

University of Alabama in Huntsville

LOUIS

Newsletters

Humanities Center

8-1-2008

UAH Humanities Center, 2008

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Follow this and additional works at: <https://louis.uah.edu/humanities-news>

Recommended Citation

University of Alabama in Huntsville, "UAH Humanities Center, 2008" (2008). *Newsletters*. 9.
<https://louis.uah.edu/humanities-news/9>

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities Center at LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsletters by an authorized administrator of LOUIS.

HUMANITIES CENTER

316 Roberts Hall • Huntsville, AL 35899 • (P) 256.824.6583 • (F) 256.824.6702

HUMANITIES CENTER

Fall 2008

Dr. Brian Martine
Director
martineb@uah.edu
256.824.2576

Dr. Johanna Shields
Executive Director for Special Projects
shieldsj@uah.edu
256.824.2578

Ms. Deborah Nelson
Program Assistant
nelson@uah.edu
256.824.6583

Steering Committee

Dr. Rolf Goebel
(German)
goebelr@uah.edu

Dr. Lillian Joyce
(Art & Art History)
joycel@uah.edu

Dr. David Neff
(English)
neffd@uah.edu

Dr. Bhavani Sitaraman
(Sociology)
sitarab@uah.edu

Dr. John Severn
(History)
severnj@uah.edu

Dr. William Wilkerson
(Philosophy)
wilkerw@uah.edu



On the cover:

Painting "Block Party" by Jill Johnson, UAH Art Department
Photo by Jose Belancourt, UAH Art Department

UAHuntsville
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

THE HUMANITIES CENTER AT

UAHuntsville

In the early 1990's, a group of faculty members from the humanities departments of the College of Liberal Arts decided to seek funds to establish a Center designed to promote humanistic inquiry both within the university and in the wider Huntsville community. Toward that end, a challenge grant was secured from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This grant acted (as it was intended to do) as a focus for the attraction of other funds, both state and private, and within three or four years, the foundation of the current Humanities Center Endowment was laid. In the years since, the original monies (invested and monitored through the UA system's combined endowment fund) have grown and with some later donations form the Center's current endowment. That endowment is divided into three distinct funds the annual incomes from which support the Center's activities. The first of these funds is the Humanities Center Endowment. The earnings from this fund are used annually to support professional travel undertaken by faculty members working in the humanities and related fields, a program of mini-grants designed to support faculty research in the humanities, as well as general public programming in the humanities. The income from the second fund, the Visiting Eminent Scholar Endowment, is used to support visits to the UAH campus by outstanding scholars in the humanities. While here, these scholars are typically attached to one of the humanities departments in the College, teaching one or two courses, sharing their research with colleagues at UAH, and presenting lectures on their work to the general public. Until recently, scholars invited under the aegis of this program all visited for a full semester. Several years ago, we initiated a new program that uses some of the income from this fund to invite eminent scholars for short-term (usually week-long) visits as well. The third fund is the Humanities Center Salmon Library Endowment. The annual income from this fund is used to develop the humanities collections at the Salmon Library based on proposals submitted by UAH faculty members.

In addition to the activities supported by our endowment funds, the Center continues to seek external funding for other programs designed to enhance the study of the humanities at UAH. Several major grants have been secured in recent years making possible new opportunities for students throughout the university. Given restrictions on the use of endowment and grant funding, the Center depends for all operating expenses on the continuing support of the office of the Vice President for Research without which none of the activities mentioned above would be possible.

REFLECTIONS

John Severn, Professor of History and Associate Provost

Thirty five years ago I spent the summer and autumn working in the manuscript room of the British Library, then housed in the British Museum. Tucked away in a corner of that grand structure, the room (it was actually two rooms) was as one might imagine of most things British, shabbily elegant, reflecting the importance of its responsibility and the dignity of its purpose. I was there researching my doctoral dissertation and the manuscript collection was a treasure trove. I remember well my first day there, and my bewilderment and awe. It was my first trip overseas and my first experience with a collection like the British Library's manuscripts. After presenting my credentials and registering in the same fashion as Karl Marx had done one hundred twenty years earlier, I took a seat at a work space awaiting the delivery of my first set of manuscripts. The space was one of eight at an enormous table (one among many), four to a side with each work area defined by leather inlay. As I waited, carefully arranging my note pads and pencils (ink is not allowed) I eventually cast my eyes to the left and to the right to see what others might be doing. On one side papers of John Locke were being carefully studied while on the other a small volume of scores by Beethoven was the object of examination. In short order, I would be presented with a volume containing letters of 18th and 19th century statesmen, including William Pitt, George III, Charles James Fox, William Grenville and Richard Wellesley. All of these manuscripts were the real thing—paper and ink going back nearly three hundred years in Locke's case. It was magical, and still is when I make the pilgrimage to the new library a few blocks away from the museum.



My approach to history was far more pragmatic than philosophical; find the evidence and tell the story was my mantra. I gave precious little thought to how and why I would be telling the story as I did. This is odd for a couple of reasons. First, because once introduced to historiography, I read and thought about it quite a lot, just not in the context of my own work. Second, I was educated in a period when ideology played an unabashed role in the writing of history, and determinism was something with which I was never comfortable. And so I wrote a very conventional, old school dissertation concerning the diplomacy of the Napoleonic Wars. I read the correspondence, the government documents, and the newspapers, and drew my conclusions. Sometime in the years between then and now I became a post-modernist, quite unconsciously. I came to believe that the constructs of history made no sense and that the vagaries of the human experience told the real story, though no doubt those who think about the history of recent years and the role of the neo-conservative school will disagree. Perhaps I came to where I am simply because I found it more interesting. More likely it is because I see history as a humanistic endeavor and less a social science. So now I do more than read relevant documents. I study the art and literature of the period, examine relationships and public opinion, assess the limitations of communication and transportation, and then see where it all leads.

I've been asked on many occasions, "why must historians insist on knocking our heroes off their pedestals?" My answer is that the historian's responsibility is to attempt to discover people as they are and how they deal with obstacles large and small, private and public. For me, the fact that historical figures are mortal human beings subject to failure as well as success enhances the human story, it does not diminish it. The fact that Thomas Jefferson may have had an affair with Sally Hemmings suggests a real human being not a marble sculpture. Somehow knowing that Jefferson struggled with his own weaknesses while contributing in such an extraordinary fashion to the development of our country makes his achievement all the more remarkable.

Reflecting now on my own intellectual Odyssey, I realize how critical institutions such as the British Library are to the continuing search for human understanding, reflecting society's commitment to preserving a record of human thoughts and deeds in the context of a wide variety of milieu. And I wonder about the flash of genius that led to the library's creation. Our Humanities Center is part of this great tradition, the creation of a small group of scholars with an inspired vision of the future.



TRAVEL GRANTS AWARDED:

Angela Balla: presented, "Baconian Investigation and Spiritual Standing in Herbert's 'Temple,'" at the "George Herbert's Pastoral: Poetry and Priesthood, Past and Future," in Salisbury, England.

Mitch Berbrier: presented, "Reflections on Building Constructionist Theory: A Conversation," Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Boston, MA.

Brandon Gardner: presented, "The Printmaker in War Time" at Southern Graphics Council Conference in Richmond, Virginia.

Andy Cling: presented, "On John Lachs and his Influence," at the Tennessee Philosophical Convention, Nashville, TN.

Sonja Givens: presented, "Do Forms of Oppression Influence Uncertainty Selection Choices?: A Socio-Cultural Approach," at the National Communication Association Annual Convention, International and Intercultural Communication Division (IICD), Chicago, IL.

Rolf Goebel: presented, "Cinematic Geographies and Literary Hegemony: Walter Benjamin and Thomas Mann on Film," Thirty-First Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, San Diego, CA, and "Between Hermeneutics and Avant-Garde Montage: Two Intellectual Affiliations of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*," Convention of the Modern Language Association of America, Chicago, IL.

Kwaku Gyasi: presented, "Colonialism and Identity Theft: Jean-Marie Adiaffi's *La Carte d'Identité*" The topic of the panel was: "Identity, Violence and the City in Francophone African Literature," at the French Colonial Historical Society at the Université Laval in Quebec, Canada.

David Johnson: presented, "Exploring the Margins: Immigrants in Late Nineteenth Century Berlin Fiction" Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, Lexington, Kentucky. Also presented, "Engaging Consumption: Subjection and Subjectivity on the Streets of Fin-de-siècle Berlin" Conference: Berlin Modernism: 1900-1945 Sewanee, Tennessee.

Molly Johnson: traveled to the University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC), to attend the inaugural workshop of the Southeast German Studies Consortium as a member of the Steering Committee for the Consortium. Her position paper, entitled "Transnationalism and the History Classroom," was discussed during a panel discussion on Transnationalism.

Nick Jones: presented, "Belief Revision and Coherence without Foundations", American Philosophical Association Central Division Meeting, Chicago, IL, April 2008. He also presented, "Why It Is Impossible to Justify Belief in the Existence of Changeless Duration", Tennessee Philosophical Association Annual Conference, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, and "Belief Revision and Coherence without Foundations", Alabama Philosophical Society Annual Conference, Orange Beach, AL.

Philip Kovacs: presented, "The Schools Are Failing: Fear, Media, and the Marketing of Educational Reform" and co-presented: "Conservative Foundations and the Cultural Politics of Curriculum: Fighting the War of Position," at the American Educational Research Association's annual meeting in New York.

Gail Pritchard: Was Discussion Group Leader at the United States Board on Books for Young People Annual Conference. She also attended the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Conference and Participated in the presentation, Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts and Attended Children's Literature Assembly Fall Board Meeting as Membership Chair.

Clarke Rountree: presented, "Disciplining Burke: Championing Burke in Various Fields," Paper presented to 7th Triennial Conference of the Kenneth Burke Society, Philadelphia, PA. He also presented, "Difficult Notions: Dramatism as Literal," at the Kenneth Burke Interest Group at the Annual Convention of the Southern Speech Communication Association, Savannah, GA, and "Defending the Indefensible: The Bush Administration's Case for the Presidential Power to Torture," presented to the National Convention of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL.

Christine Sears: presented a paper at the Organization of American Historians annual meeting in New York, March 2008, entitled "'Capable of Anything': Conflict Among Slaves," and attended the Southern Historical Association's annual meeting in Richmond, VA.

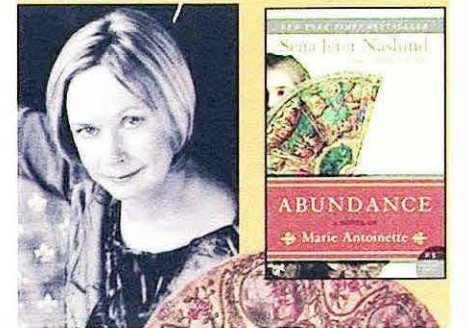
Eric Smith: presented, "The Only Way Out is Through: Space, Narrative, and Utopia in Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber*," at The Society for Utopian Studies 32nd Annual Conference, Toronto, Canada.

Sam Thomas: presented, "Female Midwives and the Language of Male Authority in Early Modern England," at the American Association for the History of Medicine, Rochester, NY.



SENA JETER NASLUND VISITS UAHUNTSMVILLE AS EMINENT SCHOLAR

Novelist Sena Jeter Naslund was very successful as the UAHuntsville Eminent Scholar in the Humanities and Visiting Professor of English during spring semester 2008, when she taught EH 410/510 Fiction Writing, gave a variety of public talks, as well as a fiction writing workshop that was open to the public. A highlight of the semester was the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of her civil rights novel *Four Spirits*, produced through a collaboration of Theatre Arts, English, and Women's Studies.



Already an accomplished and widely published author, Naslund achieved international prominence in 1999 with her bestselling *Ahab's Wife*, which was named by Time Magazine as one of the top five novels of the year. *Four Spirits*, her novel about civil rights era Birmingham, is the first to seriously engage the events of that period in fiction. Her most recent book, *Abundance: A Novel of Marie Antoinette* (2006), also made The New York Times Extended Bestseller List.



Naslund gave several public lectures on *Four Spirits*, beginning with a meeting of the American Association of University Women, where she spoke with Elaine Hughes, her co-author in the theatrical adaptation of *Four Spirits*. Naslund and Hughes

worked closely with the cast of the UAHuntsville Theatre production of *Four Spirits*, attending auditions and rehearsals and ultimately participating in a "talkback" with the cast. The theatrical adaptation *Four Spirits* was originally commissioned and developed by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. The students who worked on the UAHuntsville production felt privileged to work on a play that had never had a full-scale theatrical production (only several staged read-

ings), and to have the author herself in the audience at rehearsals. Many of the younger cast members were struggling with the ideas in the play and the harsh realities it portrays, knowing about these things only from history books. Rehearsing a scene in which they were to sing "We Shall Overcome," several young African-American actors admitted they didn't know the song. As a result, the English Department arranged to send the entire cast and crew to visit the Birmingham Civil Rights museum, the 16th Street Baptist Church next door, and Kelly Ingram Park across the street from it, where many demonstrations took place in the 1960s and where Birmingham police used firehoses and dogs on demonstrators. On that trip, a theatre student photographed statues in the park and the stained glass window in the church that commemorates the bombing. These photographs were very effectively used as slides projected on the stage throughout the play and as background images in the program. The play was enthusiastically received by the large audiences it drew through its run.



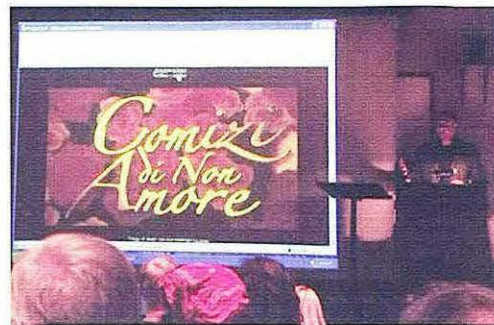
VISITING SCHOLARS: MICHAEL NEUFELD AND JOHN PAUL RICCO



Dr. Michael Neufeld, curator in the Space History Division of the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., visited UAHuntsville as a Humanities Center short-term eminent scholar during the last week of February, 2008. Neufeld, author of *Von Braun: Dreamer of Space, Engineer of War* (Knopf, 2007), learned just days before his visit to UAH that his book had received the Richard W. Leopold Prize from the Organization of American Historians. The historian, who had visited Huntsville frequently while researching the biography of the city's most renowned citizen, shared his research with the community in two public lectures. The first lecture bore the title of his book, and generated some controversy because the biography included criticism of von Braun seldom heard in the Rocket City. The audience learned, however, that Neufeld's assessment was even-handed, affecting the consensus of reviewers in several major national publications, including the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. While on campus, Neufeld also shared his ideas with three history classes also addressed the Honors Forum. His visit was co-sponsored by the History Department and the Humanities Center.

John Paul Ricco, a theorist, curator and performance artist, is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art, Media Theory, and Criticism at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. He is the author of *The Logic of the Lure*, and a number of essays on contemporary artists. Currently, he is organizing a three-part exhibition of contemporary queer video, to open at V-Tape in Toronto in January 2008, and working on his next book: *The Decision Between Us: Aporitic Aesthetics and the Inbecoming Community*.

Ricco's lecture at the UAHuntsville Department of Art and Art History featured a television pilot for a reality show that will never be aired, a trailer for a film that will never be made, and advertisements for two competing presidential campaigns that will never materialize. Addressing consensus, the society of the spectacle, and contemporary economies of labor, Ricco presented a critical assessment of the hyper-mediated and thoroughly scripted real in which we live, and suggests ways to re-think a future that would have been more properly ours, if only we could re-make it now.



FACULTY MINI-GRANTS



Lillian Joyce, Associate Professor of Art History, received funding to return to the American Academy in Rome, a residential library located on top of the Janiculum Hill overlooking the city of Rome. Dr. Joyce was able while there to wrap up her research for a lengthy article manuscript entitled, "Roma, Amazons, and the Revealed Breast." The Greeks actually developed the goddess Roma as a way to ingratiate themselves with their Roman conquerors. Knowing a good thing when they saw it, the Romans appropriated Roma, featuring her prominently on public monuments and coinage, and even setting up temples devoted to her and the divinized emperors. Artists typically represented Roma as an Amazon with a full complement of weapons, armor, and trophies. Scholars frequently comment on her martial nature, but overlook that one of her major attributes is her revealed breast. Joyce has been investigating the function of the revealed breast, and argues in this manuscript that it functions as a symbol of maternal nurture, and simultaneously as a sign of valor. College Art Association has accepted a paper on this topic that she will give in February 2009 in Los Angeles.

David S. Johnson, Assistant Professor of Global Studies and History, received funding from the Humanities Center to travel to Germany to begin library and archival research into his new project entitled "Civic Identities Past and Present: Germans and Poles in Berlin and Dresden." This project investigates parallels and contrasts between two eras of mobility, the late nineteenth century and today, and between two cities, Berlin and Dresden. The picture here shows the residence of Josef von Kraszewski, a Polish novelist in exile in Dresden in the nineteenth century. Although Kraszewski was tried and convicted for treason against Germany in 1884, current historical accounts of the city play down this past and celebrate his long residence in Dresden as symbolic of German-Polish friendship. This change in interpretation is emblematic of both transformations and continuing tensions in the imagination of civic identity in Berlin and Dresden. Notions of local pride, expressions of national interest, and desires for international relationships have shaped and continue to form the images of these cities in Germany and in the world.

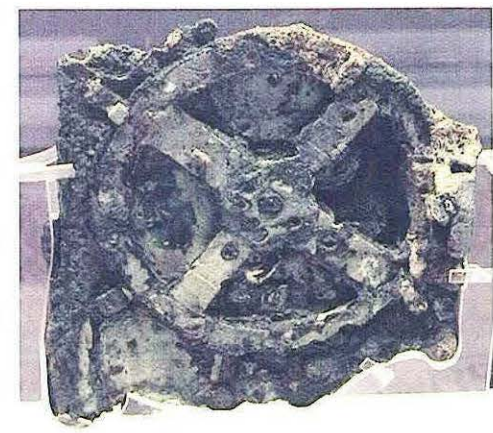


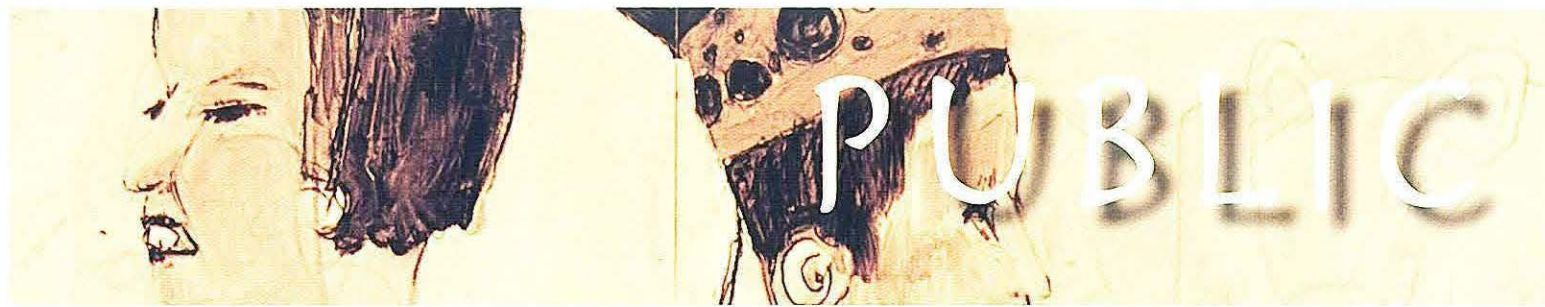
Six archaeologists of international reputation came to campus to deliver talks on a wide range of topics. Last spring Dr. David Anderson of UT, Knoxville spoke about the controversial topic of the first peopling of the Americas. His talk was followed by a lecture on the nature of divine kingship in ancient Egypt with Dr. Lanny Bell of Brown University. Many of you will remember when the Humanities Center brought Dr. Bell to campus as a Visiting Eminent Scholar and he led a hieroglyphics workshop in addition to giving



two public lectures and visiting classes. The UAHuntsville community gave him a warm welcome on his return. Our spring lecture series finished off with a visit by Dr. Robert Brown, the Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the LA County Museum, who spoke on the fabulous site of Angkor Wat and then the next day on Buddhist reliquaries. In the fall the series began with two more Egyptologists who took part in a seminar on Women in Antiquity and then gave public lectures in the evening. During the

day, Dr. Ann Roth of NYU led a discussion on Hatshepsut, the female Pharaoh and then in the evening she talked about the function of androgyny in Egyptian art. Dr. Sarah Parcak of UAB addressed students and the public about women's lives in the Workers' Village for the Valley of the Kings and then about the use of satellites in recovering and studying lost Egyptian cities. The final talk of the fall was on the Mycenaeans of Trojan War fame. Dr. Thomas Tartaron of the University of Pennsylvania spoke about how various technologies could be used to recover the locations of ancient harbors. In the spring we will have talks on ancient Iraq and mound builders of Cahokia. A highlight of the series, co-sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, will be a visit by the recently retired head of the FBI Art Crimes Team.





HOLLY NEAR VISITS CAMPUS

After early work in film, television, and Broadway, Near began writing and performing music that addressed social conditions in the world. Near has traveled from the fields of central California singing in support of The United Farm Workers to El Salvador, where she sang for peace amidst war and political conflict. Her songs were sung in secret in Latin American prisons and sung boldly by Irish and English women joined together to protest

war. In 1972, she founded

ed Redwood Records, the

first indie record company founded by a woman artist and one which became a force in alternative music for many years. Near is a consummate singer, writer, and educator. She has released more than 20 recordings and has appeared as a guest artist on many others. She is the author of *Fire in the Rain: Singer in the Storm*, and the children's book, *The Great Peace March*. Near

has received many awards for her work for social change and in 2005 was one of the 1000 Peacewomen nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Her talent, commitment, and integrity, were on display here when she participated

Women's Studies celebration, "Change of Heart: Art, Music, and Activism." Her contribution to the success of the celebration was invaluable and much appreciated.



LIBRARY GRANTS

Nicholas Jones:

Philosophy – materials concerning the philosophy of science.

William Wilkerson:

Philosophy – the Cambridge Companion Series in Philosophy and materials on European Philosophy.

Christine Sears:

History – materials on comparative slavery, abolition and comparative abolition.

Brandon Gardner:

Art & Art History – materials on the history of printmaking.

David Stewart:

Art & Art History – materials on contemporary artists.

Jeff Nelson:

English – the Cambridge History of Native Americans.

Christine Sears:

History – materials on world history, Chinese history and modern European History.

Gail Pritchard:

Education – the European Picture Book Collection.

Jason Smith:

Sociology – materials on Title IX legislative effects and inequality in Healthcare.

Andrew Dunar/Sandra Mendiola:

History – materials on Latin American History.



GLOBAL STUDIES ABROAD

IN 2008

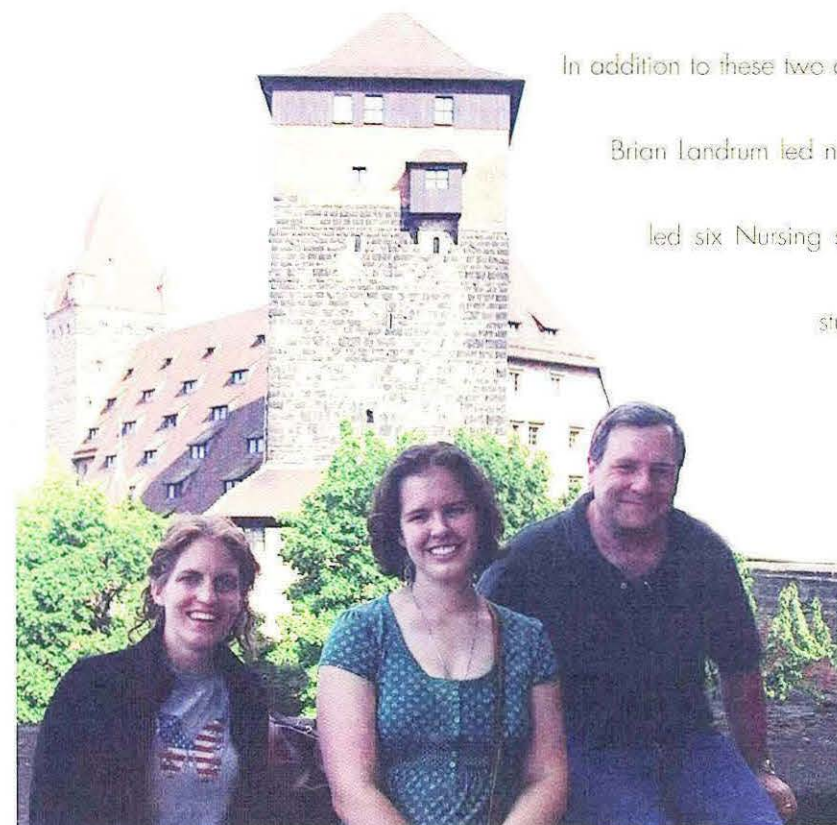
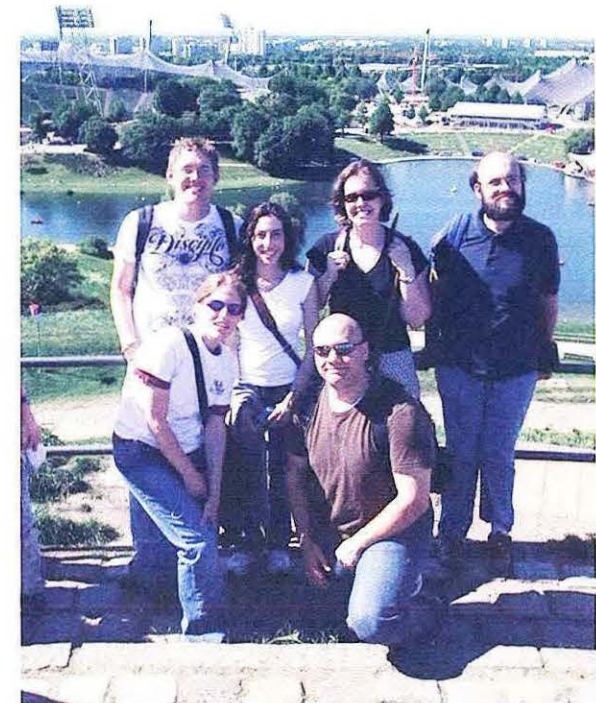


The Global Studies Program, supported grants secured from the U.S. Department of Education by Professor Johanna Shields, Executive Director for Special Projects at the Center and Dr. Kathy Hawk, Chair of Political Science, has developed a successful interdisciplinary cognate degree program and growing number of popular study abroad programs and faculty-led study abroad courses under the leadership of Dr. David Johnson.

Since 2005, over 235 students from all colleges and majors have studied abroad on programs and courses administered by the program. Highlights from the 2008 offerings included the intensive Spanish courses in Mexico and a new history course in Germany. In May 2008, 23 students traveled with Spanish instructors Constanza Holland and Karl Keller to Guanajuato, Mexico. Students were completely immersed for two weeks in Mexican culture and Spanish language. They spent several hours each day in Spanish instruction, visited important historical sites, and lived with host families. The continuing popularity of the program, evidenced by the high numbers of participants each year, demonstrates how much the students appreciate this annual opportunity.



In addition to the annual offering of intensive Spanish in Mexico, the Global Studies Program helps develop new study abroad courses each year. This past May, sixteen students traveled to Germany with Dr. Molly Johnson, Assistant Professor of History, for the course "Munich, Nuremberg, Berlin: Legacies of the Third Reich." Visits to these three cities enabled the students not only to examine the rise and fall of National Socialism, but also to compare and contrast how these three cities have confronted the legacy of the Third Reich. Students were also able to learn and see how each city has developed since the end of World War II. The course thus provided insights not only into Germany's past, but also its present.



In addition to these two courses, Dr. Brian Landrum led nine Aerospace Engineering students to Germany, Dr. Haley Hoy led six Nursing students to London to study the British health care system, three students studied German in Düsseldorf, Germany, and one student studied Italian in Pisa, Italy. Plans are underway for seven study abroad courses and programs in 2009.