

The Interpreter

BUILDING A VIBRANT ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AMONG EDCP GRADUATE STUDENTS

Contributors: Julia Ostertag, Hannah Spector, Gloria Rodriguez, Chessa Adsit-Morris

Stories: The first edition of “The Interpreter”

Welcome readers! This is the first edition of what will likely become quarterly newsletter for EDCP graduate students to help us feel connected to our academic community. This is your community and your newsletter. Please email julia_ostertag@yahoo.ca if you have announcements, suggestions, commentary, or articles for *The Interpreter*.

New Crossroads: EDCP orientation and welcome

Incoming and returning EDCP graduate students received a warm welcome to the department on DATE from Karen Meyer (Interim Department Head), Basia Zurek (Graduate Program Assistant), Cynthia Nicol (Graduate Student Advisor), and the Grad Advising Team (Chessa, Gloria, Hannah and Julia). Karen dragged a dusty journal out from under her bed to share stories from her days as a PhD student and mother at UBC. Chessa led an icebreaker where students and faculty got to know a bit about each other, starting with ‘the story of our name’ and then we talked about our current ‘crossroad in life.’ Following the welcome, a panel of faculty and students led an information session on preparing a SSHRC proposal.

The Palace Open House

Thank you to the students who attended our cozy and welcoming Grad Palace open house on September 23, and thank you Chessa and Gloria for the decorations and arranging the food. The Grad Advising Team office is located in The Palace (Rm 1323) where you can also find a small lunchroom with a fridge and microwave. Drop in for lunch, come by during our office hours and/or call/email to make an appointment. The Palace door is always locked. Please knock if you don’t have a key.



Infinite Love (Detail), Gloria Rodriguez



First “cinq à sept” at Koerner’s

In Montreal, people regularly meet after work from 5pm-7pm for drinks and conversation at one of the many *brasseries* (breweries) in the city. Well, not to be outdone by Montrealers’ sophistication, EDCP graduate students went to Koerner’s Pub on campus on Friday, September 17 to socialize, where we learned about each other’s academic and personal interests. Let’s do it again!



Feel like a fish outta water? Meet your Grad Advising Team!

For 2010-2011, EDCP now has a team of four graduate students on the Grad Advising Team. Our mandate is to help students individually with anything ranging from personal issues (Having a hard time adjusting to life in Vancouver? Considering taking a maternity leave?) to academic concerns (What happens when my supervisor goes on sabbatical? What are “comps”?). But we are also here to help build a vibrant academic and social community, and would like to hear about what kinds of events and activities you would like to have us put together. We created a survey to find these issues out and hope you filled out this online form. We are in the process of putting together a writing group, a public speaking group, and coordinating other events that are oriented toward socializing and more!

Meet the Team:

Gloria Rodriguez, MA student

Hi! I am Gloria, an independent artist working with photography and painting; I have a B.A. in Fine Arts from the National University of Colombia. I was selected on three occasions to participate in the Florence Biennale; and I have shown my artwork at Jadite Galleries, Juvenal Studios, Fordham University, the NY Book Festival in New York and the Museum of Modern Art in Colombia. I was also interviewed by the magazine EntreNos NY, where I talked about my paintings.

Currently, I am pursuing an M.A. in Art Education and I am very happy with the content of my classes, the professors, UBC and Vancouver. I deeply appreciate the kindness I have received from everybody. It really makes a difference when you are being respected and appreciated.

I am from Colombia, but I have been living for the last 9 years in the U.S.

I have worked for the last five years in childhood education and now I am volunteering at the Vancouver Art Gallery with the Tour Liaison, assisting during art-making workshops for students.

I live on campus and am thrilled to be part of the Grad Advising team.

Please, take a look to my artwork: www.gloriarodriguez.smugmug.com

Chessa Adsit-Morris, MA student

Hello, my name is Chessa Adsit-Morris and I am currently pursuing an MA in Outdoor and Environmental Education. My background is in sustainable design, I have a BA in printmaking and architecture as well as a BS in environmental science. As well as being on the Graduate Peer Advisor team I am working with a community-university research alliance project called Think&EatGreen@School and working with Julia Ostertag to coordinate the creation of an outdoor classroom at UBC for teacher education. This has already been a wonderful academic adventure; I have met so many amazingly inspirational people. When I'm not studying or working I am running, training for road races, cross-country, and (my favorite!) mountain racing. I have two wonderful puppies (whippets), two cats, and a very supportive husband! I look forward to meeting all of you, and sharing in this wonderful academic adventure!

-chessa

Julia Ostertag, PhD student

It's hard to believe but this is my fourth year as a graduate student in EDCP. It's been a long journey since I arrived from Montreal in 2007 to begin my MA in Curriculum Studies, as it was then called. I defended my MA thesis (on the co-construction of children's ecological identities through their participation in the Intergenerational Landed Learning Project, a children's garden on the UBC Farm run through our department) at the end of September 2009, one week before my baby Olivier was born and one month into my PhD. Things haven't slowed down since, even though I took a four-month maternity leave from January-May 2010. Now I am working (with great pleasure!) on the peer advising team, with a community-university collaborative research group investigating and transforming the school food system (Think & Eat Green at School), and coordinating the creation of an outdoor classroom for teacher education. As you can perhaps tell, growing food and environmental education are two of my passions, which I try as much as possible to practice and study academically. If you haven't ever gone to the UBC Farm to see the children's garden and the many other projects there, I strongly encourage you to visit this unique place on the UBC campus.

Welcome to EDCP and welcome to our community of graduate students. Please drop in and say hello, hallo, ou bonjour...or send an email.

Julia_ostertag@yahoo.ca

Hannah Spector, PhD student

I am in my second year as a PhD student in EDCP. I came to Vancouver from the gulf coast of Florida, USA, my home state, where I taught high school English for seven years in independent (private) schools. Before this, I lived in Boston for 9 years and eventually earned my MFA in Creative Writing from Emerson College, where I also taught college freshmen writing courses. I have also lived in France and Germany. My academic interests include curriculum theory, cosmopolitanism, literature education, and the political theory of Hannah Arendt. While I was an avid swimmer for many years, I have recently become a dedicated Bikram yoga practitioner. I also like the occasional hike – such as the trail in Deep Cove and the Chief in Squamish.

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Office hours: Wed. 12 PM – 1 PM

And Who is This Graduate “Community” Anyway?

Thank you to the people who completed the survey (n=48). Although quantitative methods are only one way of getting to know who we are, this survey revealed some interesting information about our graduate student community.

Unsurprisingly, English is the language most of us speak; however, while 41 respondents indicated that they speak English, only 32 people feel most comfortable speaking English. EDCP grad students speak an incredible range of languages (19 in total!). Less than half of respondents (21) only speak one language, many (17) speak two, a number speak three or four (8 total) and one person even speaks five different languages.

In terms of our living situation, 2/3 of us live off of campus, which translates into long commutes. Considering how over half of students commute for more than an hour, have full or part-time jobs, and have families it’s no wonder that we’re busy and have a hard time building community!

However, most of us find a bit of time to relax. While many respondents cited friends, yoga, exercise, spending time with family, reading, art, music, movies, and travelling as things they like to do outside of their studies, some people indicated rather unique interests. Did you know that some of your peers enjoy auto mechanics, flyfishing, embroidery, opera, storytelling, dragonboating, and entertaining cats?

Since we’re all such interesting people, let’s spend more time together. But here’s the rub - our schedules are very different. However, on the whole, lunchtime is the best time to meet during the week (especially Tuesdays and Fridays), and evenings after 7pm are also open for many people on the weekends.

And, when we get together, what would we like to do? According to this survey, a graduate research symposium interests many of you, as well as seminars (e.g. How to use RefWorks), a writing group, an online newsletter (good thing – here it is!), and coffee/tea breaks. The other ideas were selected by less than 20 respondents but were also well-received.

Finally, we asked what aspects of your lives as graduate students worry you. The good news is, well over half of respondents indicated that they weren’t concerned about their relationships with their supervisor, committee, professors, or peers. Feeling connected with EDCP faculty members is certainly key to a successful and enriching graduate experience, so we are pleased that this aspect of your academic life is working well for so many of you. However, a third of you feel uncertain about expectations for your thesis/dissertation/comprehensive exams, funding, and getting publications. As well, 28 people (n=35) indicated that they had a hard time juggling their personal and academic lives.

From your comments, we also received some great ideas for community building activities. For instance, respondents suggested we develop (mandatory) research seminars, support ESL students, support PhD students who have young children, create opportunities for people with similar research interests to meet, create opportunities for more “mature” students to meet, and have a seminar on writing literature reviews.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your thoughts with us. Although the survey is closed, we are always open to your suggestions. Please don’t hesitate to contact us!