

ARTS@ACADIA

Celebrating the research and scholarly activity of the Faculty of Arts

Welcome to Arts@Acadia, in which we celebrate the Faculty of Arts for the creativity, hard work, and contributions from its students, faculty and staff. It is an honour to be part of the editorial team and contribute to this newsletter. Our faculty abounds in talent, originality, and diversity, which is why we will share exciting research with you, from new books, past collections, and upcoming books to special journal issues. We can't possibly cover all the wonderful good news stories, such as Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies professor Claudine Bonner's prestigious Fulbright Scholar Award, "African Nova Scotians on the Eastern Seaboard, 1900-1930," which she took at Vanderbilt University, but we will cover as much as we can! Take a seat, grab a cup of coffee or tea, relax, and please enjoy this newsletter.

-Susan Qiu, Co-op Communications Officer

Pjila'si! Welcome! Bienvenue! I have been delighted to be working with Susan Qiu, our Co-op student, who has done remarkable work this summer on our websites and communications, including this newsletter. She's elevated my very grassroots inaugural newsletter by creating a sleek and sophisticated layout and template to dazzle readers. I'm also pleased to have two other students, Claire Kim and Kira Cummings, join our team as writers. Administrative manager, Denise Bonnell has proven invaluable with her experience, problem-solving, and good cheer. I have been honoured to serve the Faculty of Arts as Dean for three years, and the great stories in this newsletter are just one small reason why.

-Laura Robinson, Dean of Arts



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Museums as Sites of Power Dynamics: Laurie Dalton

By Kira Cummings,
Department of English and Theatre

Laurie Dalton has been the Director and Curator of the Acadia University Art Gallery for 15 years. Throughout her time in academia, she has explored the life and art of Nova Scotian folk artist Maud Lewis. Her Master's thesis, "*The Scotiabank Maud Lewis Gallery and the 'Folking' Over of Nova Scotia*," examined how museums portray the narratives of artists through their institutional authority. Since that thesis, Dr. Dalton has passionately continued to research Lewis.



Laurie Dalton outside of Maud Lewis' house

Upcoming Book

Kait Pinder, co-edited book, *The Contemporary Leonard Cohen: Response, Reappraisal, and Rediscovery* (June 2023)

In 2018, Dr. Dalton curated an exhibit of privately-collected works of Lewis and memories of how individuals obtained her work – thus reconstructing the public reception of the artist. This research of how public perception of artists comes from storytelling has culminated in her recent publication *Painted Worlds: The Art of Maud Lewis, A Critical Perspective*. Her book critically examines museums as sites of power dynamics and hierarchies, elucidating how curators and individuals of the past have received Lewis' art. A crucial question is: which artists are included while others are omitted, and how are they conveyed when included? Dr. Dalton's book explores this question stating, "Too long, folk artists, outsider artists, self-taught artists have rested on the margins – this book tries to look at the work of art history through critical museological and art historical lenses – presenting new ways to situate, engage and understand Lewis' work." She assesses how museums may examine their inclusions and rethink their reception of artists and collections more critically. Although Lewis is firmly within the folk artist canon, Dr. Dalton asserts that Lewis' work and life are relevant to wider discussions within art history. For example, contemporary artists experiment more and more with perspective, colour, and bending the rules than our predecessors, which opens up new ways of seeing the world. In the future, Dr. Dalton would love to explore the parallels between Lewis and other female folk artists in the United States and Europe.



Global Health and Responsibility for Maternal Care: **Sarah Rudrum**

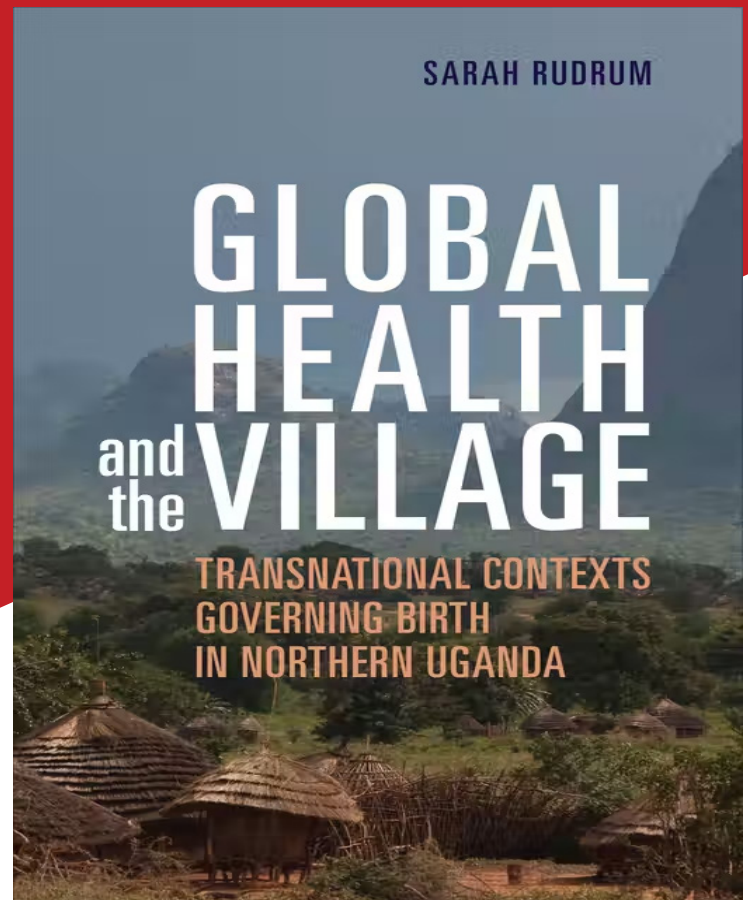
By Claire Kim, Department of English and Theatre

Dr. Sarah Rudrum's book *Global Health and the Village: Transnational Contexts Governing Birth in Northern Uganda* provides valuable criticism of global health policies surrounding maternal care focusing specifically on post-conflict Northern Uganda. Rather than looking at the efficacy of specific practices within health facilities, Dr. Rudrum uses institutional ethnography (IE). Institutional ethnography is a type of social research that analyzes social organizational processes by observing how institutions coordinate and affect people's everyday actions and experiences.

Through institutional ethnography, Dr. Rudrum can parse out the minute yet valuable nuances between culture and social context. The word "culture" often carries with it a connotation of stasis. Thus, scholars have used culture to explain away the failure of healthcare initiatives. A review of women's perception of obstetric services reports that the prevalent use of traditional birthing attendants was due to a "mistrust of the modern healthcare system, coupled with a cultural preference for traditional medicine" (147). Dr. Rudrum rebuts this claim by pointing out that the scapegoating of cultural preference fails to address the impact structural and social institutions have over the decisions people make. This conclusion fails to address contextual factors such as transportation, cost and proximity to a health facility—all of which would lead to an increased preference for traditional at-home births.

Another major critique of the current healthcare policy attitude is an ingrained attitude of responsabilization—or placing the weight of responsibility for health on an individual instead of institutions. This manifests in multiple ways not just in Northern Uganda, but in our own country as well—though to a lesser extent. For example, pregnant women are advised to maintain a healthy diet and avoid strenuous work, but without addressing systematic poverty and food insecurity, that advice amounts to nothing.

Dr. Rudrum's book is a valuable look into being able to enact meaningful change to our international health care approach. By expanding our attention to structural factors, the burden of maternal and child care will not be placed as solidly on the individual, and thus we can decrease maternal and infant mortalities.



Defending Rationalism: Stephen Maitzen

By Claire Kim, Department of English and Theatre

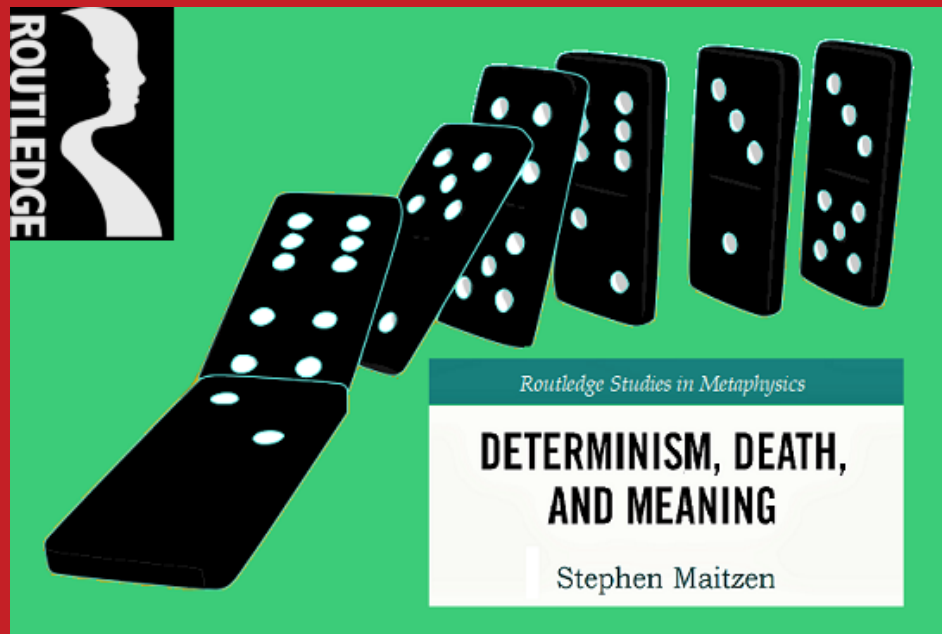
Metaphysics, or the philosophical study of the fundamental nature of reality, can be quite an intimidating subject. Dr. Stephen Maitzen's metaphysics book *Determinism, Death, and Meaning* (Routledge, 2022) provides a comprehensive and detailed defence of rationalistic determinism that he hopes will be accessible to readers of all different levels of philosophical understanding. Rationalism asserts that there is a logically sufficient explanation for everything. At the same time, however, rationalism does not imply that everything is the result of some cosmic plan. On the contrary, Dr. Maitzen argues that everything has an explanation only if not everything that happens was literally meant to happen.

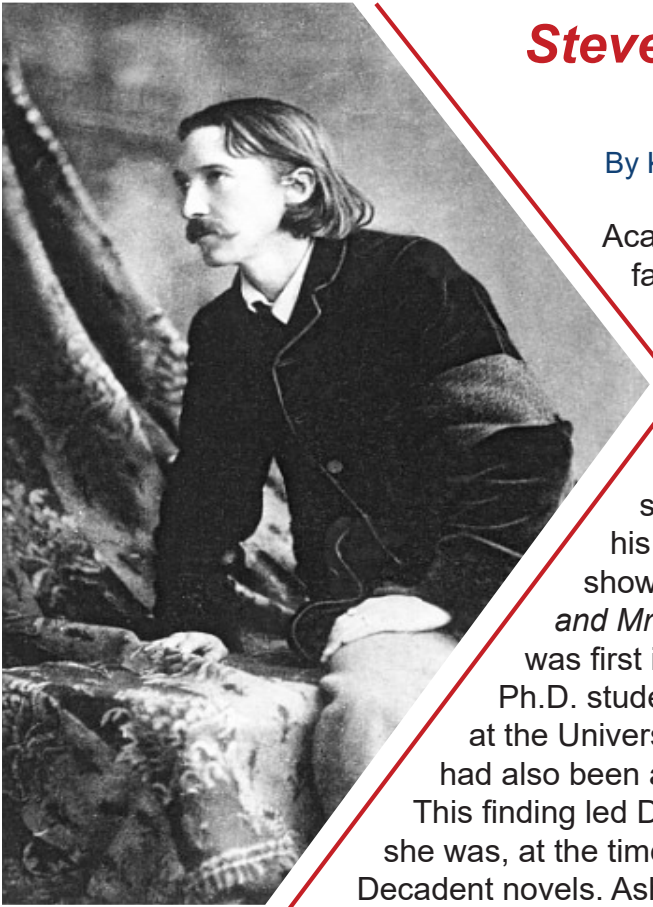
After defending rationalism, Dr. Maitzen argues that rationalism implies determinism. According to determinism, everything that happens is the cumulative result of every event which has preceded it. As a metaphysical outlook, determinism suffers from a bad reputation. A major point of criticism with regards to determinism is the notion that it is incompatible with the concept of free will and, by extension, moral responsibility.

Dr. Maitzen rebuts this criticism by arguing that determinism does not absolve you of responsibility. Determinism does not reduce your capacity for reflective control over your choices: your capacity to do what, on reflection, you want to do and to refrain from doing what, on reflection, you would rather not do. Having reflective control over your choices makes you responsible for them. Far from diminishing that kind of control, determinism in fact enhances it.

After providing a thorough defence of determinism, Dr. Maitzen examines the conclusions that follow from it. These include rejecting many of the counterfactual conditionals that we ordinarily believe, classifying many of our regrets as irrational, and reframing our attitudes toward death and grief. Under determinism, reality at every instant balances on a delicate and tight web of prior conditions. Thus, if the present state of things had been different, the past eons ago would have been so drastically different that it is almost certain that humans would never have come into existence. Therefore, if we lament that some bad thing happened, then we are almost certainly committed to lamenting that humans exist at all, which clearly most of us do not lament. Even so, determinism lets us take steps to prevent bad things from happening in the future.

Dr. Maitzen hopes that readers come away with a better understanding of the often-misunderstood doctrine of determinism and, through rationalism, that they continue to ask the question "Why?" and refuse to accept "No reason" as an answer.





Stevenson's Artistic Innovation: Kate Ashley

By Kira Cummings, Department of English and Theatre

Acadia French professor Dr. Kate Ashley has long been fascinated with the evolution of the novel, literary movements, and institutions in France and Britain. Her recent book publication, *Robert Louis Stevenson and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* highlights the literary and cultural relations that gave rise to artistic evolution at the time. Stevenson played a significant role in innovation at the fin-de-siècle through his engaging and practiced approach to writing, as showcased in his works such as *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Treasure Island*, and much more. Dr. Ashley was first inspired to research Stevenson during her time as a Ph.D. student when she read a book written by a former professor at the University of Edinburgh about Stevenson and France that had also been a part of the Scottish literary revival of the fin-de-siècle!

This finding led Dr. Ashley to return to study Stevenson even though she was, at the time, immersed in studying the French Naturalist and Decadent novels. Ashley elucidated, "For late-nineteenth-century authors, there were competing tensions between attracting a mass readership and gaining recognition as an artist." Although a talent for telling stories was ideal for selling books, stylistic refinement was essential for gaining peer approval. He became a model of literary innovation because of his ability to write crowd-pleasers that were stylistically genius through his unique ability to play with style, form, and genre in a way that refused to follow English or French literary rules. Stevenson was a Scottish author who operated on the peripheries of English and French literature. He belonged to neither literary tradition, but he significantly influenced both. Dr. Ashley's recent monograph highlights the internationalization of the novel. In the future, Dr. Ashley looks forward to studying Stevenson and Charles Baudelaire's conceptions of how the writing profession intersects with their reputations as bohemian aesthetes.

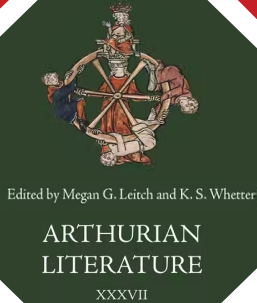
Announcing BAC Talk

BAC Talk is a new, annual series of research talks by Acadia Arts faculty. These talks will be scheduled throughout the academic year and delivered by members from each unit of the Faculty of Arts; every year, a unifying but multidisciplinary theme will ensure representation from every Arts department. In doing so, we hope to bridge connections between the various units and departments within Acadia's Faculty of Arts and showcase the broad research interests and cutting-edge contributions of our faculty to each other, as well as to students and to members of the wider Acadia community. The talks will be open to the entire Acadia community and will take place in the Beveridge Arts Centre, the hub for Arts research and teaching at Acadia. The BAC Talk theme for the 2022-2023 academic year is "Impermanence." For more information, please contact Kait Pinder (kait.pinder@acadiau.ca) or Chelsea Gardner (chelsea.gardner@acadiau.ca).

Special Arts@Acadia Journal Issues

Malory in Context: Kevin Whetter

By Kira Cummings, Department of English and Theatre



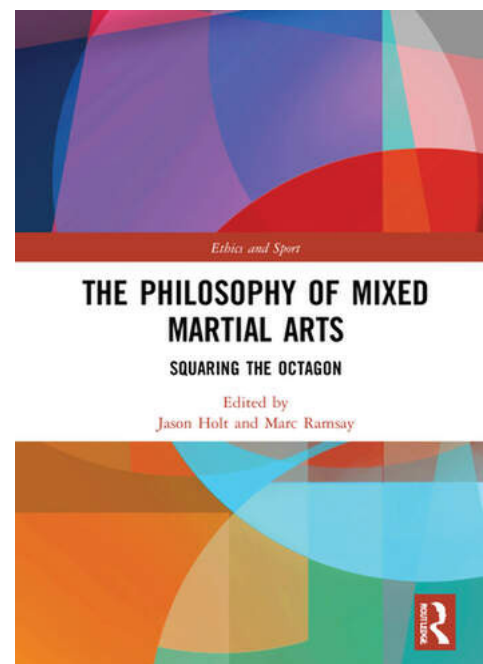
Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* is one of the most influential sources of Arthurian legend, continually lending itself to new scholarly approaches. Acadia's medieval professor, Dr. Kevin Whetter is the Co-Editor of *Arthurian Literature*, a premiere journal in this field. The latest publication of this journal – *Malory at 550: Old and New* – includes articles from papers presented at the conference of the same name held at Acadia in 2019. Dr. Whetter's interest in the comparative study of classical and medieval works has led him to pursue new avenues of scholarship. For instance, while most scholars undervalue the power of women in medieval romance, Dr. Whetter's work illuminates their authority. Dr. Whetter focuses on the connection between the text and its contexts versus the stark categorizations of older scholarship. For example, Malory fought on both sides as a knight during the War of Roses; Dr. Whetter has studied whether Malory's apparent fondness of armed combat descriptions might reflect his own involvement in warfare rather than a fixed moral standpoint. Where some scholars have vilified Malory as a bad writer, Dr. Whetter and *Malory at 550* advocate for Malory's authorial merits. Currently, Dr. Whetter is working on an essay regarding punctuation and layout in the sole surviving manuscript of Malory's *Morte*, an accessible classroom edition of *Morte* to be published by Broadview Press, and much more!

Edited Arts@Acadia Collections

Mixed Martial Arts and Philosophy: Marc Ramsay

By Claire Kim, Department of English and Theatre

Dr. Marc Ramsay and Dr. Jason Holt's *The Philosophy of Mixed Martial Arts: Squaring the Octagon* covers a wide variety of philosophical topics ranging from the contentious classification of the young sport to the moral and ethical themes surrounding it. The book features authors who are well versed both as academics and highly experienced martial arts practitioners, allowing for deeply nuanced conversations surrounding the sport of mixed martial arts (MMA). Dr. Ramsay's chapter "The line of permissibility: Gladiators, boxers, and MMA fighters" mounts a defense against Nicholas Dixon's call to ban boxing—and by extension, MMA. Dr. Ramsay identifies and debunks the three primary elements of Dixon's argument: paternalism, economic coercion, and legal moralism. While Dr. Ramsay disagrees with Dixon's conclusion that combat sports like boxing and MMA are impermissible moral evils, there are still elements of cognitive dissonance that fans of MMA must actively be aware of and reckon with.



Rebecca Casey

By Susan Qiu, Co-op Communications Officer

Recent Research

- Acadia Innovative Teaching Award
- An Apple a Day Project (with her class)
- No One Left Behind, a research grant with the town of New Minas.



From left to right: John Ansara, Becky Casey, Allie Delaney, and the Honorable Barbara Adams, Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care, and MLA (P.C.) for Eastern Passage.

Dr. Becky Casey is a dynamic assistant professor in the Department of Sociology who brings a fresh approach into her classes by having her students engage directly in community-based research. Dr. Casey has worked on multiple research projects with students before, such as An Apple Day at Acadia University. She is currently working with Allie Delaney, a BA Honours student and John Ansara from the Department of Recreation & Community Development in the Village of New Minas, on a project entitled “No One Left Behind: Mapping Accessibility and Inclusion of Older People in New Minas.” So far, this project has garnered two awards: the Age-Friendly Communities Grant from the Village of New Minas and the Acadia Innovative Teaching Award to facilitate her involving her class in the project.

The goal of the project is to investigate the gaps in everyday services and programs used by older people and to work on developing partnerships to address accessibility and inclusion for them. To reach the goal, Dr. Casey and her team are undertaking ethnographic research by doing an environmental scan that entailed physically walking around town and by having informal interviews to understand what is available for older adults. The interviews will cover topics such as shopping, transportation, physical and mental health care, community involvement, accessibility, and ageism.

Allie Delaney, an Honours student, is contributing to this project through her thesis, “Breaking Down Barriers in the Village of New Minas: Understanding what makes an Age-Friendly Community,” which will identify barriers that prevent or limit older adults from full participation in their community. Allie will conduct interviews focused on participants’ experiences related to accessibility, ageism, and inclusion in their community.

Students in this upcoming year’s Sociological Methodology course will develop advanced skills in conducting mixed methods research and will have the opportunity to learn about the personal experiences of older people living in Kings County by working on this research project. Students will showcase their research and present their findings to the public, including the Village of New Minas.

Cynthia Alexander

By Susan Qiu, Co-op Communications Officer

Students in three Politics classes took up unique opportunities to effect change when Dr. Cynthia Alexander, professor of Politics, received two grants from Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada (CEWIL Canada). Entitled “I WIL Commit to Truth and Reconciliation: Elders and Youth in Mi’kma’ki Collaborate to Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Canada” and “I WIL Make a Difference Upholding Human Rights: Canadian Youth Examine the Social Determinants of Health in Nunavut, a Community-based Participatory Virtual Policy Initiative,” these grants enabled hands-on class experiences like no other.

The students from Introduction to Law, Politics and Government gained organizational, media, teamwork, leadership, and cultural competence by working with Glooscap First Nation throughout the Fall term of 2021. As part of a five-day Truth Before Reconciliation Mawimi which they organized, students participated in the creation of the ‘Before’ mural, which now hangs on the second floor of the



From left to right: Lily-Beth Fisher, Darlene Copeland, Tanvi Dabas, Gerald Gloade.

BAC. This mural was painted with help from the public by Gerald Gloade and a twelve-year-old, Lily-Beth Fisher, both Mi’kmaw artists. Students from this course also created and challenged the entire campus community to complete two online Indigenous courses: Jiksutui and Nes’tamin.

Students in Introduction to Public Policy and the Public Good and Issues in Canadian Politics courses focused on Arctic Studies. A former Member of Parliament for Nunavut, Mumilaaq Qaqqaq and Inuit Elders guided and mentored the students. Through conversations with Inuit youth, they learned about the personal experience of the Inuit community with COVID and the lack of resources and access to healthcare. In addition to writing policy briefs, Acadia students curated an exhibit of photography by the youth of Arviat, Nunavut. Both the briefs and the exhibit were displayed at the CARE Gala Celebration: On a Journey from Civic Awareness to Responsiveness and Engagement. Students celebrated their partnership and collaboration with L’Nu of Mi’kma’ki and with Inuit of Nunavut, to promote allyship with Indigenous Peoples.

Dr. Alexander says that Acadia students continue to inspire her by their willingness to explore Eurocentric academic studies critically; by courageously addressing persistent systemic racism; by exploring new ways of learning and engaging; and by taking up opportunities to work, individually and collectively, to advance human rights in our own backyards.