

## IMPORTANT DATES : DECEMBER

- 5 Last day of classes
- 9 CAS Chairs Meeting (Conference Room, Student Union 8:15-10:15)
- 12 Finals end
- 12 Faculty Senate meeting (Conference Room, Student Union 3:00)
- 13 Commencement 11:00 a.m.
- 13 Winter Interim begins
- 14 Faculty notified of second-year reappointment recommendations (for 3rd and 4th years)
- 24-26 Christmas holidays (offices closed)



Guest Composer Mark Koval visits with music student Jason Baskin

## NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Truman State University Department of Music, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Sigma Alpha Iota and The Mostly Live Composers Society sponsored the 2008 Truman State New Music Festival, October 30 and 31. The festival featured guest composer Mark Koval, winner of the international 2008 Truman State-MACRO Composition Competition, speaking to music classes, working with student composers in a master class, and rehearsing with Truman State musicians. Koval is an internationally recognized, award-winning composer of music for television, film, and the concert hall. He is the recipient of Emmy nominations for his musical scores for the animated children's series "Bobby's World" and "The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest".

Two concerts were presented during the festival. Both concerts included performances of new music by Mark Koval, by Truman State faculty and graduate student composers, and by other contemporary composers. On Thursday, October 30, 7:30 PM in the Ophelia Parrish Performance Hall, Mr. Koval's new composition, 'Sound(s) and Fury', was premiered by the Truman State Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Dr. Sam McClure. This work was specially commissioned for this occasion by the University's chapters of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and Sigma Alpha Iota. In addition to the premiere, a variety of new instrumental and choral music was presented by Truman State musicians, including Cantoria, the Chamber Choir, and the Wind Symphony.

On Friday, October 31, 1:30- 3:00 PM in the Ophelia Parrish Music Performance Hall, chamber music by Truman State composers was performed. The program also included music by guest composer Koval. Further information on our guest composer is available at [www.markkoyal.com](http://www.markkoyal.com).



## ALPHA GAMMA RHO FUNDRAISER

Agricultural Science majors and members of Alpha Gamma Rho stir kettle corn in front of the fraternity house. The effort raised \$140 for the American Heart Association.

L-R: Casey Davis – Mark Gawriluk  
– Kyle Yardley

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT



**Dr. Obinna (Obi) Nwakanma**  
Professor of English

**Degrees:**

Ph.D. in English at Saint Louis University  
M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Washington University  
in St. Louis  
B.A. in English from the University of Jos, Nigeria

**Professional History:**

2004-2007 Instructor in English, Saint Louis University  
2004-2005 Adjunct Professor, Fontbonne University  
2003-2004 Instructor in English, Harris-Stowe State University  
2003-2004 Instructor in African & African-American Studies,  
Washington University in St. Louis

Professor Nwakanma is married and has two children, all of whom currently live in St. Louis. He enjoys both soccer and cricket and intellectual discourse and is a wine aficionado. Obi Nwakanma is a member of a number of regional and national professional associations, including the Nigerian Union of Journalists, the Association of Nigerian Authors, and has served as an interviewer for the Chinua Achebe Foundation.

## RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS/INTERESTS:

“Metonymic Eruptions: Igbo Novelists, the Narrative of the Nation and New Developments in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel,” in *Research in African Literatures (RAL)*, Vol. 39, Indiana University Press, forthcoming, 2008.

*The Horsemen and Other Poems*, Africa World Press, 2007

“Ezenwa-Ohaeto: Chants and the Minstrel,” *Dialectical Anthropology*, Springer Netherlands, October 2, 2007

“For Structure and Infrastructure in Nigerian Culture,” *African Writing On-Line*, Oxford: Fonthouse, Ltd., August 2007,  
[www.african-writing.com](http://www.african-writing.com)

“Okigbo Agonistes: Postcolonial Subjectivity in ‘Limits’ and ‘Distances,’” *Matatu Journal for African Culture and Society*, Vol. 33, Amsterdam – New York, 2006

*The Roped Urn*, Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1997

**Teaching assignments/ interests:**

Writing as Critical Thinking; Creative Writing; Writing Workshop in Poetry; Graduate Readings in English; Graduate Seminar in Creative Writing; Literature, Modernity, and African Diaspora

Dr. Obi Nwakanma brings significant and varied experience to his teaching at Truman. Teaching is actually somewhat a second career for Nwakanma, who originally worked as a journalist in Nigeria where he still writes a weekly column for one of Nigeria’s largest newspapers, the Vanguard. Professor Nwakanma’s transition from journalist/writer to teacher/scholar has created a productive tension which he says is immensely important in his work.

Nwakanma explains that he lives primarily in two zones of experience: one of the teacher and scholar, and the other of writer and artist. As a teacher, his background is quite diverse, from a Quaker boarding school in New Hampshire to St. Louis Public Schools to Saint Louis University, and now to Truman. His wide experience in teaching has helped him become a better teacher at Truman, he notes, as all of these positions have helped to shape his perspective and insight into the dynamic and unique space of the classroom. As a writer, Dr. Nwakanma has a deep understanding and empathy with his students from his own experience, as he puts it, of the “intellectual wanderer.”

Dr. Nwakanma has published widely, including a collection of poems, *The Horsemen & Other Poems* and is currently working on a new collection of poems, a novel set in the Niger Delta, and a play. His first collection of poems, *The Roped Urn*, won Nigeria’s most prestigious poetry prize, the ANA/ CADBURY prize in 1996. Nwakanma was recently awarded the Walter J. Ong award for Outstanding Achievement at Saint Louis University. He describes the award as a great and humbling experience, and he feels greatly privileged to have received it.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

**Mallory Stites****Degree program:**

Double major in English  
(Linguistics concentration)  
and Psychology

**Anticipated graduation:**

May 2009

**About Mallory Stites:**

Mallory spent the summer of 2008 at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, SC doing research under a grant from the National Science Foundation. The eight-week program, the Summer Research Institute in Experimental Psychology 3, featured free room and board as well as a modest stipend. Along with eight other undergraduates, Mallory was paired with South Carolina faculty member Dr. Robin K. Morris in order to conduct research in Cognitive Psychology.

Mallory's research was primarily focused on how native Arabic speakers read English. She studied Arabic speakers of three different language levels: beginners, intermediate speakers, and those who had near-native proficiency. Researching how Arabic speakers read English, Mallory looked at where speakers' eyes fixated and for how long. The research, she said, reveals that both of the lower level groups showed reading patterns very different from those shown in native English readers (and different from each other), which suggests different stages of learning to read in a foreign language.

Stites notes that she found the grant through Truman's Career Center website, which included a link to the National Science Foundation Website. She applied to six different programs and was admitted to four before selecting the University of North Carolina.

Because of her research experience, Ms. Stites says that she is primarily looking for graduate schools in cognitive psychology that specialize in language use.

TRUMAN FACULTY STUDY THE EFFECTS OF *SOUTH PARK*

In a recent presentation at the Crime & Popular Culture conference in Warrensburg, MO, Instructor Joe Nedelec (Instructor, Justice Systems) and Paul Parker (Professor, Political Science) made the interesting claim that the television sitcom *South Park* could be seen as a method of encouraging critical thinking about social issues.

The show, often seen as little more than juvenile irreverence, centers on the lives and outlandish experiences of four school-aged boys (Stan, Kyle, Eric, and Kenny) in a small western town (South Park, Colorado). The show is widely successful and is currently in its 12th season of production. The producers of the show, Matt Stone and Trey Parker, make use of the age-old technique of satire to comment on current events, social policies, and religious and political ideology. The producers have been noted as saying they seek to offend all members of the political spectrum and do so with consistent use of vulgar themes and prose.

This vulgarity often leads to the perception that the show is simply meant to insult. However, Nedelec and Parker argued that through satire the show can provide some

perspective and understanding to the reality of certain events. Focusing primarily on how *South Park* approaches the panics associated with 'stranger danger' (threats to children by unknown assailants) the authors theorized and tested whether an episode of the show could affect people's perceptions of stranger danger in the form of child abduction. Participants in Nedelec and Parker's study completed a brief questionnaire and watched the episode "Child Abduction is Not Funny" which involves a highly critical look at the way in which the American public reacts to media-inflated reports of child abductions. The results of the study showed that while exposure to the episode did not significantly impact the respondent's attitudes or knowledge about child abduction itself, they did report an increased level of recognition of the educational or thought-provoking aspects of the show. While the results are by no means conclusive, and further research is required, they do indicate that people can be intellectually stimulated via the use of satire, even if it is veiled in a highly vulgar and juvenile presentation.

## DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT : CLASSICAL AND MODERN LANGUAGES



**CML offers instruction in twelve languages on a regular basis:**

Ancient Greek	German
Latin	Arabic
Hebrew	Portuguese
Chinese	Italian
Russian	French
Japanese	Spanish

**The department houses six BA programs:**

Classics	German
Spanish	French
Russian	Romance Languages

Three of these – French, Spanish, and Romance Languages – lead into the University's Master of Arts in Education (MAE) program.

Minors are available in Classical Studies, Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian Studies, Spanish, Russian Studies, and Asian Studies.

The Department of Classical and Modern Languages (CML) seeks to provide for Truman students a gateway to the world. Language is culture, and by studying foreign languages one learns not only about forms of human communication but also about the ways people in various times and places live their lives and reflect upon them. Truman's extensive and diverse program of foreign language instruction offers students a wide range of opportunities to expand both their linguistic experience and their cultural horizons in order to become cosmopolites, or citizens of the world.

CML is home to forty-two faculty members, including native speakers from Argentina, Austria, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Puerto Rico, Senegal, and Spain.

CML faculty members regularly lead summer study-abroad tours to China, Costa Rica, France, Germany, and Spain.

On campus the department supports immersion activities for students through several residential programs: Le Coin Francais and Casa Hispanica in Missouri Hall, and Das Deutsche Eck (coming to Grim Hall in fall 2009). In addition, Immersion Weekends are held each fall for students of French, German, and Spanish. Conversation Tables for various languages also offer students regular opportunities to develop and maintain their communication skills.

CML students and faculty are active in a number of campus organizations:

Classics Club and Eta Sigma Phi (Classics National Honor Society)  
 French Club and Pi Delta Phi (French National Honor Society)  
 Spanish Club and Sigma Delta Pi (Spanish National Honor Society)  
 Hablantes Unidos  
 Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO)  
 German Club  
 Italian Club  
 Russian Club  
 Anime Club  
 Society for Sino-American Studies

The department supports the Edwin R. Carpenter Language Learning Center McClain Hall 302 & 304, which houses electronic media specific to foreign language study. We also maintain a Peer Tutoring Lab (Baldwin Hall 285 & 288) where many advanced language students find employment providing supplemental instruction to small groups of students enrolled in elementary and intermediate-level classes.

## JOE BENEVENTO READS FROM LATEST BOOK

Joe Benevento, Professor of English and longtime poetry editor of Truman's literary journal, *GHLL*, read from his sixth book, *Some of My Best Friends and Other Fictions*, on November 12 in the Student Union Building's Down Under.

Now in his twenty-fifth year at Truman, Benevento has published hundreds of poems and stories as well as two novels (*Plumbing in Harlem* and *The Odd Squad*). Benevento was introduced to a crowd of about ninety by Jamie D'Agostino, who recently joined the creative writing faculty at Truman, and praised Benevento's work for its lyric quality, emphasis on craft and "the music of human speech." D'Agostino pointed out the special opportunity Truman students have, given the frequent readings by resident and visiting writers, to start a collection of signed first editions.

Benevento provided the audience with a synopsis of each of the stories, and allowed them to select the reading. The choice fell on "An Usher at Their Wedding," originally published in *The MacGuffin*, in which a high school teacher, John Starace, engineers an unusual bachelor's party for a friend who's marrying someone Starace can't stand. The story emerged from one of Benevento's own creative writing classes, and he noted its long incubation and revision history. Benevento fielded questions and signed copies after the reading.

The book is available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com).



Although he considers himself primarily a fiction writer, Benevento has published several collections of poetry, most recently *My Puerto Rican Past* (Ginninderra Press), which includes "Driving To A Poetry Reading In My Father-in-Law's Pick-up Truck":

The tire was flat, nothing could be done,  
 on Sunday morning in Palmyra, MO,  
 except accept the offer of a truck.  
 Although at first I couldn't make it run,  
 some more foot on the gas got me to go  
 towards St. Louis, cursing my stupid luck.  
 Never before had I been so above  
 most other drivers on the open road,  
 never before the kinds of peer-like looks  
 from truck guys with no clue I write of love  
 and loss in poems, since this thing I drove  
 was more persona than you'll find in books.  
 And so my reading had more force by far,  
 than any I had gotten to by car.

## FACULTY RECEIVE GRANTS FOR INNOVATIVE CLASSES

On November 17, Provost Troy Paino hosted a forum for the first group of faculty to be awarded grants under the new Innovative Academic Initiative program. Early in the Fall semester, Dr. Paino solicited proposals to plan and implement innovative academic initiatives that would engage students in transforming, experiential learning opportunities. Seventeen outstanding proposals were received. Regrettably, only five could be funded with available resources.



**The Truman Blues Project**  
Clifton Kreps, Classic and  
Modern Languages

The Truman Blues Project seeks to offer students an intellectually stimulating, creative, and civically engaged learning experience in collaboration with members of the Truman faculty and the surrounding community. The focus of inquiry and exploration is the “the Blues,” a musical form which arose out of the African-American experience in the southern United States near the beginning of the twentieth century, but has subsequently adapted and spread into a nearly world-wide phenomenon. In the academic component of the Project, faculty members from a number of departments will lead students in an examination of the blues from different disciplinary perspectives, including music theory and musicology, history, geography, folklore and oral tradition, literary studies, creative

writing, gender studies, media studies, and acoustical science. The Blues Project also includes a composition and performance component in which the goal is for students, either singly or in small ensembles, to develop and perform a limited blues repertoire which is in some way related to the material and concepts encountered in the accompanying academic endeavor. The third element of the Blues Project is a civic engagement component which will provide students opportunities to interact with the surrounding community in mutually beneficial partnerships. Agencies or entities so far identified as potential points of contact with the community include the Kirksville High School music program, the Kirksville Arts Association, Circle M Recording Studio, the Round Barn Blues Festival, the Truman Hunger Fest, and Kirksville Rocks!



**Roadtrip as Pedagogy**  
Monica Barron, English  
and Linguistics

I envision this project as the first of many such roadtrips Truman students and faculty might take together. In the Spring of 2010, students will take a cluster of 10 credits comprised of Southwest Literature (in the English Department), The Bomb (a junior interdisciplinary seminar), any Spanish course at any level of study, and a new one credit College of Arts and Sciences course entitled Roadtrip as Pedagogy.

## FACULTY RECEIVE GRANTS FOR INNOVATIVE CLASSES

The idea here is that though Truman is a very powerful intellectual home, these studies gain a certain power from direct experience with a part of the ecosystem we don't live in, but which figures importantly in American literature as a means of explaining why people behave as they do and how ecosystem shapes culture. A trip like this can encourage Spanish language study, as well as make a museum junky out of you! Sante Fe is now the third biggest art market in the country. Los Alamos is a significant location in American nuclear history. Get on the bus! The one-credit Roadtrip as Pedagogy course will meet one hour per week the first eight weeks of spring term so that we may plan out a series of on-site presentations which students will deliver.



**Portrait & Self Portrait:  
An Analysis of Self &  
Community**

Julia DeLancey, Art, and  
Cole Woodcox, English  
and Linguistics



This travel study course—  
a single, twelve-credit  
hour course—considers  
the representations we  
create and consume  
of ourselves and of the  
communities we work

and live in. This course studies  
some of the factors and processes  
we use when defining who we are,  
as individuals and as groups, to  
ourselves and to others. Students  
and faculty together will analyze  
selected themes and case studies of

identity here in the Midwest. We'll look  
at how we and others create identities  
and present ourselves and place  
ourselves in communities. To do this  
we'll examine the continuity of such  
self portraits and portraits, their sense  
of uniqueness, and their networks  
of affiliation. Through creative,  
performative, and archival projects  
as well as case studies, readings,  
discussions, service learning, and  
interaction with various groups in the  
midwest, including people considering  
attending Truman and people who  
have graduated from Truman, we will  
examine the processes, actions and  
institutions we use for portraits of  
ourselves. Part of the sixteen-week  
semester will be spent at Truman  
and part of the semester "on the  
road"—in Chicago, in Kansas City and  
on excursions to rural Missouri and  
Iowa, viz., Bethel, Dancing Rabbit, the  
Amana Colonies where we'll engage in  
on-site learning through presentations,  
guest lectures, and service learning.



**Latin American Experience:  
History & Conservation  
Biology of Panama**

Chad Montgomery, Biology,  
and Marc Becker, History



History and Conservation  
Biology of Panama course  
that we are proposing as  
an Innovative Academic  
Initiative is a interdisciplinary  
course combining on-  
campus lecture and

discussion-based learning with  
off-campus community immersion

## FACULTY RECEIVE GRANTS FOR INNOVATIVE CLASSES

and service learning. The course is designed to be a full semester experience bringing together students and faculty from diverse disciplines and people from diverse cultures to engage in interdisciplinary studies of topics based in history and conservation biology in Latin America. The goal of the course is to expose students to multifaceted issues in a real world context through the integration of curricular activities, civic engagement, community involvement, and service learning experiences.



**Knowledge is Power:  
Making College  
Accessible for Minority  
and Low SES Rural  
Students**

Wendy Miner, Education,  
and Darl Davis, RPDC  
Director



Our proposal centers on the idea that minority and low socio-economic students who are interested in higher education may need additional support and services. It is our axiom that knowledge is power, and if students and their families know the steps necessary to get to college, they will be able to make informed decisions to meet their goals. In addition, our Truman students will have powerful experiences in civic engagement. Civic engagement is the cornerstone of a liberal arts education. This proposal allows our students, faculty, and staff to experience an investment in our local area and make a difference in the lives of those who might be less privileged than

they are. We are addressing a serious issue of public concern regarding privilege in the USA, which could have global relevance when working with minority Latino populations. This proposal offers support for students and families in Milan and Green City to be in the “know” regarding how to get a college education if desired by providing ACT tutoring, study skills, translations of documents about testing and services, and opportunities to work with the community, and provides service learning and civic engagement opportunities for TSU faculty, staff, and students. A real-world application of civic engagement will lead our students to use their problem-solving skills and reflect critically on their own beliefs regarding civic engagement.

In addition to the civic engagement, our proposal centers on community-based research. Both Milan and Green City school districts have a large population of minority and low socio-economic students. Principals are creating a plan for gathering and analyzing research based on our proposal. We talked about measuring raised expectations, more students in demanding courses, career focuses, higher attendance, more students looking at college as a possibility, and meeting the needs of gifted students better. This research will be utilized by the district to determine if further services are warranted after this year and data results may be used to apply for federal funding through a grant called GEAR UP.