

Today & Yesterday

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History students converse with Middle Eastern students in international classroom

Over the past several semesters, a number of Illinois State history students have been taking classes with students from the American University in Cairo, Egypt, without leaving Normal. These exchanges have been made possible through IP videoconferencing technology, which has allowed American and Middle Eastern students to exchange questions and ideas, discuss history and politics, and seek common ground across cultural and geographical divides.

The "international classroom" was the brainchild of Professor Stewart Winger, our Civil War era historian, who taught at the American University in Cairo (AUC) for four years, from 1999 to 2003. Winger, who still has many contacts at the university, initially piloted the exchange with Professor Issam Nassar, our historian of Middle Eastern history, in the spring of 2007. They arranged for Nassar's course, History of the Middle East, to meet during one class session with students from a political science class from AUC.

The meeting was so successful that they arranged for another the following semester. This past spring, Nassar increased the number of joint sessions in his course, while Winger decided to teach most of his American Religious History class as a joint transnational course with Professor Patrick Mason at AUC. Winger and Mason's students met together via the Internet for over half of the semester, a total of 20 joint sessions.

Winger and Nassar each received Teaching-Learning Development Grants from the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) to develop these classes. CTLT also provided the technology. CTLT's Rachal Roach coordinated the sessions.

Winger and Nassar wanted to launch these exchanges because many students do not have the opportunity to travel or live abroad. The international classroom could, in Nassar's words, "bring a glimpse of the abroad to them." They hope to use the classroom to break down stereotypes and prejudices on both sides of the geopolitical divide.

Winger also wanted to initiate this exchange in order "to expose our students to middle eastern students and to the world in a meaningful way at a time of supposed conflict of civilizations." What they found, however, was that there is no clash of civilizations. Instead, the students saw "a mirror image" of themselves in the Middle Eastern students. Nassar said the biggest thing he thinks his students learned was that "students everywhere are the same." Senior Lauren Foerster agreed. "The thing that surprised me the most is how similar we were to the students in Egypt," she explained. "Although our religions are different, the way we wanted to be represented and our reactions to the world...are very similar." Likewise, senior Matthew Vella, who was the undergraduate teaching assistant for Winger's class, remarked that "walking into that room, there was never an 'us vs. them' mentality." Students would sometimes linger after the formal session had ended in order to discuss their everyday lives with each other, through which they learned just how alike their interests, habits, and social lives were.

For this reason, Winger felt that covering certain subjects or material in his course was less important than the discussions the students themselves were generating. Although he and Mason arranged for common readings relevant to American religious history,

they often allowed the discussion to meander based on the Illinois State and AUC students' mutual interests. Students were often more interested in comparing Islamic and Christian fundamentalisms or in discussing Islam and U.S. Foreign Policy. Winger welcomed these kinds of digressions. "The encounter was the point," he stated.

What did his students learn in these encounters? "I think their minds were blown," said Winger. The American



Professor Winger with students in Middle Eastern History "International Classroom"

students were most surprised to discover that the Arab students were not anti-American, but rather took issue with U.S. foreign policy. For instance, the Egyptian students were deeply critical of the Iraq war, but they also knew much about and enjoyed American popular culture. Alternatively, the Middle Eastern students were surprised at how receptive U.S. students were to critiques of U.S. policy.

In this same vein, Nassar, who is a native of Palestine, noted that he thought the exchanges in his classes provided a meaningful opportunity for Arab students to hear from U.S. students who hold pro-Israeli or pro-Iraq War positions, viewpoints they do

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Letter from the chair

As I leave the chairmanship after three years, it seems appropriate to assess the progress the department has made during that time. As some of our colleagues have retired or resigned to take positions elsewhere, it has been our good fortune to replenish faculty ranks with superb, young historians. Since 2005, we have hired six new faculty members: Andrew Hartman (history education), Stewart Winger (U.S. Civil War), Issam Nassar (Middle East), Georgia Tsouvala (ancient), Christine Varga-Harris (Russia), and Monica Noraian (history education). During the same years, a number of faculty have been tenured and promoted: Patrice Olsen (Latin America), Linda Clemmons (Native Americans), Kyle Ciani (women and gender), Touré Reed (African American), and Ross Kennedy (U.S. foreign policy) were tenured and promoted to the rank of associate professor; Lucinda Beier (Medicine) was promoted to the rank of professor. A generational change has been taking place, and the department looks notably different than it did three years ago when I arrived in Bloomington-Normal.

Despite the changes that have taken place in Schroeder Hall recently, the History Department still remains unchanged in some ways. We still perform a number of critical functions for the College of Arts and Sciences and for Illinois State University, teach vast numbers of students in general education classes, offer courses for our 600 majors, and maintain a small, but vibrant M.A. program. The history faculty continues to be among the best teachers on campus, as evidenced by the stellar course evaluations submitted each semester by students and by the number of teaching awards won by department members.

The teacher education program, long recognized as one of the best in the nation, continues to supply Illinois with

more secondary history and social studies instructors than any other university in the state. This year, according to data supplied by Illinois State's College of Education, our history education program is now the largest in the country. In a February 2007 lecture on campus, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough lauded our teacher education program as a model for the nation. "Maybe all of the academic experts ought to come here to see what you are doing," he told the appreciative Illinois State audience.

The members of the young history faculty are beginning to realize their great promise as publishing scholars. In the last three years, Ray Clemens, Andrew Hartman, Alan Lessoff, and Roger Biles have published books. Within the next year, the department will enjoy an unprecedented burst of scholarly productivity as books authored or edited by Patrice Olsen, Lee Beier, Touré Reed, Ross Kennedy, and Amy Wood will appear; Lucinda Beier is awaiting the publication of two books next fall. Several others are completing manuscripts that will be published in the next few years. Illinois State historians are proving the old adage that good teachers can indeed be productive scholars.

Dr. Diane Zosky of the Department of Social Work, who will serve as interim chair of the department in 2008-2009 while a national search is conducted for a permanent chair, will administer the affairs of a history department that has been performing well and that has the potential to be truly outstanding in the future. Having finished my duties as chair, I am looking forward to contributing as a teacher-scholar to the department's continuing development.

Roger Biles



Roger Biles

Comings and goings

Our long-time office manager, **Julie Ruby**, retired last spring. Ruby has kept our office running smoothly since 1987, working with seven different chairs. In 2005, Ruby was honored with a University Distinguished Service Award for Civil Service that recognized her significant contributions to the department, college, and the University. In addition to all of the outstanding work she has done for the History Department, Ruby played an instrumental role in organizing the clerical employees union and helped found the Women's Mentoring Network on campus. She plans to spend her retirement here in Bloomington and at her new, winter home in Florida. She is looking forward to, as she says, "traveling the four corners of the world" and working in her flower garden. Ruby has two sons, a daughter, and five grandchildren with another

due in August. She was honored at a large party at Ewing Manor in May.

We are pleased to welcome two young scholars to our faculty. **Georgia Tsouvala** is our new specialist in ancient history. Tsouvala hails from northern Greece, although she has lived in the United States since 1988. She completed her undergraduate work at Hunter College in New York, and just recently received her Ph.D. in classics from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Her research focuses on Imperial Greece in the first and second centuries, C.E.



Georgia Tsouvala

More specifically, she studies epigraphy or inscriptions, and Plutarch, the biographer and essayist, as primary sources in order to understand

ethnic, cultural, and gender identities in the Roman period in Greece. She is interested in the interactions between Greeks and Romans, particularly in terms of how Roman culture influenced Greek culture, and vice versa, in these centuries. Tsouvala has been the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, and has presented a number of papers in the U.S. and abroad on

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Vietnam War Exhibit Runs at McLean County Museum



A special exhibit on the Vietnam War opened in January at the McLean County Museum of History and will run until August 2010. The guest curator for the exhibit was Dr. Ross Kennedy, our departmental specialist in U.S. diplomatic history. The exhibit, entitled *A Turbulent Time: Perspectives on the Vietnam War*, explores U.S. involvement

in Vietnam and public reactions to the war over time. But it also studies the impact of the war on local McLean County citizens. Many of these citizens, including veterans and anti-war protestors, contributed stories and materials for the exhibit. Kennedy hopes that the exhibit will give visitors "a better sense of the difficult choices faced by Americans who lived through the Vietnam War, choices faced by U.S. leaders in deciding to intervene in the war and persist for so long, and the

choices made by the ordinary citizens of McLean County over whether or not to support the policy of intervention." He worked for three years to develop the exhibit, working with museum staff and volunteers, as well as a community advisory committee. In January, Kennedy gave the opening lecture for the exhibit, and in April, the History Education Program held a one-day symposium on teaching the Vietnam War (see *History Education News*, p.7)

Alumni spotlight: John McClarey

John McClarey combined his love of art with his interest in history to become an internationally renowned sculptor of historical figures. He is best known for his statues of Abraham Lincoln, which can be found at public sites and private collections throughout Illinois and abroad.

McClarey received his B.A. from Milliken University, where he began as an art student, but switched to history because he did not think he could compete as an artist. He earned a Master's degree in history at Illinois State. McClarey says he has "great, great memories of his professors" at Illinois State, particularly Dr. Lucille Tasher, who was his thesis advisor. Her class on Lincoln, McClarey notes, fueled a long-standing interest in the President.

Although his interest in art never abated, McClarey spent over twenty years teaching high school history in Edinburg and in Cerro Gordo. He also worked in state government for some time in the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs. He did not begin sculpting full-time until his retirement in 1996, and he thinks of his work as a "marriage between history and art."

Lincoln holds particular fascination for McClarey, because, he says, Lincoln embodied American ideals of freedom, opportunity, and social advancement. In each of his statues, he attempts to communicate visually some significant aspect of Lincoln's political or personal qualities. One of his most prominent and most prized statues, named "A Greater Task," stands at the entrance of the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Complex in Springfield. In this piece, McClarey represented Lincoln as the President-elect, facing the east, the wind blowing against him, as his hand touches the lapel of his coat. According to the artist, the piece is meant to convey "the winds of rebellion growing across the land at the time," and Lincoln's awareness of the burdens that lay before him.

McClarey is especially proud of the piece he did for the Russian State Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow for the library's 75th anniversary in 1998. His statue of Lincoln

was given a preeminent spot in the library's courtyard, and its purpose was, in McClarey's words, "to represent the best ideals of America to the Russian people." The occasion allowed McClarey to spend a week in Moscow giving talks and conducting workshops as a "Lincoln Ambassador," from a grant provided by the U.S. State Department. He similarly saw his art as a "bridge between countries" when he was commissioned to make a statue of Lincoln for the Halls of Revolution in Havana, Cuba, in 1999 (Fidel Castro is apparently a great admirer of Lincoln).

More recently, McClarey has become increasingly interested in Lincoln's ability to cross political divides to find common ground with his rivals. He hopes that his "art, like a book or a lecture, will communicate that common ground." For instance, one of his newest pieces, which will be installed this summer in front of the courthouse in Shelbyville shows Lincoln with fellow lawyer and rival, Anthony Thornton. Although they disagreed on many issues, the two men were friends and would sit up late debating political issues.

His works have been reprinted in several journals and books, and have appeared in film documentaries of Lincoln. Some of his pieces are on exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In 2005, McClarey received the Richard Nelson Current Award of Achievement at the Lincoln Forum in Gettysburg. He was the first "visual historian" to receive this honor. He was recently elected to the Order of Lincoln by the Lincoln Academy of Illinois. Illinois State honored McClarey this past March by inducting him into the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Hall of Fame.

McClarey is married with four children and seven grandchildren. He lives on a farm outside of Decatur.



John McClarey, M.S. '71, and a young friend in front of his statue of Lincoln, "The Last Stop" in Taylorville at the Christian County Courthouse.

David Edmunds M.A. '66, served as the President of the Western History Association (WHA) last year. His presidential address, offered at the WHA's annual meeting in Oklahoma last October, traced the origins and growth of academic Indian history programs. He also spoke about the value of oral history in helping historians understand the broader histories of native peoples. Edmunds, who after leaving Illinois State earned a Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma, is Watson Professor of American History at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Luke Smith, M.A. '67, has been entered into the 2008 edition of Who's Who in America. Smith recently retired as Chief of the Europe and General Division Historical Office, Department of State and is currently employed by the U.S. Department of Defense.

David Sam '81 is currently the president of Elgin Community College. Sam received his M.A. in Law and Diplomacy and his Ph.D. in International Economic and Political Relations from Tufts University. He has held numerous teaching and administrative positions at colleges across the country. Most recently, he served as the President of North Harris College in Houston, Texas, before taking the helm at Elgin in 2007.

John Roberts, D.A. '90, won the College of Liberal Arts Distinguished Alumni Award from Colorado State University, where he received his B.A. in 1964. Roberts has taught history for many years at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, Illinois.

Eric Bohm, M.S. '03, who teaches history and social studies at Pontiac Township High School, has been involved in initiating the Pontiac Prescription Drug Disposal Program. Started by his colleague, science teacher Paul Ritter, the program educates students and the public about the dangers from drugs and chemicals making their way into public water systems. Ritter and Bohm have engaged their students in collaborating with local officials and pharmacies to devise alternative ways of disposing discarded prescriptions and medications. Bohm's students have also begun a grassroots lobbying effort geared

toward state and federal officials. The program has garnered media attention. This spring, Bohm returned to Illinois State to speak with history education students about civil engagement in the classroom.

Gregory Baker '03 is about to finish his fifth year of teaching at Proviso West High School in Hillside, Illinois. Since starting at Proviso West, he has completed his M.Ed. degree in School Leadership from Concordia University in Chicago. He is working on his Ph.D. at Loyola University Chicago in Cultural and Educational Policy Studies. Greg and his wife, Ebony Johnson Baker, reside in Woodridge and are expecting their first child in August of 2008.

Ed Banks, '04, M.S. '08, is currently completing a teacher-training program through the Academy of Urban School Leadership. The program is designed to restructure chronically underperforming schools in Chicago. He is gaining his certification and a MAT from National Louis University while student teaching. This past spring, he taught at the Chicago Academy High School on the North side of Chicago, but will be relocating to Austin Polytech Academy on the West side in the fall.

Kevin Dobson '04 moved to Phoenix, Arizona, after graduating from Illinois State and has been working for Enterprise Car Rental in their insurance division. He recently transferred to the Peoria office.

Katelyn Little '05 just earned a Master's in Curriculum at Benedictine University in Springfield. She is now teaching kindergarten in Riverton, Illinois.

Lindsay Boynton '06 is teaching history at St. Charles East High School, outside of Chicago. She married in June.

Erin Furry '06, M.S. '08, will begin teaching U.S. and world history, as well as geography and civics, at Steelville High School this fall.

Sravani Biswas '08 will be starting the doctoral program in history at Syracuse University in New York this fall.

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Plutarch and his milieu. Before coming to Illinois State, she taught at Hunter College and at Western Illinois University. At Illinois State, she teaches courses in western civilization, and in Greek and Roman history. Tsouvala has coordinated and led study abroad trips for students in the past, and she hopes to do the same for Illinois State students.

Christine Varga-Harris has joined our department as a specialist in Russian and Soviet history. A native of Canada, Varga-Harris earned a B.A. at McGill University in Montreal and a M.A. from Carleton

University in Ottawa. She completed her Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2005, where she received several awards and fellowships for both her teaching and research. Before coming to Illinois State, Varga-Harris spent two years teaching at St. Thomas University in New Brunswick, Canada. She studies the social and cultural history of housing in the Khrushchev era, examining issues of citizenship and the reinvigoration of socialism in the post-Stalin era, or what is known as the "thaw" period. Varga-Harris explains that housing is a "metaphor" or a site where both state and society were trying to determine what a communist country was and

how to create it. She has published several chapters and articles on the topic, including an article in the most recent issue of the *Journal of Social History*, entitled "Homemaking and the Aesthetic and Moral Perimeters of the Soviet Home during the Khrushchev Era." At Illinois State, she teaches courses in Western civilization, Russian and Soviet history, and Post-War Eastern European history. Both she and Tsouvala are also affiliated faculty in the Women and Gender Studies program.



Christine Varga-Harris

Two Faculty Publish Books

Professors Andrew Hartman and Ray Clemens both published books this year. Hartman's book, entitled *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) examines how schools in the U.S. served as a battleground for the ideological conflicts of the Cold War era. In doing so, he offers a fresh perspective on post-war conservatism as

it played out in American education. Hartman, a specialist in the history of education in the U.S., came to Illinois State last year after receiving his Ph.D. from George Washington University.

Clemens, a specialist in late medieval and early modern European cultural and religious history, published *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Cornell University Press, 2007). The book,

co-authored with Timothy Graham, is designed to bridge the gap between the graduate study of medieval manuscripts and work in the archives. It includes chapters on the production and copying of books and the materials used in them, as well as chapters on how to analyze, annotate, catalogue, and store manuscripts.

History education news

After a competitive nationwide search, the department has hired Monica Noraian as our new director of the history education program. Noraian has been serving admirably as the interim director of the program since Fred Drake retired a year ago. She has been working for a number of years as an instructor, an academic advisor, and the coordinator for student teaching. As director, we are confident that she will be able to further the goals and expansion that previous directors Drake and Larry McBride created. We will profile Noraian more fully in our next issue.

In April, the program co-sponsored a symposium on teaching the Vietnam War, as part of the McLean County Museum of History's ongoing exhibit on the war. The day-long symposium brought together about 100 participants, including current history education students and history teachers from across the state. Richard Hughes spoke on the history of the war at an introductory panel that also included local citizens Mark Dunn, a Vietnam veteran, and Jack Porter, who had been deeply involved in the anti-war movement. Both Dunn and Porter had contributed oral histories to the museum exhibit. Monica Noraian led a breakout session on pedagogical techniques and tools for teaching the war to high school students. Staff from the museum and current high school teachers led similar sessions. The symposium was also sponsored by the McLean County Museum and the Regional Office of Education.

Student Interns for Obama

Shaun Conway, a senior history education major, had the opportunity to intern in Barack Obama's U.S. Senate office in Washington, D.C. this past spring. Conway, originally from Rolling Meadows, was one of almost a dozen interns working in the office. He worked full-time for four months, for which he received course credit from both the History, and Politics and Government Departments. Conway was fortunate enough to work directly for Obama's legislative director. That meant, in addition to performing the usual intern duties of answering phones and opening mail, Conway was put in charge of tracking all of the copious legislative correspondence that came into the office and was, at times, asked to research and compile reports on legislation that Obama might support. Conway called it a fantastic opportunity that gave him "a better idea of how government works" and a "more detailed and accurate view of how things are actually done."

Obama was not present in the office for most of the term, though Conway did meet him, when Obama took the

time to greet and thank each of his interns personally. The Senator's charisma, Conway noted, "is exponentially larger in person than it is on television."

A recipient of a prestigious Golden Apple Scholarship, Conway will be starting his student teaching in the fall and will graduate in December '08. The Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program recruits and trains students to teach in economically and academically disadvantaged schools. In return for his commitment to teach at an in-need school for five years, Conway received both funding to support his education at Illinois State and specialized teacher training at summer institutes. In the future, Conway hopes to combine his interest in education with his interest in politics by establishing a non-profit foundation that would provide funding to in-need schools. He is also contemplating returning to school for a Master's in teaching and an M.B.A.



Shaun Conway '08

Professor wins Diversity Award

In spring 2007, Associate Professor Touré Reed won the Diversity Advocacy Award for Outstanding Faculty. The award honors faculty members who have promoted diversity at Illinois State. Reed was honored for his work with the Umoja Student Development Corporation and Manley High School in Chicago. He arranges pre-college visits for African-American students at Manley, coordinates discussions

between them and current black university students, and mentors them on expectations of college life. He also serves as a faculty mentor to the Black Graduate Student Association and is involved with a number of projects on campus pertaining to minority recruitment and retention. President Bowman presented Reed this award at the Commitment to Diversity Awards ceremony in April 2007.

Faculty updates

Fred Drake, emeritus, has kept busy since his 2007 retirement. In January, he gave a speech on the state of history education in the U.S. at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's American History and Civic Initiative Conference in Boston. He also continues to work with schools and programs that have been awarded Teaching American History grants. He has written a chapter on history education in the book, *History 101: The Past, Present, and Future of Teacher Preparation*, edited by Wilson J. Warren and D. Antonio Cantu. The second edition of his textbook, co-authored with Lynn Nelson, *Engagement in Teaching History*, appeared this spring. The book is doing well and is taught in history teaching methodology classes.

Lou Perez has revised the late Mikiso Hane's classic textbook, *Modern Japan: A History Survey*, which is appearing this summer from Westview Press.

Roger Biles published two articles last spring in the field of urban history. "Black Milwaukee and the Ghetto Synthesis" appeared in the *Journal of Urban History* in May 2007, and "Tobacco Towns: Urban Growth and Economic Development in Eastern North Carolina" was published in the *North Carolina Historical Review* in April 2007. The Historical Society of North Carolina awarded the latter piece the Robert D. W. Connor Award, for being the best article published in the *Historical Review* that year. Biles was also elected to serve on the board of directors of the Illinois State Historical Society.

Richard Hughes published an article, "A Hint of Whiteness: History Textbooks and the Social Construction of Race in the Wake of the Sixties" in *The Social Studies*.

Stewart Winger spoke on Abraham Lincoln and Doris Kearns Goodwin's book, *Team of Rivals*, at a local "Dinner with the Professors" before Goodwin's sesquicentennial lecture on campus last September. He also presented a paper entitled, "Common Law Appeals and Constitutional Hermetics: Lincoln on Dred Scott" at the Mid-America Conference on History in Tulsa, Oklahoma last October.

Georgia Tsouvala gave an invited lecture last February, entitled "Biographer to the Stars: Plutarch and his World," as part of the Ides Lecture Series at Illinois Wesleyan.

Alan Lessoff, who was a Fulbright Scholar in Ankara, Turkey in 2006, returned there last summer to give a series of

presentations in comparative urban history, focusing on U.S. cities like Washington, D.C. and Ankara. Lessoff also published a piece in the American Historical Association's (AHA) newsletter, *Perspectives*, on "Plagiarism and Historical Journals." That piece grew out of a report from the Conference of Historical Journals on the AHA's decision to cease evaluating plagiarism accusations. Lessoff is the editor of the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*.

In March, **Amy Wood** gave an invited talk on Hollywood and anti-lynching activism at the Center for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as part of their James A. Hutchins Lecture Series. In the fall, she presented a paper, entitled "Killing the Elephant: Executions and the Circus" at the Southern Historical Association's annual meeting in Richmond, Virginia. Her 2005 journal article, "Lynching Photography and the Visual Reproduction of White Supremacy," which had appeared in *American Nineteenth Century History* was republished in *Lynching Reconsidered: New Perspectives in the Study of Mob Violence* (Routledge, 2007), edited by William Carrigan.

Kyle Ciani wrote an article entitled "A 'Growing Evil' or 'Inventive Genius': Anglo Perceptions of Indian Life in San Diego, 1850 to 1900". It appeared last fall in *Southern California Quarterly*.

Anthony Crubaugh presented a paper last November, entitled "Geography Lessons for Peasants: The Nationalist Project of La Feuille Villageoise, 1789-1792," at a conference on interpreting the French Revolution at Columbia University in New York.

Christine Varga-Harris published an article this past spring in the *Journal of Social History* called "Homemaking and the Aesthetic and Moral Perimeters of the Soviet Home during the Khrushchev Era."

Bill Philpott presented a paper entitled, "Interstate Highways and the Tourist Turn in Rural America" at the Agricultural History Society's annual conference in Ames, Iowa, in June 2007. Last November, he presented on "Ghost Town Echoes: Tourism and the Fate of Extraction in the Postwar West," at the Social Science History Association's annual conference in Chicago.

In memoriam

Former departmental alumna and staff member, **Paula Nelson '86, M.A. '93**, died last August at the age of 58 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. Nelson transferred to Illinois State from Illinois Valley Community College and earned her B.A. in education, with majors also in history and German. She taught history at St. Anthony School and Illinois Valley Community College before returning to Illinois State to earn her Master's in history.

She was one of our finest students. In 1993, she won the Helen A. Cavanaugh award for best master's student. She also won the Cavanaugh award for her thesis, entitled, "Sainte Anne: The Populating of a French Parish in the Illinois Country." Upon graduating, she continued to work for the department as an instructor, an academic advisor, and a supervisor of student teachers.

After earning her M.S. in counseling from Illinois State in 1998, Nelson worked as a therapist and counselor in private practice, and for several social service agencies in LaSalle County.

Nelson was married to Dennis C. Nelson, who died in 2004, for thirty-six years. Their son, Matthew Nelson, is currently a student in the doctor of pharmacy program at Midwestern University.

International classroom, from page 1

not have much exposure to in Egypt. Senior David Solotke, who described himself as sympathetic with Israel, appreciated the opportunity to engage in “a true debate” with Arab students, “talking about causes of the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict and possible ways to work toward a resolution.”

Students at AUC were not a monolithic group, which allowed Illinois State students to see the full diversity of the Arab world. Students in Mason’s AUC class were, for the most part, Egyptian, though the class also included students from Lebanon and Palestine. The AUC students in the political science classes that interacted with Nassar’s classes tended to be even more heterogeneous. One of the most enlightening classes, according to Nassar, was one in which students from the American University of Bahrain happened to be visiting the AUC classroom on the day they were videoconferencing with Nassar’s students. The discussion was focused on the recent politics of Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Bahrainian students, who were largely Shiite, were more sympathetic to Hezbollah, and began engaging in a debate with the Egyptian students, who as Sunnis and Christians, were more critical of Hezbollah. “Our students loved it,” said Nassar. It was enlightening for them to witness a critical debate amongst Middle Easterners and to see firsthand divisions and disagreements within the Arab world

Students also welcomed the AUC students’ perspectives on other difficult topics. Vella noted, for instance, that initially in Winger’s class, “there

was an unspoken assumption that the Egyptian students would be more sympathetic to al-Qaeda than we would be. However, both the Egyptian students and American students handled the topic very well and very intellectually.” Dennis Ellison, a senior history education major, found that the Egyptian students did not think of the world the same way as the American students did. He thought “their views of history and [how] they address complex issues like Israel and Palestine [to be] more pragmatic and even-handed.” “I think they want an end to conflict, true, but they also desire [that] justice be done in the context of lasting peace,” he explained.

Winger found that the most significant difference between AUC and Illinois State students was that the American students were much less informed about the outside world than their Cairo counterparts. They were also, “very intrigued and very prepared and really energized” to learn, he said.

The students from AUC were indeed more accustomed to these kinds of exchanges than Illinois State students. AUC professor Eric Goodfield arranged for his political science class to meet with students from several other elite and Ivy League universities in addition to Nassar’s class. Goodfield thought, however, that the exchange with Illinois State was the best, as students were more open and curious than other American students he had encountered. It is because Illinois State students were less likely to have traveled abroad than students at private universities that their encounters with the AUC students were more fruitful, and they seemed to get much more



Students from the American University in Cairo via Videoconferencing

from them.

One of the strongest stereotypes that Illinois State students held, concerned Muslim women. Many, in particular, expressed trepidation about interacting with veiled women in the classroom (though AUC does not allow women to cover their faces). At least one female Illinois State student expressed shock that some of their AUC counterparts believed women to be subservient to men. Students also discovered, despite their own assumptions, that many of the Arab women, even those who were veiled, were assertive and appeared self-confident. Senior Lauren Seghi said she asked some of the women directly about why they take the veil and was “surprised how they answered, probably because of my close-minded view.” She learned, for instance, that some women chose to wear the veil for their own religious or personal convictions.

The international classroom proved to be a success for Illinois State and AUC. Winger and Nassar plan to arrange more exchanges in the future, expanding the project to other Middle Eastern and other international universities, as well as more history courses.

Student Becomes a Reality TV Star

History Education major, Jason Siska, suspended his student teaching last fall so he could compete on the hit CBS reality series, *Survivor*. Siska, who completed his student teaching at Prairie Middle School in Barrington, Illinois, this spring and graduated from Illinois State in May, was one of 16 contestants competing for a prize of one million dollars. This season, the 16th

of the long-running series, was shot in Micronesia and aired from January-May 2008.

This season’s “twist” initially broke the contestants into two teams, one consisting of former contestants and the other of long-time *Survivor* fans. Siska fell into the latter category, and did well in the game, making it through the 11th episode and onto the jury. He

was an athletic and energetic player.

Siska, who grew up in both the Virgin Islands and Illinois, also teaches gymnastics to elementary and middle school age boys. In addition to being a history major, Siska also majored in Spanish and has spent considerable time traveling in Central America.

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