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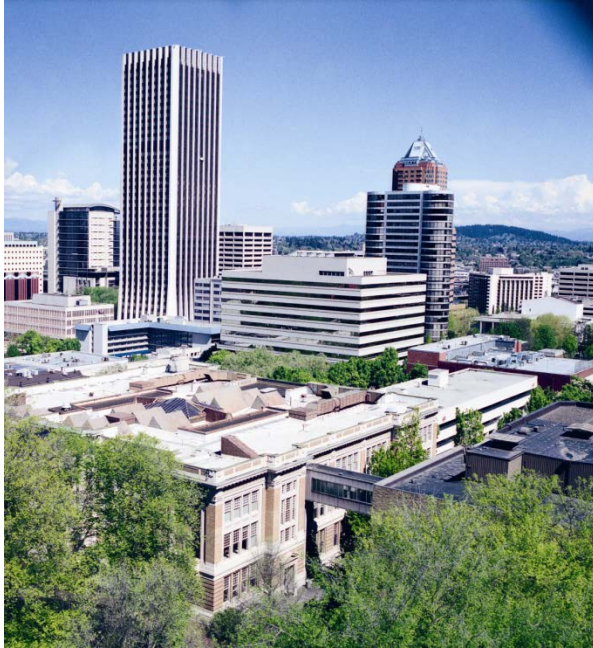
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O U R C O M P L E X
W O R L D :

C O N T R I B U T I O N S T O
P H I L O S O P H Y , S O C I A L
S C I E N C E , A N D S C I E N C E

2012 McNair Scholars Online Journal



The Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program at Portland State University (PSU) works with motivated and talented undergraduates who want to pursue PhDs. It introduces juniors and seniors who are first-generation and low-income, and/or members of under-represented groups to academic research and to effective strategies for getting into and graduating from PhD programs.

The McNair Scholars Program has academic-year activities and a full-time summer research internship. Scholars take academic and skills-building seminars and workshops

during the year, and each scholar works closely with a faculty mentor on original research in the summer. Scholars present their research findings at the McNair Summer Symposium and at other conferences, and are encouraged to publish their papers in the McNair Journal and other scholarly publications.

The Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program was established in 1986 by the U.S. Department of Education and named in honor of Challenger Space Shuttle astronaut Dr. Ronald E. McNair. The program, which is in its seventh year on campus, is funded by a \$924,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education and institutional cost-share funds.

The McNair Scholars Program's student-centered approach relies heavily on faculty and university commitment. Activities and opportunities provided by the program focus on building a positive academic community for the scholars while they are undergraduates at PSU.

Ronald E. McNair



Ronald Erwin McNair was born October 21, 1950 in Lake City, South Carolina. While in junior high school, Dr. McNair was inspired to work hard and persevere in his studies by his family and by a teacher who recognized his scientific potential and believed in him. Dr. McNair graduated as valedictorian from Carver High School in 1967. In 1971, he graduated magna cum laude and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics from North Carolina A&T State University (Greensboro). Dr. McNair then enrolled in the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1976, at the age of 26, he earned his Ph.D. in laser physics. His dissertation was titled, "Energy Absorption and Vibrational Heating in Molecules Following Intense Laser Excitation." Dr. McNair was presented an honorary doctorate of Laws from North Carolina A&T State University in 1978, an honorary

doctorate of Science from Morris College in 1980, and an honorary doctorate of science from the University of South Carolina in 1984.

While working as a staff physicist with Hughes Research Laboratory, Dr. McNair soon became a recognized expert in laser physics. His many distinctions include being a Presidential Scholar (1971-74), a Ford Foundation Fellow (1971-74), a National Fellowship Fund Fellow (1974-75), and a NATO Fellow (1975). He was also a sixth degree black belt in karate and an accomplished saxophonist. Because of his many accomplishments, he was selected by NASA for the space shuttle program in 1978. His first space shuttle mission launched successfully from Kennedy Space Center on February 3, 1984. Dr. Ronald E. McNair was the second African American to fly in space. Two years later he was selected to serve as mission specialist aboard the ill-fated U.S. Challenger space shuttle. He was killed instantly when the Challenger exploded one minute, thirteen seconds after it was launched. Dr. McNair was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. After his death in the Challenger Space Shuttle accident on January 28, 1986, members of Congress provided funding for the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. Their goal was to encourage low-income and first-generation college students, and students from historically underrepresented ethnic groups to expand their educational opportunities by enrolling in a Ph.D. program and ultimately pursue an academic career. This program is dedicated to the high standards of achievement inspired by Dr. McNair's life.

Source: mcnairscholars.com

Table of Contents

The Portland State Scholars

Editorial Board

Between Two Worlds: Identity and Community in Oaxaca

By Mandy Elder

Faculty mentor: Dr. Jack Corbett

Investigating some Correlates of Hegemonic Masculinity and Criminal Motives among Residents in Juvenile Correctional Facilities.

By Caitlin D. Jones

Faculty Mentor: Eric Mankowski

Spinoza and Virtue: The significance of habituation to a virtuous character to the ethics of the *Ethics*

By bobbie sue schindler

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Angela Coventry

Effects of Environmental Enrichment and Natural Substrates on Increasing Species-Specific Behavior of Captive Northern White-Cheeked Gibbons (*Nomascus leucogenys leucogenys*)

By Arina Woolery

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Deborah Duffield

The Synthesis and Characterization of SNAFR-5 Derivatives

By Jia Li Zhao

Faculty mentor: Dr. Robert M. Strongin

The Portland State Scholars 2011



AMANDA ALVARADO

MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. KEITH KAUFMAN

PROJECT TITLE: "WOMEN'S STUDIES EDUCATION AND RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE"

CARMAN BROWN

MAJOR: BIOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. MICHAEL BARTLETT

PROJECT TITLE: "POSITION AND ROLE OF ARCHAEAL TRANSCRIPTION FACTOR E."

MARY CRONIN

MAJOR: INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

MENTOR: DR. TURGRUL KESKIN

PROJECT TITLE: "POST 9/11 FIRST GENERATION MUSLIM AMERICAN WOMEN AND THEIR DIFFICULTIES IN ATTENDING FOUR YEAR UNIVERSITIES IN PORTLAND, OREGON"

ADRIENNE CROSKEY

MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. NANCY M. KOROLOFF

PROJECT TITLE: "THE PERCEPTIONS OF BIRACIAL WOMEN ON DATING PARTNER CHOICE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN "

JOAQUIN DELATORRE-MACNEIL

MAJOR: PHILOSOPHY

MENTOR: DR. TOM SEPPALAINEN

PROJECT TITLE: "NATIVE INTERCONNECTEDNESS VS. ECO-FEMINISM: A DIFFERENCE OF EXPERIENCE"

GABRIELA DOMINGUEZ-ESCUZIA

MAJOR: COMMUNITY HEALTH

MENTOR: DR. CARLOS CRESPO

PROJECT TITLE: "LEISURE TIME PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, SERUM 25(OH) D, AND ALL-CAUSE MORTALITY IN THE THIRD NATIONAL HEALTH AND NUTRITION EXAMINATION SURVEY"

AMANDA ELDER

MAJOR: CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES, SPANISH

MENTOR: DR. JACK CORBETT

PROJECT TITLE: "QUE LE ECHEN GANAS: CHANGES IN THE FAMILY DYNAMICS OF FIRST-GENERATION WOMEN ATTENDING UNIVERSITY IN OAXACA, MEXICO"

CAMERON GEISE

MAJORS: HISTORY

MENTOR: DR. MICHAEL LUPRO

PROJECT TITLE: "EVIDENCE AND EPISTEMOLOGY IN AMERICAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY"

ANDRES GUZMAN

MAJOR: INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND ECONOMICS

MENTOR: DR. LEOPOLDO RODRIGUEZ

PROJECT TITLE: "THE NATURE OF MODERN AGRICULTURE: SOYBEANS IN SOUTH AMERICA"

TRACY HANDRICH

MAJOR: GEOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. CAMERON SMITH AND DR. MARTIN STRECK

PROJECT TITLE: "COMPOSITIONAL ZONATION OF THE DINNER CREEK TUFF MAGMA BODY AS RECORDED BY ERUPTIVE COMPONENTS AT JOHN DAY, OR"

MICHAEL HIGGENBOTHAM

MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. THOMAS KINDERMANN

PROJECT TITLE: "SOCIAL NETWORKS OF AUTISTIC ADOLESCENTS"

NHUHUYEN HOANG

MAJOR: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, ACCOUNTING

MENTOR: DR. JEANNE ENDERS

PROJECT TITLE: "THE EFFECTS OF COLLEGE ROMANCE ON STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE"

CAITLIN JONES

MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY AND ENGLISH

MENTOR: DR. ERIC MANKOWSKI

PROJECT TITLE: "HOW DO JUVENILE CORRECTIONS AFFECT HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES AND CRIMINAL THINKING?"

DANE OLSEN

MAJOR: HISTORY

MENTOR: DR. FREDRICH E. SCHULER

PROJECT TITLE: "STRATEGIES AND SCHEMATA: PRESENTING BRAZIL HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE AMIDST THE TRANSITION OF THE BRAZILIAN LABOR SYSTEM 1937-1947."

MARTIN RODRIGUEZ

MAJOR: PHYSICS

MENTOR: DR. MARK WEISLOGEL

PROJECT TITLE: "THE UTILITY OF STK IN DETERMINING TECHCUBE CUBESAT ORBITS"

RUSSELL SANCHEZ

MAJOR: ENGLISH

MENTOR: DR. MARCIA KLOTZ

PROJECT TITLE: "THE HISTORYLESS ANONYMITY OF RAIN-FORESTS: NONHUMAN AGENCY AND THE REJECTIONS OF ROMANTICISM IN SALMON RUSHDIE'S MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN"

BOBBIE SUE SCHINDLER

MAJORS: PHILOSOPHY

MENTOR: DR. ANGELA COVENTRY

PROJECT TITLE: "SPINOZA AND VIRTUE: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HABITUATION TO A VIRTUOUS CHARACTER TO THE ETHICS OF THE ETHICS"

HOPE SKELTON

MAJOR: LIBERAL STUDIES AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

MENTORS: DR. DAVID KINSELLA

PROJECT TITLE: "ENDGAME, CIVIL LIBERTIES AND RACISM"

MICHELLE STONEBRAKER

MAJOR: ENGLISH

MENTOR: DR. GRACE DILLON

PROJECT TITLE: "WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS'S GHOST OF CHANCE: MAPPING OUR WAY TO THE APOCALYPSE AND BEYOND"

TASHA TRIPLET

MAJOR: HISTORY AND LIBERAL STUDIES

MENTOR: DR. PATRICIA SCHECHTER

PROJECT TITLE: "FROM SELF DEFENSE TO SELF DETERMINATION: THE REVOLUTIONARY LEGACY OF OAKLAND BLACK PANTHER PARTY (BPP) COMMUNITY SCHOOL"

BRAIN VARGO

MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. ELLEN SKINNER

PROJECT TITLE: "SOCIAL CLIMATE AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN JUVENILE JUSTICE"

MONDELL WELLS

MAJOR: MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

MENTOR: DR. RAÚL BAYOÁN CAL

PROJECT TITLE: "ULTRASONIC METHODS FOR OBJECT DETECTION AND THREAT LIQUID DISCRIMINATION"

ZACHARY WONG

MAJOR: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MENTOR: DR. SAMUEL HENRY

PROJECT TITLE: "E MAU ANA KA HA'AHEO: A CASE STUDY ON KE KULA KAIAPUNI" O 'ĀNUENUE"

ARINA WOOLERY

MAJOR: BIOLOGY

MENTOR: DR. DEBBI DUFFIELD

PROJECT TITLE: "EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT AND NATURAL SUBSTRATES ON INCREASING SPECIES-SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR OF CAPTIVE NORTHERN WHITE-CHEEKED GIBBONS (NOMASCUS LEUCOGENYS LEUCOGENYS)"

JIA ZHAO

MAJOR: CHEMISTRY

MENTOR: DR. ROBERT M. STRONGIN

PROJECT TITLE: "THE SYNTHESIS AND CHARACTERIZATION OF SNAFR-5 DERIVATIVES"

JUNIOR SCHOLARS:

DOMINIC PAZ

MAJOR: CHILD AND FAMILY STUDIES

MENTOR: DR. BEN ANDERSON-NANTHE

ROSE SORFA

MAJOR: APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND SPANISH

MENTOR: DR. KEITH WALTERS

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