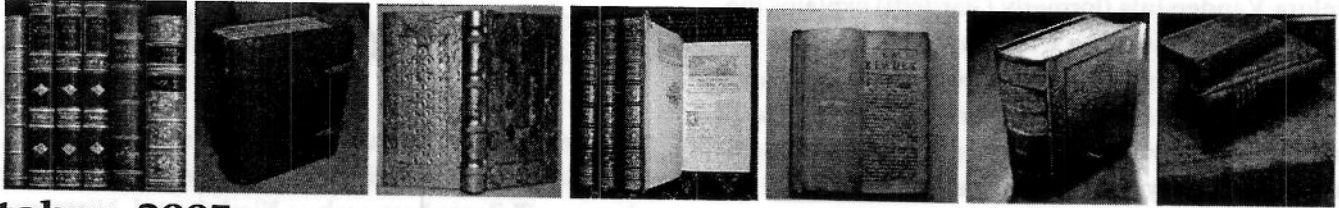


# RESEARCH REPORTER



October, 2005

APU Office of Faculty Research

## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

### Humanities

#### Truth, Emotions, and Journalism



Dr. Jim Willis, Chair of the Communication Studies Department, has received a *Choice Magazine Award* from the American Library Association for *The Human Journalist: Reporters, Perspectives, and Emotions* (Praeger, 2003). He has also been invited to speak to journalists in Europe about his fine text. Obviously he has touched an important point of

sensitivity among reporters increasingly obligated to write about such traumatic events as the Oklahoma City bombing, the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, the ongoing war in Iraq, and Hurricane Katrina. However, Dr. Willis's penetrating book actually speaks to all serious scholars, not just journalists, for he courageously probes why we write (often emotional concerns are the hidden motivators), how we write (where do we put ourselves on the spectrum running from "neutrality" to very subjective commentary), and when we write (a journalist has immediate deadlines while scholars have the leisure to determine when we are ready to publish our work). Dr. Willis courageously reveals how emotions can influence intellectual choices and vice versa. He modestly includes examples from articles he has written which exemplify how he has chosen to balance emotional and intellectual perspectives (his authorship of these examples appears only in the footnotes). In short, Dr. Willis's outstanding book is an exploration of why, how, and when to present truth in words for public consumption. He will be discussing his book at an Office of Research Colloquium in the Spring under the Biblical theme, "What is truth?" – CL

#### Bonhoeffer in Hollywood

Dr. Monica Ganas, Professor of Communication, explores the theological teachings of the 1999 film, *A Civil Action*, starring John Travolta. The writings of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer shed much light on the theme of fallenness, redemption, and *real* redemption in the life of a

corrupt corporate lawyer who finds that no level of rationalization can deliver him from the demands of conscience. As Bonhoeffer taught, receiving true grace is costly because it means admitting the depth of one's sin, while letting grace work in one's life means achieving human heights that look very different from mere worldly success. The film did not enjoy much popularity, Dr. Ganas argues, because of its lack of dramatic splendor by contemporary standards: the appeal of modern stories relies far more on very generic concepts of good and evil, amoral turns of plot, and "good" expressed in bold assertions of power rather than on personal revelations and changes of heart. Even in depictions of human suffering, theological and moral depth is still a taboo. This makes films like *A Civil Action* particularly refreshing for Christian students of the media. Dr. Ganas' article, "Bonhoeffer in Hollywood's Courtroom," appeared in Issue 25 of the *Mars Hill Review*. – KW

#### Teaching Virtue

Dr. Sheryl O'Sullivan, Professor of English, writes on the disparity between the teacher's calling and the displaced sense of what education is actually for among those entering the field today. In the minds of many modern education theorists, character has long been relegated to subjective values and beliefs, having no place in the realm of real truth now based on positive facts. Yet this damages the capacity of students to appreciate examples of virtue in the themes of literature and history, as well as the beauty of form and order they find in mathematics or music – areas of study that at one time directly pertained to the human soul, and which cannot be understood in their fullness without moral elements in mind. Stripped of their true significance, the liberal arts cease to be liberal; teachers become uncertain of their purpose, and students miss out on truly growing as individuals. Dr. O'Sullivan presents a case for reversing this trend in today's teacher education programs and proposes a design for new character-centered courses. Such courses, she argues, can revive a classical sense of the inherent relevance between character and curriculum. Dr. O'Sullivan's article, "The Soul of Teaching: Educating Teachers of Character," appeared in *Action in Teacher Education*, Vol. 26 (4). – KW

## Gardens and Souls

Dr. Melora Vandersluis (formerly Giardetti) explains the importance of gardens in the writings of George Eliot. Either tended to or neglected, flourishing or dying, plant life is always meant to show the conditions of individual souls. Eliot's novel *Silas Marner* shows the protagonist – an herb specialist, incidentally – pulling himself up from deep sorrow into a fuller life by simply changing the way he tends his own inner garden. Greater than modern stoicism, and more human than the expectation of God's justice, Eliot upholds the garden as the ideal metaphor for hope. It is, of course, slow growing, and it takes work; but it is the only way to realizing the fullness of hope, either pursuing the good in the face of despair, or prolonging that despair indefinitely in a longing for nothingness. Dr. Vandersluis' article "How Does Your Garden Grow?: Plants, Gardens, and Doctrines in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*" appeared in the September 2005 issue of the *George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Journal*. – KW

## Sciences

### Relapse Prevention and Community

Dr. Mark Stanton, Professor of Graduate Psychology, comments on the new model used for studies in relapse prevention, based primarily on individual traits common among addicts in the recovery process. According to Dr. Stanton, who specializes in couples therapy, this model leaves out many social support factors. These factors are strong and can go both ways; they can either trigger a relapse or prevent it, depending on the situation that the recovering addict finds himself/herself in and on the significance of the non-addict who holds the subject accountable. It could be improved, he argues, by taking into account the most effective interpersonal methods of relapse prevention and, on the whole, admitting the necessity of community in all aspects of personal growth. Dr. Stanton's article appeared in the May-June 2005 issue of *American Psychologist*. – KW

## RESEARCH COLLOQUIA

### "Love Not the World..."

- I John 2:15

This month's colloquium will focus on the value to Christians of seemingly secular philosophies and comic book heroes. Philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre are key figures in modern Western culture's college curricula, while superheroes like Superman, Batman, and The Hulk have dominated popular culture's comic books and films. How much should Christians know about these real and imagined characters? Would our time not be better spent reading Scriptures rather than texts by or about them? If we enjoy reading such texts, are we not loving "the world" and "the things that are in the world"? Professors Steve Wilkens and B. J. Oropeza courageously tackle these questions and others as they thoughtfully build bridges between the secular and the sacred. – CL

## APU FACULTY RESEARCH

*The Office of Faculty Research and the Office of Sponsored Research and Grants work to assist APU faculty with their research and dissemination endeavors, provide external research funding, and promote an academic climate that celebrates and strengthens the Azusa Pacific University community of Christian scholars and researchers.*

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about the *Research Reporter*, or if you would like to be formally recognized for your research and publications.

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