

MLA Connections

a graduate program dedicated to the life of the mind

Minnesota State University Moorhead Master of Liberal Arts • Spring 2006 Edition

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
moorhead

Friendly Reminder:

Spring Pre-Registration Dates: March 27-April 4th. Remember, as long as you have a Dragon ID you can pre-register using the phone: Dial 4240 (on campus), 477-4240 (local) or 1-888-297-7089 (out of town), or check the Registration link on the web at www.mnstate.edu.

MLA Courses planned through Spring 2007 include:

Fall Course for 2006

MLA 690: Monday 6:30-9:00 p.m.: Artistic Creativity: Portraits of Art & Artists taught by Dr. Laura Fasick.

MLA 690: Wednesday 6:30-9:00 p.m.: The Literatures of War taught by Dr. Stephen Hamrick

Engl 490/590: T-Th 2:00-3:15 p.m.: Writing About Art, taught by Dr. Sharon Scapple.

Philosophy Phil 495/595: T-Th 9:30-10:45 a.m.: Seminar in Feminist Theory, taught by Dr. Randy Cagle.

Philosophy Phil 590: Wednesday 6:30-9:00 p.m.: Nietzsche & Art, 3 credits taught by Dr. Randy Cagle.

MLA Summer Class

FIRST SUMMER SESSION: June 5th-July 7th

MLA 690 M-W 6:30-9:45 Memoir and the American Family taught by Dr. Maureen Reed. See Bill Gillette's interview with Dr. Reed below.

ENGL 322 MTWTh 2:15-4:15 American Transcendentalism and its Critics taught by Dr. Jim Bense. Note: To register for this class, please request & get a signed Arranged slip from either Dr. Bense, bense@mnstate.edu or Dr. Coghill, coghill@mnstate.edu. MLA students will register under the MLA 697 number.

Spring Courses for 2007:

MLA 690: Tuesday 6:30-9:00 The Shadow taught by Dr. Al Davis. Course description forthcoming.

MLA 690: Wednesday 4:00-6:30 Censorship in American Literature. Course description forthcoming.

MLA 630: Masterpieces of Spanish Literature. Day/Time TBA.

Note

- Please see schedule & Tri-College for additional & appropriate graduate level classes. As soon as I have information about Summer and Fall 2006 MLA classes, I will let you know.
- If any of these courses are not confirmed, and if I must arrange for substitutions, I will let you know as soon as I can.

From the Director's Desk:

Dr. Sheila Coghill



Welcome to Spring, 2006. The MLA Program continues strong and steady. To date our enrollments are healthy and our graduation rates comparable to Masters programs of this size.

Currently Enrolled in Program: 27

In Program but not currently enrolled: 18

New Admits 2005-06: 9

Working on Thesis Projects: 4

Graduated 2005-06: 4

Will Graduate 2006-07: 4

The program continues as a vital community of teachers and learners "dedicated to the life of the mind."

You will recall that in the Fall MLA Newsletter, 2005, I described the process for how MLA classes are selected and offered. You can view this Newsletter via the MLA website: <http://www.mnstate.edu/mla/> As MLA Director, I do work hard at getting two

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designated MLA courses to offer each semester, and one or two MLA courses for the Hispanic Emphasis. When I know of other courses that will be open to MLA students, I also try to let everyone know about those.

As part of our revising and updating for the MLA website, I have requested “thumbnails” from faculty, MLA students, and alumni. Many have responded and been very generous. If anyone reading this newsletter would still like to send in a “thumbnail” of themselves, please feel free via email to coghill@mnstate.edu. These will go up on the MLA website Faculty/Student/Alumni link and will serve as a way to introduce ourselves, learn what our interests and projects are, and form a virtual community of scholars “dedicated to the life of the mind.” These can be updated & revised at any time, and I will add new ones as they

come in. I hope to have as many as possible up on the MLA website by early March 2006.

I have also been working to stay in touch with alumni and students soon to complete their program of study. To this effect I often try to list them or describe Thesis projects or ideas students are working on. This gives currently enrolled MLA students a chance to see the exciting things, the range and flexibility allowed by the MLA Program, as well as all the good work MLA students do for their final Thesis projects! These are the things that keep the MLA community of learners alive and vital. Another way of illustrating this will be to gather student responses to the Program itself, and I am developing a simple Exit Interview (consisting of three or four simple questions) for students near the end of their program. I hope to implement this

soon and publish the results on the MLA website.

Because we have so many good things going on in the MLA Program, I will now turn this space over to courses confirmed for Spring 2006, and courses tentatively planned for Summer through Fall and Spring 2006-2007.

Course Descriptions For Summer–Fall 2006 Classes

MLA 690: Memoir and the American Family. Summer Session I
(June 5–July 7) M–W 6:30–9:45 (3 credits). taught by Dr. Maureen Reed.



How has the literary genre of memoir shaped the way that Americans think about their own and others’ families? How can student writers use this genre to explore their own ideas about and roles within families? This course seeks to answer these questions using an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from the methodologies of cultural history, literature, gender studies, ethnic studies, and creative writing. In order to do so, the course is divided into two parts, a literature review and a writing workshop.

During the first unit, students will read works of literary memoir by American writers that explore themes of family life from a variety of ethnic and gender perspectives. A brief review of the history of American autobiography will include selections from authors such as Mary Rowlandson, Benjamin

Franklin, Frederick Douglass, Mary Austin, Zora Neale Hurston, and Mary McCarthy. Then we will turn to more recent works in the genre of memoir, including at least one book-length memoir as well as short works by authors such as Joan Didion, Mary Karr, Richard Rodriguez, David Sedaris, and Tobias Wolff; as well as writers writing about the process of writing memoir, such as Patricia Hampl and Anne Lamott.

Class meetings during this first unit will include extensive discussion of these texts as well as short exercises in content and style inspired by these readings. Thematic topics that will be discussed will include changes in gender roles, recurring tensions between individualism and family life, the role of ethnicity in families and in memoir writing, and the potentials and limitations of writing as a form of memory. Our discussion will likely also touch on the “fine line” between memoir and fiction that has been in the news lately. In order to gain a better sense of the range and purpose of the genre, students will conduct research on how

these texts are reviewed and produce a short review essay themselves.

In the second unit, students will write and revise a substantial piece of memoir. They will submit a proposal, a draft, and a revised version to both the professor and their peers. Class sessions during this unit will be organized to allow extensive discussion of student work through a creative writing workshop format. These discussions will be informed by our reading during the first part of the semester as well as by student-generated questions about technique and style.

Students who enroll in this course will likely represent a wide range of reading and writing experiences: experience in creative writing is a plus, but certainly not required. Those who enroll need only bring to the course a desire to learn, both as readers and writers, from the lessons about culture, identity, and communication that this genre has to teach us.

See also Bill Gillette’s interview with Dr. Reed on page four.

**ENGL 222: MTWTh 2:15-4:15
American Transcendentalism and its
Critics** taught by Dr. Jim Bense.

This course will examine Transcendentalism's literary and cultural significance by focusing primarily on selected writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau along with other Transcendentalist authors. We will broaden the historical focus by observing responses to Transcendentalism from Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and a number of other authors (contemporary and from later periods). Note: To register for this class, please request & get a signed Arranged slip from either Dr. Bense, bense@mnstate.edu or Dr. Coghill, coghill@mnstae.edu. MLA students will register under the MLA 697 number.

**MLA 690 Monday 6:30-9:00 Artistic
Creativity: Portrait of Art & Artists**
taught by Dr. Laura Fasick.



Ever since the Romantic Movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century introduced the idea of the artist as a

tormented and solitary genius, artistic creativity has been associated as much with a certain personality type as with the actual works of art that an individual produces. Terms such as "artistic temperament" have come to connote a driven, often self-destructive and self-absorbed character, prone to extreme mood swings, simultaneously sensitive and yet ruthless in his (or more rarely he) pursuit of creative fulfillment. To what extent has twentieth-century literature reflected, reacted to, and revised this vision of the artist? The focus of this course will be on exploring some literary embodiments of the artist, whether the art in question is writing, painting, or musical composition and performance, and discussing what the implications of those embodiments are for our understanding of artistic creativity itself.

We will encounter a gallery of fictional artists (and some fictionalized treatments of actual artists) through the following works: James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Willa Cather's *Song of the Lark*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, W. Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence*, and Peter Schaffer's *Amadeus*. The artists in these works struggle to fulfill their destinies in settings as various as eighteenth-century Europe (*Amadeus*), colonized Ireland (*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), and rural, small-town America (*The Song of the Lark*). In addition to these fictional works, we will also read some speculations about the nature of creativity by Rainer Maria Rilke (*Letters to a Young Poet*), Alice Walker (*In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*), Edmund Wilson (*The Wound and the Bow*) and others.

Issues that this course will explore include the relationship between art and morality (both private and public), the putative link (much disputed) between artistic creativity and neurosis, and the idea of an artistic "type."

The class will be conducted seminar-style with an emphasis on discussion and shared learning. In addition to their responsibility for careful reading and engaged discussion, class participants will prepare brief response papers early in the semester, lead class discussion for a portion of later class meetings, and produce a major research or creative project by the end of the course. Please note that the creative project, whatever its medium, should involve working with at least one of the major texts in the course.

**MLA 690 Wednesday 6:30-9:00 The
Literatures of War**
taught by Dr. Stephen Hamrick.



War continues to play a central role in our lives as Americans and as students. As such, the course will study a series of Western and non-western

texts written by men and women, starting with the ancient period and con-

tinuing to the current moment. In addition to looking closely at texts from different genres (including epic, poetry, short story, science fiction, biography, concept album, and film), the course will introduce students to important theoretical, historical, and literary studies of war and violence. Students will practice reading texts closely as well as setting them within a series of interdisciplinary historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts. Several books may include: *The Illiad*, *The Art of War*, *Monstrous Regiment* by Terry Pratchett, and *Henry V*.

**ENGL 490/590: T-Th 2:00-3:15
Writing About Art**

taught by Dr. Shari Scapple.



Dr. Scapple will accept limited enrollment for graduate students (either MLA or MFA) on a first-come first-serve basis. If graduate students express

interest in taking this class and at the day & time given, we can increase the enrollment limit.

People do write about art, in classrooms, journals, catalogs, newspapers, magazines. We write about art to clarify and to account for our responses to works of art. When putting words on paper, we need to take a second, a third look at what is in front of us and what is within us.

The emphasis in the course is on seeing and then saying (writing). As Paul Klee has put it, "Art does not produce the visible, rather it makes visible." Art doesn't reproduce what we see; rather, it makes us see. To get at content and meaning of art, we will need to interpret subject matter, material and form, socio-historic content, and artists' intentions.

We will begin the course by viewing art in galleries/museums in the tri-college/Fargo Moorhead area and writing imaginatively/descriptively about the art we see. From this open approach, students will move to analysis of art, first one piece of art; then a

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comparison of two works on the same subject. We follow this writing with a review of a local exhibition. The final project involves research and documentation, a more academic approach to writing about art that assumes the value of the work under discussion. All writing in this course involves building and refining skills in writing effectively about art and features a workshop approach.

PHIL 590, Nietzsche & Art, 3 credits
W 6:30-9:00 pm.



This class will investigate Friedrich Nietzsche's views on the nature of art and its role in the good life. We will begin with an look at

Schopenhauer's aesthetics and will trace its influence on Nietzsche. Focus will be on Nietzsche's views on Greek tragedy, Romanticism and Wagnerian Opera. Title will include *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Ecce Homo*.

PHILOSOPHY 495/595 Seminar in Feminist Theory,
T-Th 9:30-10:45 a.m
taught by Randy Cagle.

Course description will be available Fall semester, 2006.

Meet Dr. Maureen Reed, Interview by Bill Gillette.



Dr. Reed is originally from the Detroit area. She spent her college years in Texas. Dr. Reed received her undergraduate degree from Rice University. Both her MA and Ph.D (2001) are in American Studies from the University of Texas. Dr. Reed and her husband, Dr. Patrick Walsh, moved to Moorhead in 2001. Both Dr. Reed and her husband spent last year teaching American Studies as Fulbright lecturers in Germany.

Dr. Reed's research and teaching interests are many. She is interested in women's literature and history, issues of ethnicity, and regional cultures. Dr. Reed enjoys "looking at how scholarship and creative writing approach cultural issues, since

I try to practice both methods of writing myself." While in Germany, Dr. Reed taught a course about looking at American cultural conflicts through short fiction, and would like to develop a similar course at MSUM.

Dr. Reed's new book, *A Woman's Place: Women Writing New Mexico*, was published by the University of New Mexico Press in 2005. Her book is a collective biography of six New Mexican women and activists: Mary Austin, Kay Bennett, Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Clefoas Jaramillo, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and Pablita Velarde. "What I found by looking at these women's writings was that they sought to enhance this image by portraying Hispanic and Native American women as "homemakers" who could keep traditions intact: when I researched their actual lived experiences, however, I found that all of these women undertook quite a bit of adaptation in their own lives. I put their stories together because I wanted to write a book that showed how important understanding women's lives can be to understanding how cultures change over time, and why understanding the value of such change can help Americans to develop a more healthy vision of multiculturalism than one that depends on the idea of static, "authentic" traditions."

Off the clock, Dr. Reed enjoys spending time with her three year old son, Eamon. She enjoys biking around town with her son in tow, running when she gets a chance to, and cooking and baking. "Since moving to Minnesota, my pies have improved quite dramatically, though I still have lots to learn." She enjoys traveling, and in her "spare" time, staying up late to watch movies.

Dr. Reed will be teaching MLA 690 "Memoir and The American Family," the first summer session (2006). "Memoir as a genre interests me because it challenges writers to extract narratives from the actual chaos of lived experience and offers readers a window into culture through the compelling form of a personal story. I like teaching this class because students produce their own pieces of family memoir, and doing so leads to provocative questions about memory, truth, and the presence of the past in all of our lives."

Meet Some of Our MLA Students & Alumni:

Cassandra Thomasson



Cassandra is a middle and high school Spanish teacher in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. She earned her B.S. in Education at Valley City State in 1995. For

Cassandra, the MLA Program has its rewards. Being a better teacher is one of them. As Cassandra puts it, "I will be a better citizen because of the variety of intellectual discussions on various

cultures and topics that the MLA Program has offered."

For Cassandra, the thesis should be a reflection of what the student has learned throughout the program, and how they plan to utilize that knowledge in the future. Cassandra's thesis will address the "standard of beauty" over the years, both physically and artistically. She intends to research and formulate a plan to help educators encourage their students to accept a more multicultural view of beauty. Her idea came to her in a class when the question was asked, "Who gets to set the standard?" In the

future, she would like to "help expand that standard to fit a wide variety of cultures."

Cassandra believes it is important for students to start "brainstorming" ideas for a thesis early on. This way, students will already have some ideas to explore.



Jill Holsen

Jill is the Director of International Programs here at MSUM. She graduated with her MLA in December 2005. For Jill, having

been a part of the MLA Program has meant many things. She admits that having a Masters is important for her position as Director, but the program has meant so much more to her.

Jill picked the MLA Program because she wanted to continue with her schooling and it is more humanities driven. "It seemed to be a good fit with my background in English." Jill has found the classes offered in the MLA Program to be very intellectually stimulating. "I looked forward to the intellectual stimulation in all of the classes I took." Another feature of the program that Jill finds to be of great reward are the people involved in the program. All are interesting people, students and professors alike. "The MLA Program just seems to attract interesting people. All have their own contributions to make. This makes for very intellectually stimulating classes." Other strengths that Jill points out are the diverse subject matter and the fact that the professors are truly interested in what they teach. For Jill, this translates into "being pointed in directions we would not necessarily pick for ourselves."

Jill's Thesis is titled "Somebody was looking out for me" (2005). Although this was not her original idea, she is proud of the results of this biography. "Somebody was looking out for me" (2005) is about a special bond that formed over the years between two men as one man, a Vietnam veteran, dealt with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

As far as the Thesis goes, Jill's advice for fellow students is to pick a topic early.



Beth Salvatore

Beth graduated from MSUM in 1991 with a B.A. in Humanities. She is currently in the MLA

Program. She is finishing up classes this semester as she starts the Thesis process. Being in the MLA Program has renewed Beth's desire to keep learning. Beth states, "it is nice to be in the academic setting. I cannot imagine not learning."

For Beth, the MLA Program has opened her mind to current events. This has led to more involvement in politics and an increased awareness of what is going on, not only locally, but nationally and internationally, as well. She feels more confident as she deals with people in her personal life and on the job.

Beth finds the strengths of the MLA Program to be many. For starters, it is not a finite program in the usual sense. The possibilities seem endless as the program incorporates such a variety of classes. She has found a new interest in reading non-fiction, something she very rarely did before. She is always excited to go to class, as the classes are full of people who participate.

Her Thesis, although not with a title as of yet, will focus on how "fear in rhetoric is used to persuade and manipulate the masses." The focus will likely be on 16th-18th century England as she looks at sermons and political speeches of the time.

Beth believes it is important to "step outside the box". She stresses the importance of "taking classes you are not necessarily familiar with." In other words, be open to new things. As far as the Thesis goes, "do something you enjoy, something you are excited about."



Kathy Peil

Kathy began the MLA with Hispanic Emphasis program in 2003. Kathy recently completed her coursework for the program in the fall of

2006. A veteran teacher, Kathy earned a second Bachelors Degree in 1995. She earned this degree from MSUM in Spanish. Kathy taught high school in Nebraska for 16 years before moving to Moorhead in 1990 with her husband, Tim, who is a professor in the Mathematics Department at MSUM.

Currently Kathy works at the North Dakota Division of Independent Study, where she teaches high school Spanish, First Aid/Health, and Middle Level Physical Education through distance education.

Friendly Reminder:

MLA Program Objectives:

1. The Program strives to provide a course of study that inspires and challenges students to pursue independent intellectual inquiry, critical thought, and clear written and oral expression.
2. The Program also encourages students to adopt a life of intellectual and creative growth, self-awareness and social consciousness.
3. The Program strives to offer a stimulating program of interdisciplinary courses through which students are given the means for developing not only analytical skills, but also a sensitivity to values, a discerning capacity in judgment and compassion required of citizens living in a difficult and uncertain world.
4. The Program is comprehensive. It focuses on liberal arts with an emphasis on academic instruction, continuing education that offers students a variety of approaches to ideas. By providing venues in which MLA students can both exercise intellectual creativity and appreciate the creative work of others, the program strives to make students more aware of how Liberal Arts can improve their lives.

Thesis Projects: Ideas In Progress:

Beth Salvatore: She doesn't have a thesis title yet, but wants to focus on how "fear in rhetoric is used to persuade and manipulate the masses." The focus will likely be on 16th-18th century England as she looks at sermons and political speeches of the time.

Sandy Ben-Haim: My thesis will propose an effective model for active learning in an art museum setting. I will argue that in order to serve people of all ages and abilities, an effective model must be informed by established educational theory and practice, and combine engaging open-ended learning opportunities and innovative design.

Bill Gillette: Because he is doing the Hispanic Emphasis aspect of the MLA Program, Bill wants to focus on the Hispanic migrant work force in the Moorhead-Fargo community, and he is interested in the availability and accessibility of the social services, mainly healthcare, in the F-M community. Because he wants to interview people, Bill is currently waiting to get IRB approval for this part of his project.

Janet Hoenstein: Janet is currently working on putting together her IRB and thesis proposal looking at an oral history project. The project would include interviewing three (or more) family members who have each served in a different war from WWII

to Iraq and how serving their country has influenced their outcome on life and the humanity around them.

Kathy Peil: Kathy is also doing the Hispanic Emphasis aspect of the MLA degree and is proposing a Thesis project that addresses the needs at the North Dakota Division of Independent Study for a Fourth Year of High School Spanish distance education course. The proposed course will exist in both online and print-based formats to meet the needs of students in the broadest means possible. Within the project, the issue and background of distance education will be addressed. Kathy is proposing to write a two-semester Spanish course for fourth year secondary level students, available in online and print formats.

Congratulations to Mike Amick. Mike graduated from the MLA Program this past December and was then offered a job as the new Director of Online Learning at Central Lakes College in Brainerd, MN. His new job is right in line with what he prepared himself to do all along. His Thesis project was "High School Digital Photography Art Exhibition: Online Art Education at the Secondary Level Using Digital Photography." He did a Thesis project, and

gave a public exhibition and lecture as part of it. Mike's project involved documenting the efforts his students have produced after completing his Online Digital Photography Course through NDIS (North Dakota Independent Study). Each year approximately 150 high school diplomas are issued through NDIS and student work through their high school or home-school curriculum. NDIS began creating online courses in 1996. In 1999 it became the first accredited school to offer enough courses in the required subject areas for a student to earn a fully accredited high school diploma entirely online. In 1997 Mike earned his teaching degree in art education, and in 2000 began offering the digital photography course online. He worked closely with students so that they achieved the course objectives. Each student submitted 20 completed photographs by the end of the course. In his MLA Thesis Mike discusses the context and process he followed to ensure students experienced a high level of learning as well as produced professional photographs. He organized and coordinated an exhibit of his students' photographs and these were displayed at the NDSU Reineke Visual Arts Gallery (NDSU campus).

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