Study follows frustrated patients in chatrooms

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during the past two decades more than ten million Americans, mostly women, have been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and multiple chemical sensitivity. Known as “functional somatic syndromes,” these conditions share a host of symptoms. They also share the negative distinction of being viewed with suspicion by many in the mainstream medical community.

“By definition, functional somatic syndromes are not linked to any known organic abnormality, and hence many physicians approach these diagnoses with a considerable degree of skepticism,” said Kristin Barker, a Research Fellow and assistant professor of sociology at OSU. “The fact that functional somatic syndromes respond poorly to established medical treatments only further fuels suspicions.”

In simplest terms, what is at issue in the minds of many clinicians is whether the symptoms are “real,” that is, have physical rather than psychosomatic origins. For the millions of sufferers, who commonly experience chronic pain, fatigue, headaches, sleep irregularities, and mood disorders, such skepticism is highly frustrating, and it has led patients to turn in huge numbers to a relatively new source of help—internet newsgroups, listserves and chatrooms where they can talk to others in the same situation.

“There are anecdotal reports from participants that these electronic support groups provide information and support that significantly alleviate symptoms and the self-discrediting impact of living with a contested illness,” said Barker, who is the author of The Fibromyalgia Story: Medical Authority and Women’s Worlds of Pain (Temple UP, 2005). “In sharp opposition to this assessment, skeptical clinicians accuse these groups of contributing to the spread of functional somatic syndromes by circulating medical misinformation twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, to the worried and anxious.”

Center names OSU Fellows

The Center has awarded nine Research Fellowships to OSU faculty members for 2006-07. Two Fellowships will also be awarded to visiting scholars, to be named at a later date. Visiting scholars receive a stipend for the academic year, while OSU Fellows receive paid release time for one or two terms, although they are Fellows for the full year. Fellowships come with an office at Autzen House, a computer, and full support services.

OSU Fellows

Nabil Boudraa
Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages & Literatures
Discursive Geographies: Writing Landscape in French and Francophone Literature

Elizabeth Campbell
Associate Professor
Department of English
The Language of Nighshades: The Solanaceae in Victoria’s Garden

Marisa Chappell
Assistant Professor
Department of History

Kristin Barker
Civic organizations often act as “midwives” to democracy by serving as mediators between the state and society. The question for Research Fellow Sarah Henderson is just how strong a role citizen activism has played in Russia since the collapse of communism.

“...the realm where citizens interact, exchange information, and pressure the government—is particularly critical to democratic stability.

“To what degree are elements of civil society active in designing governance at the local and regional levels and what is the nature of this governance? Specifically, I want to trace the evolution of citizen activism and the effects of such activism on public policy in six of Russia’s regions.”

As authoritarianism has crumbled on every continent around the world, many countries have struggled to establish viable democratic institutions, said Henderson, an assistant professor of political science at OSU and co-author, with Alana Jeydel, of Participation and Protest: Women and Politics in a Global World (Oxford UP, 2006).

While a variety of factors help cement fledgling institutions into working democracies, a strong and healthy civil society—the realm where citizens interact, exchange information, and pressure the government—is particularly critical to democratic stability.

“Civic organizations help build norms of citizen trust and activism. The groups also provide citizens with alternative methods of political expression beyond traditional electoral politics, particularly in countries with weak or poorly institutionalized political parties.”

While the institutions of democracy are in place in Russia, said Henderson, they often work poorly or not at all. “In particular, President Putin has acted in ways dangerous for democracy by further weakening the mechanisms of communication between society and state. Governors will now be appointed by Presidential fiat rather than through competitive elections. Critical voices of dissent within civil society have been muffled, the independent media has been brought into line, and many nongovernmental organizations have been effectively excluded from the policy process at the federal level. One could say that while civil society, and by extension, democracy, is alive in Russia, it is not well.”

This grim prognosis at the federal level, however, masks a wide regional variation in civil society development and citizen input on policy across Russia’s eighty-nine regions. Henderson’s project assesses the internal, domestic factors that explain the nature and strength of linkages between the population, civil society organizations, and local governments,
Man, in transforming nature, transforms himself,” asserts a propaganda slogan from Russia’s Stalin era.

“As a mobilization device, this declaration captured the ruthless bravado of the Russian experiment in Communism, in which attempts to ‘correct nature’s mistakes’ ranged from the benign to the benighted,” said William Husband, a Research Fellow and OSU professor of history. “It included the scientific improvement of chronically anemic peasant agriculture, to be sure, but also environmentally calamitous projects such as attempting to reverse the flow of major rivers or reconfigure regional biospheres.”

Beyond its hackneyed propaganda functions, the slogan also extended the letter, if not the spirit, of the idealism of the nineteenth century Russian intelligentsia, who saw in science a rationalizing force with the potential to inculcate a more egalitarian society in Russia, in addition to improving its material existence. In his project **Nature in Modern Russia: A Social History**, Husband focuses on the complexity of the relationship between humans and nature in Russia from 1861 to the present, a period during which intellectuals and successive governments have considered it realistic to try to transform both simultaneously.

“Multiple attempts to transform and/or preserve the natural environment in Russia have been inextricably tied not only to improving humans’ material existence, but also to a variety of aspirations to reconfigure the human condition globally.” Previous studies have failed to emphasize adequately one underappreciated truth about the multiple Russian and Soviet attempts to transform both humans and nature, said Husband: that impulses toward both exploitation and protection evolved not from markedly disparate traditions, but from the same cultural matrix.

“Seventy-four years of Communist rule undeniably produced manifold catastrophic consequences for humans and the natural environment, but the aspirations of the Russian experiment in Communism—if not all its actions—were consistent with the predominant scientific and humanitarian modes of educated Russian thought at the end of the nineteenth century.”

Husband’s book begins with a discussion of nature and science as representing a Russian state of mind, that is, the coexistence in the same intellectual tradition of seemingly contradictory approaches to nature.

“Russian educated opinion of the late nineteenth century covered a wide range, including concern over the serious depletion of forests and game, optimism that the exploitation of the country’s natural resources represented the avenue out of Russia’s chronic ‘backwardness’ relative to the West, a deterministic faith in science, fear that modernization would contaminate Russia’s national spirit and uniqueness, and literary representations that both idealized nature and laid bare its peril.”

Western historians of the environment approach nature not as a fixed or pristine wilderness, but as a phenomenon that continually evolves even without human intervention or interference. “Western analytical categories, however, do not apply neatly to the Russian experience—there is, for example, no true Russian word for ‘wilderness’”

In his study, Husband focuses on the internal logic of the Russian situation by approaching the subject from a broad social and cultural perspective. Individual phenomena considered in the study include the land itself, wood and forest, water, hunting, fire, and finally the city as “contested space where humans and nature negotiate their coexistence.”

Husband is the author of **Revolution in the Factory** (Oxford UP, 1990) and ‘**Godless Communists**: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932” (Northern Illinois UP, 2000), both written with the help of previous Center Fellowships.
A singular truth exists in the movie industry. If you can’t protect what you own, you don’t own anything.” The words are those of Jack Valenti, former president of the Motion Picture Association of America, and they refer to the big new challenge for the film business.

“Valenti made clear that the new battleground for the motion picture industry is no longer censorship—the familiar hue and cry over movie violence and sexual content—but piracy,” said Jon Lewis, Research Fellow and professor of English at OSU.

New technology will soon allow the downloading of a DVD quality movie to a home computer in five seconds. According to Valenti, 400,000 to 600,000 films already are “abducted” every day. The resultant losses aren’t felt so much by the film directors, producers or writers, but by the studio distributors who make up the Motion Picture Association and who own nearly all the copyrights on commercially released films.

“So what’s at stake in this 21st Century struggle with internet pirates is control over the marketing of filmed materials, control over the movement of filmed material as it makes its profitable way through the various markets that comprise the modern entertainment industry,” said Lewis, author of seven acclaimed books on the film industry and editor, since 2003, of Cinema Journal.

Domestic theatrical earnings account, on average, for only 16 percent of the total revenue of most film studios. The remaining 84 percent are comprised of domestic home video (26 percent), international box office (16 percent), international home video (20 percent), domestic television (11 percent) and licensing and merchandising (11 percent).

“The free uploading and downloading of filmed information on the Net threatens several if not all of these parallel markets. Though it is hard to feel all that sorry for the studios and their lost revenue, only a small, very specialized community makes the case that stealing and sharing films on the Net is either legal or ethical.”

Even so, said Lewis, efforts to enforce copyrights on the internet have been difficult. For example, when the recording industry forced the closure of Napster, in its place more sophisticated sites such as Gnutella and Kazaa emerged. When a suit was filed against Gnutella, the court found the peer-to-peer (P2P) network not liable for what its users do with their software.

“After working hard for the better part of a century to keep the govern-

ment out of the film business, the 21st Century Motion Picture Association of America is working hard to get the government to intervene on their behalf. At stake as the MPAA lobbies hard for government regulation of Internet traffic is more than just the financial bottom line of a handful of very wealthy companies that own the movie studios.”

Through his Center project, a book titled ‘If you Can’t Protect What You Own, You Don’t Own Anything’: Piracy, Privacy and Public Relations in 21st Century Hollywood, Lewis will make clear that future regulation and enforcement will raise significant questions concerning international public relations, individual privacy and academic freedom. “While we assume that digital pirates are mostly computer savvy teenagers too poor or too cheap to buy DVDs from Amazon.com, a new breed of digital pirates has emerged from America’s heartland,” said Lewis.

The story begins with the 1997 booking of the film Titanic at the Towne Cinema in Twin Forks, Utah. When the proprietor of the theater previewed the film, he objected to two racy scenes, so he cut them out with scissors. A few weeks later he did the same thing to Deep Impact; he did not announce what he was doing, and the Motion Picture Association did not openly object.

“In a classic Clintonian conceit, the Towne Cinema and the MPAA reached an accord: don’t ask, don’t tell,” said Lewis. There followed
Antique map show

That the earth is a sphere was known to the early Greeks, who also estimated its circumference and developed geometry that made the latitude and longitude grid system possible. Ptolemy, working in the second century AD, assembled a gazetteer locating 8,000 places in Europe, Asia and Africa and very likely produced maps using a system he devised to draw a sphere in two dimensions.

For the following 1300 years, however, European cartography went flat—literally.

“After Ptolemy, little progress was made and flat earth theories abounded,” said Duncan Thomas, a tropical ecologist, OSU Associate Professor of Forest Science by courtesy appointment and curator of the Center’s spring art show “500 Years of Cartography.” The exhibit features original maps and charts dating back to the 1500s, along with brief explanatory notes.

During the age of discovery, when explorers and their sponsors needed to know the locations of newly-discovered lands and the routes to find them, map-making again became important. As with much of Renaissance science in Europe, a rediscovery of classical knowledge was crucial to the revival of cartography. During the late 15th and early 16th centuries, cartographers used Ptolemy’s lists, updated with new information from explorers, to produce maps that were often attributed to Ptolemy himself.

Around the middle of the 16th century, more accurate survey techniques were developed. A key figure was Gerard Mercator (1512-1594), a mathematician and cartographer who developed Mercator’s Projection, a revolutionary way

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more such incidents, including a case of 135 cuts in Blackhawk Down that were made by Albertsons stores in Utah. And now there is software that can edit DVDs while they play, to remove bad language, nudity and so on.

“The industry is divided on these post-release editing systems because the purveyors do not ostensibly cut into their profits and may well increase revenues over the long term.” Nonetheless, many studio executives and filmmakers view the technologies as a form of piracy because they disregard the integrity of film copyrights.

Another challenge comes from China, where the government allows just twenty U.S. films per year into the country, not nearly enough to satisfy demand. “If the Chinese government won’t give the people what they want, then they’ll steal, duplicate and buy pirated copies of these films because there’s no other way to participate in the global American culture.”

Among its strategies to combat film theft, the film industry is turning ever more to Congress, which it is lobbying with some success for anti-piracy laws.

Despite the piracy, said Lewis, the movie industry continues to make huge profits. “Valenti has acknowledged that the Internet has the potential to be ‘a magnificent delivery apparatus’ and it may well be only a matter of time before sites like I-Tunes emerge, simplifying and legitimating the digital delivery of film-files on the web. But in the meantime, the studios are trying to protect their copyrights, not necessarily from unlicensed alteration, but from illegal acquisition. As with so many Hollywood stories, the bottom line is indeed the bottom line.”
Old Spanish Main provides lesson in colonialism

A major slave port, site of an inquisition high court, target of pirates and focus of colonial ambitions, the Colombian city of Cartagena de Indies formed a dramatic microcosm of empire building along the old Spanish Main. Its story has not been told before in an English text despite the importance of Caribbean culture and history to the United States, but this is being remedied by Research Fellow Nicole von Germeten through her book project, “Chaos and Control in Colonial Cartagena de Indies, 1600-1800.”

“The city was a crucible for most of Spain’s policies in Latin America,” said von Germeten, an assistant professor of history at OSU and author of the forthcoming book, Black Blood Brothers, about African religious brotherhoods in colonial Mexico. “But these forms of rule, while intensely concentrated on Cartagena, can be extended to Spain’s empire as a whole, or, in fact, any colonial enterprise.”

The central theme of her study “is the unavoidable tension between imperial institutions designed to close off colonies and the inescapable presence of outside influences.” Cartagena was the only legal port in the Viceroyalty of New Granada, a region that now includes the countries of Colombia and Venezuela. As a crucial Caribbean port city during the era of Spanish rule over Latin America, Cartagena exported massive amounts of silver, but, nonetheless, cost the Spanish crown a great deal because of the need for defense. Francis Drake invaded in 1585, a French expedition destroyed the city at the end of the 1600s and the English devastated it in 1741.

“The city, especially as a port at the crossroads of Spain’s export economy, was an extremely artificial construction, physically and symbolically, and required immense efforts in infrastructure to prevent it from disappearing or disintegrating. Several Spanish colonial institutions worked against overwhelming forces to protect the city’s function as a port for incoming European goods and outgoing gold and silver.”

For the Spanish empire, as for many world empires, the undermining forces included: devastating epidemics; foreigners who were not indigenous to the ruling country or the conquered territory who sought to make money or gain power over the colony; cultures that challenged the colonial power, in the form or religious or social practices; and internal threats from behavior considered devious or rebellious.

Von Germeten intends to devote a chapter to each of the most powerful institutions and forces in colonial Cartagena, focusing on the individual human stories revealed through surviving records. Primary source documentation is limited because the hot, damp climate destroys paper records, plus many of the archives were ransacked during the nineteenth century, but enough evidence remains to have provided her with rich materials during visits to the major archives in the region.

The best known Spanish institution in Cartagena was an inquisition high court, one of only three in Spain’s massive American empire, which tried cases of religious heresy against Catholicism. These included the practice of Judaism or Protestantism, moral crimes such as bigamy or concubinage, and witchcraft.

“Cartagena received trends in philosophy and politics earlier than inland cities, and of course the inquisition reacted to the new ideas. The king and the inquisitors hoped to become self-sufficient through trying wealthy, heretical locals, but generally only persecuted poorer people for the minor crimes of blasphemy and superstition.”

A less well-known institution was a leper colony that isolated sufferers from the surrounding territory. “This hospital joined forces with several other local hospitals in fighting a losing battle against tropical disease. The population needing medical care

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The defeat of Napoleon in 1815 marked a critical shift in Britain’s self-image, a shift that Evan Gottlieb argues was deeply reflected in the literature that would come to be known as Romantic.

“Britain found itself in a position like America today, a hegemonic world power, but with military, economic and geo-political limits,” said Gottlieb, a Research Fellow and assistant professor of English at OSU.

“Especially near the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Romantic fiction began to help Britons not only conceive of their world globally—as a complex and uneven network of flows and exchanges of ideas, people, goods, and money—but also to understand their nation’s new role as the primary world power.”

In his Center project, Gottlieb is exploring the relationship between Romanticism and the developing processes of globalization and related social changes, including the rise of European secular nationalism, the growth and expansion of modern forms of capital, and the adoption of a universalizing definition of modernity predicated on cultural and industrial modernization.

“Many historians now agree that the Congress of Vienna, convened in September, 1814, to ensure European stability after Napoleon’s defeat, marked the beginning of a new world order dominated by sovereign

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Certificate

All talks are at 4 p.m. Mondays, Autzen House.

WINTER TERM
Art Exhibit--January through March
Paintings: Where the Road Leads Me
By John Cruson

JANUARY
23 Contracted Participation: The Art of Michael Asher. Lecture by Kirsi Peltomaki, Center Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of Art, OSU.

FEBRUARY
6 Correcting Nature’s Mistakes: Transforming the Environment and Socialist Children’s Literature, 1928-1941. Lecture by William Husband, Center Research Fellow, Professor of History, OSU.
13 Situating Contemporary American Poetry. Lecture by Lisa Steinman, Professor of English, Reed College.
20 Nature Wars, Culture Wars: Immigration and Environmental Reform in Progressive America. Lecture by Adam Rome, Center Research Fellow, Associate Professor of History, Pennsylvania State University.

SPRING TERM
Art Exhibit--April through June
500 Years of Cartography
Curated by Duncan Thomas

APRIL
24 ‘Mal de San Lazaro’: Controlling Lepers and Leprosy in Colonia Cartagena de Indies. Lecture by Nicole von Germeten, Center Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of History, OSU.

MAY
8 Romanticism, Globalization, and Modernity: The World According to Walter Scott. Lecture by Evan Gottlieb, Center Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of English, OSU.
22 Virtual Communities and Contested Chronic Illness: An Exploration in Electronic Ethnography. Lecture by Kristin Barker, Center Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of Sociology, OSU.
29 Freedom on the Fence. Preview of film footage for a documentary on Polish poster art, by Andrea Marks, 2003-04 Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of Art, OSU.
Center Director David Robinson was honored in July with the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society’s Distinguished Achievement Award, which was presented following Robinson’s address, “Natural History and Natural Life: Thoreau’s Intellectual and Emotional Crisis,” at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering in Concord, Massachusetts.

A member of the Emerson Society’s awards committee declared David Robinson “one of the very few scholars on whom the whole modern Emerson enterprise is built.” A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, he received the M.T.S. from the Harvard Divinity School and the M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. At OSU, Robinson is Oregon Professor of English and Distinguished Professor of American Literature in addition to his role at the Center.

The following, by Wesley T. Mott, Professor of English, Humanities and Arts, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, appeared in the Fall 2005 edition of The Emerson Society Papers.

“Professor Robinson’s Emerson and the Conduct of Life (1993) is widely considered the best book on the pragmatic strain in Emerson’s thought. His first book, Apostle of Culture: Emerson as Preacher and Lecturer (1982), was a ground-breaking study of the theological and intellectual underpinnings of Emerson’s early career. In this book—as well as in dozens of articles and in the introductory historical essay to the four-volume Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson—Professor Robinson firmly established the Unitarian foreground of Emersonian Transcendentalism.

“His The Unitarians and the Universalists (1985) is a standard biographical reference work, and his collections William Ellery Channing (1985), The Spiritual Emerson (2003), and The Political Emerson (2004) have made important writings of American religious liberalism available to a wider audience. “Besides these major scholarly projects, Professor Robinson has written the annual bibliographical essay, “Emerson, Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller,” for American Literary Scholarship since 1988, and since 1991 he has compiled the official annual bibliography for Emerson Society Papers.

“Valued as a generous colleague across the profession, he is a frequent presenter at scholarly conferences, contributor to reference works and festschriften, and past president of the Emerson Society. His lectures, like his books and essays, are admired for a grace and a clarity that render even complex issues of intellectual history and theological controversy accessible.

“A leading Emerson scholar for the past quarter century, Professor Robinson recently turned his attention to Henry Thoreau—with equally impressive results. Natural Life: Thoreau’s Worldly Transcendentalism (2004) has been hailed by Bradley P. Dean, editor of the Thoreau Society Bulletin, as one of the best books ever written about Thoreau. The Emerson Society proudly shares David Robinson with our Thoreauvian friends even as we honor him with our highest award.”

Maps continued . . .

of mapping curved surfaces so that compass bearings were straight lines rather than curved. This led to maps accurate enough to be used for large-scale navigation. Several Mercator maps are included in the exhibition.

The show follows the development of cartography during the next 300 years, including the proliferation and subsequent reduction of distance measurements and prime meridians (the location of zero degrees of longitude, a political rather than scientific decision); the development of maps for exploration, political and military purposes; and the development of road maps for travelers, as well as mapping for property deeds and taxation.

“By the middle of the 19th century, colossal national efforts were underway such as the British Ordnance Survey, to map entire countries at the level of the individual property or tax lot,” said Thomas.

The show includes a 1695 map showing California as an island, and early maps of Oregon, along with a discussion of the puzzling name itself. “The name probably originated in the great lakes region and was used to fill in blank space to the west. One map, from around 1800, labels the Columbia River as ‘Oregan or the River of the West.’”

The exhibit follows map-making to the recent end of traditional cartography with the advent of computer science and the replacement of hand-drawn map originals by electronic data. Hours are weekdays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue.
Although photographer Edward Weston died of Parkinson’s disease in 1958, his wife Charis Wilson, 91, is alive and sharp enough to crack jokes in a film being made about her life with Weston from 1935 to 1946.

The documentary is based on the book *Through Another Lens* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998) by Wendy Madar, Associate Director of the Center. Written with Wilson, in her voice, the book chronicles a marriage and working relationship—with Wilson as writer and model—that is widely viewed as one of the most important arts partnerships of the 20th century.

The film, by NW Documentary Arts & Media, is directed by Ian McClusky, whose most recent film *Sun Gu Ja: A Century of Korean Pioneers* has won numerous awards, including the NW Regional Emmy for Best Historical Documentary.

In 1937, Weston was awarded the first ever Guggenheim for a photographer. He and Wilson embarked on a tour around California, which resulted in the book *California and the West*, with photographs by Weston and text by Wilson.

During the next decade, as Wilson continued to be a major camera subject, they built a small house on the coast south of Carmel, presented photography workshops in Yosemite with Ansel Adams, and traveled across the country on a grant to make pictures for an edition of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. Neither knew that Weston was ill with Parkinson’s disease, but the symptoms contributed to their eventual separation in 1946.

Interviews with Wilson and a few other survivors from the era are a major part of the film but McCluskey also has employed what he describes as the “risky” tactic of using actors to represent the young Charis (pronounced Kair-iss) as well as Weston. These sequences were shot in grainy black and white, with no dialogue and no direct views of the faces. They recreate such famous scenes as Wilson rolling nude and loose-limbed down the white sand dunes of Oceano, California, and Weston and Wilson traveling in their 1936 Ford and camping in the desert.

As an advisor to the project, Madar traveled to California in March 2005 to spend a week with the camera crew during the first phase of filming, and since then has worked closely with the director. The film is scheduled for release in August.
grew when slavers or trading ships entered the ports or when pirates and foreign navies attacked the city.”

Yet another institutional element was a penal colony, consisting of prisoners from throughout the region, who provided the labor to build and maintain massive fortifications meant to keep out foreigners and pirates.

“Decrees from the king and the Viceroy, who ruled from Bogota several hundred miles inland, attempted to limit and control the presence of permanent foreign residents,” said von Germeten. “However, Portuguese, Africans, Jews, Muslims, Protestants and people from most parts of Europe and even North America passed through Cartagena, defying enforcement of Spanish imperial ideals that naively envisioned an empire of Catholic Spaniards and protected and isolated indigenous populations.”

Cartagena hosted the standard Spanish civil and ecclesiastical bureaucracy—including half a dozen religious orders—who fought constantly among themselves. “The presence of the penal colony, the barracks and the port from which treasure ships disembarked prevented any possible realization of a peaceful and orderly city and, in fact, encouraged crime and disease. The fact that Cartagena was one of the most important slave markets in the Americas also meant non-Spanish religions and racial backgrounds were inevitably present, either in the form of African slaves or English, French and Portuguese slave traders.”

The United States has significant vested interest in Colombia; the country is among the top five recipients of U.S. military aid. “To understand modern Colombia, it is important for Americans to have a sense of the origins of Colombia’s internal conflicts. As a Caribbean port city, Cartagena represents an important example of the peaceful and violent mix of cultures and ethnicities created by imperial expansion.”

The charge is that the groups encourage maladaptive illness behavior, that is, the individuals focus on proving they are ill through solidarity with others who are similarly ill, and encourage undiagnosed sufferers to shop for “friendly” doctors willing to diagnose them with a functional somatic syndrome.

Little is actually known about the functioning and consequences of the electronic support groups, but interest in them is high, in part because of the soaring personal, social, health care and economic costs associated with the illnesses. To study the groups, however, does not fit standard evidence-based research methods, such as randomized and controlled double-blind studies, using placebos, or placing subjects deliberately in groups as test individuals.

“And clinicians will never be able to meaningfully disentangle the effects of group participation as distinct from the many other ‘interventions’ patients use to manage chronic illness,” said Barker. The problem is that the groups represent naturally occurring social phenomena rather than technologically based therapeutic interventions.

This has led Barker to devise a study that employs electronic, text-based ethnography to analyze a year in the life of a fibromyalgia online group, pseudonymously dubbed The Fibro Spot. The Fibro Spot is an open bulletin board system accessible to anyone with an online computer, to read and add postings without being a subscriber. It is typical of hundreds of lay-operated online fibromyalgia groups that have emerged over the past several years. Barker will download an entire year’s postings for analysis with suitable software.

“In addition to a general exploration of The Fibro Spot as a cyber-community with its own distinctive cultural practices, this project will specifically address the role that these kinds of groups and this new technology play in shaping our cultural beliefs about chronic suffering, illness, and disease. A principal question will focus on whether and how these groups contribute to ‘medicalization’—that is, to the process by which human experiences that are neither inherently nor fully medical in character come to be understood as essentially medical.”

Because electronic ethnography is still in its infancy, said Barker, a considerable portion of her study will be devoted to exploring the applicability of alternative methods of textual analysis to the investigation of online groups. “The contribution of this project is, therefore, not only one of adding to our understanding of the role the groups play in the experience of functional somatic syndromes, but also one of expanding the repertoire of methods available to the study of cybercommunities and cybertexts more generally.”
European nation-states, with Britain as the ‘first among equals,’ said Gottlieb. “By combining contemporary theoretical concepts used to describe and understand globalization with careful historicization and close interpretation, I intend to demonstrate that British Romanticism can be viewed as a primary cultural manifestation of long-durational globalization.”

Though this might appear counterintuitive given that globalization is assumed to be a highly contemporary phenomenon, and Romanticism is generally associated with local attachments and nationalism rather than cosmopolitanism, Gottlieb argues that Romantic-era writers such as Ann Radcliffe, Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and Walter Scott, helped teach British readers how to think of themselves as citizens of an increasingly globalized world. The challenge for British authors and readers at the time was to learn to conceptualize their cultural, political and economic situation relative to the rest of the world, that is, as connected to and yet different from—and generally superior to—other societies.

During his Center tenure, Gottlieb is writing the book’s introduction, as well as a chapter on Walter Scott’s 1823 novel of European nation-building, *Quentin Durward*, in which Scott traces the construction of the secular concept of sovereignty necessary for the formation of our modern world order.

“The main goals of my project are to demonstrate not only that early globalization influenced the development of important works of Romantic poetry and prose, but also that Romantic literature in turn played a significant role in shaping Anglo-American perceptions of global relations, many of which remain prevalent today.”

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Russian civic society continued. . .

as well as the policy results from these linkages. During three visits to Russia she interviewed civic activists and local officials, and has done extensive collecting of documents, brochures and pamphlets, along with data on political and economic indicators, and she has surveyed more than 150 nongovernmental organizations in the target regions.

“The study will provide a window into the status of local democracy in the Russian Federation. It also will have significant policy implications for Western donors such as the World Bank and the European Union, who are involved in various civil society and democracy promotion activities in Russia. Assessing the degree to which nongovernmental organizations have been able to influence and impact policy, and the degree to which foreign aid can facilitate this process is of extreme importance . . . With the democracy building experiment underway in Iraq, it is increasingly critical that we understand the varied factors, domestic as well as external, that help strengthen democratic institutions.”
The Center for the Humanities

The Center was established in 1984 as an outgrowth of the Humanities Development Program, which had been creating innovative interdisciplinary courses since 1977. The Center’s focus has broadened to a concern for improving the quality of humanities research as well as teaching at OSU. This is accomplished through the awarding of resident research fellowships to both OSU and visiting scholars, as well as by sponsoring conferences, seminars, lecture series, art exhibits and other events. The Center occupies Autzen House, 811 S.W. Jefferson Avenue.

David Robinson
Director

Wendy Madar
Associate Director

Sara Ash-Majeski
Office Coordinator

Quynh Le
Student Assistant