Nanotechnology Programme Launches Four New Courses

The Nanotechnology Programme is pleased to announce the launch of four new courses in 2008, including the creation of a new ‘Biomedical Nanotechnology and Nanosafety Programme’ developed using funds awarded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and Medical Research Council (MRC).

This new Programme consists of three exciting one-day courses which will be taught using a mixture of lectures and case studies, complemented by question-and-answer sessions led by experts in specific research areas.

The first in the series is ‘Nanomedicine’, which explores the development, application and properties of nanostructures for diagnostics, biosensing, drug delivery and therapy through the use of case studies. In ‘New Developments in Bionanotechnology’ students will explore the properties of biomimetic structures and their applications using examples from nature. The fundamentals of microfluidics and fluid dynamics in relation to particle and cell transport will also be examined. ‘The Safety and Societal Implications of Engineered Nanoparticles’ course will discuss the issues of how nanoparticles interact with living cells and the implications for industry and consumers.

Another new addition to the Nanotechnology Programme is ‘The Business of Emerging Technologies’, a one-day course aimed at researchers interested in setting up their own business and for people working in the nanotechnology sector. Through discussing concepts such as the difference between ‘technology-driven’ versus a ‘market-led’ approach participants are shown how nanotechnologies and other emerging technologies impact on existing markets and give rise to novel markets. During this process participants will hone their understanding of the opportunities for and barriers to commercialisation.

For further information: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/nano
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£1.13m Award for Technology Enhanced Learning

A team, led by Professor Diana Laurillard of the London Knowledge Lab (LKL), has won a £1.13m ESRC/ERC funded research into pedagogic planners carried out by teams from the LKL and Oxford, will be undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including Marion Manton of TALL and Liz Masterman of Oxford University Computing Services. The project aims to develop an interactive environment – a ‘Learning Design Support Environment’ (LDSE) – to enable teachers to lead the discovery of innovative pedagogical designs that exploit the potential of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) and better integrate TEL in the mainstream provision, processes and practice of educational institutions. The LDSE will provide a space where teachers can explore, model and share ways of ‘normalising’ their uses of technology, and build on each others’ work. The project commenced on 1 September 2008 and will last for three years.

For further information: http://www.softeng.ox.ac.uk
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New Professional MSc in Software and Systems Security

The University of Oxford is pleased to announce the launch of a new MSc in Software and Systems Security as part of its successful professionally-focused Software Engineering Programme.

The new Master’s degree will be fully integrated with the existing MSc in Software Engineering, enabling students to select from a portfolio of over 25 different modules, in topics as diverse as Software Testing, Project Risk and Quality, and Service-Oriented Architectures, through, now, to Secure and Robust Programming, Forensics, and Trusted Computing.

A distinctive feature of the new MSc is its focus upon Systems. “We didn’t want to offer simply an MSc in Information Security,” said Dr Andrew Martin, who directs the new MSc, “instead, we are building on our software engineering strengths, and reflect a growing realisation that security must be considered at every stage in the systems lifecycle.”

Students may choose course dates to suit their personal and professional schedules, spreading the whole MSc over four years – though some complete it in two.

Enrolment is possible throughout the year and modules can also be taken on a stand-alone basis. Admissions criteria reflect the diverse career patterns of people in this industry, and course regulations are as flexible as possible, to accommodate changes in career and personal circumstances.

For further information: http://www.softeng.ox.ac.uk
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Bitten by the History Bug?

In the wake of the tenth anniversary of the Department’s Foundation Certificate in History, we are pleased to see that the academic year 2007–2008 has launched the second decade of the course with a further bevy of success stories for current and former Foundation History students.

Six students completed the Foundation course this year, two with distinctions. Four students, Joanne Pearce Noble, Valery Rose, Chris Thomas and Pushpa Khumbat have obtained places at Oxford and Oxford Brookes Universities to complete their history degree studies full-time. Joanne is taking a break from her acting career to study at St Edmund Hall, while Valery will abandon her editorial responsibilities in publishing to study at Oriel College. Mark Hopkinson is returning to University College, Oxford to pursue a Master of Studies in History.

We were delighted to learn that eight former Foundation History students had graduated with bachelors’ degrees this year, five from Oxford, Guy Garden, Alex Lansbury, Leo Gough, Michael Hirst and Michael Weatherburn, two from London University, Jo Edge and David Potter, and Manuela Rosochacka from Oxford Brookes University. Jo obtained a first class degree from Goldsmith’s College, London and plans to return to study for a Master’s qualification. Alex and Leo have both secured places to pursue Master’s of Studies courses at Oxford. Michael Weatherburn has secured a place at a centre based at Imperial College London and University College London to pursue Master’s and Doctoral work in the History of Science. Michael Hirst is joining Oxford Brookes to undertake Master’s work in the History of Art.

It was equally exciting to learn that four former students have successfully completed Master’s courses at Oxford, Peter Dunn, Eric Caines and Mike Wagner, and London, Chris Mitchinson in 2008. Mike and Eric will join Linda Amor and Graciela Rogers on Oxford’s DPhil programme.

It is now almost impossible to attend seminars, visit libraries – or even pubs and cafés in Oxford – without bumping into current and former Foundation course students. Long may this continue! It is rewarding to see history playing such an important part in the lives of so many students – indeed transforming their lives with the support and toleration of their partners and families. Observant readers may note our change in name from Modern History to History for 2008. Time marches on and the meaning of ‘modern’ continues to provide a ripe subject for historical discussion!

News in Brief

On Wednesday 22 October the Department hosted the Zivani Festival of African cultural events, including musical workshops, an exhibition of paintings and information about Oxford’s Black History. Among other visitors was Oxford’s Lord Mayor, Councillor Susanna Pressel.

The University’s ‘recognition of distinction’ exercise has resulted in David Griffiths being made a Reader in Archaeology. Ralf Hinze was also recognised in the distinction exercise, and is now a Reader in Software Engineering. The criteria for awarding such titles are extremely demanding at the University of Oxford, so this is an excellent result that reflects extremely well on David and Ralf (and indeed on the Department).

Dr Anna Beer, Lecturer in Literature, will be talking about her new biography of John Milton at various venues in Oxfordshire and beyond. John Milton: Poet, Pamphleteer and Patriot comes out in paperback on 17 November. For further information please contact Anna at: anna.beer@conted.ox.ac.uk

Translating Knowledge into Progress towards UN Millennium Development Goals

CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and TALL (Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning), in collaboration with Professor David Roberts of the Nuffield Department of Clinical Laboratory Science, Professor Kevin Marsh of the KEMRI-Wellcome Research Programme in Kilifi, Kenya, the Whittington Hospital, London, and the Muhimbili National Hospital and Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania, have won a DelPHE (Development Partnerships in Higher Education) award.

DelPHE is a joint DfID (Department for International Development) and British Council initiative to help achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. The three-year project, Oxford–Dar-es-Salaam Link for Health: Translating Knowledge into Practice, aims to develop the research, clinical practice and training capacity in support of haematology and blood transfusion services, and users of those services, in Tanzania in order to reduce maternal and child mortality and to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. A further objective is to roll out the established capacity-building framework to other medical specialities and across Tanzania and the region.

Explore our Online Courses

The Department offers over forty online courses in a range of subjects from art history to nanotechnology. Are you new to online learning? Why not explore a selection of sample units from our online courses to get a feel for what it’s like to study online? You can access examples of online courses by visiting http://openmoodle.conted.ox.ac.uk. Details of the full range of online courses offered by the Department are available from: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/online
Archaeology and Public Engagement at the University of Oxford

Five weeks in June and July saw the Department running a research and teaching excavation at Marcham, Oxfordshire, co-directed by Professor Gary Lock. As well as providing training for students, the excavation has a strong history of public engagement, in explaining the results of this leading research project and getting people involved in the process of research.

The site at Marcham has evidence of human occupation throughout the Iron Age and Roman periods, approximately 1000 BC to AD 450. An extensive prehistoric settlement of round houses, ditches and pits is overlain by a Roman temple with associated buildings including an amphitheatre. One important research focus is on ideas of continuity and identity. How did the indigenous people react to the new opportunities offered by the Roman Empire?

Through a series of events for community involvement, the process of excavation is explained and the artefacts found are explored in the ground, followed by their interpretation. Members of the public can take part in the excavation within a ‘People's Trench’. Display boards and interpretative panels show the processing of finds, and guided tours are available for visitors. During the five weeks over 1000 people participated in and visited the excavations.

Outreach officers visit schools throughout Oxfordshire, explaining archaeology and how an understanding of the past can inform our lives today. Many schools visit the excavation to see the action and have a go at digging, albeit in non-sensitive areas seeded with finds. Another highlight is the annual Open Day, part of National Archaeology Week. On this day there are Roman soldiers organising marching lessons in Latin, one of the many activities on offer, with others focusing on how to do archaeology, as well as interpreting the various finds.

Overall, the excavation uses the popularity of archaeology to demonstrate how the Department can engage with its local community to show how learning and research are intertwined.

University Launches Apple iTunes U site

In October 2008, the University launched its new Apple iTunes U site. Audio and video podcasts from across the University will be made available on the site for anyone to download and then watch or listen to on their computer or on mobile devices such as mp3 players, iPods or mobile phones. The site will include lectures from academics, information about Oxford's world-leading research projects and podcasts about how to apply to the University.

The Department has its own section on the iTunes U site and will be publishing a series of lectures and presentations from both Departmental staff and guest lecturers. Some of the first lectures to be published by the Department include Dr Anna Beer talking about the poet John Milton and Chris Day giving an overview of the history of the University of Oxford.

In a related project, the Department is developing a new website to host audio and video resources. This site includes lectures and presentations from Departmental staff as well as a series of short videos of students describing their experiences of studying with the Department.

New resources will be added to both the University’s iTunes U site (http://itunes.ox.ac.uk) and the Department’s media resources website (http://media.conted.ox.ac.uk) on a regular basis, so why not bookmark the sites now and visit on a regular basis to keep in touch with what’s happening within the Department and the wider University.

Double Award for TALL

Award for excellence in teaching and learning

TALL, the Department’s e-learning course development and research unit, has received a team award of £5000 from the University’s teaching and learning award scheme 2008. The award was made in recognition of the team’s outstanding work in developing online programmes that bring courses from Continuing Education to a wide range of students outside of Oxford. The Committee noted that this work makes a major contribution to outreach by the University. The award was presented by the Vice-Chancellor on 16 October 2008 at Rhodes House.

Phoebe wins OxTALENT award

Each year the University’s OxTALENT Committee presents a series of awards to recognise innovative use of IT in teaching and learning at Oxford. TALL was delighted to receive the 2008 award for ‘teaching and learning project created with professional assistance’ for its Phoebe pedagogic planner project. The Phoebe project designed, implemented and evaluated a web-based tool to guide teachers through the construction of designs for courses and/or individual learning sessions.

Further information about the Phoebe project is available from: http://phoebe-app.conted.ox.ac.uk/
Human Rights Programme goes from Strength to Strength

After a successful five-year review in 2007 – where external reviewers noted that the Department’s MSt in Human Rights Law was “unique” with a course structure that allows students to “apply the law as they are learning it, with immediate humanitarian benefits” – this Departmental programme has continued to impress on a number of fronts. The quality of its faculty and its interest to funders are just two areas that have come to light in the past weeks.

The Programme Director, Dr Andrew Shacknove, recently received confirmation of an award of £105,000 from the Commonwealth Foundation. This award is for the support of seven students from Sub-Saharan Africa for the 2009-2011 academic intake. The Department is particularly delighted that exceptional students from this region will now be able to apply on the basis of merit alone.

The outstanding calibre of the faculty teaching on the Human Rights Law Master’s was also brought into focus on the world stage last week. The Department was delighted to note that all three short-listed candidates being considered for the highest global human rights post – the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as confirmed by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. See: http://www.un.org/News/ossg/hilites.htm (24 July 2008).

More information can be found at: http://humanrightslaw.conted.ox.ac.uk/MStIHRL

Wildlife Conservation for the Developing World

We are delighted to announce the launch of a new Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice. The Programme, with a special focus on wild felids (which includes the big cats and wild cat families), is now being piloted and will launch internationally at the start of 2009.

Professor David Macdonald, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), said, “This new Postgraduate Diploma will not only make a great contribution to building conservation capacity in parts of the world where action is urgently needed on the ground – it will be a milestone in opening access to Oxford.” He added, “Our focus on big cats will take the students to the heart of the most challenging conservation issues, and the new course will lead to the creation of a worldwide force of expert problem-solvers who can take their training home and pass it on to others.”

WildCRU, based at Tubney House and part of the University of Oxford Department of Zoology, has come together with the Department for Continuing Education, via its Continuing Professional Development Centre, to create the joint Postgraduate Diploma, which will enable conservationists to monitor biodiversity, implement conservation actions, and engage with stakeholders ranging from local communities to national governments and international donor organisations.

This programme is aligned with Continuing Education’s growing number of global-education initiatives for the developing world, particularly in the environmental, health and medical sciences.

For further information: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/env
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Obituary

Michael Broadway, who taught History at OUDCE, sadly died aged 75 on 22 July 2008 at his home in Oxford. Michael had been a much valued tutor for the History and Literature Undergraduate Certificate course, having joined the teaching team in 1998 when the course was run as an Access course in conjunction with the WEA.

His students especially remember him as a kind, patient, funny, gentle man who appealed to them with his wit and his shrewdly-developed cultured and historical mind. He will be greatly missed by all who worked and studied with him.