



College of Humanities
Dean Elizabeth A. Say,
Ph.D. CSUN Alum 1981
English and Religious
Studies



Asian American Studies
Department Chair Teresa
Williams-Leon, Ph.D.

The College of Humanities

Message from Humanities Dean Elizabeth A. Say

Welcome to the first CSUN **College of Humanities Newsletter!** A direct effort to build stronger relationships both within the College and with our friends in the greater San Fernando Valley Community, the **College Newsletter** will serve as an essential tool in communicating with all of you about the exciting things happening in the College. In this issue, you'll meet all of the department chairs and program coordinators within the College, cutting-edge scholars and educators who have helped the College to grow into the second largest college at CSUN.

One way for you to see some of the great work going on in the College of Humanities is to attend one of our many public events throughout the year. If you're interested, please visit the calendar section of the College's website at <http://www.csun.edu/~humndean/cgi-bin/index.php>

On the back page, you'll find the College's Mission Statement. One of the results of a year-long strategic planning process, the Mission Statement encapsulates all that the College both stands and strives for. We hope you'll let us know if we're meeting our goals.

Meet our Department Chairs and Program Coordinators

The Asian American Studies Department

Professor Teresa Williams-Leon returns this semester from maternity leave for her third year as department chair for Asian American Studies. Her first project will be to spearhead a department-sponsored panel discussion titled "The Hapa Debate" next semester. The term "hapa," which comes from the Hawai'ian language, is a word for the offspring of mixed marriages between Hawai'ians and other ethnicities, Williams explained. Controversy arises because other ethnicities in the state have appropriated the term to refer to children of non-Hawai'ian mixed ethnic heritage. "Name, power, identity – who gets to do the naming is so important," Dr. Williams-Leon said said.

A major academic focus of the department includes this idea of inter-ethnic heritage. Classes study topics such as Asian American sexuality and multiracial identity. According to Dr. Williams-Leon, "This notion of multiple identities [is] a major subject matter, both

personally and academically, for our department."

Associate Professor Edith Chen was recently awarded a grant from the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation to continue gathering and archiving the ethnography, "Telling Our Stories: Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley." This project is a joint effort between the faculty and students of the department and the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center. It started two years ago when valley resident Nancy Takayama approached the College with an idea - to gather and exhibit an archive of oral histories and photographs of Japanese Americans from the Nisei generation, those who lived through early 20th Century California ethnic repression and the era of the internment camps of World War II. Members of this traditionally reticent subculture often remained silent about their difficulties, not even passing on these stories to their

own children, Dr. Chen explained.

An exhibition of the archive just returned from the San Fernando Museum of Art and History in July, its eighth presentation, with more to come. Dr. Chen will use the grant to widen the scope of the archive, gathering stories about the historical interactions between the Japanese American and the Mexican American communities in the San Fernando Valley. Eventually, the archive will become available to the world online as part of the San Fernando Valley Digital Library at Oviatt Library.

The department graduated 23 majors last spring, the most in its history. And department members have jointly written a book. Edited by Professor Glenn Omatsu and Dr. Chen, and published this summer, the textbook "Teaching About Asian Pacific Americans" contains chapters written by 10 faculty members of the College.



**Central American Studies Program Coordinator
Beatriz Cortez, Ph.D.**

The Central American Studies Program

Late on a scorching summer afternoon, the office of the Central American Studies Program was still buzzing as Dr. Beatriz Cortez enthusiastically spoke about the topic foremost on her mind. Dr. Cortez, the coordinator of the program, was pleased to report that the Provost's office had recently approved the creation of a Central American Studies major – the first academic concentration of its kind in the United States.

The Central American Studies program, which has grown substantially since a minor was introduced in the program in 2002, now has more than 500 students enrolled in its 19 classes and over 100 students who pursue the minor.

An estimated 2,500 students at CSUN have their roots in Central America. Dr. Cortez, however, is adamant that her program will not reinforce a

common misconception in North America about people from that region - the mindset that groups a wide diversity of cultural identities under the single, territorial label "Central American." Course descriptions reflect an emphasis on these regional and cultural differences in such subject areas as literature, the history of various diasporas, and even revolutionary movements.

The program includes formal academic interaction with the Central American population in Los Angeles. In conjunction with Central American Research and Policy Institute, students assist in the collection of a virtual historical archive dedicated to preserving the cultural and historical heritage of immigrants to the United States. The archive consists of photos and documents as well as oral histories, and the

students participate in the archiving process as part of their regular class work.

Students in the program are deeply involved with political projects focusing on the region. In July, 20 members of the Central American United Student Association participated in a political action rally held at the Los Angeles Convention Center, inspired by the huge public gatherings in the spring of 2006 in support of immigrants all over the country. The CSUN contingent assisted with a voter registration effort, Dr. Cortez said.

The program also publishes a student journal, **Mandrágora**, named after the plant with a human-shaped root. This beautiful little journal of student work is in its third issue and recently moved into a new office in JR 219.



**Newly elected Chicana/o Studies Department Chair
David Rodriguez, Ph.D.**

The Chicana/o Studies Department

After three years as the Associate Chair of the Chicana/o Studies Department, Dr. David Rodriguez was recently named chair. The second-largest department in the College of Humanities, Chicana/o Studies was founded in 1969 as a response to a history of Chicano student activism. The department offers a major, a double major, a minor, and a social science option (which is currently being revised to meet the new state standards).

An exciting addition to the department curriculum is an experimental class, taught by Professor Yreina Cervantez,

focusing on the Day of the Dead (an ancient Mexican festival, when families remember their dead and celebrate the continuity of life). More than a history class or a study of cross-cultural ideas on and about death, the class includes art projects and other hands-on cultural interaction. "[The study of] mores on death is significant because of different Western and non-Western indigenous perspectives," Dr. Rodriguez said.

In September, Dr. Rodriguez addressed the National Latino Congreso in Los Angeles. Later this academic year, the

department will share in the presentation of a Youth Leadership Conference, to be co-sponsored by the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (M.E.Ch.A.) and Chicano Studies.

Founder of the Chicana/o Studies Department at CSUN, Professor Rudy Acuña, though now retired, continues to lead the field. The sixth edition of his widely used textbook, "Occupied America," is being prepared for publication, and he will also soon complete an on-line, 2,000-page anthology on the general subject area of Chicano/a Studies.

The English Department

“The English Department is increasingly interested in service learning and community-centered learning,” said Dr. George Uba, chair of the largest academic department in the College of Humanities.

The English Department, with more than 100 professors, 26 teaching assistants, 600 undergraduates and another 200 graduate students, is keenly focused on developing projects that get students out of the classroom and into the community. For example, a writing internship for English majors who are not interested in becoming teachers has been revitalized, and this fall approximately 18 students have enrolled in a prerequisite professional writing class (English 407, Composition and the Professions). This spring they will be placed in community-centered

businesses that need experienced and stylistically engaging writers.

“Any time you can bridge the divide between the community and the campus – that’s a good idea. If [students] can think well and they can write well, there are lots of opportunities out there for them, but they don’t know that,” Dr. Uba said.

The administrative challenge of multiple intern sites requires strong leadership. The Director of the Intern Program, Professor Kent Baxter, said that last spring a dozen students worked at placements in publishing, archiving and promotion, some even getting their first bylines in periodicals.

This fall semester also marks a departmental reemphasis on the Four Year Integrated Program in the English Department, under the

direction of Professor Sharon Klein. In the program, freshman students can complete their undergraduate subject requirement for a B.A. and their teaching credential in only four years, thereby avoiding the usual extra year of classes and educational loans necessary to earn the credential needed to enter the teaching profession.

Currently, the program is not available to students transferring to CSUN from community colleges. In order to help those transfer students, the department is designing an ambitious two-year program with the same goal of providing a credential with the degree.

“We hope to expedite transfer students’ progress to a degree and a credential in only two years,” Dr. Uba said.



**English Department Chair
George Uba, Ph.D.**

How Can You Help Support The College Of Humanities?

- **Volunteer! Call the Dean’s office at 818/677-3301 for opportunities.**
- **Attend events! Check the calendar on our website and give us your feedback.**
- **Join our college email list! Send an email to noreen.galvin@csun.edu**
- **Donate! All donations go directly into programming for the college.**

**Mail to:
College of Humanities
18111 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330-8252**

The Classics Program



**Classics Program
Coordinator
John Adams, Ph.D.**

“The Classics are the foundation of most disciplines in Western Civilization,” says Dr. John Adams, the coordinator of The Classics

Program. An inter-disciplinary minor, the multicultural Classics Program focuses on Classical Greek and Roman Civilization.

The Program seeks to provide students with a firm grounding in the basic principles and themes on which those civilizations were built. These principals and themes, which were drawn from a number of ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians, Semitics, and Thracians, were ultimately transmitted to European and Mediterranean cultures for more than 1500 years, and serve as the intellectual and moral basis for the modern

world.

Students hoping to pursue graduate studies in History, Art History, Philosophy, and English need a firm grounding in the Classics to fully understand their specialties. And though the number of students interested in the Classics may ebb and flow, their importance never changes.

“It (the Classics) upholds values that modern society no longer cares about,” says Dr. Adams. “But those values don’t lose importance just because they’ve gone out of fashion.”



Humanities Program Coordinator Richard Mitchell, Ph.D.

The Humanities Program

The Humanities Program at CSUN, run by Program Director Dr. Rick Mitchell, embodies an interdisciplinary approach to education that allows students to examine and illuminate the breadth of human experience. In the Humanities Program, students have a large degree of flexibility and input into their course material, allowing them to call on the interdisciplinary nature of the program to design a degree that addresses their individual interests.

The Program, which graduated 20 majors last spring, was recently awarded a grant from the California Council of Humanities. Written by Program Director Rick

Mitchell, the \$15,000 grant, part of the California Stories Program, will fund a program that gives students the opportunity to gather an archived ethnography of the personal histories of Californians who have endured natural disasters. Work began this summer, as students interviewed refugees from Hurricane Katrina, and will continue as course work this fall, eventually to be archived in Oviatt Library.

The grant will also fund the production of a play, "Natural Disaster," written by Dr. Mitchell and based in part on the ethnographies the students have collected. The play is

scheduled for production at the Theater of Note in November. For more informational, call (818) 677-3422).

This fall, the Program initiates a colloquium of two senior-level classes, which will share some speakers and course objectives. One of these, a senior-level seminar taught by Professor Adam Swenson, will focus on the topic of pain and the body, including torture. The other class will be a senior-level English seminar taught by Dr. Mitchell, which will address the literature of disaster. "We hope to do this sort of thing every fall," he said, hoping to elevate the Program's profile on campus.



Jewish Studies Program Coordinator Jody Myers, Ph.D.

The Jewish Studies Program

The Jewish Studies Program at CSUN is interdepartmental. Its curriculum is made up of courses from both the College of Humanities and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Subject material can include anthropology, cultural history, and sociology, as well as classical Judaic texts and the American Jewish experience.

The program, which is run by Dr. Jody Myers, has offered a minor in Jewish Studies since 1969. This academic year, however, marks a milestone. The first B.A. degrees will be awarded in the Spring of 2007 for a major in Modern Jewish Studies, which focuses on Jewish history and culture since the French Revolution.

The Jewish Studies Program sponsors a great deal of campus/community interaction, ranging from a film and public lecture series to an

upper level course "Service Learning in the Jewish Community."

The Jewish Studies Film Series, a partnership between the program, area synagogues, and Laemmle Theatres, has been a rousing success. The 2006-2007 series began with a free screening of the film "Paper Dolls" at two area theaters on September 27, 2006. (For more event information, call (818) 677-3007 or visit the web at <http://www.csun.edu/jewish.studies/calendar.html>)

In "Service Learning in the Jewish Community", students study and participate in paid internships of 100 hours with a non-profit agency in the Jewish community. The internship program is supported by the Zimmer Family Foundation. This fall, Dr. Myers will begin a new project with local faith-

based action group Valley Interfaith Council on the topic of the afterlife as viewed by different religious traditions.

The Program also plans to run a provocative class this year, funded by the "1939" Club, titled "Teaching the Holocaust and Genocide."

In order to capitalize on its ongoing relationships with and activities for the community, the Jewish Studies Program has put together a Community Advisory Board. Made up of leaders from the Jewish community in the San Fernando Valley and greater Los Angeles, the board will play an important role in the growth of the Program, and almost \$150,000 in pledges have already been made by members of the board to support endowments within the Program.

The Liberal Studies Program

The Liberal Studies Program, which graduates more teachers in a year than all of the other Cal State schools combined, is the largest major in the College of Humanities with almost 2000 students. Most of these students are planning to be teachers, and take the Liberal Studies major as undergraduate preparation for a teaching credential.

Part of CSUN's overall commitment to teacher preparation (as evidenced by the University's selection in the Carnegie Foundation's "Teachers for a New Era" initiative), this year the Liberal Studies Program has added an important new element to its mission. Literacy Scholars for the Future of Los Angeles (LSLA), a special concentration for 15 juniors a

year, will focus on teaching tomorrow's teachers how to recognize and overcome literacy issues with their future students.

"The whole point [of this pilot program] is to give our students a depth of knowledge about literacy issues, coupled with a depth of fieldwork," says Dr. Elizabeth Adams, who serves as the Program Director for Liberal Studies.

LSLA will present an upper-level literacy theory class in conjunction with a classroom practicum in the fall term. In the spring term, a third class will focus on literacy issues related to family and culture in conjunction with the pupils and their families.

Usually, students on the

elementary and special education tracks get their practical teaching experience as seniors interning in the Integrated Teacher Education Program. LSLA will provide one-to-one teaching experience a year earlier, giving students the opportunity to work with literacy-challenged kindergarten, first- and second-graders, valuable experience which the students will then be able to carry with them both in their internships and ultimately in their own classrooms.

Dr. Adams hopes that the program, which is currently supported by a grant, will become self-sustaining and replicable. "We would like to use [this program] as a model to do the same kind of thing in math," she says. "There's a real crisis in numeracy learning."

The Linguistics Program

The Linguistics Program at CSUN occupies an unusual niche. Due to its status as a program and not a department, it has no full-time faculty members. The program, located in the College of Humanities, draws professors from five other disciplines on campus – Education, Psychology, Communications, Philosophy, and the College of Extended Learning.

The program might appear from the outside to be a mish-mash of disciplines and approaches, but it accomplishes as much as many full departments, offering an undergraduate minor, a major, a certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language,

and a Masters Degree. Last spring, the program graduated 15 M.A.s.

Program Coordinator, Dr. Sabrina Peck, comes from the College of Education, where, she studies teaching strategies for elementary classrooms in which multiple foreign languages are spoken, an important subject in the Los Angeles area. Dr. Peck characterizes the Linguistics Program under her direction as a balance of applied and theoretical linguistics. On the applied side, for instance, Professor Sharon Klein has initiated Project Shine, a program for teaching English-illiterate neighborhood elders who are preparing for

citizenship. TESL certification classes are also a form of applied linguistics, she said. On the theoretical side, Professor Evelyn McClave is studying the role of spontaneous gestures in the co-expression of thought in both spoken and signed languages. One theoretical class bears the imposing title, "Seminar: Cognitive linguistic interface of cognition, experience and grammar in natural discourse."

"You never know exactly what particular language question the linguist you're talking to might be asking," Dr. Peck said. "But you don't have to worry about 'watching your tongue' – or your hands. We'll do that for you."



This summer, Elizabeth Adams, Ph.D. (pictured above) was appointed Director of the Liberal Studies program after filling the post for two years as interim director.



Linguistics Program Coordinator Sabrina Peck, Ph.D.



Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures Department Chair Brian Castronovo, Ph.D. and Professor Aki Hirota, Ph.D.

The Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures Department

Here's an interesting fact that well reflects the mission of the College of Humanities – a substantial number of the Spanish teachers who occupy positions in the Los Angeles Unified School District received a B.A. in Spanish through the Spanish Subject Matter Program for the Single Subject Credential in the Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures Department (MCLL) at CSUN.

MCLL has been at the forefront in preparing language teachers for many years, and this year the department has taken that commitment a step forward. Department Chair Brian Castronovo and

Professor Aki Hirota have instituted a new major, Language and Culture, which combines comparative cultural studies with an advanced level of language proficiency. The new major will play an integral role in preparing CSUN students for careers in international business, politics, or advanced degrees in international studies

“Language is inextricably linked to culture,” Dr. Castronovo said. “Multicultural familiarity will help graduates to compete in a multicultural work environment. Other universities offer International Relations or Comparative Culture as an academic track,

but few, if any, include an advanced language proficiency component in the mix,” he explained.

The MCLL Department has also recently affiliated with a CSU consortial program that will feature five less commonly studied languages – Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Hindi and Russian. With funding from the Federal government, the National Strategic Language Initiative (NSLI) will develop intensive summer language instruction at several California State universities in the L.A. basin. The CSUN campus will host the Russian component in the summer of 2007 or 2008.



Philosophy Department Chair Greg Velazco y Trianosky, Ph.D.

The Philosophy Department

In his fourth year as Chair of the Philosophy Department, Dr. Gregory Velazco y Trianosky speaks with pride about the virtues of the teachers in the Philosophy Department. “The great secret strength of CSUN is how many of the faculty have been the first in their families to go to college,” he said. “No matter the ethnicity, if you have had that experience, you understand our students.”

During Dr. Velazco's tenure as Chair, the Philosophy Department has taken steps to attract a wider cross-section of this student body. A year ago, the department departed from its traditional academic curriculum, expanding the variety of courses available to majors. Along with the

restructuring of course requirements, the department has also added such diverse classes as the Philosophy of Race and Sexual Ethics, and is looking for others. Judging from enrollment figures, the new approach is working.

The department now has more than 100 majors, the most in the history of the major, while also attracting new students from outside the major. A Business Ethics class has grown in the past four years from 30 students to 400. “Other business schools teach ethics internally,” Velazco explained, “but we have the opportunity to get business people thinking ethically.”

Velazco characterizes the CSUN student population as

similar in background to that of the faculty. “Our students don't come from backgrounds where they live and breathe a professional atmosphere,” he said. “They don't think to go to graduate school. Many of them don't even know the door to an academic career is open to them.” To counter this lack of knowledge, the Philosophy Department will sponsor faculty-led workshops this fall entitled “How To Go To Graduate School For Free.”

For Dr. Velazco, it's all about making philosophy applicable for everyone. “For me,” he said, “the challenge is to take this fine, fine philosophy department and help it serve our communities more effectively.”

The Religious Studies Department

During an interview this summer in an office filled with moving boxes, outgoing Chair of the Religious Studies Department Dr. Patrick Nicholson reflected with satisfaction on the results of the department's five-year review by the CSUN Provost's Office. Not only were there high words of praise for his department and staff but, perhaps more unusually, there were no criticisms, he said. The reviewers described the program as "a strong one, which can build from its strengths."

Dr. Nicholson is leaving a larger department behind him than when he became chair. There are now nine full-time faculty, 12 part-time faculty, 60 Religious Studies majors, 35 minors, and 1800 students enrolled in classes.

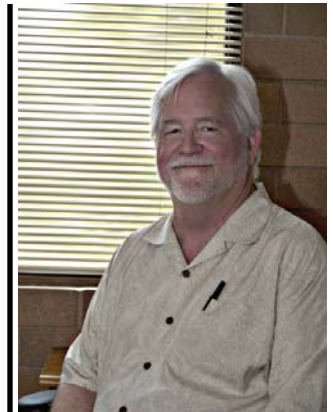
Appropriate to his final hours as chair, Dr. Nicholson reflected on the big picture. "When I first started into the field as a Catholic, I was really surprised that so much of the academic approach came out of a liberal protestant context. With the diversification of faculty all over North America, that's really changed," he said. This fall, the department initiates a search for a full time specialist in Islam.

This fall the Religious Studies department chair is filled by Dr. Phyllis K. Herman. Nicholson will continue to teach part-time on campus and maintain his role as the faculty advisor to the Muslim Student Association. And, along with Professor Jody Myers of the Jewish Studies Program, Nicholson will become involved with the Valley

Interfaith Council, an ecumenical body of religious and community leaders that addresses community issues. Nicholson has been elected to the board of directors for the Valley Interfaith Council, the first professor from CSUN to occupy that position.

Also this fall, the Religious Studies Department will continue to invite the public to showings of popular films that are course material for the Religion and Film class taught on Monday evenings by Professor Vincent Coppola.

The department will also present two public colloquia to be offered by new faculty. The topics covered will include the Buddhist culture and religion and feminist perspectives on household politics in early Christianity.



Outgoing Religious Studies Department Chair Patrick Nicholson, Ph.D.



Incoming Religious Studies Department Chair Phyllis Herman, Ph.D.



Newly elected Women's Studies Department Chair Nayereh Tohidi, Ph.D.

The Women's Studies Department

This semester, Dr. Nayereh Tohidi returns to campus after a yearlong Keddie-Balzan fellowship at U.C.L.A. (where she was teaching and writing a book about the women's movement in Iran) to take over the Women's Studies department chair.

This department, which started as a program in 1975 and became a department in 1995, is one of the oldest and largest Women's Studies concentrations in the country and has matured into one of the most well-respected as well. "Our department emphasizes an interdisciplinary cross-cultural approach to gender studies," Dr. Tohidi said. "We try to be very inclusive in our teaching and research."

This cross-cultural inclusivity comes directly from the diversity of the faculty. In a department with six full-time faculty members, professors come from Uganda, Honduras, Iran and India, and also represent African-American and Chicana culture. These differing viewpoints lead to richly diverse course materials, including such topics as: *Women and Gender in Islamic Societies*, *Queer Studies*, *Women and Violence* and a new course, *Women and Global Peace*.

Dr. Tohidi is particularly proud of a senior seminar named Women as Agents of Change. "We emphasize the concept of agency and change. Our students learn not only critical thinking but also how to

become responsible citizens," she said. "This is how we try to keep our students connected to the community and value it – to keep our university from becoming an ivory tower."

On Saturday, October 7, the department will host the Seventh Biennial Phenomenal Woman Reception and Awards Fundraiser. The award ceremony, which serves as a fund-raiser for the department, brings important female role models to campus to interact with students. This year, awardees are Congresswoman Maxine Waters, journalist Patt Morrison, visual artist Tina Allen, activist Angela Sanbrano and Elizabeth Berry, cofounder of the Women's Studies Program.

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The College of Humanities Mission Statement

The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a
community of learners who ...

- Explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;
- Critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;
- Contribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and
- Act as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy.