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Newsletters

Humanities Center

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## UAH Humanities Center, 2004

University of Alabama in Huntsville

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# Humanities Center

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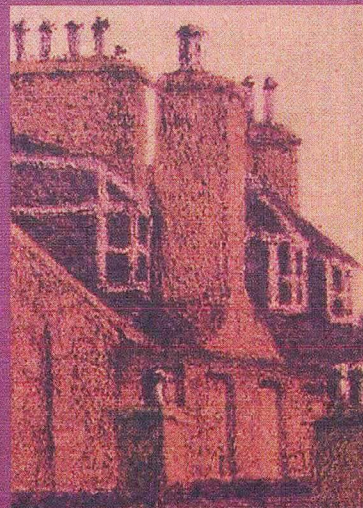
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On the cover:  
"Lerwick" by  
Michael Crouse



# UAH

The University of Alabama in Huntsville

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# Humanities Center

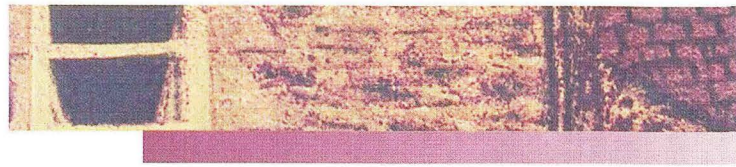
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Fall 2004



# UAH

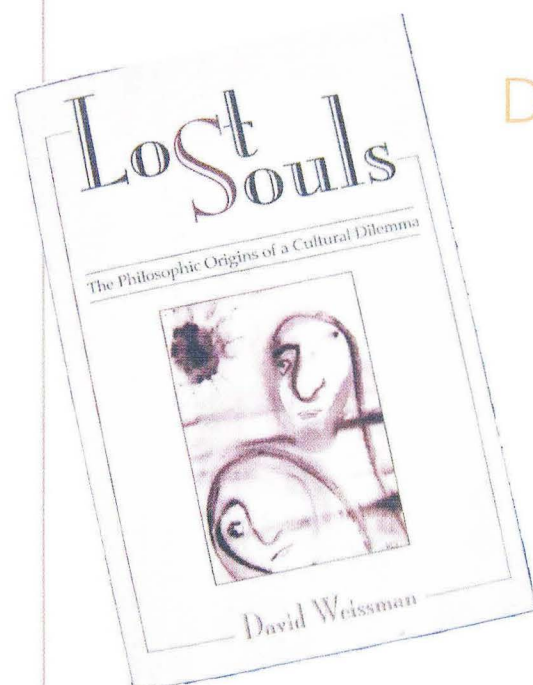
# Visiting Scholars



## Kelly Cherry

KELLY CHERRY, well-known to the university and larger Huntsville community from her earlier visits, will return to UAH this fall as Visiting Eminent Scholar in the Humanities and Professor of English. Professor Cherry has published over 20 books, including fiction, poetry, and autobiography, and a collection of essays. Her most recent titles are *We Can Still Be Friends*, a novel (Soho Press, 2003) and *Rising Venus*, poems (Louisiana University Press, 2002). Her short fiction has been represented in the anthologies *Best American Short Stories*, *The O. Henry*

*Awards*, and *The Pushcart Prize*. She is Eudora Welty Professor Emerita of English and Evjue-Bascom Professor Emerita in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Her work (which has been translated into a dozen languages) has taken her all over the world, and through most of the United States. When not traveling, she lives on a small farm in Virginia with her husband, the fiction writer Burke Davis III. Professor Kelly will teach a course in creative writing in the fall semester and conduct a short-term writer's workshop late in the term.



## David Weissman

DAVID WEISSMAN, Professor of Philosophy at City College (City University of New York), will visit campus for a week in October. Widely known in this country and abroad for his writings and lectures on a variety of fundamental philosophical topics, Professor Weissman has established a reputation as a speaker who is able to bring difficult philosophical issues to life for both specialized and general audiences. A remarkably comprehensive grasp of the Western tradition in philosophy and science has provided the base for his distinctive contributions to systematic philosophy. In *Eternal Possibilities*, *Intuition and Ideality*, and *Hypothesis and the Spiral of Reflection*, he developed a critique of

some of the central ontological and epistemological presuppositions of the tradition. In his more recent work, (particularly in *Truth's Debt to Value* and *A Social Ontology*) he has turned his attention to basic questions of value, arguing that our conceptions of value require a foundation in a world whose fundamental nature is independent of subjective experience. Most recently, in his book *Lost Souls*, he suggests a way of moving beyond the mind-body dualism that has plagued much of the modern tradition. Professor Weissman will be visiting various philosophy classes during the week and will give a public lecture in the evening on October 15th in Roberts Recital Hall.

# A note from the Director



When I took over as director of the Humanities Center last year, I knew a good deal about the contributions the Center had been making to the life of the university, and assumed everyone else did as well. I soon learned that this was not really true. Having heard about the appointment, lots of friends and acquaintances (after polite congratulations) asked, "What is the Humanities Center exactly?" "Well," I'd say (once I'd learned that I needed a little speech ready to hand), "the Humanities Center endowment funds were developed through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and matching private donations to provide extra support for faculty research in the humanities, travel related to this research, public programs with a humanistic focus, and to expand the library holdings in the humanities." As a summary, that's not bad, but I fairly often found (and find) myself next asked to define the "humanities." Most of the people who asked about this already knew that the expression is formally used to refer to the study of history, literature, philosophy, and related fields. They meant to ask just what it is that distinguishes humanistic inquiry. After all, the kinds of things that people in these fields are interested in can seem (and be) as different from one another as are the methods of inquiry by which they are approached.

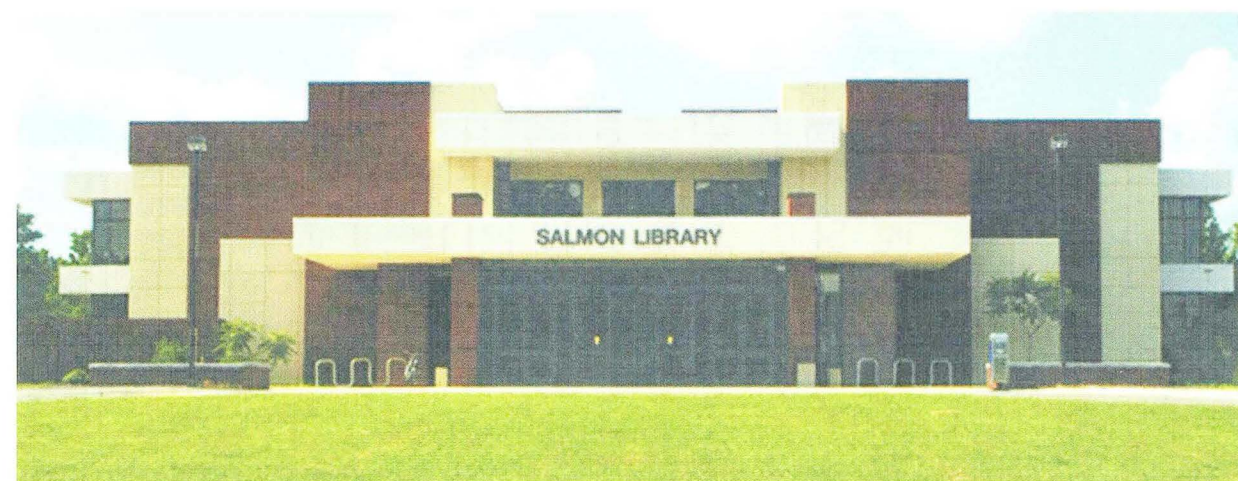
So what does distinguish the humanities? What draws the philosophical, historical, and literary traditions together? I don't think there's a simple answer to these questions, but I do think that some general things can be said. In fact, in some ways it's generality that distinguishes humanistic thinking. When we take up "humanistic" inquiry, we think about human being from the broadest perspectives, putting aside for a time the more specific and technical sort of inquiry that has come to occupy so much of our attention these days. In an age distinguished by its penchant for a narrowing of focus, for an increasing emphasis on dividing experience into smaller and smaller bits, it becomes increasingly difficult to take the long view. But there is great danger in allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by detailed analyses of small slices of our experience. If we lose sight of the larger picture, the significance of the smaller bits fades away from view along with it. Technical questions have technical answers; the large questions that gave rise to the technical ones in the first place rarely do. Who are we? Where did we come from? What are we supposed to do? Why? How do we tell when we have good answers to these questions? Humanistic inquiry attempts to respond to these very big questions now as it has always done. We search through our past, we tell stories to and about ourselves, we look for broad categorical bonds that might help to tie our experience together into a meaningful whole. It has been the special task of people working in the humanities to keep this inquiry alive. And it is equally the task of the humanities to draw as many people as possible into the search. We need to find ways to enliven and broaden the conversation of the humanities by embracing as many points of view as we can, to encourage as many people as possible to think together about those big questions. In the next few years, I hope to find ways to use the resources of the Center to draw on the insights and expertise of the people in our own community as we continue this most fundamental of human conversations.

*Brian Martine*

Brian Martine  
Professor of Philosophy and  
Director, UAH Humanities Center



# Library Enhancement Grants Awarded



In an effort to support faculty and student research, the Humanities Center continues to provide funds to expand the humanities collections held at the Salmon Library. This year, the Center provided in excess of \$20,000 to fund proposals made by the following faculty members:

**Dr. Molly Johnson, History:**

Two grants, the first for the purchase of materials in German history with an emphasis on the post-1945 period of publication and the second for the purchase of materials focusing on European Women's History.

**Dr. Rose Norman, English:**

studies concerning Virginia Woolf – a series of annuals and selected papers from the annual Woolf conference.

**Dr. Mitch Berbrier, Sociology:**

materials on Social Movements including historical analysis.

**Dr. Bill Wilkerson, Philosophy:**

monographs and volumes of essays on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual studies.

**Dr. Jeff Nelson, English:**

materials on World Literature with emphasis on non-Western literature.

**Dr. Mary Piersma, Education:**

the entire collection of Newberry Award and Caldecott Collection in children's literature.

**Dr. Julie Ferris, Communication Arts:**

materials on Cultural Studies Theories and Methods and Women's Studies as related to Media and Cultural Studies.

**Dr. Merrill Price, English:**

monographs on the place of women in the Middle Ages.

**Dr. Andree Reeves, Women's Studies:**

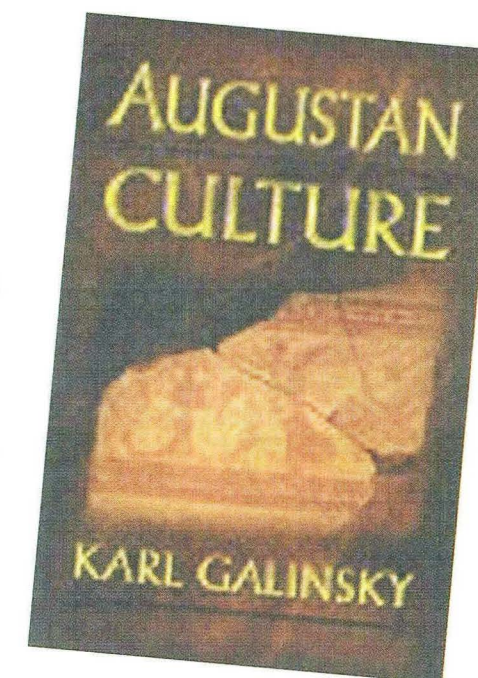
materials focusing on Women's Studies in a variety of disciplines including Technology and Communication, Sociology, Religion and Spirituality, military, sports, etc.



# Spring 2003-Fall 2004

## Karl Galinsky

At the request of the students of the Society for Ancient Languages, the Center was pleased to co-sponsor the visit of KARL GALINSKY, Floyd A. Cailloux Centennial Professor of Classics at the University of Texas at Austin. Professor Galinsky, who has published widely on Ovid, was an obvious choice for the students of the Society who had spent most of the year in a special study of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. His general public lectures were enthusiastically received as was his special address to the students of the Society at their annual Convivium, the annual celebratory dinner held at the end of each academic year.



## Charles Mills

CHARLES MILLS, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, visited UAH for a week during the 2004 spring semester as a Distinguished Visiting Scholar supported by the Center. It was an honor to host Professor Mills who has broken new ground in the field of philosophy and race. His first book, *Blackness Visible*, contained many of his important essays in this field, including essays that examine the metaphysics of race and why philosophy in America has had to struggle to attract African-American students.

Perhaps best known for *The Racial Contract*, which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and for a National Book Award by Cornell University Press, Professor Mills has lectured extensively throughout the United States on race and political theory. After spending a week in discussion with philosophy faculty and students, Mills capped his visit with an outstanding public lecture in which he brought his insights to bear on the difficult topics of race and racism with remarkable intelligence and grace.



# The Chapbook Project

When Kelly Cherry last visited UAH as an Eminent Scholar, she happened to see some of Michael Crouse's work in an exhibit and immediately felt a sympathetic chord struck. It seemed to her Crouse's work captured in an entirely different medium some of the same sense of things that she has tried to express in her poetry. When she met Professor Crouse, the printmaker in UAH's Art Department, they began to consider possible ways of drawing some of their work together. Cherry and Crouse discussed the matter with Sue Kirkpatrick, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the three conceived the idea of producing a small volume that would include some of Cherry's poetry and some of Crouse's artwork. Dean Kirkpatrick found a printer (see below) who could put together a special edition, and Cherry and Crouse began polishing some work that each already had in progress for the volume. Through the generous support of a private donor, Mrs. Julian Davidson, (together with some funding from the Humanities Center), the project was underwritten and came to fruition. The result, a beautifully crafted boxed edition entitled *Welsh Table Talk* will be available early in the fall, and will be offered as a gift to College supporters who donate \$500.00 or more to the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Excellence Fund.

## Poetry by Kelly Cherry

### WELSH SONG

Rain blew against the window pane.  
The kestrel's shadow quartered the air.  
A rooster crowed. The drainpipe banged  
Against stone. The child brushed her hair

And sang a song. The gas fire burned.  
The gas lamp glowed. The rain fell faster.  
Blue became black in the window.  
The wind pulled the sea up to the pasture.

The child brushed her hair and sang songs.  
The lost pigeon sheltered alone  
In the chapel rafters. The red  
Glass on the sill gleamed in gaslight.

A winged darkness crossed the dark night,  
And the drainpipe banged against stone.

Ten years ago as I write this, I spent a week on Bardsey Island, off the coast of Wales. Bardsey Island is a National Nature Reserve and "designated Site of Special Scientific Interest." Automobiles are prohibited on the island; there is no electricity; there is no indoor plumbing; and nothing must be left behind that is not organic. I went there with a friend, his ten-year-old daughter, and the daughter's best friend.

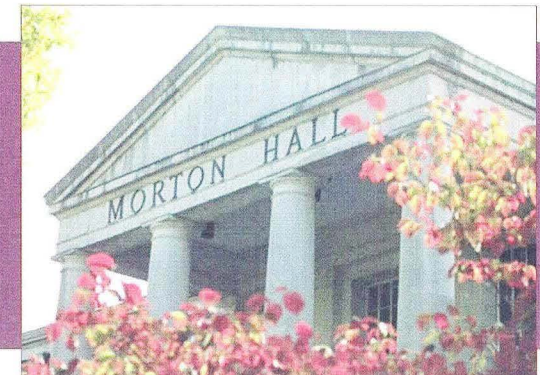
I had wanted a daughter and missed having one. That week, I was blessed with two. They were smart, funny, full of spunk, sensitive, and intelligent.

Without television, comics, movies, video games, or toys to distract them, they simply, nonchalantly, created a universe of other worlds—detailed and dramatic worlds that popped into being with a sentence, a gesture, an accidental rhyme. The girls became infantry bivouacked under a canvas in the yard; doctor and patient; well-to-do matrons at high tea; singers and singing nuns. To me, their conversations seemed magical, filled with mythical beasts and making wild leaps. I began writing poems about the girls. They didn't know I was writing about them, but when they saw I was writing poems, they began to write poems, too. Even my friend, who had written a number of books but not poetry, began to write poetry.

And meanwhile, there really was a mad friar, and there really was a ruined abbey, and there really was a pigeon in the church rafters. The enchantment of the girls and their theatrical and narrative inventions stayed with me and is still with me. In *Welsh Table Talk*—some of the poems written on the island, others afterward; some a reflection of fact, others more a reflection of spirit—I tried to convey both the sadness and the playfulness of that week. I tried to capture the simplicity of childhood, and the extravagant imagination of childhood, and place them side by side with a darker, adult story that is semi-submerged, like the island itself.

Kelly Cherry  
Visiting Eminent Scholar and  
Professor of English

# Faculty Research Grants Awarded



## Art History from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

Some of the most interesting discoveries are found when one thinks "outside of the box" and considers not only what is apparent, but what is not easily observed. Dr. Lillian Joyce (Dept. of Art and Art History) continues to pursue her research in the area of Roman Art, turning what she describes as "a significant gap in the scholarship" into a "Gender Study in Roman Art." While studying a pair of Azure blue glass cameo plaques, Dr. Joyce found what suggests a connection with the

house of Fabius Rufus and works of art located on the property which share the same subject--Ariadne. As a previous recipient of humanities' grants, Dr. Joyce has researched and written articles such as "Ariadne Transformed in Pompeii's House of Fabius Rufus," to be published by the American Academy in Rome for their annual journal *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* and "Ecstasy in Miniature: Satyrs and Maenads on Gems," published by SECAC

Review. This study has led Dr. Joyce to discover an array of artistic representations of women in Roman art and to examine the factors that led artists to display women in a variety of poses. Further investigations have revealed that through history of the Greek and Roman periods, women have been portrayed as clothed, partially clothed, and completely nude for different reasons depending on the culture, the stereotype, and the motivations of the person being depicted.

## Mrs. Iris Butler Portal to Become Subject of Biography

In the life and work of Mrs. Iris Butler Portal, historian and biographer, Dr. John Severn (Dept. of History) has found an intriguing subject for a biographical study. Although her name may not be familiar to most Americans, Mrs. Portal published several well-received biographies in Britain during her long life. (She died just last year at the age of 97.) Two of these, focusing on the lives of Alice,

Countess of Reading, and Marquess Wellesley, drew on her intimate knowledge of the politics and life of the British in India. As the daughter of the governor of the Central Provinces, she was exposed to the elite of the Raj, cared for the children of the Mountbattens (then Governor-General of India) and did welfare work for the impoverished families of Indian soldiers. She broke with tradition and defied convention

with regard to her associations with the natives. As sister to the eminent politician R.A. Butler, she had first-hand knowledge of the political climate of the mid-twentieth century. Though without much formal education (given the conventions of her time), Mrs. Portal was a keen observer of life in India and Britain in the twentieth century, and Dr. Severn plans to give her insights the attention they deserve in his study.

## Academic Integrity Issues and Internet Plagiarism

Finding cultural differences with students from foreign countries is not unusual. However as Dr. Madeleine Youmans (Dept. of English) points out, "there is a

pressing need to apprentice ESL students into U.S. norms of academic integrity and plagiarism as part of their acculturation." Dr. Youmans plans to conduct research in this

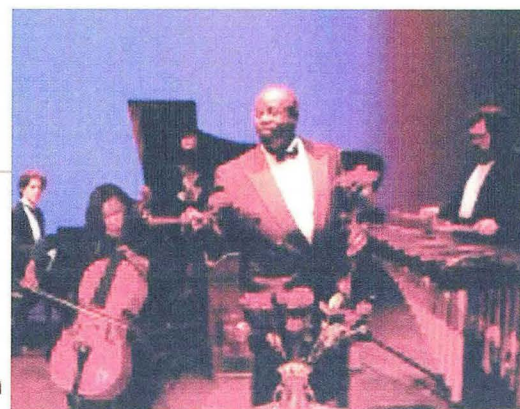
area with the ultimate goal of finding ways to reduce plagiarism among ESL students by using ethnographic approaches and emphasizing ownership of one's own writing.

# Public Programs

## The Core Ensemble

Touring throughout the United States and elsewhere around the world, this fine ensemble of musicians and actors has established a reputation for a unique blend of music and biographical drama. Last year, they performed a work called "Tres Vidas" to a packed house in Roberts Auditorium. A wonderful score provided the backdrop against which actress and singer Georgina Corbo captured the spirits and ideas of three extraordinary Latin American women: Mexican painter Frida

Kahlo, Salvadoran peasant activist Rufina Amaya, and Argentinian poet Alfonsina Storni. The music, performed by Tahira Whittington (cello), Hugh Hinton (piano), and Michael Parola (percussion) was exhilarating and as enthusiastically received as Ms. Corbo's performance. The Center will provide part of the support again this year when the Core Ensemble returns to perform another piece for chamber music ensemble,



"Of Ebony Embers." In this work, the ensemble examines the lives of African American poets Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay as seen through the eyes of painter Aaron Douglas. (Co-sponsored by the College of Engineering and the Office of Multicultural Affairs.)

## History Forum

Entitled "The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and Nation-Building," this year's History Department Forum brought three prominent scholars (Professors William Stuck,

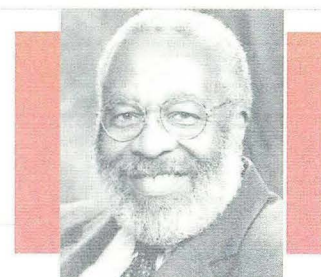
Howard Adelman, and Peter Hahn) to UAH to discuss the impact of the UN in three global regions: North Korea, Africa, and the Middle East. The forum presented a multi-cultural,

historical examination of the UN's role as peacekeeper and nation builder as well as the organization's future as an emblem of global stability and order.

## Dr. Vincent Harding visits UAH

At the invitation of the Civil Rights Planning Group, a joint committee of faculty and staff members from Alabama A&M University and UAH,

veteran activist and theologian Vincent Harding spoke to a large audience drawn from both universities and the Huntsville community.



## Philosophy Forum

Sponsored once again by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, the Philosophy Forum brought two well-known thinkers to campus to discuss the relation between philosophy and mysticism. Professor

Allison Coudert traced the impact of the Kabbalah on philosophy and science during the Enlightenment, and Professor Bruce Janz discussed the relevance of historical mysticism for contemporary philosophical

problems. Exploring a topic often neglected by the mainstream philosophical tradition, these speakers illuminated the important relationship between philosophy and mysticism.

## Archaeological Institute of America



UAH hosts the North Alabama Society of the AIA and its events have been hugely successful with students and the larger Huntsville community. The Center helped to bring underwater archaeologist Chris Amer to campus to discuss his most recent finding on the HL Huntley, the Civil War submarine built in Mobile that sank with its crew in Charleston Harbor and was recently recovered in tact. The Center also co-sponsored a visit by eminent Etruscologist Dr. Ili Nagy, who gave a fascinating lecture on the "Demons of the Etruscan Underworld."



## MATERIALS AND PROCESS for WELSH TABLE TALK

Designed and hand bound by John Paul Greenwald and Stephen L. Vanilio of the Book Arts Conservatory in Washington, D.C., the chapbook is made entirely of archival materials meant to last for at least 300 years. The leather binding of both the chap-

book itself and the box that contains it is Italian calfskin. The interior of the chapbook is letterpress printed on fabiano rusticus art paper by the printer for the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. Interspersed among Kelly Cherry's poems in the chapbook are

six etchings by Michael Crouse. Also included within the box is a folder containing three more loose (frameable) etchings by Crouse. The box, chapbook, folder, all together comprise a beautifully integrated art object in themselves.

## Etchings by Michael Crouse

The images for the chapbook were inspired by a previous sabbatical trip to Wales and the Shetland Islands. These images are line etchings with hand-applied ink washes and were based on sketchbook drawings and photographs created during the month of February, 1997. In developing the etchings for the chapbook, I intentionally chose to retain the hand-drawn integrity of the original sketchbook drawings. After several readings of Kelly Cherry's series of Welsh Table Talk poems, I selected images that I felt would complement the mood and tone of her poems.

I found the winter season to be a particularly inspiring time of the year. Drawing in my sketchbook was an important activity during my daily long walks. When I was drawing, I felt a unique bond to the landscape, the forces of nature, the present, and to the past. I was inspired by the more barren, rugged, and desolate landscapes. The weather was often cold and raining with gale-force winds. In developing the etchings for the chapbook, I purposefully tried to capture not just the physical landscape imagery, but also this unique bond and feelings I experienced while doing the original drawings.

Michael Crouse  
Professor of Art



"Coastline" by Michael Crouse

# Grants provide opportunities for UAH students

through funding from the U.S. Department of Education



Students from the UAH Jazz Ensemble visit Havana, Cuba.

## "International Business Studies Initiative" grant completed

In the summer of 2001, the Humanities Center was awarded a \$131,000 contract by the U.S. Department of Education to integrate some of the international programs from the College of Liberal Arts with other programs in the College of Administrative Science and the North Alabama International Trade Agency. The culmination of two years' effort on the International Business Studies Initiative is dramatically improved resources for

students seeking knowledge of foreign cultures and languages.

The establishment of new internship programs (this summer alone saw 15 students travel to 9 foreign countries as interns), substantial improvements in software and laboratory equipment, as well as redesigned curriculum and enhanced library collections focusing on international subjects, have already established a new emphasis integrating global awareness with traditional

business studies. Lectures at UAH by academics as well as local business leaders emphasized the importance of history, knowing the cultures of other peoples and the difficulty language barriers can provide. Through the new Global Studies grant, the Humanities Center hopes to continue the work begun by this initiative in demonstrating the importance of humanistic study for advances in science, technology and business.

## Global Studies grant opens doors to the world

In recent years, a number of faculty members at UAH have been working to add more content about the world outside of the U.S. borders to the university curriculum. To support those efforts, Dr. Johanna Shields, Executive Director for Special Projects at the Humanities Center, led an interdisciplinary faculty team which last summer succeeded in securing a two-year federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$148,000. Since then, great strides have been made in strengthening international studies and foreign languages at UAH under the leadership of Project Director Dr. Kathy Hawk of the Department of Political Science.

One of the most significant accomplishments over the past year has been the development of a Global Studies cognate (an interdisciplinary minor) in the College of Liberal Arts. The idea behind the development of the cognate is to provide students who are interested in pursuing serious study of the world

outside the United States a formal academic program that will appear on their college transcript. The cognate requires that students take three core courses in order to develop a strong foundation in global studies, but allows students great flexibility in designing a program tailored to their individual interests.

Another significant activity has been in the development of short-term study abroad opportunities for UAH students. Because many UAH students work, have families, and are involved in other activities that often preclude them from spending a semester or a year abroad, the focus has been on developing courses that take students abroad for one to three weeks. During the 2004 spring semester, two faculty members led students abroad for part of their coursework. Dr. Don Bowyer arranged for students in his Jazz Ensemble course to travel to Cuba for a week over spring break where they studied about Cuban jazz and performed with musicians in

the country. Dr. Rose Norman led a group to the United Kingdom in June for a course on Virginia Woolf.

Two new study-abroad opportunities for students are currently in development for spring 2005. Dr. Richard Gerberding is planning to lead a group of students to Rome, Italy, as part of a 100-level humanities course. This will be a great opportunity for lower-level students from all parts of campus to participate in a study-abroad program. The second excursion is a two-week intensive Spanish language study in Mexico, to be led by Dr. Sharron Abernethy. This course will be open to students who have completed at least two semesters of Spanish, and will allow them a unique opportunity to sharpen their conversation skills in a native setting. Each course will allow students to earn three credit hours toward their degrees. More information on these programs will be forthcoming this fall.