Greetings from the Director

Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith

It is indeed an honor to bring greetings as the new Director of Interdisciplinary Studies. In just six short months 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 workshops. I hope many of you will help me to build a mentoring program for this year’s incoming students in September. I also wish to reach out to our part-time students – many of whom find it difficult to come in to see Fiona or myself during the day so have launched once-a-month evening hours on the first Wednesday of the month. As well, I am exploring the creation of a web-based virtual community similar to the amazing one Environmental Studies has, where supervisory committees and students could share documents and see one another’s comments, plus get things signed and then uploaded to the IS office. We are meeting to explore this in February. As well, we have launched this newsletter to keep everyone in the loop and to create more opportunities for information sharing about all things IS. Let me close by saying a big thank you to the many students who have dropped in or written to welcome me to the role. As well, a big thank you to the new and returning executive members for their willingness to jump in and help with many pressing deadlines. To the terrific supervisors – many of whom I’ve had the chance to meet and still many more I hope to this year. I am indebted to Jamie Scott, for easing the transition and for being available with ever the sage advice. And finally, to our Fiona who is the backbone of the program. For all you do and then some… I thank you. We invite you to come in and see us! The administrative day for the Director is Wednesdays. The coffee is always on….

Cheryl.
What a monumental day January 15th, 2014 was for the Interdisciplinary Studies Community. After months of tireless work by Fiona Fernandes, the Christopher Innes Interdisciplinary Studies Student Lounge was opened! 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. A committee is working on decorating the lounge to suit the needs of our students. Dr. Innes, founder of the program provided opening remarks, as did Associate Dean Graduate Studies, Dr. Fahim Quadir. Dr. Leyton-Brown welcomed INST officially to McLaughlin College. Fiona Fernandes invited students to make this lounge their own and Dr. van Daalen-Smith officially named the lounge in honor of the program's founder. Students are asked to email Fiona for the passcode number and are asked not to share it outside of the INST community.

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 March 1st, 2014. Email submissions under the subject line “Name the Newsletter” to gradinst@yorku.ca

The program welcomes Dr. Livy Visano, Dr. Merle Jacobs, Dr. Minoo Dereyeh, Dr. Tom Cohen, Emad Zahedi (2nd year rep studying the integration of Iranian Immigrants to the GTA, focusing specifically on identity) and Shila Khayambashi (1st year rep studying Bullying and its effects on Persian youth – Criminology, Psychology, Education) to the Executive Committee. Additionally, the program welcomes back Dr. Victor Shea, Dr. Walter Whitely and Dr. Christopher Innes as ongoing executive members. To see their profiles see: www.yorku.ca/gradinst/faculty Thank you for all of your current and future work for Interdisciplinary Studies at YorkU.

**NEW EXECUTIVE MEMBERS FOR 2013-2015**

Dr. Cheryl van Daalen-Smith, GPD officially opens the new student lounge and names it in honor of the program Founder: Dr. Christopher Innes

Dr. Christopher Innes, Program Founder, Fiona Fernandes, GPA, Dr. Fahim Quadir, Associate Dean
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 26
1:30pm -2:30pm : Emad Zahedi : “Identity in Limbo: The Roles of Culture, Religion and Gender Among Iranian Immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).”

2:30pm – 3:30pm: Kaspar Saxena, “The Nowhere Man: Monster Taxonomy, Symbolic Migration and the Construction of Intersectional Outsider Images in Pre-Modern Europe.”

March 19
1:30pm – 2:30Pm: Meghan Mills, “Unsettled Resistance: Decolonizing Social Movement Theory.”
2:30pm – 3:30pm: Nayani Thiyagarayah, “...I Can Hear Her Breathing’: Second-Generation Sri Lankan Thamil Womyn Reflect on Personal Impacts of the 2009 Toronto Protests.”

March 26
1:30pm – 2:30pm: Alex Gilbert. “To Dye For:"
2:30pm – 3:30pm: Andrew Roth, "A Creative Exploration of the use of Intelligent Agents in Spatial Narrative Structures.”

April 2
1:30pm – 2:30Pm: Paul Bergmani : "Designing product experience satisfaction - moment by moment."
2:30pm – 3:30pm: Sandi Trillo, “Sustain Ontario - The Alliance for Healthy Food and Farming. How the design of a policy coalition contributes to their legitimacy and influence.”

April 9
1:30pm – 2:30Pm: Zainub Verjee, “The Making of Muslim Identity in a Canadian City: The genealogy of an event.”

April 16
1:30pm – 2:30Pm: Keith Francis, “Chasing vapors within a disappearing mist; the Dementia narratives.”
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. That’s why this year, a panel of students greeted both newly admitted students during the September program orientation session as well as prospective students during the Fall Interdisciplinary Studies Information Session. Students and alumni are encouraged to submit tidbits all year long for inclusion in your Community Newsletter.

From Keith Francis – 2nd Year PT: “My name is Keith Francis. I am a Masters Student at York University, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies. My Master’s thesis involves understanding how patient narratives have bearing on the conception of spatial realms, specifically institutions of healthcare. To those who face a multitude of coursework, a general paper, thesis prospectus, or simply seeking explanation with understanding: The world of Graduate Studies can be frighteningly large and complex. But it is my belief the depth of multidisciplinary experiences resides within the fertile forum that is Interdisciplinary Studies. Since conceptions of any kind are never singular towards a pedagogic understanding of world, where else could the merging of behavioral science, design and phenomenology be an accepted form of inquiry? Thankfully in my case it was. It’s what makes IS… well, so broadly cool…………For those of you on this wonderful journey that is INST, I offer this: Craft your knowledge council carefully, for the supervisors you choose provide the depth of knowledge and experience needed to succeed. Be entrepreneurial and immersive in your pursuits, since the preparation and experience is of inquiry and gathering. Embrace the literary journey but be inclusive of the personal experience, as IS becomes you as you of it. “

From Meghan Mills – (2nd year FT) “Getting your thesis done quickly doesn’t mean you have to sacrifice the quality of your work. Interdisciplinary Studies is all about self-discipline; force yourself to write at least 90 minutes a day. Even if, at the end of each day, you only have one or two sentences written: that amounts to a few pages a month! Most importantly: take care of yourself. Socialize in class and get to know other students – and professors! Get to know the departments of your supervisors. Everyone will benefit from close working relationships, and the quality of your work will improve dramatically. Networking is also the surest way of getting your foot through the door of professional opportunities. Everyone on your team wants to help, so let them. Part of that means taking care of yourself by being conscious of your capacity level. In other words, say, “no, I can’t right now” when you need to. You’ll be under a lot of the age-old “publish-or-perish” pressure of academia, but in the end, spreading yourself too thin and half-committing to a variety of causes (however worthy) will negatively reflect on you as an academic. Be ambitious! Be goal-oriented! Just don’t overextend.” Meghan’s work focuses on social movements in Canada and in particular, Indigenous resistance. It is her intention to complete and defend her thesis, *Unsettled Resistance: Decolonizing Social Movement Theory* in Spring 2014.
From Sue Patrick-Breit – Alumni: Successful Thesis

Writing: Process, Purposiveness, and Perseverance: Thesis writing is hard. With two theses behind me, I can attest to that fact. My recent work centred on a phenomenology of expression by way of songwriting, but a comparison with thesis writing was unavoidable. Both processes are creative, and our failure to frame academic writing in this light can impede progress. In songwriting, there is a sense that the process has intentionality, a purposiveness that one trusts even when it presents obstacles. One remains open to possibility and, eventually, something emerges that catalyzes crystallization. Though conscious intention enters in, one cannot just overtly “think” the song. Discursive discourse seems to demand that we overtly think it, but every creative process is complex and a good portion of it is not transparent (neither rooted in reflective thought nor consciously determined). On encountering the inevitable challenges of thesis writing, trust in the purposiveness of the process encourages us to persevere, to trust ourselves, to see obstacles as possible clues, and to utilize tools we might not call upon otherwise. If you have embarked on your IS Masters, this purposiveness is already evident. You are on the trail of something meaningful, something only you can realize and express. I suggest that a focus on process, purposiveness, and perseverance can help immensely.

From Zainub Verjee – 2nd Year FT: As we know our everyday reality cannot be explained only through one narrative or one discipline. IS offers an opportunity to grapple with this challenge of everyday reality in its convergence and intersections. I have seized the opportunity to present at two international conferences and found this to be an invaluable experience in furthering my own research. It provides a forum to network, understand the state of filed and receive feedback. Attending conferences has its own pedagogical value and singularly contributes to the idiom of IS.

Announcing the Inaugural
Interdisciplinary Studies/McLaughlin College Speaker Series.

With Interdisciplinary Studies Alumni & Film maker

Professor John Greyson:

“MAKING GLUE FROM MACARONI: Adventures in Interdisciplinarity at York and U of T, in Capetown and Cairo.”

Wednesday March 12th, 2014  2:30 pm

(Interdisciplinary Studies Student/Faculty Social & Luncheon first at 1:30)

140 McLaughlin College: Senior Common Room

Light Refreshments Provided.

To learn more about Dr. Greyson, visit: http://finearts.yorku.ca/about-us/our-faculty/john-greyson
NEW POLICIES IN Interdisciplinary Studies

The Interdisciplinary Studies Executive has been busy this fall as has your new director with many consultations taking place in order to strengthen our already strong program. The aim is to work towards what Dr. van Daalen-Smith calls “Creating a Climate of Completion.” To that end under the advisement of FGS and the IS executive, four new policies have been adopted that ensure decisions are made with the approval of a student’s committee and come into effect February 1st, 2014. The new/revised policies (and a brief gist) include:

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.

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: [http://www.yorku.ca/gradinst/guidelines.html](http://www.yorku.ca/gradinst/guidelines.html)

A new exciting opportunity for Interdisciplinary Studies Student LEADERS

Junior Fellow Positions

At McLaughlin College

For a while now, conversations have been going on regarding how IS students can be a part of the academic community at McLaughlin College. Past Master Dr. Ian Greene worked tirelessly to secure space both physically and intellectually for INST at McLaughlin. And now Dr. David Leyton-Brown together with the INST director are working on a pilot project to launch York’s first-ever Junior Fellows program. Junior Fellows will contribute to the robust intellectual community at McLaughlin by Mentoring the Mentors. Currently Upper level students affiliated with McLaughlin College mentor 1st year students. In this pilot project – Junior Fellows (graduate students) will mentor the upper level students. As well, Junior Fellows will be encouraged to host or plan lunch-time talks on (in our case) all things Interdisciplinary Studies.

Students wishing to self-nominate to be Junior Fellows are asked to write a letter and attach a CV and send it to Dr. van Daalen-Smith. The INST executive sub-committee on Junior Fellowships will preside over the selection of Junior Fellows.

What an excellent opportunity!!!

REMINDER FROM THE INST PROGRAM OFFICE:

*ANNUAL Academic Progress REPORT IS DUE APRIL 15TH, 2014. Students and Supervisory Committees are asked to book a meeting prior to this due date in order to prevent any problems.*

RECENT Interdisciplinary Studies MA DEFENCES:

**SUE PATRICK BRECHT:** “The Phenomenology of a Simple Song: Expression, Creativity, and the Recovery of Aesthetics”

**IAN MCLEOD:** “Exciting Instrumental Data: Toward an Expanded Action - Oriented Ontology for Digital Music Performance”
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: Working on an IS project offers unique opportunities and challenges for both supervisors and students. From my experiences as a supervisor, I can say that I have been given the chance to work for extended periods of time with colleagues from other departments: for instance, my last thesis was with two sociologists (I’m in Humanities/English). In our meetings I encountered very different ways of formulating questions and working out problems. Since the student was from a sociology background, needless to say I was often outvoted after spirited discussion; nevertheless, these exchanges were beneficial to both the supervisors and the student. On the other hand, working within the IS structure does present some potential difficulties: in particular, the co-ordination of meetings and exchanges between the supervision team, as well as between the team and the student. When working within one department, supervisors and students often encounter each other going about daily business, making possible easy checks on progress and the co-ordination of meetings. This is often not the case in IS; therefore, I think it is extremely important to establish a clear protocol early on for how exchanges and meetings are to take place. I prefer that one of the supervisors takes a leadership position in this regard; however, it is also possible for the student to take that role. Whatever the case, clear lines of communication and a set of agreed-upon procedures are essential for a successful and enjoyable project.

FROM DR. LIVY VISANO, Professor, Criminology Program, Humanities:

*A Reflection on the Collective Enterprise of Supervision.*

_Einstein_ is quoted as saying: “No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it” “Years later, I return to Einstein who noted that: “Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted”. The aim in supervision is to provide elements of a toolkit necessary to appreciate critically the cycle and circle of connectedness. The student is asked to move outside of specific disciplines and incorporate a sense of interdisciplinarity in the search for the authentic engagement. The Message in the Method: Critical inquiry consists of what is said (the message) together with how it is being said (the method). It is precisely a concern for the latter that sets this experimental and experiential project apart from other investigations. The strengths of interdisciplinary supervision rest not on any one perspective but in the collective representation of different voices and the different forms of (re)presentations. Collectively the students and supervisors demonstrate courage to be open and challenging—to connect with the subject from so many hither to neglected vantage points: Interdisciplinarity. The strengths derive equally from the authentic style of presentation—spontaneous, exciting and passionate. In this way, the supervisors and students offer a very rare, refreshing and empowering set of analytic tools with which to approach research sites. Collectively, Interdisciplinarity highlights the essential elements of critical inquiry, including: a) a commitment and conviction to appreciate the respective contributions of several disciplines; b) a courage to comprehend the relative strengths of disciplines; c) a curiosity that examines the intersectionality of disciplines; d) a series of connections to a wider set of scholars and a relatedness to Interdisciplinarity; and, e) a strength of character to be forever questioning that which is presented as a single corpus of disciplinary knowledge. A commitment to supervision recognizes the importance of intra psychic and intersubjective relations. *Intersubjectivity* is the capacity for exchange based on mutual recognition that exists in all forms of interactions. Intersubjectivity recognizes the complexity of multiple involvements with students, along with the value of incorporating diverse

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**More...REMINDERS FROM THE IS PROGRAM OFFICE**

1. The *Thesis Defence Workshop* is Scheduled for Wednesday February 12th, 2014 at 12 noon. It will run provided there is sufficient interest so students need to RSVP at gradinst@yorku.ca

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.

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**UPDATE FROM YOUR SOCIAL CONVENOR: KALEY AMES**

Join us for a Winter

**IS Social and Luncheon**

March 12th 130 in 140 McLaughlin

Just before the John Greyson Lecture!
As the GSA representatives of students of the Interdisciplinary Studies Program Sam Aria and I wish you all a Happy New Year!!! The year has started off with a bang as we finally have a room to call our own in the INST lounge in McLaughlin College. The lounge is great space to study, meet someone for coffee, conduct a research interview, and enjoy. You are probably all familiar with York University Graduate Students Association (YUGSA), an autonomous body representing full and part-time students registered at York. The YUGSA offers services to students and works on behalf of students. The body is engaged in advocacy, organizes social events, provides funding and support in a variety of ways. The GSA just hosted its Annual General Meeting and organized a discussion panel ‘Higher Education and the Austerity Agenda’. You can find more information at www.yugsa.ca. As representatives for the Interdisciplinary Program, Sam and I are part of the Council and attend meetings once a month. We oversee the disbursement of funds awarded by the GSA through their annual grant program. These funds are for academic endeavors and social events. We aim to use these funds towards a mix of events and welcome your ideas and suggestions towards making the most of our academic and social experience at York. Once again through this newsletter and regular communication, Sam and I will keep you informed about our activities and seek your input.

Best wishes for 2014!

Zainub Verjee, President, ISGSA 2012-14

UPCOMING Interdisciplinary Studies MA DEFENCES:

KELLY ARMSTRONG-BENTLEY: “Visualizing the Zoo Visitor Experience: Intersecting Space and Meaning Making.” Please check the INST website for finalized date, time and location.

Interdisciplinary Studies Student Accolades

Sue Patrick-Breit’s thesis “The Phenomenology of a Simple Song” was nominated for a University-wide thesis prize. Sue will be providing a workshop for current students. Stay posted for details!

Update about our Immediate Past Director,

Dr. Jamie Scott.

As many IS faculty and continuing students know, after handing over the reigns of the INST program, Dr. Scott was on a long-awaited vacation in England and suffered a fall. Dr. Scott is gaining strength every day, and despite remaining on medical leave for now, makes himself available to the program when questions and clarifications arise. He would appreciate a cheery note from his students as he is on the mend. Sending him best wishes for a full recovery!!!

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.
Thanks to everyone who participated in the Grand Opening of the Christopher Innes Graduate Lounge. It turned out to be a huge success and was dedicated to the founder of the Interdisciplinary Studies program. It was attended by students, Dr. Christopher Innes, Associate Dean Quadir and Dr. David Leyton-Brown, the Master of McLaughlin College. We express our gratitude to Dr. Leyton-Brown for giving us this much needed space where our students can meet, relax, study and finally enjoy being part of the Interdisciplinary Studies community, whereas before they felt isolated. We have moved into a new chapter in the program with a new Director, who is very passionate and brings so much fresh energy and strength that will catapult us forward in making Interdisciplinary Studies a program which will be recognized and sought after by future applicants who seek to customize their studies.

I also thoroughly enjoy working with our students, a great bunch, full of a joie de vivre which they apply not only to life as a whole but also to their studies. Way to go guys! Keep up the good work.

Fiona.