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and Our Time Here on Earth
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Message from the Dean

Liberals don’t operate in a vacuum—so neither does their research. Everyday, faculty members across the college draw inspiration for their work from the pressing issues facing society today.

From unearthing the oldest case of tuberculosis, which has reemerged as a global killer, to examining the benefits and drawbacks of genetic ancestry tests, liberal arts researchers use academic inquiry to inform health policies and market decisions.

Attracting and supporting faculty members who bring important ideas and solutions to society and deepen students’ educational experiences, is critical to the college’s mission—and its competitiveness. This year, we welcomed 38 new scholars to liberal arts: 18 women and 20 men. Eight of these new faculty members are Latino and five are African American.

In addition, we recruited an unusually large number of distinguished senior scholars:
- Dean Young in English
- Jacqueline Jones and Miriam Bodian in History
- Tom Tweed in Religious Studies
- Zenzi Griffin in Psychology
- Brian Jones and Jeffrey Abramson in Government and
- Javier Auyero and Nestor Rodriguez in Sociology.

The Human Condition

In this issue of Life & Letters, titled the Human Condition, we introduce you to researchers who explore our time here on earth by surfacing archaeological links to our past and examining the implications of ancestry research for our sense of self.

You’ll meet the thought-leaders who champion the humanities’ role in society and examine the human life cycle by delving into the world of children and analyzing how intimate relationships affect health.

In the Evolution and Ancestry section of the magazine, John Kappelman unearths the oldest case of tuberculosis, which has reemerged as a global killer, and Deborah Bolnick examines the benefits and drawbacks of genetic ancestry tests.

Researchers from the Center for Perceptual Systems open their labs to readers interested in exploring the inner workings of the human senses—and how we perceive our world. I am proud to be a member of the center and its team of scientists ably led by psychology researcher Wilson Geisler. Recently, my colleague and friend was elected into the National Academy of Sciences, one of the highest U.S. honors for a scientist or engineer.

In the Humanities section of the issue, Keith Maitland, creative writing alumnus, invites you behind the scenes of his movie sets to learn about the stories at the heart of his films, and Daniel Bonevac draws upon pop culture, film and television to explore philosophy with the next generation of thinkers.

Finally, the back page of the magazine highlights the pioneering work of the new Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies, which will build on the college’s top-ranked Latin American history program and the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies. Under the leadership of historian Bob Abzug, the center is working to match the generous $6 million challenge grant to expand the scholarship on the history, culture, and society of Jews in the Americas, including the United States and Canada.

Liberal Arts: Learning that Lasts a Lifetime

The Human Condition is the second edition of a three-part series of Life & Letters issues designed to bring the college’s researchers closer to communities throughout the nation—and world.

Earlier this year, the college introduced you to scholars whose work transcends hemispheric borders and ethnic boundaries in Gateway to the Americas and Changing U.S. Demographics (Winter 07-08). During the spring, you will meet the thought-leaders who shape national and international policy issues in The American Citizen and Modern Democracy.

The College of Liberal Arts—your college—is the largest and oldest of the university’s academic units. It comprises a community of 600 faculty members, 450 staff members and an average of 15,000 students. And, with you, there are more than 100,000 living alumni.

A liberal arts education remains the intellectual core of any university and society—and is at the heart of every person.

— Randy Diehl
As Turkish workers cut into a block of travertine stone destined for the international tile market, they uncovered a 500,000-year-old fossil, which anthropologist John Kappelman is using to expand scientists’ understanding of tuberculosis—and how the infectious disease may affect people who migrate.

“Tuberculosis has re-emerged as a global killer during the past two decades,” Kappelman says. “This ancient fossil reveals a case history similar to that of many modern patients since the disease was probably exacerbated by a vitamin D deficiency, which resulted after the species migrated north from the tropics into the temperate climates of Eurasia.”

Although most researchers believed tuberculosis emerged only several thousand years ago, Kappelman revealed the most ancient evidence of the disease in the fossil workers unearthed in Pamukkale in western Turkey.

The physical anthropologist’s discovery of *Homo erectus*, a new specimen of the human species, suggests support for the theory that dark-skinned people who migrate northward from low, tropical latitudes produce less vitamin D, which can adversely affect the immune system, as well as the skeleton.

Kappelman is part of an international team of researchers from the United States, Turkey and Germany who published their findings in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* last year. The Leakey Foundation and the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey funded the research.

Prior to this discovery, which helps scientists fill a temporal and geographical gap in human evolution, the oldest evidence of tuberculosis in humans was found in mummies from Egypt and Peru that date to several thousand years ago.

Paleontologists spent decades prospecting in Turkey for remains of *Homo erectus*, widely believed to be the first human species to migrate out of Africa. After moving north, the species had to adapt to increasingly seasonal climates.

The researchers identified this specimen of *Homo erectus* as a young male, based on aspects of the cranial suture closure, sinus formation and the size of the ridges of the brow. They also found a series of small lesions etched into the bone of the cranium whose shape and location are characteristic of tuberculosis.

**WEB RESOURCE: eSkeletons**

Compare 3-D skeletons of humans and primates at [http://web.austin.utexas.edu/eskeletons](http://web.austin.utexas.utexas.edu/eskeletons)

**John Kappelman**, anthropology professor, holds a plaster cast replica of the cranium of the newly discovered *Homo erectus* specimen from western Turkey. Quarry workers found the 500,000-year-old fossil of a young male in a block of travertine stone prepared for the commercial tile market.
the Leptomeningitis tuberculosa, a form of tuberculosis that attacks the meninges of the brain.

**Vitamin D: Protecting People who Migrate**

After reviewing the medical literature on the disease that has re-emerged as a global killer, the researchers found some groups of people demonstrate a higher than average rate of infection, including Gujarati Indians who live in London, and Senegalese conscripts who served with the French army during World War I.

The research team identified two shared characteristics in the communities: a path of migration from low, tropical latitudes to northern temperate regions, and darker skin color.

People with dark skin produce less vitamin D because the skin pigment melanin blocks ultraviolet light. And, when they live in areas with lower ultraviolet radiation such as Europe, their immune systems can be compromised.

It is likely that *Homo erectus* had dark skin because it evolves in the tropics, Kappelman explains. After the species moved north, it had to adapt to more seasonal climates. The researchers hypothesize the young male’s body produced less vitamin D and this deficiency weakened his immune system, opening the door to tuberculosis.

“Skin color represents one of biology’s most elegant adaptations,” Kappelman says. “The production of vitamin D in the skin serves as one of the body’s first lines of defense against a whole host of infections and diseases. Vitamin D deficiencies are implicated in hypertension, multiple sclerosis, cardiovascular disease and cancer.”

Before the invention of antibiotics, doctors typically treated tuberculosis by sending patients to sanatoria where they were prescribed plenty of sunshine and fresh air.

“No one knew why sunshine was integral to the treatment, but it worked,” Kappelman says. “Recent research suggests the flush of ultraviolet radiation jump-started the patients’ immune systems by increasing the production of vitamin D, which helped to cure the disease.”

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**‘Beautiful’ Bones: Lucy the Famous Fossil**

After years of storage in a vault in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Lucy the famous fossil, the oldest and most complete adult skeleton of any erect-walking human ancestor, traveled to Texas in 2007. The Houston Museum of Natural Science featured the 3.2 million-year-old hominid, whom Ethiopians call “Dinkenesh” (“You are beautiful”), at the exhibition, “Lucy’s Legacy: The Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia.”

John Kappelman leads a scientific team that has requested permission to conduct a high-resolution CT (computed tomography) scan of Lucy, whose remains include portions of her skeleton.

“By examining the internal architecture of Lucy’s bones, researchers can study how her skeleton supported her movement and posture, which can be compared with modern humans and chimpanzees,” the physical anthropologist explains.

Although Lucy is quite small (about 1 meter in height), her contribution to science has been large. She represents a new species of human ancestor, known as *Australopithecus afarensis*, or “southern ape of Afar,” in reference to where the bones were found.

Prior to the 1974 discovery of Lucy, theories of evolution suggested human-like intelligence evolved before upright posture. But, the existence of *Australopithecus* refutes this theory since Lucy’s brain case is not significantly larger than a modern chimpanzee, yet she certainly walked on two legs.

**With 40 percent of her skeleton preserved**, Lucy the famous fossil is the oldest and most complete skeleton of any adult erect-walking human ancestor. Anthropologist John Kappelman has requested permission to conduct a high-resolution scan of the rare and important scientific discovery. See [www.eLucy.org](http://www.eLucy.org) for more information.

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**Salem: Scientists Unearth Earliest Child Skeleton**

A team of researchers, including Denné Reed, assistant professor of anthropology, discovered a key link between humans and apes: a 3.3-million-year-old fossil of *Australopithecus afarensis*, an early human ancestor with a form between humans and other living apes.

The team unearthed Salem, a nearly intact skeleton of one of the earliest child fossils, from a small river channel in Dikika, Ethiopia. They published their findings in the elite scientific journal *Nature*.

Reed discovered the right knee of the skeleton, which the researchers identified as a three-year-old girl. The rare find provides insight into the growth and development cycle of *A. afarensis*, which helps researchers probe deeper into the study of human evolution.

Reed is particularly interested in how the environment and landscape affected the species development. He investigates the environmental influences on human evolution in East Africa and reconstructs the environment of primates throughout evolution.
Deep Roots?
New DNA tests may reveal your ancestry, but researchers urge caution when interpreting results

BY JENNIFER MCANDREW

From 1892 to 1954, more than 12 million immigrants entered the United States through Ellis Island in New York Harbor. They left behind a huge repository of records that for many years has been the first stop for Americans researching their genealogy. More than 100 million Americans are directly related to immigrants who passed through the island.

Now an increasing number of people are turning to a new source of historical information for answers about their family history—their DNA. More than two dozen companies offer genetic tests that claim to link people to high-profile ancestors, such as Genghis Khan or the Irish warlord Niall of the Nine Hostages.

While the testing companies promise to unlock the secrets of your ancestry, researchers warn the science can be problematic. The tests also raise complex questions about identity and race. If you’re thinking about adding DNA testing to your repertoire of genealogy research tools, proceed with caution.

Deborah Bolnick, assistant professor of anthropology at The University of Texas at Austin, studies the tests and is following the budding trend closely. She questions the tests’ validity and reliability, and worries many people may be unaware of the underlying scientific assumptions on which the tests are based.

In the policy piece “The Science and Business of Genetic Ancestry Testing,” which appeared in a recent issue of Science, Bolnick and 13 researchers from across the nation called upon the scientific community to better educate the public about the limitations of the tests.

“Consumers should know the limitations and complexities before they spend $500 thinking they’re going to find an answer to who they really are,” Bolnick says. “It’s much more ambiguous and uncertain than the testing companies make clear. These tests often make dubious assumptions and rely on limited databases of comparative samples, so there’s a large margin of error.”

Home DNA test kits are available on the Internet at a cost between $70 and $850 per test. With one swab of the cheek, participants mail in a sample of their saliva to a genetic lab for testing. They receive results in a matter of weeks.

The two most common tests examine the paternally inherited Y chromosome (Y-DNA), which is passed down from father to son, and the maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is passed down from mother to child, both male and female. A third type of test (autosomal DNA) examines DNA inherited from both parents.

“With many of these tests, you’re only tracking one small part of your family tree,” Bolnick says. “For example, a mtDNA test can tell you about only one of your 16 great-great-grandparents. That leaves a huge number of unknowns.”

Genetic ancestry tests examine the sequence of molecules, called nucleotides, in a person’s DNA. They focus on what scientists consider “junk” DNA—portions of the human genome for which no biological function has been identified. An individual’s DNA sequence is compared to a database of samples to identify others with similar DNA sequences. The testing

“Many people are taking the tests to get answers about their identity, and instead end up with an identity crisis.”

— Deborah Bolnick

Deborah Bolnick, assistant professor of anthropology, studies human DNA samples in the Patterson Lab.
company then suggests that the customer’s ancestors lived in the geographic region and belonged to the ethnic group in which the customer’s DNA sequence is most common.

However, Bolnick finds the tests tend to ignore the fact that many DNA sequences are found in many different human populations. For example, certain DNA sequences may be most common in Native Americans, but they also are found in Asians. As a result, some tests may incorrectly inform someone they have Native American ancestry when their ancestors actually lived in Asia.

“Many companies try to link your DNA to racial and ethnic categories in ways that are problematic,” Bolnick says. “These categories are socially constructed, and they’re mostly based on cultural heritage and shared experiences. There’s no clear-cut connection between racial identity and your genetic makeup. Unfortunately, these tests incorrectly imply that there is, so they may encourage a return to old ways of thinking about race as purely biological, which it’s not.”

What questions can the tests answer?

“It depends on what you want to know,” Bolnick says. “If you want a specific question answered, like, ‘is there Native American ancestry on my mother’s side of the family?’ then a genetic ancestry test can probably tell you something about your direct maternal lineage. But the tests usually can’t tell you that you’re descended from someone like Genghis Khan with any real certainty. Nor can they be positive that your ancestors lived in a particular region or held a specific ethnic identity. People move. Identities change over time.”

DNA ancestry testing has been especially popular among African Americans. Due to the transatlantic slave trade, many African Americans cannot easily trace their ancestry through surname research and other traditional means. DNA testing offers an unprecedented opportunity to find out more about their heritage.

The 2006 PBS documentary “African American Lives” tested the DNA of several prominent African Americans, including Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey and Quincy Jones. Winfrey’s results suggested her most likely match was from the Kpelles tribe in Liberia.

The documentary showed that genetic ancestry tests can have a profound impact on how the test-taker perceives his or her racial identity. However, an individual’s racial identity does not always match his or her genetic ancestry, warns Bolnick.

“What happens if the results don’t match how you’ve identified yourself your whole life? Do you accept them, question them, or get depressed?” Bolnick asks. “Many people are taking the tests to get answers about their identity and instead end up with an identity crisis. As a society, we need to think about the broader implications of the tests and whether they should be more important than your personal experiences.”

One issue that concerns Bolnick is the risk the tests pose for Native American tribes. No federally recognized Native American nation relies on DNA testing when determining tribal enrollment. Instead, membership usually requires documenting ancestral ties to a specific tribal member and providing evidence of community involvement. Bolnick worries the rise of genetic ancestry testing could undermine tribal sovereignty.

“For 150 years, Native American citizenship has been determined by legal criteria that support the tribes’ sovereignty as political entities,” Bolnick says. “DNA tests are starting to be used to challenge tribal decisions when someone doesn’t meet the tribe’s membership criteria. But why should tribes give up authority to a test that can’t reliably affiliate a test-taker with a specific tribe or ensure that tribal members are culturally connected and committed to the tribe’s future?”
Alumnus Creates Global Genealogy Map

Though many questions remain about how we should interpret the clues revealed in our DNA, scientists are rushing to expand the global database of genetic samples.

One of the most ambitious collection efforts to date is The Genographic Project, started by National Geographic in 2005 and led by geneticist and Texas Ex, Spencer Wells (B.A. Biology, ’88). The project uses participants’ DNA to map and trace migration patterns of humans who lived thousands of years ago. The five-year, $50 million effort aims to collect 100,000 DNA samples from around the world.

“It’s been a lifelong dream of mine to answer some of the big questions like: Where did we come from? How did we produce these patterns of diversity?” Wells says.

From the snow-covered Tibetan highlands to the burning windstorms of the Sahara desert, Wells traverses the globe collecting samples from indigenous groups in the world’s most remote locations.

“When humans first ventured out of Africa some 60,000 years ago, they left genetic footprints that are still visible today,” Wells says. “By mapping these ancient ancestral clans called haplogroups, we create an atlas of when and where ancient humans moved around the world.”

As of 2007, the project has collected more than 20,000 samples from roughly 100 indigenous groups across five continents. An additional 200,000 people, mostly from North America, have submitted samples for testing. The project has even caught the attention of Bono, lead singer for the Irish rockgroup U2, who had his DNA tested for Vanity Fair’s July 2007 Africa issue.

For about $100, The Genographic Project will test your DNA and reveal a few aspects of your deep ancestry, the ancient migratory paths of one of your lineages. However, Wells cautions that this is not an individual genealogy study. You won’t receive a breakdown of your genetic background by ethnicity or race or geographic origin.

“We are extremely careful not to overstate results. I also want to emphasize that interpretations may change as we continue to collect data. We just don’t know enough to assign people to an ancient tribal group,” Wells says. “Telling someone, ‘You are 10 percent such-and-such, and 90 percent such-and-such, and so on’ is worrying to me. We’re talking about genetic lineages, not racial classifications.”

So why are we as Americans so fascinated by our ancestry? Both Bolnick and Wells believe it’s because of our history as a nation of immigrants.

“A lot of people came here running away from something, or they came against their will. It’s very human to want to find connections, to feel like we belong to a place and a people,” Wells says.

“Your DNA is just one of many tools that you can use to confirm what you know, or find out something new about your ancient heritage,” Bolnick adds. “It’s fascinating that our cells contain information about our history, but we shouldn’t privilege genetic data over our personal, cultural experiences.”

On expedition in Chad, National Geographic explorer-in-residence and Texas Ex Spencer Wells explains The Genographic Project to local village leaders. Photo by David Evans © 2006 National Geographic Society.
The Real Indiana Jones
Anthropologist separates fact from fiction

From the moment Indiana Jones performed his first death-defying stunt on the big screen in 1981, movielovers and archaeologists alike have been enthralled by the globetrotting, whip-cracking action hero.

From recovering ancient biblical artifacts to rescuing damsels-in-distress, the fictional archaeologist stops at nothing to save the world from political imbalance—even if he has to break every code of ethics in archaeology along the way. Jones’ recent adventures in “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull,” spurred an onslaught of mixed reviews, especially among expert archaeologists.

With the release of each Indiana Jones film, enrollment in archaeology courses surge, giving professors the opportunity to separate facts from the myths about archaeology.

Fred Valdez, associate anthropology professor at The University of Texas at Austin, says archaeology is not about traveling to exotic countries and raiding tombs. It is large groups of students and researchers painstakingly shoveling through dirt to recover ancient objects that can reveal how our ancestors once lived.

But at the end of a long day, despite the head-to-toe dirt, bug bites and aching muscles, most researchers return to camp smiling and satisfied with the work they have accomplished.

“archeology can be a destructive process,” Valdez says. “We take apart things we study. But when Indiana Jones recovers artifacts, he isn’t exactly preserving or documenting his findings.”

Many experts suggest the Hollywood portrayal of archaeology leads people to believe the sole purpose of excavations is to recover precious gems or priceless, mythical artifacts. Valdez explains the field isn’t just about the objects they dig up. It is about uncovering the mysteries of our past.

As an archaeology professor, Valdez shares some similarities with Jones, minus the whip and the dusty fedora. Both conduct field research in exotic lands. Amid spider monkeys, snakes and tropical birds, Valdez has been conducting field work in remote rainforests for more than 30 years. As the director of the Programme for Belize Archaeological Project, a summer and spring field school, he investigates ancient Maya civilization.

Underneath a dense canopy of rainforest, Valdez and his team of students and researchers from across the globe have investigated more than 60 Maya sites including pyramids, small house mounds and tombs that date from 1000 B.C. to 1400 A.D.

Digging for hours to unearth pottery fragments and architectural remains may not entice the average thrill seeker. But to archeologists, there is nothing more exciting than finding remnants from the ancient world.

“Once the students fully understand the meaning of archaeology, the ideas of action and adventure quickly slip away, replaced with the excitement of being the first to hold an object that has not been touched in 2,000 years,” Valdez says.
HUMAN SENSES

Y

OUR ALARM ROUSES YOU, AND YOU OPEN YOUR
eyes to shadows stretching across the ceiling. The
coffee pot gurgles in the kitchen, birds chirp outside the window, and the dog runs circles
around your feet. You open the cabinet and scan for
your favorite mug before pouring the coffee.

What sounds like an ordinary morning is really extraor-
dinary when you consider how your senses lead you through
it.

For most of us, our eyes register electromagnetic
radiation and our ears register sound waves. Neurons fire and we trans-
form these stimuli into information, seemingly effortlessly. We
don’t step on the dog, and we can distinguish the birdcall from
the coffee pot gurgling. But how do we do it? That question
is at the heart of the research
at the Center for Perceptual Systems at The University of
Texas at Austin.

The group of researchers
spans the areas of psychol-
yogy, neurobiology, computer
and electrical engineering,
computer sciences, speech
and biology. Working in cross-
disciplinary teams, they tackle
some of the most mysterious
workings of human existence.

“Everybody’s interested
in the perceptual systems,
because they are how you gain
information from the world
and make sense of it; they
allow you to interact with your environment,” says Wilson
Geisler, director of the center and David Wechsler Professor in
the Department of Psychology. “Your perceptual systems are
your window on the world.”

The center began as the Center for Vision and Image
Sciences and expanded in 2001 to become the Center for
Perceptual Systems.

Today researchers study everything from the energy fields
of electric fish to how our visual system enables us to navigate
around pedestrians on a crowded sidewalk to the information
contained in the tiny sounds your ear makes that you can’t
hear.

It is complex work. The perceptual systems probably take
up about 50 percent of all the gray matter in the brain, Geisler
says.

“One of the things that perception gives you is the illusion
that it’s simple because it happens pretty rapidly,” Geisler
says. “You quickly recognize the objects in a room and can see
their distances and shapes and colors. It’s really very compli-
cated, and no one really knows in any kind of detail how we
do it, although rapid progress is being made.”

Technology is helping. In fact, the technological advances
of the past 20 years have entirely transformed the study of
perceptual systems.

For example, Mary Hayhoe, psychology professor, used to
study eye movement with subjects lying on a table while their
eyes were observed. Today she can observe subjects walking
around one of the best-known virtual reality labs in the coun-
try. Or, she can ask them to move through their day wearing
a backpack system in which a camera can record their eye
movements and the world they traverse simultaneously.

The technology, almost counter-intuitively, allows Hayhoe
to take subjects out of the world constructed for the experi-
ment and put them in the natural world. Researchers at the
center are most interested in how our senses function in real-
world situations instead of in arbitrarily constrained labora-
tory experiments.

The Center for Perceptual Systems is poised to become
the best in the world for natural systems analysis, or
the rigorous study of perception under natural conditions.

A Quarter in the Grass

It’s happened to all of us: We’ve dropped a quarter in the
glass, or lost that post-it note on a desk stacked with papers,
or scanned the crowd for the face of the friend we’ve come to
meet. Our frustration mounts because it seems to take forever.

There has to be a better way.

Wilson Geisler, who recently was elected to the National
Academy of Sciences, set out to find out if there is.

“The process of visual search is a natural task that we do all
the time,” Geisler says, “and it’s really important for survival.
But how human beings have solved the problem of using the
eyes to find something is really complicated.”

The human visual system has evolved from compromise.
We need to have a large field of view, and yet we also need to
be able to see very fine detail. To see fine detail over a large
field of view would require an optic nerve the size of an arm.
Ours is the size of a pinky.

We’ve had to settle for an eye that couples low-resolution
sight over a large field of view with higher resolution over
only a very small central field of view.

Geisler took these known facts of human sight to the ques-
tion of visual search and asked how human beings should
move their eyes if they want to find something. What is the
optimal way? What could we do to locate an object as quickly
as possible?
He and Jiri Najemnik, graduate student researcher, answered the question by creating a mathematical algorithm for optimizing eye movements during visual search.

Then Geisler turned to human subjects to see how people perform a visual search in real life. The results surprised him.

“We found out that people are almost perfect,” Geisler says. “We can find things just about as fast as physically possible.”

Geisler’s study reveals a lot about the complexity of the visual process and the ways we develop to optimize it. Going through our natural learning process, we seem to discover the best way to use our sensory system.

And it may bring some relief the next time you’re frantically searching for that lost item that won’t come into sight. Rest assured, you really are doing the best that you can.

A Virtual Stroll

You know what they say about walking and chewing gum? It turns out there’s a lot of truth to this—we really cannot attend to much more than one thing at a time. Mary Hayhoe is working to understand how we decide to what we will attend.

“Most of the time we manage walking down the street just fine,” Hayhoe says. “We’re asking how it is you manage to attend to the right thing at the right time.”

She is answering that question by tracking the direction of the gaze. We distribute our gaze across natural scenes in ways that keep us from bumping into things, stepping off things, and otherwise hurting ourselves or others. We learn to do this as we develop during childhood.

“That learning is really critical,” Hayhoe says. “The visual system doesn’t just magically direct your eye to the right place. With young children, you get the sense that you have to be their attention, be there to say ‘watch out!’ They’re still learning what the world is like.”

To understand how we adults, who have learned what the world is like, use our eyes to navigate, Hayhoe puts subjects on the sidewalk. In her case, it is a virtual sidewalk.

Hayhoe operates one of the most advanced virtual reality labs in the country, alongside Dana Ballard, professor of computer science. In one of the many experiments in the lab, subjects don a virtual reality head mount and walk around the room.

An observer may think the subject is just making a long oval across the tile floor, but in the virtual world the subject is walking on a sidewalk, with a curb, fellow pedestrians and objects to steer around. The images the subject sees change rapidly, just as they would in the real world.

A small camera tracks the subject’s left eye—the pupil and the corneal reflection—to see where he or she is looking at any time. LEDs in the ceiling track the subject’s head position, which enables the program to change the images the subject is seeing.

The experiment offers a complex view of how an individual uses his or her eyes.

“It’s like you’re inside her head,” Hayhoe says. “You get a lot of information about what a person is trying to do. She looks at the path, figures out where to put her feet, looks at pedestrians.”

One finding is that when your expectations of a scene change, your gaze behavior changes almost immediately. For example, if a pedestrian suddenly acts unruly, bumping into you, you’ll spend more time looking at pedestrians after that for a period of time.

Why use virtual reality instead of a real street?

“We want to do both,” Hayhoe says. “We’ve conducted experiments tracking people walking around the room with a real person trying to run into them. But you have less control in the real world, so we get ideas from it and then take them into a virtual environment where we can conduct more controlled experiments.”

Hayhoe’s research is critical to understanding the basic scientific issues about the neural underpinnings of visually guided behavior, and its implications are

The Mind’s Eye: Psychologist’s Insights into Brain Could Restore Sight

BY TRACY MUELLER

MEDICAL RESEARCHERS HAVE AN IMPRESSIVE history of innovation, pushing the human body’s capacity to heal beyond what most could imagine. Reconstructive surgery, heart transplants and remarkably functional cochlear implants give patients with severe injuries or critical impairments a second chance.

However modern technology has had a limited impact on the visual system, and doctors do not have many tools to treat severe afflictions. Associate professor of psychology Eyal Seidemann hopes to change that.

Seidemann studies brain activity in the primary visual cortex, the first and largest processing stage of visual information in the cerebral cortex (“gray matter”).

The primary visual cortex, together with several dozen subsequent visual cortical areas, is responsible for forming our visual perception. Seidemann hopes his research will lead to the development of visual prostheses, allowing people with severe eye damage to see.

“The brain uses its own language of electrical signals to represent our environment,” Seidemann says.

“Everything that we perceive has to be represented in our brains using this complex neural code. Our ultimate goal is to break this code. If we could understand the brain’s inner language, we may one day be able to bypass the eyes and insert the electrical signals that represent the current visual scene directly into the relevant neurons in the patient’s visual cortex, thereby restoring normal vision.”

Most researchers in the field study vision by measuring the electrical signals of single neurons or by looking at the activity in large regions in the brain. Seidemann studies a critical intermediate spatial scale of small groups of neurons. His goal is to understand how groups of neurons behave together, which offers a more complete picture of how the brain represents information.

Seidemann says an exciting aspect of the research is that fully understanding the primary visual cortex likely will lead to a more complete understanding of other parts of the brain.

“The primary visual cortex is just one part of the cerebral cortex,” he explains. “Each region of the cortex is responsible for a different function (such as perception, memory, thought or movement planning) but each region’s architecture is very similar. This similarity suggests that the neural language is likely to be shared among the sensory, cognitive and motor parts of our brain.”

Seidemann says understanding the neural code in the visual system, therefore, is likely to have profound consequences for our ability to treat many other disorders of the brain.
Human Senses

Contrary to popular belief, the human ear is capable of performing tasks beyond just hearing sounds. One such function is the production of otoacoustic emissions, or OAEs. OAEs are tones that emanate from the inner ear and are measurable with a sensitive microphone placed in the ear canal. They may be spontaneous, present even in a sound-deadened room, or they may be produced in response to brief sounds. People generally don’t notice their OAEs.

“It’s interesting that most of us are unaware of those sounds,” says Dennis McFadden, Ashbel Smith Professor of Psychology. “But then again they’ve been around since birth, and maybe the higher centers of the brain have just nulled them out.”

Scientists, however, are finding that OAEs yield some very interesting information. OAEs are stronger and more numerous in females than in males, and that difference exists even at birth. Evidence suggests this is due to a difference in prenatal exposure to androgens (certain kinds of hormones). Females are exposed to weaker levels of androgens than males are.

Other differences in OAEs are even more interesting. Take boys with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). For years, clinicians have been arguing that there are two subtypes of ADHD—the inattentive type and the combined type (in which the individual has both inattention and hyperactivity symptoms). It turns out the ears support this distinction.

McFadden, working with colleagues in clinical psychology, found that the OAEs of boys with the combined type of ADHD were not different from those of boys without ADHD. But boys with the inattentive type of ADHD had weaker OAEs than either group. This suggests they were exposed to higher levels of androgens before birth.

OAEs also appear to be different between females who have female twins and females who have male twins, as well as between heterosexual and homosexual females. As scientists explore these differences, it becomes clear that the auditory system has the capacity to serve as a window into prenatal development and sexual differentiation.

The finding is surprising, but for McFadden it is just one of the many mysteries of the auditory system that have kept him engaged during his 40 years of doing research at the university. “The cochlea, or inner ear, is an extraordinarily complicated and therefore interesting structure,” McFadden says. “The way it breaks down sound waves so that they can be processed by the brain and then reconstitutes them to give us the rich experience of hearing—music, speech, environmental sounds—is fascinating to those of us who study hearing.”

Your Ears Reveal More Than You Think

Obviously the ears hear sounds, but would you have guessed they make sounds as well? Otoacoustic emissions, or OAEs, are tones that emanate from the inner ear and are measurable with a sensitive microphone placed in the ear canal. They may be spontaneous, present even in a sound-deadened room, or they may be produced in response to brief sounds. People generally don’t notice their OAEs.

“Sign language is not something that can be learned in a classroom,” Ramont says. “The students need to be involved in the deaf community, and this Web site can be used as a support tool.”

Ramont dedicated two years to building the site with the assistance of Richard Meier, professor and chair of linguistics, and the Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services team. “It’s difficult to create homework assignments because ASL is not a written language,” Meier explains. “This online resource has produced positive results in classroom projects because students are now able to study and practice sign language on their own time.”

In ASL, the meaning of each sign is not just determined by the shape of the hands, but by the movements of the hands and arms and facial expressions. Small, but significant details are learned interactively rather than with a textbook or dictionary, which is why Ramont created a Web site rich in video segments featuring fluent signers demonstrating vocabulary sentences and conversations.

Signing Up: Tapping Technology for American Sign Language Studies

By Jessica Sinn

Similar to Spanish, French or Italian, the study of American Sign Language (ASL) fulfills the university’s foreign language requirement. But, unlike those languages, ASL involves movements of the arms and hands, not just the mouth.

Two million people in the United States use ASL. To help bridge the communication gap between the deaf and non-deaf communities, Franky Ramont, linguistics lecturer, encourages students to join the conversation by signing up for ASL.

By using ASLOnline, an instructional Web site created by Ramont in 2004, students spend less time studying basic vocabulary in class, and more time developing conversational skills.

Students of any language who fall out of practice may forget what they have learned. But when students continue to use ASLOnline, they will maintain and sharpen their skills.

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moving through depth and toward and away from the head than things moving on a flat computer screen.

Asking what it means in our regular life, Cormack calls out, “Duck!”

“I say that somewhat flippantly, yet it ties in with some other little fun facts,” Cormack explains.

Among those fun facts is that the muscles attached to the eyeball that are responsible for crossing the eyes (or following approaching objects) are large and strong, as compared to the muscles that make the eyes move up and down.

“The brain’s paying a lot of attention, developing a robust response to things coming at you so that you can react to them,” Cormack says. “Essentially it says something’s happening that’s terribly important. Get busy.”

Sound Systems

Randy Diehl, psychology professor and dean of the College of Liberal Arts, is used to people looking at him quizzically when he says he studies speech perception.

“What’s the problem there?” they ask. “We perceive vowels and consonants, so what? There doesn’t seem to be any mystery.”

In fact, there’s plenty of mystery, Diehl says, and his lab has been working to decipher it for years.

“It’s a difficult problem because the task of listeners is to extract words from the speech signal,” Diehl says. “Words are series of distinctive sounds; think of them as sequences of vowels and consonants. It turns out that every talker produces these things in different ways.”

In other words, words themselves can be very different acoustically depending on who is saying them. A speaker with a large vocal tract is different from one with a small vocal tract. Men and women speak differently, as do children and adults, people with different types of speech pathologies or dialects, people who speak quickly or slowly, with food in their mouths or through a tube.

And yet we understand them.

“We have to apply adjustments on-the-fly in interpreting the acoustic signal to take into account all of the sources of lawful variability,” Diehl says. “And we do that without knowing we’re doing it. It’s as though the listener by a certain age has implicitly acquired all the rules for transforming those variations into a uniform message.”

Diehl’s lab has placed a lot of focus for the past 20 years on understanding auditory processing, how the brain converts the acoustic signals it gets into neural representations. To do so, Diehl has looked at the sound systems of various languages.

Though there are somewhere between 4,000 and 6,000 languages worldwide, the sound systems of those languages have a lot in common. Given the range of sounds that the human vocal tract can produce, there has to be a reason that certain patterns are so popular.

Working with Björn Lindblom of Stockholm University, Diehl set out to create an inventory of sounds that would be optimal for language, based on the degrees of freedom in the human vocal tract and the premise that optimal sounds will be sufficiently audible and distinctive from each other, enabling listeners to distinguish them from noise.

Running a representative sampling of sounds through a computer model, Diehl was able to select an optimal vowel system. If that system consisted of just five vowels, it would be the sounds ee, ah, oo, ay, oh. This corresponds perfectly with the vowel systems in Spanish, Japanese, Hawaiian and a host of other languages. In fact, it is the most common vowel system among the world’s languages overall.

This means that languages have evolved to take advantage of the optimal ways our auditory system can interpret sound.

Diehl says this finding was just a starting point. He has taken advantage of state-of-the-art technology to trace how the auditory system codes the frequency of vowels, allowing more complex vowel systems to evolve. And his recent work is breaking new ground in predicting the optimal ways that humans classify phonemes, allowing them to distinguish between similar sounds, like buh and puh.

All of this work is geared toward solving the problem of how we are able to sit down with someone we’ve never met and understand each other.

“It’s really a great problem,” he says, “because it intersects with so many classic philosophical and psychological questions about the nature of perception, the nature of language and the nature of memory and how knowledge is used to interpret our world.”

Lost in Translation: Anthropologist Preserves Dying Sign Languages

BY JESSICA SINN

DURING THE 1960s, when linguists and anthropologists began studying languages of deaf people, research focused on national sign language, with scant attention paid to indigenous ones.

Today, Angela Nonaka, assistant professor of anthropology who specializes in linguistic anthropology, is preserving endangered and undocumented sign languages in Thailand.

By examining and documenting rare phonological forms (hand configurations), color terminology (using three basic colors) and baby talk, she analyzes Ban Khor Sign Language and compares its variations with American Sign Language (ASL) and other languages.

Understanding the origins of indigenous sign languages, which spontaneously arise in small rural villages around the world, allows researchers to answer questions about language complexity and evolution that would remain unanswered when these unique communication methods disappear, Nonaka explains.

For example, during the 1950s when ASL was introduced in Thailand, local sign languages began to dissipate. Now, many signed codes are in danger of becoming extinct within the next couple of generations.

“The true extent of the country’s linguistic diversity has yet to be fully recognized or appreciated because an entire class of sign languages remains largely unexplored,” Nonaka says.

Her research extends beyond linguistic documentation. She takes a holistic anthropological approach, investigating how and why native sign languages form, spread and disappear. By examining the local sign language communities, she works to preserve and revitalize the culture, as well as the language.

“The study of sign languages enriches our collective knowledge of linguistics and anthropology, underscoring the true linguistic and cultural diversity in the world,” Nonaka says.

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Most parents will attest to the routine of a baby’s life: sleep, eat, diaper change. Precious though they may be, infants are not generally considered the most complex individuals. Humorist Dave Barry offered a cynic’s take on child psychology when he quipped that a baby’s head is filled with “nothing but an enormous drool gland.”

Scientists at The University of Texas at Austin’s Children’s Research Lab (CRL) can confirm the drool, but insist on a more sophisticated interpretation of a child’s psyche.

More than 16,000 infants, children and parents have participated in CRL research projects since the lab opened in 1982. The CRL houses six separate labs focusing child development. Research topics include infant vision and hearing, cognitive and intellectual ability, language acquisition and stereotype development.

A World of Their Own

“Studying children is essential to gain insight into the human mind and behavior,” Catharine Echols, associate professor of psychology who directs the CRL, says. “Examining their development helps us understand who we are.”

At the same time, Echols notes, it is important to understand children for who they are.

“Science is now recognizing that kids aren’t just little adults,” Echols says. “The way they make sense of the world has its own sensibility.”

Echols’ research examines how children make sense of language. Studying children ages 9 months to 5 years old, she studies how labeling and categorizing objects helps children develop language. For instance, when and how does a child learn the word “cup” refers to many different kinds of cups, not just one specific cup? She also researches how children from different cultures or who are deaf learn the meaning of words from their parents.

“Language learning is a key part of development,” Echols says. “We want to know why some children excel with language and some struggle, and how parents can help kids who are not developing as they should.”

The parental interaction thread runs through the CRL’s various projects, and parents who participate in the research often leave with a unique understanding of their child.

“The work we do has enormous value for practitioners in education, media and counseling,” Echols says. “But we’re always thinking about how it will help parents.”

The Science of Learning

Baby’s first word—the momentous occasion parents anticipate, when “gaga” and giggles turn into recognizable language. But more than the joy of hearing “mama” or “dada” for the first time, parents are assured their child is reaching an important developmental milestone, showing skill in perception, memory and cognition.

These are the moments upon which psychologist Leslie Cohen builds his research. Before piano recitals, honor rolls and graduation, a child must learn how to comprehend his or her surroundings, speak, think and learn.

Cohen, director of the Infant Cognition Laboratory, examines infant perceptual and cognitive development during the first 18 months. By using a simple procedure that involves the infant looking at a series of computer-generated pictures or movies and by recording the infants’ visual fixation time, he investigates how infants organize the auditory and visual information they see and how well they remember that information.

He has found consistent developmental differences in infants’ organization of simple visual information into complex patterns, objects and events. He also is examining developmental changes in infants’ understanding of concepts and categories, their perception of music, and the relationship between categorization and early language.

Cohen recently created the multipurpose software program Habit X for the MAC to facilitate his and others’ research. Habit X tests infant perception, cognition and language acquisition.

“Children are acutely aware of and uncomfortable being outnumbered, even if they are separated by something as meaningless as a T-shirt color.”

— Rebecca Bigler
More than 125 infant laboratories around the world now employ the program.

**Children and Stereotypes**

When asked how she knows that only white men have been president of the United States, one elementary student simply responded, “Have you seen the money?”

It is perhaps an amusingly astute commentary on power and money, but also a reminder of children’s attention to detail. The faces of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and other commanders in chief appear on everything from currency to mountainsides. It does not take long for children to notice a pattern in the presidents’ appearances.

Adults often think children live in a color or gender blind world, but children begin to detect race during their first year of life and show signs of stereotyping by age three, says Rebecca Bigler, psychology professor and director of the Gender and Racial Attitudes Lab.

Bigler has identified four ingredients that lead to stereotyping and prejudice. The first component is a child’s ability to visibly detect differences. This explains why children tend to form stereotypes based on race and gender, but not religion or political affiliation.

The second component is minority status. In one study, Bigler randomly separated a class into two groups. One group was given blue T-shirts and the second group, consisting of only two or three children, wore red T-shirts. The children in red T-shirts were far more likely to want to change groups than their blue T-shirt peers.

“Children are acutely aware of and uncomfortable being outnumbered, even if they are separated by something as meaningless as a T-shirt color,” Bigler says. “And children in the minority group sought each other’s company, becoming close friends in almost every classroom.”

The third component involves explicit labeling of different groups. For instance, a teacher’s greeting of “Good morning, class!” is likely to result in close friends in almost every classroom. However, a teacher’s greeting of “Good morning, boy, girl, boy, girl” groups children.

For instance, red or blue T-shirts demonstrated more stereotypical opinions about their peers than did children in integrated classrooms.

What can parents and educators do to prevent and correct prejudicial beliefs?

“Talk to your kids,” Bigler counsels. “Children are perceptive and they notice racial and gender differences. If adults don’t acknowledge and discuss why all the presidents have been white males, or why poor neighborhoods are more likely than rich neighborhoods to include African Americans and Latinos, children will form their own, probably prejudicial, explanations.”

**Babies and Beauty**

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but what if the beholder is only 3 months old? One might think any cooing adult would delight an innocent infant, but according to research by Judith Langlois, children have quite discriminating tastes when it comes to beauty.

Langlois, a vice provost and the Charles and Sarah Seay Regents’ Professor of Developmental Psychology, studies children’s social development, attractiveness and the origins of social stereotypes.

Her research shows babies look longer at faces that are rated as attractive by adults than at faces rated as unattractive by adults. And, 1-year-olds are more involved in play and show more positive behavior toward an attractive stranger than an unattractive stranger.

Conversely, Langlois found mothers are more affectionate toward and play more with attractive infants (as rated by college students) compared with mothers of less attractive infants. And, mothers of less attractive infants perceive them as interfering more in their lives than do mothers of more attractive infants.

“This is not to say that mothers treat unattractive infants badly,” Langlois says. “All the women in this study were excellent moms. Even among excellent moms, however, the attractiveness of an infant seems to influence maternal behavior.”

As children grow older, attractiveness continues to influence their interactions with others. Physical attractiveness affects whom children choose as peers and what types of traits they attribute to other children. For instance, attractive children are liked more, are perceived as being smarter and are rated higher on sharing and friendliness and lower on meanness and hitting than less attractive children.

“Most people are aware of the fact that attractive adults often receive preferential treatment,” Langlois says. “This research reveals that attractive children benefit from their looks too.”

**Fact vs. Fairy Tale**

A child’s life is filled with wonder and discovery. Doctors take an X-ray that seems to make skin invisible, revealing the inside of the body. Adults tell children intriguing stories about the Easter Bunny and Tooth Fairy. Elmo, a friendly monster, teaches science lessons on “Sesame Street,” and Harry Potter, a human child, performs magic spells.

The boundary between fact and fiction is often blurred, and navigating the complex worlds of reality and fantasy is no easy task for a youngster. Or is it?

Psychologist Jacqueline Woolley studies how children understand reality and evaluate new information. Her research shows that kids may have a better grasp on reality than adults realize. Her most recent study found children are able to distinguish between reality and fantasy between the ages of 3 and 5.

“Young children continually are exposed to new information through conversations, books and the media,” Woolley says. “Much of the information is factual such as the names of planets, but some is fictional such as the existence of Santa Claus.”

By the age of 4, children learn to use the context in which new information is presented to distinguish between fact and fiction, Woolley says. She studied about 400 children between the ages of 3 and 6 who were asked to determine whether a series of new words were real or imaginary. For some children, the researchers presented the words in scientific terms: “Doctors use hercules to make medicine.” For others, they introduced the words in fantastical terms: “Fairies use hercules to make fairy dust.”

Woolley found when children heard the new words in a scientific context they were more likely to believe the words represented real things than when they heard the words described in a fantastical context.
“These studies provide new insight into the development of children’s ability to make the fantasy-reality distinction,” Woolley says. “It is clear that young children do not believe everything they hear, and that they can use the context surrounding the presentation of a new entity to make inferences about the real versus fantastical nature of that entity.”

Even when children do believe in the fantasy world, they expect certain rules to be followed. In a study examining children’s belief in the power of wishing, Woolley found children only gave credence to the validity of wishing when specific conditions were met.

The children watched as someone wished for an object, and then opened a box containing the desired item. Under normal circumstances, children generally believed the wish caused the item to appear. However if the child saw the item in the box prior to the wish being made, or if the child saw someone place the object in the box, he or she was less likely to credit the wish for the appearance of the item.

“Despite wishes belonging to the fantastical realm, children evaluate them based on the rules of the real world,” Woolley says. “All reasoning does not go out the window simply because they encounter what they believe to be magic.”

Sociologist Investigates Infant Mortality in the United States
BY JENNIFER MCANDREW

Following a dramatic decline throughout the 20th century, the U.S. infant mortality rate—the proportion of babies who die before they reach their first birthday—has leveled off at a little less than seven deaths per 1,000 live births, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. That’s a much higher rate than in other parts of the developed world.

Infant mortality rates are generally viewed as one of the best indicators of a country’s health. So why are the rates in the United States so high? W. Parker Frisbie, professor of sociology and former director of the Population Research Center, devoted his career to exploring this question.

“Most scholars believe the United States’ low ranking is due to the high infant mortality rates of the country’s minority populations,” Frisbie says. “This is further evidence that we need to work harder at lowering the infant mortality rate of disadvantaged minorities by reducing social inequality that leads to differential access to healthcare.”

The scholar has published more than 80 studies on racial disparity in infant mortality, pregnancy outcomes, mortality and the demography of minorities. His research has been supported by millions of dollars in grant funding from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation.

Frisbie’s prolific work has inspired the next generation of demography researchers says Robert Hummer, chair of the Department of Sociology. The dozens of students he mentored during his tenure are now in leading research positions throughout the United States and around the world.

Born to Texas ranchers in 1940, Frisbie will retire to his family ranch in south Texas where he will work cattle on horseback, mend fences, repair water wells, and educate his granddaughters in the ways of Texas ranching.

“We need to work harder at lowering the infant mortality rate of disadvantaged minorities by reducing social inequality that leads to differential access to healthcare.”

— Parker Frisbie
Millions of love-lorn people turn to self-help books, searching for the magic words that might save a relationship. But their own writing may provide the key to everlasting love, according to researchers at The University of Texas at Austin.

In a study titled “How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Words,” psychology professor James Pennebaker and graduate student Richard Slatcher found writing about one’s romantic relationship may help it last longer. Pennebaker is the chair of the Department of Psychology and the Bush Regents Professor in Liberal Arts.

Pennebaker and Slatcher analyzed writing samples from 86 couples. One person from each couple wrote for 20 minutes per day for three consecutive days. Volunteers in one group wrote about their daily activities while those in the second group wrote about their deepest thoughts and feelings about the relationship. The participants’ dating partners did not complete any writing task.

The researchers found that 77 percent of volunteers who wrote about their relationship were still dating their partner three months later. In contrast, only 52 percent of people who wrote just about everyday activities stayed with their partner.

The study also revealed those who wrote about their relationship used more words expressing positive emotions such as “happy” and “love” in Instant Message (IM) exchanges with their dating partner during the days following the writing.

“These results demonstrate that people who express more emotion, both in their writing and to their partner, may have the power to improve their relationship’s longevity,” says Pennebaker, the author of “Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions” and “Writing to Heal: A Guided Journal for Recovering from Trauma and Emotional Upheaval.”

A pioneer in the study of the effects of expressive writing, Pennebaker has researched how it benefits cancer patients and people who have lost their jobs or are recovering from emotional trauma. In each instance, people saw positive results from the writing, whether it was improved physical health or finding a new job more quickly than people who wrote about everyday activities.

Another Pennebaker study found college freshmen who wrote about the anxiety of the transition from high school earned higher grades the following semester.

So why is expressive writing so powerful? Slatcher likens it to the calming effect of writing a to-do list.

“When people feel overwhelmed by their workload, they write a simple list and almost instantly feel less stressed,” he says. “Once they start crossing things off the list, they feel even better.

“Writing down your thoughts helps put worries into concrete ideas and move past an event, rather than simply ruminating and letting negative feelings simmer,” Slatcher says.

“It creates a cohesive story for your life narrative.”

Expressive writing is so effective even participants’ dating partners changed how they communicated, despite not participating in the writing process.

The researchers collected IM exchanges from couples before and after the writing exercise, and found people who completed the writing exercise used more emotional language and their partners, in turn, became more emotionally expressive. It’s something researchers call linguistic synchrony—when one person mirrors the language of another.

Monitoring IM conversations provided insight into the progression of the relationships after the writing and allowed the researchers to examine the ebb and flow of the couples’ daily conversations in their natural settings.

“Most studies take place in a laboratory and rely on participants’ self-reporting for information, so using IM chats gave us a unique opportunity to track real-world interactions, creating a more accurate picture of the relationships,” Pennebaker says.

High-tech Romance

Using IM programs to monitor conversations is part of a research trend referred to as “experience sampling,” which relies
LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

on unobtrusive technology to study people in their everyday environments.

For instance, a study participant might carry a palm pilot, from which he or she can receive and answer questions, allowing researchers to gather real-time responses more frequently during a given day. The volunteer might then give a saliva sample by chewing on a cotton ball (then storing it in a test tube) that researchers can later analyze for the hormone cortisol, which is an indicator of stress.

Perhaps the most innovative research technology in experience sampling is the electronically activated recorder (EAR), developed at the university in the late-1990s. About the size of an iPod, the EAR turns on for 30 seconds every 12 minutes to record conversations, allowing researchers to be a fly on the wall for playful banter after class or a fiery 3 a.m. fight.

“We want to capture what people think, what they say and how their body responds to various social interactions,” Slatcher says. “By utilizing new technology, we gain far greater understanding of the inner workings of relationships.”

Slatcher is using the EAR in a new study to monitor how emotionally expressive couples are around their friends compared to when they are alone together.

Write Your Own Love Story

Follow these tips from Pennebaker, keeping in mind there are many ways to write that may be beneficial. Think of these as guidelines, and experiment to discover what works best for you.

Getting Ready to Write

• Commit to writing for a minimum of 15 minutes a day for at least three or four consecutive days.
• Write continuously. Don’t worry about spelling or grammar, and if you run out of things to write about, just repeat what you have already written.
• You may write longhand, type on a computer, or if you are unable to write, speak into a tape recorder.
• You do not have to write about the same topic every day.

What to Write About

• Worries, thoughts or anything that is affecting your life in an unhealthy way
• Your dreams
• Something you have avoided for days, weeks or years

Pennebaker recommends writing about your deepest thoughts and feelings about the relationship. Write about major conflicts or problems with your significant other, or particularly positive events with this person that you have experienced or are experiencing now. You can even tie your relationship to other parts of your life. Ideally, you should write about significant aspects of your relationship you have not discussed in great detail with others.

Many people report that after writing, they sometimes feel somewhat sad or depressed, Pennebaker says. Like seeing a sad movie, this typically goes away in a couple of hours. If you find you are getting extremely upset, simply stop writing or change topics.

If you are more concerned with a troublesome coworker or family member than your significant other, expressive writing can still be helpful. Pennebaker and Slatcher believe the connection between writing and improving one’s relationship extends beyond the realm of dating couples.

“That people may enhance their romantic relationships by simply writing down their thoughts and feelings about those relationships has clear implications,” Pennebaker says. “The use of expressive writing as a tool for relationship enhancement could be applied to families, circles of friends and even work groups.”

The Brownings: A Writers’ Romance

Working with James Pennebaker, Molly Ireland, a psychology doctoral student, analyzed the poetry and letters of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. Ireland examined the couple’s “language style matching” (LSM), which occurs when two people automatically structure their sentences in similar ways.

“When measuring style matching, it is much more psychologically revealing to look at how people phrase their sentences rather than what they say,” Ireland says. “We ignore content words, like nouns and verbs, and focus on function words, such as pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions, which more reliably reveal the speaker’s state of mind.”

Ireland found that LSM mapped directly onto synchrony (and asynchrony) in the Brownings’ relationship. For example, when Robert proposed to Elizabeth, she delayed her acceptance for several months. While Robert was left in limbo, their LSM in letters and poetry was at an all-time low.

“But, when Elizabeth got over her self-loathing and other anxieties and eloped with Robert, their LSM sprang back again higher than ever,” Ireland explains.

Hi-tech Romance: Cupid’s Electronic Arrow

Exchanges from a real IM chat in the study “How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Words.” The participants names have been changed.

This chat appears ordinary, but researchers say the unassuming words reveal important information about the state of the couple’s relationship.

“Writing down your thoughts helps put worries into concrete ideas and move past an event, rather than simply ruminating and letting negative feelings simmer. It creates a cohesive story for your life narrative.”

— Richard Slatcher
**Why Do People Have Sex?**

Psychologists identify 237 reasons

BY CHRISTIAN CLARKE CÁSAREZ

**Do Women Really Talk More than Men?**

Research refutes popular belief

BY CHRISTIAN CLARKE CÁSAREZ

Refuting the popular stereotype that females talk more than men, psychology researchers at The University of Texas at Austin found women and men both use an average of 16,000 words each day. Matthias Mehl, who earned his doctoral degree in 2004, led the study with James Pennebaker, chair of the psychology department. They published their findings in “Are Women Really More Talkative Than Men?” in *Science*.

For more than a decade, researchers have claimed that women use far more words each day than men. One set of numbers commonly tossed around is that women use 20,000 words per day compared to only 7,000 for men.

“These findings have been reported widely by national media and have entered the cultural mainstream,” Pennebaker says. “Although many people believe the stereotypes of females as talkative and males as reticent, there is no large-scale study that systematically has recorded the natural conversations of large groups of people for an extended period of time.”

For almost a decade, the researchers have developed a method for recording natural language using the electronically activated recorder (EAR). The unobtrusive digital voice recorder tracks people’s interactions, including their conversations.

Pennebaker and Mehl, who is an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Arizona in Tucson, worked with recent alumni Richard Slatcher and Nairán Ramírez-Esparza.

The team analyzed the transcripts of almost 400 university students in the United States and Mexico whose daily interactions were recorded between 1998 and 2004. The research participants could not control the EAR, which automatically records for 30 seconds every 12.5 minutes, and did not know when the device was on.

**Why Do People Have Sex?**

Many scientists assume people have sex for simple and straightforward reasons such as to experience sexual pleasure or to reproduce, but new psychology research reveals hundreds of varied and complex motivations that range from the spiritual to the vengeful.

After conducting one of the most comprehensive studies on why people have sex, psychology researchers David Buss and Cindy Meston uncovered 237 motivations, which appeared in the Archives of Sexual Behavior.

People’s motivations ranged from the mundane (“I was bored”) to the spiritual (“I wanted to feel closer to God”) and from the altruistic (“I wanted the person to feel good about himself/herself”) to the manipulative (“I wanted to get a promotion”).

Some said they had sex to feel powerful, others to debase themselves. Some wanted to impress their friends, others to harm their enemies (“I wanted to break up a rival’s relationship”).

Buss and Meston conducted two studies. In the first, they asked more than 400 men and women to identify reasons people have sex. In the second, the researchers asked more than 1,500 undergraduate students about their experiences and attitudes.

Four major factors and 13 sub-factors for why people have sex:

- **Physical reasons** such as to reduce stress (“It seemed like good exercise”), feel pleasure (“It’s exciting”), improve or expand experiences (“I was curious about sex”), and the physical desirability of their partner (“The person was a good dancer”).
- **Goal-based reasons**, including utilitarian or practical considerations (“I wanted to have a baby”), social status (“I wanted to be popular”) and revenge (“I wanted to give someone else a sexually transmitted disease”).
- **Emotional reasons** such as love and commitment (“I wanted to feel connected”) and expression (“I wanted to say ‘thank you’”).
- **Insecurity-based reasons**, including self-esteem (“I wanted the attention”), a feeling of duty or pressure (“My partner kept insisting”) and to guard a mate (“I wanted to keep my partner from straying”).

“Why people have sex is extremely important, but rarely studied,” Buss says. “Surprisingly, many scientists assume the answer is obvious, but people have different reasons for having sex, some of which are rather complex.”

**Do You Blurt or Brood?**

Bill Swann, the William Howard Beasley III Professor in the Graduate School of Business, examines how the presence or absence of verbal inhibitions affects romantically involved couples. The psychology researcher found relationships become particularly troubled when men who are more verbally inhibited are paired with women who are highly critical and verbally disinhibited.

Take the online personality test at “Are you a Blurtor or a Brooder? … and how this Affects your Love Life” at: www.outofservice.com/blirt/.

Cindy Meston David Buss
So, Why Aren’t You Married? It’s an Age-Old Question Dreaded by Singletons. The underlying assumption of the awkward inquiry: there is something wrong with being single and one’s life is somehow incomplete without a partner.

But does marriage mean you will live happily, and healthfully, ever after?

Research does reveal that married people live longer than their single counterparts. They have lower rates of heart failure and cancer, develop expanded networks of social support and have more frequent sex.

However, the reasons why married people tend to be healthier are not fully understood, says Debra Umberson, professor of sociology and affiliate of the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

“In recent years, the health disparity between the marrieds and the never-marrieds has actually narrowed,” Umberson says. “After investigating what people get out of relationships, we’ve found that it is not the case that any marriage is better than no marriage at all when it comes to health benefits.”

The Honeymoon is Over

Umberson’s recent study, “You Make Me Sick,” shows that while a good marriage may offer health benefits, a bad marriage can be detrimental to your health.

“I’ve always been interested in how people want to be in relationships, but then often seem miserable once they are in one,” she says. “For many people, relationships are a double-edged sword.”

Umberson and a team of researchers examined more than 1,000 married couples in three waves of interviews as part of a study supported by the National Institute on Aging.

Participants answered a series of questions about their marital quality, such as:

• How satisfied are you with your marriage?
• How much does your husband/wife make you feel loved and cared for?
• How much is he/she willing to listen when you need to talk about your worries or problems?
• How often do you feel bothered or upset by your marriage?
• How often would you say the two of you typically have unpleasant disagreements or conflicts?

Responses reveal that marital strain is a key source of stress, which can affect one’s immune system and accelerate the typical decline in health that occurs over time, especially as couples age. In other words, a wedding ring doesn’t guarantee good health.

However, she notes the purpose of the study is not to issue a call for divorce but to raise awareness about the importance of identifying marital difficulties and seeking to improve marital quality.

Health Consequences of Divorce

Mark Hayward, sociologist and director of the Population Research Center, says his work has a similar purpose. He researches the health consequences of divorce.

“The choices we make in our relationships can permanently affect our health trajectories later in life,” Hayward explains.

In a recent study funded by the National Institute on Aging, Hayward found that divorced, middle-aged women are 60 percent more likely to have cardiovascular disease than women who remain married.

“Divorce is one of the most stressful things a person can go through in life, so it makes sense that it has such a pronounced effect on women’s cardiovascular health,” Hayward says.

The sociologist’s study, with colleague Zhenmei Zhang at Michigan State University, is based on data from the Health and Retirement Study, which tracked a nationally representative sample of nearly 10,000 men and women aged 51-61 from 1992 to 2000.

Hayward found divorced women have the lowest household income and wealth, compared to married women, widows and women who remarry.

“Divorce clearly leads to a drop in financial resources,” he says. “Add that to the emotional distress that can stem from a change in residence, loss of social support or the potential of single parenting, and divorced, middle-aged women are
face incredible stress that puts them at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to their cardiovascular health.”

Divorce, however, does not increase the odds of heart disease among middle-aged men.

“Men’s health is not immune to divorce,” Hayward notes. “But because men typically get heart disease at younger ages than women, the effect of divorce for men may play out before middle age. Also, divorce appears to have negative consequences for other major health problems among middle-aged men—just not cardiovascular disease.”

Hayward was surprised the negative consequences of divorce did not go away with time, showing that divorce’s effects on women’s cardiovascular health appear to linger long after the divorce.

“From a social policy perspective,” Hayward says, “we need to think about how we can help women navigate the divorce experience so that it doesn’t have such significant health consequences.”

Importance of Careful Mate Selection
Kelly Raley, associate professor of sociology and affiliate of the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, says the negative health consequences of a bad marriage and divorce underscore the importance of why individuals should be extremely careful in mate selection.

In the study, “Not Even if You Were the Last Person on Earth,” Raley examined how the process of mate selection affects the ability of both to find a suitable mate.

“Interestingly, men were more willing to marry women with higher education and earning power than themselves, which is in contrast to previous ideals of marriage,” Raley says.

“This suggests that the foundation of marriage is changing and that men now recognize the potential benefit of a higher earning partner. We’re now looking at marriage as a cooperative relationship rather than one of rigid gender roles.”

Defending Marriage
In a recent opinion piece for the Dallas Morning News, “In Defense of Marriage,” Norval Glenn, professor of sociology, wrote that for most adults, marriage is still the best arrangement for providing material and emotional security.

However, Glenn admits the institutional mechanisms for bringing people together are not working like they used to. As more people choose to marry later in life, few social institutions have arisen to replace the role that local communities, families and schools once played.

Still, Umberson and Raley assert the stigma of singlehood is in decline. “Previously, the choice to never marry was viewed as deviant or extremely tragic,” Umberson says. “Today that’s just not the case.”

We know marriage has health benefits for both men and women, Hayward adds, but it’s a complex story. As divorce rates level off, cohabitation becomes increasingly common and the median age of marriage increases. But, it’s not clear how future marriage trends will affect health outcomes, he concludes.

“Increasingly,” he says, “couples are in a two-income household, many face long commutes, education costs are rising and the paycheck doesn’t stretch as far. The middle-class crunch adds stress and social circumstances that have health consequences for marriage that we’re just now starting to study. And, there are no easy solutions for how we solve these problems.”

Literary Marriages from Hell

“Why does some of the best poetry emerge from the charred ruins of a tortured relationship? That’s the question students tackle in Betsy Berry’s popular course, “Literary Marriages from Hell,” which examines the lives of doomed literary couples and the masterpieces of literature they produced.

Students read books such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s autobiographical account of his relationship with his wife Zelda who suffered from schizophrenia, and analyze poems such as “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath, which portrayed her troubled relationships with both her father and British poet laureate Ted Hughes.

“Plath and Hughes are the student’s perennial favorite couple to study,” Berry, a lecturer in the English Department, says. “The volume of work that sprang from their union is simply amazing.”

Along with engaging in textual criticism, the class screens films such as “Sylvia,” the 2003 biopic of Plath’s life that starred Gwyneth Paltrow and Daniel Craig.

“In studying the relationships that informed the authors’ creativity, students gain a deeper reading of some of the great literature of the 20th century.” Berry says. “However, it’s important to note that the works stand on their own, regardless of the context of their creation.”
The Aging of America
Sociologists examine population’s challenges

BY JENNIFER MCANDREW

In 2011, the first Baby Boomers will reach age 65, and the population aged 65 and older will grow rapidly during the next two decades. How the country responds to this new demographic reality will shape the fabric of American life and culture for years to come, says Robert Hummer, chair of the Department of Sociology.

Sociologists at the Population Research Center are working to understand the aging process through studies funded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), a division of the National Institutes of Health. Since 2000, the NIA has contributed more than $3.8 million to their research, which has national implications for the aging population.

With Age Comes a Sense of Peace and Calm

A new NIA-funded study from the Population Research Center reveals that aging brings a sense of peace and calm. Starting at about age 60, participants reported more feelings of ease and contentment than their younger counterparts.

Catherine Ross and John Mirowsky, professors of sociology, published the study “Age and the Balance of Emotions” in a recent issue of Social Science and Medicine. They examined 1,450 responses to the 1996 U.S. General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

Previous research on emotions associated with aging has focused on negative emotions, such as depression.

The findings reveal aging is associated with more positive emotions, and more passive than active emotions, Ross says.

"The passive/positive combination reveals that contentment, calm and ease are some of the most common emotions people feel as they age," Ross says. "Emotions that are both active and negative, such as anxiety and anger, are especially unlikely among the elderly."

Death of a Parent: Transition to a New Adult Identity

As Baby Boomers begin to confront their own aging and retirement, they face the added challenge of losing a parent. The death of a mother or father can be emotionally devastating for many adult children who suddenly find themselves the oldest generation of their family.

"A parent's death has a much more profound and far-reaching impact on adult children than most people believe," says Debra Umberson, sociologist and author of "Death of a Parent: Transition to a New Adult Identity" (2003).

Based on in-depth interviews and data collected nationwide, "Death of a Parent" explores the social and psychological factors that determine how this loss affects adult children, and whether it will function as a personal crisis, or opportunity for healthy change.

"The time following a parent's death is a period of tremendous upheaval and change in the way we think about who we are and what we want to accomplish in life," Umberson says. "The loss can sharpen our sense of our own mortality. Many adults make important changes in their health habits that can have a long-term influence on their health."

Although an individual's health is likely to decline during the short term following a parent's death, the long-term outlook on their physical health is much more positive, says Umberson, whose research was recognized by the NIA with a FIRST Award for independent, innovative research.
Psychology as Commodity
Why it’s time for scientists to market for the masses

BY ART MARKMAN, Professor of Psychology

Psychology is part of everything we do. But, despite our daily use of memory, attention, language and social interaction, most of us do not know much about the field and its innovative researchers. This is unfortunate, because many of the most pressing problems in business and society draw upon psychological solutions.

• Business magazines tout the importance of innovation in companies. Innovation is based on creativity, which is an essential aspect of cognition, a field of psychology focused on how we think.
• Health professionals focus on helping people prevent diseases. Avoiding a piece of cake or cigarette often involves the psychological tradeoff between current choices and future implications.
• Politicians and social activists are concerned about the effects of stereotypes on how people treat others, which is an important aspect of social and personality research.

But, the field of psychology suffers from stereotypes about its work. Most often, psychologists are portrayed as therapists, who preside over a couch or, perhaps, conduct experiments with rats that must run through a maze.

Rx: A Call to Action
Fortunately, this problem has a straightforward solution. Since psychology is a commodity with a high value to consumers, marketing is key. We, as academic psychologists, must package our work, give some of it away, and sell it.

Let me explain.
Package it: The academic world has changed. In the past, psychologists assumed if we conducted interesting, basic research people would discover our work and figure out how to apply it to problems outside the lab. Certainly, a few people did. For example, business schools routinely teach about decision-making based on psychological research. But, the academic community needs to make clearer connections between our work and the real-world.

Give some away: If a discovery falls in the forest, and there is nobody there to hear it, then did it really happen? Institutions that support psychology need to ensure there are people around to hear it. It is routine for journals and universities to wind up their public relations apparatus to trumpet their latest research. This promotion is critical.

In addition, scholars are beginning to connect to popular sources of information. As a proponent of this trend, for three years, I have served as a scientific advisor to The Dr. Phil Show as a way of bringing some small measure of science to daytime television.

Sell, sell, sell: If our field has the potential to transform business, health-care, interface design and education, then psychology researchers and graduates should be selling the implications of our work. But how?

Traditionally, scholars sell their work by writing books for broad audiences. We must continue to share the field’s ideas similar to David Buss, author of “The Murderer next door,” and Sam Gosling, who recently wrote “Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You.”

Academic psychologists also need to sell their services as consultants. Bob Helmreich, who retired from the psychology department last year, is a master at this. The international aviation expert helped industry and government improve and maintain their safety records.

Cindy Meston, a clinical psychologist, has shared her research on female sexual dysfunction with drug companies and consumer products companies. And, I have consulted with consumer products companies to explore how research on memory and reasoning can be used to make groups better at developing new ideas.

Finally, the market needs psychology students. An under-graduate psychology graduate has many options beyond earning a clinical license and hanging out a shingle (although that is an honorable and important use of the degree). Companies want and need psychologists to design studies that test user interfaces, analyze consumer reactions to new products and offer guidance about how to better motivate staff.

Psychology for the Masses
The link between academic psychologists and the world does not end when class concludes and students file out of the room—or when our peers review our scholarship. It is crucial for researchers to engage people outside the university and share the value of our work.

This engagement will inform the next generation of research. Listening to people who are potential consumers of psychology is a valuable source to address under-studied research questions. For me, thinking about the practical applications of cognition research has led to new and interesting basic research questions, which can only improve the field and its scholarship.

Art Markman is the W. W. Heath Centennial Fellowship and Annabel Irion Worsham Centennial Professor in Liberal Arts. He holds a joint appointment with the McCombs School of Business and has advised companies such as Procter & Gamble. For the past three years, he has served as a scientific adviser to the Dr. Phil television show.
Literary Excellence:
Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, an internationally renowned expert on W.B. Yeats and modern Irish literature, is chair of the Department of English.

English Takes the Stage as Presidential Priority

President William Powers Jr. identified the Department of English as a strategic priority in his 2007 State of the University Address.

“No comprehensive university can be great without stellar programs in the humanities and social sciences, and we need to nurture them,” he said.

English joins the History department as part of Powers’ vision to strengthen areas of excellence at the university by creating new funding initiatives to help the programs provide more support for their faculty and students.

The Department of English has 76 faculty members who welcome 1,255 undergraduates and 163 graduate students into their classrooms, where the next generation of writers and leaders benefit from the innovative teaching methods of the program’s nationally recognized researchers and authors.

This year, U.S. News and World Report ranked the English graduate program 19th in the nation. The department also offers a doctoral program with 11 concentrations and a master’s program in creative writing.

K E I T H M A I T L A N D H A S A B L I N D A M B I T I O N.

The filmmaker and liberal arts alumnus (B.A. Creative Writing, ’98) wants you to keep an eye out (or an ear) for his forthcoming film, “Keep Your Ear on the Ball.” The ensemble documentary offers an intimate look at the lives of four blind teens and will premiere on PBS in 2009.

A veteran of the Directors Guild of America’s prestigious training program and seven seasons of NBC’s “Law & Order,” Maitland left New York City for Austin after meeting several students at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI).

“I’ve always been interested in questions of human perception,” Maitland says. “What would it be like to lose one of your major senses? How do you take the clues around you and put them together to understand the world? I wanted to explore these questions through the prism of teenagers who have lost or are losing their sight.”

In order to capture the TSBVI students’ stories, Maitland and his producer, Patrick Floyd, immersed themselves in the lives of the teens, shooting more than 200 hours of footage in 2005 and 2006. The school offered the filmmaker unprecedented access to its campus, classes and extracurricular activities.

The film’s title references goalball, a team sport designed for the visually impaired. A goalball weighs 3.5 pounds and contains jingling bells. Teams position themselves at opposite ends of an indoor court and try to roll the ball across their opponents’ goal line to score points. Competitors track the ball’s movements by listening to the bells.

Jason Archer and Paul Beck, the team who led the ground-breaking rotoscopic animation techniques for the films “Waking Life” and “A Scanner Darkly,” are attached to the project. Maitland plans to use animation sequences to represent the loss of sight.

“Animation provides the visual cues to explain what is happening to these kids as they are losing their sight—what their perception used to be like, versus what it is today. And, how their brain works to distill their experience with all their other senses,” Maitland says.

A Storyteller Gets His Start

Maitland’s been delving into questions of identity and perception since he was 12 years old, when his dad put a video camera in his hands, but it was in the College of Liberal Arts that he began to hone his skills as a storyteller.

He started out as a double major in both radio-television-film (RTF) and creative writing. However, a summer internship convinced him that he could learn technical expertise and on-set training via internships. So Maitland dropped RTF and enrolled in a series of short story courses.

“What was really important for me during college was to read as much as possible and learn how to write dialogue,” Maitland says. “Through my creative writing major, I learned how to inhabit characters and see the world through someone else’s perspective. That has carried over to how I
Summer breaks would inevitably find Maitland on a film set somewhere. After a stint with Jim Henson’s “The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss,” a puppet television series on Nickelodeon, Maitland was ready for more serious fare. Next on his agenda was an internship with Richard Linklater’s Detour Film Productions.

Early ventures for the fledgling company included the short documentary “40 Dogs a Day,” which follows an ambitious San Francisco dog walker, and a music video for indie rock band Interpol. Then, in 2004, Maitland learned about an unusual event called “tractorcade” that would lead him on a trek across America’s heartland.

**Tapping the Tao of Willie**

In 1979, 6,000 American farmers from 43 states drove their tractors to the nation’s capital at a mere 14 miles per hour. Their goal: to lobby the U.S. government to reform unfair pricing subsidies that endangered American family farms. The protest event became known as the great tractorcade of ’79.

When Maitland heard about the massive protest by farmers, he knew the story needed to be told. At the top of his interview wish list for the documentary, “Tractorcade: The Spirit of ’79,” was Willie Nelson.

Nelson credits the great tractorcade as one of the inspirations for Farm Aid, a 1985 benefit concert the country music legend organized to help family farmers. Maitland was confident he would be a great ally for the project.

“Willie is amazing, he’s like the Texas Dalai Lama,” Maitland says. “We sat down for a 30-minute interview about the tractorcade that turned into hours of shooting the breeze about Farm Aid, the plight of American farmers and bio-diesel fuels.”

Maitland has interviewed dozens of farmers across the country for the documentary and hopes to complete “Tractorcade: The Spirit of ’79” in time for the 30th anniversary of the protest.

“It’s a tremendous responsibility to tell the story of these farmers who were mavericks,” Maitland says. “They were bucking their community. They’re connected to their land and they don’t take vacations, let alone protest in the dead of winter in Washington, D.C. But they felt so strongly about what they were doing that they were willing to put it all on the line.”

For a maverick filmmaker like Maitland, putting it all on the line is all in a day’s work. “What keeps me going is that you never stop learning in the filmmaking environment,” Maitland says. “You’re always in a new place, interacting with new people. There are few jobs like it, where everyday you get to create something out of nothing, or tell a story that’s never been told before.”

“In filmmaking, you’re always in a new place, interacting with new people. There are few jobs like it, where everyday you get to create something out of nothing, or tell a story that’s never been told before.”

— Keith Maitland
The Bard and the Human Condition

Shakespeare soothes the soul and sharpens the mind

BY RUTH PENNEBAKER

FOR DECADES, DAVID B. COHEN PORED OVER the plays and sonnets of William Shakespeare. He repeatedly read and enjoyed live and recorded performances of the great writer’s works.

The professor of psychology at The University of Texas at Austin recognized themes and insights in Shakespeare’s writing he believed many critics had overlooked. Beyond the brilliance of Shakespeare’s characters, language, and presentation of the human dilemma, Cohen found an astute observer of the human condition in Shakespeare’s 37 plays.

After he retired from the university, Cohen devoted himself to writing “Plays of Genius,” a book which illuminated Shakespeare’s greatest social, moral and existential insights into human nature. Cohen showed that more than 400 years after Shakespeare wrote his plays, psychological research confirmed the bard’s profound examinations into love and sex, good and evil, fate and free will, illusion and reality.

Though centuries and empires have come and gone since Shakespeare’s death, passions such as Cohen’s still flourish. If anything, Shakespeare’s reach and popularity have greatly expanded during the 21st century, both at the university and beyond, says Alan Friedman, director of Shakespeare Studies and professor in the Department of English.

“Shakespeare has truly entered the culture in an unprecedented way during the past 30 or 40 years,” Friedman says, pointing to Shakespearean festivals across the country, popular films and adaptations, and videos of staged performances. “It’s infectious. Instead of being boring and monumental, it’s great fun, exciting and smart.”

As coordinator of the university’s participation in the Actors from the London Stage (AFTLS) program, currently housed at the University of Notre Dame, Friedman oversees the annual exchange that brings a troupe of five classically trained actors to the campus.

The actors teach classes and workshops, present one-person shows and perform a full-length Shakespeare play using subtle gestures, body movements and voice modulation rather than elaborate costumes or sets.

Since coming to the university in 1999, AFTLS has hosted sold-out performances that Friedman estimates have entertained as many as 13,000 audience members. In 2006, the AFTLS production of “Hamlet” won the Austin Circle of Critics Award for best touring performance in the city.

James Loehlin, the Shakespeare at Winedale Regents Professor, attributes the bard’s growing popularity to his focus on such a wide range of human experience.

“Whatever your age and circumstances, there’s something in the plays that’s accessible,” Loehlin, a Plan II alumnus, says. “When I was a moody adolescent, I responded to Hamlet’s adolescent moodiness. At other periods of my life, I focused on the romanticism or political complexity of his plays or their rhetorical mastery.

“Shakespeare’s canon of work covers a lifetime of experience, from the naive optimism of youth to bitterness and pessimism, then, finally, a sense of resignation and acceptance. His works’ openness and richness and depth keep us coming back.”

– James Loehlin
drawn students to the Winedale Theatre Barn, located in the rolling countryside close to the small town of Round Top. Winedale attracts students from different disciplines who spend their summer learning, rehearsing and performing three plays.

“T’im the fortunate guy who gets to teach Shakespeare to students who are very eager to learn,” Loehlin says. He’s also the fortunate guy who helps introduce even younger audiences to Shakespeare’s plays.

“I used to drag my kids, kicking and screaming, to Winedale,” says Mark Metts, a Plan II and law school alumnus, Houston lawyer and Winedale supporter. “But then, they really got into it. To have words written 400 years ago performed in that environment is really magical.”

Elizabeth Lay, who spent two summers at Winedale as a student, then one as an assistant, says, “I thought I’d found heaven on earth.

“You take the plays and make them your own. After a while, you start to live and breathe the images you’re speaking, and it remains in your blood after you leave.”

Shakespeare has traveled well—from century to century and continent to continent—due to the breadth of his soul, Kathleen Higgins, professor of philosophy, says. “Shakespeare is an astute observer of the human psyche,” she explains. “He appreciates characters from multiple points of view and lets us see why that person sees himself as reasonable. But Shakespeare also provides us with the ability to see a character at distance. He gives us what we need to appreciate anyone’s character in reality, as well as in plays.”

One of Shakespeare’s major insights about life is how much it involves acting—showing as well as hiding who we are and what we want, says Douglas Bruster, professor of English and author of six interpretive books about Shakespeare’s works.

“Shakespeare tells us that we, all of us, are always actors and audience members—and all at the same time,” Buster explains.

If Shakespeare continues to intrigue audiences, scholars, students, actors and critics, both in their youth and the prime of their lives, he also provides enduring comfort and understanding to enthusiasts in their most difficult years.

Cohen pursued his investigation of Shakespeare’s psychological insights throughout his retirement and the final years of his life. Even after his diagnosis with multiple myeloma, Cohen and another retired psychology professor, Joe Horn, traveled to London’s Globe Theatre to see “Measure for Measure.”

“David and I had found that we had a common interest in Shakespeare,” Horn says. “But David’s interest flowered into a passion, and his illness supported even greater study of the bard because his work deals with the timeless issues of life, death and the meaning of life.”

One Saturday morning, Cohen’s wife Leslie remembers her husband rallied briefly while he was in the intensive care unit of the hospital. Cohen pumped his fist into the air and said, “Yes! I’ve finished my book on Shakespeare!” Leslie recalls.

The next day, he passed away. “I really feel that he finished the book on his deathbed,” she says.

In Shakespeare’s staggering range and richness of material, Cohen had found a world that illuminated the great social, moral and existential themes of life itself, and inspired him to the end.

Why Shakespeare? Cohen quotes the poet John Dryden in his prologue: “Shakespeare was the man, who, of all moderns and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul.” And, Shakespeare’s soulful writings continue to take center stage today because as Friedman notes, they capture the dilemma of being alive.
IN A POPULAR EPISODE OF “THE SIMPSONS,” Homer secures an illegal, free cable television hookup. Lisa is appalled by her father’s crime and faces an ethical crisis. She announces her moral objection to stealing and refuses to watch the stolen cable TV programming.

Homer later complains to Marge: “There’s something wrong with that kid. She’s so … moral. Why can’t she be more like … well, not like Bart … but there’s got to be a happy medium.”

It’s a funny moment in the Emmy award-winning episode, “Homer vs. Lisa and the 8th Commandment,” that points to a major philosophical conundrum, says Daniel Bonevac, professor of philosophy at The University of Texas at Austin. According to Bonevac, Homer raises an intriguing Aristotelian dilemma by asking the question: Can one be too moral?

“For Aristotle, virtue is essentially the mean between two extremes,” Bonevac says. “Homer’s question offers a great way to explain this abstract ideal in a way that really resonates with students.”

Bonevac specializes in making philosophy relevant. For more than 15 years, he has used “The Simpsons” and other examples from film and television to teach esoteric philosophical concepts in the class, “Contemporary Moral Problems.” Bonevac’s willingness to engage popular culture may explain why the class is one of the most sought-after philosophy courses at the university.

“In teaching philosophy, you need common stories to illuminate theoretical ideas,” Bonevac explains. “In the past, Bible stories, Greek myths and Shakespeare performed this cultural role. What common stories can we rely on today? The best example I can think of is ‘The Simpsons.’”

Teaching the D’oh! of Homer

One of Bonevac’s favorite episodes is, “Homer the Vigilante,” which he says illustrates John Locke’s approach to the state of nature. In the episode, Homer forms a vigilante posse to combat the Springfield cat burglar.

“Homer’s actions highlight Locke’s argument that, without governmental authority, people would band together in private associations to protect themselves,” Bonevac says. “But they also reveal why that doesn’t solve the problem. Homer’s gang quickly spirals out of control, prompting Lisa to wonder, ‘Who will police the police?’”

To engage students in the philosophical debate on the nature of the soul, Bonevac screens the episode, “Bart Sells His Soul,” which raises penetrating questions about the soul’s existence and value. Philosophers and theologians have pondered the elusive concept throughout history.

“In many ways, philosophy is the most abstract of all disciplines,” Bonevac admits. “It addresses very general questions such as: What is real? How do we know? What should we do? But philosophy also is the most practical of all disciplines because it aims at wisdom. Living wisely, displaying good judgment, and understanding yourself and your surroundings are the keys to living well.”

Another pop culture example that appeals to students is “Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” a television show Bonevac’s teenage daughters introduced him to during the late 1990s. After viewing several episodes, the scholar found that each of the characters tended to represent a different philosophical ideal, making it an excellent tool for illustrating how ideals translate into behaviors.

“Buffy represents the Kantian viewpoint, that all life is precious,” Bonevac explains, “and she’s in constant conflict with her watcher Giles, who represents the Utilitarian viewpoint. For example, Buffy isn’t willing to kill one innocent person, even to save the entire world. Giles is, and does.

“Meanwhile, Willow is an Aristotelian, worrying about how it’s possible to be virtuous in a world full of evil. And Xander represents common sense, which, at some crucial moments, saves the day. The tension between these perspectives pervades the whole series, so there are many examples to draw upon.”

Tradition of Engagement

The university’s Department of Philosophy has a long history of engaging popular culture and making philosophy relevant to today’s issues, Bonevac says. He was chairman of
they ponder. Frequently, they argue. Learning to read philosophy requires a new set of skills.”


The book introduces students to theoretical approaches from heavyweight philosophers such as Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Locke and John Stuart Mill, and places them in conversation with a wide range of contemporary moral problems from abortion, animal rights, capital punishment, drug legalization, the environment and euthanasia, to free speech, gay marriage, pornography, privacy, racial equality, sexual behavior and war.

“Looking at these hot-button issues provides students with the opportunity to not only apply philosophical theories to real world examples, but also to test and evaluate them,” Bonevac says.

The scholar has taught “Contemporary Moral Problems” for nearly 30 years and more than 10,000 students have passed through the doors of his classroom. However, he warns that the course doesn’t offer any easy answers.

“These philosophical approaches don’t give you the answers to life’s difficult questions,” Bonevac concludes. “They tell you what questions you should be asking. My goal by the end of the class is for students to learn how to ask the right questions, so that when they come into contact with any new issue, they have the basic tools to approach the issue from a philosophical point of view, rather than just an emotional or partisan perspective.”

Modern philosophical teaching tools.

Although philosophy can be abstract, it also “is the most practical of all disciplines because it aims at wisdom. Living wisely, displaying good judgment, and understanding yourself and your surroundings are the keys to living well.”

– Daniel Bonevac

Pop Culture in the Classroom

Faculty in the philosophy department are not the only scholars embracing pop culture in the classroom. Professors throughout the College of Liberal Arts draw upon film, music and television to teach everything from religion to the Russian language.

Karl Galinsky, the Floyd A. Cailloux Centennial Professor of Classics, teaches the popular course “Ancient Greece and Rome: Film and Reality,” which combines feature film screenings with traditional lectures. Students screen films such as “Ben Hur,” “Cleopatra,” “Gladiator,” “Troy” and “300,” as a lens for learning about classical history and understanding America’s fascination with re-creating ancient Rome.

“Academics love to point out the mistakes in these popular films, but the films are a wonderful tool to spark students’ interest in ancient civilization,” Galinsky says. “Instead of focusing on historical accuracy, we should consider these films an opportunity to discuss important questions about authenticity, history, truth and culture.”

Thomas Garza, chair of the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, uses a novel approach to teaching the Russian language. He includes music videos from MTV Russia at his Web Site, “Rockin’ Russia,” to help students strengthen their language skills.

The innovative site allows students to use several caption options—Russian subtitles, English literal translation and English colloquial translation—for a more nuanced interpretation of song lyrics.

“Russian pop music is really catchy so this helps students learn the language,” Garza says. “The videos also reflect the values of contemporary Russian youth culture, so they also provide cultural insights.”

Howard Miller, distinguished teaching associate professor of history and religious studies, compiled an expansive collection of pop culture images of Jesus for his multimedia course, “Jesus in American Culture,” available online in full-length video recordings at www.llats.utexas.edu/jc.

Students analyze pop-culture artifacts from “What Would Jesus Do?” bracelets and “Jesus is My Homeboy” t-shirts, to action figures, shopping bags and diet books.

They also examine cinematic representations of the life of Christ, from Cecil B. DeMille’s “King of Kings” (1927) and the rock-opera “Jesus Christ Superstar” (1973), to Martin Scorsese’s controversial “The Last Temptation of Christ” (1988) and Mel Gibson’s “Passion of the Christ” (2004).

“In our culture of consumption, all things eventually become commodities—even Jesus,” Miller, a Firor Centennial Teaching Fellow, says. “Criticuing popular representations of Christ gives students a foundation to consider broader theoretical questions about the commercialization of religion during the 20th and 21st centuries.”
A Philosophical Prescription

Robert Solomon was born in Detroit, but grew up in Philadelphia. His father, a lawyer, and mother, an artist, encouraged Solomon’s passion for music, which included studying violin and playing saxophone in a big band.

After graduating from high school, Solomon embarked on a path to become a doctor. In only three years he earned a microbiology degree from the University of Pennsylvania and enrolled in medical school at the University of Michigan. But, when he audited a philosophy course taught by Frithjof Bergmann, Solomon began to explore a new career path.

As Bergmann lectured about Nietzsche’s idea of eternal recurrence, the philosophical concept that time repeats itself, Solomon evaluated his own life and decided to leave medical school to enroll in the university’s graduate program in philosophy.

After completing his dissertation on unconscious motivation and earning his doctoral degree in 1967, Solomon began a worldwide teaching tour beginning with the University of Auckland and continuing to Princeton, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Pennsylvania, UCLA, the University of Melbourne and Queens College.

In 1972, Solomon joined the faculty at The University of Texas at Austin and author of “A Better Way to Think About Business,” helped people make sense of the psychology behind the seemingly self-destructive behavior of the former corporate giants.

“The message of Existentialism, unlike that of many more obscure and academic philosophical movements, is about as simple as can be.

It is that every one of us, as an individual, is responsible—responsible for what we do, responsible for who we are, responsible for the way we face and deal with the world, responsible, ultimately, for the way the world is.

It is, in a very short phrase, the philosophy of ‘No excuses! We cannot shift that burden onto God, or nature, or the ways of the world.’

— Robert Solomon

1942-2007

Robert Solomon became an internationally respected scholar who expanded the field of philosophy’s reach beyond the university. Most notably, he discussed the relevance of existentialism in a postmodern world in Richard Linklater’s 2001 film, “Waking Life.”

Song of Solomon:
A life full of joy—and philosophy

By Christian Clarke CáSárez

“The message of Existentialism, unlike that of many more obscure and academic philosophical movements, is about as simple as can be.

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1942-2007

AFTER ENRON, ARTHUR ANDERSEN AND TYCO collapsed a few years ago, U.S. federal investigators tried to identify who was responsible for the corporate mismanagement and misdeeds that shook the economy and the American public’s trust in business leaders.

As prosecutors charged C.E.O.s and top executives with tampering with evidence to cover their tracks, Robert C. Solomon, philosophy professor at The University of Texas at Austin and author of “A Better Way to Think About Business,” helped people make sense of the psychology behind the seemingly self-destructive behavior of the former corporate giants.

“People assiduously avoid the risks they readily envision and remain all but oblivious to those they don’t. It’s easy for a C.E.O. to envision losing his job or losing face among his peers but all but unthinkable that he would get indicted, much less go to jail,” Solomon explained to the New York Times in 2002.

The business ethics consultant compared the errant executive with an alcoholic who “chooses to drive home to avoid having to admit to his friends that he’s too drunk, but risks arrest—not to mention his life—in doing so.”

Solomon, the Quincy Lee Centennial Professor of Business and Philosophy and a Distinguished Teaching Professor, said, “The question is, Why is the C.E.O. acting like a drunk?”

The question exemplifies Solomon’s talent to get to the heart of an issue, translating confusing human behavior and the nature of emotions into an easy-to-understand philosophical analysis.

John Schwartz wrote the New York Times article, “Choosing Whether to Cover-Up or Come Clean.” The Plan II alumnus who specialized in history says he turned to the philosopher Solomon because, “His expertise was deep, and he had a knack for explaining complex issues with elegance and wit.”

In January 2007, Solomon, 64, died after suffering from a heart attack. The international scholar left behind rich scholarship in the areas of business and philosophy and a community of friends and colleagues who remember and celebrate his ingenious insights, generosity of spirit—and love for The Three Stooges.

Robert Solomon became an internationally respected scholar who expanded the field of philosophy’s reach beyond the university. Most notably, he discussed the relevance of existentialism in a postmodern world in Richard Linklater’s 2001 film, “Waking Life.”

PRO BENE MERITIS
Robert Solomon often collaborated with his wife and fellow philosopher, Kathleen Higgins, on books and articles.

“I was young and adventuresome, I guess, so I took lots of one-year jobs and two-year jobs just because I wanted to see the world,” Solomon said in a 2005 Austin American-Statesman article. “I came to Texas expecting it was an interesting place and I’d spend a couple semesters here and then go back to New York.”

Instead, he fell in love with the city, the university—and eventually his wife, fellow philosopher, Kathleen Higgins, who often collaborated with Solomon on his books and articles. As a gifted teacher, Solomon decoded complex philosophical concepts for a new generation of thinkers. The popular professor earned high teaching honors, including: the Standard Oil Outstanding Teaching Award, the President’s Associates Outstanding Teaching Award and the Chad Oliver Plan II Teaching Award. In 1997, he was elected into the university’s Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

Throughout his career, the recognized scholar and teacher continued to bring philosophy beyond the hallowed halls of academe.

Most notably, in 2001, he made a cameo appearance in Richard Linklater’s film, “Waking Life,” in which he discussed the relevance of existentialism in a postmodern world.

The Joy of Philosophy

Solomon was a leader in the field of continental (or European) philosophy and post-Kantian thought. He impressed his colleagues not only with his deep understanding of the great ideas, but also with his intimate familiarity with the philosophizers, themselves.

“He talked about Nietzsche, Hegel, and the German romantics as if they were old friends,” Joanne B. Ciulla observed, especially the Aristotelian notion that what we are cannot be separated from what we do.

“A humble man with an enormous work ethic, Bob showed his graduate students that being a world-class philosopher did not entitle you to be pompous, inconsiderate, dogmatic or too good to teach the intro course,” explained Ciulla, who co-authored “Honest Work: A Business Ethics Reader” with Solomon.

In addition to serving as a world-wide consultant on business ethics to such corporations as Chase Manhattan bank, AT&T and Volkswagen, Solomon was a thought-leader in the philosophy of the emotions, a field he launched after publishing “The Passions” in 1976.

For more than three decades, Solomon examined the nature of emotions for his books, which included “Not Passion’s Slave: Emotions and Choice,” “In Defense of Sentimentality” and “True to Our Feelings.”

In 2000, he was elected president of the International Society for Research on the Emotions (ISRE). He produced “The Passions: Philosophy and the Intelligence of Emotions” for The Teaching Company’s Superstar Teachers Series.

Solomon’s insights inspired fellow philosophers, even those with whom he disagreed. “On the emotions we had opposing views, but I learned more from his arguments than from any others,” philosopher Jesse Prinz wrote in an ISRE newsletter tribute to Solomon.

“For those of us who want to reduce emotions to something simple and scientifically tractable, we must not forget that the whole interest in this category stems from the fact that emotions permeate our lives,” he explained. “As a person and as a scholar, Bob never lost sight of why emotions matter.”

Solomon also never lost his sense of humor.

Peter Kivy, Board of Governors Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers University, recalls the deep and abiding affection for The Three Stooges he shared with Solomon.

“I shared his affection for those low, disreputable characters, although Bob’s affection for, and understanding of, them I am certain were more profound than mine,” Kivy wrote for the American Society of Aesthetics’ memorial.

“Could the Stooges perhaps have been a metaphor for Bob’s work?” he asked. “All us Stooge lovers will know Moe’s classic routine: the tweak of the nose, the finger in the eye, the bop on the noggin. Well, Bob’s work tweaked our received opinions; it bopped our thoughts out of their familiar channels; it opened our philosophical eyes. He waked us from our dogmatic slumbers.”

The proper recognition of tragedy and the tragic sense of life is not shaking one’s fist at the gods or the universe “in scorn and defiance” but rather, as Kierkegaard writes in a religious context, “going down on one’s knees” and giving thanks.

Whether or not there is a God or there are gods to be thanked, however, seems not the issue to me. It is the importance and the significance of being thankful, to whomever or whatever, for life itself.
David Oshinsky’s America
Pulitzer prize-winning author brings national perspective to the classroom

BY PAM LOSEFSKY

As a child, David Oshinsky explored the wonders of America in an un-airconditioned, stick-shift Chevy, packed to the roof with traveling gear for his family of four. The son of two schoolteachers remembers spending every summer the same way: criss-crossing states as they visited national parks, historic landmarks, presidential libraries and state fairs.

You name the place, he’s been there: Mount Rushmore, the Alamo, Hoover Dam, Washington, D.C., the Grand Canyon, Colonial Williamsburg, the Rocky Mountains.

“My parents opened up America to us during those impressionable times,” Oshinsky says. He credits the annual odysseys with laying the foundation for a life-long love of the nation.

Today, Oshinsky takes his students and readers on an equally eye-opening, but much less cramped journey, sharing his fascination with all things American in the climate-controlled classrooms of Garrison Hall and through page-turning historical accounts of cultural phenomena such as the polio epidemic, Jim Crow justice, the McCarthy era and capital punishment.

“What interests me are pivotal people and events that really shed light on our culture,” Oshinsky says. He believes that some of the most memorable events in his lifetime, such as the assassination of President Kennedy or the lunar landing may not be the most significant.

“One was so tragic, the other so uplifting,” he says. “But I don’t feel that either event had historical legs. Certain technological breakthroughs and personalities—the invention of the personal computer, Jonas Salk, Bill Gates, or even Michael Jordan—have had a far greater, long-lasting impact on the direction of our culture.”

The University of Texas at Austin recruited the Pulitzer Prize-winning author from Rutgers University in 2003 to bring this sense of the big American picture to students. He believes it is essential that every student take at least one American history class and a global history class.

“It’s such a mistake to let students who do well on the Advanced Placement exam to opt out of college-level history classes,” he says. “We desperately need to emphasize the importance of history because it does repeat itself, and there are great lessons to be learned by studying it.”

As an engaging storyteller, Oshinsky encourages students to think critically, separating important ideas from peripheral ones and synthesizing large quantities of information before they realize they are learning something. And he does it without the technology that is ubiquitous in college classrooms — he does not use PowerPoint presentations, slides or movies. The students do not seem to mind: since coming to the university, Oshinsky has earned the Raymond Dickson Centennial Teaching Award and has been inducted into the Academy of Distinguished Teachers.

Not just an ivory tower scholar, Oshinsky played a role in a historical subplot in the 1990s, when the New York Times asked him to determine whether new evidence had materialized in the murders of Civil Rights-era workers.

Reliving one of those long summer road trips with his parents, Oshinsky invited his college-age son, Matthew, for a first-hand experience in investigative journalism. Father and son pored over newly opened files of the State Sovereignty Commission and tracked down Edgar Ray Killen, a local Ku Klux Klan leader involved in the murders who had been set free when the jury deadlocked during deliberation.

Through a series of events, Oshinsky and Matthew found themselves at Killen’s remote farm for supper, served with an unnerving helping of outlandish claims and racial epithets that left them wondering how Killen had managed to escape justice.

In Oshinsky’s 1998 New York Times article about the new evidence in the case, the historian suggested that the time had arrived for Killen and other suspects to be prosecuted again for their crimes. The article helped reawaken interest in the case, and seven years later, Killen was retried and imprisoned. It’s not quite the stuff of an Indiana Jones movie, but probably as close to being a scholarly action hero as Oshinsky cares to come.

For now, he travels mostly between Austin and New York, where he will serve as a distinguished scholar in residence at New York University during the fall terms for the next five years. He will return to teach at The University of Texas at Austin every spring and to cheer on his beloved Longhorns on fall weekends.

He’s also working on his next book, a medical history of New York City. With this latest book, as with the others, Oshinsky’s goal is to put historical events into perspective, to figure out what has staying power in the American psyche.

“When you start really examining these cultural watersheds, you begin to understand the world isn’t going to end with the next crisis,” he says. “New problems arise and are solved. The genius of our society and our nation, especially, is that we’re moving forward.”

The Oshinsky family spent summers on the road, exploring the United States’ rich heritage, landmarks and institutions, from Mount Rushmore to the FBI.

“We desperately need to emphasize the importance of history because it does repeat itself, and there are great lessons to be learned by studying it.”

— David Oshinsky

David Oshinsky is internationally recognized for page-turning historical accounts of the polio epidemic, Jim Crow justice, the McCarthy era and capital punishment. In January, PBS will host a New York premiere of “The Polio Crusade,” a documentary based in part on his Pulitzer Prize-winning research.
Dr. Denton Cooley Takes Innovation to Heart

From assisting in the first infant congenital heart defect operation to founding one of the nation’s top-ranked heart hospitals, Dr. Denton Cooley has been at the forefront of the relentless march of medical technology throughout the 20th and into the 21st century.

By Pam Losefsky

Today, as Cooley, a 1941 zoology graduate from the University of Texas at Austin, walks through the state-of-the-art operating suites at the Texas Heart Institute in Houston, he can recall a time when surgeons propped open operating room windows to allow in the “sterile” breezes.

He has seen it all.

As a doctor and an innovator, Cooley has long modeled a singular dedication to the welfare of his patients: when available medical science failed them, he invented new techniques and instruments.

In this dedication, he followed the footsteps of his famous mentor, Dr. Alfred Blalock, namesake of the operating room procedure to correct congenital heart defects in infants. As a young intern at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Cooley assisted Blalock in that first surgery in 1944.

“Dr. Blalock had been investigating hypertension in pulmonary circulation and thought it would be an interesting thing to achieve,” Cooley remembers. In what was considered a high-risk operation, Blalock used his experimental technique to remove oxygen from the baby’s lungs.

“Most thought it was impossible because it involved putting a very sick baby under general anesthesia,” says Cooley. “But the outcome was so spectacular that it was a strong impetus to develop refinements to the practice.”
Cooley found his calling in the operating room that day. He went on to pioneer innovations in surgery, including a heart-lung bypass machine and techniques to correct congenital cardiac anomalies, refine artificial heart valves and improve coronary bypass surgery.

Due to his innovations in the 1960s, the mortality rate for valve transplant patients fell from 70 to eight percent. He was the first surgeon to successfully remove pulmonary embolisms (sudden blockages in lung arteries, usually caused by a blood clot), with a technique that squeezed the lungs flat to remove inaccessible clots during temporary cardiopulmonary bypass.

Featured on the cover of LIFE magazine in 1968 and again in 1981, Cooley is no stranger to the limelight. But like anyone in the vanguard of an emerging field, he also has seen his share of controversy.

Cooley says that, through it all, his guiding principle has been to keep an open mind. Advances occur only because someone takes a leap, reaches beyond what is known to explore the possible.

“Physicians must use their imaginations to develop new techniques, always with the welfare of their patients as their number one priority,” he says.

During his more than 60 years on the job, Cooley has accumulated more honors than perhaps any other physician in America. Among his more than 120 awards are the Grand Hamdan International Award for Medical Science, National Medal of Technology, Medal of Freedom, Theodore Roosevelt Award, and Rene Leriche Prize.

But for Cooley, his greatest achievements are founding the Texas Heart Institute and the Cardiovascular Surgical Foundation, where the octogenarian still guides the next generation of surgeons who continue his pioneering work—developing devices to support and replace the human heart during surgery.

Cooley credits his good health and natural stamina for his long and extremely prolific career. And his agility and speed in the operating room, he believes, stemmed from the determination and focus he developed as a varsity basketball player at the university.

It wasn’t until last year that he finally laid down his scalpel, arbitrarily selecting his 87th birthday as the end of his surgical career.

For someone who conducted surgery nearly every day for six decades, quitting cold turkey was difficult. “I’ve had withdrawal symptoms,” he laughs.

But he’s a long way from retiring altogether. He is a frequent visitor in the operating room, and makes rounds with residents and students to see patients and give diagnostic and treatment advice.

Aside from a greatly improved landscape for heart surgery, Cooley’s legacy includes a family full of medical professionals. He and his wife, Louise, have five daughters, among them an ophthalmologist, a medical illustrator, a public health and nursing professional, and a wife of a cardiovascular surgeon. Two of his grandchildren are in medical school, and he expects others will follow. It is in the arteries, so to speak.

As his grandchildren prepare to follow in his footsteps, Cooley believes the digital age holds much promise for the next wave of medical advances.

“Major challenges today include finding a method of control or cure for malignant disease and further improvements in diagnostics,” he says. “Computers will focus physicians’ persistent curiosity and fuel the innovation it will take to overcome them.”  

For more than 60 years, Dr. Denton Cooley has been a medical innovator—from assisting in the first infant congenital heart defect operation to pioneering surgical innovations such as a heart-lung bypass machine and techniques to correct congenital cardiac anomalies, refine artificial heart valves and improve coronary bypass surgery.
In the Eye of the Beholder:
Depressed people linger longer on negative images

Depression is the second leading cause of disability in the United States, and 16 percent of the population will experience it at some point during their lifetime. The disease costs the country billions of dollars in medical expenses and lost productivity.

Funded by a three-year, $900,000 grant from the National Institutes of Mental Health, assistant professor of psychology Christopher Beevers researches who might be vulnerable to depression. He studies differences in people’s genetic makeup and how they pay attention to their environment.
RESEARCH

New Fossil Reveals Primates Lingered in Texas

Climate provided refuge for diminishing population

More than 40 million years ago, primates preferred Texas to northern climates that were significantly cooling, according to new fossil evidence discovered by Chris Kirk, physical anthropologist.

Kirk and Blythe Williams from Duke University have discovered Diablomomys dalquesti, a new genus and species of primate that dates to 44-43 million years ago when tropical forests and active volcanoes covered west Texas.

The researchers published their discovery in the Journal of Human Evolution article, “New Uintan Primates from Texas and their Implications for North American Patterns of Species Richness during the Eocene.”

During the early part of the Eocene epoch, primates were common in the tropical forests that covered most of North America. Over time, however, climatic cooling caused a dramatic decline in the abundance and diversity of North American primates. By the end of the Eocene, primates and most tropical species had almost disappeared from North America.

Kirk’s discovery of late middle Eocene (Uintan) primates at the Devil’s Graveyard Formation in Southwest Texas reveals new information about how North American primates evolved during this period of faunal (animal) reorganization.

“Africa had not occurred.” Kirk says. “Yet our research shows their spines have evolved to make pregnancy safer and less painful than it might have been if these adaptations had not occurred.”

While primate diversity was falling off precipitously in places like Utah and Wyoming during the late middle Eocene, west Texas provided a humid, tropical refuge for primates and other arboreal (tree-inhabiting) animals.

The anthropologists named the new primate Diablomomys dalquesti, combining “Diablo” to represent the Devil’s Graveyard Formation (sand- and mudstones near Big Bend National Park) with Omomys, a related fossil genus.

The dalquesti species name honors Walter and Rose Dalquest, who donated the land on which the fossil was collected (Midwestern State University’s Dalquest Research Site). Walter was a Texas paleontologist and distinguished biology professor at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls until his death in 2000.

Why Pregnant Women Waddle

The human spine evolved differently in males and females in order to alleviate back pressure from the weight of carrying a baby, according to anthropologist Liza Shapiro whose findings were first documented in Nature.

The researcher believes the adaptation first appeared at least two million years ago, in the early human ancestor Australopithecus. The male-female difference does not appear in chimpanzees, meaning the human evolution of walking upright led to the adaptation.

“Natural selection favored this adaptation because it reduces extra stress on a pregnant female’s spine,” says Shapiro who conducted the research with Katherine K. Whitcome, an alumna who is a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University. “Without the adaptation, pregnancy would have placed a heavier burden on back muscles, causing considerable pain and fatigue and possibly limiting foraging capacity and the ability to escape from predators.”

Harvard anthropologist Daniel Lieberman also contributed to the study, which shows the key differences between males and females appear in the lower back, or lumbar portion of the spine.

Human spines have a unique forward curve in the lumbar region, but the curve extends across more vertebrae in females. That helps offset harmful forces that might occur on the spine when pregnant women lean back or hyperextend their spines to balance the weight of the fetus, Shapiro says. The joints between the vertebrae also are larger in females and angled differently than in males to better support the extra weight.

“Any mother can attest to the awkwardness of standing and walking while balancing pregnancy weight in front of the body,” Shapiro says. “Yet our research shows their spines have evolved to make pregnancy safer and less painful than it might have been if these adaptations had not occurred.”

The preliminary research suggests a variation in the serotonin transporter gene causes individuals to pay greater attention to emotional information, experience more difficulty disengaging their attention from emotional information and think more negatively after experiencing a negative mood.

When presented with a series of photographs ranging from neutral to distressing, people who are depressed spend more time focused on negative images, according to Beevers.
Social Science: Examining Behavior Genetics of Lemurs in Madagascar

In Western Madagascar, Rebecca Lewis, assistant professor of anthropology, established a new field site and research station in Kirindy Mitea National Park.

The ecologically unique park encompasses the transition between deciduous forest, spiny desert and mangroves. At this site, Lewis is examining the social behavior, ecology, hormones and genetics of wild lemurs (Verreaux's sifaka).

She has created an 82-kilometer trail system and placed radio collars on eight lemur groups inhabiting the research area. She is investigating how variation in male chest coloration attracts potential mates and signals social competitiveness. She found that males with dark, greasy chest stains have higher testosterone than other males.

The anthropologist also studies the foods the lemurs eat and has marked every food source used by four lemur groups during the course of a year.

Brain Damage and Recovery

Theresa Jones, psychology professor, examines the neurobiology of learning and memory and neural plasticity after brain damage. Supported by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, she studies how the brain changes to adapt to an injury and how it is affected by alterations in behavior.

Jones is working to understand the neural mechanisms behind these changes after suffering brain damage such a stroke. She also examines how motor rehabilitation, alone and in combination with other therapies, can drive more effective neural and behavioral adaptation to brain damage.

Creative Work Helps People Stay Healthy

Employees who have more control over their daily activities and do challenging work enjoy are likely to be in better health, according to a study by John Mirowsky, professor of sociology, published in a recent issue of the Journal of Health and Social Behavior.

“The most important finding is that creative activity helps people stay healthy,” Mirowsky says. “Creative activity is non-routine, enjoyable and provides opportunity for learning and for solving problems. People who do that kind of work, whether paid or not, feel healthier and have fewer physical problems.”

Although people who work do give up some control over their daily activities, the study found that being employed leads to better health generally, regardless of the amount of creativity required. The researchers were surprised to find that the daily activities of employed persons are more creative than those of non-employed persons of the same sex, age and level of education.

“The health advantage of being somewhat above average in creative work (in the 60th percentile) versus being somewhat below average (in the 40th percentile) is equal to being 6.7 years younger,” Mirowsky says.

Although the authors didn't examine specific jobs that may confer this health advantage, professions considered not to involve a creative environment included those in which people work in assembly lines. They found jobs that are high-status, with managerial authority, or that require complex work with data, generally provide more access to creative work.

And, people with higher levels of education tend to have more creative activities in their lives, paid or not.

The Devil Within: Tracing the History of Demonic Possession

The 1973 supernatural horror film “The Exorcist” introduced Linda Blair’s famous head-spinning performance of demonic possession to audiences worldwide. Since then, Hollywood’s fascination with stories of spiritual oppression has not abated.

Recent films such as “Stigmata” (1999), “Constantine” (2005) and the “The Exorcism of Emily Rose” (2005) explored themes of possession, exorcism and the nature of evil.

In 1999, perhaps prompted by renewed public interest in the supernatural phenomenon, the Vatican issued the first updated ritual for exorcism since 1614. And, in 2005, the Regina Apostolorum, a pontifical university in Italy, offered Catholic priests a new course on exorcism.

The belief that demons can enter the bodies of human beings and control their movements and behavior has been present in Christianity since its foundation, says Brian Levack, the John E. Green Regents Professor of History, who studies the phenomenon of possession. However, current popular representations of demonic influence are actually rooted in many documented cases of possession that swept through Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries, the scholar says.

“During the age of the Reformation, hundreds of people fell into fits and convulsions, vomited foreign objects, exhibited preternatural strength, committed blasphemies and spoke in foreign tongues,” Levack says. “These symptoms are similar to those depicted in popular films.”

Levack’s book-length research project, “The Devil Within: Demonic Possession in Reformation Europe,” will explore the cultural history and representations of demonic possession, from the Reformation to the modern era. The interdisciplinary approach will include work by historians, biblical scholars, theologians, psychologists and medical doctors.

“Thirty years ago, the topics of demonology and witchcraft were on the periphery of historical research,” Levack says. “However, historians now recognize that cases of possession are not isolated phenomena and should not be explained away as a product of disease, mental illness or social tensions. The activities of demoniacs should be studied as performances that reflect the religious culture of early modern Europe.”

Ultimately, the performance of the possessed and rituals of exorcism can shed light on some of the major theological disputes between Catholics and Protestants. It also can inform understanding of early modern society, Levack contends.


Scholar Explores Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy

Concerned about sanitation during a severe bout of plague in Milan, Leonardo da Vinci designed an ideal, clean city. Leonardo was not alone in thinking about personal and public hygiene, writes Douglas Biow, professor of Italian and comparative literature in “The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy” (2006).

“One of the major concerns that defined the Italian Renaissance was a preoccupation with dirt and cleanliness,” the director for European studies explains. “The topic of cleanliness crops up everywhere, from Dante’s “Inferno,” which depicted hell as a cesspool, to the paintings of Vittore Carpaccio, which contain images of laundry hanging out to dry over the canals of Venice.”

Biow traverses the Renaissance approach to hygiene by analyzing key texts and what they reveal about soap and washerwomen, purifying behaviors in households in cities, and latrines and latrine-cleaners. Dante’s hell functioned as a massive, funnel-shaped latrine, Biow posits.

“Renaissance culture will never look—or smell—the same to those who read this book,” wrote Stephen Botterill in Choice Magazine’s review of the book.

Biow’s research has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Guggenheim Foundation. He also is the author of “Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy.”

To learn more about Dante’s “Inferno,” visit Danteworld at danteworlds.laits.utexas.edu, developed by Guy Raffa, associate professor of Italian.
Hippocrates and the Ancient Profession of Medicine

When graduating from medical school, many new doctors swear to the Hippocratic oath, an ancient moral code followed by physicians since antiquity. Scholars are not certain who wrote the oath, but generally attribute it to Hippocrates, a 5th century Greek physician often referred to as the father of medicine.

The oath is one of the most enduring traditions in Western medicine and serves as the foundation of medical ethics today, according to the American Medical Association. In taking the oath, physicians swear to preserve the sacred principles of treating the sick with benevolence, respect patient privacy and teach the secrets of medicine to the next generation.

The question of who first took the oath and when, and its connection to Hippocrates, was one of the issues addressed at the “Colloquium Hippocraticum,” hosted by the Departments of Classics and Philosophy, and organized by Lesley Dean-Jones, associate professor of classics.

The conference brought together international scholars of ancient medicine, science, philosophy, history and literature to discuss ancient medical treatises, Hippocrates and the Hippocratic oath.

The National Science Foundation supported the conference with a $25,000 grant. Additional sponsors included the Seton Group of Hospitals, Society for Ancient Medicine and Texas Medical Association.

Dean-Jones is the author of “Women’s Bodies in Classical Greek Science.” She has written numerous scholarly articles related to ancient medicine and philosophy. She earned a 2008 Loeb Classical Library Foundation Award to pursue research on a medical treatise on reproduction attributed to Aristotle.

Alumnus Investigates Speech “Blunderology”

Where did the Freudian slip come from? How are hesitations and interruptions in speaking useful to cops and interrogators? Why do President George W. Bush’s verbal gaffes, such as “misunderestimate,” resonate with the American people?

These are just a few of the questions liberal arts alumna Michael Erard (M.A. Linguistics, ’96; Ph.D. English, ’00) tackles in “Um…: Slips, Stumbles, and Verbal Blunders, and What They Mean” (Random House, 2007).

According to Erard, everyday speech is filled with verbal blunders—approximately one in every ten words. That gives him a lot of ground to cover in “Um,” which is packed with interviews from interpreters, police officers, psychologists, transcribers at the Federal News Service, and members of Toastmasters, a public speaking club.

Erard investigates everything from a brief history of the word “um” to the birth of bloops, distilling complex linguistic theories along the way.

“Um…” could be such a page-turner,” says Geoffrey Nunberg, a commentator for National Public Radio. “But Michael Erard’s investigations of ‘applied blunderology’ come to something more than the familiar catalogues of verbal slips and gaffes from the high and the low. It’s also a fascinating meditation on why blunders happen, and what they tell us about language and ourselves.”

Erard’s essays on language and culture have appeared in The New York Times, Atlantic Monthly and Rolling Stone. He earned a 2008 Ralph A. Johnston Writing Fellowship from the university and Texas Institute of Letters. He will begin a residency at Paisano Ranch during the fall.

Learn more online at Erard’s blog www.umthebook.com.

Gospel Truth? Scholar Says Gospel of Judas Must Be Read within Historical Context of Christianity

When National Geographic revealed the discovery of the Gospel of Judas in 2006, the news swept across the globe. Judas Iscariot, the scorned disciple who betrayed Jesus to Roman soldiers with a kiss, was suddenly redeemed. The gospel presented Judas as a hero, the disciple who knew Jesus best and understood his identity as the son of God.

To many this finding was confusing and even disturbing. Judas was the most hated man in the New Testament. Does this discovered text change the way we read the four gospels of the Bible?

Not exactly, says Michael White, the Ronald Nelson Smith Chair in Classics and Christian Origins and director of the Institute for the Study of Antiquity and Christian Origins. “Step back, take a deep breath and don’t worry,” White says. “Because it’s more complicated than that. We have to put these things in a historical framework to understand why they were even written and for whom they were written.”

As a scholar with a background in religious studies, classics and archaeology, White understands that contexts of the time—historical, social and cultural—are critical to understanding all the gospels, newly discovered or not.

His book, “From Jesus to Christianity: How Four Generations of Visionaries and Storytellers Created the New Testament and Christian Faith” (2004), leads readers through the first 200 years of early Christianity, when followers sought to create a unified religion and tell the story of Jesus’ life.

Learn more about White’s research at www.utexas.edu/research/isac/lmw.
Women and the Autobiographical Impulse

In 1855, American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a letter to his publisher lashing out at the “famed mob of scribbling women” whose works gained wide readership in antebellum America.

“Hawthorne’s comments represent the uphill battle women writers faced in earning legitimacy for their work,” says Carol MacKay, professor of English and affiliate of the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies. “Historically, this task has been a cultural challenge—if not a psychological impossibility—for women writers worldwide.”

Though the male autobiographical impulse began to manifest itself in Western culture in the Enlightenment during the 18th-century in Europe, women writers usually confined themselves to the less egoistic modes of diary and letter writing, MacKay says.

The professor teaches “Emerging Selves: The Autobiographical Impulse in Women’s Writing,” a course that explores the array of narrative strategies women writers have used to construct and project their autobiographical self through literature.

Students in the class begin with early works such as “Revelations of Divine Love” (1737) by Julian of Norwich, move through the early 20th century with “A Room of One’s Own” by Virginia Woolf, and conclude with contemporary works such as “Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood” (1984) by bell hooks and “Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child” (1999) by Elva Trevino Hart.

MacKay will teach “Emerging Selves” as a Freshman Signature Course which is the centerpiece of curriculum reform envisioned by the Commission of 125 and led by Paul Woodruff, professor of philosophy and dean of the School of Undergraduate Studies.

Creative Writing Professor Earns NEA Fellowship

Laura Furman, creative writing professor in the Department of English, earned a 2008 Literature Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. The $25,000 fellowship was awarded to only 42 writers nationwide from a pool of more than 800 applicants.

Furman earned the award in support of her writing project, “Here It Was, November,” a collection of short stories. To read a selection of Furman’s work, visit www.arts.gov/features/writers/2008/.

Furman’s work has appeared in The New Yorker, American Scholar, Ploughshares and The Yale Review.

Graduate Student Excavates Ancient Shipwrecks in the Black Sea

In a series of expeditions to the Black Sea in the early 2000s, Robert Ballard of the University of Rhode Island—famous for locating the wreck of the Titanic—discovered a miraculously well-preserved Byzantine shipwreck dating from the 6th century. Dan Davis, a nautical archaeologist and Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Classics, is a member of Ballard’s research team, which is using remotely operated vehicles to excavate the ancient shipwreck. National Geographic featured the groundbreaking research project in the television special “Ghost Ships of the Black Sea” last June. Learn more about Davis’ work with Ballard at www.utexas.edu/opa/features/2008/10/27/shipwrecks/.

EVENT SPOTLIGHTS

Crisis in Darfur: Nigerian Nobelist Wole Soyinka Urges International Community to Remember the ‘Tree of Forgetfulness’

When Tola Mosadomi, assistant professor of Middle Eastern Studies and affiliate of the Warfield Center for African and African American Studies, was an undergraduate student at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, she sometimes saw poet Wole Soyinka walking across campus.

Instead of speaking to the professor, the Yoruba studies specialist would turn and walk in the opposite direction. “I avoided him because I had no idea what to say to the man many consider the Shakespeare of Africa,” Mosadomi admits.

More than 30 years later, Mosadomi had the chance to finally meet Soyinka when she invited the 1986 Nobel Laureate in Literature, playwright and political activist to speak at the university last spring.

Soyinka is the author of more than 40 plays, books and essays that highlight a variety of African cultural and political issues, including “Death and the King’s Horseman” (1975), “A Play of Giants” (1984) and “The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis” (1996). He was imprisoned several times for his criticism of the Nigerian government.

Soyinka’s keynote address, “Race, Rights and the Agony of Darfur,” touched upon the violence in western Sudan, and also narrated the history of slavery.

Woven throughout the poet’s address was the haunting image of the “tree of forgetfulness.” During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, traders in West Africa would force captured Africans to walk circles around a magical tree in an attempt to clear their minds of their previous lives.

The ritual was never effective, Soyinka says, warning that the “tree of forgetfulness” thrives when the international community ignores acts of genocide, such as the violence in Sudan.

The United Nations estimates at least 200,000 people have been killed and more than two million have been displaced in the Darfur region since 2003.

Feminist Scholar Naomi Wolf Challenges Unrealistic Standards of Beauty

Naomi Wolf, leading feminist scholar and bestselling author, was the keynote speaker at the “Defining Beauty” symposium hosted by the university’s Center for Women’s and Gender Studies, the Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership and Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty, which features “real” women instead of professional models in national advertisements.

The feminist icon believes the fashion industry’s practice of airbrushing photographs in women’s magazines has had a negative influence on women’s conceptions of modern beauty. Wolf’s book, “The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women” (1991), challenged the marketing of unrealistic standards of beauty by the cosmetics industry.

“How many of us look like that?” Wolf asks. “It’s not just a fake ideal of beauty, it’s a fake ideal of what a woman is. It is so hard for women to avoid being bombarded by these images, appreciate their own individual beauty and step outside the sense that they need to conform to unrealistic ideals.”

Wolf and event panelists—Gretchen Ritter, professor of government, and Michelle Valles, news anchor for KXAN-TV—encouraged women to focus on inner beauty, confidence and intelligence. The event drew more than 400 participants from across the university.
Arnold Buss: Leading the Field and Inspiring Psychology’s Thought-leaders

For more than six decades, Arnold Buss, recently retired psychology professor, has been a nationally recognized researcher in the field of social behavior and personality.

Throughout his career at The University of Texas at Austin, Buss examined shame and guilt; an epigenetic theory of personality (emphasizing differentiation); and an evolutionary-developmental approach to social emotions. He has published more than 80 articles and book chapters and more than a dozen books. In 2001, he published, “Psychological Dimensions of the Self.”

Buss also inspired some of today’s leaders in the field. The Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) is an institution that tracks bibliographic information for the sciences. Seven of Buss’ former students are listed on ISI’s 300 most cited researchers within the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Arguably, among the most notable of his former students shares his last name. His son, David, is one of the leading experts in the field of evolutionary psychology, human sexuality and relationships.

The Top 10 Signs I Knew It Was Time to Retire by Arnold Buss

1. I kept thinking it’s still the 20th century.
2. I lost faith that my body was made by an intelligent designer.
3. My chairman kept speaking about me in the past tense.
4. My colleagues started treating me with respect.
5. Students were shocked that I read journals printed on paper.
6. I realized that my computer is the work of the devil.
7. I came up with an interesting new idea but discovered I had published an article on it 20 years ago.
8. I gave the same lecture twice in a row.
9. I gave the same lecture twice in a row.
10. I came into work one day and couldn’t remember why, so I decided to retire.

Read more about Buss in “Six Decades of Psychology” at www.psy.utexas.edu/psy/announcements/buss_retirement.html.
RETIRE FACULTY

DINA M. SHERZER
French and Italian

Sherzer, professor of French and Italian and comparative literature, taught at the university for 37 years. She served as director of the France-University of Texas Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies from 2002 to 2005, and as chair of the Department of French and Italian from 1994 to 2003. Her fields of study are 20th-century French literature and film and postcolonialism. She has published numerous studies on Irish writer and poet Samuel Beckett, French new novels and contemporary French films. Her research has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and a Fulbright Fellowship.

JOEL F. SHERZER
Anthropology

Sherzer, the Liberal Arts Foundation Centennial Professor of Linguistic Anthropology, taught at the university for 28 years. He served as chair of the anthropology department from 1987 to 1995 and directed the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America for eight years. He specializes in linguistic anthropology, with a focus on the ethnography of speaking and speech play. Sherzer has researched among the Kuna Indians of Panama and in Bali, Indonesia. His publications include “Kuna Ways of Speaking” and “Verbal Art in San Blas.” Sherzer earned Guggenheim and National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships.

IAN R. MANNERS
Geography and the Environment

Manners, professor of geography and the environment, taught at the university for 37 years. A former director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and chair of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Manners is known for his research on the cartographic representation of the Middle East and the Mediterranean worlds, and his explorations of how maps shape both our geographical knowledge and political history. He specializes in conservation and resource management, urban cultural geography and historical cartography. Manners is the curator of an exhibit on European cartography and the Ottoman world for the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

IN MEMORIAM

CHARLES BONJEAN
Sociology

Bonjean, emeritus professor of sociology, died Feb. 20 at the age of 72. The former executive director of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health taught at the university for 40 years. Bonjean served as chair of the sociology department from 1972 to 1974 when he was appointed Hogg Professor of Sociology, a position he held until he retired in 2002. His research interests included formal organizations, evaluation research and mental health.

JOHN W. F. DULLES
Latin American Studies

Dulles, professor of American and Latin American studies, died June 23 at the age of 95. The son of former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles taught at the university for 45 years. Dulles was a noted scholar of the history of Brazil and an affiliate of the Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies. He authored 12 books on the political history of Brazil during the 20th century, including “Resisting Brazil’s Military Regime,” “Brazilian Communism,” “Castello Branco, The Making of a Brazilian President,” “Anarchists and Communists in Brazil” and “Unrest in Brazil.”

TONY HILFER
English

Hilfer, the Iris Howard Regents Professor of English Literature, died April 11 in a car accident at the age of 71. He taught at the university for 45 years. Hilfer was a renowned scholar of popular genres. His book, “The Crime Novel: A Deviant Genre,” was one of the first to define the characteristics of crime fiction and provide a critical treatment of the genre. His recent book, “The New Hegemony in Literary Studies: Contradictions in Theory,” won the admiration of playwright David Mamet. Hilfer also was the long-time editor of the journal, Texas Studies in Language and Literature.

GARDNER LINDZEY
Psychology

Lindzey, professor emeritus of psychology, died Feb. 4. Lindzey served as chair of the Department of Psychology from 1964 to 1969. He was instrumental in transforming the department from a relatively small group to a large and internationally recognized faculty. He edited the “Handbook of Social Psychology,” a seminal work that has been a professional resource for a generation.

ELSPETH ROSTOW
Government

Rostow, professor emeritus of government, died Dec. 9, 2007. An internationally recognized expert on national politics and U.S. foreign policy, Rostow served as dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs from 1977 to 1983. She also taught at Barnard, Sarah Lawrence, MIT, Georgetown, American University and the University of Cambridge.

JOHN SLATIN
English, Rhetoric and Writing

Slatin, professor of Rhetoric and Writing and English, died March 24 at the age of 55. He taught at the university for 29 years. Slatin, who was visually impaired, was founding director of the university’s Accessibility Institute, which monitored the university’s compliance with national accessibility standards and promoted Web accessibility for all users. He authored numerous articles about technology and learning, and the book “Maximum Accessibility: Making Your Web Site More Usable for Everyone.” His work on accessibility issues with the World Wide Web Consortium earned international acclaim.
Through Take 5 videos, liberal arts professors share their research on issues from presidential accountability and the jury selection process to the history of the Alamo and the myth of the vampire.

Each semester, central public affairs welcomes scholars to the Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Lab studio where they provide a glimpse into the research they reveal in lecture halls and labs throughout campus.

To learn more, visit Take 5 at www.utexas.edu/inside_ut/take5/.
MORE THAN 400,000 JEWS RESIDE IN LATIN AMERICA, comprising the fifth largest community of Jews after the United States, Israel, the former Soviet Union, and France. Their stories and experiences are a major focus of research and teaching at the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies, which encompasses the history, culture, and society of Jews in the Americas, including the United States and Canada.

Established in 2006 with a $6 million challenge grant from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the center draws upon many important resources at the university, including the General Libraries’ extensive Judaica collections, the Harry Ransom Center’s manuscript collections of such notable Jewish writers and scholars as Albert Einstein, Norman Mailer, David Mamet, Isaac Bashevis Singer and Leon Uris, as well as the Center for American History’s extensive Texas Jewish History materials.

Robert Abzug, the Oliver H. Radkey Regents Professor of History and a renowned scholar of Jewish and American Studies, directs the Schusterman Center, which is uniquely poised to lead the study of Jewish life in the Americas, in addition to traditional subjects of Jewish studies.

Since his appointment last year, Abzug has spearheaded a wide array of special events and symposia focusing on the Jewish experience in the Western Hemisphere. Special events addressed topics on Latin American Jewry, including lectures on the life of Cuban Jews, Jewish-Brazilian history, Cuba and Israel, and Jews in Argentina.

The Center sponsored the lecture series, “Medical Ethics and the Holocaust,” in partnership with the Holocaust Museum of Houston, and lectures on Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism, Israeli politics, and Holocaust remembrance. The center also co-sponsored the Austin Jewish Film Festival to raise the visibility of Jewish film on campus.

As part of the university’s capital campaign, the center has launched a giving campaign to match the initial Schusterman Foundation challenge grant. Learn about ways to support the center, and events that celebrate Jewish history, literature and cultural traditions at www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/scjs/.

The Ransom Center houses many archives of notable Jewish figures, including unpublished correspondence of physicist Albert Einstein.

Author Ruth Behar visited the Schusterman Center to talk about her book “An Island Called Home: Returning to Jewish Cuba.”