MARCUS DU SAUTOY: ONE YEAR ON

In October 2008 mathematician Professor Marcus du Sautoy was appointed to the Charles Simonyi Chair for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, following in the footsteps of zoologist Professor Richard Dawkins. The Chair is based in the Department for Continuing Education, and is shared with the post holder’s department, which in Professor du Sautoy’s case is Mathematics.

On 25 November 2009 he gave his inaugural lecture as Simonyi Professor to a sold-out audience at Oxford’s Examination Schools.

Over the past year he has worked to bring mathematics and science to new audiences, presenting two episodes of BBC Two’s Horizon – including explaining the maths of football and multiple dimensions to Alan Davies, and having his own brain prodded, scanned and probed in an investigation of consciousness.

“The Horizon on how the brain gives us a sense of “I” was really important in enabling me to broaden what I was doing beyond maths into some fascinating corners of science. It was a privilege to discover the cutting edge research that is being done to unlock the mysteries of what happens in our heads. What’s great is that, even in these very different areas of science, maths still has a vital role to play,” said Marcus.

As well as writing for national newspapers, making numerous TV and radio appearances on everything from BBC Breakfast to Desert Island Discs, giving public talks all over the world, and launching Oxford’s science podcasts on iTunes U, he has also been keen to foster young science communicators with the formation of Marcus’s Marvellous Mathemagicians – a team of eager maths students who have learnt how to perform maths games to wow audiences everywhere from county shows to London’s Barbican.

“For me, science is about discovery, but it is also about communication. A scientific discovery barely exists until it is communicated and brought to life in the minds of others,” said du Sautoy. “A mathematically and scientifically literate society is essential, given the huge role science now plays in our world. I am passionately dedicated to giving as many people as possible access to the exciting and beautiful world of mathematics and science that I inhabit.”

Professor du Sautoy’s tenure as Simonyi Professor comes at an important time for Oxford University, with plans crystallising for a new Mathematical Institute to be built in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter and the University attracting researchers of the calibre of Sir Andrew Wiles, the mathematician who solved Fermat’s Last Theorem; and with the Department for Continuing Education’s ten-year vision setting out ambitious plans for engaging with alumni and others regionally, nationally and globally.

Learn more about the Simonyi Professorship and lectures by visiting the website at http://www.simonyi.ox.ac.uk/.

WILDCRU: THE BALANCE BETWEEN MAN AND BEAST

New Diploma and facilities aim to solve conflict between peoples’ futures and wildlife conservation.

The planet’s human population increases by more than 200,000 every day, exerting ever more severe pressure on the world’s finite natural resources.

Enter Oxford University’s Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildcRU), part of the Department of Zoology. WildcRU now has a new Diploma course and new facilities, the Recanati-Kaplan Centre, both dedicated to finding practical solutions to the conservation and environmental challenges of the 21st Century. The Diploma in International Conservation Practice is a joint venture between the Department for Continuing Education and WildcRU.

The five students of the new Diploma programme come from countries as diverse as Bolivia, Zimbabwe and Bhutan. Known as the ‘WildcRU Panthers’, they are already putting learning into practice: projects include establishing a research station to monitor the Andean cat in Bolivia, working with WWF in China to save the Amur tiger, and mitigating the effects of man-eating lions in Tanzania.

The Diploma and facilities are funded by Thomas Kaplan and his wife Daphne Recanati Kaplan, founders of the charitable foundation “Panthera”– from which the WildcRU ‘Panthers’ take their name.

More info can be found on the Oxford University news page and in The Telegraph online.

University of Oxford Global Health Summer School 2010

Dates: 05–09 July 2010
Venue: Jesus College
Web: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/globalhealth
Email: globalhealth@conted.ox.ac.uk
Phone: +44(0)1865 286960/45

Learn more about the Sir Andrew Wiles Mathematics Institute and the work of the Institute for Science, Knowledge and Innovation by visiting the website at http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/.
NANOTECHNOLOGY SUMMER SCHOOL
This past Summer, 42 delegates from nine countries attended the first Oxford University Nanotechnology Summer School, based in Oxford and at Begbroke Science Park. Delegates got the chance to gain hands-on experience in a range of materials characterisation techniques, such as photon spectroscopy and electron-optical imaging.

Run by the CPD Centre in collaboration with Begbroke Science Park, this event was the first time that our separate courses, covering nano-medicine, bio-nanotechnology, the safety of nanoparticles and nano-scale materials characterisation, were offered as a single week’s programme. Delegates were immersed in nanotechnology—and experienced Oxford at its best!

For further information about our Nanotechnology Programme, please contact: Phone: +44 (0)1865 283951 Email: nano@conted.ox.ac.uk Web: http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/cpd/nanotechnology

CHANGING FACE OF OXFORD—A NEW COURSE FOR OXFORD ALUMNI

May 2010: Return to Oxford for five nights to explore the exciting and significant architectural changes to the Oxford you knew as a student. Professor Malcolm Airs, Director of the Centre for the Historic Environment at Kellogg College and Vice-Chairman of the University’s Buildings and Estates Sub-Committee will lead the programme, and explore the opportunities and challenges of introducing contemporary designs into this historic setting. Fees will be £995 per person in a single room and £910 p.p. in a twin room (half board). Further details: please contact ip@conted.ox.ac.uk.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY’S ITUNES U WAS LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER 2008, AND REACHED 1 MILLION DOWNLOADS OVER THE SUMMER. THE SITE CONTAINS 264 HOURS OF MATERIAL IN TOTAL, ON 163 THEMED ‘FEEDS’. THE DEPARTMENT HAS OFFERINGS IN THE HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND LIFE SCIENCES ON THE UNIVERSITY’S ITUNES U SITE, IN ADDITION TO MARIANNE’S ‘PHILOSOPHY FOR BEGINNERS’ LECTURE SERIES. ADDITIONALLY, YOU MAY WISH TO VISIT THE DEPARTMENT’S OWN MEDIA WEBSITE AT http://media.conted.ox.ac.uk/.

For more information, and to learn how you can use iTunes U, see http://itunes.ox.ac.uk/. If you are already able to access iTunes, you can link directly to Marianne’s podcast using this link: http://deimos3.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/Browse/ox-ac-uk-public.2191186376.02191186378.2197812009?i=2058524181.

DEPARTMENT ACADEMICS SHARE OVER £1m IN FUNDING FOR STUDIES FOCUSED ON BELIEF

Paul Barnwell, Director of Studies for the Historic Environment, and Nazila Ghanea-Hercock, University Lecturer in International Human Rights Law, are members of research teams to receive two significant funding grants from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Paul Barnwell is part of a team to have won £700k in research funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for ‘The Experience of Worship in Late Medieval Cathedral and Parish Church: Investigation, Realisation and Interpretation’. The project will be based at Bangor University and will work with Salisbury Cathedral and St Fagans: National History Museum of Wales.

Nazila Ghanea-Hercock joins colleagues from the Universities of Derby and Manchester on a three year, £400k academic study, ‘Religion and Belief, Discrimination and Equality’. Led by the University of Derby, the study investigates how attitudes and experiences of different religious and non-religious groups in England and Wales have evolved since 1999.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) supports world-class research that furthers our understanding of human culture and creativity. Each year the AHRC provides around £100 million per year in support of research and post-graduate study.

(Read more about each of these studies on page 3.)
THE EXPERIENCE OF WORSHIP IN LATE MEDIEVAL CATHEDRAL AND PARISH CHURCH

Dr Paul Barnwell, the Department’s Director of Studies for the Historic Environment, examines how surroundings may have informed religious experience.

Surprisingly little is known of how liturgy was performed in the late medieval period; still less is known about how it was understood and experienced by the participants: the priests, choir, and ordinary parishioners. And how might the experience differ between a large and wealthy cathedral (with many clergy, a large choir, and rich artefacts and utensils) and that of the humble rural parish church?

The Experience of Worship in Late Medieval Cathedral and Parish Church: Investigation, Realisation and Interpretation involves scholars from many disciplines: musicologists, practical theologians, anthropologists and sociologists of religion. They will develop ways of understanding the experience of late medieval worship through re-enactment.

The ‘laboratories’ for this project are Salisbury Cathedral and the church of St Teilo, recently moved to St Fagan’s: National History Museum of Wales. Dr Paul Barnwell’s remit within the project team is to co-ordinate investigation of the opportunities and constraints provided by these two very different architectural settings, and to test the extent to which it is possible to understand how they contributed to the creation of particular sensory, religious and emotional experiences.

The lead researcher on the project is Professor John Harper, Director of the International Centre for Sacred Music Studies at Bangor University. The project duration is three years from January 2010.

NEW ONLINE COURSE OFFERINGS

The Department will launch two new online courses in January 2010: Literary Theory (a 10 week course) and History of Medicine (5 weeks, and offered in conjunction with Oxford University Press, the largest university publisher in the world.) Other courses scheduled for 2010 include a Shakespeare offering and a Dramatic Writing course.

The department now offers a total of 60 online courses, including 5 which lead to awards. Popular offerings: New Economic Powers, Political Philosophy, Critical Reading, a suite of Creative Writing courses, Effective Online Tutoring, and the Postgraduate Diploma in Paediatric Infectious Diseases.

More info: http://onlinecourses.conted.ox.ac.uk/

RELIGION AND BELIEF, DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY

Dr Nazila Ghanea-Hercock, University Lecturer in Human Rights Law, probes the evolution of religious discrimination from a legal perspective.

Multi-culturalism, the 7/7 bombings, the ‘War on Terror’, laws against religious discrimination and migration from new European states have made UK headlines during this decade. But what impact have such events and developments had on discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, and upon the means of combating it?

Investigating how attitudes and experiences of religious and non-religious groups in England and Wales have evolved since 1999 is the key focus of this study.

“In a multi-cultural Britain, belief, discrimination and equality are at the top of the political agenda.” said Dr Ghanea-Hercock. My contribution to the study will be to see how developments in human rights and equality law address these issues. This project will ask whether new legal standards are indeed tackling discrimination in the area of religion or belief in England and Wales - an area that policy makers, community activists and lawyers are watching with interest.”

The lead researcher on the project is Paul Weller, Professor of Inter-Religious Relations at the University of Derby. The project duration is three years from December 2009.

NEW TOOL HELPS ARCHAEOLOGISTS “SEE” BENEATH THE SURFACE

In archaeology, geophysical surveying equipment, known as ‘magnetometers’, assist archaeologists in creating detailed mapping of sub-surface archaeological features.

Past activity, such as burning and soil disturbance, creates anomalies in the earth’s magnetic field; magnetometers allow for measurement and mapping of such features. Sites as diverse as prehistoric settlements, Roman forts and industrial sites can be detected with magnetometry.

The Department’s new magnetometer is the generous gift of Bartington Instruments of Witney, the leading makers and suppliers of geophysical survey equipment in the world.

“Such generosity on the part of Bartington is a great vote of confidence in us and our students,” said Dr. David Griffiths, Reader in Archaeology and Course director for the Master’s in Applied Landscape Archaeology.

Cascade: More Than a Waterfall

Find out more: http://cascade.conted.ox.ac.uk
PUBLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS FOR MSt IN CREATIVE WRITING PARTICIPANTS

Antoinette Pas graduated from the MSt in Creative Writing programme a year ago. Her first novel, ‘Het Land Waar Ik U Liefheb’ (‘The Country Where I Love You’), is to be published in Belgium and the Netherlands in early 2010. Antoinette writes under the name of ‘Annette Pas’.

‘Het Land Waar Ik U Liefheb’ is a comic love story set amid the rise of extreme right politics in contemporary Europe. Jean-Claude, an ageing maths professor, adopts his dead brother’s traumatised little daughter Bérénice. In nursing her back to health, he renews his own understanding of life.

“I wrote it while at Oxford and am extremely grateful for all the help I’ve had from both our tutors and my course mates” says Antoinette. “All sitting together in the inner court yard and talking...not just as tutors and students but as a group of friends, about the craziest ideas and also the most beautiful ideas, often ideas you could not have expressed elsewhere, or would not have known how.”

Marti Leimbach, tutor in fiction on the MSt programme, has published a new novel, The Man From Saigon. Set in Vietnam in 1967, it addresses themes of love and allegiance. Marti is also the author of the international bestseller Dying Young, which was made into a major motion picture starring Julia Roberts.

Clare Morgan, Director of the MSt in Creative Writing, found herself listed in the Banff Centre’s top 10 list of leadership books with her poetry offering, What Poetry Brings to Business.

Jane Draycott and George Szirtes, two of the MSt in Creative Writing tutors, have been shortlisted for this year’s T. S. Eliot Prize. The T. S. Eliot Prize for Poetry is awarded by the Poetry Book Society for “the best collection of new verse in English first published in the UK or the Republic of Ireland.” The shortlist of ten books is chosen from nearly a hundred titles. Also on the shortlist are External Examiner Professor Philip Gross, and Fred d’Aguiar, who led the Showcase Celebrations at the Guided Retreat this June.

More on the MSt in Creative Writing: http://awardbearing.conted.ox.ac.uk/creative_writing/mstcw.php

NEW A.M. HEATH PRIZE

One of London’s most prestigious and long-established literary agencies, A.M. Heath & Company, has announced the inauguration of the A.M. Heath Prize for fiction. The prize will be awarded annually for the best piece of fiction written by a graduating student of the MSt in Creative Writing Programme. The first winner will be announced in late 2009.

Victoria Hobbs, director of A.M. Heath, said “Publishing thrives on finding new talent and we are delighted to be associated with a creative writing course that is innovative, fresh and bursting with talent.”

Your Ideas for Our Future

The Department will be conducting a series of focus groups to determine some of our future directions, including new course offerings and pricing. Feedback from students past and present is sought.

To attend a buffet lunch session and share your views, contact Gail Anderson, Communications & Marketing Manager: gail.anderson@conted.ox.ac.uk

GRADUATE TRAINING IN ANIMAL WELFARE AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

£32k of development funding has been won from the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council’s (BBSRC’s) Modular Training for Industry Scheme. The funding will enable the development of two Master’s-level modules: Animal Welfare in Commercial Livestock Production and Effective Animal Welfare Research Within Commercial Agriculture. The courses will start in February 2010.

The modules are a joint effort between the Department for Continuing Education, the Department of Zoology and the Food Animal Initiative (FAI).

For further information: Phone: +44 (0)1865 283951 Email: awlp@conted.ox.ac.uk Web: www.conted.ox.ac.uk/cpd/env/awlp

T.S. ELIOT PRIZE NOMINEES

- Over by Jane Draycott
- The Burning of the Books and Other Poems by George Szirtes
- The Water Table by Philip Gross
- Continental Shelf by Fred D’Aguiar