

# CLST News

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## New CLST Director's Message

This inaugural issue of *CLST News*, to be published each August and February, marks the end of my initial half year as the new Director of the Graduate Program for Cultural Studies (CLST). Having been elected by the CLST faculty in November 2011, I was supposed to begin my term in August 2012, but unforeseen good fortune intervened: I was awarded a year-long Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities to write a book with (Mary Saracino Zboray) on what, how, and why people read during the American Civil War—a study of print media use in everyday life across intersecting axes of social difference (especially race, class, gender, and region). In consultation with Dietrich School Senior Associate Dean Jim Knapp, and with CLST Executive Committee input, Giuseppina Mecchia kindly stayed on as Director an extra semester. Thereafter, she graciously helped my transition into office, for which I thank her, as well as Jim Knapp and CLST program administrator Karen Lillis, heartily.



Taking on the CLST Directorship mid-year made for a busy Spring Semester. The remainder of this newsletter will provide glimpses into the many CLST activities that swirled around me since January. Not only will you find reports of CLST's many ongoing projects, but also news of several policy changes either in the works or already in place.

Realizing early on our members' difficulty in keeping track of CLST activities, I quickly saw the need for better communication about what we do. Hence, *CLST News* will serve as a twice-yearly cumulative record of program developments, the subscriber-based distribution list launched in January 2013 announces news as it occurs, and the forthcoming CLST website (see below) will provide a wide array of information essential to program's running.

When I use the word "program" here, I do not mean solely its own activities, but also those related to the CLST membership. I want publicize through CLST for any of our our graduate students' and faculty members' accomplishments, achievements, or recognitions. So please send such notices to me (zboray@pitt.edu) or to Karen Lillis (cultural@pitt.edu). CLST looks forward to getting the word out about the wonderful work our faculty, students, and alumni do.

Over the next year, CLST will become more visible to many of you, and it will look considerably different from what it was before, but much of what has made the program distinctive will remain in place. The changes will be more than merely cosmetic, however. The strengthening and extension of CLST communication channels will help create synergy between areas of the program that have previously operated virtually independent of one another.

There will be more ways for CLST faculty and students to learn about the program, and more ways for them to influence its future direction. CLST was a leader in the foundation of American cultural studies programs. It is now poised to lead in redefining what cultural studies is and can be for the rest of the twenty-first century. Input from CLST members is critical to charting this new course. I look forward to hearing these new ideas in the coming year.

## CLST Common Seminar 2014 Cultural Dis/Union

Randall Halle, the Klaus W. Jonas Professor of German Film and Cultural Studies, at the University of Pittsburgh will teach the CLST Common Seminar in Spring 2014, with the theme of Cultural Dis/Union. The course will explore cultural processes of unification and disunification. These processes should not be understood necessarily as antithetical but may actually belong to the dynamism of culture and social coherency. The course will include discussions of globalization, transnationalism, complex connectivity, interzones, rhizomes, and world systems. One of the sources of primary objects will be the European Union.

Professor Halle will give an inaugural lecture in October 2013 to introduce the seminar theme at the CLST program's annual Open House. In April 2014, as the seminar's culmination, he will host a distinguished lecturer who will speak on a topic related to the seminar theme, and he will preside over the Common Seminar Colloquium, an event open to the public at which seminar participants present slices of their research and writing from the semester for comment from the guest speaker.

The Common Seminar is a course required to be taken at least once by all students pursuing MA and PhD certificates.



Professor Halle specializes in film, visual culture, and social philosophy. He published with the University of Illinois Press: *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities* (2014), *German Film after Germany: Toward a Transnational Aesthetic* (2008), and *Queer Social Philosophy: Critical Readings from Kant to Adorno* (2004) as well as *After the Avant-garde: New Directions in Experimental Film* (Camden House 2008), and *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective* (Wayne State University Press, 2003), along with numerous well placed essays and articles. He has been a Senior Fellow in the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies and a Senior Fulbright Researcher in Berlin. He has two book projects in the works, "Interzone Europe: Social Philosophy and the Transnational Imagination" and "Visual Alterity: Seeing Difference."

## New CLST Website in the Works

The Dietrich School is generously funding a complete overhaul of the CLST website. It is being re-themed with an eye toward borrowing from the rich visual culture of left social movements from the 19<sup>th</sup> century down to present, to signal a membership engaged in progressive causes and aware of its own traditions. A host of new features will facilitate interaction with the program. For example, CLST fellowship applications will be uploaded directly the site and there will be a "donate" button to a small fund for graduate student research and conference-going. There will also be a clearinghouse for positions, fellowships, and other opportunities in cultural studies, along with notices of CLST deadlines and events. The career successes of alumni will be touted, alongside notable achievements of students and faculty.

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### **New Membership Policy**

According to CLST bylaws, membership in the program is automatic for faculty who have in the past three years taught a CLST course, crosslisted into other departments or otherwise. The Director may appoint up to half the number of automatic members. In 2013, he asked that the Executive Committee (Jonathan Arac, Jonathan Platt, Gayle Rogers, Philip Smith, and Bruce Venarde, absent on leave) approve a new policy to guide the use of these appointive powers: 1) any faculty member who serves on a standing or ad-hoc CLST committee will automatically become a CLST member for three years from the date of election or, if appointed, first service on the committee; and 2) any faculty member not affiliated with CLST who has a CLST-certificate advisee pass a milestone will, *on written request to the Director* stating the name of the student and identifying the milestone and the date it was passed, be granted membership for three years after the milestone date. The new policy went into effect as of March 2013 and addresses the problems of CLST faculty whose administrative duties limit their chances for offering crosslisted courses and those whose graduate programs were suspended. Current membership is 108 faculty members.

### **CLST Fellowships**

The annual competition for CLST program's two doctoral student research and writing fellowships was keen this year with twenty applications from students in seven departments. The elected fellowship committee, consisting of Jonathan Arac (ENGLIT), Nancy Condee (SLAV) Chloe Hogg (FRIT), Lisa Jackson-Schebetta (THEA), Shanara Reid-Brinkley (COMMRC) William Scott (ENGLIT), and the Director (recused from voting), awarded the full-year funding to Dr. Irina Anisimova (SLAV)—this is her second PhD—and to Elise Thorsen (SLAV).

### **New Fellowship Policies**

The next application deadline is 4:00 P.M., Friday, January 17, 2014, considerably later than in previous years, in response to requests from recommendation writers for more time after the semester begins.

All fellowship applications and letters of support from now on will be electronically submitted via CLST's new website. This will allow the fellowship committee to begin reviewing the applications immediately after the deadline.

Consideration of applications will be limited to students who have successfully passed their doctoral comprehensive exams.

All applicants will be invited to join the program's dissertation colloquium. The fellowship winners will be invited to present at the new CLST Fellowship Showcase that will run in conjunction with the CLST Fellowship Workshop to be held in late November.

### **Report on CLST Common Seminar 2013**

This year's Common Seminar, *Neoliberalism and Cultural Production*, was taught by Associate Professor of Anthropology Gabriella Lukaacs, to eleven students.

The lecturer/commentator at the culminating event held on April 18 and 19 was Professor Kathi Weeks, from Women Studies at Duke University, author of the acclaimed 2011 book, *The Problem with Work*. She gave a stimulating lecture based on her book and provided elucidating commentary on the papers the students delivered as part of the event. The two-day event was held in the Humanities Center; thanks go to Jonathan Arac and Sabine von Dirke for Humanities Center support of the event, as well as the Departments of Anthropology and German for helping out with funding and publicity.



### **2013 Dissertation Writers Colloquium**

Once again this year CLST, with funding from the Humanities Center, convened a colloquium for late-stage doctoral students completing their dissertations. This year the group consisted of Hannah Aileen Burdette (HISP), Alison Hahn (COMMRC), Katie K. O'Neill (COMMRC), Parker Shaw (HISP), Don Simpson (HAA), and César Zamorano Díaz (HISP). As in the past, CLST provided space and food for the event, and the Director presided and led discussion of dissertation slices. On September 28, Shaw presented a chapter of his dissertation "Champions of a New Era: The First Latin American Boy Scouts" and O'Neill followed on October 19 with a chapter from her "Mobtown Murders: Remembering a Century of Gang Violence in Baltimore." On November 19 Simpson gave a selection from his dissertation on rethinking the American Civic Center. On December 7 Hahn presented on "Maasai Arguments Against Land Dispossession in Kenya." During the Spring Semester, Burdette spoke on the indigenous novelists her dissertation treats and, on a separate occasion, the group discussed general professional issues. This set the ground for a panel proposal submitted to the Cultural Studies Association annual conference in Chicago. Three colloquium students participated in (Hahn, O'Neill, and Simpson) and Ron Zboray moderated the presentation given on April 24, "The Promise and Perils of Interdisciplinarity for Dissertation Writers."

### **Short Items**

The First Annual *Eric O. Clarke Dissertation Prize* competition took place this summer under the auspices of CLST and the Department of English. The CLST representative to the Committee was Lester Olson (COMMRC). The winner will be soon announced.

On October 17, CLST held its annual *Open House*. At it, Gabriella Lukaacs gave her inaugural lecture: "The Labor of Cute: Net Idols, Cute Culture, and the Social Factory in Contemporary Japan"

In 2012-2013, CLST provided funding for 16 lectures involving the Humanities Center, the Center for Latin American Studies, Russian and Eastern European Studies, Eighteenth Century Studies, the Film Studies Graduate Student Organization, the Departments of German, Slavic Languages and Literatures, and Hispanic Languages and Literatures.

CLST disengaged from the Cultural Studies Association during the year. That association, which had been based at Pitt since its founding in 2003, became a freestanding nonprofit entity.

The annual CLST elections will be held online from September 15 to October 1, for Departmental Liaisons and the Fellowship Committee. Vote early and carefully but not too frequently.