

# NEWSLETTER

## Department of Scandinavian Studies

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

### A Message from the Chair, Professor Kirsten Wolf

The newsletter committee has worked hard to put together our spring 2010 issue. The late spring is an exceptionally hectic time for faculty, staff, and students, who are all busy wrapping up courses in preparation for exam week. Several undergraduate students are in the process of completing their majors, and a number of graduate students are working on their prelims or finishing their dissertations. A number of our students have spent the year studying abroad, in Norway and Denmark, and we look forward to welcoming them back and hearing about their experiences. Other students will be leaving shortly to spend either the summer months, a semester, or a full academic year studying in Scandinavia. These include four graduate and undergraduate students, who received scholarships from the Scan|Design study abroad scholarship program, which was established at the University of Wisconsin in the spring of 2010. A recent and generous donation from the estate of Vera Croner will enable the Department to increase the number of scholarships offered in the near future.

In addition to research, teaching, and course work, conference presentations and not least conference organization and planning have kept members of the Department occupied and busy. In mid-February, the Department joined with the faculty from American Indian Studies, German, Folklore, and the Language Institute to host a symposium on "Language as Homeland," and in October, the Department will join with the Department of French and Italian to host a colloquium on the Old Norse-Icelandic tales of knights. For more information about these events, we invite you to read the following pages, which also include brief interviews with our students learning Swedish, Finnish, and Icelandic as well as an account by two graduate students of their year of study in Denmark.

### SPRING 2010

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## BALSSI, Summer 2010

For the second of three years, the Scandinavian Department is teaming with the UW's Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian (CREECA) to host BALSSI, the Baltic Studies Summer Institute. Funded by a nationwide consortium of American research universities, government grants and private

individuals and foundations, BALSSI will offer instruction in elementary and intermediate Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian for eight weeks this summer. The courses are very reasonably priced and are offered to all qualified applicants. Last year's BALSSI

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## International Colloquium on the Riddarasögur, Oct. 13-15, 2010

*Riddarasögur* (Sagas of Knights) is a term used to designate a group of Old Norse-Icelandic prose texts from the thirteenth century, many preserved in late Icelandic manuscripts. The prime characteristic of these texts is that they are either based directly on extant Old French texts (usually romances or epics) or original compositions, which adhere to the model of the adaptations from the French. Primarily because of the large corpus of native Old Norse-Icelandic sagas, the *riddarasögur* have been comparatively speaking neglected by scholars since the rise of philology in the second half of the nineteenth century. Long regarded as late and degenerate (and foreign-influenced) in comparison with

products of the native tradition, they are finally beginning to receive impartial scholarly attention from specialists in medieval Scandinavian studies.

Two recent colloquia (Paris, April 2008, and Oslo, October 2008) have begun to address the neglect of these works, examining both theoretical and practical issues relating to translation and adaptation from Old French into Old Norse-Icelandic. It is clear that the best results in the study of the *riddarasögur* come from collaboration between Scandinavianists, scholars of Old French, and medieval historians specializing in the history of the North and its relations with France and England. The

colloquium, which is to be held in Madison in October 2010, will pursue four principal directions suggested by the Paris and Oslo meetings: 1) The precise relationship between selected *riddarasögur* and their French models; 2) the manuscript context of the *riddarasögur*; 3) the study and rehabilitation of some especially neglected texts; and 4) the historical and cultural contexts in which *riddarasögur* were composed in medieval Scandinavia. To this end, specialists, both faculty and graduate students, from the above-mentioned areas of specialization will be addressing these issues both generally and specifically.

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## Meet Our Students Learning Swedish



### Engelskaförbud!

One of the two first-semester Swedish classes during the fall of 2010 was part of a Freshman Interest Group (FIG) about the Vikings, and the twenty students in the FIG took three classes

together. This semester, the two sections are a mix of students from the FIG and students from the "regular" class. Here is what some first-year students said when asked why they chose to study Swedish:

I study Swedish because half of my family is Swedish and I am trying to improve my command of the language. -Gustaf Buchanan, undeclared

I have no reason to take Swedish; I just love the language and have a lot of fun in class. It is very easy to learn and funny for English speakers to listen to. It is the one fun class I allow myself to take and I hope to continue my studies. -Courtney Thrall, Art Major, also considering a Scandinavian Studies Major

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## Meet Our Students Learning Finnish

Every other year, our department offers Intensive Finnish language instruction, in which students enroll for a total of seven credits each semester, and emerge with two years' worth of language skills in one academic year. It is a commitment, to be sure, but our hardy students who enrolled this fall and spring are interested in, and excited about, Finnish language and culture. Here's what they said when posed the question, "Why study Finnish?"

"I study Finnish because a lot of good music comes out of Finland. It is a beautifully sounding language." Parry Carrison, Engineering Mechanics Major.

"In 2007, I spent a month in the summer in Finland. I fell in love with the people, the culture, the beauty – everything! I want to live there one day." Rebecca Dakai, Scandinavian Studies and International Business Major.

"I study Finnish because my great-grandpa came from Finland, and I want to learn the language that he spoke." Natasha Dockter, History and Scandinavian Studies Major.

"I first developed an interest in Finland and Finnish because of Finnish metal bands. I heard some bands singing in Finnish and I thought it was the strangest



## Meet Our Students Learning Icelandic

Modern Icelandic is offered irregularly at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It is certainly not an easy language due to its complex grammar and vocabulary, but the students are enthusiastic and not only learn a fascinating and beautiful language, but also grow closer as a group and form friendships based on their common interest in Scandinavia. Here is why they want to learn Icelandic and why they think others should follow in their footsteps:

"In 2008, I went to Iceland on a whim and although I have been to other places, Iceland resonated with me in a way nowhere else had. The language is a huge part of that. I hope to continue learning Icelandic and someday live in Iceland." MaryAnn George.

"There are many reasons why someone should study this sadly underrated language. Icelandic is easily one of the most beautiful languages in the west. It has also changed very little from Old Norse, in which a massive collection of literary works was written. Icelandic is a lot of fun to study. Although it is a very difficult language, I have not once regretted taking this class and I only wish that they would offer more classes in the future." Vali Nashat

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### Meet our Finnish Students, continued

and most beautiful language I had ever heard, and I wanted to learn it even if I never had an opportunity to use it. Since then, my interests have expanded to encompass Finnish society and culture in general, and I hope I will continue to learn the language and learn more about Finland after I graduate." Gretchen Ladd, Communication Arts and Scandinavian Studies Major.

"I am studying Finnish because all my relatives live there, and I think I would like to have a formal education in it." Anna McCabe, English Major.

"I decided to study Finnish because I enjoyed my experience in Finland and the Finnish culture I encountered this past summer. I wanted to learn more about Finland and the language." Caitlin Roby, Scandinavian Studies Major.

"I study Finnish because, after visiting and living in the country, I was interested in knowing more about the culture Finland. The language is unique and beautiful, and it is very impressive once learned, due to it being very difficult." Janelle Schofield, Communication Arts Major.



### Meet our Icelandic Students, continued

"I study Icelandic and Danish because I have been intrigued with Scandinavia for as long as I can remember. My heritage and ties to the region in addition to my appreciation for the politics and policies of Scandinavia inspired me to learn the languages and more about past and modern day culture . . . Ultimately, though, I love the way it sounds and so many of the people who speak it. I just want to be able to go there and converse!" Jillana Peterson

"I am learning Icelandic with the goal of one day living in Iceland. My entire family lives there and it would be great to talk with them in their native language." Kristjan Gudjonsson

Why WOULDNT anyone study Icelandic if given the chance? It's one of the few languages where one can pick up a text written eight or nine hundred years ago and, with a little effort, understand it. It's like studying a well-preserved painting: beautiful and timeless." Tim Cochrane



### Riddarasögur Colloquium, continued

The colloquium will be truly interdisciplinary, placing an important literary-historical topic in the contexts of new developments in medieval and cultural studies: multilingualism, the "new codicology," medieval textuality, translation theory and practice, medievalism and post-medieval reception of the Middle Ages, colonialism and post-colonial theory, medieval notions of history, genre theory, and others. The altogether twenty-two speakers at the colloquium are drawn from Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the U.S. Norris J. Lacy, Edwin Earle Sparks Professor of French at Pennsylvania State University, will give a plenary lecture entitled "Writing in the Margins: Norse Arthurian Romance as Palimpsest."

The colloquium, which will be held at the Pyle Center, is free and open to the public. It is sponsored by the Department of Scandinavian Studies and the Department of French and Italian and organized by Professors Kirsten Wolf and Keith Busby.



**BALSSI, 2010 continued**

attracted students from as far away as Florida and Washington D.C.

According to Tom DuBois, professor of Finnish and director of BALSSI 2010, learning Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian can greatly enhance a Scandinavian student's profile and education. "The fall of the Soviet Union and the northward expansion of the European Union altered the political landscape of Scandinavia permanently. Today scholars speak of "Northern Europe" as a rapidly integrating entity, a collection of similarly-sized, well-educated and technologically advanced countries poised on the northern edge of the European Union and engaged in close economic ties with the Russian Federation."

DuBois notes that for many American students, scholars, and businessmen, the Baltic countries are still off the beaten path. But the same is not true for Scandinavians. "Travel to the Baltics has become trendy and cheap," says DuBois. "For less than the cost of a beer in Oslo a Norwegian couple can hop on a plane to Latvia and enjoy a weekend in Riga that includes a hotel room, dinner and dancing for a small fraction of what the same would cost in their own country. Finns travel to Tallinn for an afternoon shopping spree, Swedes fly to Vilnius for dinner and a show. We want our students to know about the Baltics, to have some knowledge of their languages and cultures, and to explore the world that is open to them now. It's an exciting time to visit the Baltics and a wonderful time to be hosting BALSSI."

For further information, check out the BALSSI website: <http://www.creca.wisc.edu/balssi/>

**Meet our Swedish Students, continued**

I took Swedish because I'm interested in traveling there someday and I have some vague family ties to Sweden. But mostly because it was in the FIG. - Drew Fink, undeclared, considering Biomedical Engineering

I first took Swedish because it was grouped with other classes and it sounded interesting. And being of Swedish ancestry, I thought it would be fun to learn part of my culture. I continued with it because I found it to be both of these things. I've already found that speaking a little bit of Swedish adds some variety to life. I may not need it for my future career, but it certainly adds interest to my life now. -Bethany Polzin, undeclared

I'm studying Swedish partly because of the FIG and partly because of my family heritage. I have always wanted to travel to Scandinavia and meet distant family members, and taking Swedish has given me that opportunity. Also, it's a good language to start with before learning others. -Sam Knapp, Physics and Geology Major

After taking French throughout Middle and High School, I wanted to take up another language. Over the past summer I had spent some time with my aunt and her 4-year-old granddaughter who were visiting from Sweden. I was fascinated by the language and decided that knowing Swedish would be a skill I could challenge myself to learn for the rest of my life through communicating with the large portion of my family living overseas. -Allie Johnson, undeclared, considering Education and English majors

My high school only offered Spanish, so my language-learning options were pretty limited. When I signed up for classes here at the UW, I decided that I still wanted to take a foreign language but I didn't want it to be Spanish. Since I have a friend in Sweden, and part of my family comes from Scandinavia, I decided that I should give Swedish a shot. The next day I came across a FIG that included Swedish. I figured, 'Why not? If I don't like it I don't have to keep taking it.' Well, so far it's been great, and I plan on continuing to learn Swedish for another year at the very least. -Tom Jensen, Scandinavian Studies Major

## The Department Congratulates The Classes of 2009-2010

Congrats Graduates:

**Fall 2009:**

Sarah Anderson

Eric Heling

**Spring 2010:**

Lucas Annear

Lucy Clements

Gretchen Ladd

Karl Locher

Nora Matland

Jacob Ross

Gustie Saganski

Hillary Thompson

Congrats to Departmental Award and Grant Winners:

For the Academic Year 2010-11:

American Scandinavian Foundation: Christopher Bishop, Uppsala, Sweden.

Every year, thanks to the help of funds given to the department, students are able to travel to Scandinavia to take courses or to conduct research over the summer or during the academic year.

Cullander-Raoul Wallenberg Fund:  
Erin Howland, Gothenburg, Sweden;  
Sara Fagen, Uppsala, Sweden

Sons of Norway:  
Bryce Loken, Bø, Norway

Torske Klubben  
Skye Doney, Bergen, Norway

William and Grace Larsen Memorial Fund:  
Stephanie Blichfeld, Copenhagen, Denmark;  
Jeff Ziegler, Aarhus, Denmark

Ygdrasil Fund:  
Todd Michelson-Ambelang, Copenhagen, Denmark

### Jim Leary Featured in Finnish Newspapers during Fall Trip

"Western Johnny's American Guide Bites into Blush-Inducing Songs"

An excerpted translation of a profile of James P. Leary, *Turun Sanomat* [Turku, Finland], November 19, 2009. Original by Jarmo Wallenius, translated by Hilary Virtanen.

University of Wisconsin folklore and Scandinavian culture professor James P. Leary's writings have become known to Finns in connection with J. Karjalainen's recordings *Lännen Jukka* and *Paratiisin Pojat*. Leary, a program chair in Madison, has worked as Karjalainen's guide on the Midwestern tour that

acquainted him with folklorist Alan Lomax's 1938 recordings of American Finnish songs in Michigan.

Now Leary is in Finland to participate in, among other things, a seminar on American Finnish music held last weekend in Riihimäki. The seminar celebrated the American Finnish Accordion Princess, Viola Turpeinen (1909-1958) whose birthday was on November 15, when she would have been 100 years old.

On Wednesday night, Leary lectured at the Turku University folklore department on the

### Jim Leary Continued

living song tradition of the well-known Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) worker's union and their associated American Finnish songs from field recordings.

Founded in Chicago in 1905, the anarcho-syndicalist IWW's objective was "One Big Union." At the beginning of the last century, it was presumed that all industrial workers could belong to one union, regardless of nationality and language.

According to Leary, American Finns were the union's most active workers. The IWW is still in existence today, with its headquarters in Cincinnati, Ohio. Auvo Kostiainen, professor of general history at Turku University, has also studied the role of Finns in the first decade of the IWW.

Leary says, "Two years ago, the *Big Red Songbook* was published, which was a collection of the IWW's worker songs and poetry from 1909-1973. Included were the songs of well-known Swedish immigrant Joe Hill and American Finn Matti Huhta, alias T-Bone Slim. Now it is a goal to broaden the research to include non-English language workers' culture and song traditions.

"On the first hand, the objective is to study so-called 'bad and bawdy Finnish language songs' from the Midwest. These include politically radical workers' songs, battle songs, sport songs, parody songs, and drinking and pornographic songs. I don't know Finnish myself, but luckily, I have two such gifted Finnish-American graduate students in my program in Madison."

Leary's plan is to publish a special issue of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* next year on this topic including the essays of several different writers. He also wants to include Finnish ethnomusicologist and YLE Broadcasting Company recording archivist emeritus Pekka Gronow's contemporary Finnish view on this subject.

"This stage regarding Finnish-American music is

part of a wider research project, in which I survey voice collections and recording texts from the Midwest's top immigrant and migrant groups' musical cultures in the years surrounding World War II, between 1937-1946. It promises to be interesting material for both researchers and listeners, resulting in a five CD collection and accompanying book."

According to Leary, he has chosen 175 songs from over 2000 field recordings in 25 languages. These recordings from the Library of Congress have been digitized and repaired for reduced distortion. The songs are also being written in the original language, translated into English and written in musical notation.

"In addition to field recorder and ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax, two recently well-known and regarded female musicologists, Sidney Robertson Cowell and Helene Stratman-Thomas, also worked in the Midwest: in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. They had specialized in recording to wax only non-English immigrant musicians and their descendents from Central Europe, Scandinavia, the Baltics and the Balkans during the 1930s and 40s."

The Editors wish to thank to Hilary Virtanen for the translations.





## Language as Homeland Conference

by Tom DuBois

On Saturday, February 14, 2010, the Department of Scandinavian Studies joined with faculty from American Indian Studies, German, Folklore, and the Language Institute to host "Language as Homeland," an open symposium. Speakers addressed questions of how and why communities choose to maintain a native language, even when it might seem more practical to adopt a different one.

Tom DuBois surveyed government and local efforts to preserve Sami languages in Finland, Sweden, and Norway. Nete Schmidt explored the correspondence of a Danish emigrant writing back to his devoted bride-to-be in Denmark. Jim Leary introduced the lively joke-telling traditions that grew up in the Upper Midwest as immigrants from Scandinavia brushed elbows with people from other cultures and places. Special guest Stephen Walton (Ivar Aasen Institute) spoke on the status of New Norwegian (nynorsk) in modern Norway.

Funded by grants from the UW's Center for the Humanities, Center for European Studies, and Anonymous Fund, the symposium was part of the UW's Year of the Humanities program.



## Kjerstin Moody Receives Position at Gustavus Adolphus

The department would like to congratulate Kjerstin Moody on her new position as Assistant Professor of Scandinavian Studies at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. Kjerstin will begin teaching at Gustavus in the fall of 2010. In her first semester on the job, Kjerstin will be teaching first- and third-semester Swedish, as well as a Scandinavian Life and Culture course. The department offers four years of Swedish language instruction as well as a variety of English-language courses about Scandinavian literature, film, and culture, which focus on the contemporary Scandinavian world.

Gustavus Adolphus is a four-year, liberal arts college with about 2,500 students. Students can choose from a total of 71 major programs at the college, and it is one of a handful of colleges and universities across the U.S. with an independent department devoted to education about the Nordic region. The Scandinavian Studies Department has three permanent faculty members: two focus on teaching language, literature, and culture, and one focuses on teaching history. Nearly all students who are majors and minors in the department spend at least one semester studying abroad in Sweden, often at one of the schools with which Gustavus has exchange agreements: the University of Uppsala and Mora Folkhögskola. Study abroad opportunities are also possible at universities in Norway, Denmark, and Finland. Recently, the department has also developed a semester-long, faculty-led group study abroad experience, which includes a month of study in Jokkmokk, Mora, Stockholm, and Gothenburg.

*Lycka till* on your new position, Kjerstin!



## Two Graduate Students Write about Life in Denmark

Mathew Holland, MA Candidate

For the last six months I have been studying at Århus Universitet in cooperation with Moesgård Museum. The purpose of my 10-month long Fulbright project here in Denmark is to outline changes in the Scandinavian Iron Age sword over a period of nearly 1,000 years. Unlike many of the modern sword chronologies already existing on this topic, I am including changes in iron type or composition, production procedures and variations in functionality. I am also hypothesizing a connection between production time and materials and a blade's prestige in Iron Age Scandinavian society.

Moesgård Museum is the home and main research center for most of the bog finds in Denmark dating from the beginning of the Roman Iron Age. I have been in discussion with Jørgen Ilkjær and Professor Else Roesdahl on making a chronology that begins with the many swords found in these bog sacrifices rather than beginning with Viking Period swords as most other sources have done so far. The process of pattern-welding is a key connection between the Roman Iron Age and swords up until the end of the Viking Period and changes in this technique will most likely play a large role in my chronology.

In order to get a better picture of the process of pattern-welding I have been in discussion with re-creationists and experimental archeologists about reproducing a pattern-welded sword and measuring elements of time, material (both in iron and charcoal) and forge temperatures. A side product of this investigation will be to try and reproduce this sword in a smithy as accurate as possible to Viking Age Denmark. While most evidence points to importation of the Viking Age sword, new research alludes to some Scandinavian imitations and my investigation will at least prove a possibility of Scandinavian origins from a technological perspective.



Natalie Van Deusen, PhD Candidate

I was awarded the 2009-10 Birgit Baldwin Fellowship to continue work on my dissertation, "The Old Norse-Icelandic Legend of Saints Mary Magdalen and Martha," at the Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection in Copenhagen, Denmark. The work comprises a four-chapter introduction followed by an edition, both digital and printed, of the text.

At the Collection, I have focused primarily on Chapter 4 and on the preparation of the edition. As such, I have spent a good deal of time physically working with the five medieval Icelandic manuscripts preserving my saga, especially the three that are housed at the Manuscript Collection in Copenhagen. I have travelled to the Royal Library in Stockholm and to the National Archives in Oslo in order to view the two manuscripts not in the Arnamagnæan Collection. The hands-on work with the physical manuscripts, the collaboration with scholars at the Collection, and the access I have had to a number of manuscript catalogs, editions, and secondary sources unavailable to me in the United States has enabled me to do more work than I ever would have thought possible in such a short period of time. Especially helpful has been working with Dr. Matthew Driscoll, a textual philologist and the former head of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), who has been a pioneer in digital editions of Old Norse-Icelandic texts. He has trained me in XML markup, and has provided much guidance during the preparation of the digital edition.

The year in Copenhagen has truly been a wonderful one, and has been both personally and professionally fulfilling. I have not only made a substantial dent in my dissertation, but I have also established important contacts within the field and have grown as a future scholar. I am extremely grateful to the Birgit Baldwin committee for choosing me as the recipient of the this year's Birgit Baldwin Fellowship, and to the Scandinavian Studies Department at UW-Madison for preparing me so well for such an opportunity.

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## Scholarships from Scan | Design

The Scan | Design Foundation by Inger and Jens Bruun, based in Seattle, Washington, has established a Scan | Design study abroad scholarship program at the University of Wisconsin. It is designed to foster Danish-American relations by providing generous financial support to undergraduate and graduate students who have been accepted to study abroad in Denmark for either a semester or a full academic year through any of UW-Madison's Danish study abroad programs, at the University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark's Technical University, and the University of Aarhus. The first 4 scholarships were awarded for Spring Semester 2010 to Kirsten Moller, Thomas Davich, Karen Bien, who are spending the semester in Copenhagen, and Ashley Bentley, who has spent the academic year in Aarhus. The competition for Fall 2010 and academic year 2010-11 scholarships is currently underway. The deadline for Spring 2011 scholarship applications will be November 1, 2010. For further information, contact Professor Julie Allen (jkallen@wisc.edu).

## Department Events

The Department Picnic will be on Saturday, September 11 from 4-6 PM in Westmoreland Park. Please come if you can attend. Bring a dish to share!

If you are interested in taking part in BALSSI (taking courses in Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian), please contact Tom DuBois (tadubois@wisc.edu) for further information.

Danish, Norwegian and Swedish Language Tables do not meet during the Summer Break. Please check back in the fall for current meeting times and days.

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*Edited by Kirsten Wolf, Julie Allen, Susanna Fahn, Hilary Virtanen, Rachel Willson-Broyles, and Todd Michelson-Ambelang*

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DEPARTMENT OF  
SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES  

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