

## Writer Willis Visits Ramapo

*Meredith Sue Willis reads work and speaks at Berrie Center*

The AIS Colloquium Committee is very pleased to announce a visit from noted author Meredith Sue Willis. Willis is the author of more than twelve books, including short stories, children's literature, and writing instruction. She is a master teacher, offering classes and seminars online and at colleges and universities around the nation on the craft of writing.

Meredith Sue Willis will speak at the Berrie Center for Performing Arts on: Wednesday, April 5, 2006 at 4:30 p.m. She will read a story ("Tales of Abstract Expressionists") from her latest collection, *Dwight's House and Other Stories*. (This story can be read online at <http://www.tatlinstower.com/Tales.html>)

One reviewer of *Dwight's House* commented:

The title novella is a marvel that successfully experiments with point of view, rapidly gyrating between the four main characters in the piece—Dwight, Fern, Susan, and Elaine. Willis pulls off this exhilarating *As I Lay Dying* technique quite nicely, managing to probe the inner states of each character, as well as allowing the innate conflict to surface in an almost organic fashion. Within a rustic Massachusetts setting, Willis introduces us to Dwight, an abusive and malicious man from West Virginia who envies the sleek modern cabin of the Jewish couple by the lake; his withdrawn wife Susan; Fern, who hates her stepfather; and Elaine, the neighbor who has retreated to her lakeside cabin to come to terms with the lump in her breast. In superbly piercing, almost brittle prose, the story ultimately

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This issue of *AIS Occurrences* was produced and edited by Prof. **Lisa Cassidy** and Prof. **Jeremy M. Teigen**.

## AIS Faculty Updates

### Faculty Research and Pedagogy Events

**Lisa Williams** will be a plenary speaker at the International Virginia Woolf Conference in Birmingham, England in June, where she will be reading from and speaking about her new book of creative non-fiction, *Letters to Virginia Woolf*.

**Jeremy Teigen** presented empirical research on congressional elections at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, April, 2006, in Chicago, explaining the rise and efficacy of candidates who trumpet their military service, "Can Democrats Hackett? How Military Experience Aids Congressional Candidates." ¶Additionally, his manuscript, "Enduring Effects of the Uniform: Previous Military Experience and Voting Turnout," was accepted for publication in *Political Research Quarterly* (3/2007).

On Thursday Nov. 10, **Ed Shannon** was invited to a celebration at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Labor Center on West 43rd St. in New York City where he was one of three award recipients. The award will support his research project: "The History of 'This Land is Your Land.'" Shannon was presented an award by Ralph Jackson (president, BMI music publishers) and Nora Guthrie, Woody's daughter and the director of the Guthrie archives. Several notable figures from the worlds of folk music and organized labor were present, including folksinger David Massengill and Woody's first biographer (and longtime friend) Henrietta Yurchenco, author of *A Mighty Hard Road; the Woody Guthrie Story*. The evening was a lively and musical celebration of the art and music of Woody Guthrie. ¶Ed Shannon is also chairing two panels at this year's New Jersey College English Association meeting on March 18 at Seton Hall University. ¶In addition, he is also delivering a paper at this year's NorthEast Modern Language Association conference in Philadelphia on March 5, called "'This Song Was Written in New York City': A History of 'This Land is Your Land.'"

**Peter Scheckner's** poem, "Better Than Falluja", was published in *The Tsculum Review*, 2005 Vol. 1. ¶His essay, "Roth's Falstaff: Transgressive Humor in Sabbath's Theater", was published in *The Midwest Quarterly*, Spring 2005, vol. xlvi, no. 3. ¶He also presented "Philip Roth's *Plot against America* and Upon Sinclair's *The Jungle*: Conspiracy and Business as Usual" New Jersey College English Association, 29th Spring Conference, March 18, 2006 at Seton Hall University. ¶His entry "The Chartist Movement" was published in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Politics* (GR 2928), edited by M. Keith Booker,

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manages to portray class conflict, the roots of anti-Semitism, the consequences of adultery, as well as render a family's free fall... In *Dwight's House and Other Stories*, [her] eclecticism and layered prose releases us from the moorings of "regional fiction." This is a significant book from an accomplished author much deserving of a wider readership.

—Nathan Leslie, *Main Street Rag*, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring 2005.

In addition, Willis's work on how to write is very insightful. Her website has practical exercises that faculty could easily incorporate into any writing-centered course. Copies of *Dwight's House* will be at the RCNJ bookstore, and many of her works are available through her website, [www.meredithsuewillis.com](http://www.meredithsuewillis.com), along with writing exercises to help faculty teach writing.

## Off the Syllabus:

### Recent Reads & Reactions

**Ed Shannon:** I am reading Simon Winchester's *A Crack in the Edge of the World*, a history of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. I love Winchester's books, and while this is not as wonderful as his *Krakatoa*, I recommend it. He has the strange distinction of claiming expertise in the areas of geology and the history of *The Oxford English Dictionary*. Such a strange résumé demands attention!

**Jeremy M. Teigen:** Before Hollywood wrecks it next year, give William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* (2003) your time—it is a clever, multilayered, and cyber-knowledgeable exploration of very human lives on- and offline, illuminating truths about what defines postmodern cool. Gibson weaves the narrative through post-9/11 lives with soft footsteps.

### Student News:

**Donna Kauder** reports that History and Literature double major **Nicole Ventuolo** is working as an archivist at NYU's Margaret Sanger Papers as a co-op. The editor of the papers is a Ramapo alumnus and a classmate of **Ed Shannon**, who set the contact up.

MALS student and former Ramapo literature major, **Walker Jackson**, had his essay on Herman Melville accepted for publication in the national MALS journal.

One of our History majors, **Joel Barret**, just presented a paper at the Regional Phi Alpha Theta Undergraduate and Graduate Student conference held at Rowan University. His paper, "The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: An Evaluation of the Causes and Contemporary Impressions" won the Outstanding Paper for an Undergraduate award! Joel wrote this paper in **Carter Jones Meyer's** History Seminar class.

Another major, **Megan Knowlton**, was one of a select group of national finalists for the Gilder Lehrman Summer Fellowship program. As a finalist, she will join other top undergraduates for one week in New York City and attend seminars, work with top History scholars, and be wined and dined by a number of New York cultural institutions.

## AIS Clubs & Organizations

### Students and Faculty Events

In addition to the presentation by Meredith Sue Willis, the **AIS Colloquium Committee** had two presentations:

- ▶ Recent faculty member **Karen O'Brien** spoke on "Forging Toleration in Revolutionary Times: Religion, the Continental Army, and American Civil Society," on March 1 in the York room.
- ▶ With the South Asians at Ramapo and the Political Forum the Committee also heard from **Deepak Thapa** (Fellow, Center for Conflict Resolution at Columbia University). He spoke on "Kingdom under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency" in the York Room on March 30.

*The AIS Colloquium Series is partially funded by a grant from the Ramapo College Foundation.*

**American Studies Club:** There is a new student club on campus, the American Studies Club. The club is now formally recognized, it has its officers and Steve Rice advises, and it has been meeting every Monday at 5:00 p.m. in the Atrium. The club will be sponsoring various cultural activities, including visits to historic sites and screenings of films on campus. It will also help foster a sense of community for students in the American Studies major, and for anyone else interested in the field of American Studies. Those interested in finding out more about the club, or students interested in joining, can contact **Steve Rice** or visit the club Luminis page.



### Spring 2006 Culture Club activities:

- ▶ Trip to Harlem, "The Malcolm X Exhibition Hall," November 5, 2005.
- ▶ End of Semester Party and Cultural Exhibit, December 5, 2005.
- ▶ **Karl Johnson** (SSHS), "My Trip to West Africa: Cultural and Societal Observations of Ghana and Togo," February 6, 2006.
- ▶ **Carol Bonilla Bowman** (SSHS), "Facing the Past and Finding the Present: A Cultural Journey Along the Routes of the African Slave Trade," February 20, 2006.
- ▶ **Ruma Sen** (CA), "Race, Religion, and Nationalism: Cultural Encounters in the Asian Indian Diaspora," March 13, 2006.
- ▶ **Paramjeet S. Bagga** (TAS), "The Sikh Culture of America," April 10, 2006.
- ▶ **Virginia Gonsalvez-Domond** (SSHS), "Images of Haiti: Personal Views," April 24, 2006.
- ▶ Reggae Festival, "Calypso, Hip-Hop, Reggae, African and Latino Show," performed by **Exodus Supreme Band**, May 4, 2006.

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**Philosophy Club:** The Philosophy club, with Sigma Tau Delta (Literature Honor Society) held its first roundtable of the year on February 15, 2006. Participants discussed "Love and Happiness" over lunch. The second roundtable, "How can a work of art be offensive?" was highly successful at generating interest. Over sixty people discussed controversial works of art.

Professor **Leonard Grob**, Fairleigh Dickinson University, discussed "Philosophy as Peacemaking and Genocide: the work of Emmanuel Levinas" on March 7, 2006. This event was co-sponsored with the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and the History Club.

In honor of Women's Herstory month Professor **Barbara Andrew**, William Paterson University, discussed "Simone's de Beauvoir's Place in Philosophy."

Professor **Tao Jiang**, Rutgers University, delivered his lecture "Buddhism, Chinese Religious and Philosophical Traditions, and Comparative Philosophy," in honor of Asian/Pacific American History Month.

**Eric Buck** of Transylvania University will arrive in May for a presentation on the phenomenology of architecture and space.



The following students were inducted in the Rider University Chapter of Phi Sigma Tau, the Philosophy Honor Society:

**John Benfield, Petra Carr, Michael DiBerardino, Jr., Silvia Fernandes, Jonathan Goffan, Kristin Gorsky, Nicholas Jackson, Erin Suydam, and Magorzata Zawodna.** Petra, Jonathan, Nick, and **Lisa Cassidy** attended the induction ceremony, held on March 6 at Rider's main campus in Lawrenceville, NJ.

The **Ramapo Ethics Society** was approved as a club, and **Bernard Roy** is its faculty advisor. The club meets every Wednesday between 1 and 2 to discuss issues of ethical import. For example, we have had discussions on just wars, and the morality of pro choice attitudes. We have also had joint meetings with the Philosophy Club (**Lisa Cassidy**, faculty advisor) and the literature club, Sigma Delta Tau (**Ed Shannon**, faculty advisor).

In addition to the highly successful joint **Sigma Tau Delta - Philosophy Club** roundtable lunches, ΣΤΔ will be holding a meeting to discuss the essays of Kurt Vonnegut on March 22, at 7 pm in SC225.

The **Italian Club**, along with assorted faculty, attended New York City Opera's production of Don Giovanni on April 1<sup>st</sup> after dinner at Marcello's in Suffern.

*Happy Birthday, Anthony Charles Francis Stone,  
as well to Mother Monika Giacoppe!*



December 30, 2005

*"Faculty Updates" continued from page 1*

Westport: Greenwood, 2005.

**Bernard Roy's** paper, titled "Askesis on the path to Conversion in Descartes' Meditations," has been accepted by the forthcoming New Jersey Regional Philosophical Association. He'll be reading it at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University on Saturday, April 8.

**Steve Rice** gave a paper last month at the annual meeting of the College Art Association. The paper was in a session on "Prints in the Nineteenth Century" and was titled "Timothy Cole and the Transformation of Wood Engraving in America."

This past summer **Ziva Piltch's** article, "From Stage to Screen: Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ and the Medieval Passion Play," was published in an anthology, *Passionate Dialogues: Critical Perspectives on Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ,"* edited by Burston and Denova.

**Sharon Fingerer-Goldman** is involved in restarting the New Jersey Political Science Association which will be having a conference Mar 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Eagleton Center at Princeton. Jennefer Mazza will host a panel discussing the state of political science on New Jersey college campuses.

**Niza Fabre** gave two campus presentations: "The African Cimarron: Ladinos and Bozales in Esmeraldas, Ecuador," Operation Link-Up for Diversity Week, October 25, 2005, and "African Religions in the New World: Vaudun, Santeria and Beyond," Philosophy Club, March 7, 2006. ¶She also chaired a session on: "Africans and Africans Americans in the Diaspora: Cultural Values and Identity and presented "Black Mythology in Esmeraldas, Ecuador" at the Popular Culture Association Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, April 14, 2006.

**Ellen Dolgin** attended the MLA convention in December as the NEMLA Women's Caucus Representative to the National Women's Caucus meetings and events; she will do the same this coming December. ¶She also gave a campus presentation to a joint meeting of the philosophy club and Sigma Tau Delta on her Joan of Arc research project. Cultural images of Joan is

the subject of her book in progress.

**Lisa Cassidy's** article "Advising an Undergraduate Philosophy Club" will be published in this spring's American Philosophical Association's Newsletter on Teaching. ¶Additionally, she will read her essay "Women Shopping and Women Sweatshopping: Consumerism as a Moral Dilemma" at two conferences this spring, the 33rd Annual Conference on Value Inquiry (Molloy College, Rockville Center, NY) and the Global Studies Association (DePaul, Chicago, IL).

Last Hurrah Publications released adjunct professor **Walt Brown's** "The Guns of Texas Are upon You" on November 22, 2005. That same week, he gave the keynote speech at a JFK Symposium at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas. ¶He was also featured in a history documentary taped in February and broadcast on March 26 of this year, overseas. Currently he is completing a user-friendly grammar manual and a children's story, "Tommy and the Little Guy."

**Patricia Ard** will speak by invitation to the literature honor society and literature majors on "The Letter in Literature" on April 12, 2006. She spoke by invitation on March 9, 2006 to the First Year Seminar faculty about models for teaching the research paper.



## Carol Hovanec Retires

### *Longtime College Leader Says Goodbye to Ramapo*

Carol is retiring at the end of this term. In addition to earning renown in her field (as a Fulbright Scholar and a Woodrow Wilson Scholar), she has been rewarded on campus with several honors: the Fred and Florence Thomases Award for Outstanding Faculty Member, the Jack Richardson Award for Leadership, and the Student Services Award for Leadership. Carol has served the College as Dean of AIS, Convener of the Writing Program, and President of the Faculty Assembly.

Carol Hovanec has been honored by the New Jersey College English Association with The Steven J. Rosen Mentor Award. NJCEA annually recognizes a college English professor and NJCEA member who has mentored colleagues. This individual should have contributed to the profession beyond assigned teaching duties by demonstrating leadership, giving wise counsel, and providing extraordinary guidance. Carol is a longtime member and past president of the organization. The award will be given at the organization's annual meeting on March 18, 2006 at Seton Hall University.

AIS will honor Carol Hovanec at a dinner to celebrate her retirement on May 10, 5-8 pm in SC136-7. Those who wish to celebrate Carol's life at Ramapo College can RSVP to x7406.

## IN MEMORIAM By Bill Russo

**Walter T. Brown** died on March 5, 2006. He was 63 years old. A three time recipient of Fulbright Fellowships, Dr. Brown was professor of African History and International Studies for 33 years at Ramapo College in New Jersey, during which time he brought the world to his students through his dynamic lectures illustrated with his own documentary photographs and his students to the world through the numerous trips he led to Ghana, Czech Republic, Russia, and Jamaica. Through his career, Dr. Brown's studies focused on issues of ethnicity, religion and political change as they affected the lives of small minorities within cultures. Born in the Bronx, he received his BS from CCNY where he was a star lacrosse player and later inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame and his MA and PhD from Boston University doing his field research in East Africa. His intellect, humor and passion for life will be deeply missed by students, colleagues, family, and friends.

A memorial service was held on campus on March 15 and a large group of students, former students, friends, and colleagues attended and shared their fond memories of Walt. He is survived by his wife Beverly, his daughters Ericka and Kara, and four grandchildren.

### On a Personal Note

**Monika Giacoppe's** son was born on December 30, 10 pounds and 4 ounces, 22 and a quarter inches long. (She reports she never understood how mothers remembered this information so well, but now can see how it is burned into memory.) And his full name: **Anthony Charles Francis Stone.** ("You don't get many chances to honor people like this, so we did all we figured we could.")

**Carol Hovanec's** retirement plans include moving to Alabama, her birthplace and childhood home. Carol's retirement program is ambitious. In addition to part time teaching in the Birmingham area, she has several writing projects. The first is to continue her previous work on the attitudes about nature in American literature; this work may result in a new anthology of short stories. In addition, Carol

plans on exploring her heritage. She is in possession of a group of letters from a relative who fought in the Civil War. Carol also is interested in her family's more recent history. Carol's parents were fascinating people: her father was a self-made man, a doctor of divinity, and a prominent a Methodist minister, and her mother was the first older, returning student to attend the University of Alabama. Carol looks forward to reflecting on the dramatic changes the South has undergone since her childhood.

**Michael Weinman**, who has taught Business Ethics, Critical Thinking, and other courses at Ramapo since this past fall, will be leaving Ramapo next year to embark on his first tenure-track job at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. He is looking forward to teaching St. John's College's all-required course of study, based on the great books of the Western tradition. He will live in Washington D.C. with his partner.