



# Humanities and Western Civilization Program

Spring 2010

## Director's Letter

by Jim Woelfel [woelfel@ku.edu](mailto:woelfel@ku.edu)

This is my last newsletter column as director of Humanities & Western Civilization, and the most difficult I've ever had to write. I will retire on June 30 after twenty-five years of administering the program and turn things over to our new director, Professor Sandi Zimdars-Swartz. Twenty-five years is a very long "run" to try to talk about, and far too many memories crowd around me. Attempting to say anything at all has become paralyzing. When I ask, How do I begin? and What do I include and what do I leave out?, I end up with writer's block and find myself (for a change) tongue-tied.

And so I will say next to nothing—a few reflections that, however heartfelt, will probably sound banal, because they condense into tiny surface fragments all the richness that I remember and feel. I cherish the generations of people—faculty, staff, GTAs, students—who have made up the HWC community, and the fact that my job has been at a level that enabled me to lead them "from the trenches." I loved teaching the large-lecture Western Civilization classes for a number of years, and I'm still surprised and delighted when former students who were "faces in the crowd" of 240 when I was their instructor personally introduce themselves to me. I've enjoyed the many challenges and opportunities for growth and change over my years as director, and the satisfactions of helping the program and its people move in new and often unanticipated directions. I've learned a great deal about myself—positive and negative—that I never would have discovered had I not taken on the directorship. And I've been continually renewed and strengthened in my conviction that what we do in HWC—interdisciplinary and text-focused humanistic teaching and learning—belongs at the very core of a liberal education, and that a liberal education is the best education for a lifetime.

Directing Humanities & Western Civilization for so long has been both exhilarating and exhausting, rewarding and punishing, but happily not in equal measure. The achievements and the rewards have made the often-relentless responsibilities well worth the effort—although as I near the end of my tenure I can't deny that I'm looking forward eagerly to turning over the exhausting part to someone else! Above all, I leave the position with a profound sense of gratitude to the people of HWC, past and present, for the high privilege of directing a program that has meant so much to so many. Thanks for the memories!

*Editor's note:* Jim will go onto half-time phased retirement in August of 2010.

### Dale Urie Receives Prestigious Award

HWC full-time lecturer, **Dale Urie**, accepted the award of Outstanding Woman Educator during an April 8 ceremony sponsored by KU's Emily Taylor Woman's Resource Center and the student Commission on the Status of Women. The press release announcing Dale's award stated, "Students consistently rank Urie as a favorite instructor and as one who has influenced their decisions to major in history or the humanities." In his nomination letter **Jim Woelfel** praised her for "the superb quality of her teaching and the impact she's had on the lives of her students."



Dale teaches Western Civilization I and II and also coordinates the Western Civ Honors Program. In addition, she regularly offers HWC/EURS 500, Studies in Europe Today, and HWC/EURS 430, European Civilization in World Context: Islam in Europe.

Congratulations, Dale!

## First Mid-America Humanities Conference a Success!

On Saturday, April 3, HWC hosted the first Mid-America Humanities Conference, a day-long forum for interdisciplinary research for undergraduate and graduate students, ably organized by **Chris Forth** and **Marika Janzen**. The theme of the conference was “Downward Spirals? Thinking about ‘Crisis’ across the Disciplines.” Sixteen presentations addressed topics pertaining to our crisis-ridden world, including:

- Barack Obama: Messiah or Anti-Christ?
- Frayed Borders: Illegal Aliens and Invasion Fiction
- Identity Crises: Holocaust Survivors and Palestinian citizens of Israel
- Natural Catastrophes: Prairies in Peril and Mississippi Floods

A keynote address was delivered by Dr. Tom Lutz, University of California, Riverside. Known for his interdisciplinary work, Professor Lutz has written numerous books, including *American Nervousness 1903: An Anecdotal History* (1991); *Crying: The Natural and Cultural History of Tears* (2001); and, most recently, *Doing Nothing: A History of Loafers, Loungers, Slackers and Bums in America* (2006).

HWC faculty and GTAs who supported the conference as moderators and commentators were **Ashley Acosta**, **Antha Cotten-Spreckelmeyer**, **Diane Fourny**, **James Quinn**, **Dale Urie** and **Sandra Zimdars-Swartz**. HWC GTA **Steven Tucker** presented his paper “Preventing ‘A Manhood Dishonored’: Gender Usage in British Invasion Fiction, 1871-1918.” **Jim Woelfel** offered the conference’s opening remarks.

## Casagrande Retires

by **Jim Woelfel**

HWC Professor **Pete Casagrande** will retire at the end of the spring semester having completed his fifth year on half-time phased retirement. Through a long career Pete has been as fine a faculty citizen of this university as one can find. He achieved a national reputation as a scholar, especially with his work on the literature of Thomas Hardy.



He has been an outstanding and beloved teacher by generations of KU students at both the undergraduate and graduate level—as I can attest from the many unsolicited letters from former students over the past several years—and won Fink and (twice) Mortar Board awards. Pete also put in several years as a conscientious and capable administrator, serving as an associate dean in the College. He joined our faculty in 2000 moving 75% of his appointment from English and adding luster to HWC. He was actively involved in teaching and service, creating a new course, HWC 565, Literature of Human Rights, which took its place as a core course in our Peace & Conflict Studies program, and faithfully and enthusiastically taught Western Civ semester after semester.

Many thanks, Pete, for all you’ve given to HWC and the university, and best wishes for a well-deserved and enjoyable retirement!

*Editor’s note:* Pete Casagrande can be reached at [pjc@ku.edu](mailto:pjc@ku.edu).

## New HWC Major Tracks to Begin in Fall

by **Antha Cotten-Spreckelmeyer**, [arcs@ku.edu](mailto:arcs@ku.edu)

The Humanities and Western Civilization Program announces three new and revised major tracks to take effect in fall 2010. Students will have the opportunity to enroll in the Humanities major with an emphasis in Foundations of Law in Society, Civilization in a Global Context, or World Literatures.

The Foundations of Law in Society track may help students identify an interest in further study of the law by providing background on the origins of legal traditions in a global humanistic context. This track features a new course, *Introduction to Law and the Legal Profession*, as the foundation of an interdisciplinary curriculum that includes a wide range of course choices from Humanities and Western Civilization, History, Political Science, and Peace and Conflict Studies among other fields. The newly revised track, Civilization in a Global Context, replaces the former Western Civilization track in the Humanities

major, and studies aspects of both western and non-western civilizations. It is designed to provide students with knowledge of diverse cultures and with methods for investigating their differences and commonalities. The World Literatures track of the Humanities major focuses on the study of both western and non-western literatures to provide students with knowledge of diverse literary traditions. Students may enroll in a variety of courses in British, American, European and world literatures to complete this emphasis.

All three tracks require a common core of HWC courses that includes: *HWC 110/ 111 Introduction to Humanities*; *HWC 325 Theory and Method in Interdisciplinary Studies*; and *HWC 424 Senior Seminar*. Students are encouraged to fulfill their remaining major hours with interdisciplinary courses from the Humanities and Western Civilization Program and from other humanities-area fields, and are required to complete a capstone essay during their senior year that integrates two or more fields of study.

# More HWC News...

New Course—Spring 2010

## HWC 206 Contemporary Western Civilization

Line # 87634  
MWF 1:00-1:50, BA 301  
Instructor: Rick Botkin



A sequel to the Western Civilization courses which offers the opportunity to examine influential works of literature, philosophy, history, and political thought written since the end of World War II.

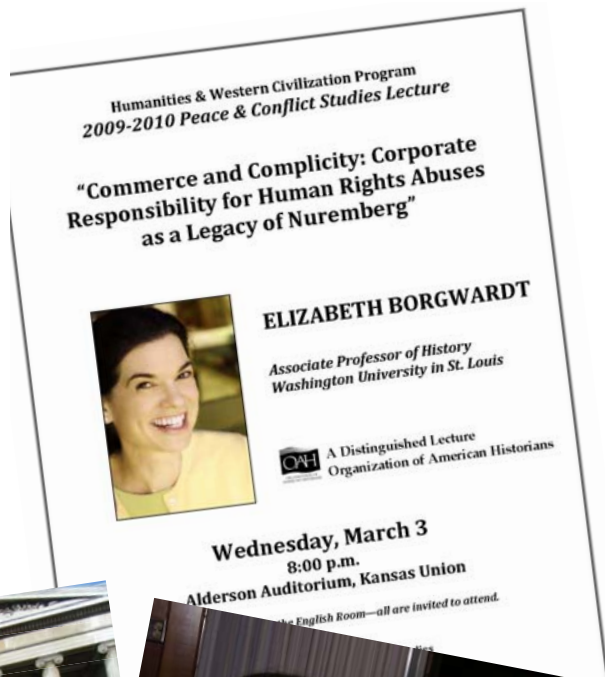
In keeping with the decline of colonialism and the growth of global and multicultural civilization since 1945, the readings of the course are selected from a wide range of sources.



Incoming HWC Director Sandra Zimdars-Swartz with Jim Woelfel



Dean's Instructor Ryan Gaston and daughter Ainsley



Fall 09 HWC Semester Abroad Director Nan Harper with EURS 302 instructor, HWC GTA Marwa Ghazali in Brittany



HWC 205 Spring Break in London at the British Museum



Newlywed GTAs Franzi Jung and Derek Richards

University of Kansas  
Humanities and Western Civilization Program  
1440 Jayhawk Blvd., Room 308  
Lawrence, KS 66045-7594

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JOIN US TO RECOGNIZE JIM WOELFEL UPON HIS RETIREMENT  
AS DIRECTOR OF THE HUMANITIES & WESTERN CIVILIZATION PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MAY 13, 2010  
4:00 -6:00 P.M.  
ADAMS ALUMNI CENTER

WE WILL HONOR JIM WITH A BOOK OF TRIBUTES. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO  
CONTRIBUTE A SHORT PIECE DESCRIBING YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH JIM OR HIS  
INFLUENCE ON YOUR EDUCATION AND CAREER, SEND IT TO AN ADDRESS BELOW.

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