

## English Professor Describes *Dialects of Dementia* to Help Diagnose Alzheimer's Disease



Photo: Kelly Clark

*Dr. Elissa Asp, Professor of English and Linguistics.*

conversations actually changes. Moreover, her research is attempting to link specific changes in language to specific damage in the brain.

How are changed language patterns and degenerative brain disease related? According to Dr. Asp, it has do with the fact that dementias change the structure of the brain. While not all parts of the brain contribute to language per se, deterioration in particular brain areas will shape what information we have at hand to construct language. She says, for example, if our hippocampus, which is a part of our brain responsible for episodic memory, becomes diseased, our ability to reference particular events may

Is it possible that the health of our brains could be evident in the way we talk? This question is at the centre of research being done by Dr. Elissa Asp, a professor of English and Linguistics at Saint Mary's University. Assisted by a number of students, Dr. Asp is part of an interdisciplinary research team that is developing protocols for measuring the effectiveness of drugs used to treat Alzheimer's disease. Her role involves analyzing patient speech patterns, which she believes can help to differentiate types of dementias and chart their development over time.

Within a common language group, such as English speakers, most members will use similar speech patterns to express themselves. When individuals develop Alzheimer's or vascular dementia, their speech patterns change in discernible and predictable ways. Dr. Asp describes these dementia-induced language changes as, "dialects of dementia." She says these speech changes involve more than simply forgetting words, or losing the ability to make particular sounds. The way people structure their sentences and their

## Welcome from the Dean of Arts



Photo: Sandra Fitch

In the Faculty of Arts, we are committed to helping students gain international and cross-cultural experience as part of their degree programs. In so doing, we hope to enhance students' opportunities for building successful and rewarding lives. The reason is that in today's world, it is becoming increasingly important to have knowledge about different countries around the world, and to be able to interact effectively with people from cultures other than one's own. In fact, it is those graduates with international and cross-cultural experience who will be particularly well placed to participate and work in the context of the global trends and issues which characterize our world.

Over this past year, the work of many students and professors in the Faculty of Arts shows a particularly strong global emphasis. We are proud to showcase the global interests of our Faculty in the 2004 issue of SMARTS, and to promote our view that exposure to other cultures in the national and international community is an important part of a university education.

We trust that you will enjoy reading the profiles of students pursuing Arts degrees as well as graduates from the Arts who share their experiences of studying and doing research in cultural contexts other than their own. You will read about

students who traveled to Europe, Africa and Canada's North. They share how their experiences have taken their lives in new directions, and how their perspectives have changed due to their experiences. From a very different type of cross-cultural perspective, our feature story on Dr. Elissa Asp will share new insights about the world of brain disease, and introduce its language in terms of "dialects of dementia." The Faculty of Arts is proud of the wide-ranging work underway, and the unique international as well as cross-cultural learning opportunities available to students.

A particular honour for the Faculty was the naming of Dr. John Reid as a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Dr. Reid is a longstanding faculty member teaching in both the Department of History and the Atlantic Canada Studies program.

As the SMARTS profiles for 2004 will show you, the Faculty of Arts is committed to its tradition of excellence in education and research. Our Faculty is an important reason why aspiring citizens of the world choose Saint Mary's as their university.

I encourage you to discover how SMARTS can open a world of experience for you.

Dr. Esther E. Enns, Dean of Arts

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be impaired, and our speech patterns will reflect this impairment. Put in reverse, speech patterns that do not include reference to episodic events may be an indication of damage to the hippocampus.

Dr. Asp's research will have important medical and social benefits. One benefit will be the creation of improved, low-cost strategies to assist in the early diagnosis of dementias and in the assessment of treatment effectiveness. Physicians will be able to differentiate more easily between Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, and other illnesses such as depression. As a result of Dr. Asp's work, patients and their families may get earlier diagnosis of dementia, and thus have more time to prepare for the changes such an illness will bring. As well, her work in measuring treatment effectiveness may help to maintain a patient's

independence, which will have great personal and social benefit, especially in an aging population such as ours.

Students working and studying with Dr. Asp have had the opportunity both to learn and practise linguistic research skills, and to experience professional applications of linguistic study. Over the past year, five Arts students have helped her analyze transcripts of doctor-patient interviews and code various language patterns in the patients' speech. More generally, students enrolled in Dr. Asp's courses on English language and human communications learn about her Alzheimer's research and thus experience connections between language and neuroscience. In so doing, Dr. Elissa Asp takes her students on a unique interdisciplinary journey to that place where the Arts and Sciences overlap.



## IDS Grad Seeks Gender Equity in Public Health Policy

Lessons learned on the other side of the world have enabled Erika Burger, a 2004 graduate of Saint Mary's

International Development Studies (IDS) program, to pursue a career in health policy research here in Halifax. Originally a professional physiotherapist, Erika's work in this field is taking her in a new career direction. After receiving her Master of Arts degree in May, Erika began full-time work leading a program on gender and HIV/AIDS at the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. This is a women's health research centre funded through the Health Canada's Women's Health Bureau and jointly housed by Dalhousie University and the IWK.

Erika's new professional role grows directly out of the research she did for her IDS Master's thesis at Saint Mary's University. Her thesis studied the effect of World Bank health reform policy on women and girls in Malawi who are often the primary caregivers to a population ravaged by HIV/AIDS. This disease is a public health issue of mammoth proportions in Malawi. Estimates suggest up to one-third of Malawian adults are infected, and perhaps, one million children, out of a total population of 11 million people, have been orphaned by the pandemic. In 2003 Erika received a grant from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to do four months of fieldwork for research related to HIV/AIDS in Malawi. While there, she interviewed women and girls to find out how their lives are affected by the demands put on them having to care for family members who are ill with HIV/AIDS. She was looking to find links between the obstacles they face and the shift in health policy away from primary health care and towards a free market approach, which hasn't taken into account the reality of poor women and girls' everyday lives.

Reflecting on her IDS program at Saint Mary's, Erika says: "It's a dynamic field to be in. The people are doing lots of amazing research, which is cutting edge in academic circles." There is a woman in India studying how farmers are affected by the introduction of genetically modified seeds; another is studying indigenous education in Mexico; still others are studying coastline management in Cuba; and the use of women and child labour in China's recycling industries.

Erika says she chose Saint Mary's in part because of its long history of enrolling international students: Saint Mary's "...provides a more diverse classroom experience, having students from many different countries, which indeed happened. I had classmates from Cameroon, a classmate from Ghana, a classmate from Japan, and a classmate from Indonesia. Of course, all that helps for lively classroom discussions, and people bring diverse experiences and backgrounds."

When asked about her thesis supervisor, Erika says: "Dr. Suzanne Dansereau was a wonderful supervisor and very able to direct me to the literature I needed to read to give me good guidance around doing fieldwork in communities in Africa. Dr. Dansereau's support helped me achieve the overall aim of my thesis, which was to link individual stories from the frontlines of the AIDS epidemic to the broader policy environment."

Erika Burger's MA studies were a resounding success. She completed her IDS program in 2004 with the highest academic standing among graduate students at Saint Mary's in 2004, and thus received the Governor General's Gold Medal at Spring Convocation. Her career goal now is to work with other researchers, advocates and people living with HIV/AIDS to develop a global

network of expertise in the area of Gender and HIV/AIDS in order to promote gender-based analysis of health policy so that the specific needs of women and girls can be met in the overall efforts to fight the global pandemic of HIV/AIDS.

*"International Development Studies is a dynamic field to be in. The people are doing lots of amazing research, which is cutting edge in academic circles."*



## Bringing Home the Dead

Joseph hopes that his project will spark renewed interest by government in having unmarked and unknown Inuit graves identified in this cemetery as well as other Northern cemeteries housing such graves. He also hopes his research into the social and cultural impacts TB had on the Inuit will demonstrate the necessity of incorporating an anthropological dimension in future policy as it pertains to northern peoples.

Explaining how he came to be an Honour's student in the Department of Anthropology, Joseph says: "Originally I was a transfer student from Dalhousie... Initially what attracted me were the archaeology and forensic anthropology courses. It's a really good program and when I came, it just grabbed me. I intended to just take one course, but then I got hooked." He found the Anthropology Department to be "really warm," and the professors' doors "always open." Joseph

describes the Department as richly diverse in the many sub-disciplines of its faculty, and that makes it a "golden nugget school for anthropology".

On the personal side, Joseph says the smaller size of Saint Mary's encourages people to get to know one another. He has met many people; some he hopes will become lifelong friends. Joseph is Vice-President of Saint Mary's Anthropology Society – the only such group in the Maritimes – and has enjoyed organizing events and activities for his fellow students.

For now, Joseph is finishing his thesis and applying to graduate schools. He says that later he may pursue a PhD. And what are his long-term plans? Eventually he hopes to teach archaeology, and do practical work in mortuary archaeology.

Unmarked graves in the North have brought to life a disturbing aspect of Inuit history for Saint Mary's Anthropology student, Joseph Cosgrove. Joseph made his discovery as he investigated the tuberculosis epidemic in the Canadian North throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. At that time, sufficient treatment facilities did not exist in the North, so many Inuit were evacuated to sanatoria in Southern Canada. Those who died during treatment were buried in the south, and too often their records were lost. This was primarily due to the transfer of Inuit health responsibility between several departments within the government. As a result, many Inuit families today have no knowledge of where to locate their displaced relatives.

Joseph travelled to a Northern community last summer to conduct the fieldwork portion of his undergraduate thesis, which is titled "Retracing the Burials of Displaced Inuit Afflicted with Tuberculosis". When researching the history of TB in this community, he found an equally troublesome problem: approximately two hundred of the six hundred graves in the community cemetery are currently unknown and/or unmarked. As a student interested in mortuary archaeology, Joseph was so intrigued that he has revised his thesis topic to focus on the effects of the TB epidemic on families now living in this community.

*Joseph describes the Department as richly diverse in many sub-disciplines of its faculty, and that makes it a "golden nugget school for anthropology".*

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## GEOGRAPHY CRAIG FLINN

### Local Restaurateur Finds Recipe for Success in Arts Degree

Craig Flinn, a leading Halifax restaurateur, is unambiguous about the value of his Saint Mary's Arts degree in Geography. He says that it taught him how to think critically, how to formulate and substantiate his arguments; it gave him the tools to create and sell a successful business plan and ultimately to build a successful business. Chives Bistro is the result.

Chives Bistro combines good cuisine with good business. Those who have been to Chives know that Craig's well-reasoned perspectives extend to all aspects of the dining experience. From how his guests are greeted and seated to the quality of his food and its presentation, no detail is overlooked. Craig says good food is essential, but he believes his customers should have a great dining experience, and he works hard to give them that experience.

The success of Chives Bistro grows out of Craig's two life-long passions - making maps and preparing food. Early on he thought cartography would be his vocation while food preparation would be his avocation. But when he graduated from Saint Mary's with a BA in Geography back in 1993, computer-based Geographic Information System technology was beginning to revolutionize the practice of cartography. The new technology, while interesting, lacked the human dimension that is so much a part of Craig. He had to admit to himself that it was the artistic and creative aspects of cartography that most motivated him. After much soul-searching, he decided to redirect his energies into his other passion, food. With his characteristic zeal, Craig immersed



himself in culinary studies, and then apprenticed in Canada, Switzerland, England, and New York City before returning to Halifax to spend a year planning Chives Bistro. Chives incorporates many of Craig's ideas and perspectives about food and world cultures. His menu combines the finest local ingredients to make internationally inspired meals, all served in a warm and inviting setting.

Craig said there were several reasons why he chose Saint Mary's in addition to the family tradition that his father had started in the mid 1960's. He says he likes the "perfect little size" of its campus. Also, the Husky's tradition is a great source of pride, and of course, Saint Mary's has a Geography program. Craig's passion for maps continues. He collects them, studies them and enjoys them. He also stays in touch with faculty in Saint Mary's Geography department, and they visit him at his restaurant.

Craig's experience exemplifies the professional agility that an Arts degree can give the focussed student. As Craig says, his

Arts degree provides the foundational knowledge needed to succeed wherever his interests would have taken him.

*Craig says that his degree taught him how to think critically, how to formulate and substantiate his arguments; it gave him the tools to create and sell a successful business plan and ultimately to build a successful business.*



## Study Abroad in France Gives French and Criminology Major the Bilingual Advantage

The benefactor of the new Homburg International Mobility Awards at Saint Mary's University, Mr.

Richard Homburg, wants to give students the opportunity to learn new languages and discover different cultures. He says: "Students from Saint Mary's studying abroad assures tomorrow's workforce in Nova Scotia and the Atlantic Region is one that is diverse with a global perspective – a cornerstone in the growth of our own economy."

Arts student, Jill Peterson, is one of the first to receive a Homburg Award. Jill is completing a double Major in Criminology and French and has her sights set on a job in law-enforcement, though she says a career in law is also a possibility. Jill's longstanding interest in law and justice led her to Saint Mary's Criminology program, which she says provides an intimate and personable environment in which to learn. Believing that being bilingual will help her get a law-enforcement job in Canada, Jill enrolled in a

study abroad program in France which is organized by the Department of Modern Languages and Classics. With close support from her French professor and advisor, Dr. Joelle Cauville, Jill spent a year at Angers, France, supported in part by a \$12,000 scholarship from the Homburg International Mobility Award program.

Jill describes her experience at Angers as "amazing." She says: "You learn so much about who you are and where you are from. "I learned that I am capable of much more than I thought I was before... It made me realize who I really am." She also says she learned how different the French culture is from her own, which made her realize what is unique about Canadian culture. "Sharing my experiences with my international colleagues sharpened my understanding and appreciation of Canada."

Jill says her study abroad program has changed her. "You appreciate your life and your friends and your family a whole lot more when you move away... When I was in France I used every opportunity to absorb the French culture, I now use every opportunity to live life to the fullest now that I'm back in Canada."

*"Sharing my experiences with my international colleagues sharpened my understanding and appreciation of Canada."*

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## ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA 2004 FELLOW JOHN REID



This past summer, Dr. John Reid, Saint Mary's professor of History and Atlantic Canada Studies (ACS), was named a 2004 Fellow of Royal Society of Canada. This is one of

the most sought-after academic accolades. The Royal Society consists of scholars and scientists from all disciplines who are dedicated to achieving excellence in their endeavours.

"I am honoured to be named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada," says Dr. Reid. According to the Royal Society Dr. Reid was named a 2004 Fellow on the basis of his rich academic career, which reflects his work on the history of northeastern North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as on the history of Atlantic Canada. He has combined meticulous archival research with a broad knowledge of new historical thought. As a result, he has made an original contribution to the study of history of the northeastern region of both Canada and the United States. This has led to his participation in international research projects, linking scholars in Europe and North America.

Dr. Reid is among sixty New Fellows named to the Royal Society of Canada this year. Gilles Paquet, President of the Society, states, "The Society is proud to celebrate the accomplishments of the New Fellows. They add in a meaningful and significant way to the extraordinary wealth of talent, expertise and experience of the society."

Paquet adds that Canadians have directly benefited from research conducted by these individuals, from extra-galactic work to the study of cultural synergies, the development of new medical devices and groundbreaking work on the Canadian political economy. The members of the Royal Society of Canada are among those who, today, build the world we live in tomorrow.

## smarts FACULTY OF CHOICE

Why Saint Mary's Faculty of Arts is a Faculty of Choice:

- Wide ranging course selection
- Flexibility in programs through cross-disciplinary study
- Individualized attention from faculty
- Opportunities for direct involvement in faculty research
- new and established professors who are nationally and internationally acclaimed researchers, and award-winning teachers
- Globally focused courses
- International exchange and study abroad programs

What can I do with an Arts degree from Saint Mary's?

- Prepare yourself for professional occupations that require imagination, analytical skills, and the ability to communicate effectively
- Open doors to a career in government, business, education, law, academics, media and communications
- Achieve the background needed for professional schools and graduate studies

You can enhance your degree by taking an additional certificate program. The choices in Arts are: Certificate in Linguistics, Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, Proficiency in French, German Language and Culture, Spanish Language and Hispanic Culture.

If you have your sights set on eventual graduate studies at Saint Mary's, there are opportunities to pursue a Master of Arts in these fields:

- Atlantic Canada Studies
- Criminology
- History
- International Development Studies
- Philosophy
- Women's Studies



Photo: Jamie Steeves



Photo: Sandor Fizi

## ARTS PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Bachelor of Arts (Honours)  | French                               |
| Bachelor of Arts (Major)  | Geography                            |
| Bachelor of Arts (General)  | German                               |
| Master of Arts – Atlantic<br>Canada Studies,                            | Hispanic Studies                     |
| Criminology, History,   | History                              |
| International Development<br>Studies, Philosophy and<br>Women's Studies | International Development<br>Studies |
| <b>Majors</b>   | Irish Studies                        |
| Anthropology  | Linguistics                          |
| Asian Studies   | Mathematics                          |
| Atlantic Canada Studies   | Philosophy                           |
| Classics  | Political Science                    |
| Criminology   | Psychology                           |
| Economics   | Religious Studies                    |
| English   | Sociology                            |
|   | Women's Studies                      |

## smarts facts

- ☛ Students gain international and cross-cultural experiences.
- ☛ The average introductory Arts class size is 55. Upper level courses have an average class size of 30.
- ☛ At Saint Mary's you can take an Arts degree while minoring in Business or the Sciences.
- ☛ The 20-credit program provides added program diversity.
- ☛ Metro inter-university programs allow you to draw on the best resources local universities have to offer. Programs are available in Film Studies, Linguistics and Women's Studies.
- ☛ Saint Mary's is the only University in Canada where you can complete an undergraduate degree in Irish Studies.
- ☛ Saint Mary's has the only stand-alone Criminology program in Atlantic Canada, which includes the Bachelor, Honours, Graduate Diploma and Master's.
- ☛ The Creative Writing program enables students to have their work published in a University publication.
- ☛ Cultural life on campus includes an Art Gallery, a performing arts series, the Saint Mary's Drama Society, a Writer-in-Residence reading, and a Public Philosophy Lecture Series.
- ☛ Saint Mary's has the only Asian Studies program in Atlantic Canada.
- ☛ Saint Mary's is the first Canadian university to offer a Shakespeare course at Stratford-upon-Avon, England as part of its English program.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### Faculty of Arts

tel **902.420.5437**  
 fax **902.491.8634**  
 e-mail **facultyarts@smu.ca**

### Student Recruitment

tel **902.496.8280**  
 fax **902.420.5073**  
 e-mail **recruitment@smu.ca**  
 web site **www.smu.ca**

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 and the Faculty of Arts



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