



# INSIDER

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# ONLINE

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A publication for faculty and staff of the WMU College of Arts and Sciences

## Doctoral Student Interviews Renowned Latin American Writer

A doctoral student in the Spanish Department, **Hedy Habra** recently received a Fellowship for Dissertation Completion and is writing her doctoral thesis on the narrative of **Mario Vargas Llosa**, one of the foremost Latin American contemporary writers. On the Nobel list for decades, Vargas Llosa is one of the leading exponents of the Latin American “Boom” alongside **Gabriel García Márquez**, **Carlos Fuentes** and **Julio Cortázar**.

His work has been translated in 32 languages. An award-winning essayist, novelist and playwright, Vargas Llosa’s novels cover a wide range of genres, from historical and political narratives to novels with lyrical or humorous overtones. He has just been granted the Maria Moors Cabot Prize from Columbia University for his exceptional journalistic achievements. Vargas Llosa is also a recipient of the most prestigious literary award in the Spanish-speaking world, the Premio Cervantes.

Habra has developed a great interest in Vargas Llosa and has published several refereed articles on some of his novels. On Oct. 19, she was granted an interview from Vargas Llosa in Georgetown where he is currently teaching as a Visiting Professor. She was able to discuss several points relevant to her thesis and address specific questions that he graciously answered in detail. This meeting was stimulating and useful for a better understanding of his work.

For her doctoral dissertation Habra has chosen a combined critical approach, which consists of the linking of the function of the visual to the concept of “small worlds” which stem from characters’ fantasies. Vargas Llosa transforms his characters into producers of short films, which multiplies the levels of interpretation and sheds light on the fictional plot, inducing reader’s involvement in the interpretation and recreation of the text. She feels that meeting Mario Vargas Llosa was instrumental in improving the depth and quality of her research and insights on his complex narrative.

For more about Habra or Vargas Llosa, visit one of the following websites:

- [www.hedyhabra.com](http://www.hedyhabra.com)
- <http://www.mvargasllosa.com/> (Vargas Llosa Official Website)
- <http://www.mvargasllosa.com/distin.htm> (Awards and Distinctions)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario\\_Vargas\\_Llosa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mario_Vargas_Llosa) (English and other languages)



Spanish Department doctoral student, **Hedy Habra** (left) after her interview with **Mario Vargas Llosa** at his home in Georgetown.

### PRISM DEADLINE NOV. 21—READER’S SURVEY ONLINE

The editors of the PRISM newsletter are looking for feedback about the publication.

The October and November issues will be combined into one publication. *The deadline for submission to the October/November issue is Tuesday, Nov. 21.* Please send your items for submission to Cheri Bales at [cheri.bales@wmich.edu](mailto:cheri.bales@wmich.edu). PRISM is not published in December. The January issue will incorporate changes and suggestions as a result of the reader’s survey.

Take the survey at: <http://survey.atis.wmich.edu/other/prism/prism.htm>.

- **Dr. Linda Borish's** documentary film, "Jewish Women in American Sport: Settlement Houses to the Olympics" has been written up in an article in "History News Network," circulated nationally.
- **Amy McGinnis**, (former MFA English student) has won the 2006 Holland Prize for her poetry collection "Cut River." which will be published in March 2007 by Logan House Press.
- **Elizabeth Kerlikowske**, (current Ph.D. student, English) will have her poetry collection "Dominant Hand" be published by Mayapple Press.
- **Bonfas Odour-Owina**, a PhD student in Political Science, wrote an analysis on the transparency of the Kenyan budget process for Open Budget Initiative 2006, a project of the International Budget Project funded by the Ford and Hewlett Foundations and the Open Society Institute. The website for the Initiative is at <http://www.openbudgetindex.org/>. The Open Budget Index was unveiled on Oct. 18. Odour-Owina also was an invited presenter at a World Bank workshop on poverty reduction at the Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore in mid-September.
- Professor Susan Pozo from the Economics Department was cited in an article appearing on the front page of today's Wall Street Journal entitled "Migrants Money is an Imperfect Cure for Poor Nations". In this article they cite research on the impact of remissions undertaken by Professor Pozo and her co-author and WMU graduate Catalina Amuedo Dorantes.
- Chemistry faculty **Elke Schoffers, John Miller, Don Schreiber, Steve Bertman, and Michael Barcelona** participated in Chemistry Day at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. The event attracted 1,700 visitors and proved to be quite an opportunity to help the public understand the roles which Chemistry plays in their lives. Children and adults were able to make their own biodiesel, make "slime", and participate in many other experiments.
- **Steven Bertman** (Chemistry) recently was appointed by the Gov. Jennifer Granholm to the Michigan Renewable Fuels Commission, an advisory group to promote the use of alternative fuels and evaluate feasible, environmentally friendly alternatives to fossil fuels.
- **Michael Barcelona** recently was reappointed to a seat on the Michigan Environmental Science Board, an issue-driven advisory group to the Governor.
- **Sisay Asefa**, (Economics) recently was invited to participate in the International Conference on State of Affairs in Africa. Dr. Asefa also moderated a plenary session on "State of Economic Development", and presented a paper on the "Political Economy of Poverty and Food Insecurity in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa", at the International Conference on the State of Affairs on Africa (ICSAA), in Boston.
- **Joe McKean** (Statistics) gave a two day workshop on "Robust Nonparametric Methods for the General Linear Model" at the U.S. Army Conference on Applied Statistics 2006, Research Triangle Park, NC, Oct. 16-17. It was jointly conducted with Dr. Jeff Terpstra of North Dakota State University. The course was interactive, using the software R. It was well received. The link to the web page for the course is <http://www.stat.wmich.edu/mckean/NC/ACAS-Course.html>
- **Nora Faires** (chair, Canadian Studies Initiative) received a State History Award from the Historical Society of Michigan for her co-authored book "Jewish Life in the Industrial Promised Land, 1855-2005," a study intertwining the story of Flint's Jewish community with the saga of this iconic boom-and-bust city. Earlier this year the book was named a finalist for an Independent Book Publishers Award (IPPY).
- **Robert E. Vann** (Spanish) was awarded \$2,000 for a site visit in March 2007 to the University of Lleida in Spain from the Haenicke Institute for Global Education.

## NOMINATIONS DUE JAN. 12

## DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARDS REINSTATED

Western Michigan University has reinstated its annual Distinguished Teaching Awards to recognize outstanding teaching, and up to three full-time members of the faculty will be recognized with the award during spring semester.

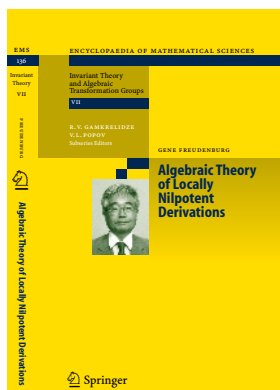
Eligible to receive the awards are full-time members of the faculty. Recipients will be recognized at the academic convocation in February and at spring commencement ceremonies in April. The awards carry a one-time cash prize of \$2,000 and a subsequent increase in base salary. Past recipients are not eligible for a second award.

**THE AWARDS CARRY A ONE-TIME CASH PRIZE OF \$2,000 AND A SUBSEQUENT INCREASE IN BASE SALARY.**

This year's nominations are due by Jan. 12. They should be submitted in the form of a letter to the Distinguished Teaching Award Committee and should include the nominator's full name and signature, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address and indicate the nominator's current relationship to WMU.

Please mail nomination letters to Distinguished Teaching Award, Office of the Provost, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo MI 49008-5204.

Contact **Katherine Joslin** at [katherine.joslin@wmich.edu](mailto:katherine.joslin@wmich.edu) with questions or comments.



## Freudenburg Book Published

**Dr. Gene Freudenburg**, chair of the department of mathematics, recently published "Algebraic Theory of Locally Nilpotent Derivations." This book explores the theory and application of locally nilpotent derivations, which is a subject of growing interest and importance not only among those in commutative algebra and algebraic geometry, but also in fields such as Lie algebras and differential equations. Freudenburg provides a unified treatment of the subject, beginning with 16 First Principles on which the entire theory is based. These are used to establish classical results, such as Rentschler's Theorem for the plane, right up to the most recent results, such as Makar-Limanov's Theorem for locally nilpotent derivations of polynomial rings. Topics of special interest include: progress in the dimension three case, finiteness questions (Hilbert's 14th Problem), algorithms, the Makar-Limanov invariant, and connections to the Cancellation Problem and the Embedding Problem.

## Veek in China; Fulbrights from WMU top Michigan's List

**Gregory Veek** (Geography) who is in China as a Fulbright Scholar writes: "I have just finished my survey of herders in Inner Mongolia, China (the first step of a long project--backed with limited NSF monies as well as the Fulbright), but after coming back to Beijing, I just found out that Western Michigan has the largest number of Fulbright Awards of any college/university in Michigan in 2006-2007. It is said here that "good news travels on foot and bad news on horseback".

The list includes:

**Jeffrey Buckner Abshear**; Art; Italy

**Igor Yurievich Fedotov**; Music; Russia

**Ann M. Miles**; Anthropology; Ecuador

**Susan Pozo**; Economics; Uruguay

**Gregory Veek**; Geography; China

**Lance Edward Weldy**; American Literature; Germany

## COM Grad Student Open House set for Nov. 8

Students and others considering graduate studies are invited to an open house and information session on the graduate program in the WMU School of Communication. The open house is from noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 8, on the 10th floor of Sprau Tower. Free pizza and beverages will be provided.

For more information, contact **Dr. Leigh Arden Ford** at [leigh.ford@wmich.edu](mailto:leigh.ford@wmich.edu) or (269) 387-3160.

To be included on this list, please send your events to Cheri Van Kuren-Bales at [cheri.bales@wmich.edu](mailto:cheri.bales@wmich.edu) or deliver to 3302 Friedmann Hall. We will run as many as space allows.

We make every effort to print accurate information and apologize for any errors. For more information about any of the events, please contact the sponsoring department.

## NOVEMBER

### 6

**Event:** Ethics lecture—Fred Gifford, Philosophy, Michigan State University, “Research On Enhancement”

**Location:** Bernhard Center Room 242

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Event:** Physics colloquium, “Liquid Interfacial Nanoscience,” Mark Schlossman, University of Illinois-Chicago,

**Location:** 1110 Rood Hall

**Time:** 4 p.m.

### 7

**Event:** Doctoral oral examination, Henda Ouda, New Tests of Univariate Symmetry Based on the Gini Mean Difference

**Location:** Alavi Commons Room, 6th Floor Everett Tower

**Time:** 9 to 11 a.m.

**Department:** Statistics

### 8

**Event:** Anne E. Polivka, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The Daily Activities of Shift Workers and their Spouses”

**Location:** 3508 Knauss Hall

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Department:** Economics

**Event:** Li-Young Lee (poetry and non-fiction), Gwen Frostic Reading Series

**Location:** The Little Theater

**Time:** 8 p.m.

**Department:** English

### 10

**Event:** Neal Goodwin, Ph.D.—Topic TBA Chief Scientific Officer, ProNAi Therapeutics, Inc., WMU-BRCC—Biological Sciences Seminar

**Event:** English Writing Conference, sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta

**Time:** noon to 4 p.m.

**Department:** English Department

**Event:** Doctoral oral examination, Lisa Lishman, Cottonlandia

**Location:** 3050 Schneider Hall

**Time:** 2 to 4 p.m.

**Department:** English

**Event:** Doctoral oral examination, Kaye Lynn Longberg, Unconfessed

**Location:** 3050 Schneider Hall

**Time:** 10 a.m. to noon

**Department:** English

### 14

**Event:** Lola Rennt - Run Lola Run (1998)

**Location:** Kohrman Hall Viewing Room

**Time:** 7:30 p.m.

### 15

**Event:** Russian Film Series, “Brother II”

**Location:** 10th floor Sprau Tower,

**Time:** 7 p.m.

Free.

### 16-17

GIS Day & Geography Awareness Week  
Events: TBA

### 17

**Event:** Biological Sciences Seminar—Torsten Stachelhaus, Ph.D., Chief Scientific Officer, AureoGen Biosciences, Inc. WMU-BRCC

### 22

Thanksgiving Recess begins at noon

### 28

**Event:** Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei to The Edukators (2004)

**Location:** Kohrman Hall Viewing Room

**Time:** 7:30 p.m.

### 29

**Event:** Len Jenkin (playwriting, screenwriting, and fiction), Gwen Frostic Reading Series

**Location:** The Little Theater

**Time:** 8 p.m.

**Department:** English

### 30

**Event:** Milan Spasojevic, Adjunct Professor, Department of Geography, WMU

**Location:** 2708 Wood Hall

**Time:** 4 p.m.

**Department:** Geography

**Event:** Russ Shafer-Landau, Philosophy University of Wisconsin at Madison, In Defense of Gay Marriage

**Location:** Bernhard Center Room 242

**Time:** 7 p.m.

## DECEMBER

### 1

**Bronco Spirit Day;** wear WMU apparel or Bronco sportswear.

**Final day to apply for April graduation.**

**Event:** Beronda Montgomery-Kaguri, Ph.D.—“Seeing the Light: Color Vi-

sion Cyanobacteria”, MSU-DOE Plant Research Laboratory, Michigan State University, Lansing, MI—Biological Sciences Seminar

**6**

**Event:** Jennifer L. Ward-Batts, Claremont McKenna College, “Household Production, Consumption and Retirement”

**Location:** 3508 Knauss Hall

**Time:** 3 p.m.

**Department:** Economics

**Event:** Liesel Litzenburger (fiction), Gwen Frostic Reading Series

**Location:** The Little Theater

**Time:** 8 p.m.

**Department:** English

**8**

**Event:** Biological Sciences Seminar, David Rueda, Dept. of Chemistry, Wayne State University, Topic TBA

**11-15**

Final Examination Week

**15**

**Event:** Board of Trustees meeting

**Location:** 157 Bernhard Center

**Time:** 9 a.m. (time and location tentative)

**16**

Commencement

**22-JAN. 1**

WMU Closed for Holiday Break

**JANUARY**

**8**

Classes resume 8 a.m.

## Curriculum Revisions Planned as Result of Faculty Proposals

Associate dean Dr. Wendy Ford reports that faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences has been quite busy in revamping curriculum. She received numerous proposals for changes in courses and programs.

Last Friday, the College Curriculum Committee acted on 44 proposals pertaining to 46 courses. These resulted in recommendations for deleting 10 courses, adding 10 courses, and revising 26 courses.

Notably, the proposals reflect genuine efforts among the faculty to address issues of recruitment and retention, including the following:

- Simplifying course descriptions to enhance student awareness of content
- Incorporating new course content that will be attractive to prospective students
- Updating courses to address emerging trends, information, and technologies
- Updating courses to better prepare students for careers in the field
- Reducing or revising course prerequisites to address only essential pre-course preparation
- Reducing course credit hour expectations, where unnecessary
- Facilitating students’ timely progress toward degree completion
- Revising courses to provide more practical hands-on experiences

- Revising courses to give more attention to professional ethics
- Responding to results of program assessments
- Responding to results of surveys or interviews with current or potential employers
- Responding to results of the graduate program review
- Addressing expectations of accreditation bodies
- Creating a limited number of new courses to address cross-disciplinary needs
- Creating a limited number of new courses to enhance program competitiveness relative to peer institutions
- Eliminating courses that cannot be offered regularly to avoid creating false expectations among students
- Utilizing limited resources more wisely to address critical needs and priorities

Beyond these proposals for course changes, Dr. Ford says she is, “already in receipt of several proposals for overall program changes at both the undergraduate and graduate level. We will be acting on these over the course of the academic year.”

She continues, “I am excited about the tremendous efforts of our faculty to enhance the quality of our programs. These efforts will facilitate recruitment and retention efforts in our college and campus-wide!”