



Tattler

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S LAIR...

KARLA TAYLOR, ENGLISH

With this inaugural newsletter, it is a great pleasure to connect and reconnect with new and old students, parents, friends, and faculty, both of the Program in Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) and of its predecessor, the Medieval and Renaissance Collegium (MARC). I'm especially proud to pass along all the honors and awards won by our exceptional students, but my main purpose here is to bring you up to date with the exciting developments here at MEMS.

The centerpiece of MEMS is its restructured undergraduate honors concentration, which is now global as well as interdisciplinary in scope. The MEMS concentration offers something rare: all the resources of a large university—the research library, the varied and accomplished faculty—and the close personal attention, intellectual response, and guidance possible only in a small program. A prime example of this is the new thesis colloquium, which gives our seniors the chance to share their work with one another as they prepare their theses with the guidance of two faculty advisors. As teacher of the colloquium for the past two years, I have witnessed the transformation of our seniors from their initial attacks of nerves (I've never written a thesis before!), through their growing excitement and confidence as they dig into their topics, to their sense of achievement when they finish the theses they could hardly imagine at the beginning of the year.

This year we have a couple of "firsts" to announce from other parts of the MEMS program. We awarded our first Graduate Certificate in Medieval and Early Modern Studies to **Laura Williamson**, a PhD candidate in English who works on travel literature and conceptions of space in Renaissance English drama. We will also graduate our first MEMS Minor, **Song Woo Kim**, whose work in MEMS complements an honors BA in History; his thesis is "The Duke and His Artists: The Politics of Visual Representation in Public Spectacle of Florence during the Reign of Cosimo I de Medici." The Graduate Certificate and the Minor are brand new programs and many more students are in the pipeline for both.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECENT GRADUATES!!

THE 2006 CROP

Christopher H. Flack. Rites of Passage: Social Transitions in Two Middle English Romances. Examines *Amis and Amiloun* and *The Knight's Tale* as accounts of processes that effect reconciliation in patriarchal communities.

Mark Freudenthal. Redefining History: An Analysis of the Levellers' Reforms and Use of Norman Yoke Theory.

Explores how the Levellers' historical view of the Anglo-Saxons shaped their reforms.

Francisco Ramos. Córdoba: Re-examining the Physical and Conceptual Boundaries that Encompass a Culture of Tolerance. Reconsiders the relationship between the "peoples of the book" in ninth-century al-Andalus.

Samantha Woll. Between Spain and Zion: The Juxtaposition of Diaspora and Exile in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tuleda*. Uses the notion of memory to illuminate medieval Jewish experience in communities around the Mediterranean.

THE 2005 CROP

Alexander Byrne. The Knightly Palimpsest: Ritual, Romance, and the Making of the Ideal Knight.





Life in Aix-en-Provence

By Catherine Wimple, MEMS Junior

Study abroad? What is this thing that so many people rave about? How different could life really be somewhere outside the comforts of the Diag and State Street? And more importantly, how can you prepare yourself for the experiences you will have? After seven months in the south of France, I can say with complete confidence that nearly everything is different than sweet home Ann Arbor, and there's practically nothing you can do to prepare for it. As radical as it sounds to put everything you've ever known into a box, shake it around, and spill out the contents, I assure you it's by far the most amazing thing that's ever happened to me.

The first few months I looked around in awe and amazement, thinking I surely must be in some sort of dream land. The sun always shines, the bread is the most incredible thing I've ever tasted, and there are even olive trees growing in the park! Then classes started, and I wondered how anyone could survive in this disorganized meeting place of students called a university. My tiny UM-conditioned mind was on the verge of panic as I searched desperately for some clue to the room number where a class I may or may not have been enrolled in

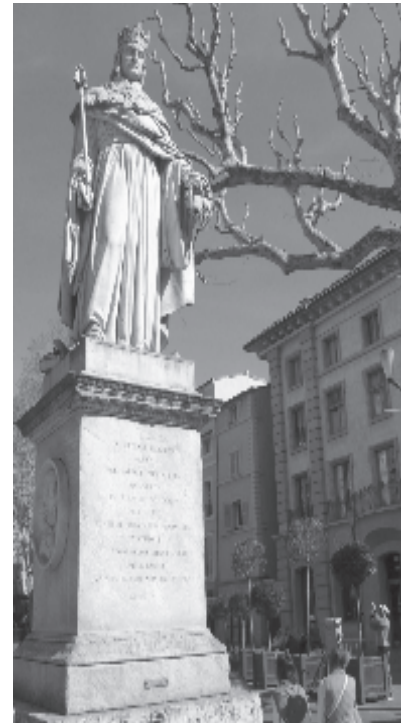
would start in five minutes. That'll wake you up faster than anything the Angell Hall vending machine could offer! But little by little, I started to develop a routine; I began to learn not only in my classes, but from everything around me. It's such an amazing feeling to sit back and watch how another culture works with the realization that you understand!

Taking classes in French, while daunting at first, has become something normal. The thought of taking classes in English next year seems like a foreign idea; and although I'm a bit ashamed to admit it, I'll probably have some difficulties re-adjusting. There's just something amazing about studying history in the environment where it happened that makes learning so much more exciting! The examples used in class are nearby; professors talk about the local nobles of Aix-en-Provence and the impact this city has had over the years. One time, I even received directions during a lecture to the site we were discussing! That could never happen in Ann Arbor without the words "hop a plane over to Europe" coming first. The material seems so real here—the events that happened directly impacted the area where I'm living. On the main street in the city stands a giant statue of King René (Roi René), who allowed the region of Provence to be absorbed into the country of France in the fifteenth century. He seems to be a local hero of sorts; he's represented more frequently than George Washington in most cities in the States. The good ol' René has a street, a hotel, and even a bakery named after him!

People here seem much more tied to their historical heritage. The dreaded question for any MEMS concentrator "What are you studying?" comes up just as frequently. But as I prepare to rattle off arguments defending my decision, I've been met with the response "Oh, so you're a historian!" from the genuinely intrigued listener on the other side. I once tried to convince a Frenchman that I was merely a student and not yet a real historian, but at the end of our lengthy conversation, his opinion of me remained the same. The amount of respect I am met with is mind boggling, and it always leaves me with a little warm feeling and sense of pride.

But my life here in France is much more than academics; it's also the people I've met and the places I've seen. My favorite phrase here has become "Profitez-en!" which simply means, take advantage of it, or profit from it. My friends here have been amazing, and I love learning about the different aspects of their respective cultures. I live in dorms that have been described as "the United Nations." There are people from almost everywhere—I've even met people from countries I didn't know existed! While cooking food in the community kitchen, I've been invited to try specialities from Martinique, Slovakia, and even got to taste an authentic Swedish meatball! I could spend hours in the kitchen just watching what everyone else is making and soaking up the aromas. Occasionally, when I get a break from classes, it's time to explore my new surroundings! Places like Italy are a mere three hours away, and with the amazing train system, you just have to take advantage of something like that! Travelling has been an amazing experience for me; I feel like a kid in a candy store everywhere I go. I try not to be too obvious that I'm utterly astounded, but somehow it always creeps out.

My experiences here have been far too numerous to write in an article of any length. Every day I seem to notice something I had overlooked the previous days. I feel like I'm constantly rediscovering the town, the country, and even different aspects of myself. (Sometimes you realize that you have a certain habit or belief because you just always have, and not necessarily because it means something to you.) The experience of studying abroad can never be summed up or categorized: It is a gift you take with you for the rest of your life, and an experience that has a huge influence on the person you will become.

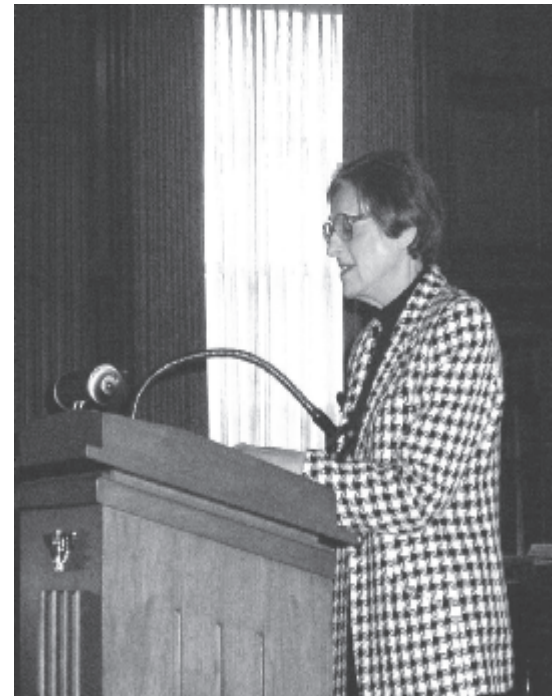


BUILDING COMMUNITY ACROSS DISCIPLINES

MEMS Supports A Venerable Sunday Tradition— The Premodern Colloquium

Founded in the late 1970s as a study group dedicated to the history of law, The Premodern Colloquium, co-directed by Tom Green (Law School and History) and Tom Willette (History of Art), evolved in the 1990s into a broad-based reading group. It is now dedicated chiefly to new research in the fields of history, history of art, history of law, and European and Atlantic literature and languages. MEMS has collaborated closely with the Colloquium since Fall 2001, sponsoring guests and related events.

The Colloquium regularly invites two visiting scholars each term to present their research and meet with faculty and graduate students. Marcia Colish's visit this February shows how broadly these collaborations benefit the scholarly community. Professor Colish (Frederick B. Artz Professor of History, emerita, Oberlin College, and Visiting Fellow in History, Yale University) began her stay with a lively discussion on patristic ethical discourse at a Premodern Colloquium session. The next day she conducted a workshop on religious thought with the Medieval Reading Group and later in the afternoon gave a public lecture at the Clements Library, titled "Rethinking Lying in the Twelfth Century." More than eighty area and regional faculty and graduate students participated in the three events.



Marcia Colish speaks at the Clements.

Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshops (RIW): A Key Forum for Graduate Students

"Boundary Crossing and Cultural Exchange in Medieval and Early Modern Europe and the Near East" is a MEMS-run RIW begun in the winter of 2004 by Natalie Rothman (Anthropology and History), with faculty advisors Tom Willette (History of Art) and Diane Owen Hughes (History). In its first semester the workshop focused on cultural connections between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. In 2004–2005 Dimitri Krallis (History) and faculty advisor Karla Taylor (English) expanded its chronological reach back to include Late Antiquity. Its geographical focus also shifted to the Byzantine Empire and its cultural connections with Europe and the Near East. This year "Boundary Crossing" has been taken up by Stefan Stantchev (History) with faculty advisor Rudi Lindner (History). It has inherited the interdisciplinary character of the two previous years but abandoned the thematic focus to engage a broader range of participants. Not only are our presenters and participants interdisciplinary, more importantly, so are the topics discussed and the approaches used. The 2005–2006 edition has addressed issues in economic and social history, religion, politics, intellectual history, literature and literary history, and history of art.

The workshop poses opportunities for research to be heard in an interdisciplinary environment that links doctoral students and faculty. Provoking discussion between scholars of widely diverging experience and interests is of significant help to presenters, who receive attentive feedback from a broad range of specialists. It is also helpful to the other participants, who can familiarizing themselves with the interests and methods of "neighboring," yet too often distant, disciplines.

Plans for the 2006–2007 academic year include greatly raising the workshop's profile. Organizers Alexander Angelov (History), Stefan Stantchev, and Rudi Lindner hope to engage an international audience and participation beyond U of M by planning a MEMS/RIW-sponsored session for the 2007 Congress of Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, the single most attended gathering of medievalists in the world.

TRANSITIONS

Faculty News Around Campus

Two beloved professors have retired in the past year: **Ward Bissell** (History of Art), after 34 years of teaching Italian and Spanish Baroque painting and sculpture, and **John Knott** (English), after 39 years of teaching Reformation and nonconformist literature. A conference, "Responding to the Natural World," was held in John's honor early this April.

We are happy to welcome a number of new(ish) faculty, including **Jonathan Sheehan** (History), **Madeline Kochen** (Law School), **Sunil Agnani** (English), **Stella Nair** (History of Art), **Guido Olivieri** and **Stefan Mengozzi** (Musicology), and **Ivonne De Valle** (Romance Languages).

And finally, a number of visitors have graced the MEMS ranks this past year: **Owen Phelan** in History, **Mark Burde** in Romance Languages, and **Norbert Dubowy** in Musicology. We appreciate all their contributions and wish them well with future projects.



**Watch for News, Events
and Opportunities @**

www.lsa.umich.edu/mems/



WHAT'S COOKIN' IN MEMS? CHECK OUT RECENT PROSEMINARS

Fall 2005: **The Status of the Artist in Medieval and Early Modern Europe**

Elizabeth Sears, History of Art; Megan Holmes, History of Art

Winter 2006: **The Presence of the Past in Medieval and Early Modern Culture**

Karla Taylor, English; Tom Willette, History of Art

Coming Up . . .

Fall 2006: **Histories of Etymology and Genealogy** *Pat Simons, History of Art; Diane Owen Hughes, History*

This course will examine etymological and genealogical continuity and rupture, investigating these processes in terms of their fictionality and representational strategies. Stretching over both medieval and early modern materials, chiefly in Western Europe, the seminar queries standard notions of chronological division and instead invites a reconsideration of conventional ideas about origin, influence and filiation. After an overview of theoretical frameworks (Bloch, Butler, Derrida, Foucault), our case studies will be drawn from such subjects as Isidore of Seville's etymological project, linguistic and archaeological claims for the primacy of Etruscan roots (including Annius of Viterbo's late fifteenth-century forgeries and those of Curzio Inghirami in the seventeenth century, which also invoke notions of authenticity), the representation of Adam and Eve as the "first parents" after they committed "original sin," nationalistic myths of Troy (including stories about the origins of the Ottomans), and the productive tension between valorized imitation (visual, political, rhetorical) on the one hand and valued innovation on the other.



Kinetics of the Sacred in Medieval European and East Asian Art, 800-1600

An International Symposium, September 29-30, 2006
Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan

This conference, organized by Kevin Carr and Achim Timmermann (both U-M History of Art), will adopt a cross-cultural approach that highlights methodological biases in the scholarship of both European and East Asian medieval art. The term "kinetics," borrowed from the physical sciences, is used as a lens through which to re-examine medieval religious art. It will refer here to the study of viewers and objects moving through both conceptual and physical spaces constructed and defined through their interactions. The symposium brings together representatives of European and East Asian art to facilitate focused dialogue on wider theoretical issues in art history. Not only will the colloquium serve as a testing ground for the validity of a trans-regional approach to medieval art, it should also serve as the arena for intensive engagement between two apparently disparate fields of study. Through this cross-cultural comparison, we hope to hold a mirror up to each of our fields as we consider the possibilities of drawing larger conclusions about visual cultures in general.

SPECIAL AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Musiking in Late Ming China

An International and Interdisciplinary Conference, May 5 and 6, 2006
Michigan League, University of Michigan.

Organized by Joseph Lam (U-M School of Music) and Judith Zeitlin (University of Chicago), this conference will feature two days of paper presentations and discussion by scholars from Asia, Europe, and North America, as well as a full performance of an early modern Chinese opera by Ms. Liang Guyin and other leading artists from Shanghai, China. Using music as a prism, the conference will explore late Ming Chinese culture and society by examining a diversity of topics—from the musical-cultural exchanges between Ming China and her neighbors (Japan, Vietnam, and non-Han peoples in Yunnan), to geo-cultural boundaries between the north and south, to the production and consumption of art and commercial goods in the gendered and hierarchical late Ming world.



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University of Michigan
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Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003

