This year we welcomed an exuberant new cohort of both full and part-time students in Interdisciplinary Studies. This group has demonstrated how an ethos of “no-one left behind” best facilitates student community in graduate school. This group now studies together, checks in with one another, and yes took their Interdisciplinary Studies Classes together – new this year and as requested by the INST community – subsumed under the current INST 5000 6.0 course. There also has been much mentorship provided by 2nd and 3rd year INST students to the newcomers and this co-creation of a community of learners continues to benefit the entire program.

A new provincial initiative in Graduate Studies that you may be interested in is the Graduate Student Mental Health Strategy. Both York and INST is deeply committed to exploring this issue in order to discover the best practices in supporting grad students. Perhaps you’d be interested to take the survey aimed at exploring this issue. Check it out at: www.notinthesyllabus.ca

In house, our wish remains what I like to call “Creating a climate of completion”, so stay in touch with us and let us know how we can help you, clarify things, assist you to succeed and above all else, support the work you want to do. Plus the coffee’s always on!

Greetings from the Director
Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith
Did you know that Interdisciplinary Studies Students have their **OWN LOUNGE**?? Housed in McLaughlin College, this space provides a place for INST students to land when they arrive at York on class or committee meeting days. It has computers, student mailboxes and somewhat comfortable seating. We are looking for a group of you to help us decorate the lounge to suit the needs of our students. The lounge is named after Dr. Christopher Innes, founder of the program. Students are asked to email Fiona for the passcode number and are asked not to share it outside of the INST community.

**Contest:**
**Name the new Interdisciplinary Studies Community Newsletter.....**

As we launch this new way to build community in Interdisciplinary Studies at YorkU, all members of the INST community are invited to name the Newsletter. What should our **Community Newsletter** be named? You tell us... Context closes April 1st, 2015. (no fooling !) Email submissions under the subject line “Name the Newsletter” to gradinst@yorku.ca

**NEW EXECUTIVE MEMBERS joining us in 2015**

As the program moves into a very important **Program Review**, having executive members who also graduated from the program is simply a gift. To that end the program welcomes Professor John Greyson (Film - check him out [http://finearts.yorku.ca/about-us/our-faculty/john-greyson](http://finearts.yorku.ca/about-us/our-faculty/john-greyson)) and Professor Gail Vanstone (Humanities, Culture and Expression – check it out [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnjx4Nz-no8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnjx4Nz-no8))

**THE Christopher Innes Interdisciplinary Studies Student Lounge**

Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith, GPD officially opened the new student lounge in January 2014 and named it in honor of the program Founder: Dr. Christopher Innes
One of the highlights of the Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies is the annual opportunity for the entire INST community to come together to hear about the innovative inquiry projects being undertaken by our students. This comes in the form of the Colloquium Series, where both Full and Part time students present their work-in-progress to a gathering of their peers and supervisors, and engage in scholarly discourse. Below you will find the eleven scheduled Colloquia for this year. Supervisory Committees are reminded that a minimum of one member of the committee must attend, as the student’s colloquium counts towards their overall grade in the course led by the committee, i.e. INST 5000 6.0 While students presenting this year are expected to attend each other’s colloquium, students who already have or are going to host a colloquium next year are equally invited to join these sessions.

February 11
1:30pm -2:30pm : Leva Rouhani : Gender in Ghanaian Educational Policy: Parity or Equity?“

March 4
12:00-1:00 : Maral Karimi, “A Critical Exploration of Social Media Use in the Iranian Green Resistance Movement of 2009”

March 11
12:00- 1:00 : Sarah Gebretsadik: “From Growth to Transformation: the Politics and Potential of Ethiopian State-Led Diaspora Engagement in Development.”
1:00-2:00: Kaley Ames: “Mirrors of Infantical Mothers: Euripides’ Medea Reflected in 19th Century Theatre and Canadian Law.”

March 25
12:00-1:00: Alix Voz: Mélancolie, Longing and the Built Environment: a Visual Ethnography from Beyond Northern Familiarity.”
1:00-2:00: HEATHER Bergen: “Teen Moms Talk Back: Young Mothers Strategizing Supportive Communities”

April 1
12:00-1:00 : Caroline Suchit: “Shadeism: Exploring Inequalities Within a Historicizing Agenda”

April 8
12:00-1:00: Caroline Novak: “Form and Ephemerality: Musical Performance and Danse Macabre in Medieval Art, Architecture, Music, and Cosmology.”
1:00-2:00: Marcell McBean: “Peer Influence and the Educational Underachievement of Black Youths in Ontario.”
Finding a Key to the Library of Babel

There are really only two ways you can go about doing library research. Either you can take an active role in finding things that will support your argument, or you can adopt a more passive approach by letting those things find you instead. Although most people seem to think that it is braver to follow the first of these two paths, I have found that the second method is not only easier and more rewarding: it is also a good deal more honest.

When most students set out to write a research paper they begin by choosing a topic and then formulating an argument based on what very little they actually know about the subject. Then they cling to that argument with all their strength. And because they won’t abandon or even adjust that argument, their research ultimately boils down to a straightforward (and boring) process of finding books, articles, and other documents that support their existing presumptions. Assuming such documents actually exist and everything works out just as these students plan, they end up right where they imagined they would from the start: with an essay that elegantly presents carefully selected evidence to support a position developed in splendid isolation from the scholarly literature itself. All that would be fine except for one thing: these students haven’t actually done any real research. Instead, they’ve really just engaged in an elaborate exercise of confirmation bias. Why? Because students who approach their essays like this invariably fail to learn anything new about their subjects at all.

There is another way. Library catalogues, databases, and Internet search engines can be more than just tools for finding things. They can also be used to help researchers think more clearly about their subjects. Seasoned researchers understand this principle and never presume to fix their final destination before setting out on the journey. And that’s because genuine research is always exploratory. The goal of this kind of research is to learn something new rather than just come up with a product—the essay—that will satisfy the professor. Students who follow this path must postpone the whole process of formulating an argument until they have had an opportunity to prepare their minds by doing some preliminary research and reading. For them research is not just a mechanical process that takes place before the writing begins. Instead, research and writing are treated as recursive processes that together help generate new ideas.

Students who take this approach find themselves liberated from their own academic prejudices because they are willing to treat the scholarly literature as a living conversation that they hope to join, rather than just a pile of documents from which they hope to extract something useful. The final payoff comes when their bibliographies begin to take shape on their own, when their arguments emerge organically from their reading, and when their research leads them in new and unanticipated directions. In the end, students who approach research as a process of genuine discovery are not only able to engage more deeply with their subjects, they also end up bringing new knowledge into the classroom. And isn’t that, after all, what education is all about?

More…REMINDERS FROM THE INST PROGRAM OFFICE

1. The **ANNUAL END-OF-YEAR PARTY** is Scheduled for April 8th, 2015 at 3 PM. SUPERVISORS & Students are invited for an amazing speaker followed by our annual social. Refreshments served of course!

2. Many GA Workload forms remain past due.

3. Students who have not handed in their Interim Reports they are overdue.

4. By now, all first year full-time students and second year part-time students should have submitted their thesis proposals to their supervisory committees.

5. A reminder that no IS student may commence their thesis research

UPDATE FROM YOUR SOCIAL CONVENOR: Rebecca Barnstaple

We've all been so busy with our course work, there's not been much time for socially convening. With that in mind, we're planning for a big IS shindig in April! Invite your Supervisors - we'll have a guest speaker, blow our budget on nibbles, and commiserate about the trials and triumphs of our journeys thus far. Details can be found in the newsletter with more specific stuff closer to the date. Good luck with the rest of the semester everyone! And strike or no strike, stay in touch - we're all here for each other.
Announcing the 2nd Annual
Interdisciplinary Studies/McLaughlin College Speaker Series.
With Interdisciplinary THOUGHT LEADER & Innovator

Ariel Garten:

“KNOW THYSELF:
Interdisciplinary Innovations Featuring Technology, Neuroscience and Design.

Wednesday April 8th, 2015 3:00 pm 140 McLaughlin College
(Interdisciplinary Studies END OF YEAR SOCIAL to follow immediately afterwards)

To learn more about Ariel Garten, visit:
http://www.ideacityonline.com/speaker/ariel-garten/

According to IdeaCity founder Moses Znaimer

“if there ever was a gap between science, art, business and technology, Garten has closed it.”

Her work converts the workings of the mind into tangible solutions. Garten has researched at the Krembil Neuroscience Institute studying hippocampal neurogenesis, displayed work at the AGO, DeLeon White Gallery and opened Toronto Fashion Week. The Intersections of these diverse interests have culminated into various lectures with topics such as "The Neuroscience of Aesthetics" and "The Neuroscience of Conflict", featured on TVO's Big Ideas.

Referred to as the "Brain Guru", Garten has also run a successful real estate business, spent time as the designer of a Canadian fashion boutique, and is a practicing psychotherapist.

In 2007, Garten co-founded InteraXon, one of the world's leading companies creating brainwave controlled products and experiences. InteraXon debuted with the creation of "Bright Ideas", Ontario's feature showcase at the Vancouver 2012 Winter Olympics, where visitors in Vancouver got to control the lights on the CN Tower, Niagara Falls and the Canadian Parliament buildings, with their minds, from across the country.

Garten and her team are merging technology, neuroscience, art and design. Muse, InteraXon's brain-sensing headband, just one example of this innovation, allows consumers to interact with their smartphone and tablet using the power of their mind. Garten regularly lectures at MIT and her lecture on Ted.com has over 250,000 views and she recently gave the opening keynote at Le Web, Europe's biggest tech conference. Garten is lauded for her style and inspiration and The Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies is proud to welcome her.
POLICY Reminders in Interdisciplinary Studies

Just a reminder that if in doubt – there’s probably a policy about it !!! Here are some reminders:

1. Change of Supervisory Committee Members: requires approval of student, the student’s committee as well as GPD. Involves a formal approval process and transparent meeting convened by the GPD and/or the coordinating supervisor.

2. Adding & Dropping Courses: requires approval of course professor, the student’s coordinating supervisor as well as the GPD.

3. Annual Academic Progress Report: remains a compulsory requirement of all graduate students at York University. As in other programs, failure to meet this FGS/ INST policy will generate an automated enrollment block. Students are advised to book this in-person meeting several months in advance in order to get this academic progress report co-developed, approved and signed on time.

4. Change of Program Disciplinary Focus: this policy applies mostly to new admits, requiring the completion of 6.0- credits prior to any change in the three disciplines that inform their work.

5. Directed Reading Courses: In addition to the role of DRs = providing a course that does not exist to an INST student, students may only take 6.0 credits in DR. These must be co-created with the professor and include detailed particulars regarding appropriate learning evidences and be submitted prior to the commencement of said course. Forms submitted retroactively are generally not accepted. Once approved, Fiona will open the enrollment window for you and will enter the title of the DR so it goes on your eventual transcript.

As students are responsible to both understand and adhere to all FGS and INST policies, we ask that students and their supervisors review these policy changes in full detail. The full policies can be found here: https://learn.yorku.ca/moodle/course/view.php?id=616

RECENT Interdisciplinary Studies MA DEFENCES:

The Program congratulates Interdisciplinary Studies soon-to-graduate ALEXANDRA BUSGANG for successfully defending her thesis. Cap and Gown in June ! Way to go Alexandra. You did so well!

REMEMBER FROM THE INST PROGRAM OFFICE:

*ANNUAL Academic Progress REPORT IS DUE APRIL 15TH, 2015. Students and Supervisory Committees are asked to book a meeting prior to this due date in order to prevent any problems/enrollment blocks.
The Supervisors’ Corner

In this Supervisors’ Corner section of the new IS Community Newsletter, we invite Supervisors in Interdisciplinary Studies to submit strategies, ideas and tid-bits of “good ideas” that they have found helpful.

FROM DR. VICTOR SHEA, Associate Professor, Humanities: READING AND COMPREHENDING TEXTS


Learning to read and understand assigned texts is sometimes overwhelming for students moving to a new level of expectations, such as graduate school. Students must learn different coping and strategic methods of reading to thrive; you do not read all texts the same way. In a large psychology class at Harvard, students were told to take ten minutes to read twenty pages of the textbook, a tall order in itself. Then they had to shut the books and take a test in which they had to write out the main argument, describe the supporting arguments and evidence, and finally state the author’s conclusions. Only about 10 percent were able to complete the last requirement. Most students began at the beginning and read as far as they could in the allotted time, but they failed to come close to completing the reading. Those who completed the last requirement had learned to read for an overview, to skim, and then to fill in the gaps.

These are essential survival skills in completing the volume of reading assigned over three different graduate level courses, and they can be broken down into a number of steps:

1. Look over the whole of a book, chapter, or article before you begin to read it. See how it is set out and what its divisions are (parts, chapters, sections, sub-headings, and so on). Sometimes the table of contents is much abbreviated, so look over the parts or sections to see what each really contains.

2. Look over the subheadings in the parts of the book, chapter, or article that you are going to read. If you will be reading it all, look at the other kinds of information, such as illustrations, graphs and diagrams, charts and summaries.

3. Read at least part of the preface or all of an article’s abstract or opening summary. Here an author usually sets out his or her goals and a summary of the literature in the field, how this text relates to it, and how the argument is organized. You often get a useful summary of the whole reading in the preface of a book or the opening paragraph of a book or article.

4. Look to see whether the book, chapter, or article has a bibliography or list of works cited. Skimming it will help you learn which kinds of authors and authorities are referred to in the text, and what they were writing about, and will also give you a greater sense of the field to contextualize your particular reading. In all honesty, this step will not make a lot of sense to you at; however, the habit is a good one to establish from the outset. As your knowledge of the course and the field broadens, you will begin to recognize citations from particular authors and key articles, and will perceive their importance in the reading in establishing its frames of reference.

On a practical level, it helps to start off by scanning the whole of your assigned reading from the beginning to the end, even going quickly through an entire book to look at the chapter headings to see what is covered. You might want to modify this practice in the case of a novel or play, where you do not want to know the ending before your detailed reading. At the very least, having a sense of the structure of the entire novel (as well as any other kind of text) will help you immensely before undertaking a detailed reading. Of course, for reading poetry the practice is quite different and might involve detailed attention to language, metaphors, and versification which take time and frequent re-reading.

In most kinds of reading, however, after your survey or over-view of the complete text, you move to a more careful read-through, marking your text. You can number its stages in the margin, for instance, using a word of summary for each. You can note any key definitions, examples, or technical words. In some texts you will want to note parts of the narrative or important phrases. And you might also mark those words or ideas that you do not understand to raise for clarification later. Try to avoid underlining or setting bold to page after page of text. The point is to select what you mark to help you understand what is being said.

Armed with this preliminary survey, you are ready for a more sustained and detailed approach to the assigned reading.
MESSAGE FROM
YOUR INST
GRADUATE STUDENT
ASSOCIATION
President SAM ARIA

UPCOMING Interdisciplinary Studies MA DEFENCES:
York Lanes, Room 232


SANDI TRILLO : April 9th, 2015 2 PM (tentative date): “Sustain Ontario: The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming: How the design of a policy coalition contributes to their legitimacy and influence.”


Please check the INST website for finalized date, time and location.

Students are encouraged to attend and are most welcome.

Interdisciplinary Studies Student Accolades
So far this academic year, we’ve heard of two INST students being admitted to a PhD program and they are Maral Karimi and Shila Khayabashi. This shows that an MA in Interdis can be a bridge to a PhD program. Many others have applied and we look forward to hearing your news. Keep us in the loop and let us know if you need any help when applying.

CYCLICAL PROGRAM REVIEW

Every 5-7 years any Canadian program at an accredited University undergoes a Program Review and it’s Interdisciplinary Studies’ turn.

By now many INST students will have been contacted by the Institute for Social Research to participate in a student survey regarding our program. Some of the questions are a better fit for our innovative program than others, so just do your best to elaborate and specify when permitted. We know that our program is very unique – in fact that’s what makes it so innovative. We’ve added a few questions as well. Data from that survey, plus the analysis of a set of external reviewers who oversee a graduate program in Interdisciplinary Studies in Canada will then propel your program’s executive to respond to the strengths and growth areas identified by the review. This fall the external reviewers will be visiting with our program and some of you will be asked to meet with them. Stay tuned for more details.

To our Part-Time students: Do you find it hard to get to campus to meet with the Director during the day? We hear you! INST has launched pilot evening hours – on the First Wednesday of every month on an appointment basis. To make an apt with
I am Alejandro Mayoral, 1st year FT INST student. I am studying how information technologies can be implemented within indigenous context because I want to find out how indigenous peoples can be reencountered to their identities through different IT solutions.

On Saturday January 30th, I had the opportunity to go to an Ice Fishing Trip on Lake Scugog organized by Seneca College and the Center for Aboriginal Student Services at YorkU. The experience was great because beside the fun activities we had, the Elder of CASS, Blu Waters, gave us teachings about the nature and its relation with fishing, e.g. we offered Tabaco to the fish for giving their life, we put back into the water the small fishes to let them grow up and we took from the lake just the fish we ate. “Alejandro, your spirit is probably connected with water and that’s why you’re feeling so happy being here”. Blu Waters.

Recently Muna Ali was named as one of the top ten Somali artists and activists to watch in 2015! The judging panel wrote “As the founder of Gashanti Unity, an organization dedicated to empowering Somali women, Muna Ali’s work takes on many forms. Whether she’s producing a documentary on colorism or leading self-love workshops, she’s centering young women of color—particularly Somali women—in all that she does.” Way to go Muna! Your research is going to make such a difference in the world—and that’s what we want for all our Interdisciplinary Studies students!
USING **DOODLE MEETING POLLS** is a terrific way to bring your full committee together. Have you ever tried it? A wise senior student recently commented that the strength of the INST program, i.e. having three wise scholars encircle an IS student as she/he embarks on an innovative program of study is also difficult to manage at times. We hear you! We are working on exploring many new ways to build community in IS: one of which is a passport-york protected web interface only for IS where students and supervisors can share documents, see each other’s comments and sign forms virtually. The GPD is currently in consultation with UIT and other GPDs in order to bring this to fruition. It won’t happen quickly so how about you explore the use of Doodle Meeting Polls. You’ll be happy you did!! See: [www.doodle.com](http://www.doodle.com)

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**From the Desk of.... Fiona Fernandes Graduate Program Administrator**

It’s almost Spring and we are half way through the winter term. Everyone seems to be working in earnest to meet their goals before the end of April. Congratulations to Alexandra Busgang who has just completed her oral defense. We have two more coming up, Lawrie Gluck and Sandi Trillo and Nayani Thyagarajah. information on website. The best part of working with you is seeing you through from Orientation to Convocation even though it leaves us with a bitter sweet feeling, as we do miss you when you are done.

Right now we are working on applications for Fall Admits, when we will see brand new faces who will very quickly become part of the IS family. We will be starting the colloquium series on March 4. Please look on our website for details. Leva Rouhani has already completed hers earlier, as she has gone abroad to do her research. Please connect with me if you need anything. I have an open door policy from 2 to 4 PM in the afternoons Monday through Thursday. Please feel free to drop in with any concerns and I would be pleased to assist you. I thank you in advance for being mindful of these times as it will greatly assist me in dealing with my workload as I am only here 4 days a week.

A few reminders:

- Please mark your calendars for the IS End of Term Speaker/Reception on April 9 at 3.00 PM in Rm. 140 McL. Ariel Garten will be our guest speaker, you can read all about her, link below. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariel_Garten](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariel_Garten)

- Final thesis proposal due March 30, 2015

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**F.Y.I.**

So often, we get a call, or are (gladly) asked for a meeting where students ask us – “I’m not sure where I am in the timeline and what I’m supposed to be doing?” Terrific question! So here is a neat list of what an INST student-trajectory typically looks like ... with a few of those reminders we send you included 😊:

1. Take a half course in **each** of your **three disciplines** with your fourth half course typically being a research methods course, or a practicum or a Directed Reading
2. Provide an Interim Report to the Program Office every January
3. Attend the INST-sponsored Ethics Workshop & Obtain Research Ethical Approval
5. If doing a Creative Component – ensure that this is also approved at the time your Thesis Proposal is.
6. Commence your Research
7. Provide an Annual Report every April 15th.
8. Attend the INST-sponsored Colloquium Workshop & In the 5th semester (FT) and the 8th semester (PT) participate in the INST Colloquium and lead a scholarly discussion regarding your research in progress. Supervisors are present as well as other students who are doing their colloquia and engage in a Q & A
9. Ensure you meet with your entire supervisory team **once a semester** and each supervisor at least one a semester on a 1:1 basis. Take notes, even plan the meeting and be proactive. It’s in your best interest!
10. **Register each term including the Summer.** You must stay registered as an **active** student.
11. Build in review time when you submit chapters to your entire committee, and better yet, schedule a committee meeting where you can receive the feedback both orally and in written forms. This way everyone hears each other’s feedback – a real necessity especially since each supervisor is coming from a different discipline or world view. This way everyone hears each other’s feedback and consensus can be reached in person in a spirited scholarly conversation. Better for you – and better in ensuring an **interdisciplinary** rather than an uni-disciplinary thesis.
12. Once your thesis (probably by a full third draft) is approved you’ll get ready for your Oral Defence! Wonderful!