Message from the Chair

After two years as Chair of the Department of Greek and Roman Studies we have over-hauled our curriculum to meet better the needs of the full range of our students, from those who want to become professional classicists by attending graduate school, to those who want to complete a degree in a subject they thoroughly enjoy before they begin professional school, such as business or law or some other career. Our enrolment numbers for the coming year look very positive—we always welcome increasing enrolments. Like the university as a whole, we have weathered financial constraints over the last few years, but we are continuing on a path of slow growth and continued excellence. Please see p. 8 for the opportunity presented by a matching gifts program.

Dealing with change, I have learned, is very much a part of the Chair’s job. In Fall 2014 we welcome to our department the Latinist Dr. Colin Shelton who is happy to be back in his native Canada after teaching at the University of Washington and at UCLA. We bid farewell to Drs. Nick Reymond and Josiah Davis who have moved on, to New Zealand and Toronto respectively. We also enthusiastically congratulate Dr. Geof Kron on receiving tenure and promotion with us. Most notably, we are preparing ourselves for the very significant departure by Professor John Oleson who will be retiring after 39 years of devoted service, teaching, and research. The university has recognized the tremendous contributions Dr. Oleson has made to the field of Roman Archaeology, to our Department and to UVic over the years, and we are grateful that we have been permitted to search for a highly qualified junior replacement in Roman archaeology. The search process is just beginning and will continue over the 2014-15 academic year.

Victoria is a magnet for retirees across Canada, and we have been glad to appoint recent arrivals Wade Richardson (formerly McGill University) and Keith Bradley (formerly Notre Dame) as Adjunct Professors, and Catherine Rubincam (formerly University of Toronto) as Associate Adjunct Professor. Keith taught at UVic for 21 years.

Looking back at our calendar of visitors since the last newsletter, I find it most impressive to see the range and fields of study covered, especially from our Lansdowne speakers. We heard from Dr. Tim Whitmarsh, Oxford, on ancient religion and atheism, and we learned about aerial photography and the fascinating archaeology of Jordan from Dr. David Kennedy, University of Western Australia. Other memorable speakers include Dr. Michelle George, former UVic graduate student and now department chair at McMaster University, Dr. Eric Cline, best-selling author and archaeologist from George Washington University, Professor Margalit Finkelberg, University of Haifa, Dr. Dylan Sailor, UC Berkeley, and UVic Professor Emeritus Dr. John Fitch. The dialogue between invited speaker and audience members creates a very stimulating intellectual environment, one that spurs greater interest in the teaching and research of the Department, and we have every reason to expect this tradition to continue. Our archaeological talks allow students to see the opportunities available to them by continuing to study the Classical world. Even if a student does not become a field archaeologist in Greece, Italy, or other Classical lands, the skills that they learn in our courses, including field schools (see p. 4-5), can be applied to contract archaeology here in BC and elsewhere in North America.

Brendan Burke, Chair
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Laurel Bowman presented a poster session “Myths on Maps” (co-written with Lauren Mayes) at Bristol in July 2013, and a paper “Decisions in Memorial/Decisions in the iliad” at the CACW/CAPN joint conference in Vancouver during March 2014. Also in 2014, along with Ingrid Holmberg, Laurel presented to the Department a seminar “The New Sappho,” concerning some recently discovered fragments of the poet. She has been busy co-editing with Brad Levitt the papers selected for Visualizing Antiquity, a special edition of Mouseion. Laurel also edited the scripts of six graphic novels about Greek mythology for Capstone Press. During the 2013-14 academic year she presented six lectures on classical culture at various middle schools and retirement homes around town. In 2014 Laurel was awarded an Internal Research Grant to continue development of the “Myths on Maps” website (see myths.uvic.ca). She is preparing an article on “Women’s Epigrams” for Blackwell’s Companion to the Ancient Epigram.

Keith R. Bradley, who taught in the Department from 1980-2001, retired from Notre Dame University in June 2014 and has moved back to Victoria. He has been appointed as an Adjunct Professor.

Brendan Burke again co-directed excavations in central Greece at the Mycenaean and Archaic/Classical site of ancient Eleon during June and July of 2013 and 2014. This SSHRC-funded project involves nearly 50 students, staff, and colleagues from all over the world. While administrative duties as Department chair and co-director of the excavation keep Brendan busy, he has been able to find some time for his own research, which focuses on both the results of the Eleon excavation and the Phrygian King Midas of Gordion, the famous king with the golden touch. Brendan presented papers about the Eleon project at the Annual Meetings of the Archaeological Institute of America in Seattle in 2013 and Chicago in 2014, at the University of Montreal, and at the Archaeological Society of British Columbia in Victoria, as well as AIA sponsored lectures on his work on King Midas and Gordion to audiences at Willamette University and the University of Montreal.


Josiah Davis, who taught in the Department since 2009, left in August 2014 to pursue a law degree at the University of Toronto. His article entitled “Terence Interrupted: Literary Biography and the Reception of the Terentian Canon” has been accepted by the American Journal of Philology.

John Fitch (Professor Emeritus) published his book of poetry, Wildflowers of the Coast in 2013. The project arose in part from John’s long experience of teaching a course at UVic on the didactic poetry of Hesiod, Lucretius, and Vergil. In his descriptions of wildflowers in this book, John aims to retrieve one of poetry’s capabilities that is largely lost in contemporary writing, namely its didactic power and its ability to convey systematic knowledge. In contrast to the prosaic descriptions found in botanical handbooks, John has attempted to use some of the resources of poetry, such as word-play and sound-play, to express a fuller appreciation of the plants and flowers in question. In the fall of 2013, John gave a related talk to the Classical Association of Vancouver Island (CAVI), illustrated with his photographs, entitled “What’s in a Name? Latin and Greek in our Names for Wildflowers.” Harvard Studies in Classical Philology has just published John’s article “Textual Notes on Palladius, Opus Agriculturae,” which advances the work of previous editors in restoring from Columella corrupt or lacunose passages in Palladius’ text. The article complements John’s translation of Palladius, published in the spring of 2013.

Ingrid Holmberg, along with Laurel Bowman, presented a Department seminar concerning some recently discovered fragments of the poet Sappho. Although very busy as our Graduate Adviser, Ingrid has written a chapter entitled “Sex in Ancient Greek and Roman Epic” for Blackwell’s Companion to Greek and Roman Sexualities.

Geoffrey Kron’s chapter on Etruscan demography appeared in 2014 in The Etruscan World, edited by Jean Macintosh Turfa. A number of book chapters are due to come out soon, one on Roman agriculture in J. Wilkins’ Companion to Food in Antiquity (Blackwell), chapters on animal husbandry and fishing and fish farming in G. Campbell’s Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life (Oxford), a comparative look at Greek and early modern maritime trade in D. Lewis’ Beyond Self-Sufficiency: Households, City-States and Markets in the Ancient Greek World (Cambridge), and a study of housing evidence as an indicator of income distribution in Roman Pompeii, in F. de Callatajy’s Long-term Quantification in Ancient Mediterranean History (Edipuglia). The peripatetic Kron also gave papers on the rural economy to a conference at the Dutch Royal Institute at Rome, and on the economic and social prospects of freedmen in Roman Italy and the Antebellum USA at the Vienna meeting of the European Social Science History Conference in May, and one on neo-slavery in the post-reconstruction South at the Celtic Classics Conference in Edinburgh in late June. He also presided over a paper session on “Wine in Roman Italy” at the 82nd Annual Anglo-American Conference of Historians, at the Institute of History, University College, London, in November 2013.

U Vic/UBC Seminar March 2014.
(I-r) Toph Marshall, Cedric Littlewood, Hector Williams, Geof Kron, Roger Wilson
Cedric Littlewood presented a paper on “Seneca and Sublimity” at the annual conference of the Classical Association of Canada and wrote an article for Mouseion: “Allusion and Ambiguity in Pseudo-Seneca, Hercules Oetaeus.” Another piece on the same play was published in Brill’s Companion to Seneca. Cedric gave a talk on theatre and theatricality in Nero’s Rome as part of the Dean’s Lecture Series at the Victoria Public Library. In spring 2014 he taught a new course: Ancient Comedy and Satire.

Mark Nugent’s current research focus involves the depiction of religious conflict and sexual politics under the emperor Elagabalus in Jean Lombard’s novel L’Agonie (1888). Mark will be teaching the UVic Latin Club for Teens program in the fall, while Greg Rowe is on leave.

John Peter Oleson has recently published two books that grew out of his long-term research projects: The Humayma Excavation Project, vol. 2: Nabataean Campground and Necropolis, Byzantine Churches, and Early Islamic Domestic Structures (Boston 2013), and Building for Eternity: The History and Technology of Roman Concrete Engineering in the Sea (Oxford 2014). Since the last newsletter John has presented eighteen invited lectures or conference papers at various places around North America and Europe. He was the CAC Central Canada Lecturer for 2013-14. John is now working on the third and last volume of the Humayma Excavation Project report, concerned with the Roman Fort. He hopes to finish it before retiring in June 2015. While in Amman in May he met once again with Prince Ra’ad bin Zeid, Head of the Royal House of Syria and Iraq, and an important patron of archaeology in the region (see photo).

Nick Reymond, after teaching in the Department since 2008 returned to New Zealand with his wife and son in December 2013.

Greg Rowe made a major contribution to the field of Roman history in 2013 with the publication of his article “Reconsidering the Auctoritas of Augustus,” in the Journal of Roman Studies. This article has provoked considerable comment, since it changes the way scholars will think about one of the most important inscriptions from the ancient world, the Res Gestae. Greg has also submitted a substantial article on Roman Juridical Epigraphy that is forthcoming in November 2014. His future research plans involve Roman and early Christian history. Greg is also active in a major outreach project of our Department, the Latin Club for Teens. Greg started this program in 2009 and it has contributed greatly to the Victoria community. In Fall 2014 Greg is on Study Leave and will be lecturing at the University of Leeds, University of Queensland (Brisbane, Australia), at the University of Naples, and at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem.

Events of 2013 – 14

On February 2, 2013 members of the University of British Columbia Department of Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies travelled to Victoria for our annual joint seminar, which rotates between campuses. Laurel Bowman presented a talk entitled “The Power of Place: Moving Smiles in Oswald’s Memorial,” and Florence Yoon of UBC spoke on “Person, Place, or Thing: Defining Props in Greek Tragedy.” On March 1, 2014 some faculty and graduate students made the reciprocal trip to UBC. Toff Marshall spoke about “The Theatre of Dionysus as Memory Machine,” while Geoffrey Kron presented his ideas about “The Diversification and Intensification of Italian Agriculture.” On Sept. 12, 2013 GRS Faculty, Graduate, and Undergraduate students presented their ideas about “Current Research in Greek and Roman Studies.” We have also enjoyed a busy schedule of CAVI speakers over the past two years: Prof. Cynthia Shelmerdine, University of Texas at Austin, “Before the Odyssey: Life in Mycenaean Greece”; Prof. Tim Whitmarsh, Oxford, “Atheism and Polytheism”; Prof. John P. Oleson, “From Church to Farmhouse: The Fate of Christians and Churches in Early Islamic Humayma (Jordan)”; Prof. Michele George, McMaster University “The Dead of Vesuvius”; Prof. John Fitch, University of Victoria, “What’s in a Name? Latin and Greek in our Names for Wildflowers”; Prof. Dylan Sailor, University of California, Berkeley, “The Empire of C. Verres”; Prof. David Kennedy, University of Western Australia, “The ‘Works of the Old Men’ in Arabia”; Prof. Margalit Finkelberg, Tel Aviv University, “Memory or Forgetfulness? Aegean Prehistory and Greek Heroic Tradition”; Prof. Marcus Milwright, UVic, “The Crafts of Damascus at the Dawn of the Modern Age”; Wade Richardson, Adjunct Professor at UVic, “Plautus and the Antillean Tody.”

Over the two past years we hosted two Lansdowne speakers: Timothy Whitmarsh, Oxford University, visited in February and early March 2013, presenting four lectures about religion and myth in Greek culture. In January 2014, David Kennedy, University of Western Australia and Oxford University, presented four lectures concerned with early European visitors to the Holy Land and Jordan, and with the aerial photography of archaeological sites in Jordan.

For upcoming events, please visit the Department’s website: http://web.uvic.ca/grs.
On June 2, 2014 I began my third full season of excavation at the site of ancient Eleon in eastern Boeotia. This project is a synergasia between the Canadian Institute in Greece and the 9th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities at Thebes, as well as an archaeological field school (GRS 495) for UVic students. Six students participated in both GRS 395 and 495 this year, earning a full semester’s worth of credit. Excavation blog entries, which were part of the course requirements for the field school, can be found on our blog site: http://ebapexcavation.blogspot.gr/. My colleagues and I appreciate the dedicated efforts of the students who volunteer for our project. Not only do they provide the physical energy that shifts a great deal of earth and moves many a stone to reveal the archaeological record, they bring a lively spirit of inquiry, humour, and an unrivalled appreciation for the work. We are also very grateful for the research funding we receive from the Social Sciences Humanities Research Council of Canada (Insight Grant), the Loeb Classical Library Foundation, and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory.

The project addresses two major periods in Greek archaeology: a prehistoric phase spanning the Late Bronze/Mycenaean period, ca. 1700-1050 BC, and a historical phase from the late Archaic to early Classical periods, ca. 600-400 BC. Our team in 2014 was the largest we have ever fielded. At peak capacity we numbered just over 50 individuals, including site supervisors, returning volunteers, first-time students, and specialists in geography, human and animal bones, ceramics, conservation, and illustration. While our daily efforts in the field consume the major part of our research day, work does not stop once we leave the site. All our pottery is washed on the day it was excavated, offering the students a chance to better understand what they have collected. The commitment to process and analyze all finds within a few days of their excavation provides important data that is fed back into the project planning.

Jobs for Greek and Roman Studies students

While it is worth pursuing Greek and Roman Studies for its own sake, since it provides a thorough knowledge of the foundations of Western culture, including the universal issues of philosophical and religious thought, and the workings of language, students also want to prepare for employment. Significant numbers of our undergraduate students, after working with Professor Oleson as volunteers at Caesarea and Humayma, and Professor Burke in Greece and Turkey, have gone on to work in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada as contract archaeologists, or jobs in cultural resource management. In BC in particular, these jobs have become more important in response to the evolution of treaty negotiations with the Native Peoples. After further graduate training, such students have also found careers in Conservation or Archaeological Illustration. Both our PhD graduates found university jobs in Canada, and many of our MA graduates after PhD training elsewhere have gone on to academic careers in North American and Britain.
In 2014 our program visited Crete, the Peloponnese, and central and northern Greece. Highlights included visiting the royal Macedonian tombs at Vergina, exploring the Palace of Minos at Knossos, seeing the Roman remains in Thessaloniki, Greece’s second largest city, and getting to know the city of Athens. Economic conditions are slowly improving in Greece today, and all participants enjoyed learning about the country’s important history, past and present.

Undergraduate News


Student Awards in 2013 – 14

UVic Reaches Out

In addition to an active public lecture program through the Classical Association of Vancouver Island, the UVic Latin Club for Teens continued our department’s outreach with great success under Greg Rowe’s direction. The club, meant to make up for the absence of Latin language instruction in the regional high schools, is run as part of the Victoria Public Library community outreach program. During the 2013-14 academic year Laurel Bowman presented six lectures on classical culture at middle schools and elder care facilities around town, Brendan Burke lectured to the Archaeological Society of BC, and John Oleson to the Underwater Archaeological Society of BC. Cedric Littlewood contributed to the Dean’s Lecture Series at the Victoria Public Library.

Graduate Program News

The following MA candidates successfully defended their theses in 2013-14:
- Diotima Coad (“Pauline Christianity as a Stoic Interpretation of Judaism”),
- Georgina Henderson (“Spiral Fluted Columns and the Mechanical Screw: The History of a Mathematical Idea in Ancient Architecture and Mechanical Technology”),
- Eva Bullard (“Macromannia in the Making”),
- Craig Harvey (“Tubuli and their Use in Roman Arabia, with a Focus on Humayma, Ancient Hauarra”), and
- Joshua Binus (“Betrayed, Berserk, and Abandoned: War Trauma in Sophocles’ Ajax and Philoctetes”).

An energetic crop of new MA students has arrived since the last newsletter: Graham Butler is researching slavery in the Greek world, Glenn Beauvais is focusing on the Greek poet Pindar, and Aidan Kirkpatrick is examining early Greek urbanism. Carly Tomblin will form a topic in the area of later Roman history, Liam Coughlan in the field of Latin literature. Neil Barney is completing work on Roman speech and the Elder Seneca, and Lauren Tee looks at Lucretius and the rhetoric of the ‘law of Nature’ for her thesis.

After a long period of gestation, the PhD program in Greek and Roman Studies was approved in late 2013, and we admitted our first student under this new arrangement: Carla Osborne (MA, University of Calgary), who will work with Ingrid Holmberg and Laurel Bowman on a topic involving shared themes in archaic Greek epic tradition and Cree oral narratives. Two students have previously completed their PhD in the department by special arrangement, Leslie Shumka (2000) and Milorad Nikolic (2008).

In Alumni news, two former MA students have entered PhD programs elsewhere: Craig Harvey (MA 2013, now University of Michigan at Ann Arbor), Kelsey Koon (MA 2012, now University of Calgary). Trevor Van Damme (MA 2012, now University of California Los Angeles) received the prestigious Emily Vermeule Fellowship to the American School of Classical Studies in Athens for 2014-15, and Ruben Post (BA 2011) was awarded a SSHRC PhD Fellowship for study at the University of Pennsylvania. Becky Littlechilds (MA 2010) has just been hired to teach at King’s College London. Peter Miller (MA 2009) completed his PhD at Western University and has been hired by Texas Tech University.

Graduate Awards 2013 – 2014

You are invited!

The Classical Association of Vancouver Island (CAVI) was founded in 1971 as a way of fostering relations between the department and members of the general public interested in Classical studies. The main activity has always been the organization of public lectures on all aspects of Greek and Roman studies by local and visiting classical scholars, and we have hosted over 200 well-attended presentations since the association began. Please send in your e-mail (to sberming@uvic.ca) so that we may put you on the e-mailing list for our lectures and other activities. You may also check the department website for information on upcoming CAVI- lectures and other events (http://web.uvic.ca/grs/web_pages/events.php). Membership is free to students; $10.00 per annum for others.

Reaching out

In March 2014, Brendan Burke, Greg Rowe, and Laurel Bowman worked with a UVic graduate, now filmmaker, Shiraz Higgins, to produce an excellent short video that introduces potential students and donors to the Department and its activities. There is a link to the video on our Department website: click on the Greek and Roman Studies icon on our home page (at http://web.uvic.ca/grs/web_pages/index.php), or use http://vimeo.com/88853632.

Keeping Classics Current

Over the past few years, we have worked hard to revise our curriculum so as to offer a range of courses that both covers the necessary foundations of the field of Greek and Roman Studies and acknowledges the current academic and professional climate. Our goal is to prepare students thoroughly for further study in this academic area, if this is what they want to do, but we also recognize that many majors will not become professional “Classicists.” We take care that our curriculum will teach all our students to think critically, to communicate thoughts persuasively in writing and speaking, and to conduct research with a high level of competence.

Our new curriculum still places a heavy emphasis on instruction in the Greek and Latin languages; these are the foundation for all classical studies and will always be the mainstay of our Department. We also believe that students are better served if the curriculum is truly graduated, so that students can progress from 100 level to 400 level over their entire career at UVic. Our main objective in our recent revision of the non-language courses was to streamline the offerings so that students can build their knowledge from one class to the other. We are constantly adjusting our courses to meet demands of students and the changing labour market, while at the same time maintaining the traditions of a Classical education that have been around for so long. For a full account of our new offerings see the UVic Calendar.

Stay in Touch

If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter in electronic or printed format, please telephone (250-721-8514) or send an e-mail message (sberming@uvic.ca) to our Department Administrator Sonja Bermingham, informing her of your wishes.

The issue was compiled by Sonja Bermingham and John Peter Oleson. Comments and contributions are welcome, and can be sent to sberming@uvic.ca

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Your gift will change lives

The Department relies on the generosity of alumni, emeriti and friends to help maintain the excellence of our programs and to build our capacity to support students. Your philanthropy enables us to pursue innovation that inspires students to become critical thinkers, engaged citizens and tomorrow’s leaders. Private support from individuals is fundamental to student awards, such as scholarships and bursaries. We’re very fortunate to have the support of a number of philanthropically minded people, but our Department needs to continue to build support for our students. There is always far more student need than there is financial assistance. These awards assist in removing some of the financial barriers faced by our students, helping them to reach their full potential while being recognized for academic excellence, achievement, and leadership. For example, the Margareta von Rudloff Travel Assistance Award has been particularly important to our students over the years. Evelyn Feldman reports “The von Rudloff Travel Award allowed me to travel to Greece in 2014. It was wonderful to experience an archaeological dig and learn about archaeology through first-hand involvement. . . I have grown and changed as a person through this experience.”

We welcome and appreciate gifts of all sizes—every gift is important to us. With the help of many caring friends, joining together, we can continue to support our students and offer the best education possible. You can contribute directly to established funds, such as those listed in the contribution card below, or you can create an endowment that is meaningful to you and which meets the needs of the Greek and Roman Studies Department. At present, a generous anonymous donor to UVic will match new endowments for undergraduate student awards in the Humanities’ disciplines—dollar for dollar! This doubles the principal of the endowment when it’s established and makes a tremendous positive impact for students by doubling the amount of the financial award they receive.

A gift of any size can be put to immediate use to benefit students or the department. If you want to donate online, you can make a gift to the Greek & Roman Studies Department with a credit card through our secure website.

Should you have any questions about the myriad of ways to support the department or would like assistance with your contribution, please contact Katherine Blake, Development Officer, Faculty of Humanities, at 250-853-3893 or kablake@uvic.ca.

Your gift makes a real difference—in students’ lives and for our department. Thank you for your support.

University of Victoria
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