**From the Director’s Chair**

**Lucy Fischer** (Professor and Program Director)

With the Fall of 2004 a new academic year begins, and we are pleased to be offering a series of stimulating courses. On the undergraduate level, in addition to our general requirements, we will offer classes this Fall on such topics as History of American Film, Hitchcock, Photography and its Social/Political Contexts, Film Theory, Film Noir, The Film Western, Science Fiction Cinema, Japanese Culture and Society through Cinema, Polish Cinema, Russian Film, Czech and Slovak Cinema, Francophone Film, and Television Analysis. On the graduate level, we are offering Film History/Theory, Genre and Film, and Ethnographic Cinema. The specificity of these topics makes clear the depth of our curriculum.

We are also extremely pleased to welcome two new faculty members to the interdisciplinary Film Studies program (whom we hope to “profile” in some detail in future issues). **Dr. Mark Lynn Anderson** (Department of English) comes to us most recently from Florida Atlantic University. **Dr. Xinmin Liu** (Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures) comes to us most recently from Yale University.

Finally, we are very proud to unveil a newly revamped and revised Film Studies Website which Andrea Campbell and I have worked on for the past year. Please visit it at [link].

(Continued on page 2)

**Graduation Reception**

On April 25, 2004, the Department of English and the Film Studies Program co-hosted a reception for their undergraduate graduating students. The event complemented the University-wide Commencement Ceremony. The funding for the reception came from FAS Dean **Patricia Beeson**, with the expectation that this reception will become an annual affair. The event took place in the lobby of Posvar Hall from 9:00A.M. – 11:00A.M. The area in Posvar Hall was festooned with balloons, movie posters, and a standup cutout of *The Three Stooges* dressed in graduation gowns and mortar boards, which made for many a humorous photo opportunity.

The attendees included English Department Chair, **David Bartholomae**, Film Studies Director, **Lucy Fischer**, Film Studies Associate Director, **Vladimir Padenov**, some English and Film Studies faculty, graduating students and their families. The reception was a wonderful opportunity for the English Department and the Film Studies Program to recognize their majors as well as to have students, parents, and faculty gather in a social setting. David Bartholomae announced

(Continued on page 2)
Faculty Profile

Keiko McDonald

“I’m like wine. Good teachers/researchers and fine wine need time to develop,” says Keiko McDonald, Professor of Japanese Cinema and Literature. McDonald began her full-time teaching career at the University of Texas at Austin in 1974; her Japanese film course was the first to be offered at an American academic institution. The following year she joined the faculty of East Asian Languages and Literatures, the same year that the Asian Studies Program received a $1 million endowment from the Japan Iron and Steel Federation for the development of Japanese Studies.

As one of the leading scholars in Japanese cinema, McDonald teaches a number of Japanese film courses. Among them are Japanese Culture and Society through Cinema, Westerns and Samurai Films, and Japanese Literature on Screen. Her film courses close quickly, and students sometimes wait up to three years to take her comparative film class on westerns and samurai films.

McDonald was a nominee for the Chancellor’s Distinguished Teaching Award and a recipient of the 1998 Asian Studies Teaching Excellence Award and the 2002 Tina and David Bellet CAS Teaching Excellence Award. She has also written extensively on both Japanese literature and cinema. Her major books include Cinema East: A Critical Study of Major Japanese Films (1983), Mizoguchi (1984), Japanese Classical Theater in Films (1994) and From Book to Screen: Modern Japanese Literature in Films (2000). She has also co-edited Nara Encounters (1997) with Professor Thomas Rimer, a colleague at Pitt, and recently completed two books—Reading a Japanese Film: (under contract from the University of Hawaii Press) and The World of Hiroshi Shimizu, a Forgotten Veteran of Japanese Cinema.

McDonald is currently working on a book about Japanese women directors—a project supported by a Fulbright Senior Research Fellowship and a Japan Foundation Fellowship.

For many years, Dr. McDonald has served as academic advisor for Japanese majors. A number of her advisees are currently in Japan, participating in the Year-In-Japan Program.

As an avid athlete, McDonald has run more than thirty marathons. Her passion for running has ancient roots: the hope of having “a sound mind in a sound body.” McDonald believes that teachers owe their students an appearance of balance. “A good humor and self-discipline, no matter how dark the day or strained this or that temper or ligament,” she says. One student has described her as “the happiest professor on campus.”

As an enthusiastic angler, McDonald has written many articles for Japanese fishing magazines such as Fishing Sunday and Anglers. As a regular contributor to The Epic World, she has also written about intercultural exchange between East and West. McDonald also had cameo roles in two films shot in Pittsburgh: Ron Howard’s Gung Ho (1986) and George Miller’s Lorenzo’s Oil (1992).

Graduation (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

...the names of each attending student and awarded each graduate a bound certificate of accomplishment. Afterwards, everyone mingled and partook of the refreshments offered. It was a lovely affair and just the beginning of what should become a highly anticipated, annual event. Many thanks to Jen Florian for all her hard work.

Director’s Chair (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

www.pitt.edu/~filmst, and give us any feedback you think appropriate.

Have a good Fall!
Internship Opportunities

The Film Studies Program internship program has just gotten a boost with the recent appointment of Ellen Bishop as the undergraduate advisor. Bishop, who received her MFA in poetry in 1987 and her PhD in 1994, both from Pitt, has been a visiting lecturer since 1999.

“The program needed someone in a central position with a sense of what’s going on locally in the film industry,” she says. “So I have taken on that responsibility, and now all the undergraduates who want internships have to come through me first. It gives the students a point person to rely on who has the time and knowledge.”

Students will still have to register for their internship through the Office of Experiential Learning, but now they have a touchstone in the program to whom to go to for help, advice, and placement.

Bishop, who is teaching Introduction to Film Genres and Film Westerns this fall, has helped to place students in local television stations such as KDKA, cable stations, and smaller suburban stations. She sees an advantage to picking a smaller company with which to intern because it gives a student a better chance to try out different jobs.

“One student recently completed an internship with a Bethel Park station,” she says. “It was great for him because he was able to do everything, like filming footage for background stories and shorter spots. These jobs are very valuable—you get hands-on experience, and there’s room for small mistakes.”

Bishop is currently working through a long list of contacts, getting more information on positions at all kinds of companies, including some surprising candidates such as Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild and the Carnegie Museums. Both arts organizations employ production crews for various events and activities, including art openings, artist spotlights, and concerts. Bishop also works with The Sprocket Guild, a Pittsburgh-based filmmaking organization, to find short-term assignments for students.

Bishop is also collaborating with the Film Studies advising office to move students through production courses as quickly as possible in order to get them involved in internships sooner in their academic careers.

“Companies are interested in students with basic production skills,” she says. “I strongly recommend taking an internship to all students. Even if you’re going to go on to graduate school and study film and not going into the technical side of film, an internship gives kids a better sense of filmmaking from the other side of the camera and screen.” Contacts: ebishop@pitt.edu - 412-624-6512, Office of Experiential Learning - 412-624-6828.

Internship Profile

Senior fiction writing major and 2003-04 Pitt-in-Hollywood club co-president Melanie Kirschbaum spent the summer of 2003 in Los Angeles as an intern for Mosaic Media Group. The company has produced films such as Cool Runnings, 12 Monkeys, City of Angels, Three Kings, Scary Movie 1 & 2 and Elf and is currently developing a six-film package for HBO. Recently, Melanie took some time to answer a few questions about her experience, her plans for the future, and how this internship has shaped her career as a student.

News Reel: Tell us about your internship.

Melanie Kirschbaum: My internship was fabulous! I interned with Mosaic Media Group and spent most of my time filing, faxing, and making copies. Every now and then I filled in for an assistant and answered calls for the managers and other executives. I met Vince Vaughn, Will Ferrell, Randy Jackson, and Chris Parnell from SNL, among others. I did not work on a specific project, but I did the small tasks that needed to be completed around the office, including script coverage.

I got the internship by meeting a Mosaic Media Group partner (who was from Pittsburgh), and he offered me the opportunity after I spoke briefly with him about my interest in the entertainment industry, which had been sparked by taking a few screenwriting classes with Professor Carl Kurlander.

NR: How has the internship affected your studies at Pitt?
MK: Coming back to Pittsburgh was hard, especially since I spent every weekend at the beaches in Malibu! Imagine the drastic change of scenery! But I am glad to be back and to bring my knowledge of the entertainment industry to the Pitt-in-Hollywood club.

NR: How do you think this internship will affect your job search after graduation?
MK: This internship helped me decide that I would like to pursue a career somewhere in film and television writing. I definitely made a lot of contacts and keep in touch with many of my former colleagues. I plan on moving back to (Continued on page 6)
Awards

This past March, Dana Och, a graduate student in the department of English, presented a broad overview of her dissertation project at the James W. Knox Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the University’s Nationality Rooms Programs. Her talk, entitled “Are All the Beautiful Things Gone?: Movements in Recent Irish Cinema,” grew out of her receipt of the Ruth Crawford Mitchell Memorial Award to do independent research at the Irish Film Archive in Dublin.

According to Och, filmgoing in Ireland has been dominated by American and, to a lesser extent, British productions. Various political and economic reasons underlie this, such as the government’s willingness to offer tax breaks to foreign studios as a means to promote Ireland for location shooting while refusing financial assistance to local artists and directors.

While some films were made in Ireland before the contemporary era, indigenous Irish cinema did not develop in any sustained form until the late 1970s. Previously, the image of Ireland had been developed cinematically through an American and British perspective. Och asserts that these images reflected each country’s political relationship with Ireland. On the simplest level, American representations tended to portray Ireland as the utopian idyll of a nostalgic immigrant perspective, while British films tended to portray Ireland as a violence-torn dystopia.

The American treatment, marked by an optimistic mindset in which the world is morally legible, is seen in such films as John Ford’s The Quiet Man (1952). It was a particularly influential view due to the prominence of Hollywood cinema within Ireland and internationally. It is this optimism that has been ubiquitously underlined in the later indigenous Irish films.

Och plans to continue her research this academic year as a Lillian B. Lawler Predoctoral Fellow.

Our Graduates

When aspiring screenwriter Matt Lohr graduated from Pitt with a B.A. degree in Film Studies and a concentration in English Writing in the spring of 1999, he never thought his graduate school experience would rely so heavily on the courses he took in the Film Studies program during his undergraduate years.

“The extensive essay assignments I wrote taught me how to look at a film from a multitude of perspectives, and this complex imaginative exercise likewise required me to expand my prose powers to accommodate these ideas I had created,” he says.

Lohr has recently moved back to Pittsburgh to work on various film and writing projects after spending three years in California, most of them as a graduate student in screenwriting at Chapman University in Orange County. This program was small—only nine other students graduated with him—and he credits the intimate environment of the school and his ability to work closely with his professors as a major factor in his success as an MFA candidate. His thesis project, a screenplay called Santa’s Little Helpers, was written under the tutelage of Oscar nominee Leonard Schrader, who is now head of the screenwriting department at the American Film Institute.

Santa’s Little Helpers is the story of a lovable loser and a bitter divorcée who find themselves punching the clock at a certain North Pole workshop, where they just might make their Christmas true-love wishes come true if they don’t drive each other crazy first.

“It’s a classic opposites-attract romantic comedy with a Yuletide twist,” Lohr says. “This script took me about a year to complete from initial concept to final draft. The inspiration for the story came from a simple desire: I’ve always wanted to write a Christmas story.”

The script is being shopped around on the open market. He has loads of good contacts because of his summer internship with Revelations Entertainment, Morgan Freeman’s production company. Working for a small company meant Lohr could juggle many tasks at once, including script reading, sample trailer writing, and even becoming the assistant to Revelation’s Chief Operating Officer Anne Marie Gillens.

“The number of scripts that I would read varied from week to week,” he says. “During my stint at Revelations, I read six screenplays and two complete novels, for which I then wrote brief synopses and recommendations. The best part of this job was reading scripts. I am always curious to encounter new written film material, and as a writer I found it

(Continued on page 6)
Our Higher Faculties

These faculty members have shared some of their most recent accomplishments.

Lucy Fischer presented a paper entitled “Crawford, Consumerism and Art Deco Style in Our Blushing Brides (1930)” at the March meeting of The Society for Cinema and Media Studies. She appeared on the BBC radio show “Nightwaves,” commenting on Roman Polanski’s film Chinatown in April. In May, she attended the meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies as a Delegate for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. In May, she also gave a talk entitled “The French Connection: Cinema, Art Deco and Transnational Style” at the University of California, Davis.

In June, Fischer gave a talk for the Art Deco Society of New York City. Her newest book, Stars: A Film Reader, (co-edited with Marcia Landy) was published by Routledge. Two of her articles are presently “in press” for anthologies: “Beauty and the Beast: Desire and its Double in Polanski’s Repulsion” and “The Shock of the New: Electrification, Illumination, Urbanization and the Cinema.”


Adam Lowenstein presented his paper “A Second Look at Seconds: Rock Hudson and the Case of Retrospective Spectatorship,” at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Atlanta in March. His recent publishing credits include “The Master, the Maniac, and Frenzy: Hitchcock’s Legacy of Horror” in Hitchcock: Past and Future and “Allegorizing Hiroshima: Shindo Kaneto’s Onibaba as Trauma Text” in Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations. He was also interviewed for The American Nightmare, a documentary film on the historical dimensions of 1960s and 1970s American horror films, co-produced by Colin MacCabe and directed by Adam Simon. The film originally aired on the Independent Film Channel in October 2000 and was released on DVD this past March. Lowenstein also introduced two new classes this past spring: Horror Film: The Modern Era, 1960-2001 and Film Directors: David Cronenberg and Wes Craven. This fall, Lowenstein (Continued on page 7)
something of a learning experience to read ‘agented,’ professionally presented material.”

Unfortunately, because of Freeman’s busy acting schedule, Lohr was unable to interact with the actor very much in the office.

“I did have the opportunity to meet Morgan at the Revelations company barbecue,” Lohr says. “He’s a very nice man, charming and funny, exactly what you would hope he would be from his appearances on screen.”

Back in his hometown, Lohr is excited to get away from the financial pressures of L.A. living and concentrating on his work, which includes a book-length critical study of the films of Woody Allen entitled Woody Allen: The Dark Odyssey of a Manhattan Moviemaker. Lohr has also been hired on speculation by Texpyton Productions of Woodland Hills, California to do a rewrite of a thriller script from a story by Texpyton head Tom Bruggeman and writers Jason Filardi (Bringing Down the House) and Peter Filardi (Flatliners, The Craft).

Lohr has made some steps toward reintegrating himself into the Pittsburgh film community, including attending several Pitt-in-Hollywood meetings and volunteering at the Pittsburgh Film Office Oscar-night fundraiser, held last February at the Loews Theatre in Homestead.

Internship Profile (cont.)

L.A. and either working at Mosaic, or working at a related company. My dream is to one day work for NBC or to eventually do something in creative development.

NR: Do you have any advice for other students looking for internships?
MK: Be aggressive! Look everywhere! Don’t give up! The most important thing is to just jump right in there. Chances are what life is all about. If you don’t do it, you’ll never know.

2003-04 Abstracts of Award Winning Student Entries

Film Studies Undergraduate Writing Award Winner 2003-04

Amy Hirschman

“Donnie Darko: Fate up Against the Real: Exploring the Ideas of Destiny, Time, and the “Real” in the Film, “Donnie Darko”

Donnie Darko (2001), directed by Richard Kelly, brings up some heavy concepts concerning the idea of time and the nature of reality. In the paper, the arguments of film theorists Andre Bazin and Jean Baudrillard prove to be quite useful in dealing with the sometimes confusing and manipulated images on screen, as well as the existential plot points. Their stances are compared and contrasted in conjunction with the themes in the film. The theories of Bazin, a realist, are used to discuss questions of what seems real photographically and situationally. Baudrillard’s arguments for simulation and simulacra underline the image as a construct, and the kind of relationship it has to the viewer.

Film Studies Graduate Writing Award Co-Winners 2003-04

Salome Skvirsy

“Double Becoming: The Decolonizing Blind Balladeer of God and the Devil in the Land of Sun”

This paper reads Glauber Rocha’s 1964 Cinema Novo classic in terms of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s elaboration of a ‘cinema of poetry.’ Against the filmmaker whose naturalistic portrayal of misery cultivates a taste for it, Rocha adopts the “aesthetic of hunger” to block the aestheticization of misery. The paper argues that God and the Devil literalizes this aesthetic in the figure of a blind balladeer who slips in and out of the narrative hardly noticed. His folk ballads narrate the film, which is itself a folk version of the actual history of the last bandit revolutionaries that wandered the parched, northeastern expanse of Brazil in the 1930s fighting government-financed mercenaries in the name of the people. The paper draws an analogy between the blind balladeer, whose wrenching ballads are the only material trace of an opaque history; and the filmmaker, who tries to represent the past: he is like a blind man working with only an oral record.

Matthew F. Teichman

“Extended Indexicality”

To the hypothesis that there is an ontological relation between a film “take” and the event of which it constitutes a record, this paper adjoins the following extension: that as there is also a relation between an event and its historical context, there must be some sort of connection between a film “take” and its historical context.

(Continued on page 7)
While We’re on the Subject

Upcoming Events: 2004-05

Higher Faculty (cont.)

Film Series

Brazilian Film Series—September 2004

Documentary Film Series—November 2004

Yugoslav Film Series—September/October 2004

French Film Series—November 2004

Claire Denis Film Series—November 2004

Speakers

Guiliana Bruno—October 2004

Peter Riegert—November 2004

David Rodowick—December 2004

Ian Christie—February 2005

John Belton—Spring 2005

Peter Biskind—Spring 2005

Cinema News

Newly Released to DVD:
The Martin Scorsese Collection
Taxi Driver—Collector’s Edition
Kill Bill, Vol. 1 & 2
Donnie Brasko—Special Edition
THX 1138—Collector’s Edition
The Simpsons—Complete 4th Season
Curb Your Enthusiasm—Complete 2nd Season

Newly Released to VHS:
The Passion of the Christ

Volume 3, Number 1

(Continued from page 5)


(Continued from page 6)

Awardee Abstracts (cont.)

Works such as Franju’s Le sang des betes give us ample reason to consider this new hypothesis, which, if accepted, is certain to problematize the usual assumptions regarding the boundedness of film texts.

Honorable Mention Film Studies Writing Award

Julie Marie Wade
“Staying Home: George Bailey and the Atrophy of Desire”

This paper presents a critical exploration of the relationship among desire, wish, and dream in light of Frank Capra’s 1946 film, It’s a Wonderful Life. Written in a non-traditional, lyric style, this essay draws upon Christian Metz’s work in The Imaginary Signifier, specifically his assertion that “the lack is what [desire] wishes to fill, and at the same time what it is always careful to leave gaping, in order to survive as desire.” The evolving thesis challenges Metz’s notion that desire thrives upon its own perennial unfulfillment and examines the disintegration of George Bailey’s desire in its inverse relationship to Mary (Hatch) Bailey’s triumphant and ultimate satisfaction. The essay further explores “ambition” and “sacrifice” as socio-religious constructs that influence the characters’ desire-driven journeys throughout the film.

Vladimir Padunov, Neepa Majumdar, Moya Luckett, Amy Hirschman and Marcia Landy at the Film Studies Award Lunch.
Don’t be left out in the cold!

Check out the new and improved Film Studies website at www.pitt.edu/~filmst