

SCHOOL OF LITERATURES CULTURES AND LINGUISTICS

A NEWSLETTER COVERING THE
UNIT FOR CINEMA STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF THE CLASSICS
PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE AND WORLD LITERATURE
DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
DIVISION OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
PROGRAM FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE
AND DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH, ITALIAN AND PORTUGUESE

CENTER FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES TO BE ESTABLISHED AT ILLINOIS

By Andrea Lynn
Humanities Editor, U of I News Bureau

The U of I announced on June 13 in New York that it is establishing a Center for Translation Studies.

Richard Herman, the chancellor of the Urbana campus, announced the creation of the center during a reception for another translation unit at U of I, Dalkey Archive Press.

Dalkey Archive Press moved to the Urbana campus last December. It is the leading independent publisher specializing in literary translations of contemporary international titles, mostly fiction.

The French Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York hosted the event to celebrate its co-publication with the press of *As You Were Saying: American Writers Respond to Their French Contemporaries*. The book, released July 1, is a collection of short stories written by some of the best contemporary U.S. and French authors.

The new center will be “a new academic entity—a place where scholars and students will study, perform, and enhance the complex act of transforming a literary experience created in one language into an equivalent experience in another language,” Herman said.

“The knowledge of art and business will be one of Dalkey’s vital contributions to the center, giving students a real-world experience available nowhere else.”

Douglas A. Kibbee will serve as interim director of the center, under the auspices of the newly formed School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Kibbee, a professor of French and linguistics at U of I, is Director of the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics.

“There are three or four significant translation programs in this country,” according to Kibbee, “but what we are proposing is significantly different from any of them.”

In addition to offering literary translation in conjunction with Dalkey and the English department’s Creative Writing Program, the center “will create other connections with our ‘full-service’ University—such as machine translation with computer science, simultaneous interpretation in conjunction with the Fire Service Institute, and business translation in conjunction with

the College of Business as well as international journalism courses,” Kibbee said.

Also, the University Library is digitizing translated works “as a way of supporting the study of translation, including multiple translations of a single work,” he said.

“With the presence of Dalkey, we also will be able to give our students a chance to work on the business side of translation—editing and publicity, for example—and bring to campus a number of translators for short master classes,” Kibbee said.

The center also will offer major international

conferences on translation issues and create a publication series on issues in translation.

Dalkey Archive Press is a nonprofit organization whose mission is “to promote international cultural understanding and provide a forum for dialogue for the literary arts,” said John O’Brien, the director of the press.

Dalkey publishes 30 titles a year in English and has more than 350 books in print, and its

website has an annual readership of 600,000.

Dalkey has received many honors, and its authors have won the Nobel Prize, the National Book Award, the Pulitzer Prize, and the National Book Critics Circle Award.



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

With the opening of the school year in August came the opening of a new school, the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics. The 11 units of the School teach more than 30 languages, and promote understanding of the literatures and cultures that use them. Our distinguished faculty conduct exciting research on language and culture, and impart their own excitement to hundreds of graduate students and thousands of undergraduates every semester.

The formation of the School is the culmination of a long process begun in the late 1990s. Through administrative consolidations realized in this way, we have been able to put more money towards academic endeavors, creating new courses and hosting scholarly conferences.

In particular, the School encourages collaborations across departmental boundaries. Within the past two years we have been able to fund dozens of projects and conferences that have enriched the intellectual life of the building and the campus. In the past year we have hosted conferences on South Asian Linguistics, Violence in German Literature, Czechs in the New and Old Europe, among many others.

In May we held our first joint graduation in the Smith Music Hall, next to the Foreign Languages Building. Retiring professors Hans Hock (Linguistics and Classics) and Michael Palencia-Roth (Comparative and World Literature) shared the wisdom from their careers and their hopes for our graduates. A lovely reception followed in the atrium of the Foreign Languages Building.

Now we have embarked on a new endeavor that unites our interests in literature, culture and linguistics: the creation of a Center for Translation Studies. Part of this project has been to welcome the Dalkey Archive Press to campus. The Dalkey Archive Press is a leading publisher of contemporary fiction and poetry from around the world. It has already been instrumental in creating internships for our undergraduates and graduate students, introducing them to the world of publishing. With these efforts, we hope to train the next generation of translators and pursue our mission of understanding the world, and bringing about world understanding.

It's an exciting time to be in the Foreign Languages Building, as we work more closely together and learn from each other. I am honored to be the first director of this new School, and look forward to working with many people to realize the promise of this adventure.

Best wishes,
Doug Kibbee

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School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
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SWEDISH PLAYWRIGHT STRINDBERG FRUSTRATED BY 19TH CENTURY GENDER CONVENTIONS, SCHOLAR SAYS

By Andrea Lynn
Humanities Editor, U of I News Bureau

Misunderstood genius or misogynist? Playwright or novelist? Alchemist or artist? Beyond being the unquestioned father of modern prose drama—who was the real August Strindberg, and what was he really trying to communicate?

A University of Illinois Germanic languages and literatures professor who grew up reading Strindberg in her native Sweden has taken on the alternately venerated and vilified Swedish playwright (1849-1912) as her intellectual challenge.

Anna Stenport, the director of the University's Scandinavian studies program, has devoted seven years to deconstructing and deciphering the brilliant, prolific, and controversial writer of Stockholm and Paris. August Strindberg shocked audiences and readers with his raw realism—explicit references to lust and bodily functions, for example, and unapologetic writings on politics and religion—and still had time to marry three times; father five children; become an accomplished artist and photographer; and even dabble successfully in alchemy, spiritualism, and the occult.

Stenport, a co-editor of a published book of essays about Strindberg, is finishing her own study of his writings about Stockholm and Paris. She argues that like some of the other major writers of the time, including Henrik Ibsen, Strindberg was driven by his “extreme frustration with the stifling gender conventions of the late 19th century.”

“I believe that at the core of his writing, Strindberg was rebelling against those conventions, while at the same time trying to work out new paradigms for how men and women could coexist, especially in marriage.”

However, unlike Ibsen, who also was interested in exploring gender relations but opted for “a kind of consensus or rational and well-tempered

approach, Strindberg held out as a rebel, a radical, a challenger, and perhaps also as a more interesting writer.”

But he paid a dear price for his positions, Stenport said. Not only was he essentially kept out of the drama canon over the decades, but he also was not particularly well-received by his readers, including literary critics.

“I would say that his views on gender are the white elephant in his works,” said Stenport.

“Everyone knows that he had some peculiar ideas. In a play like *Miss Julie*, for example, he appears to be wildly misogynistic. The female protagonist in that play comes across as a neurotic, a not very serious character who ends up killing herself.”

While critics have homed in on Strindberg's portrayals of women, Stenport and the authors in the new book of essays are trying to look at the writer more broadly—“not only at his portrayals of women, who do indeed seem overly neurotic, but also at his construction of his own masculinity as an authorial persona, for example.”

The book, co-edited with Anna Cavallin and titled *Det gäckande könet: Strindberg och Genusteori* or *The Vexing Sex: Strindberg and Gender Theory*, was published by Symposion, a Swedish press.

According to Stenport, Strindberg is for a small group—scholars of literature in Sweden and readers of Swedish and Scandinavian literature—“very much a canonical figure, but he is mostly known in Sweden as a prose writer, a novelist.”

However, for international audiences, Strindberg is better known for his key dramas,

Miss Julie and *The Father*, among them—both regarded as his naturalist plays; and for *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*—his expressionist or modernist plays.

In the United States, on the other hand, Strindberg is read less widely than Ibsen—mainly in university theater departments and in Scandinavian studies classes. He also is occasionally performed in the “off-Broadway, non-mainstream theater,” Stenport said.

“What I do in this book is offer a reading of the prose that's very little known outside of Sweden. Strindberg—yes, he may have been the ‘father of modern drama,’ but he wrote a very substantial amount of prose in both Swedish and French,” Stenport said.

In her manuscript, Stenport compares Strindberg's Swedish and French writings and looks at “how he conceived of himself as a cosmopolitan living on the European continent

for a large portion of his life.” He typically wrote about Stockholm when living in Paris and about Paris when residing in Stockholm, she said.

“He has a complementary—I'm not going to say radically

different—view on turn-of-the-century European modernity,” Stenport said.

“He's writing from the provinces, in a sense, trying to break onto the stages of Paris at the end of the 19th century, and also trying to present Sweden to Europe in a way that was different—that didn't include the old stereotypes.

“He was trying to remake Sweden, trying to turn its image into one that was more cosmopolitan and modern.”

To Stenport, Strindberg ultimately offers “an alternate understanding of European modernity, particularly about how we should think about the function of European cities.”

“He's a fascinating person—mad and prolific—one of those authors that you feel you can never totally get a handle on.”



ALUMNA FEATURE

A PERFECT BLEND: ANN ABBOTT AND COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

By Rick Partin

In August of 2004, Ann Abbott began teaching Spanish 232, "Community-Based Learning." At the same time, she also forged a community partnership with the East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center (ECIRMAC).

More than a year later, Abbott started thinking she could turn her involvement in community-based learning into a possible enterprise—that is, fusing learning Spanish with community service.

"I had two thoughts," she recalled. The first was "Think big, Ann!" and the second was, "I am an entrepreneur."

So, she wrote out a one-page business plan.

Today, Abbott, an assistant professor of Spanish at the U of I, is a board member of ECIRMAC and has developed a community-based educational program that involves numerous local, statewide, and regional organizations and more than 100 student interns.

When Abbott started the program with ECIRMAC, 12 students signed up to serve as volunteer interns. Today, ECIRMAC continues as a local partner, along with several other community organizations, including Champaign County Health Care Consumers, Booker T. Washington Elementary School, Central High School, Boy Scouts in Shadowwood, and Child Care Resource Services. This fall she'll add new community partner, Habitat for Humanity.

Abbott also has worked with organizations in the state of Illinois, from Carbondale, to Rockford, to Chicago. In addition, she works with the College of DuPage, which has a Business Development Center. The common denominator for all these organizations is a need for Spanish speakers.

Her job is to connect them. She says what she strives to do is match the students' needs to those of the organizations.

Interns in the program take Spanish 232, "Spanish in the Community," the pre-requisite for Spanish 332, "Spanish and Entrepreneurship," one of five business-related courses the department offers undergraduates. Interns work for eight weeks in the summer, earning \$10 an hour.

Abbott grew up in Clay City, a small town in southern Illinois. She said that she drew part of her inspiration for the community-learning program from having grown up in a small town where being involved in the community was an expectation. Also, her father and husband have owned their own businesses. These influences, coupled with Ann's interest in social justice and international politics, spurred her to take action. "I could take that passion and say, 'Oh, I can do something about that.'"

For many of the interns, their involvement with the local refugee center has been an eye-opening



Like many students who return from study-abroad and want to maintain their Spanish, Kyle Benefield used his Spanish to lead Booker T. Washington Elementary School (Champaign) in important academic activities.

experience. Many of them have told Abbott that prior to their internship they had no idea what the life of a refugee and immigrant was like.

From Abbott's point of view, such experiences are "a way of doing 'study abroad' at home."

She added that for students it's a one-on-one experience in which the political often becomes personal. For many students, this personal encounter is life changing. For instance, one student who interned and who had planned to become an accountant changed her mind and told Abbott that she now intends to work only for non-profit organizations.

Abbott also works with the College of Business' Social Entrepreneurship Summer Institute (SESI), a new summer program that provides 10 local non-profit groups with an introduction to basic business principals taught by faculty from

all three college departments as well as outside consultants and faculty from other University colleges.

Abbott said her involvement with the College of Business was "one of those rare moments" when the interests of business and humanities coincided. She said that her perspective as a humanities professor, as well as the experiences of the humanities students, is genuinely valued by her business counterparts.

The internships have obviously paid dividends for U of I graduates. When Alison Koch, a Spanish graduate, went through job interviews, all of the organizations asked her whether she had served as an intern. Koch believes the internship experience is what got her hired, according to Abbott.

Christine Jones, who majored in finance, took the entrepreneurial course and, in the summer of 2006, served a business internship with La Voz Latina in Rockford, Ill. The organization's mission is to promote the progress and serve the needs of the Latino community in the Rockford area. Jones soon became immersed in their community efforts. "She really went for it," Abbott recalled.

The professor said that in the coming years she will be able to secure external grant monies and hire staff. At present she's reached a ceiling on being able to administer the programs she has set into place. But she would like to build a certificate program so that students can develop a portfolio, take the requisite courses, and, in the end, get a certificate,

which would help them in their professional job searches.

She says that the beauty of the program is that it brings students together to discuss their experiences. Every week students select a topic for reflection. One week they write a one-page reflection; the next week they film a five-minute web-cam talk—in Spanish.

"The students don't get academic credit for the work," Abbott explained. "They get it for learning, and that happens when they sit down to do their reflections."

"The program has so many possibilities—teaching, research, and serving an internship and getting paid. Service, teaching, research—it's what you're supposed to be doing at a university."

CHINA'S AGGRESSIVE FILM INDUSTRY TIED TO NATION'S RISE TO POWER

By Andrea Lynn

Humanities Editor, U of I News Bureau

Just so there's no confusion: Current Chinese cinema is no crouching tiger, no hidden dragon.

Alternately absorbing and being absorbed by Hollywood, China's film industry is attacking, highly visible, and "one of the most crucial aspects of China's rise to power in the 21st century." So says the author of a new book that analyzes the complex and ever-morphing, robust and transnational state of modern Chinese cinema.

According to Gary Gang Xu (pronounced GONG shoe), author of *Sinascapes: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, several converging forces—transnationalism, privatization and the lifting of strict government controls, a strong pan-Chinese film tradition, and the current Hollywood penchant for remaking East Asian films—have made China "one of the film production centers of the world."

Xu, a professor of cinema and Chinese studies at the University of Illinois, coined the word "sinascape" to describe the complex web of transnational film production and consumption centered on and in China. In his wide-ranging study of transnational Chinese-language films and filmmakers from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, Xu also analyzes the most critical issues in the industry today: copyright, digital technology, global networking, cross-cultural viewing, and piracy.

Pirating Hollywood blockbusters is "rampant and tolerated," according to Xu.

"Piracy serves as a form of local protectionism," he wrote, "preventing the flood of Hollywood films into Chinese theaters."

But because most Chinese people prefer watching television programming for free, piracy of films has helped create "a strange yet

functional symbiosis" between the Chinese film and television industries.

"Piracy makes most Chinese films unprofitable, but television series—soap operas, comedy sitcoms, martial arts melodramas, etc.—based on pirated films are immensely popular and profitable."

So, Xu explained, a film director makes an

excellent film, it is quickly pirated, and "thus attracts no interest from state-controlled distribution chains." He then makes an "eponymous" TV series based on the film, often using the same cast.

"The film has already served to advertise the TV series, TV stations purchase the series, and the director reaps healthy financial gain."

TV series pirating, often done on condensed DVDs that hold 10 times more data than regular DVDs, "is even more ruthless and brutal in China than the piracy of films."

Another significant phenomenon Xu examines is Hollywood's remaking of Chinese films—a trend he describes as "Hollywood's way of outsourcing."

"Sooner or later, the unions within the Hollywood system will come to realize the outsourcing nature of remakes. But for now, remakes are making Hollywood leaner, stronger, more efficient, more profitable, and more dominant than ever. This is an irreversible but well-disguised trend."

Xu explained that by changing the ethnicity of the characters from Asian to Caucasian, the remakes are "completely severed from the original ethnic soil and become solely the product of Hollywood. Caucasian faces in the remakes cover up the significant contributions of East Asia as the provider of intense labor that the film industry requires."

One example is China's *Infernal Affairs*, starring Tony Leung Chiu-Wai and Andy Lau Tak-Wah, which became Hollywood's Oscar-winning *The Departed*, starring Matt Damon and Leonardo DiCaprio.

With all this cultural exchange, Chinese cinema and Hollywood are "increasingly absorbing each other and the boundaries are increasingly blurred."

"Cinema consumption used to follow a unidirectional trail of popularity: whatever proved successful in North America would surely be welcomed in East Asia as long as those countries opened their markets to Hollywood," Xu wrote.

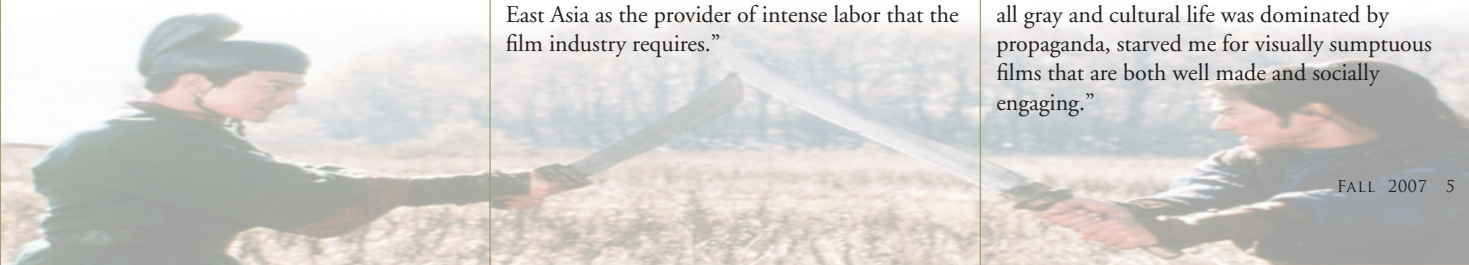
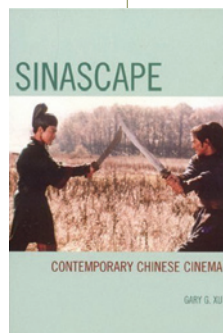
"Now, thanks to transnationalism, the trail has traffic in both directions: Whatever proved successful in East Asia would most likely succeed in North America as long as the original ethnicity is changed to that of Caucasian."

Xu also found other considerable differences between Chinese and American film tastes. Hollywood emphasizes the happy ending, which is "never a chief concern for Chinese films;" Hollywood is "American first, global second," while Chinese cinema is "global first—gaining international recognition—and Chinese second;" action is foremost for Hollywood, martial arts for Chinese; cinematic realism ranks high for the U.S., while social realism—reflective of social issues—ranks high for Chinese audiences.

While China's film aesthetics likely will cast "increasing influence on Hollywood," Xu thinks China is unlikely to surpass Hollywood in the foreseeable future. "Some studios may be bought by Chinese corporations, but they will remain 'Hollywood,' and continue doing what Hollywood does best: the star system, mega productions, glossy pictures."

Born in Nanjing, China, Xu was trained as a literary critic at Columbia University. Studying modern literature, he said he "could not dodge the question of the increasing dominance of cinematic visuality on world cultures during the 20th century."

"Also, my experience growing up during China's cultural revolution, when colors were all gray and cultural life was dominated by propaganda, starved me for visually sumptuous films that are both well made and socially engaging."



NEWS BRIEFS

U OF I STUDENTS SHARE AWARD FOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON MESOPOTAMIAN CYLINDER SEALS

Undergraduate students at the University of Illinois accomplished a rare feat by winning first prize in the Humanities Division of the University of Southern California's Undergraduate Research Symposium for a joint U of I/USC Cylinder Seal Project.

As a joint project under the supervision of **Wayne T. Pitard** (Program for the Study of Religion), Bruce Zuckerman (USC), and Lynn Swartz Dodd (USC), undergraduates from the U of I and USC worked together during the 2006-2007 academic year, in collaboration with the U of I's Spurlock Museum, to photograph and study the museum's collection of Mesopotamian cylinder seals.

According to Pitard, the award is a unique case in which non-USC students share such an honor. "This is, in fact, the first time that an inter-university project had been submitted to the symposium. It has been an extraordinary project in every way, and the students from both universities certainly deserve this recognition."

The photographic work for the project has been performed under the auspices of the West Semitic Research Project (WSR) at USC. WSR has developed a new technique for photographing cylinder seals that provides a 360-degree image of the carved surface, thus allowing scholars to examine the artisan's work directly, alongside the impression that was made from the stone.

A website displaying the results of the students' research is currently under construction. The website is designed for use by both scholars and non-specialists. To view the link, visit: <http://inscriptifact.ncsa.uiuc.edu/cgi-bin//narrative>.

LINGUISTICS STUDENTS WIN INTERNATIONAL AWARD FIRST TIME OUT

A team of University of Illinois students won a rigorous and prestigious international computational linguistics competition the first time they entered it.

The competition, which is held every three years, is sponsored by SemEval, an international workshop on semantic evaluations, under the auspices of the Association for Computational Linguistics.

The U of I students won first place for their task on the "Classification of Semantic Relations Between Nominals."

Nineteen teams entered the competition, including university and company teams from Australia, Europe, and the United States. SemEval announced the results of the competition at the annual meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics, held in late June, in Prague.

The winning team developed software to solve their particular task on semantic parsing between nominals, or nouns. Their task

involved identifying the underlying meaning encoded by two nouns in a sentence.

The winners included **Brandon Beamer**, undergraduate in linguistics and computer science, who enrolled in U of I's doctoral program in linguistics in Fall semester 2007; **Suma Bhat**, electrical and computer engineering; **Brant Chee**, library and information science; **Andrew Fister**, linguistics; and **Alla Rozovskaya**, linguistics. Their team leader was **Roxana Girju**, professor of linguistics at U of I.

Girju said that working with students from different departments was a very good idea, and may have been what allowed the U of I students to win.

"It proves one more time the interdisciplinary nature of this area of research," Girju said, noting that several of the students work at the University's Beckman Institute, and that the team used Beckman's resources in their endeavor.

INTERSECTION OF HUMANITIES AND TECHNOLOGY FOCUS OF FRENCH CONFERENCE

How and where the humanities and high-tech will meet in the future was the topic for a conference hosted by the Department of French in April.

The conference was titled "Interfaces and Visualizations: A State-of-the-Art Conference on the Humanities in Post-Human Times."

According to organizer **Lawrence R. Schehr**, a professor of French, the term "post-human" in the title of the conference refers to the fact that because humans and machines today "meet every second, we are all, humanists and non-humanists alike, some combination of human and machine."

He said the goal of the conference was to "explore the interfaces between the humanities and high technology."

Presenters examined "the ways in which emerging technologies can literally and figuratively illuminate and illustrate cultural artifacts, as well as the ways the humanities can pursue traditional and not-so-traditional subjects," said Schehr.

"This conference will not only produce new knowledge but also develop innovative approaches to the issues and problems that are central to having an ongoing dialogue about humanities and high-tech at the U of I and elsewhere," he added.

Alan Liu, a professor of English at the University of California at Santa Barbara, gave the keynote lecture, entitled "Imagining the New Media Encounter."

Other presenters included **Dmitri Williams** and **James Hay** of the U of I's speech communication department; Bertrand Gervais, literary studies, University of Quebec at Montreal; and Lucy Suchman, sociology, University of Lancaster, England.

TWO SYMPOSIA AT U OF I TO CONSIDER RELIGION AND VIOLENCE

The "darker side of religion" in the United States was put under intense scrutiny during symposia sponsored by the Program for the Study of Religion and held on campus in February and April. The February symposium, *Saving Faith/Killing Faith: A Religious History of Violence and Restraint*, examined the history of violence with "particular attention to the myths of nation that have created and spread violence," said **Jonathan Ebel**, one of the organizers and a professor of religion at U of I.

Speakers included Martin Marty, a professor emeritus of the history of modern Christianity at the University of Chicago.

The April symposium explored "Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Violence, Faith and America."

Both meetings featured some of the prominent names in a variety of disciplines, Ebel said, including American religious history, ethics, law, philosophy, and theology.

The symposia were sponsored by the Illinois Forum on Religion in America, an organization Ebel and his colleague **Richard Layton** founded at U of I from their academic unit, the Program for the Study of Religion.

Reflecting on this year's topic, Ebel said that "the diversity that has always characterized religious life in this part of the world can and has sparked acts of hatred and destruction as well as acts of compassion on American soil.

"It seemed to us a good thing at this juncture to ask how religion and violence have interacted over the course of American history and to see what the tools of different disciplines have to say about the darker side of religion in this stunningly religiously diverse and religiously engaged nation," Ebel said.

SLAVIC PROFESSOR ORGANIZES SOLZHENITSYN CONFERENCE

Richard Tempest, a professor of the U of I Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, organized a University of Illinois conference recognizing Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's contributions to modern Russian literature, history, and political life.

Natalia Solzhenitsyn, the wife of the Nobel Prize-winning author, presented the keynote talk at the Ralph and Ruth Fisher Forum.

Also participating in the conference, entitled "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as Writer, Myth-Maker and Public Figure," were Solzhenitsyn's sons, Ignat and Stephan, who chaired panels. Ignat is the music director of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia; Stephan is an urban planner in Moscow.

The Fisher Forum, which took place June 14-17, is one of the highlights of the annual Summer Research Laboratory on Rus-

GRADUATION 2007

sia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia, hosted by the U of I's Russian, East European and Eurasian Center. The forum is named for the summer lab's founder, U of I emeritus professor of history **Ralph Fisher**, and his wife.

The lab draws scholars from throughout the world to conduct research and take part in other scholarly pursuits. In addition to providing scholars with access to the U of I Library, which houses the largest Slavic collection west of Washington, D.C., the lab features workshops, discussion groups, and film screenings.

Tempest, who is currently writing a book about Solzhenitsyn, said the 88-year-old remains active and continues to write but rarely travels far from home. Instead, Tempest said, Solzhenitsyn's wife is his public face.

"For me, Solzhenitsyn is the 20th century—at least the Russian 20th century."

CINEMA PROFESSOR COMMENTS ON 'SEVEN SAMURAI' DVD RELEASE



A professor of cinema studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is one of five film scholars weighing in on a DVD release of *Seven Samurai*.

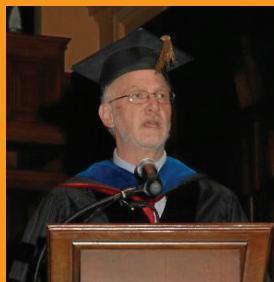
David Desser, the director of U of I's Unit for Cinema Studies, did a 40-minute audio-track commentary for Criterion's three-disc set of the Japanese classic, which was released in September 2006.

Desser is an expert on Asian cinema and on various film genres, including horror, melodrama, science fiction, war, and the Western. This is his second DVD commentary for Criterion. He did the entire commentary for *Tokyo Story* a few years ago.

Seven Samurai (1954) tells the story of 16th-century Japanese villagers, who hire seven Samurai warriors to protect them from invading bandits. The film was restored using high definition digital transfer. It appears on the first two discs, as do the audio commentaries. The third disc contains the video documentary, including the new on-camera interviews with the scholar commentators.

Desser, who is editor of the National Film Traditions Series, published by Cambridge University Press, said that while many DVD commentaries feature the director and/or other members of the cast and crew, "Criterion has specialized in a kind of 'scholarly' approach, featuring academics and serious film critics doing the commentary."

He believes that such an approach is likely to reach a "far wider audience than merely students in film classrooms."



CONTROVERSIAL CATHOLIC THEOLOGIAN DELIVERS 2007 THULIN LECTURE

Professor Charles E. Curran, Elizabeth Spurlock University professor of human values



at Southern Methodist University, delivered the 2007 Thulin Lecture at the University of Illinois, in March, at the Spurlock Museum.

Speaking on "The Church and Politics," Curran discussed various roles of the church—as teacher and motivator, provider of direct services to the poor, moral model, and advocate for the poor.

Over a nearly 50-year career, Curran has disagreed with official church teachings on a wide variety of issues, including abortion, contraception, divorce, homosexuality, and moral norms.

In 1986, as a result of Curran's condemnation by the Vatican, he was fired from his teaching post at Catholic University of America.

Curran, a Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Rochester, N.Y., is the author, co-author, or editor of more than 40 books, the most recent of which, *Loyal Dissent: Memoir of a Catholic Theologian*, was published last year.

The U of I Program for the Study of Religion sponsors the Marjorie Hall Thulin Lecture.

Thulin, a 1931 alumna of the U of I, is a resident of Glencoe, Ill. After graduating, she had a successful career in advertising; she also has published poetry and children's literature, and edited a book about the history of Glencoe.

Thulin, who attended this year's lecture, endowed a fund that established the Marjorie Hall Thulin Scholar of Religion and Contemporary Culture. Through the endowment, an internationally recognized scholar of religion and contemporary culture is annually chosen to reside on the campus for several days, giving talks and meeting with faculty and students.

School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

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