

SHOWCASE

LEADING-EDGE RESEARCH AT TRENT

Put 'em up:

The Rise and Fall of Latin American Boxing Legends As Political and Social Narrative

The study of boxing in Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela has proven a rich trove of historical insight for Dr. David Sheinin. "I study boxing as a window into Latin American society," he explained. "Boxing helps resolve historical problems that are otherwise difficult to understand."

Just as hockey is seen to represent fundamental characteristics about Canadian culture, society and nation, Professor Sheinin's research in collaboration with Daniel Fridman of Columbia University has shown that the wild popularity of boxing in the history of several Latin American countries reflects, in part, dominant ideologies of racism, violence and cultural identity.

As boxing began to flourish in countries like Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela from the 1930s onward, it quickly came to chart each nation's mythologies, reaching a popular apogee in the 1970s. "Boxing was very participatory, emerging during a time when neighbourhoods really mattered and families avidly followed the sport so that the best boxers became household names," he explained. Prof. Sheinin noted that most boxers tended to come from poor areas, where violence expressed itself in many forms, such as malnutrition, racism or police brutality. A universal story that developed around most boxing legends portrayed them as violent teenagers who underwent a dramatic transformation. They became "non-violent" thanks to a mentor who introduced them to boxing. "Boxing is elegance. Athletes must use their intelligence and skill to perform well. In this way, it is also a social expression of the control of violence."

The rise and fall of Colombian boxing legend Kid Pambelé shows the intersection of boxing and cultural identities in Latin America. Born in the impoverished, predominantly black town of Palenque, Kid Pambelé was immersed in the community's rich African heritage as he grew up, and identified with its slave origins and tradition of resistance. Winning matches with an unorthodox boxing style, he quickly rose to fame, assuming the status of a national hero. Kid Pambelé epitomized the idea of Colombian boxing – quicker, smarter, less formally schooled, more dependent on a raw intelligence than other boxing styles. "Boxing is a sport where national identity is bound up in how the game is played," noted Prof. Sheinin. Once a celebrity, Kid Pambelé gained renown for his generosity. He was the first African-Colombian to own an apartment in Cartagena's exclusive Bocagrande neighborhood.

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On campus, Professor Sheinin actively pursues his joint passion for academics and sport by providing complimentary tutoring to Trent's varsity athletes. Students who play for Trent's varsity teams must maintain a minimum grade-point average.

The significance placed on both academic and athletic performance has resulted in 68 Academic All-Canadians at Trent in 2007, the highest ever for the University.

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Following his triumph as Colombia's first world boxing champion, Kid Pambelé went through a tragic decline, involving substance abuse and squandered riches. Prof. Sheinin found that as Kid Pambelé fell from grace, his celebrated African-American attributes that once generated national pride now emerged ominously as negative stereotypes around violence, alcohol consumption, and failure. "Here and elsewhere, the boxing narrative unifies the professional with the personal narrative," observed Prof. Sheinin.

Through his study of boxing, Prof. Sheinin has been able to illuminate the powerful political undercurrents embedded in these shifting images of popular Latin American fighters as national figures, but also as subjects of United States dominance in the hemisphere. "In athletics, and in boxing more specifically, images of race, ethnicity, and power followed a larger set of imperial constructions that posited Manifest Destiny and subsequent American versions of the logic of imperial projects as a question of racial inevitability." Moreover, he has shown that boxing is intimately tied to revolutionary politics, and shed important light on the role of professional sport as an organic expression of international culture and power dynamics.



"What does it take to change the world?"

Trent's new M.A. in English Literature (Public Texts) Inspires Research into the Profound

Fuelling students' drive to explore the pressing issues of our world has led to the creation of an innovative new masters program at Trent University: the M.A. in English Literature (Public Texts).

Story-telling, dramatic performance, manuscript and print, the web – all of these are forms of "public text" and their production is an increasingly significant area of literary study. Understanding how publics develop, what it means to "publish" and how the concept of the public text resonates throughout our culture inspires the research which Trent graduate students are pursuing through this program.

"It's a highly interdisciplinary course of study," explained Nelly Chen, one of the program's inaugural students who recently completed her Bachelor of Science in Psychology at Trent. "My research into advocacy and public engagement touches as much on anthropology, politics, and psychology as it does literary analysis."

In her own words, Ms. Chen is investigating "what it takes to change the world" by researching how special interest groups gather and share information to make an impact on society. In addition to her course work, to achieve this, Ms. Chen will be pursuing an internship with the Kawartha World Issues Centre in Peterborough, an integral component of the Public Texts masters program designed to combine

theory and practice. In fact, this is the only M.A. program in English Literature in Canada that offers students a choice of three ways to complete their degree: by major research paper, thesis, or internship.

For other graduate students, this masters program is allowing them to investigate cultural and literary phenomena that are unique to the twenty-first century. For example, student Brent Bellamy's research explores the continuum from today's online communities to the literary traditions of the past. Motivated by his passion for popular American songwriter Bruce Springsteen, Mr. Bellamy is studying the cultural influence of his albums and performances. "There are so many pockets of people centred around Springsteen's music, especially online," he explained. "He is unusual in that his record sales are quite modest, yet people flock to see him in concert. Much of Springsteen's impact stems from the 'working class' literary tradition he represents, going back to Walt Whitman, John Steinbeck, Woody Guthrie, and Bob Dylan." The English M.A. in Public Texts provides Mr. Bellamy with a forum in which he can uncover these connections and examine their relevance to society today.

Other students in the program are exploring such issues as the 1381 Peasants' Revolt in relation to medieval literary and legal texts; the public impact of Harry Potter; and digitization and the future of the book.

According to Dr. Zailig Pollock, this English M.A. in Public Texts is a graduate program whose time has come. "The explosive growth of global electronic media in recent years marks a turning point in the development of texts and their publics which is comparable in importance to the invention of writing and of the printing press," explained Professor Pollock who helped to develop the M.A. in Public Texts. "By exploring the production of texts, their circulation, and the relationship between texts and their publics, the English M.A. in Public Texts will give our students the opportunity to investigate the history of the Public Text, to map its present and to participate in its futures."

In this way, Trent students will be at the forefront of exploring issues which are emerging as central to literary research in the twenty-first century. ■



Masters students Nelly Chen (left) and Brent Bellamy (right) are pioneering new directions in cultural and literary analysis through their research.



Risky Business:

New Study Reveals Link Between Youth Gambling and Learning Disorders



Although gambling problems are usually thought of as an adult concern, recent research indicates that this behaviour is a serious issue among adolescents. A

research team comprised of Laura Wood, Patricia Kloosterman, Katia Keefer from the Emotion and Health Research Lab (EHRL) at Trent recently completed a major project supported by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre examining gambling behaviours in adolescents. The EHRL brings together a number of researchers and graduate students interested in studying the development of emotion-regulation abilities, as well as the relationship between these abilities and mental and physical health.

This research project, led by Dr. James D. A. Parker (director of the EHRL and Canada Research Chair in Emotion and Health) examined gambling problems in clinical adolescent outpatients as well as in a sample of community-based adolescents. Several student projects (undergraduate and Master's theses) have come about because of the database the team has created. As they predicted, adolescents in the clinical sample were found to be most at risk for having serious gambling problems. Not expected, however, since no one had previously studied this group of individuals, was the finding that the most vulnerable individuals for experiencing gambling problems were adolescents with one or more learning disorders.

The team also found strong evidence that problem gambling behaviours are connected to related problems like internet abuse and video-game abuse. And all of these problems were linked with lower levels of emotional intelligence.

An important implication of the study is that intervention programs that focus on promoting and enhancing emotional competency in youth may prove to be effective in reducing not only gambling problems, but problems like internet and computer/video gaming abuse. It is also clear that intervention and prevention programs need to give particular attention to individuals with learning disorders. ■



Graduate studies researchers Laura Wood, Patricia Kloosterman and Katia Keefer



Revealing the Ocean's Layers at the Top of the World

Prof. Guéguen has been drawn to learn more about the impacts of pollution in the environment ever since witnessing a terrible oil spill off the coast of Western Brittany when she was a young girl where she grew up in France. Seeing the struggling animals and sea birds contend with the sticky substance left an impression that guided her

research career into the aquatic sciences.

Her primary objective during this six-week research mission was to determine if dissolved organic matter could be used as a tracer for water masses, or layers in the ocean. "Dissolved organic material from arctic river water reacts with heavy metals like mercury, released into the water by melting permafrost. A river with high levels of dissolved organic material quickly absorbs these heavy metals, and that means trouble for creatures living in that river and the northern communities who depend on it," she explained.

Since the Arctic Ocean is a meeting point of waters from the Pacific and Atlantic, it forms layers of materials from waters of different origins. Each ocean has a different temperature and salinity, causing the water to stratify with the Pacific on top, and Atlantic Ocean waters on the bottom. Within these layers, there is a special water mass

called the halocline, which is formed on the continental shelf and is high in nutrients and dissolved organic matter.

Using a deep-sea sampling device called a rosette, Prof. Guéguen took numerous samples from various depths in the ocean and measured the water's chemical make up to identify the characteristics of the halocline layer and if it can be tracked. "A weakening of the halocline won't be able to stop the warmer Atlantic water from melting the sea ice," noted Prof. Guéguen. "What we found was that the halocline is significantly different from the Atlantic layer which means we can track water masses in the Canada Basin." This ability to trace the movement of water masses provides scientists with a greatly improved capacity to monitor and predict changes in polar ice due to global warming.

"Ten percent of the world's rivers discharge into Arctic Ocean so tracking the flow of freshwaters is critical to global climate. Indeed, changes in arctic river runoff may freshen the North Atlantic and weaken the Gulf Stream," said Prof. Guéguen, adding, "Without the Gulf Stream we won't have warmth in Europe."

By solving this environmental puzzle, Prof. Guéguen will have an immediate impact on Canada's North, allowing the government to better protect its many rivers, and the thousands of plants and animals that depend on that water for survival. ■

While most of us were basking in summer's heat this past July, Dr. Céline Guéguen, Canada research chair in aquatic sciences and biogeochemistry at Trent, was boarding the Louis S. St. Laurent, Canada's largest icebreaker, to make her way to the Arctic Ocean.

Along with 25 other researchers from Canada, the United States and Japan, Professor Guéguen was participating in a series of intensive polar research expeditions as part of the International Polar Year (IPY). Organized through the International Council for Science and the World Meteorological Organization every 50 years or so since the 1880s, the IPY is a massive global scientific program focused on expanding human understanding of the Arctic and Antarctic. "We know more about the moon than we know about the poles," said Prof. Guéguen.



Keeping an Eye on the Owls

The mysteries behind Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) have kept biology professor Dr. Erica Nol up

late at night on more than one occasion. In fact, during the fall months, she and a team of volunteer bird banders stay up well past dark waiting for the seven-inch (18 cm) creatures to fly into her fine mesh nylon nets so they can be weighed and measured to determine their age, sex, wingspan, and fat content.

"It's important to establish if the males and females are wintering in different places," explained Professor Nol. "As monogamous birds, if males and females winter separately, habitat loss could disproportionately affect one sex and therefore reduce the opportunities for mating by the other sex."

Since 1999, Prof. Nol has been leading an annual owl-banding project at the James McLean Oliver Ecological Centre, a 270-acre waterfront property donated to Trent in 1998 for use in wildlife research that is located just 50 minutes northwest of Peterborough. Very little is known about the abundance and distribution of owls in Ontario, which is crucial for conservationists who want to know more about their sensitivity to habitat change and forest fragmentation.

In October 2007, a total of 220 owls were captured and banded in a 36-day period with an average of 6.28 owls per

night. "This figure is remarkable considering that only five nets were in operation, as opposed to the nine used in previous years, when the nightly average was about three per

"Owls have become a great spokesperson for the bird world!"

night," said Prof. Nol. "This was also the first year that we caught some males, although the majority of the owls were female." Prof. Nol noted that from this study female saw-whets seem to migrate more than males, indicating that the sexes do tend to winter in different areas.

"The summer of 2006 was a synchronous mast year for the trees throughout the breeding range of the Northern Saw-whet Owl, which means they were unusually productive providing lots of fruit and seeds for small mammals to eat, causing them to proliferate, followed by strong growth in the owl populations," explained Prof. Nol. "However, in the following year, when there is much less seed from these trees, the large populations of small mammals eat all of the food and then die off during the winter which means reduced mammal populations for owls the following year." The response by the owls is to move south to areas where they hope to encounter more food. This probably explains the much higher capture rate of the 2007 'owl season'.

Another interesting finding was the recapture of owls banded originally at distant locations, such as Wisconsin, Manitoba, Virginia and Thunder Bay, revealing how widely distributed these birds are in Eastern North America and how far they can move. What was most surprising to Prof. Nol in the 2007 season, however, was the discovery that saw-whet owls can migrate in reverse directions. "This is brand new information, and is something we've never seen before in this species of owl," she said.

In addition to the valuable data that this ongoing study provides, another great benefit of the owl-banding project is the awareness it raises about owls and habitat conservation. "This project has attracted more than 150 community volunteers since its inception, and we enjoy being able to teach people when they have a live bird in their hands," said Prof. Nol. "Once people get to hold the owls, they just fall in love with them. The owls have become a great spokesperson for the bird world!" ■



Message from Dr. James D.A. Parker, Ph.D.
Associate Vice-President of Research &
Canada Research Chair in Emotion & Health

“As the dynamic research projects within these pages demonstrate, the culture of innovation continues to thrive at Trent University across the humanities, sciences and social sciences. It’s my pleasure to share some of the highlights from the exciting work carried out at Trent by our talented faculty and students in the latest issue of *Showcase*.

With its proud interdisciplinary tradition and collaborative spirit, Trent University is leading the creation of new knowledge in areas that are making a significant difference locally, nationally, and globally. Thanks to the investment of our many donors and partner agencies, Trent has successfully established state-of-the-art facilities and support structures that nurture research excellence on campus and in the field.”

www.trentu.ca/research/



Are Men Hired More Than Women?

A recent study conducted by Dr. Ed Ng produced some telling findings about the effectiveness of employment equity hiring practices. The results indicate that when employment equity is in place, people are increasingly more likely to hire underrepresented group



members, to the extent that they are equally or more qualified. Men appear to be treated in a positively biased manner, and are more likely to be hired when they are less qualified.

Women are less likely to be hired when they are under-qualified, in the absence of employment equity directives, or when there is a suggestion that women are underrepresented. Moreover, when employment equity directives are strengthened, there appears to be a subtle backlash for women but not for men. This appeared when employment equity directives were too coercive.



Killer Whales Still at Risk from Banned PCBs

Killer whales that frequent the coastal waters of British Columbia and Washington state will not recover from historic PCB exposures until 2030 or later, according to new environmental modelling results published by Environment and Resource Science assistant professor Dr. Brendan Hickie and his colleagues. “PCB concentrations in these killer whale populations likely peaked in the early 1970s when PCB production ceased with the onset of environmental regulations, but their concentrations have only declined slowly since then,” he explained. The study found that nursing mothers pass on PCBs in their fat-rich milk, so calves can have some of the highest concentrations found in these populations. First-born calves receive a larger dose of PCBs than their siblings, and mothers deplete much of their store of PCBs in their blubber by passing them on to their offspring. Male killer whales have no similar mechanism to off-load PCBs and continue to accumulate them from their food throughout their long lives.



A glimpse into the latest findings at Trent

How Math Helps Us Predict and Prevent Climate Change

The myriad factors involved in forecasting climate change certainly keep Professor of Mathematics Dr. Kenzu Abdella very busy these days. His research focuses on fluid dynamics and atmospheric science with an emphasis on developing useful computational models for use in global climate models which are used to predict the effects of climate change. His studies centre on the parameterization of physical processes in the atmosphere, particularly at the boundary layer (2000 meters from ground level), and on the earth’s surface. The calculations involved in global climate models are so complex that very high-speed super computers are required to work them through to determine how the atmosphere is affected by climate change. These models could literally take years to compute, however with the expertise of mathematical modelers such as Professor Abdella’s, they find ways of simplifying the mathematical process so that the end result produces efficient and accurate data. This permits environmental scientists to test conservation strategies and enables them to simulate the future impacts caused by deforestation, water pollution and other human activities.



Humanity’s Greatest Mistake?

According to some archaeologists, the replacement of hunting and gathering by farming is one of the most important transitions in human history, and also one of humanity’s greatest mistakes. “Archaeological evidence suggests that agriculture is a less attractive mode of living than the hunter-gatherer lifestyles that it replaced,” explained anthropologist Dr. James Conolly. “The earliest farmers in Europe experienced a rise in pathologies and shortening of lifespan associated with a less varied diet, higher population density, and a massive increase in social conflict and interpersonal violence. A major problem is thus to explain how and why it spread so quickly.” Intensive wheat production is offering one piece to the puzzle. Professor Conolly and his colleagues are compiling ecological data from hundreds of early Neolithic sites across Southwest Asia and Europe, and have gained new insights into the effects of farming strategies on early populations. “As well as providing the basis for new research into early farming, this database will be made publicly available to support other research into the origins and spread of domestic plants and animals”.



Fighting Crime with Mastodon DNA

Although they haven’t roamed the earth for 10,000 years, ivory tusks from long-extinct mastodons are fetching huge sums of money from today’s exotic species collectors. Unfortunately for their modern yet endangered pachyderm cousins, this is leading others to illegally poach elephants for their tusks and bleach them in order to pass them off as authentic mastodon ivory. This causes increased pressure on Environment Canada to enforce this beyond the international ivory trade. Forensic Science program chair Dr. Paul Wilson and graduate student Kristyne Wozney are now in the process of creating a DNA databank of real mastodon ivory for testing purposes relating to the enforcement of CITES (Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species), the legislation designed to prevent the illegal import of threatened species.



New Era of Ethics Scholarship Launched at Trent Thanks to \$2 Million Endowment

On October 3, 2007 the Trent University community proudly celebrated its commitment to the humanities and critical thinking with the announcement of the Kenneth Mark Drain Chair in Ethics, the first Endowed Chair in the University’s history and the largest gift given to Trent by living donors. The generous \$2 million gift was given to the University by members of the Patterson and Drain families as a tribute to the life of cherished family member Kenneth Mark Drain.

Family spokesperson and Trent alumnus David Patterson described the Chair in Ethics as a fitting memorial for his dear uncle, noting, “The ‘Trent experience’ – with its outstanding teaching and research, anchored in strong social and ethical values – convinced us as a family to invest in Trent’s future. We are impressed with Trent’s leadership and its bold plans leading up to its 50th anniversary, and hope our gift will inspire other alumni and community leaders to step up to the plate.”

As the University’s first Endowed Chair, the Kenneth Mark Drain Chair in Ethics will create a prestigious faculty position within Trent’s Department of Philosophy for a national or international leader in the growing field of ethics. An Endowed Chair is a philanthropic initiative to enhance in perpetuity the academic mission of the University by facilitating the strategic recruitment and retention of leading-edge faculty for years to come.

www.trentu.ca/chairinethics/