By Dr. Chuck Gobin

What do you get when you take a classroom, mix a dozen English majors with a dozen Media Communication majors and show a movie? Barely controlled creative chaos.

This semester has been the inaugural voyage of “Film as Literature,” an examination of film as a creative medium that expands and tests our assumptions about the nature of narrative. We’ve compared classic Hollywood westerns such as John Ford’s *Stagecoach* with revisionist westerns such as Clint Eastwood’s *Unforgiven*. We’ve looked at the way Kurasawa’s *Rashomon* and Roeg’s *Walkabout* challenge the ways we’ve been taught to view reality as a linear unity. We’ve examined the pain of adolescence in *The 400 Blows* and the pain of middle age in *All About Eve*. And we’ve considered the construction of cultural difference in *The Grand Illusion* and *Crash*.

If all of this sounds abstract and esoteric, consider that we’ve also learned in *Supersize Me* what happens to someone who eats only McDonald’s food for a month (not pretty) and why *Breathless* is a good title for a French New Wave film about a chain-smoking thug who comes to a bad end. We also learned in *Metropolis*—the granddaddy of all science fiction films—that “BETWEEN THE HEAD AND THE HAND MUST BE THE MEDIATOR—THE HEART!”

Along the way, we’ve also practiced writing scene analyses, popular reviews, and film analyses. Our hope is to continue to offer this course as a permanent part of the English curriculum, so keep a lookout for the sequel. You never know what you might see out of your *Rear Window*.
Reading Matters

Dr. Paul Vincent on Henning Mankell

The Detective Fiction seminar has been studying works by Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, E. C. Bentley, Agatha Christie and others. I have, of course, been reading these along with the class, but I have also been playing hooky by reading Henning Mankell mysteries. That is, I have been hanging out in the cold environs of the little village of Ystad, Sweden. Kurt Wallander lives in a modest flat in Mariagatan street. He is a cranky, over fifty, overeating, over-worrying type; he drives an old Peugeot with a strange knock under the hood and Verdi’s La Traviata in the CD player.

One critic has classified Mankell’s work as the consummate “thinking man’s thriller,” but that’s all right: I just let Wallander do the thinking and go along for the ride.

The best of these wonderfully written, atmospheric mysteries are Firewall, Side-Tracked, One Step Behind, Faceless Killers, and The Fifth Woman. I think you will have to go some to find detective stories as humane, as involving, and as satisfying.

Greg Stump put me onto this series, so I begrudgingly give him credit. I’ve never been to Sweden, but I feel as though I have accompanied Wallander, Nyberg, and Martinsson on their investigations on the frigid beaches of Malmo and the gravel sideroads of Skane County.

Henning Mankell was born in Stockholm in 1948, raised in a village in northern Sweden and now divides his time between Sweden and Maputo, Mozambique, where he works as the director of Teatro Avenida.

You’re invited to a Christmas Party!

All English majors and minors are cordially invited to attend the Christmas party at Dr. Strait’s house on Monday, December 4, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. Dr. Strait’s address is 600 Kinlaw Dr. (Wilmore).

All good fellowship begins with food, fire (maybe), and drink (soda and holiday punch!). Santa Claus himself attended this party the last time it was held at the Strait’s. So one never knows what this year will bring.
ESL minor says take English to China...Now!

By Robby Hampton

I’ve taught English in China for two summers with the English Language Institute/China (ELIC), also known as Camp China. ELIC is a non-profit organization that sends Christian college students to China to teach English as a second language (ESL) to middle and high school students. There are only two requirements to participate in this organization—you must have a relationship with God and you must be in college.

The biggest concern most people have is the cost, and it was certainly a worry I had after I felt called to teach last summer. I actually gave up the idea of going due to cost. Fortunately, a former ELIC teacher called my dorm and gave me some words of encouragement, and this confirmation from God blessed me with a little more faith to just do it, so I did. It turned out that ELIC had successful fundraising materials for me to use.

ELIC gave one week training at California Baptist University in California. During this week, I learned a lot about ESL and how to use their curriculum. They also explained the appropriate ways to minister in Asia and how to cope with culture shock. We got up early, and went to bed late, and by the end of the week, we all just wanted to go Asia.

After landing in China, it was instant awe; it was another world. And because of the busy training in sunny L.A. with palm trees, I had no worries about teaching—until the first day I stepped into the classroom at Jingzhou Middle. There were 15 faces staring at me, and it was then I realized that this is real. At first I got a little nervous, but then naturally I started speaking.

ELIC prepared me. I began to think of the teachers I loved when I was younger and mimicked them, and doing so helped—but the tense atmosphere was still there, so I didn’t dive into the curriculum right away. There was a lesson plan for that day, and we eventually covered the material, but we started day one with ‘get to know you’ games and laughter, which definitely relaxed me and my students. After all, it is an English camp designed to be a lot of fun.

At the end of the summer relationships grew strong, and saying good-bye was extremely difficult. I exchanged emails and to this day, I still email my students from this summer and last summer.

The experience expanded my worldview and a part of Asian culture entered me. When I returned to America, I never thought L.A. would feel like home, but it did, even though home for me is in Kentucky. The experience also gave me new eyes to view my own culture differently. And I don’t mean to sound cliché when I say it was a life changing experience, and I encourage all to take this opportunity with ELIC or any other opportunity while doors are open. Now, not later, is the time to take advantage of these opportunities.

See how businesses use writing skills in English 300,

Business Writing, this spring with Prof. Jenkins

Students taking Business Writing this spring will have the opportunity to see business in action, thanks to a project funded by the Lily Grant.

Students will be shadowing and interviewing local business people as part of their class requirements. Professor Teresa Jenkins wrote and implemented an experiential education grant that allowed her to spend time with professionals from various fields. The individuals in this diverse group have agreed to allow Asbury students to observe them during their working hours and to ask questions ranging from function to philosophy. Students in the pilot program (fall 2005 Business Writing class) support the value of this activity.

Some found through shadowing that they, in fact, do not want to do what they thought they wanted to do professionally.

One student commented that the thought of having to sit in a small cubicle space all day was never part of the job vision he had until he shadowed a professional in his preferred field; this student has decided that he might need to reconsider his career options. A female student was excited to shadow a female professional in the exact field in which she sees herself. She found that the work is multi-leveled and challenging and that her biggest challenge will be how to function effectively in a high-paced environment.

Professor Jenkins believes that through these shadowing experiences, students will have a realistic view of how their day-to-day professional lives might look.
Wilberforce story plays at Asbury

Brown writes a story of “Amazing Grace”

By Dr. Devin Brown

On Thursday, November 16, I found myself racing (in a metaphorical sense) up Harrodsburg Road to make the 9 pm FedEx deadline to send overnight copies of The Educational Resources DVD to the president, CEO, and owner of Walden Media for their upcoming film Amazing Grace.

One of the key components on the DVD was a documentary on William Wilberforce that I had written the script for. How did this come about?

One answer is that I had written small things, which led to bigger things, which finally led to a book, which ultimately led to being invited to write this video documentary. Through each of these successively bigger projects, I learned a number of things about writing, and in doing so each time became a better writer.

Another answer is that because I wrote my Narnia book, I was invited to speak at one of the teaching sessions at Ichthus. Because I was at Ichthus, I was introduced to Clayton Ferguson who works for Walden. Because I met Clayton, Professor Bandy and I were invited to do this documentary.

One of the biggest things I learned from writing the Wilberforce script is that my previous paradigm of the writer/expert (the kind of writing I have done about C. S. Lewis and Narnia) is only one model for writing.

But I found out that the reading and thinking skills which English majors develop can be used to investigate any topic. Nearly all writing begins with a very private stage, the writer and a blank screen, and ends with a more public process involving the writer and his or her editor. On this project I had five people from across the country making suggestions on ways to improve the script, and in this case having six heads was certainly better than one, as the final project was much improved.

The initial response which Professor Bandy and I have received from Walden has been very positive, and so we are hoping that there will be another partnership between Asbury College and Walden Media in the near future. In case you don’t haven’t heard: Walden’s second Narnia film, Prince Caspian, is scheduled to be released in May 2008.

But even if this is the only documentary I am asked to write, like every other writing project which is finally finished and makes it out to the public, it has been a story of amazing grace.

Wilberforce looks out from the boat in this scene from the movie.