Greetings from the Director

Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith

It is indeed an honor to bring greetings as the Director of Interdisciplinary Studies. I’ve met so many dedicated and wise supervisors and numerous innovative and expansive-thinking students. It truly has been a joy. I’ve been working towards building community for the IS collegium which includes peer-to-peer components at events like orientation, information sessions and now with the help of a rejuvenated IS Graduate Student Association, we are working to solidify the peer mentoring/buddy system we sought to initiate in 2013. Now 2nd year students will make themselves available to incoming students – providing support and ideas as to how to thrive in an Interdisciplinary program.

The program is undergoing a systematic program review so do watch for several ‘asks’ coming your way into your email inbox. I ask you to help the program showcase what we do – from successful grant applications, to student profiles, faculty profiles, revamping the website and a wonderful array of workshops and events planned for the year.

I also wanted to point out that when you feel you are ‘behind’ or feeling disconnected from your studies – this is the time to connect with us. You needn’t have a form to fill in per se just to come in 😊 Rather… how about coming in to talk about your work, and get re-connected with the program and the university. It’s easy once the funding is done and your courses are done – to get busy with life and your thesis loses it’s priority space in your weekly schedule. This is normal. Let’s work together to support one another to continue working on our important areas of inquiry. And while the administrative day for the Director is Wednesdays, we can have phone meeting or try to find another time to meet. Remember, my office is meant to be a space to help you figure things out and the coffee is always on….

Cheryl. cvandaal@yorku.ca
Returning students will recall that a student survey was sent out to our community looking for your experience with IS. One really interesting question asked was what was the best thing about the program? Here are some of your thoughts:

1. Adaptability to non-traditional scholarly interests and aims
2. A committee composed of 3 experts in various fields.
3. The opportunity to combine a creative thesis with scholarly research.
4. The opportunity to design an integrated program of study.
5. The ability to create your own personalized path.
6. The opportunity to design an integrated program of study.
7. The freedom to work independently.
8. It allows students to study without little interruptions. (except those created by me 😊)

Look for more findings in the next newsletter.

I’ve always said that it takes courage to be an Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Student. You set your own path and work to bring others along…. To that end we encourage you to disseminate your work now—before you graduate. Why wait? Start getting out there and meeting with others to discuss your work. Current student MUNA ALI and recent grad NAYANI THIYAGARAJAH recently presented their film SHADEISM: DIGGING DEEPER as a world premiere at the Zanzibar International Film Festival. This documentary short is an introduction to the issue of shadeism, descrimination that exists between the lighter-skinned and darker-skinned members of the same community…. Through the eyes and words of 5 young womyn and one little girl—all females of colour—the film takes us into the thoughts and experiences of each. See www.shadeism.com

The program welcomes John Greyson (Film) and Gail Vanstone (Culture and Expression) to our executive filling vacancies for members whose term ended this summer. Both Gail and John are Interdisciplinary Studies Alum who bring important insights particularly during our time in program review. John’s work involves the use of film as a medium of social change. See https://vimeo.com/greyzone Gail Vanstone’s ongoing research frames women and the stories they tell as powerful critical tools for understanding women’s experience in a world where their voices are often suppressed. Her work involves feminist Cultural Production with an emphasis on Literature and Film, Canadian Cultural Production, Contemporary Critical Cultural Theory. Welcome aboard. We thank you.
The Role of Information and Communication Technology in Indigenous Revitalization

*International IS student Alejandro (Alex) Mayoral Banos'* research is focused on how information and communication technology (ICT) can be implemented within indigenous contexts. It is discovering how Indigenous Peoples can revitalize their Aboriginal identities through different ICT approaches and inquire whether this technological connection with identity improves the political, economic and social well-being of indigenous peoples in a university context in Canada. More specifically, an exploration is conducted about how indigenous youth can be connected to their identity through a mobile application (mobile app), and to examine the potential and scope of a mobile app focused on Aboriginal revitalization in a university context.

The thesis will be divided into two main sections. The first part will be a theoretical and historical exploration of indigenous identities and information technologies with a comparative analysis of diverse experiences with ICT and indigeneity around the world and the second part will measure the impact of ICT through the development of a mobile app for cellphones for Aboriginal students at York University (including Seneca College @ YorkU) in Toronto, Canada.

During the summer term 2015, the mobile app has been developed through the participation of an Elder and some staff members of the Center for Aboriginal Student Services at York University. The First Nations Friends App has the following appearance and it is expected to be released on September 14th, 2015.
Within the Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies, we are looking for ways to link current students, alumni and newly admitted students. Why? Because isn’t it generally a good idea to hear ideas, tips and strategies from positive, successful peers? We think so. Here’s some Sage advice from strong IS students:

**From Terri Raymond – (2nd year FT)** “It’s the beginning of the school term and the perfect time to get organized. Get out your monthly calendar, be it paper or electronic, and write down all the due dates for every component for each of your classes. Don’t forget the Interdisciplinary Studies classes too! You’ll probably find a number of items are due around the same time. It always happens that way. Just take a breath, and work your way backwards thinking about how long it will take you to complete each item. Now multiply that time frame by two. Break down all your assignments into little chunks so it doesn’t feel as overwhelming and write down each of those due dates in your calendar. You’ll be surprised at how much you can complete if you just stay organized!

**From Alejandro Mayoral Banos – (2nd year FT)** “The 7 rules of an Interdisciplinarian Student @ York University “

1) **PASSIONATE. Be Passionate about your research!** You are the one that has to lead your research throughout your stay in the university. You have to ask, push, do, make and organize the world around you to make your research happen.

2) **SUPERVISORS. Keep close relationships with your Supervisors!** You are leading a team. Your supervisors are a key piece of your research. Try to build relationship beyond your research.

3) **EXPECTATIONS. Go above Expectations!** During your courses, research and thesis try to go above expectations. You are the one that is leading and guiding the ship, try to do your best!

4) **MIDDLE. Maintain your research in the Middle of the three disciplines!** All of us, we have our favorite disciplines, but it is important to keep the research in the middle point of the three areas so your work remains truly Interdisciplinary.

5) **INTERDISCIPLINARY. Learn about Interdisciplinary Studies!** Almost at any time you are asked about your masters and research, you will need to explain what is Interdisciplinary Studies and why it is important. Keep reading about it. You are on your way to becoming an Interdisciplinary Studies expert!

6) **NOTEPAD. Always carry a Notepad with you!** The ideas are going to come up at any time and space. You have to be ready to take notes in moments that you are not expecting. It can be an electronic device, but I would suggest always to have a hard version.

7) **PROGRESS. Track your Progress with the 'Magic' Folder Program!** As a new Interdisciplinarian Student at York University, you have received a folder with all the specifications, deadlines and requirements to accomplish the program. Keep it near to track your progress.
8:30 – 9:00 Coffee and Networking – hosted by Interdisciplinary Studies

9:00 – 9:45 SEARCH BASICS: Cool Ways to do Library Research and Save your Articles with Ilo-Katryn Maimets, Science Librarian Head, Steacie Science and Engineering Library ilo@yorku.ca

9:45-10:45 – Staying on Track: Tips on a Productive Thesis Writing Process in Graduate School. With recent graduands Nayani Thiagarajah and Sarah Gebretsadik

10:45 – Break

11:00-12:00 Applying for an Ontario Graduate Scholarship or a SSHRC Grant–the Ins and Outs, with Yoko Sorono Research Officer Faculty of Graduate Studies.Special Guest Jillian Hatnean, MITACS.

12-12:20 pm Applying for Funding: A Student Voices Panel– Listen to recent INST students including Ruth Tait who have successfully secured Research Funding.

12:20 – 1:00 Interdisciplinary Studies Luncheon – hosted by Terri Raymond, President and Lucie Feldbruegge, Treasurer- Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Students Association

1:00 – 4:00 Interdisciplinary Studies Class Two (for 1st year students only)

THE WEBSITE RE-VAMP !!!

In an effort to increase the profile of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at York and within the Country, the website is being revamped to showcase the wide range of possible IS research projects. Alumni, Students and Faculty will be profiled. No doubt you’ve received the call for a profile. Please send it in to Cheryl asap so she can get it mounted. Further, a video featuring IS students and faculty will be embedded in the new website so that prospective applicants or employers can see the scope of inquiry that Interdisciplinary Methodologies enable.

Did you know that York has an Institute for Social Research? They provide 1:1 mentoring as well as workshops during the year. Our contact there David Northrup is anxious to help. Have a look at what they do and get yourself connected!

http://www.yorku.ca/isr
“Educate a man, and you educate an individual; educate a woman, and you educate a whole nation.”

Reflections on my field research by L. Rouhani

My research seeks to find answers to the reasons behind girls’ dropout rates in primary school and their low enrolment. In order to do this research, I realized I had to take an interdisciplinary approach and address the complexity of this issue through various schools of thought. My research project crosses academic boundaries by merging the discipline of development studies, women’s studies, and education to analyze the issue of gender equity in education. Given the complexity of the issue, it cannot be adequately understood from a single disciplinary perspective. By connecting various schools of thought, my research can holistically integrate the various perspectives outlined in these disciplines to better understand the barriers to education for girls.

This past semester, I spent two months doing fieldwork in Ghana in hopes of finding some answers to the many questions I had regarding gender equity in education. My fieldwork involved direct interviews with girls – over the age of 16 – in rural Ghana and time in local schools observing classroom practices for any differences that exist between the girl child and the boy child. During my time in Ghana, I had many casual conversations with different community members who provided insight on the barriers to education for rural girls and who spoke to their personal experiences with inequities. These personal connections and experiences have stuck with me and have motivated my work in understanding the role of education as a powerful instrument to aid in the social transformation of society.

With these personal encounters, conversations, and special moments at the heart of my study, I am now in the process of analyzing my field notes and understanding what the results mean in terms of progressive policy implementation. This research project hopes to make heard the voices of thousands of girls who remain silenced by conditions of inequity. Feel free to contact me at leva.rouhani@yahoo.ca

Academic Programs in Canada are required to undergo a systematic review every 7 years or so. It is our turn. In the late Spring IS executive met to review the student survey results as well as the recommendations made to the program during the last review. Since then the Director has been working to best prepare a full report of all things associated with the program. A preliminary draft will be shared with the program executive for feedback and revision. In the winter semester, program reviewers will visit the program to speak with students and faculty, so stay tuned for that. Our program routinely scores well and with the newly implemented strategies and initiatives and infrastructure during the past 2+ years, we will work hard to ensure that the strengths and potentialities of our program are well-understood during the review.

Did you know that IS students have their own lounge? Currently located in 046 McLaughlin College, you can use the computers there, rest, study or meet with your peers. You also have a mailbox there! We want to provide you with a place to land/belong as we know your 3 disciplines take you all over the university! To enter the lounge use the confidential code: 2112. The director is donating a fridge and a microwave so soon it will be even more user friendly!
The Supervisors Corner

FROM DR. NORMA SUE FISCHER-STITT: You have taken on challenging projects that require input and research across three disciplines. How you can manage this task is a fair question. As an INST supervisor, I offer the following advice: stay in touch with all three of your supervisors and don’t lose sight of your original research goal. What led you to begin this journey? What questions are driving your research? The specifics of your research might shift as you proceed through your studies, but you want the interdisciplinary nature of your investigation to remain as the basis of your work. Ongoing and regular meetings with all three committee members, individually and as a group, will help you to maintain the spirit and focus of your research.

FROM DR. LORNE FOSTER: York University’s Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) is unique not only among the programs hosted by the university’s Faculty of Graduate Studies, but also in relation to graduate programs offered by other universities in Ontario. Over the last several years, I have had the privilege of supervising several cutting-edge IS student projects. IS provides a degree of flexibility some creative graduate students need to fully flourish. IS students have the opportunity to pursue independent, innovative and interdisciplinary research, supervised by professors from three fields of study. The supervisory committee assists in the creation of a coherent plan of study and provides opportunities for critical discussion of the student’s work throughout their time in the program, to the completion of their degree. This flexible framework and the radically individualized model of IS are not without formidable challenges. IS students quickly learn that independence and innovation are best supported by effective management skills. In order to be successful, they must develop and hone their administrative coordination skills in order to organize, manage, and facilitate the academic workflow. IS students are also called upon to coordinate all aspects of scheduling and take minutes at academic supervisory meetings. While the IS supervisory committee is in charge of project pedagogy and quality control, I have found the best IS students take charge of the administrative coordination and time-management of their own program. Ensuring your committee is all on the same page and supports the course and direction of your progress is crucial for navigating your way to successful completion of an IS graduate degree.

Recent Interdisciplinary Studies Defences

Shila Khayambashi, “The Social and Cultural alienation of First and Second Generation Middle Eastern Youth: Interrogating Mainstream Bullying Discourse”


Amy Katz, “All of Us: Marginalizing Dissent in Toronto’s Jewish Community.”

Nayani Thiagarajah, “…I Can Hear Her Breathing”: Second Generation Sri Lankan Tamil Womyn Reflect on the 2009 Toronto Tamil Protests

Sandi Trillo, “Cross-sectoral Policy Coalitions: a case study of Sustain Ontario: the Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming’s efforts to reform public policy. How a policy coalition’s choices contributed to its legitimacy and influence”

Lawrie Gluck, “Ontario’s Electricity Supply Industry Before and After the Restructuring: An Economic and Environmental Analysis”

UPDATE FROM YOUR SOCIAL CONVENOR: Rebecca Barnstaple

Hi everyone! Happy First Fall to the incoming IS cohort, and Welcome Back to the rest of us! As your social convenor, I try to wrangle us all together at least once a semester to exchange ideas, tips, laughs, and generally unwind. Keep in touch with upcoming events and news on our IS facebook page - I'll send you an invite to join the group. And feel free to be in touch any time if you have an idea for an event or a suggestion about where we can party! My email address is barnstar@yorku.ca

Rebecca studies the relationship between mind and movement, her 3 disciplines are Dance, Philosophy and Neuroscience.
Welcome back to all our returning IS students, and to all those who are just joining us, welcome to the program! I’m Terri Raymond, a second year, full-time IS student, and I’m your new president of the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Students Association, ISGSA for short. We are in the process of securing a dedicated email address for ISGSA, and once we have it, Lucie, our new treasurer, and I will be updating this group throughout the year on all things YUGSA and other items we find interesting and/or relevant.

An idea we are trying out this year is the buddy system. By now, all the first year students should be buddied up with a volunteer second year full-time student. This is a very informal connection, but also very important to ensure students do not feel isolated and someone is out there cheering them on. Remember, this is a two-way street. The first year buddy can always check up on the second year buddy and ask how their thesis writing is going. ;-) Want to bounce an idea off of your buddy? Sure! Ask questions such as “how did you balance your GA work with your course work” or “I forgot. What is the code for the Christopher Innis IS study room, and where is it” are highly appropriate questions for your buddy. But any administrative questions related to the IS program should be sent to the Grad Program Assistant Fiona Fernandes and academic questions to the Director, Dr. van Daalen-Smith.

It’s the beginning of the term and soon you may feel a bit overwhelmed with your course work or your research and thesis writing. Remember to connect with each other, not just your buddies, but also people in your cohort. As was mentioned to me by a “plus one” observing everyone at our Hot Docs dinner, it is incredible the amount of support, care, and interest we have for one another’s projects and how much we want everyone to succeed. It is heartwarming and gives great hope for the future.

I wish everyone the best of luck for this year, but you won’t need it. You are all already intelligent, inquisitive, and thoughtful individuals, otherwise you wouldn’t be in the IS program. Here’s to a successful year! Terri Raymond, ISGSA President

Interdisciplinary Studies Student Accolades

Keith Francis had his Interdisciplinary Research (involving Design Architecture, Behavioural Science and Phenomenology) regarding ‘How the Experiential Narratives of Patients with Dementia Inform our Understanding of Healthcare Institutions presented at the Congress of the International Academy of Law & Mental Health in Vienna!

Keith is the student representative on the IS executive – often providing sage reflection and direction to the program. He also is a Junior Fellow with McLaughlin College and makes himself available to prospective applicants and new admits for mentorship and advice.

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 the Director, email gradinst@yorku.ca.
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. 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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**UPCOMING Interdisciplinary Studies MA DEFENCES:**

**LEVA ROUHANI:**

“*Gender in Ghanaian educational policy: parity or equity.*”

**MARAL KARIMI**:

“*Social Media or Steering Media: A critical exploration of social media use in the Iranian Green resistance movement of 2009.*”

Please check the INST website for finalized date, time and location. Students are welcome and encouraged to attend. Come and support your peers and see how Oral Defenses are convened in our program.

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**2015 Interdisciplinary Studies WORKSHOP SERIES  223 McL College**

**October 29th, 2015  9:00 – 9:45** Search Basics: Cool Ways to do Library Research and Save your Articles with Ilo-Katryn Maimets, Science Librarian Head,

9:00-9:45 *- Thesis Writing as a Creative Process: Tips on a Productive Thesis Writing Process in Graduate School. With a cool panel of recent Alumni (For 1st and 2nd year students)*

11:00-12:20 **Applying for an Ontario Graduate Scholarship or a SSHRC Grant – the Ins and Outs**, with Yoko Sorono Research Officer FGS, Followed by a student panel of successful grant applicants (for 1st year students)

**November 25th, 2015  12-200 pm**- The Thesis Proposal & Research Ethics (1st year and PT)

**December 8th, 2015  11:00 – 12:00** Deepening Your Purpose – a Workshop by INST Alumna and Coach Allyson Woodruffe ...followed by a festive Holiday Luncheon – 140 McLaughlin College

**January 20th, 2016  12-130 pm** – Convening a Successful Colloquium (2nd year students)

**February 10th, 2016  12-2 pm** – Planning your Thesis Defence Workshop (2nd year students)

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**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN Interdisciplinary Studies**
Welcome to our new 2015 Students –

Check out the wide scope of inquiries and disciplinary combinations!

Jason Bissanthe: "Bridging Modernist and Post Modernist Thought through a lens of Linguistics/Comparative Language Analysis.” (Linguistics, English, Philosophy)

Julia Bennett: Exploring Community Dance and Mental health (Dance, Neuroscience, Cinema)

Urs Dierker: Exploring the representation of dirt in popular culture and its construction as artificial memory, applied to clothing and textiles. (Film, CMCT, &)

Alexandra Fox: Exploring the contributing factors of mental health crises experienced by social justice activists with a focus on improved support. (Psychology, Political Science, Humanities)

Robert McKnight: Exploring the relationship between music therapy and healthcare systems, in order to develop therapeutic techniques that are applicable to broad patient populations. (Music, Health, Psych)

Rakhi Mutta: How Bollywood affects the sexual norms of 1st and 2nd generation South Asian girls in the diaspora. (Women’s Studies, Film, South Asian Studies, Film Studies)

Baldev Mutta: Exploring Addictions in the Punjabi Diaspora. (Social Work, Social Science, Health)

Lucie Feldbruegge – Exploring links between trauma recovery and tattooing, and will be conducting research around women’s tattooing as a tool for healing among survivors of sexual assault. (Women’s Studies, Communication and Culture, Sociology)

Hana Gartner: “A Horse/human connection: Understanding the essence of interspecies communication. (Health, ENV Studies, Animal Studies)

Ilya Berlin: Exploring ethnocentric conflicts and the applicability of the principle of self-determination in the caucuses region, more specifically; the conflicts in the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (International Law, History & Political Science)

Ruth-Anne Andrew: Exploring the use of dance to improve quality of life for adults living with a disability. (Dance, Neuroscience, Critical Disability Studies)

Maxwell Ranasinge: Interrogating socio-legal, economic and environmental implications of Corporate Irresponsibility on Chronic Kidney Disease in Sri Lanka. (Bus, Law and Environmental Studies)

Loferne Cuffy: Interrogating the combined effects of historical, systemic, interpersonal and structural trauma on the overall genetic, cognitive and psychosocial functioning of Canadian Black women. (Equity Studies, Psychology, Women’s Studies)

It was a pleasure welcoming our 2015 admits to the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. It is a privilege to be in this very unique and very different program. I especially am looking forward to working with you all. Our students go on to doing great and wonderful things. A very important word of advice to our new students is to take the word discipline out of Interdisciplinary and insert the word self before it. This program is driven by self-discipline and motivation. In order to succeed it is up to each individual to be extremely organized and proactive. The short term pain will reap great rewards in the long run. The Director and I are here to guide you academically and administratively, respectively, however it is up to you to strive for success. Also very important is checking the FGS and IS calendars daily, so you will not miss important dates and deadlines. Our website is under construction and should be up-to-date shortly. Several workshops and events are planned for this year to keep our students connected. You will gain a lot by networking with our second and third year students. I will be sending reminders of these events. A special thanks to Rebecca Barnstaple, who has agreed to be our Social Convener, for another year, and Alexandra Fox, who will be assisting her in organizing events for the IS community. Also thanks to Terri Raymond and Lucie Feldbruegge for stepping up to take on the positions of President and Treasurer for the IS Graduate Studies Association. Please connect with me if you need anything. I have an open door policy from 9:30 AM to 4 PM Monday through Thursday. Fridays are reserved for meetings. 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. I look forward to working with you all.

Fiona Fernandes