

Undergraduate Research Newsletter

Summer Edition (Issue 5), July 8, 2008

What's Happening!

Wednesday's Featured Speaker

Professor Betchen Barber, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics



SNEAK PEEK

“Chasing Mummies in Eurasia”

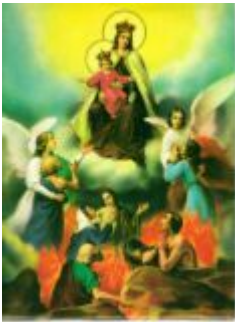
Solving complex archaeological problems requires chasing through almost every "discipline" known to academia. How does a researcher cope with such a wide field, and what are some of the precepts that can keep such research on track?

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| July 9, 2008
12:00 noon | Betchen Barber, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics “Chasing Mummies in Eurasia”
Samuelson Pavilion, includes lunch |
| July 9, 2008
7:30 pm | SPARKS Game!
Please RSVP with ResLife |
| July 13, 2008 | Lotus Festival (Echo Park)
Please check with ResLife for bus or van information or go to event on your own.
http://www.laparks.org/grifmet/lotus.htm |
| July 16, 2008
12:00 noon | Research Ethics Discussion
Samuelson Pavilion, includes lunch |



!!!!!!!!!!!!IMPORTANT!!!!!!!!!!!!

Please email the URC (urc@oxy.edu) by **July 11** to notify the office of the title of your presentation for this summer's Research Conference and whether it will be in the form of a talk or poster. We'll also be asking you to submit a 250 word abstract of your summer project by the end of the program. All of this can be submitted online at <http://departments.oxy.edu/urc/submissions.htm>. You can find some tips on preparing your presentations at <http://departments.oxy.edu/urc/students/conferencelinks/presentations.htm>.



Re-Theologizing Dante: The Influence of the Christian Theology of St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in the Purgatorio

Purgatory is the epitome of the unknown forces of the cosmic world, yet ECLS Senior Erin Conley is venturing into this mysterious space while combining her passion for both English literary analysis and Religious Studies.

Can you please provide a brief abstract of your summer research?

My research project started out as trying to understand the religious aspects of Dante's Purgatorio (not the Inferno), which is the second leg of Dante's journey through the afterworld. I was interested in the transitional aspect of Purgatory, since it is the only locality of the three (heaven, hell, and purgatory) which is not permanent, since Purgatory will disappear at the end of time. I also noticed that there was next to no scholarship on the religious aspect of Dante. Almost everyone who writes serious scholarship on Dante does so looking at his political views or the structure of the epic poem rather than at the religious context. So the short answer here is that my summer research project is about the religious aspects of Dante's Purgatorio and how the relationship between different characters show forth the idea of community and love as the pinnacle of religious interaction.

What inspired you to focus your research on Dante's Purgatorio?

The transitional state of Purgatory makes it the most human. In Purgatory, souls are given a second chance to make up for the sins that occurred in life, provided that the person was a penitent Christian at the time of death. I believe that understanding Dante's Purgatorio in the sense of community and interpersonal interactions as I mentioned earlier will help facilitate a better understanding of our own religious and secular interactions with each other as human beings.

Is your work an intersection of both Religious Studies and ECLS? I remember your NCUR presentation also falling in line with this theme. Can you briefly talk about how you intermingle the two disciplines?

Since it's me, you can pretty much assume that Religious Studies will be found in an ECLS project. Since the work I chose was written in a period in which Christianity was a major contributor to the culture of the time (c. 1300), it has not been difficult to look at the religious and literary aspects together....in fact, it would be difficult to separate them, given the intertwined nature of the two disciplines in the medieval era. Also, since Dante's Divine Comedy (the tour of all three stations of the afterlife: heaven, hell, and purgatory) is about the afterlife, there is a necessary aspect of religion that needs to be accounted for in dealing with scholarship for Dante.

4. Is there anything else you would like to mention in regards to your research?

Though it's been difficult to find scholarly material on the religious importance of Dante's Purgatorio, I am glad to have this topic, because it has allowed me to examine a field that does not have substantial research already established, and though some might view my project as arcane in a postmodern world, Dante's work and the Christian ethos that can be found in it are still a large part of how we as human beings interact and live with one another every day.

(Newsletter by Vanda Ayrapetyan)