

Indiana University's
GRADUATE QUARTERLY

News & Information from the Indiana University Graduate School

Volume 4, Fall 2008



Postdocs in the Humanities

The English Department discusses postgrad options

Education in China

An interview with Dr. Heidi Ross

When Humanities Meet the Sciences

Profile of Doctoral Candidate Renee Barlow



Director of the East Asian Studies Center and Educational Policy Studies Professor Heidi Ross speaks with a student from Shaanxi Danfeng Xihe Middle School in China.

Focus on the
Humanities

GRADUATE QUARTERLY

published by the Indiana University Graduate School

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IU Graduate Student Awards and Recognitions

IUPUI Graduate Student Awarded Prestigious Governor's Award for Tomorrow's Leaders

Two IUPUI and two IUB graduate students are among the 12 recipients of the sixth annual Governor's Award for Tomorrow's Leaders.

The Indiana Humanities Council and the Office of the Governor will honor IUPUI students David Allison and Matthew Conrad Morrow, IUB students Christina Ladan Clark and Therese (Tess) Williams, and the other recipients during a ceremony on Tuesday (Dec. 16, 2008).

The Governor's Award for Tomorrow's Leaders, developed by the Indiana Humanities Council and the Office of the Governor of Indiana, and sponsored by Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) celebrates the excellence and achievement of a broad, diverse group of young leaders in Indiana. The Award recognizes accomplishments in entrepreneurial success, community engagement, and academic and cultural achievement, with the hope that recipients and other young leaders around the state are encouraged to continue to invest their talents and knowledge in Indiana.

Todd E. Husted Memorial Award Granted to IU Clinical Psychology Graduate Student

Amanda Taylor, a doctoral candidate in Clinical Psychology at IUPUI, has recently been awarded the Todd Husted Award from the American Psychological Foundation of the American Psychological Association. A single award is granted each year for dissertation research that has great potential to contribute toward the development and improvement of mental illness services for those with severe and persistent mental illness. Amanda's dissertation is titled "Employment Specialists' Characteristics as Predictors of Employment Outcomes" and her mentor is Dr. Gary Bond.

IU McNair Scholars Student Collaborates with Kelley Business Professor

IU McNair Scholars Program Fellow Michael Sampson-Akpuru recently published a paper with Dr. Derek Oler, an Accounting Professor at Kelley School of Business.

Sampson-Akpuru said, "We assessed the effect of CEO duality (serving as CEO and Chairperson of the board concurrently) on whether a U.S. firm will buy a non-U.S. firm. The idea came from our prior research on CEOs and we decided to explore other areas of a firm where CEO decisions makes a significant impact. We landed on mergers and acquisitions and found that no one had answered the question as to how CEO duality affects a firm's international acquisition activities. And that was how the research paper came to life."

IU SURVIVAL GUIDE: LIBRARIES EDITION

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2. Can't find a database you've used elsewhere? Ask a librarian. It's possible we already provide access to the journal you need through a different database.
3. Build a relationship with the librarian responsible for your discipline or department and let him or her know what you need.
4. Remember, recommendations aren't limited to books. Recommendations can include videos, journal subscriptions, electronic resources, or any other type of material.

IU has so many books they don't all fit in the libraries. The Auxiliary Library Facility on the edge of campus holds about 2.7 million items, including books, manuscripts, and films.

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Conditions in the ALF add 400 years the life of a book. This does not work for librarians.

When **humanities** & the **sciences**

MEET

An interview with Doctoral Candidate Renee Barlow



ON THE SURFACE, ENGLISH PH.D. Candidate Renee Barlow’s dissertation research comparing African-American and Afro-German literature appears to be about race and culture. But the reality is complex – literally, as you’ll see – and perhaps the easiest way to understand the coolness factor in her research is to go back to Renee’s undergraduate years when she was interested in Carl Jung’s theories and patterns in the mind.

“[Carl Jung’s theories of the archetype of the mind] have faded out of fashion and with good reason, but I found it fascinating when I was 20,” she said. “I remember talking to a friend in Computer Science and he said, ‘you know, Renee, you keep talking about these archetypes and patterns and it really reminds me of these things called fractals.’”

Her friend gave her a book called *Chaos: Making a New Science* by James Gleick, which she describes as the first real attempt at popularizing non-linear systems theory – think fractals and chaos – and the beginnings of its sister theory complexity.

It seemed to Renee that the way mathematical

patterns like fractals and chaos were described was similar to how she saw the “patterns of the mind” theories. To explore the idea, she spent her last year as an undergraduate writing an honors thesis comparing fractals and archetypes. Ultimately, her research brought up more questions than were answered, but she knew where to look next – she now knew that the way we think and interact, and the way cultural systems change and locate in space had something to do with non-linear systems.

This was a topic she didn’t quite understand and although a lot of English research in early 1990s borrowed ideas from the sciences, Renee felt these were mostly not done well – and in many cases weren’t true if you came at it from a scientific perspective. She chalked up the confusion to not understanding the math behind the science.

“So the English practitioners – people who were writing articles analyzing literature in terms of these new scientific theories – were publishing in major journals. A physicist, by the last name of Sokal, wrote an article analyzing a piece of literature using this

science and submitted it to a humanities/theory journal,” Renee said.

In the article, Sokal intentionally confused scientific and humanities terms and theories, and although the journal reviewers didn’t understand the differences between those used in science versus the humanities, they accepted Sokal’s article for publication.

After that, Sokal wrote a scathing piece saying ‘if we don’t know what we’re talking about, we should just be quiet.’ Perhaps not the subtlest way to make a point, Renee admits, but she believes “it was a necessary corrective, because you cannot go wholesale into other people’s disciplines, steal their language and ideas, and then say, hey, I’m going to use this for my own purposes. We don’t like it when they do it to English, they don’t like it when we do it to the sciences.”

Since she wasn’t sure how non-linear systems theory would fit with her intentions to research race and culture, and she wanted to heed Sokal’s warning, Renee began her graduate studies in English at IU by signing up for Calculus.

“Armed with a bit of math and an interest in race, I started to think, how can I put this together? I was thinking less and less that fractals were the way to think about culture, simply because chaotic systems are unpredictable and not stable,” Renee said. “And anyone can tell you that if you live in a culture, it’s fairly stable, otherwise we’d wake up every day asking ‘what’s going on?’ How am I supposed to behave in the world today?”

As she progressed through her mathematics courses, she was drawn to chaos’ sister science of complexity. The study of complexity takes a qualitative approach to modeling systems of equations, which is why, Renee said, it is so amendable to her own work. The systems of equations used in complexity model open, deterministic systems with some variables acting as boundary values. These boundaries can be seen as the values or outside influences that affect the relationship (equation) being studied.

Within certain regions, given a set of boundary values, the pattern will be very ordered – a line or a repeating pattern. Think a strand of holiday lights, she said; they’re either all on or all off.

“On the opposite side, if you increase the parameter value passed a certain point, you end up with chaos – completely unstable and unpredictable. A physical example of this is turbulence,” she said.

But in terms of culture, Renee explains, we’re looking for a zone in between.

“Interestingly, there’s a small window of opportunity between these extremes where things never settle down completely into a steady state, but never spiral off into chaotic, fractal behavior,” Renee said. “That is the range of values in which one can find a complex system.”

In the sciences, the theory of complexity originally rose out of math and physics, but in recent years, a great deal of work has been done by the likes of economists, sociologists, and theoretical biologists interested in ecology and developmental biology to expand the concept of complexity beyond its mathematical definitions.

In Renee’s case, she’d like to define cultural systems in terms of the

basic principles of complex adaptive systems. Seven basic properties and mechanisms have been defined in all complex adaptive systems – simple structures, such as the predator-prey model, to complicated ones, like a national economic structure.

The first chapter of her dissertation shows how theoretical models in the humanities, especially on race and culture, can dovetail into complex adaptive systems theory.

“I see complex adaptive systems as an umbrella – a theoretical model to explain many different kinds of systems with cultural systems being one of those. Under that, you have dialogue about specific systems. The theories of one system can be compared to those in another, for example, mapping English theories to those of a complex adaptive system.”

In the second and third chapters, Renee compares the African-American and Afro-German cultures through their literature and cultural forms. Specifically, she wants to look at the “way models of blackness and race form from the African-American context out of the civil rights movement, black power movement, the rhetoric of brothers and sisters, and so on, and how that gets translated into a different national situation in

Germany.”

“Race has different tensions in Germany than in the States, but the black nationalism that has come out of America has really impacted way other black communities see themselves and see their relationship to their own country and the larger Diaspora.”

In the remaining chapter, she ties cultural comparison back in with models of complex adaptive systems.

“My last chapter is an exploration of space and offers Complex Adaptive Systems theory as a way of thinking about the relationship between the social, history and real space as both enabling and disabling effective transformation of the ideological discourses within the cultural system,” she said.

Renee hopes that her research will make it easier for different disciplines to talk to each other by using common terms based on different complex adaptive system models. This kind of theoretical model, she said, is also important for understanding how we all fit into our nation and our communities, and the way we perceive our cultures, especially in a time of increased globalization, which highlights cultural differences even as other cultural aspects meld together.

“We need ways to address the problems that come up within a larger system without causing despair or violence,” she said, “and literature is a way to do that.”

“Literature speaks to a particular condition, moment and space, but it’s very useful because it allows us to talk about the larger culture,” she explains. “We can analyze the way literature presents culture, as English researchers have been doing. I want to see this as something that’s not just true, but show that there is a valid scientific reason we can do this.”

Renee’s hope for her research is to make it easier for different disciplines to talk to each other by using common terms based on different complex adaptive system models.



Profile of Dr. Heidi Ross

Dr. Ross with students from Huangu School in An Kang, Shaanxi Province, China, 2006.

IU PROFESSOR HEIDI ROSS HAS two offices in Bloomington and a lot of frequent flyer miles. She runs a research center, teaches courses, and on any given day, you'll find her doing her research in international comparative education – sometimes in Bloomington, and sometimes halfway around the world in China.

The two projects Dr. Ross, professor in Educational Policy Studies at the IU School of Education and Director of the East Asian Studies Center, is currently working on are large and potentially long-term, she said, and each focuses on a different end of the Chinese education system.

GIRLS' EDUCATION IN SHAANXI

The first project is a girls' education project in southeast Shaanxi Province in China's midwest that began in 2000. The project has been supported by a non-governmental organization in the U.S. in

partnership with the Shaanxi Women's Federation.

"We were trying to provide poor out-of-school girls whose families couldn't afford the costs of public schooling access to education," Dr. Ross said. "Primary schools in China are free now, but they weren't in 2000. The tuition is a small amount, but it was beyond the means of poor families whose daily household income is less than a dollar a day."

One thousand out-of-school girls in grades three and four were funded by the project, with the promise of continued support for as long as they could succeed in China's exam-based educational system. In this system, Dr. Ross said, the attrition rate in rural areas where people struggle for basic educational resources is fairly high, whereas in cities like Shanghai or Beijing, the high school graduation rate is higher than in Bloomington. Despite the obstacles, more than 300 girls in the program passed

competitive examinations and are currently in high school.

Although the girls' education program started as a volunteer effort for Dr. Ross, it became apparent that without rigorous data collection and evaluation of the system, the program and its significant funding would be ineffective at best and susceptible to corruption at worst.

"And having the infrastructure in place to do the evaluation, we realized that this was an interesting research project on how access to schooling changed a girl's expectations and aspirations for the future, and how this school experience changed parents' view of what girls could do and their value in the household."

Several doctoral students work on the project with Dr. Ross. One is Lei Wang, who is currently in China for the year to do follow up interviews on a 1000-girl survey she conducted with Dr. Ross a few years ago.

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Wang plans to look at the three paths the girls in her survey have traveled. Students on the first path have been successful academically and are now being positioned through their academic high school education to access college.

Girls on the second path are in non-elite high schools and vocational schools and struggle with relatively mediocre education and a poor job market. Yet they are at least getting post-compulsory education (past ninth grade).

The majority of the girls are on the third path, having become migrant workers. After finishing ninth grade these girls went to work in county-level cities or towns, or moved to another province in China to work in restaurants and factories. This group represents a trend of massive migration of rural youths into urban areas in China.

Her research has also led to other related projects. For example, this fall Dr. Ross traveled to the San Francisco area to fundraise for the construction costs of a prototype environmentally friendly village primary school in Shaanxi Province that can withstand a magnitude eight earthquake. Shaanxi is right next door to Sichuan Province – the province where an earthquake earlier this year killed 10,000 school children. Twenty-two percent of

Shaanxi's primary schools were destroyed or eventually demolished because of the damage.

"Rebuilding is a huge issue," Dr. Ross said. "Think about Indiana – how would it be if tomorrow we had to replace 22 percent of our primary schools at once?"

HIGHER EDUCATION IN CHINA

The second project Dr. Ross is working on began in 2007 and focuses on changes in higher education in China. The project was originally supported by IU seed money given for faculty research support, and will be supported in the future by external funding, including the Ford Foundation.

Part of the reason China's system of higher education is going through "such breathtaking reform," Dr. Ross said, is that in the last twelve years, the cohort of 18 year-olds attending College has risen from five percent to nearly 25 percent.

"This increase has called for a complete restructuring of the educational system, which offers a number of challenges as well as reasons for excitement," she said. "All of us who do education research in China find ourselves drawn to this incredible massification of what is now the world's largest education system."

As well as overall growth, the Chinese higher education system has seen marked stratification: elite institutions; private schools; and growing numbers of third- and fourth-tier schools. As higher education in China goes through growing pains, Dr. Ross is interested in how college students are faring.

"So what's the role of the student now? If you're talking about 25 percent of your young people, the focus has to be on all of them. You're no longer talking about the five percent elite. In the past no one really had to worry about that five percent, because they wanted to go to college, they were assured a job upon graduation, and they were going to be part of the elite. But if you're talking about a quarter of your population, it's not just the elite anymore. It's a mass system with mass problems," she said.

After seeing the challenges Chinese institutions faced in balancing educational equity and excellence, Dr. Ross turned her thoughts back to IU where some of the best research on North American-based student engagement takes place. The School of Education's Center on Post-secondary Education houses a well-known survey of undergraduate students called the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE).

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Dr. Ross, IU graduate students and fellow colleagues from Chengguan Middle School in Ankang, Shaanxi Province, China, in 2006.

Want to add a language or culture to your research?

Dr. Ross offers this suggestion for students and faculty wanting to incorporate a language or culture into their research.

“There are many ways in which people have international experiences, both academically and personally. I’m enough of an area studies person to believe that whatever training you can get to anchor you in a culture, a society and a language, will help you with your research. There’s no substitute for that kind of deep knowledge. Not everyone can have that, but globalization doesn’t mean that we’re all becoming the same, so a respect for cultural traditions and deep knowledge of a space and place will only make your research stronger. If you’re in a professional school and not studying the language, do what you can to prepare yourself.

“Many research projects can be conducted in English. For example, I worked with a small group of faculty this summer on a science and technology project and we conducted nearly all the interviews in English, as nearly all the young Chinese faculty we were working with were fluent in English. There is both a reality and a seduction of doing research in English, to resist that to some extent and to think strongly about cultural knowledge.

“Context is so important; at least for the kind of qualitative research I do that requires knowledge of the ground. Your methodology has to follow your research question and may not be good for every area, but I think for any of us who want to go to another culture for research, it’s our responsibility out of respect for that society and desire to learn about it, to do the best we can and learn about it as deeply as we can.”

“What would happen if we took NSSE,” asks Dr. Ross, “and in a very culturally appropriate and sensitive way, used it as the springboard for a China-based survey on student engagement?”

To answer this question, Dr. Ross and her postdoctoral colleague, Associate Professor Yan Luo of Tsinghua University and doctoral student Yuhao Cen translated the NSSE survey instrument, and adapted it for the Chinese context. They piloted the new survey in China, and in June 2008 held a major workshop for Chinese scholars on the idea of student engagement as it applies to higher education assessment and evaluation.

The next step, Dr. Ross said, is to work with Chinese colleagues to explore the concept of student engagement and to adapt the survey to include a larger, more diverse range of schools. Doctoral student Yuhao Cen has begun that process and will continue her fieldwork in the winter of 2009.

“I feel like we’ve just begun,” Dr. Ross said, “and there is a lot of interest in our work from the Chinese side.”

In China, she expects the new survey to become an indispensable research tool to help clarify the role and experiences of students in Chinese universities and what responsibilities and obligations Chinese universities have to create for their students the most effective learning environments.

“The significance of focusing on student engagement is that it provides institutions with an alternative way to conceptualize quality – from the point of view of student experience. China is grappling with how to envision the purposes of higher education. For example, is a university education an individual investment or do universities play a role in the larger development of Chinese society?”

Dr. Ross, as a comparative educator, said she believes these questions are relevant to educational policies worldwide. Chinese approaches to engaging their students and articulating the purposes of universities reflect and contribute to global debates regarding educational reform.

HER JOURNEY EAST

As a high school student, Dr. Ross became interested in Chinese landscape painting, so when a gap appeared in her science-filled schedule at Oberlin College a few years later, she signed up for a 2-credit course on Chinese Civilization that changed her college career. After taking Chinese language courses at Middlebury College during her summers, she graduated and spent time in Taiwan teaching English as a Second Language.

“It was personal interest – the art and language – and like many late adolescent undergraduates, I was attracted to a culture that seemed so different from my own. My experiences studying Chinese and living and teaching in Taiwan allowed me to filter my life questions through a different culture and that dialogue between the two cultures was extremely meaningful to me and motivated my further language study,” she said.

Returning from Taiwan, Dr. Ross attended the University of Michigan, and received a Master’s in Applied Linguistics, and a Ph.D. in International and Comparative Education with a focus on Chinese studies.

Dr. Ross said that when she was in Taiwan and graduate school, she was still debating if she was more interested in cultural questions or linguistic questions.

“You don’t always end up in the field you think you will,” she said. “When I tell doctoral students about my career trajectory it seems to make sense – that one experience led somehow naturally to another. You can see these intellectual threads that run through my history – but that’s only a story made coherent in retrospect. At the time, I didn’t know where it was leading. Looking back, we can make up nice narratives and see how it all connects, but living our lives in the other direction – it’s not clear, and that means that you can change.”

What is the EASC (and how is it different from the EALC)?

Two units comprise East Asian Studies at IU, the East Asian Studies Center (EASC) with Chair Dr. Heidi Ross, and the East Asian Languages and Cultures Department (EALC) with Chair Dr. Bob Eno.

The EALC is the teaching arm and it focuses on Japanese, Chinese, and Korean language classes.

The EASC is the outreach and research arm. Any IU faculty with significant East Asian responsibilities in their research or teaching can become a member, and it is a hub for East Asian activities on campus.

As a Title VI National Resource Center supported by U.S. Department of Education, the EASC serves as one of many resource or area studies centers at IU. The EASC also works in collaboration with a Title VI center at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

For example, the EASC runs colloquiums, film series, literature workshops for teachers, and language institutes in the summer. It also administers FLAS fellowships, supports small research projects and is the site for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia (NCTA), a nationwide, privately funded and large decade-long initiative that provides semester-long seminars and funding to go abroad for public school teachers.

The hope for NCTA is that teachers can integrate knowledge of East Asia into their curriculums. The teacher program has touched thousands of teachers and three million students through the teachers' activities. Seven universities are home sites for NCTA and IU is the Midwest representative.

"We do a tremendous amount of outreach through the school system as a result of NCTA," Dr. Ross said. "We also do outreach to the business community and other IU units. For example, if SPEA is sending a group of undergrads to Japan for a study abroad experience, we'll organize an orientation for them on the language and culture."

www.indiana.edu/~easc

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Postdocs in the Humanities

Postdocs have become a staple of the science graduate education, but what about in the humanities?



The Postdoc Paradox

IT USED TO BE THAT THE WORDS “POSTDOC” and “humanities” were not words commonly associated. These days, however, it’s not unheard of to see new faculty and newly minted Ph.D.s with a few years of “postdoc” on their CV.

Ask Associate Dean and Professor of English Stephen Watt about postdocs and whether commencing graduate students should take one, and he’ll tell you, it depends. Postdocs, he says, vary greatly in the humanities and can be both help and hindrance.

“The term *postdoctoral fellowship* in the humanities is kind of a chameleon. It may mean something quite different from one institution to the next and its level of desirability and its relationship to the Research I jobs, may be quite different, as opposed to the postdocs in the sciences. When someone says that, I know it’s a research intensive appointment, and I have an idea of how long it is and what happens. In the humanities, it’s much more amorphous than that... the term is frequently exploited to conceal just the opposite: a teaching-intensive appointment, with a highly routinized course schedule of basic and introductory classes,” he said.

When first introduced in English departments, many in the early-mid 1990s, many postdoc programs allowed students to languish in the position for five or six years -- a “terrible amount of time,” said Dean Watt. If the student stays in the position too long, the benefit of extra work is diminished. Instead of professional advancement, these kinds of postdoc encourage professional stasis.

“So, [a postdoc in the humanities] is both good news and bad news. Someone gets a livable wage, teaching experience at another institution, enhanced references on their CV...but the bad news is that if the postdoc becomes standard [in the humanities], it will slowly but surely erode the number of tenure track faculty hired,” Watt said. “Therein lies the paradox. The intent is to do short-term good things for their recipients, not to exploit them.”

Another problem is that some departments offering postdocs become addicted to cheap labor.

Dr. Cary Nelson, Jubilee Professor of the Humanities at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, describes his early experiences with postdoc programs in the book “Office Work” (2004), co-authored by Dean Watts: “We were rehiring our own Ph.D.s for \$3000 a course and hiring other institutions Ph.D.s at \$10,000 a course as assistant professors. And some of *our* Ph.D.s were outpacing the new assistant professors in the publication race with no further compensation.” Needless to say, this practice led to resentment.

A national postdoc system in the humanities is also a concern because even if the kinks are worked out in regards to student rights and support, the worry is that “it can subtly raise the bar for what an incoming professor should have accomplished,” IU English Professor Ivan Kreilkamp said.

This has been a worry for at least the last decade. Just over ten years ago a professor wrote into the Chronicle Review to express his concerns.

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Faculty Postdoctoral Fellowships

POSTDOCS ARE NOT JUST FOR NEWLY minted Ph.D.s in the humanities. A few years into their positions, many assistant professors will apply to take a Faculty Postdoctoral Fellowship. Like with postdocs for new Ph.D.s, the set-up of these awards varies widely, but in general, it’s a fellowship year to focus on research and broaden connections.

Faculty postdocs aren’t an expectation for all assistant professors, but they can be an academically energizing experience.

“If you have a sympathetic department chair and an institution supportive of research, a postdoctoral fellowship is a nice amenity to have for a year when you’re in the throes of a book project as an assistant professor,” IU English Professor Dr. Ellen Mackay said.

FACULTY POSTDOCS

For his postdoc year, Dr. Ivan Kreilkamp, IU Department of English, went to the University of Texas in Austin at the Ransom Humanities Center. What is unusual about his postdoc is that he didn’t have a teaching requirement and was thus able to focus almost exclusively on his research. Perhaps the only thing better for a professor working on tenure-track projects would be a fellowship that doesn’t require travel to another university.

Another type of faculty postdoc fellowship selects candidates on a theme and includes some teaching, research time and often a seminar. Dr. MacKay’s Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Center for the Humanities at Cornell University was just that.

“We typically regard a postdoc as time off to focus on research, but there is a lot of work involved. Though a 1/1 teaching load lightened my course work by half, it still meant accommodating myself to a new department, and adjusting to the small but none-the-less discernable service demands of being a faculty member,” she said.

In addition to teaching and working on her research, Dr. MacKay also attended a Center for the Humanities seminar on issues of performance. She said the seminar was academically rewarding in terms of both the discussions and readings, and the connections forged with other colleagues across a variety of disciplines.

“It was an extraordinarily valuable set of conversations we had. I was learning in an intense and active way... The influence of that conversation was very palpable on the part of my project I was working on while I was there, and I’m really grateful for that,” she said. “It was terrific.”

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Postdocs in the Humanities continued...

“Just as the sciences have turned the postdoc into a way station on a long and uncertain path to academic security, so the humanities and social sciences have devised their own financial oases for would-be scholars who need longer and longer to prepare their professional credentials for the job market,” he said.

But postdocs can also be a benefit, and the right postdoc can provide professional development or teaching experience sometimes missing from a freshly postdoctoral student’s CV.

“Postdocs that are more teaching intensive are great if you need that experience, but if you stay in the position too long you slow your research precisely at the moment that you are applying for tenure-track positions. Research-intensive postdocs, or ones that significantly lighten your normal teaching responsibilities, are much more valuable,” IU English Professor Dr. Ellen MacKay said. The ideal kind of experience is in a department that “embraces you as a future professional.”

“There are positions that pass themselves off as postdocs that are really just teaching opportunities that pay far less than an assistant professor’s wage, and those you enter into with your eyes open.”

Postdocs at IU

In the sciences, postdocs often run for two, four or more years and many students do more than one before looking for a tenure track position. But in the English department at IU, Dean Watt said, “that’s not what these are. Our ‘lectureships,’ as we call them, usually run one or two years, and are primarily for our IU students.”

It’s important to Dean Watt that the postdoc program in English grant professional benefits as well as further teaching experience.

“We make sure that, of the three courses they teach each semester, one or two courses are upper-division courses in their areas of expertise. We make sure they get the same travel funds to conferences that regular faculty get, and we make sure they do not turn into five or six year positions, but instead provide a short term benefit,” he said. “In these times of difficult economics, [professional development opportunities] are the most helpful features we can provide.”

Dr. Kreilkamp completed a two-year postdoc at the University of Chicago before joining the IU English department.

“Looking back on it, spending the two years in the postdoc before entering the tenure track at Indiana was really helpful for me. It let me try on being a professor and start revising my dissertation without having to take on all the service responsibilities that come with a tenure track position.”

Not all postdocs are created equal, but Dean Watt said IU English Department does set a goal of providing a livable wage and professional advancement to their postdoc students, “because at

the end of the day, the last thing you want to do is to impede the professional advancement of your own students in any way.”

To take or not to take a postdoc

If a postdoc is a consideration for graduating Ph.D.s, it is worth considering national options, as well as opportunities offered by many other universities. Many Research I institutions have fewer stipulations than IU does about taking students from other schools.

The right postdoc can enrich a student’s profile on the market, Dr. MacKay said, because they are a way to make senior contacts who can serve as mentors and recommenders.

“And it certainly is a great preparative to the job market in that you have these other people who are interested in your thinking and who will spell it back out for you in new ways that are extremely helpful when you are putting together an abstract or a job letter,” she said.

But what happens when a new Ph.D. is offered both a postdoc and a position? Which one is the better choice?

“The rule of thumb [in the humanities] is that you always take a permanent position over a postdoc because you’re then commencing your career, whereas a postdoc is no guarantee to a life in the profession -- all things being equal. But all things are not usually equal,” she said.

The IU English Department, for example, places between 80-85 percent of job seekers in tenure track positions, Dean Watt said. A few may be offered a job and decline it because they don’t want to go to that institution or area, but in his recent experience, “if properly prepared, most graduate students in English end up with several interviews at the national convention.”

However, if a student’s dissertation research is not in a growth area, or if it doesn’t fit under typical field categories, a postdoc can credential a project so that it looks more appealing on the market.

“A lot of postdocs are offered on a theme, so a dissertation that doesn’t seem to sit well with job search terms can fit perfectly under the rubric of a research institute, Dr. MacKay said. “It’s a lovely way for non-traditional projects to find a happy home, and to prod job search committees to give them a second look.”

A few students end up with offers for both a job and a postdoc, and as for which one to take, “each case is different,” Dean Watt said.

For example, one of Dr. Watt’s graduate students had the option to take either a postdoc or a position at second-tier university. In that case, the student “decided to take the position at the urban university

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Postdocs in the Humanities continued...

where the teaching load was heavier than for our IU postdocs, but her chances to teach a variety of courses and students was greater. She made the calculation that it would benefit her if she only kept the job for a few years and didn't fall behind in her research. In fact, she kept the job a year, then got a job at a Research I in her home state. So it worked out in her case and she was fortunate."

Dr. MacKay has also seen the opposite choice made. Two of her graduate school colleagues, faced with the postdoc-or-position dilemma, chose the postdoc. One chose a non-teaching postdoc at Harvard University, and the other accepted a two-to-three year research intensive postdoc at Stanford University. Both felt certain that when they returned to the job market, they would have a better chance to land a tenure-track position at a Research I school. Both were right.

"But it's definitely a risk. They were taking a gamble," she said.

Freshly postdoctoral graduate students expect to move for their first position, but for students with families, moving to take a postdoc over a position may not even be a consideration. A job is more likely to advance to tenure, and it provides the often long-overdue benefits and security needed to support a family.

"Postdocs, in that sense, favor a certain type of academic," Dr. MacKay said, "and that academic is single, mobile, healthy, young. There's a reason that one does this sooner rather than later in one's post-doctoral career."

Some postdocs are well-established and well-known, but other postdocs and postdoc-like opportunities arise suddenly and without much fanfare. Dr. MacKay suggests staying in touch with faculty members, and spending time online combing online resources like the Chronicle of Higher Education and research institutes of interest.

"I recommend to my graduate students that they take a couple of hours a week to cast about for opportunities. Some deadlines are so tight that you almost need to know someone to get your foot in the door. Keep in touch with your mentors, adviser, and dissertation committee," she said.

"Those connections are key."

FACULTY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS continued...

Another plus for theme-based postdoctoral fellowships is that because the participants are all working on projects that fit under the rubric of a particular theme, the seminars takes on the qualities of a think-tank.

"It was like being a grad student at the best of all interdisciplinary programs, including a heavy reading load," she said. "I feel that I was very privileged to be privy to some very exciting exchanges across disciplines." All those great minds and distinct research philosophies in one place might seem intimidating and unwieldy, but Dr. MacKay said everyone learned to give and take.

"That's a difference between me now and me then as a fresh-out-of-graduate-school candidate, is that I know how I practice my research. I'm familiar with my own methodology. I know how to orchestrate a conversation that includes these new influences without being overtaken by them and without feeling

that my own fields can't accommodate them," she said.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

Faculty postdocs are wonderful experiences, but before you apply, Dr. MacKay advises new faculty not to overlook the practical implications of moving and working at another institution for a year.

"There are practical and academic sides of this opportunity and they both deserve consideration. Setting up and paying for two households, and traveling back and forth between the postdoc and IU, was pretty demanding."

MacKay points out that the structure of academic fellowships has not shifted to accommodate the reality of two-income families.

"Despite the fact that graduate students are more diverse than ever, the profession has not caught up to that change, not by a long shot. It is expected

that a good academic, one with a strong research profile, will spend time in these residential environments. But the unstated assumption is that a good academic can simply pick up and move to another location at the drop of a hat. This is true at every point in the career. Academia still privileges the idea of a self-cloistering professor, sheltered from the intrusions of everyday life."

So given those entailments, how do postdocs work? "Well, they support those self-selecting candidates who can accommodate and afford the disruption and the wage cut. Interestingly, postdoctoral fellowships turn out to be an opportunity for new Ph Ds to start families," Dr. MacKay said. A lot of women have come to recognize that a multi-year postdoc is the only way to spend the hectic first years of parenthood off the tenure clock."



Indiana University Graduate and Professional Student Organization (GPSO) **FALL SEMESTER EVENTS ROUND-UP**

by Peter Thoresen, GPSO Events Coordinator

Multi-Cultural Halloween Fair

On Thursday, October 30th, the Indiana University Graduate and Professional Student Organization (GPSO) and International Outreach Council (IOC) presented a Multi-Cultural Halloween Fair. Held from 5-8pm in IMU Stateroom West, participating groups included the Russian and East European Institute, Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, and West European Studies. Additionally, graduate student and instructor Lily Ibarra constructed an altar to represent the Mexican tradition of the Day of the Dead.

Nearly 80 attendees (including many children) enjoyed the offerings presented. One event highlight included the participation of Professor Jeffrey Holdeman, as well as several of his students enrolled in the class, The Vampire in European and American Culture. In addition to candy provided by participating organizations, attendees were also offered holiday cookies which were generously donated by IMU Catering Services.

GPSO's Election Watch 2008

Well over 150 graduate and professional students attended GPSO's Election Watch event on Tuesday, November 4th. Held at Coaches Bar and Grill, attendees from numerous departments gathered to monitor election results.

Grad Students Climb High at Hoosier Heights

Hoosier Heights welcomed over forty graduate and professional students to their indoor climbing facility on Thursday, November 20th. Hoosier Heights offered highly discounted admission, which included free climbing lessons to all interested attendees.

GPSO Graduate Student Social Hours

GPSO is pleased to continue to offer Graduate Student Social Hours twice a month. Recent department sponsors include Applied Health Science, and the School of Informatics. For more information on departmental sponsorship, contact **GPSO Events Coordinator, Peter Thoresen** at gpsopr@indiana.edu.

Whether you're decorating a tree, a room, or a table during the holidays, these long-lasting cookies bring sparkle, color, and the feeling of warmth that no storebought ornament can provide into your house. Making them is an ideal Saturday project to usher in the holidays. String the finished cookies on stout wire and run them along your banisters, mantels, or coil them up into a wreath or centerpiece. Light candles to catch the twinkle in the sugar crystals. One batch of dough will give you about 2 dozen cookies; if you plan to double the recipe, make 2 separate batches. You can add color to the cookies either by coloring the icing or by using white icing, then dusting the icing with colored sugar before it sets. After it sets, knock off the excess. The latter gives a prettier, more sparkly effect. Strangely, both cold milk and hot whiskey toddies go perfectly with spicy gingerbread.

Gingerbread Grads

Prep Time: 45 min

Cook Time: 10 min

Level: Graduate Student

Serves: 24 servings

Gingerbread:

- 8 ounces (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened at room temp
- 3/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup dark molasses (not blackstrap)
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 1/4 cups cake flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

Royal Icing:

- 2 cups or more confectioners' sugar
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon egg white*

Decorating:

- Raisins, as needed
- White chocolate chips, as needed
- Various food coloring
- Various colors of sanding sugar

Equipment: Pastry bag fitted with small, round tip; cookie cutters in the shape of gingerbread men and women, (or dreidels, Christmas tree ornaments, snowflakes); wire, string or yarn for stringing

Modified slightly from the recipe on FoodNetwork.com

Make the Gingerbread: In a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the butter until smooth. Add the sugar and mix. Add the eggs and mix. Add the molasses and vanilla and mix.

Sift the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves together. Working in batches and mixing after each addition until just combined, add the dry ingredients to the butter-sugar mixture. Shape the dough into a thick disk, wrap in waxed paper, and refrigerate 1 to 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Grease 1 or 2 cookie sheets. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out 1/4-inch thick and cut out with desired cookie cutters.



*Happily finished
grading papers..*

To make the Royal Icing: In a mixer, blend the confectioners' sugar, milk, and egg white together. Add more sugar to get a pipe-able consistency.

To make Gingerbread Graduate Students: Use gingerbread man and woman cookie cutters and cut out the cookies, re-rolling the scraps as needed. Decorate them with raisins and white chocolate chips for eyes, nose, mouth, and buttons down the front. Bake until firm, 8 to 10 minutes, and let cool on the pan.

Meanwhile, add some festive colors to your icing with food coloring and lay out colored sugars in small glass bowls with spoons. Using a pastry bag fitted with the smallest plain tip, pipe a few colorful borders or white borders and coat with sanding sugar. When set, add more lines of icing in white.

If you plan to hang the cookies, use a toothpick to make a hole in the cookies about 1/8-inch wide, keeping in mind that the hole will shrink as the cookies bake and puff up a bit. Bake until firm, 8 to 10 minutes, and let cool on the pan. Color some of your icing with food coloring, or use colored sugar and white icing together. Using a pastry bag fitted with a small plain tip, pipe on your decoration. Let the icing harden before threading the cookies onto wire, string, or yarn for hanging.

How to submit content for the GQ:

Departments, schools and IU campuses may submit ideas and announcements for the next issues of the Graduate Quarterly to Communications Director Erika Lee at ebigalee@indiana.edu or by phone at 855-5697.

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