Graduate Education in the Humanities

April 24, 2013

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS | MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions of Guest Speakers

Dwight A. McBride, Northwestern University
“Beyond the (Problematic) RI Target: Graduate Education for a Range of Institutions”

Robert C. Holub, The Ohio State University
“Living in the Past, Preparing for the Future”

Russell A. Berman, Stanford University
“Reforming the German Studies Ph.D.”

Karen L. Klomparens, Michigan State University
“Transferable Skills for Multiple Career Options”

Karin A. Wurst, Michigan State University
“Teaching, Learning, and Technology”

John A. Stevenson, University of Colorado
“How Much Time Does a Ph.D. Need?”

Rosemary G. Feal, Modern Language Association
“What Happens in Grad School Shouldn’t Stay in Grad School: Thoughts on Necessary Cultural Change”

Geoffrey Galt Harpham, National Humanities Center
“Going on the Offensive: Advocating for the Humanities”

Panel Discussion
Additional Topics by MSU Faculty:
Dr. Stephen Rachman, Dr. James Nelson,
Dr. Elizabeth Mittman, and Dr. William Hart-Davidson
Beyond the (Problematic) RI Target: Graduate Education for a Range of Institutions

Dwight A. McBride, Northwestern University

Associate Provost for Graduate Education & Dean of The Graduate School at Northwestern University, McBride focuses on enhancing the educational experience of Northwestern's graduate students. Working with deans, decanal staffs, faculty, and students, he serves as an advocate for graduate education and helps to facilitate cross-school initiatives and coordination via the Office of the Provost.

A leading scholar of race and literary studies, he has been a University of California President’s Postdoctoral Fellow, a Ford Fellow, and a Mellon Fellow. An award-winning author of numerous publications that examine connections between race theory, black studies, and identity politics, his most recent publication is the co-edited volume A Melvin Dixon: Critical Reader, a collection of critical essays on literature and life from the African American activist and scholar.

McBride garnered the Best Special Issue Award from the Council of Editors of Learned Journals for the special issue of Public Culture he co-edited titled "100 Years of the 'Souls of Black Folk': A Celebration of W.E.B. DuBois." Read More.
Beyond the (Problematic) RI Target: Graduate Education for a Range of Institutions

Dwight A. McBride

Abstract of Presentation

Recent data says there is an increase in the number of things that people are doing with a Ph.D. Similarly, instead of cloning students in our own image, we should listen to what they are trying to accomplish and what they want to do with the Ph.D. Job market data from Northwestern shows that academic jobs have not declined, but tenure-track jobs have. Of our (Northwestern) Social Scientist graduates, about 40 percent who annually go on to academic appointment do so at public institutions, indicating a linked fate between publics and privates. Because the tenure-track market has been difficult to crack – sometimes taking 2-3 years to land such jobs – we’ve seen a marked increase in post-doc and, in some cases, industry placements. And the data from Northwestern University over the past 10 years bears this out.

As to strategies we’ve been using to try and help students prepare for and think about different options beyond the Research 1 university placement, three examples include an NIH-sponsored program running about 5 years called New Start; a partnership with the Kellogg School on an 8-week course in management, entrepreneurship and leadership; and our Ready. Set. Go. summer program that helps students become better communicators around their work. This is true whether talking about science and research; government and policy; corporate finance; arts management; or people who steward the world’s art and culture. All of these require a kind of training, a kind of expertise, and a kind of place that I think is important for doctoral-educated folk to occupy in a Democratic society.
Robert C. Holub, The Ohio State University

Robert Holub received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1979 and taught in the German Department at the University of California, Berkeley, from 1979 until 2006. He chaired Berkeley’s German Department from 1991–1997 and was Dean of the Undergraduate Division in the College of Letters and Science from 2003–2006. From 2006–08 he served as Provost at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and from 2008–2012 he was Chancellor of the Amherst campus of the University of Massachusetts.

His scholarly work has focused on nineteenth and twentieth-century intellectual, cultural, and literary history with special interest in Heinrich Heine, German realism, Friedrich Nietzsche, literary and aesthetic theory, Jürgen Habermas, and Vergangenheitsbewältigung. He is currently working on a project that situates Nietzsche’s thought in the context of social and scientific developments in nineteenth-century Europe. Read More.
Abstract of Presentation

Most humanists live in the past. We deal with topics from earlier centuries, or with issues that concerned our societies in earlier eras. Although they suggest mild reforms for the future, they operate almost exclusively with a model of higher education that lies in the past, or at least that has now passed into something that it wasn’t a few short decades ago – and continues to evolve. True to the genuine humanist credo, they seek to preserve this institutional past as well. The real “crisis” in graduate humanities education is not a recent occurrence.

Most humanities disciplines have been producing too many Ph.D.s for the available positions for over four decades. We have no national policy on graduate education, no mechanism to rationalize the chaos of programs; nor do we have bodies or professional organizations that have sufficient authority or influence to implement such changes, or to help us implement them. In my research, I give three suggestions for how we can overcome these challenges.
Reforming the German Studies Ph.D.

Russell A. Berman, Stanford University

Russell Berman is the Walter A. Haas Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University, with appointments in Comparative Literature and German Studies and courtesy appointments at FSI and the Hoover Institution. He is an expert on German literature and culture and on cultural relations between Europe and the United States.

Most recently, he has published research on the cultural phenomenon of anti-Americanism. He is currently chair of the Department of Comparative Literature and previously served as associate dean and as director of Stanford's Overseas Studies Program. He is on the advisory board of the group Business for Diplomatic Action. He has been awarded fellowships from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the German Academic Exchange Service.

The German government awarded him the Bundesverdienstkreuz award.
The rapid contraction of the job market after 2008 was a shock and, today, there are too many Ph.D.s being produced for the number of available tenure-track academic positions. In the end, what’s at stake is preserving the vitality of the Humanities in our culture even if it means changing how professors pursue their profession. So, rather than shrink programs, let’s recognize that Humanities Ph.D.s can open many career doors. People who finish Ph.D.s and don’t go on to tenure-track positions, get good jobs: jobs they’re interested in. In reality, 10 years out from their Ph.D.s, only about 50 percent are in higher ed. So, we need to let Ph.D. candidates know about the realities of the job market, and restructure our programs to facilitate this mobility into a wider field of careers.

That means greater transparency by departments on student placements and outcomes. Ph.D.s also take too long to complete. A graduate program typically requires nine years. There’s no reason it can’t be completed in five. Entering the profession at 27 vs. 32 years of age is a huge difference. There should be a cruel scrutiny of every requirement we have. Many requirements, examination hurdles, and required courses are just there to preserve the past. Our fields have gone through enormous transformations. What I envision is Humanities study, including advanced study – a Ph.D. opportunity – that remains accessible, diverse, and available across the country in many different kinds of institutions, precisely so that Humanities thinking can better inform our society.
Transferable Skills for Multiple Career Options

Karen L. Klomparens, Michigan State University

Karen Klomparens has served as Dean of the Graduate School and Associate Provost for Graduate Education at Michigan State University since 1997. She is a Professor of Plant Biology and is on leave as Director of MSU’s Center for Advanced Microscopy. With her graduate students, Dr. Klomparens published 60 peer-reviewed articles and 3 books on the topic of ultrastructural development of sporulating structures in fungi. Prior to becoming Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Welfare in 1994, Dr. Klomparens was on a Fulbright-supported sabbatical at Cambridge University. Dr. Klomparens’ passions as a Graduate Dean focus on completion issues for doctoral students, interdisciplinary graduate education, and inclusive excellence.

Klomparens and her colleagues developed a FIPSE (U.S. Department of Education) and Hewlett Foundation–supported program on “Setting Expectations and Resolving Conflicts between Graduate Students and Faculty.” The program uses interest-based approaches to resolving conflicts and has been used in a variety of settings inside and outside of academe for the past 9 years. Klomparens served a 2–year term as the Chair of the Big Ten (CIC) graduate deans group and is currently serving on the CGS Board of Directors and Executive Committee, the AGS Executive Committee, and the GRE Board of Directors. Read More.
Transferable Skills for Multiple Career Options
Karen L. Klomparens

Abstract of Presentation

When we talk about transferable skills and the T-shaped individual, we mean workforce skills that transcend disciplinary knowledge. Often, these are interdisciplinary skills as well as expertise to collaborate across disciplinary boundaries, including non-cognitive skills such as: Time management, Project management; Information technology; Data analysis; Teamwork; Leadership and Communication to broad audiences.

The program at MSU that addresses preparing students for career success is called PREP: Planning, Resilience, Engagement, and Professionalism. PREP goals include broadening awareness of professional expectations in graduate education; preparing students to plan and manage their careers; promoting graduate student retention and completion; providing students with a competitive edge in securing professional positions; and focusing on developing transferable skills. PREP is divided into the early, mid and late stage of the graduate student’s time at MSU, and transferable skills are tied to each of the four areas represented by PREP. Affiliated partners are also identified to assist in developing these transferable skills via participation in PREP workshops and other development activities including those within the Graduate School. In mapping their path to Career Success, students Make their Plan, Evaluate their Skills, Document their Success, and Invest in Wellness, all with the end goal of becoming T-Shaped Professionals.
Teaching, Learning, and Technology

Karin A. Wurst, Michigan State University

As dean of the College of Arts and Letters, Karin A. Wurst is responsible for all aspects of the academic administration of one of MSU's largest colleges, with executive oversight of more than 20 departments, schools, and affiliated programs.

Prior to her appointment as dean, she was professor of German in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages, and served as acting chairperson in 2005. She has been chairperson of the University Graduate Council since 2005. Dean Wurst is a founding member of the Global Literary and Cultural Studies research cluster, and is recognized nationally for her expertise in graduate student mentoring and engaged learning.

Dean Wurst received a Ph.D. in German from The Ohio State University in 1985 and joined MSU in 1988. Her academic interests include 18th- and 19th-century German literature and culture. She is the author of books and articles on the writers J.M.R. Lenz and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and on German fashion, entertainment, and consumption during the Classical and Romantic periods. Dean Wurst is past president of the Society for German Renaissance and Baroque Literature and active in the American Association of Teachers of German and the Modern Language Association.

Read More.
Abstract of Presentation

When we prepare graduate students for faculty roles, we need to be mindful that they will be facing a different educational landscape than their mentors did and thus they need a more comprehensive toolkit. The challenges to higher education in general will make a more sophisticated approach to graduate education as an integrated experience that focuses on educating the whole student imperative. While we certainly want to focus also on opening alternate career paths for our Ph.D.s, preparing students for faculty positions can also NOT be business as usual.

To prepare our Ph.D.s for this new reality, it will require a radically reformed department culture; one that puts students first, vigorously pursues active and intentional learning, routinely employs high-impact strategies, and assures that the curriculum is well-articulated (learning outcomes in each course build on other courses). This requires a spirit of ongoing collaboration, collegiality, a high degree of professionalism, and accountability.

It will require the skilled human touch of professionals in a variety of possible careers that have not even been imagined to guide the public in continuous learning in the technology enhanced environment of business processes, entertainment options, civic and cultural life, and of course keeping current in work life. So even as we discuss teaching and learning in Higher Education, these other transferable implications and opportunities should be kept in mind.
How Much Time Does a Ph.D. Need?

John A. Stevenson, University of Colorado

John A. Stevenson (BA *summa cum laude*, Duke University, 1975; Ph.D., University of Virginia, 1983) is Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of English at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he has been a faculty member since 1982. He is a scholar of British literature of the eighteenth century, and is the author of two books and many articles, including most recently, *The Real History of Tom Jones* (2005), which won the Eugene Kayden Book Prize in 2007. He has presented his work both nationally and internationally many times. He was formerly Chair of the English Department (1996-2004), and Interim Director of the Program for Writing and Rhetoric (2001-02). He joined the Graduate School as associate vice chancellor for Graduate Education in 2005. He served as chair of the Flagship 2030 Task Force on Graduate Education in 2008 and as Interim Dean (2009-2011). He was appointed Dean of the Graduate School in March 2011. Read More.
That question leads to some subsidiary but related ones: do we design requirements and demands so as to encourage disciplinary mastery or to develop transferrable skills? How many years should a degree take? These are not questions most departmental curriculum discussions have faced up to. Perhaps this is just as it should be, and one can imagine colleagues who would say, some will find academic employment, and since those who do not will still have good skills for a successful career, go ahead and maintain curricula with academic employment in mind since a happy outcome awaits everyone. The benefits may be direct, they may be collateral, but the benefits are there, either way.
What Happens in Grad School Shouldn’t Stay in Grad School: Thoughts on Necessary Cultural Change

Rosemary G. Feal, Modern Language Association

Since 2002, Rosemary G. Feal has served as executive director of the Modern Language Association of America. She administers the business affairs, programs, and governance of the association; is general editor of the association’s publishing and research programs and editor of two association publications; serves as an ex officio member of all committees and commissions of the association; chairs the committee that oversees the planning of the association’s annual convention; and is a member of the MLA Executive Council’s audit and advisory committees, working with the MLA’s trustees in evaluating and implementing investments of the MLA’s endowment funds and chairing the Finance Committee.

Coeditor of the SUNY Series in Latin American Iberian Thought and Culture, Rosemary Feal is also an associate editor of the Afro–Hispanic Review and former senior consulting editor of the Latin American Literary Review. She has published on contemporary Latin American literature, Afro–Hispanic studies, Caribbean women writers, and feminist theory.

Her book publications include Isabel Allende Today (coeditor; 2002); Painting on the Page: Interartistic Approaches to Modern Hispanic Texts (coauthor; 1995); and Novel Lives: The Fictional Autobiographies of Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Mario Vargas Llosa (author; 1986). Read More.
What Happens in Grad School Shouldn’t Stay in Grad School: Thoughts on Necessary Cultural Change
Rosemary G. Feal

Abstract of Presentation

We are in an era of hyper-specialization even though the academic job market cannot accommodate these specialized Ph.D. recipients in sustainable academic positions. In general, graduate students receive little training (or encouragement) to explore opportunities other than the scholarly reproductive choices made for them by their graduate advisors.

The hyper-specialized Ph.D. program provides students with some essential skills that would serve them in jobs beyond the academy, but rarely are those skills formally identified and cultivated. Several shifts need to happen if we are to move away from the current model. The first is recognition on the part of graduate schools and graduate programs that we have a responsibility to our students to inform them about current employment prospects and conditions and prepare them for their post-Ph.D. years.
Going on the Offensive: Advocating for the Humanities

Geoffrey Galt Harpham, National Humanities Center

Geoffrey Galt Harpham is president and director of the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, the only institute for advanced study in the world dedicated exclusively to the humanities.

Among his many books are On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature (1982); Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society (1999); and Language Alone: The Critical Fetish of Modernity (2002). His longstanding scholarly interests include the role of ethics in literary study, the place of language in intellectual history, and the work of Joseph Conrad. He has collaborated with M. H. Abrams on A Glossary of Literary Terms, now in its tenth edition.

In recent years, he has become a prominent historian of and advocate for the humanities; The Humanities and the Dream of America appeared in 2011. Under his leadership, the National Humanities Center has sponsored initiatives that have encouraged dialogue between the humanities and the natural and social sciences. Read More.
Going on the Offensive: Advocating for the Humanities
Geoffrey Galt Harpham

Abstract of Presentation

Immediately after World War II, the current system of American education was consolidated and mass liberal education at the secondary level and at the collegiate level was developed with Humanities as the heart and soul of this enterprise. Within a generation, every department was affected including the Humanities. But it was harder for us to justify research than for science, because scientific research is tied to technology, innovations, sometimes the military, as well as the production of wealth. I’m suggesting we take stock of how we educate people and what we educate them for. Professors are evaluated in three areas: Scholarship, Teaching, and Service.

On Scholarship, the Humanities have a vast, important research assignment: “total responsibility for everything we know about everything.” My second point concerns Teaching. Our profession is face-to-face. In every class, we create face-to-face communities, and we’re responsible for them. If we don’t understand that, we’re missing the point. The last area, Service, shouldn’t be an afterthought, but our first thought. We should be citizens of our campuses: deeply engaged, deeply involved citizens. We should take Service very seriously and encourage our graduate students to do the same. Every professor should be able to answer the question: How does what you do contribute to the common good? The Humanities have a past that we can be deeply proud of. They played a singular role in development of this country, and many of its best features. Going forward, if we permit ourselves to be excited and inspired in the right way, we might actually have a great future as well.
Proposal for National Forum on Reform of the Humanities
Dr. Stephen Rachman, Department of English, Michigan State University

Alternate Placements for Philosophy Ph.D.s: Strategies for Success at MSU
Dr. James Nelson, Department of Philosophy, Michigan State University

The Case of the German Ph.D. Program
Dr. Elizabeth Mittman, Department of Linguistics & Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages, Michigan State University

Preparing Scholars & Teachers to be Outstanding Leaders
Dr. William Hart-Davidson, Department of Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures, Michigan State University
We agree that the improvement of educational experiences toward those that maximize student excitement and the cultivation of skills through active engagement is a laudable goal as is finding ways to develop graduate training that fosters these objectives. There have been many interesting literary projects that have involved digital humanities but, in general, not been the case that digital projects have become part of graduate studies in English. At MSU, we are seeking to change that by building an integrated approach to the digital study of literature.

One obstacle to growing it has been the question of faculty training and expertise. The Department of English is populated with graduate students ready to experiment with pedagogy in productive ways and digital technology is an area well-suited for integration into the English classroom, and the Tech GA has been facilitating the incorporation of digital technologies. With faculty guidance by myself, as Associate Chair for Graduate Studies and Co-Director of the DHLC, and Steve Arch, as faculty mentor on summer online courses, and Steve Grandchamp transforming the pedagogical culture of our graduate students and our faculty.
Abstract of Presentation

Tenure stream appointments in academic departments concordant with student education continue to be seen as the natural telos of graduate education in the humanities. In general terms, philosophy has been no exception to this trend; my disciplinary colleagues, by and large, still think in these terms. However, my departmental colleagues at MSU have been willing to take advantage of trends in the field. In the non-profit sector, Ph.D. trained people with writing skills are in high demand, and our Environmental Faculty have been tailoring to their approach to graduate education to specifically help graduate students become "change agents," so they can sell themselves as being able to do basic organizational work as well.

Our students have also been working to develop their skills as grants writers, which will help them be competitive for these positions. There are private and government funded programs that include positions for “environmental educators”, too. Our graduates will be able to make a strong case for filling many such positions.
In the fall 2012, AATG Center of Excellence designation recognize the uniquely balanced profile of MSU’s German program and interactions across areas traditionally held apart—curriculum, faculty research, and community engagement. More specifically, graduate studies in German at MSU includes the study of literature, culture, language and pedagogy within the context of the production and dissemination of knowledge via media and technology, and emphasizes an innovative integration of curricular and co-curricular activities in the comprehensive training of students in research, teaching, service, and outreach for academic and non-academic employment in the twenty-first century.

The German faculty has streamlined and professionalized the Ph.D. program significantly through structural changes throughout the department (e.g. the comprehensive exams/portfolio model). This innovative model of student preparation provides student support for overseas pre-program summer funding, job-shadowing internships in conjunction with a short-term study abroad program in Germany, and on-campus research assistantships. The funding for these innovations comes from institutional funding as well as Max Kade fellowships.
Abstract of Presentation
Why the Emphasis on Leadership?

We understand that our field requires outstanding leaders across the higher-ed mission and across many types of institutions. As such, we operate a graduate program that aims to do the following year over year:

Recruiting & Preparing Leaders

We emphasize leadership qualities in our screening and recruitment criteria for Ph.D. applicants, seeking credentials, experience, and achievements that speak to leadership potential as well as behavioral qualities consistent with effective leaders.

Leadership in the Academy Comes from Excellence in Research, Teaching, Outreach & Engagement, Institutional & Professional Service.

Our program focuses on preparing students to be outstanding in all areas of academic life by emphasizing the different forms leadership can take.
Working Dinner

Discussion Topics:

Communication between Departments, Dean's levels, Graduate Schools, and Provost's level: what is working, what could be improved? (Local experiences?)

What are the most contested issues?

Faculty Research in the Humanities and the Role of the Dissertation?

Size of Programs?

Is there (or should there be) better alignment of University mission and vision, and the vision governing graduate education in the humanities?

Creating more focused graduate programs that are more differentiated? Pros and cons?