



Life at Fifty

By David Ley



David Ley settles into his new position as Department Head.

There are few more abrupt transitions in the year than the day after Labour Day, the end of summer and the start of a new school year for educators and students. My own transition came a bit earlier on July 1 when Graeme Wynn stepped down after a second term as Head of Department. As a new Head I am benefiting from the careful decision-making and wise stewardship of Graeme's tenure. We are all extremely grateful to him as he begins a well-deserved administrative leave. Sally Hermansen has also re-defined her role. News of her superb work with undergraduates reached the Dean's Office and she has been made Assistant Dean for Student Services, while continuing to teach a course in Geography. We will miss her tireless promotion of undergraduate learning and welfare in our building, though of course she will be pursuing the same objectives across a broader canvas.

It's a fortunate Head who inherits a well-managed department that has attained a high level of excellence. But there is never room for complacency; in an ever more competitive and corporate university setting successful departments need to be vigilant and continually evolving in the context of unstable external environments. One important task over the summer has been to re-organise our Graduate program. While the department is very successful in its recruitment and placement of top-rank graduate students, the programmatic side needs rebuilding to ensure adequate teaching resources for the first-rate institution we claim to be. Jamie Peck has been heading up a committee that has met over the summer to develop some proposals to that end.

Other summer activities included the upgrading of the computer lab and a total reconstruction of the department's web site, energetically and creatively led by Andreas Christen. The next time you check it out you will find an informative, aesthetic and navigable site.

A new academic year is also a time to introduce fresh blood to the academic endeavour. Welcome to new majors and transfer students and welcome back to old hands. Aside from university events, the Geography Student Association has already kicked off the year with a Welcome Back BBQ and will soon offer their first Geopit. Over the past couple of years the GSA has been more engaged across a broad agenda as at any time I can remember since my arrival at UBC during the waning years of hippydom.

We also want to welcome new graduate students arriving from across Canada and different corners of the world. You will find a set of events from your active social committee to help you settle in, including a picnic at the UBC Farm on 26 September and a trip to Whistler on 3-4 October. Mark these dates!

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Geography Department. We are celebrating on 25-26 September with a packed program of activities. Trevor Barnes and his committee have organised a symposium on 25 September, where we have invited back to the department six eminent graduates from universities around the world. Each will give a presentation on some of the broader implications of their research field. It will be a real privilege to have this diverse and talented group around for several days. Evidence of the work of the department over the past five decades appears in a number of wall posters that provide something of a living archive of the research of faculty and graduate students. This is an entirely new compilation of scattered data overseen by Graeme Wynn and superbly charted by our cartographer, Eric Leinberger. In the evening of 25 September there will be a gala dinner at Sage Bistro to which alumni, students, staff, and faculty, past and present are invited. Undoubtedly it will be a time of great good cheer!

As Geography at UBC enters its second half-century, there is much to anticipate. I wish each member of our enterprise a fulfilling and congenial academic year.

Congratulations Karen



On September 15th Karen Young was awarded the very first UBC President's Staff Award for Enhancing the UBC Experience

and I have to say – I am not the least bit surprised. Every day at least one student comes into the main office looking for Karen Young, and at this time of year that number is closer to 10 a day!

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Karen's position, she is the Geography Department's Undergraduate Advisor. Karen is responsible for over 600 under-

graduate students. For many undergrads Karen becomes a sort of keystone underpinning their Geography experience. In many cases, students first encounter her in those hectic first weeks of class when they are trying to sort out their schedules, get their names added to waitlists and make sure they are meeting their degree requirements; and although she is at it all day Karen greets every student with patience and a healthy dose of humor. Throughout the year she promotes Geography in the wider university environment and recruits student at events such as "Beyond Second Year" and "Imagine Your Major."

Karen supports undergrads throughout their Geography degree, helping them to navigate co-op study, prepare for exchanges, attend to grade disputes, invigilates exams and much more.

This year, in particular, Karen has demonstrated her commitment to the UBC undergrad experience through her tireless work with the Curriculum Committee to overhaul the BSc program. The aim was to make the degrees awarded by the Geography Department as useful as possible. As many of you know, the review resulted in the introduction of the new Biogeosciences stream for science majors and the new program in Environment and Sustainability for arts students. Karen put in countless hours fine tuning these changes, and once they were completed she worked equally hard to make the transition as easy as possible for our students.

A geography pillar since 1996, Karen is "honored and shocked and appreciative that [she] was even nominated." Thanks Karen for your commitment to UBC Geography.

Welcome Back Reception 2009



Lori Daniels and new grad student Natasha Cowie visit with Dan Moore and Sarah Roberts.

The Geography Department celebrated the new school year on September 9th with the 2009 Welcome Back Reception. Hosted for the first time by the GIC, it was perhaps, the best Welcome Back Reception yet! Geographers old and new mingled and enjoyed the wonderful refreshments provided by the stellar organizing committee: Jennifer Hamilton, Kevin Gillard and Stephanie Lambiris. Thanks to the GIC for another great event!



Stephanie, Kevin and Jennifer, the amazing, and possibly nutty, organizers.



Left: Stephanie enjoys the fruits of her labours, with Katie Kinsley, John Dewey, Emily Rosenman and Sophie Webber. Right: Old and new grad students celebrate the new year!(clockwise) Lisa Erven, Doris Leong, John Dewey, Yolande Pottier-Sherman, Tommy Thomson, Sara Koopman, Scott Krayenhoff, Jake wall, and Justin Tse.



Visiting Geography

This fall UBC Geography has three new visitors in the Department. Please give them a warm welcome.



Luiza Bialasiewicz

Luiza Bialasiewicz is Senior Lecturer in Political Geography in the Department of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her main research interests lie with the political geographies of European integration and with the historical geographies of the European idea. Her current research focuses on two related themes: first, the ways in which the European Union increasingly constitutes and imagines itself as a geopolitical actor and 'global power' and, secondly, the post-colonial geographies of the 'European World'.

During her stay at UBC, she will be completing the introduction to an edited volume entitled "Europe in the World: EU Geopolitics and the Transformation of European Space" that she is putting together for Ashgate's series in Critical Geopolitics (UBC Geography's Prof. Merje Kuus is one of the series editors). The bulk of her time will be devoted, however, to work on a book entitled *Traces of Europe*. This book project follows the 'traces' of Europe outside of its traditionally conceived territorial borders: in two Mediterranean ports, Alexandria and Tangiers, and across the Atlantic, in a 'Global Mediterranean' city, Buenos Aires. The book brings together

a concern with contemporary EU geopolitics (in particular, the imagination of the Union's presumed 'spaces of responsibility') with a historical geography of the European field of effects and affects, noting the fundamental place also of such 'non-European' cities in making Europe – and in defining what it is to be European. You can contact Luiza at Luiza.Bialasiewicz@ruhul.ac.uk or stop by her office in room 140E.



Claudio Minca

Claudio Minca is presently Professor of Geography at Royal Holloway, the University of London and Visiting Professor at the College of Tourism, Rikkyo University, Tokyo. Claudio's work is centred around the relationship between geographical representations and tourist space and the philosophy and theory of geography. His current research is focused on three major themes: the spatialisation of (bio)politics; tourism and travel theories of modernity; and the relationship between modern knowledge, space and landscape in postcolonial geography. In empirical terms, his most recent work has centred on Trieste, Morocco and the Mediterranean more generally. While at UBC he intends to continue his work on the relationship between biopolitics and the new global nomos and on Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben. Also, he would like to take advantage of the expertise on postcolonial theory present in the

Department in order to further develop his other ongoing project on the post-colonial geographies of Morocco. Claudio and Luiza will be sharing office 140E. They will be visiting UBC until December 2009. Claudio's email address is Claudio.Minca@ruhul.ac.uk.



Shubhra Gururani

I am a faculty member in the Department of Social Anthropology at York University in Toronto and am spending my Sabbatical year in UBC. I am a feminist anthropologist, who is interested in feminist theory and methodology, political ecology, postcolonial theory, histories and anthropologies of social natures, place, race and gender. I am currently juggling two projects. The first one is an ongoing project in the Indian Himalayas that ethnographically explores how the cultural politics of nature, race, and gender have come to articulate with contemporary environmental movements and politics in the region. The second one is a newer project, which maps unfolding the processes and politics of urbanization in India. It focuses on Gurgaon, the Millennial City of India, which lies just outside of New Delhi, and is home to countless call-centers, corporate offices, gated enclaves, and ever expanding population of labor migrants. My contact email is sgururani@gmail.com. Shubhra will be using office 140A while she is visiting UBC.

More New Faces: Post Docs of 2009

The UBC Geography Post Docs this year are comprised of a mix of old and new faces. Recent graduate Emma Norman has taken on a post doc position working with Karen Bakker. Elaine Ho, who arrived as a post doctoral teaching fellow last year has had her appointment renewed so she will spend another year here with us at UBC.

Hilary Thorpe



Hilary Thorpe (PhD U. Toronto, 2008) is a postdoctoral fellow in Lori Daniels' Tree Ring Lab. She joined the Geography Department in May 2009 and is currently studying long-term trends in tree mortality rates in Alberta's boreal forests. More broadly, Hilary's research explores human-forest interactions, in particular how forest ecosystems respond to human impacts, both intentional and inadvertent, and how our ideas about nature work to influence forest science and management. In January 2010, Hilary will commence a NSERC postdoctoral fellowship to examine tree demographics in the forests of Haida Gwaii/the Queen Charlotte Islands, with a particular focus on the role giant western redcedar trees play in struc-

turing rainforest communities. This research is aimed at helping to inform the Council of the Haida Nation's 1000-Year Cedar Strategy.

Christian Abrahamsson



Last year I finished a doctoral thesis entitled *Topoi/graphein* at Uppsala University in Sweden. While the aim of the thesis was to 'map' the paradoxical limit of the in-between, at its center was a key geographical question: how can we comprehend and communicate an ever-changing world in a language which is characterized by fixed points and stable relations? Rephrased, it is a question of understanding how we find our way in a world of differences and ambiguities, an attempt to understand how the maps with which we orientate are constructed and how we live in the spaces in-between distinct categories without going insane. While at UBC I will be working on a project entitled Spaces of Experimentation The aim of this project is to study the relation between practice and theory. The project will approach this question through a series of interrelated studies of three major thinkers: the philosopher John Dewey, the

anthropologist Gregory Bateson and the psychiatrist Félix Guattari. The project will take the form of a series of studies of the sites in which these three thinkers developed their ideas. In Guattari's case this was the clinic of La Borde at Court-Cheverny, for John Dewey the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago, for Gregory Bateson the Veterans Administration Hospital in Palo Alto. Christian will be at UBC working with Trevor Barnes until April 2010.

Geography Cares

This year, some of the Geography Department Staff have launched a new initiative: Geography Cares. The committee aims to foster a sense of community both within and beyond the Geography Department as well as raise awareness around some valuable causes. Each month, the department will sponsor an event. The Geography Cares Committee is not asking for monetary donations. The events are simply an opportunity for you to get involved.

The first Geography Cares Event, the Walk for Ovarian Cancer took place on September 14th, coordinated by Sandy Lapsky. Although, the turnout was small, the day was lovely and the walk a success.

The Second Geography Cares event: The Ride for Refugees is scheduled for October 3rd. If you are interested in joining the ride email: katie.kinsley@geog.ubc.ca.

Check out GEOG @ UBC on the web: <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/department/newsletters>

The University of British Columbia
The Department of Geography

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