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FACULTY  
OF ARTS

# Rights, refugees, and return

Dr. Djordje Stefanovic heads to Turkey to forge international connections



Dr. Djordje Stefanovic presenting at the "Durable Solutions to Displacement" conference in Ankara, Turkey.

A three-day workshop last month in Ankara, Turkey, co-organized by Sociology professor Dr. Djordje Stefanovic, had an unexpectedly poignant global backdrop. Just

## In Brief

**New faculty, programs, events and more**

### **BNUZ partnership**

This latest development in the growing, reciprocal relationship between the two universities will see BNUZ students spend the last two years of their BA studies in Halifax.

The agreement was signed on Feb. 27 by Dean MacDonald, and Dean of BNUZ's School of Chinese,

days after academics and policy makers came together for the workshop to discuss questions of refugee displacement, hundreds of African migrants [drowned off the coast of Italy](#)—highlighting the urgency of the issues at hand.

[“Peace Processes and Durable Solutions to Displacement.”](#) held at the British Institute of Ankara, saw academics from Canada, Europe, and the Middle East join representatives of key international organizations—including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Displacement Monitoring Centre, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada—to initiate opportunities for research and collaboration on pressing global questions of refugees and displacement.

Key among these was the under-discussed issue of refugee return. “The conventional wisdom is that displacement is irreversible,” says Dr. Stefanovic. “That’s really something we want to challenge, because the ideal outcome is for the situation to improve sufficiently in refugees’ countries of origin so that they can return—which is what many really want to do. We aim to find a way for refugees to live in peace and dignity in their homes.”

The conference on was funded by two external grants awarded to the organizers by the SSHRC, and the British Academy, as well as internal grants awarded by the University of Kent. The project is expected to produce a website, a book, and a special issue of an academic journal, to target audiences including media, policy makers, NGOs, and academia.

“It was a great way to connect with colleagues around the world and see how we can work together into the future on sustainable protection of refugees,” says Dr.

Prof. Mingyuan Zhang. Similar agreements in Canada have typically involved science and business disciplines, rather than Arts, making this a first-of-its-kind arrangement.

BNUZ is located on China’s south coast, in Guangdong province, near Hong Kong and Macau. Saint Mary’s has had a relationship with BNUZ since 2002, with 120 BNUZ students currently studying at Saint Mary’s, and Saint Mary’s students having access to a study-abroad program at BNUZ.

## Cyril Byrne lecture

Emma Donoghue, the Irish-Canadian author of *Room*, *Slammerkin*, and many other acclaimed works of fiction, delivered this year’s Cyril Byrne lecture to a packed audience at the McNally Theatre Auditorium on March 13. Donoghue read from her most recent historical fiction, *Frog Music*, and then engaged in a wide-ranging discussion with SMU’s D’Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, Pádraig Ó Siadhail. The engaging conversation covered Donoghue’s diverse choices in subject matter, an upcoming film adaptation of *Room*, and Ireland’s same-sex marriage debate. The event was bookended by a

Stefanovic.

# Robot Futures

**Dr. Teresa Heffernan is embarking on a summer tour of the world's top robotics and artificial-intelligence labs in a bid to enrich her five-year SSHRC research project on the ethics of "social robots"**



**The robots of tomorrow will be a bit more human-like—and potentially a lot more militarized—than this guy.**

Does science need fiction?

English Professor Dr. Teresa Heffernan believes the answer is yes. Her five-year, SSHRC-funded research project, “Where Science Meets Fiction: Social Robots and the Ethical Imagination,” aims to address the implications, for the future of humanity and the planet, of creating cyborgs, [disconcertingly realistic and autonomous humanoid robots](#), and artificial

beautiful piano performance from East Coast Music Award winner, Erin Costelo.

## Canada Forces liaison award

On Friday, May 12, 2015, the Faculty received a Canadian Forces Liaison Council Provincial Award for Best Practices in Support to Student Reservists. Dean MacDonald and Philosophy professor Dr. Todd Calder were on hand at Government House to receive the award from Nova Scotia Lieutenant Governor, Brigadier General (Ret'd) John James Grant.

The Faculty was nominated for the award by student Lt. Sarah Gray, a third-year Criminology major and army reservist.

## National Model UN recognition

Seventeen Saint Mary's students, along with Political Science Chair Marc Doucet, were presented on April 2 with an Honourable Delegation Award at the National Model UN (NMUN) Conference in New York. Representing Ukraine at this year's conference—the largest United Nations simulation in the world—Saint Mary's was one of only four Canadian universities recognized in the

intelligence.

“When you look at debates around policy and ethics and technology, you find that fiction—despite being the source of so much of the inspiration behind these technologies—is left out of the conversation,” says Dr. Heffernan. “[But] we need fiction to situate science in politics, history, culture.”

With the most advanced AI and robotics development in the world being funded by [military contractors and private industry](#), and with many scientists anxious about the repercussions of this research, developing the “ethical impulse” that emerges from a literary training in the imagination is critical. Dr. Heffernan is heading this spring to MIT, Carnegie Mellon, Yale, and Vassar, where she's meeting with some of the world's top AI scientists and roboticists. She'll be learning more about how fiction inspires their work, why scientists invoke literature and film, and where fiction and real-world science intersect—and where they conflict.

"Is our current love affair with this technology cause for concern, and is humanity at risk, or does this technology address human limitations and provide a direction for the future?," asks Dr. Heffernan, describing some guiding questions of this study. The project will culminate in a book exploring this and other issues, from robot rights, to the anthropomorphization of AI, to how our very notion of humanness may be reshaped by human-like machines. And, of course, how fiction can help us better understand the new world we're inventing. You can follow some of Dr. Heffernan's work on her

Honourable Delegation category.

## Leading in linguistics

As of February, SMU is the Maritimes' main centre for the study of linguistics, after the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission granted approval for a name change from The Halifax Interuniversity Linguistics Program to the Linguistics Program.

The Interuniversity Program began in 1998, as a collaboration between SMU, Dalhousie, and MSVU. Students earned a BA in linguistics studying at any of the schools, but took core courses at Saint Mary's. Saint Mary's has supported the program, adding faculty and more courses for linguistics students over the years. Dalhousie and MSVU did not follow suit, and officially applied to MPHEC to withdraw from the program.

The approval of SMU's program as independent is a recognition of this, and the program is thriving, with students registering for around 250 courses a year and an average of 20 doing linguistics degrees or certificates. SMU is the only school offering majors, honours, and certificate programs in linguistics in the region.

website, [Social Robot Futures](#).

# Professional evolution

**Anthropology Chair Paul Erickson on his professional pilgrimage to Galápagos**



**Dr. Paul Erickson on the beach in Galápagos**

Anthropology Chair Paul Erickson sent off a quick dispatch from the Galápagos Islands, during a trip which was both a personal journey years in the making, and one intended enrich his teaching, particularly the history of biological anthropology, one of Dr. Erickson's main areas of research and publication.

*In December 2014, I realized a lifelong ambition to visit the Galápagos Islands, in the Pacific Ocean far off the coast of Ecuador. In 1835 Charles Darwin stopped at the islands on his famous around-the-world voyage aboard*

## Faculty publications

In April, International Development Studies professors Dr. Kate Ervine and Dr. Gavin Fridell celebrated the release of their co-edited book, [Beyond Free Trade: Alternative Approaches to Trade, Politics and Power](#). Published with Palgrave Macmillan as part of its International Political Economy Series, the book emerged out of the two-day, SSHRC-funded workshop, Alternative Trade: Critical Approaches and New Directions in Trade and Development, held at Saint Mary's in November 2013.

## New faculty

*English* - Dr. Hengameh Saroukhani works on contemporary black British writing (fiction and poetry) in a cosmopolitan context, and has recently taught courses at the University of Leeds and the University of Manchester. As an Assistant Professor, she'll be teaching "The Study of Narrative" in the fall, and will offer a new winter course, "Post-war Black British Writing."

*Sociology & Criminology* Rachael E. Collins has a PhD in Sociology (2014) from the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Collins has several years of experience researching the contextual factors that contribute to the social construction of crime,

*the HMS Beagle. This is where Darwin observed subtle inter-Island variation in species of plants and animals, notably tortoises and finches, that later contributed to his theory of natural selection. This theory is the basis for all of biological anthropology, so my visit was a professional pilgrimage to an extraordinarily special place.*

*There are very few of Darwin's tortoises left on the Galápagos, but I did see many of his finches. I was especially privileged to be able to visit Punta Pitt on San Cristobal Island, a small cove where Darwin spent the night after exploring and making diary entries that he later published in The Voyage of The Beagle. In Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capitol of San Cristobal, I was amused to encounter the Darwin Shop, one of many examples of the entrepreneurial spirit with which local residents have capitalized on the fame that Darwin has brought to their Galápagos home.*

including oppression, racism, scapegoating, and the criminalization of poverty.

Welcome, one and all!

# In the media

Forensic Anthropology professor Tanya Peckmann has garnered a great deal of well-deserved media attention lately for her efforts to help create the first facial tissue-depth database for Mi'kmaq people. This is a key tool to aid in facial reconstruction in solving missing-person cases, which have long relied on models utilizing typical tissue depth for European population—leading to inaccurate facial

reconstructions among the populations most over-represented in missing-person cases. [Read all about it](#) or [listen to Tanya](#) on CBC Radio's *The Current*.

# Upcoming events

**July 4 - 5**

## ***Nova Scotia Heritage Fair***

More than 50 Nova Scotia students from grades four through nine will give presentations on Canadian culture and history, and engage in hands-on workshops in archaeology, archiving, and geocaching organized by professors and Nova Scotia Archives experts. The event is open to the public.

**July 14 - 17**

## ***Conference***

### ***The Culture of Study Abroad***

A four-day conference on "The Culture of Study Abroad," co-organized by Dr. John L. Plews, will bring world-renowned scholars to Saint Mary's for plenary talks, research presentations, panels, and workshops exploring various facets of the culture of study and residence abroad and their relationship to foreign language learning.

This conference, organized in association with the [AILA-ReN](#) on study-abroad research, will highlight issues especially critical in Canada today, as business and culture becomes increasingly

globalized, yet Canadian students lag their international peers in knowledge of second languages and cross-cultural experience generally.

More information is [available here](#).

**July 8 - 10**

**Conference**

***Liquid Dickens: The 20th Annual Dickens Society Symposium***

SMU will be pleased to host the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Symposium of The Dickens Society—an international body that conducts and encourages research, publication, and general interest in the life, times, and literature of Charles Dickens.

The society publishes *Dickens Quarterly* and holds an annual symposium, normally alternating between Europe and North America. A major event for Dickens scholars around the world, recent symposia have been held at the University of Massachusetts, the University of Kent in Canterbury, and the University of Toronto.

This year's event is being organized by Sara Malton, Associate Professor of the Department of English, and a current Trustee of the Dickens Society. The theme of the 2015 symposium—"Liquid Dickens"—is inspired by Dickens' 1842 arrival in Halifax and North America by sea.

More information [is available here](#).

*[POSTER IMAGE]*

