

MA in Liberal Studies *News*

Fall 2017

Art Encounters



Dr. Catherine Bernard offers a new course in the MALS curriculum, *VA 6320 African Visual Traditions in the Americas*. Her decades-long interest in African art and art of the African diaspora has led her to the study of other indigenous art forms and contemporary forms such as installation and film and video. “The thread through all these interests is that of contact between cultures, diverse groups of varied backgrounds and the art forms resulting from these encounters.”

Dr. Bernard received her Ph.D. in Art History from the Sorbonne in Paris. She “was lucky to have as a professor and mentors one of Europe’s pioneers of African art history, Jean Laude, who was one of the first scholars to look at African art as art and not ethnographic material. He specialized in ethno-aesthetics.” She continued her research “under the guidance of Edouard Glissant, writer, poet and influential theoretician of Caribbean cultures.” Glissant argues for *Antillanité*, the notion that the culture of the Caribbean, the U.S., and other parts of the Americas derives from complex relations between cultures, and takes the form of a creolization process.

Her early researches into cross-cultural phenomena and contact led to a study of “the arts of the African Diaspora. She connected “traditional West African textiles with textiles in the Southern U.S. and the Caribbean,” conducting field work in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, and in the Caribbean nations of Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Bernard researched quilts and wall hangings, textiles by African-American and Caribbean women who included traditional

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*News*worthy

Candice Mordhorst is a current MALS student with a concentration of Media Studies who is set to graduate in December 2018. Candice has been a public school teacher in Nassau County for the past fifteen years and holds a B.S. in

Music Education and MA in Music Education from Hofstra University.

“I applied to the MALS Program at SUNY Old Westbury to further my education and diversify my experiences so I can bring that back to my students.”



Mordhorst noted, “because of the unique class options, I am able to build my degree with courses I want to take and that are interesting to me.” The MALS program offered her many classes in Graphic Arts, Multimedia Studies and an opportunity to complete an internship in a subject of her interest, Mariachi music, originating in Mexico, in the public school setting. “I feel like I have been supported 100% along the way which allows me to explore topics and experiences that I never thought would have been possible anywhere else.”

American Studies/Media Studies concentrator, **Humerto Bonilla** is completing his MALS degree this fall. After graduating from SUNY Farmingdale with a degree in Professional Communications he “did not want to stop the momentum,” so he pursued the masters in Liberal Studies. He believes the program “has helped me a lot to analyze life situations and strengthen my work.” He credits his first course, *LI6000 Introduction to Liberal Studies* with refining his sense of ethics which he uses both “in the workplace” and in his personal life.”

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Bernard, cont. from p. 1.

African designs, patterns but also story-telling and religious narratives within the textile making process.”

Dr. Bernard taught at Hunter College, City College and Cooper Union, and worked as a freelance writer and curator before becoming a full-time professor in SUNY Old Westbury’s Visual Arts department in 2001. Her research interests have expanded. Not only has she written about contemporary African-American art; she now writes about film, video, and digital arts. She says, “At this point in my career, I write mostly about contemporary art, politically engaged arts, activist art. It includes of course that of African-American artists and also other groups such as indigenous artists and artists who engage in critical political and cultural discourses.” Dr. Bernard has published extensively, in *Art Journal*, *African Arts*, *NKA: Journal of Contemporary Art*, and has a piece in the collection *Utopia*, published by MIT Press in conjunction with Whitechapel: Documents in Contemporary Art.

She has written several catalogue essays, for museums in Montevideo, Dublin, and New York and has curated many exhibitions over the past twenty years. She is currently “studying traditional indigenous arts in the southwestern US as well as contemporary arts and the connection between old and new, traditional and contemporary.” Her regional field work will form the basis of an upcoming exhibition at Old Westbury’s Amelie A. Wallace Gallery in April, which will travel to Canada and perhaps Europe.

Dr Bernard would find it difficult to “make a short list” of artists for those seeking to acquaint themselves with the rich arts of the African diaspora—but she would include John Akomfrah, a British filmmaker of Ghanaian descent, Kara Walker a painter and installation artist, Lorna Simpson, photographer, Glenn Ligon a conceptual artist who works with language and historical texts, and Yinka Shonibare, another British artist, of Nigerian descent, among so many others. She also recommends the work of the Harlem Renaissance artists William Johnson, Aaron Douglas, Hale Woodruff, Augusta Savage, and Lois Mailou Jones whom she “had the pleasure and honor to meet and interview before she passed away.”

Bonilla, cont. from p. 1.

For his internship he worked with a local soccer club in Westbury, New York, with young boys from six to fifteen years old. The club’s purpose is gang and drug prevention. Bonilla states, “I am from Westbury, and interacting with these kids helped me grow as a person and reminded me of my



youth. Most of these kids’ parents are immigrants and I heard many stories of these kids worried as if they were adults.”

Bonilla also honed skills in

non-profit management, by learning how to sponsor functions and organize tournaments.

Winter 2018

No winter courses are offered in 2018. Another winter option is an internship or an independent study course. These options require advance planning. Email Dr. Quirke at quirkec@oldwestbury.edu.

Sonic Communities: Dr. Blackstone

Dr. Lee Blackstone joined the Old Westbury Sociology Department in 2004 after earning his Ph.D. at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. At Amherst he placed his life-long interest in music at the heart of his scholarly investigations. His love for music dates to his childhood, when he listened to his parents’ records of jazz music and folk artists wearing “turtlenecks and Aran sweaters.” As a teen he sought out jazz greats such as Stan Getz, Miles Davis, Sarah Vaughn, or David

Brubeck to hear live at area clubs. His interest in jazz led to an interest in the socio-historical component to the music,” particularly “the African-American condition in America.” He was intrigued by the “community behind the artist.” Dr. Blackstone began writing music reviews for folk magazines, and he soon pursued music as a scholarly passion.

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Capstones

If you've completed 15 credits of your MALS degree, and submitted a draft Degree Plan, it's time to start planning your Capstone project. Either an internship or a Thesis are options. Internships are available with many of Old Westbury's many community and nonprofit partners, local and national organizations, and government offices. Many are competitive.

Advanced planning is the key to finding a successful internship placement. The two-course Thesis Option also requires advance planning, beginning with the selection of a faculty mentor. To find out more about how to pursue either of the Capstone Options, consult the Acting Graduate Director, Dr. Quirke, quirkec@oldwestbury.edu.



Blackstone, cont. from p. 2

For his dissertation he conducted field research that explored England's 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. With this act the state targeted a wide range of alternative lifestyle groups. The folk rock band The Levellers, referenced the act, which brought him to the topic. He wanted to learn more. In the summer of 2000 he briefly visited England to meet with musicians, including an Anarcho-Rastafarian group which was targeted by the government. One result of his research was the essay "A New Kind of English: Cultural Variance, Citizenship and DiY Politics amongst the Exodus Collective in England," which he published in the top sociological journal, *Social Forces*.

This essay "remains a template for current research," as Dr. Blackstone continues to combine ethnographic and historical methods to explore

other music forms and music as it intersects with deviance and identity studies. He learned of the social phenomenon of tarantism after encountering the work of Nidi d'Arac, in New York City. The group, from the South of Italy, invited Dr. Blackstone to Rome and Lecce to learn about their music. Tarantella is traced back to a Greek cult of Dionysis from several thousand years ago. Tarantism afflicts poor women, largely rural laborers, who are ostensibly bitten by a spider. Once someone is bitten, their family must hire musicians for a ritual designed to end the affliction. This rite was dying out in the 1950s. But as immigration has made Italy more heterogeneous, long-time residents sought traditions, and through "a broken memory" of the cultural ritual they valorized a musical form that had been considered a sign of degradation. Today, the music and dance of tarantism signifies rebirth—instead of individual ills, social dislocation can be redressed through the ritualistic dance.

Dr. Blackstone is now at work on exploring the revival of Roumanian folk music. Under communism, folk music was languishing and largely used for state occasions, including large-scale televised pageants. But a younger generation is modernizing the form—hip-hop and electronic music practitioners are remaking the music in a "stunning cultural revival" that takes advantage of the internet, touring, and merchandising. Dr. Blackstone's essays and reviews can be found in many journals including: *Symbolic Interaction*, and the *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*. His SY 6310 *Sociology of Music and Listening*, will be offered in the MALS program for the second time this spring. Dr. Blackstone hopes students leave the class understanding that, "real political choices are made in music all the time which are worthy of attention."

Fall 2017 MALS class



Members of the Fall 2017 MALS class include, from left: Sal Fiorenti, Daniel Costeira, Kieran Maroney, Jessica Osorio, & Noelle Gostyla.

The MALS program has interested many Old Westbury graduates, but program participants include alumni from Syracuse University, SUNY Farmingdale, Hofstra University, and the School of Visual Arts.

Spring 2018 SUNY Old Westbury MALS courses

Course #	CRN	Title	Time	Professor
VA6320	1820	African Visual Traditions in the Americas	Thursday 4:45-7	Catherine Bernard
SY 6310	1784	Sociology of Music & Listening	Tuesday, 7:15-9:30	Lee Blackstone
EL 6530	1637	Topics in Multicultural Literature	Tuesday 4:45-7	Nicholas Powers
EL 6540	1638	Topics in World Literature	Monday: 4:45-7	Deepa Jani
HI 6520	1639	US Constitutional & Political History	Wednesday 4:45-7	Carolyn Cocca
HI 6540	1640	Topics in European History	Monday 4:45-7	Chelsea Mas-Shields
MH6500	1641	Lifespan Development	Wednesday 8-10:15 am	Marty Cooper
MH-7500	1647	Drug and Treatment for Addictive Disorders	Wednesday, 1-3:15	William Knack
MH7510	1648	Career Development	Monday, 8-10:15 am	Theresa Hughes
ML 6530	1634	Cervantes and the Golden Age (Conducted in Spanish)	Monday, 4:45-7	Fernando Guerrero
ML 6540	1635	Points of Contact: US & Latin America	Thursday 4:45-7	Zenaida Madurka

COURSES IN BOLD, above, are exclusively for students in the MALS program. The remaining courses are open to MALS students on a space-available basis. Some require pre-requisites and/or instructor permission.

All classes in the afternoon or evening unless otherwise indicated.

ML6540 will be conducted in English. Assignments may be completed in Spanish upon mutual agreement between individual student and professor.