



This is the first of a new series of newsletters, which will come out at the beginning of the fall and winter terms. Each newsletter will be organized around a general theme. There are two main objectives of this series. The first is to celebrate research being done in the Faculty of Social Science at Western, highlighting its great breadth and depth, with the goal of making our researchers better known both within and outside of the Faculty. The second is to provide information about funding opportunities and other research resources. Thus, there is a variety of target audiences whom we hope to attract. Whichever audience you belong to, we hope that you find this newsletter interesting and we encourage you to submit ideas or to make suggestions for future issues.

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# Social Science Review

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The theme of this first issue is *interdisciplinarity*. Interdisciplinary research crosses disciplinary boundaries breaking out of traditional academic -"silos"- to draw on new theoretical, empirical or analytical approaches in order to address research problems. Many research problems that scholars address are too complex or too large to be properly addressed within the confines of a traditional discipline. Interdisciplinarity, allows us to bring fresh eyes, ideas and approaches as a means of solving these complex problems. This increased complexity requires more refined and innovative solutions, and it is often the unexpected relationships created through interdisciplinarity that produce the most innovative research.

This integration of disciplinary approaches is innovative, both in terms of the research process and its outcomes. Innovation does not demand interdisciplinarity, but it is certainly fostered by it.

There are many barriers to interdisciplinary research. These include structural issues, funding issues and issues of attitude and flexibility for both the researcher and the institution. However, The University of Western Ontario made several commitments to the principle of interdisciplinarity in its 2007 Strategic Plan, "Engaging the Future." This commitment was made explicit at the Undergraduate level (section 2.8), at the Graduate level (section 3.8), and at the Faculty level (section 4.4). ([www.uwo.ca/univsec/strategic\\_plan/documents/strategic\\_plan\\_colour\\_hr\\_000.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/strategic_plan/documents/strategic_plan_colour_hr_000.pdf))

The highest level commitment of resource allocations to interdisciplinarity made in the Strategic Plan is: 11B "The University-level response to unit plans will involve the allocation of resources to allow progress toward agreed upon objectives by: ... 11.8 Investing resources, including faculty and staff, space and facilities, and library and computing support, in areas demonstrating flexibility, interdisciplinary and collaborative commitment, and innovation in scholarship."

Our Faculty has a strong history of innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to research. In many ways, interdisciplinarity has always been a necessary part of the research methodologies used by the numerous disciplines that combine to make our Faculty.

Our Faculty's research has been consistently funded by all three arms of the Tri-Council, with many of our researchers receiving funding from multiple Tri-Council agencies. Please take the time to look at the long list of Faculty research groups and centres ([www.ssc.uwo.ca/research/](http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/research/)); it is quite obvious that interdisciplinary collaborations from within our own Faculty are an important part of what defines the Faculty of Social Science!

There are numerous funding opportunities available to researchers interested in pursuing both discipline focused and interdisciplinary research. Please see our Faculty research website ([www.ssc.uwo.ca/research/](http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/research/)) for up to date funding opportunities and important information about the ROLA system. A sign of the important and innovative research that is being done by the members of our Faculty is that there has been a 165% increase in our Faculty research expenditures from 2004-2009. This newsletter seeks to celebrate and encourage this research.

## Research Groups

Western defines a Research Group as a group or unit "that consists of a number of investigators informally organized within, and recognized by, a Department, School and/or Faculty (or in two or more Departments, Schools or Faculties) with shared research objectives, and possible shared facilities and funds" ([www.uwo.ca/research/excellence/centres.html](http://www.uwo.ca/research/excellence/centres.html)). The Faculty of Social Science is home to a diverse collection of research groups, many of which are interdisciplinary. What is the point? The creation of most research groups gives official recognition to a team of researchers who have already been working together. By gaining official recognition the team takes on an identity, which can be useful when applying for grants (particularly ones that have a collaborative component), when lobbying the University for resources, when seeking to attract graduate students and post-doctoral fellows and in interactions with the general public.

An example of a recently formed interdisciplinary group is the Research Group in Integrative Avian Research. This group is directed by Scott MacDougall-Schackleton, from the Department of Psychology and co-directed by Christopher Guglielmo (Biology) and David Sherry (Psychology). The formation of this group was supported by the Faculties of Social Science, Science and Engineering. This group undertakes interdisciplinary studies of birds, seeking to understand how birds adapt their reproductive and migratory strategies to environmental pressures.

The disciplines represented in this group include psychology, physiology, bioengineering (aerodynamics), animal behavior and neurology, to name only a few. This Research Group has already been extremely successful in the areas of publication productivity, funding acquisition, graduate student training and outreach. For more information, please see: (<http://birds.uwo.ca/AFAR/Welcome.html>).

## Interdisciplinary Initiatives

The University's commitment to interdisciplinary research is perhaps best illustrated by the Interdisciplinary Initiative Program, which made its first round of grants available in 2007-08. This program, funded by the Office of the Provost and VP Academic, "provides seed funding for projects that further Western's research and teaching mission, attracts scholars and graduate students to our University, and brings prestige to Western. These IDIs, led by leading or emerging scholars, will have articulated undergraduate, graduate and research dimensions" (see <http://president.uwo.ca/vpacademic/idi/>).

Two rounds of IDIs have been funded so far, including 13 projects, two of which were hosted in this Faculty and an additional five, which included Social Science researchers. A third round is currently underway with a letter of intent deadline of November 1, 2010.

The two Social Science hosted IDIs are the Western Centre for Migration and Ethnic Relations and Population and Life course Studies. MER seeks to foster interdisciplinary research among faculty and students on questions of direct relevance to migration and ethnic relations. PCLS draws on the expertise of researchers from various academic backgrounds to integrate three traditionally separate areas of study: population process, social trends, and health over the life course. The five initiatives that are led by other faculties, but include Faculty of Social Science researchers are: Environment & Sustainability, Healthy Living Across the Lifespan, Interdisciplinary Approaches to Linguistics, Neuroscience and Planetary Science and Exploration.

(<http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/MERcentre/>)  
(<http://sociology.uwo.ca/plcs/index.html>).

# Know Your Faculty

An important part of interdisciplinary research is knowing who is researching what! A full description of the great variety of research projects going on in our Faculty would take much more space than is available in this newsletter. However, in preparing their submissions to the Faculty's new academic plan, the departments did identify key areas of research strength. They are presented below to create a brief "snap-shot" of the exciting work being undertaken in each unit.

While these bullets give only general indications of the research areas, it is clear that there is tremendous overlap, and potential for interdisciplinarity. Beyond the obvious areas such as culture and society, there are many other overlaps, such as the environment and health (which is an interesting comment on the recent decisions by SSHRC regarding health related research!) Please take the time to explore the Departments' websites to learn more about your Faculty.

## Anthropology

- Archaeology & Bioarchaeology
- Environment & Culture
- Identities & Human Mobility
- First Nations of North America
- Latin America
- Culture, Society & Power

## Sociology

- Population Studies
- Health, Aging & Life Course Transitions
- Diversity & Inequality (Criminology)
- Workforce Aging in the New Economy

## Psychology

- Behavioural & Cognitive Neuroscience
- Clinical Psychology
- Cognition & Perception
- Developmental Psychology
- Industrial & Organizational Psychology
- Personality Measurement
- Social Psychology

## Economics

- Economics of Education, Human Capital and Productivity
- The Economics of Behaviour
- Macroeconomics, Growth and Development
- China Research and Policy

## Women's Studies and Feminist Research

- Feminist Theory
- Sexuality & Gender
- Representation & Cultural Production
- Equity & Social Structures
- International Feminisms & Globalization
- Health Embodiment

## Geography

- Physical Geography
- Environment, Development & Health
- Urban Studies
- Geographic Information Science

## History

- Conflict & Society
- International, Transnational & Global History
- Public & Digital History
- Environment, Health & Technology
- Business & Economy
- Politics, Law & Governance
- Culture & Society, Social History & Gender

## MOS

- Finance
- Consumer Behaviour
- Human Resource Management
- Commercial Aviation Management

## Political Science

- Global Justice & International Politics
- Multilevel Governance
- Democracy and Citizenship

The Women's Studies and Feminist Research Department is housed in both the Faculties of Social Science and Arts and Humanities- so it is inherently interdisciplinary. There are also a variety of other programs and centres that bridge the main Departments in and outside our Faculty.  
([www.ssc.uwo.ca](http://www.ssc.uwo.ca))