**Coming to Grips with September 11**

The storm of emotions that transformed one day in September 2001 — the dread memories and the human tragedy — are still being measured, probed, lived. The immediate urgency to "sense" 9/11 evolves with each passing week of daily headlines.

Attempting to come to grips with the far-flung fall-out of 9/11 was the aim of an unusual interdisciplinary A&S Electives course last semester, "Understanding the New Global Crisis" brought together faculty and students from all corners of the campus to ponder the post-Sept. 11 world.

In the weeks after the attacks, undergraduates had virtually demanded such a course. Students wanted a class to help them navigate through their own wrenching emotions and geopolitical confusions. The course was first offered in spring 2002, directed by Professor of English Vereen Bell.

"Students were feeling an immense need to learn what was behind the attacks — why it took place, the origins of the rage, and what should our response be," said Thomas Alan Schwartz, the associate professor of history who directed the class last semester.

"We drew from the talent of the University, faculty who are researching in history, political science, sociology, religion, communications, literary studies."

The course was launched as an experiment in cross-disciplinary teaching, and that same spirit will guide its future. The aim is to offer students a flexible team-taught class on the pressing issues of society and the world. Unertered to any one department, the course has to make its own way financially: Plans are underway now to raise money and build an endowment to guarantee its future. Such funding would pay guest speakers and other outside experts who teach the course as an overload to their regular duties.

Nearly 200 students enrolled when the class was first offered in spring 2002, taught by a team of eight or nine professors. Emotions were raw. Many students were in shock, still reeling from the notion that America could be so hated in some corners of the world.

This past semester, the course was modified to reflect the unfolding of events of the last year, notably the war in Iraq. Schwartz was aided by guest lecturers throughout the semester. Three other faculty members were assistant directors — Kate Daniels of the Department of English, James Lee Ray of the Department of Political Science and Barbara Tsakirgis of the Department of Classical Studies.

But basic themes still shaped the course’s identity — the roots of the crisis, the history of Islam and the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian ordeal, issues of American foreign policy, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and the question of how the Sept. 11 attacks have changed the roots of the crisis, the history of Islam and the Middle East.
New center tackles thorny issues from many perspectives

I magine what could happen if a group of dis- 
tinguished scholars from diverse disciplines joined forces to tackle the pressing issue of religion and terror. What kind of ideas and practical solutions to current global problems might emerge? That’s just what Professors Volney Gay and Douglas Knight are hoping will result from the newly established Center for the Study of Religion and Culture.

“We’re living in a period when the interplay between religion and culture is as dicey as it’s ever been,” Knight says. “Religion itself can form our highest values and ideas, but it can also occasion our most treacherous conflicts. Religion and culture are embedded in each other, at times a comforting thought and other times a frightening prospect. We need to understand better how these two domains intersect and plan to do so through the center.”

Knight and Gay can envision a table where distinguished scholars from diverse disciplines might sit, including a sociologist in existentialism, and a psychologist gather a scholar and an anthropologist who studies an ancient China, a specialist in 19th century British novels, a criminologist, a bibliothecary and art historian of classical Greece, a specialist in the cultural matrices of Christianity; or Islamic humanism.”

Volney Gay and Douglas Knight are hoping will emerge? That’s just what Professors will have an academic state of research in the areas of religion and culture and, in the process, to promote the scholar- ship of Vanderbilt faculty and graduate students. In addition to scholars from the Divinity School and the A&S Department of Religious Studies, the center, which will provide most of the faculty for the masters and Ph.D. students in the Graduate Department of Religion (GDR) — participation is expected by faculty from such diverse fields as sociology, anthropology, history, political science, economics, philosophy, psychology, literature, law and education. The center may also draw students from the Medical Center and the Blair School of Music. Already, some 55 faculty members have been identified as possible participants.

Plans call for five to six research teams to run concurrently, each for up to three years. Each team typically will have from eight to 10 faculty members, drawn from a wide range of fields of study. The center has received $3 million from the University’s Academic Venture Capital Fund for five years. Additional funds and an endowment will need to be raised in order for the center to be sustained after 2008.

Proponents say the center will be an international center for interdisciplinary research and scholarship, which to examine the overwhelming problem of traumatic stress among the ‘lost boys’ population, says Holton. “This research not only applies the principles of the center in its multidisciplinary approach, but also addresses a serious problem of global proportions — the mental health of the world’s 22 million refugees and displaced persons.”

One of the first graduate students to benefit from the new center will be Jan Holton, a GDR student whose doctoral dissertation will center on post-traumatic shock in refugee populations, which applies the rich resources of theological anthropology and psychology as lenses through which to examine the overwhelming problem of traumatic stress among the ‘lost boys’ population, says Holton. “This research not only applies the principles of the center in its multidisciplinary approach, but also addresses a serious problem of global proportions — the mental health of the world’s 22 million refugees and displaced persons.”

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The center has been charged to advance the kind of scholarship that would allow for a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue that challenges graduate students, and all scholars, to think outside of the familiar framework of their particular learned discipline and, instead, to pull and stretch at the safe boundaries,” she continues. “The new center will also provide other graduate students coming to Vanderbilt with funding so they can complete their degrees and their research much more quickly.”

There will also be stipends available for top undergraduate students who might participate in some of the research projects. The Nashville community and clergy will have the opportunity to benefit from public forums, conferences and presentations offered by the center. It is likely that the center will become an attractive resource for the media and the public on certain issues.

It will also benefit faculty recruitment, as Gay has already discovered, “This has been a hard time to recruit good faculty, even at Vanderbilt,” he says. “Frankly, we have used the center as a lure for hires. It will help both the Divinity School and the Department of Religious Studies attract and retain the very best faculty from across the country. We have a chance to elevate the very best faculty from across the country. We have a chance to elevate the University to the broadest possible range of applicants and to lighten the burden of debt now incurred by many Vanderbilt students. (Graduates of Vanderbilt currently rank third among the nation’s top 25 schools in terms of their debt burden, due to a lack of need-based scholarships.)

Calling his Vanderbilt experience an excellent education, Roby says, “I think the College of Arts and Science is the heart and soul of Vanderbilt. I am keenly interested in seeing it succeed, and I was happy to pitch in and help.”

Over the years, he has generously supported A&S, most recently by endowing the Joe L. Roby Chair in Economics. Eric W. Bond, professor of economics at Penn State University, has been named the inaugural holder of that chair.

Roby, who last year added emeritus to his title of chairman of Ced-it Suisse First Boston, a New York firm offering worldwide investment banking and financial services, says he is “whirling back” his commitments to focus on just a few. Vanderbilt is fortunate to be one of those.

“The best way I could do it was to be asked to help Vanderbilt raise more than a billion dollars. That, how- ever, is exactly what has happened. Roby, a 1963 graduate of the College of Arts and Science, has agreed to chair the A&S committee for Van- derbilt’s Shape the Future Campaign. The committee has a goal of raising $125 million for A&S by June 30, 2005. The over- all University goal is $2.5 billion; Roby, who joined the Vanderbilt Board of Trust in 2000, also serves on the campaign’s overall steering committee.

“Through the center’s work, we want differences, not just of skin color, but of ideas. We want more debate, not less. We want differences, not just of skin color, but of thinking and articulation.” — Professor Volney Gay
Douglas McMahon spends his days telling time. It’s a job he loves. "If you’re a mouse, the clock helps you avoid predation, and if you’re a shrimp, the clock helps you find your food," he says. "And in my other area of interest, vision research, vision is acting to time different bodily rhythms at different times of the day." McMahon says. "Just about every physiological variable is rhythmic, driven by the clock." McMahon says. "And in my other area of interest, vision research, vision is acting to time different bodily rhythms at different times of the day."

The events of Sept. 11 added to the economy's troubles by creating more uncertainty about the business climate, and this uncertainty made consumers wary as well. The economy has not been the same since. The end of the conflict with Iraq may allow the economy to recover some of its momentum, but the U.S. economy will continue to weigh heavily in the minds of both consumers and investors.

The economy will improve when investors regain confidence in the strength of its technological fundamentals. These fundamentals remain strong despite the sharp fluctuations in the stock market that we have seen. Even so, the trend that this confidence will be restored and that prospects for the markets in the early 21st century are still bright, it might be a year or two before we see a sustainable turnaround.

McMahon's research team demonstrated that subsets of cells in the clock are "set" to different times. "This raises the idea that subgroups of cells within the nucleus are acting to time different bodily rhythms at different times of the day," McMahon says. His group's future studies will probe the connections of these cell groups.

McMahon, who joined the faculty last year, is enthusiastic about his new scientific home. "There's a very strong center of excellence in biological rhythms," he says. "And in my other area of interest, vision research, Vanderbilt has a tremendous concentration of expertise."

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For the first time this year, the College of Arts and Science joined with Parents’ Weekend to showcase its faculty and students in March. In addition to parents of current students, members of the College Cabinet — donors who provide significant support for A&S — and other friends of the college were invited to spend a weekend on campus. They attended regular classes by some of the most interesting A&S faculty members, as well as special events, such as:

- a luncheon where a panel of scholarship students discussed their Vanderbilt experience
- a special lecture by Professor Vivien Green Fryd on her new book “Art and the Crisis of Marriage: Georgia O’Keeffe and Edward Hopper”
- breakfast and a gala dinner hosted by Dean Richard McCarty
- a special “Conversation with Chancellor Gee”
- "Live on the Lawn" with music by Barefoot Manner, and
- the Chancellor’s Accolade Dance.

Here is a look at some of the people involved in this special event.

A) Many parents attended class with their students.
B) Nancy Bell visits with A&S sophomore Sharman Wilson and her mother, who is also Sharman Wilson.
C) Rising senior John Ross Stringham, recipient of the Turner Scholarship, with his benefactors Cathy and Bill Turner, BA’54
D) Professor Yong Erlely, right, read from his book, “Jim the Boy,” following the dinner, which was also attended by his wife, Sarah.
E) Bernard Mitchell, father of Tiffany Mitchell, a rising junior, was among many parents of A&S students attending the weekend.
F) Sandy and Wayne Killon attended the gala dinner with their son, David, a rising senior.
G) Attending the A&S breakfast was Larry M. Smith, father of A&S alumna Ta’Nisha Channel Smith, BA’02, and of Larry Marion Smith, a rising junior in engineering.
H) Dean Richard McCarty welcomed guests.
I) Joe Williams is the parent of Lauren Melissa and Erin Lynn, both rising A&S juniors.

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VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
A&S Cornerstone
Celebrating Arts and Science

PHOTOS BY DANIEL DUBOIS

Save the date, Oct. 10-11, 2003, for the second annual extraVUganza weekend, the largest alumni celebration on campus, combining Reunion with Homecoming. Classes ending in “3” and “8” will reunite, but everyone is invited to attend the all-alumni events. Watch the mail for more details. For more information, go to www.vanderbilt.edu/alumni/homecoming.htm