps us not forget things.

SEE ONKEY, PAGE 5

## Summer 2015 Seminars ♦ May 18 - August 7, 2015

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

REGISTRATION AVAILABLE MARCH 30

**CULS 600 SelTp: Appalachian Folklore (Lassiter); Hybrid Online & Face-to-Face, with four live meetings on Tuesdays, 7 - 9:50 PM: May 19; June 16; July 14; August 4.** This seminar will explore the wide range of human expression (story, song, art, belief, etc.) in Appalachia via the field of Folklore. The course will take up the various kinds of folklore in Appalachia, as well as the folklore traditions found among different groups in the region.

**HUMN 600 Introduction to Study in the Humanities (Lassiter); Hybrid Online & Face-**

**to-Face Seminar, with four live meetings on Wednesdays, 7 - 9:50 PM: May 20; June 24; July 22; August 5.** 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. Open to non-degree students.

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

## Fall 2015 Seminars ♦ August 24 - December 4, 2015

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

REGISTRATION AVAILABLE APRIL 13

**A&S 600 SelTp: Song Traditions & Musical Experience (Lassiter); W, 7 - 9:50 PM.** This seminar will explore song traditions from a variety of perspectives and cultural contexts. It will focus, in particular, on the field of ethnomusicology and develop understandings of musical experience as an individual, as well as a social process. *Dr. Lassiter, director of the Graduate Humanities Program and professor of humanities and anthropology, has written widely on topics concerning anthropology, folklore, ethnomusicology, and ethnography. His latest book, titled Doing Ethnography Today, co-authored with Elizabeth Campbell, explores the complexities of doing collaborative ethnography in dynamic and shifting fieldwork sites.*

**HIST 600 SelTp: Appalachian Archaeology; (Maslowski); Saturdays, 9 AM - 2:30 PM; Sept. 5, 19, 26; Oct. 3, 17, 24; Nov. 7, 21. See [www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/seminar-schedules/](http://www.marshall.edu/graduatehumanities/seminar-schedules/) for more information.** This seminar will engage participants in the archaeology of Appalachia, and involve a special focus on the Glenwood Estate, the lens through which the archaeology of the region will be viewed. Through a Federal Historic Preservation Grant, and in partnership with the Glenwood Center for Scholarship in the Humanities, students will be involved in archaeological survey,

excavation, and lab analysis in their study of both Glenwood and the Appalachian region. Please note that there will be 8 Saturday seminar meetings across the semester. *Dr. Robert Maslowski, retired Archaeologist for the Huntington District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, possesses extensive knowledge of Appalachian archaeology, culture, and history. He was executive producer of three award winning films, Ghosts of Green Bottom, Red Salt & Reynolds, and Secrets of the Valley. His numerous publications have appeared in venues such as World Archaeology, National Geographic Society Research Reports, Pennsylvania Archaeologist, Wonderful West Virginia, and West Virginia Archeologist.*

**HUMN 601 Literary Theory & Criticism (McConnell); T, 4:30 - 6:50 PM.** Core course introduces modern critical approaches, concepts and methods of research and scholarship in the broad field of literature. *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 604 Expository Writing for Research (Pleska), M, 7 - 9:50 p.m.** This core writing course develops proficiency in writing for research. Open to non-degree students. *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.*

**HUMN 650 Special Topics (Independent Studies arranged between instructor and student—contact Program 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.

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# Maslowski from page 1

It's very rewarding watching students struggle with picking a term paper topic, seeing them come up with innovative topics, getting their work published and eventually launching successful careers.

## What led you into archaeology?

Well, I was always interested in science. I got a football scholarship to attend Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts. I was good at physics and liked it but hadn't taken any of the calculus needed. The math teacher said, "I'll make a deal with you. I'll pass you if you'll change your major." I had met many of the basic requirements for psychology already, so I changed my major and got a degree in psychology with a minor in philosophy and theology. I took all the electives I was interested in, with the best teachers.

When I was a senior, a friend of mine gave me the book, *African Genesis*, by Robert Ardrey. It was a best seller at the time about Early Man and the excavations in Africa. I really got into that. The next semester I took courses in Cultural Anthropology and Biblical Archaeology. An anthropologist from Rochester University spoke in one of my psychology classes. Everyone totally zoned out. He knew he lost his audience and he didn't know what to do so I started asking him questions about evolution. He'd perk up and go on and a little later, I'd ask him another question. He was appreciative. I was walking out of the lecture hall and two of my psych professors grabbed me and said,

"Where the hell did you learn that stuff you were asking him?" One of them said, "You know if you want to go into anthropology, we can get you into an anthropology school." I decided on the University of Pittsburgh, because it was close to home and I figured I was going to get drafted.

After Holy Cross, I worked in Israel working with Hebrew Union College on Tel Gezer, one of Solomon's "chariot cities." I was always interested in traveling. One of my professors, Jim Adovasio, would talk about different projects, one in Cyprus. He said no students were interested in going. Me and Joel Gunn, another graduate student, said we would go, just tell us what to do. We took off for a month survey of western Cyprus on a National Geographic grant. We stayed with the Australian UN Forces, this was right after a civil war and the area was part Turkish and part Greek. Later a survey in Mexico for the Smithsonian came along and we said, "Sign us up!" We ended up going to Austin, Texas, and hanging out for a month because the permits never came. We never made it to Mexico, but I made a lot of contacts and got a Smithsonian Fellowship to do my dissertation on Smithsonian Collections from west Texas.

One of my favorite courses was on the anthropology of food. My interest in food

started with my time in Israel. We had the weekends off and traveled over most of the country in search of the local and exotic. In Vietnam I was in the Military Police and worked with the Vietnamese and Koreans who provided us with local foods for going away parties. At Pitt our students and professors worked all over the world. We had grilled liver like they ate in Africa. Hummus – you added garlic until your eyes began to water. As part of our archaeology training we got a road kill deer from Pennsylvania DOT, butchered it with stone tools

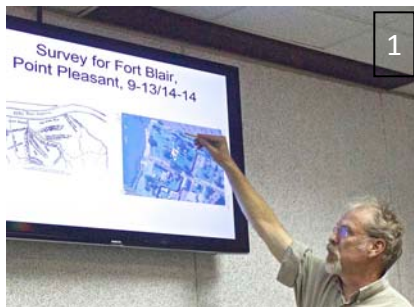
and grilled part of it for dinner. The last several years I've been interested in research on the transition from agriculture to urbanization related to the Glenwood Estate. [See Fall 2015 schedule, pg. 3, "Glenwood Seminar on Appalachian Archaeology."]

## What would you say about the value of a Humanities degree?

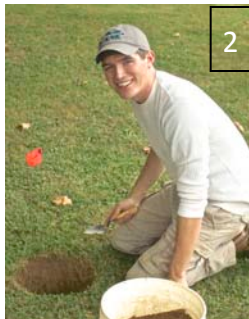
My background in the Humanities prepared me for diversified assignments at the Corps of Engineers. Besides being in charge of archaeological and historical studies I was involved in project management, negotiations with Indian tribes and even wrote the Environmental Impact Statements for Lock Replacement Projects. The diversity in my education meant I could have gone anywhere in the Corps. I always felt my background in the humanities made it easier to solve problems and come up with innovative solutions. ■

## Fort Blair "Shovel Test" Excavation September 2014

For a write-up of the Fort Blair excavation by WV Gazette reporter, Rick Steelhammer, go to [www.wvgazette.com/article/20140913/GZ01/140919630](http://www.wvgazette.com/article/20140913/GZ01/140919630)



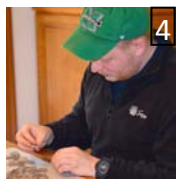
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1 **Guest speaker Dr. Stephen McBride** describes survey plan for Fort Blair at Point Pleasant, West Virginia.

2 **Student Josh Mills** at the Fort Blair site digs a shovel test hole the diameter of the shovel and at least a foot deep. At Fort Blair they went 3' because of a backfill layer.

3 **Student Harley Walden** at the Fort Blair site sifts dirt through a screen to separate dirt from artifacts.

4 **Harley Walden** analyzing prehistoric pottery.

5 **Stone tools** recovered from the excavation.

6 **Sandstone fragment** marked with an X may have been a spindle whorl.



Dr. Onkey speaks about musical pioneer Stevie Wonder.

**How would you answer the question, "What can you do with a Humanities degree?"**

As an undergraduate, I majored in English and political science, and then I pursued English for my MA and Ph.D. So I'm a humanities person, through and through. When I came to this museum, there was a whole lot I had to do right off the bat for which I had no experience. For example, interview an artist, produce a concert, communicate what we do on a daily basis to potential funders. Navigate political advocacy with a Congress person about a pending bill that might have education implications. Create partnerships with the city of Cleveland school system, with private funders' banks, unions, theaters . . . all kinds of things that I had no experience in.

What I brought to the table was an ability to analyze in a very systematic way, to understand how things worked, what the problem was to be solved, and who was the best person to solve it. Coming out

of the Humanities, asking questions was in my DNA. In a leadership position, one of five vice-presidents, I had to be an advocate for my division. Explaining the value of what my education department was doing in a clear and concise way to different audiences is crucial to my job. What can you do with a Humanities degree? You can read, write, communicate, and analyze structures and problems - that's the short answer to that question.



Audience on campus of West Virginia State University listen to Dr. Onkey's speaking about Stevie Wonder's social vision.

**Any final words you would like to say to our readers?**

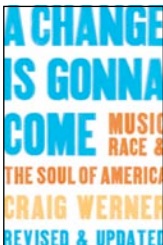
Come up to Cleveland and visit the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum! Listen attentively to the music that moves you. Mine it for history and ideas that are there. Always keep your ears open to sounds that are unfamiliar to you because you'll never know what you'll learn in there. ■

**"Women Who Rock: Vision, Passion, Power"**

<http://video.pbs.org/video/2168854975/>

"Women are the 21st century's top-grossing recording artists. This film tells the story of how we got here, tracing the earliest women musicians from the 1920's to the mega stars of today."

**Additional Resources**



**A favorite of the students in Dr. Onkey's class:**

*A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & The Soul of America* by Craig Werner

**Student Reflection on Dr. Onkey's class**

I have always had a love of music but failed to recognize its importance beyond sheer entertainment. My perspective has changed entirely after taking the Major Scholar Seminar, "Fight the Power, Can Pop Music Foster Social Change?" with instructor Lauren Onkey.

Thus far this course has challenged me to reexamine history through the cultural lens of musicians, songwriters and the audience who give their songs life. Most recently, we have explored music related to the Civil Rights Movement. The analysis of songs such as Sam Cooke's, "A Change is Gonna Come," gave me an emotional and personal perspective of this historical time period.

I no longer view the Civil Rights Movement as a stagnant event in history, but rather the music helped it to become a personal event that cried out for people to not only take notice, but to move toward change. So much of what is represented in the music is still quite relevant today.

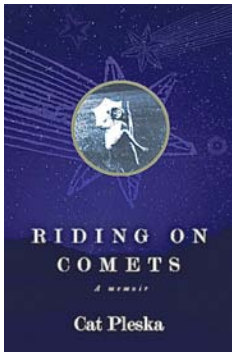
This course has helped to realize that while music is a form of entertainment, it is also a universal way to reach out to the masses and challenge them to make a difference.

— Angie Holley, Director  
Marshall University  
Heart of Appalachia Talent Search Program

**Online interview with Dr. Onkey**

[www.pbs.org/arts/gallery/women-who-rock/09\\_lauren\\_onkey](http://www.pbs.org/arts/gallery/women-who-rock/09_lauren_onkey)

## NEW BOOKS by three of our *unusual collaborative of faculty*



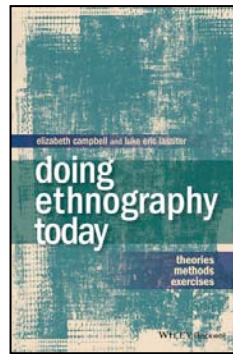
***Riding on Comets : A Memoir***  
by Cat Pleska. Faculty, Editor-in-Chief of Mountain State Press

Cat Pleska whispers and shouts about growing up around savvy, strong women and hard-working, hard-drinking men. This story provides an uncommon glimpse into this region: not coal, but an aluminum plant; not hollers, but small-town America; not hillbillies, but a hard-working family with traditional values. Cat reveals the sometimes

tender, sometimes frightening education of a child who listens at the knees of these giants. She mimics and learns every nuance, every rhythm—how they laugh, smoke, cuss, fight, love, and tell stories—as she unwittingly prepares to carry their tales forward, their words and actions forever etched in her mind. And finally, she discovers a life story of her own.” –Abridged summary from West Virginia University Press

"I just finished reading your comet (which I started on the 24th [and finished on the 26th]) & loved each and every minute!"

– Dr. Chris Green, Graduate Humanities Program Affiliated Faculty, Director of the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center; Associate Professor of Appalachian Studies, Berea, Kentucky.



***Doing Ethnography Today: Theories, Methods, Exercises***

by Dr. Beth Campbell. Faculty, Assistant Professor of Education.  
and Dr. Luke Eric Lassiter. Director, Professor of Humanities and Anthropology

Ethnography begins and ends with people. Combining both theory and practice, *Doing Ethnography Today* emphasizes the ways that collaboration

provides the foundation on which contemporary ethnography is built and sustained. It shows that ethnography is personal as well as collaborative, creative and artful rather than analytical or technical, and, oriented towards dynamic and complex ideas of culture and society. Includes guidance on interview questions and selecting appropriate field equipment with lists of suggested readings and websites. – Abridged summary from the back cover.

“Doing Ethnography Today is a book that practitioners, students, and teachers have been hoping to find for a long time. Using it will give you a roadmap to create rigorous, ethical, and artful projects that can have important lives in the world.”

– Rachel Breunlin, Neighborhood Story Project



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