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## Cutting Truth



Author Edward P. Jones discussed writing, imagination and inspiration in Honors College events, classroom appearances and a public reading last week. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edward P. Jones would rather be a wood carver. If he admires the artistry and skill that allow a man to cut a character from a formless block, he envies the carver's ability to judge a work in a glance, discerning in that instant if a figure's features are right, if the likeness is both striking and true. Not so with fiction-writing.

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## The Power of Peers

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### THE WEEK IN VIEW

*Oct. 20, 7 p.m.*  
Forum on Aging Lecture: "From Cruzan to Schiavo: What Have We Learned?" with William Colby, lawyer and author. Emerald Ballroom, Sheraton Hotel Burlington.

*Oct. 20, 7:30 p.m.*  
Jazz Concert, with UVM alumna Monike Heideman, who "twists together vocal improvisation and jazz sensibility with catchy pop melodies and the grind of rock n' roll" and band. Music Recital Hall, Redstone.

*Oct. 23-25,*  
Conference: "Legal Issues in Higher Education Conference." Gain a comprehensive picture of the diverse legal issues shaping higher education. Sessions focus on three areas: student affairs, academic and administrative affairs. Cost varies; discount for UVM employees. UVM Conference Center at the Sheraton. Information: [Continuing Education](#)

*Oct. 21, 7:30 p.m.*  
Lane Series Concert: Pianist Joyce Yang. Tickets: \$25 adults/\$20 students, student rush tickets \$6 with ID. UVM Recital Hall. Information: 656-4455 or visit [UVM Lane Series](#)

*Oct. 24, 4 p.m.*  
Lecture: "Tony Blair and the War on

['Bridge to Terabithia' Author to Discuss  
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Terror," with Alex Danchev, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. Danchev is the author or editor of 13 books, including *The Iraq War and Democratic Politics*. Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building. Information: 656-8512

Oct. 25, 6 p.m. Community Medical School: "The Human Voice: How It Works, What Can Go Wrong, and How To Fix It," with Dr. Damon Silverman, UVM/ Fletcher Allen otolaryngologist. Carpenter Auditorium, Given Building. Registration: 847-2886 or [Community Medical School](#)

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## Cutting Truth

By Lee Ann Cox

Article published Oct 18, 2005



Author Edward P. Jones discussed writing, imagination and inspiration in Honors College events, classroom appearances and a public reading last week. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edward P. Jones would rather be a wood carver. If he admires the artistry and skill that allow a man to cut a character from a formless block, he envies the carver's ability to judge a work in a glance, discerning in that instant if a figure's features are right, if the likeness is both striking and true. Not so with fiction-writing.

"Even with a 25-page story and certainly with a novel," Jones told

students on October 10, beginning a three-day campus visit for both the Buckham Lecture Series and the Burack President's Distinguished Lecture Series, "it's all so spread out... it's all these words and you can't really determine how real it is and if it will make sense to someone else down the line."

Over the 388 pages of Jones' prize-winning novel, *The Known World*, the characters indeed sprawl out in uneasy directions, moving back and forth through time, defying conventional form. In the fictional Virginia county of Manchester, blacks are both slaves and slaveholders and even whites destined for irredeemable acts are capable, in the least, of scorching moments of humility. Americans have been handed a lot of stereotypes about this time in our history, Jones said, but human relationships are murky. "I think it's far more complex than any of us will ever realize," he said.

But as Jones explained to a gathering of first-year honors students who were assigned the novel as summer reading, he leaves phrases like "moral complexity" to reviewers. As messy and amorphous as it is to create nonwooden characters, fleshed out in all their cruelty, tenderness, passion, greed and pain, for Jones, those people are everything. "All I had was all of these characters," he said. "I didn't have any lofty purpose in mind."

Jones is not an evangelist, to be sure, about slavery or anything else. He is a shy, humble man, despite honors that include a MacArthur Fellowship, a Pen/Hemingway Award and National Book Award finalist for both *The Known World*, his first novel, and an earlier collection of short stories, *Lost in the City*. Yet Jones has a riveting storyteller's voice and when he raises it to decry Thomas Jefferson for owning slaves or African American stereotypes in movies, his words hit hard, just a hint of the power in his fiction.

"So often you watch movies and the black people are loud, unintelligent—this fat woman, that fat woman, and the men are big and overpowering and threatening, that's all," he said, "that's all. And that's because those writers, that director, that's all they likely know. They don't know any people beyond themselves and they don't have the imagination (to portray them differently)."

So Jones's first advice to the eager young writers who questioned him is to

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read. He recalled a woman at a reading who told him that she can't enjoy characters who aren't like herself. To Jones, who grew up in poverty, raised by a beloved mother who could not read or write, such self-imposed limitation is alien. For him, Richard Wright, James Joyce, southern writers, both black and white, were the bridge to a different life.

*From Here to Eternity*, Jones explained, put him in the place of the white soldier Pruitt, playing his horn, even though Jones himself has no sense of music: "I had come to see how this man suffered and so I cared about him. And I could see this guy out on that hill just as clear and I could hear every note that he was playing. And you don't get that I think unless you have an open heart, unless you are already caring about the rest of the world...the literature opens that up for you. So you read everybody."

### **The best lie**

If the charge to read sounded like an achievable plan, the fiction writers in Jones's audiences last week — particularly those with assignments due — may have felt stymied hearing about his methods. He created *The Known World*, with its intricate plot lines and scores of characters, entirely in his mind over the course of ten years. He never took a note.

"What I've learned is that you're a writer not because you get up every single day and write. Sometimes," Jones said, "what you do in your head counts."

And the ideas, he said, cannot be forced. They come to you out of the blue. At a reading a year or so ago, Jones told Professor David Huddle's advanced fiction-writing class, he was taking questions from an audience when he saw a woman with blood on her dress, walking out of a cornfield with a gun in her hands. In the background a house was burning and she was walking toward another house. You got the sense, he said, that it wasn't her house, but when she got to it she didn't knock but simply opened the door.

"What I'm slowly beginning to realize," Jones said, "is that maybe, just maybe, when some idea comes to you...there is some reason...and it should be given the privilege of being born. And so there may not be a solution to why this woman was walking up to this door with the gun today or next week or next year, but there is a reason...and all I need do is stop worrying myself about why and let it come to me over time."

That, according to Jones, is what the creative mind is. He's mystified by the number of people who ask about the research he did for *The Known World* (none) and by those who are sure he heard the stories at his grandmother's knee.

"There is this inability on the part of so many people to believe that things flew out of the imagination," Jones said, "...I think so many of us have that (creativity) and along the way I suppose we are told to shut that down."

For Jones, fiction is about telling the best lie possible in order to communicate a greater truth. "It's fine that it's a small table," he told students, "but a small table that holds a candelabra, a teacup, and a Bible, is a better lie."

Crafting stories fulfills a need in Jones, but the drive to write—this gift—is not exactly a blessing. Asked by a student if he's happy being a writer, Jones doesn't hesitate, but his voice is low. "No," his answer begins, then, seeing the pained reaction, it ends with a hearty laugh, "Hey, you asked me, man."

"If I were God passing out what you could do," Jones said "I think writing would probably be about number 27. It's messy business because you get up in the morning and there's this emptiness there. 'Can I do it today? Is it possible? God, will I go to bed tonight and think, jeez...what a wasted day?'"

But Jones also admits to those moments when he knows that he has two or three pages of really fine writing, when he reads them over with the pride of accomplishment. Still, he has no truck with egotistical writers, full of themselves and making demands. Even with the acclaim, the awards, the royalties, life for Jones hasn't changed too much. When he travels, he still takes the bus to the subway to get to the airport, and when he starts a new work, no past prizes or fulsome reviews will carry him through.

"I'm always starting at the bottom of the mountain," Jones said. "We all are."

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## The Power of Peers

By Jon Reidel

Article published Oct 19, 2005

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Senior mentors Hillary Burrows (left) and Gina Guerino tell two first-year students what they really want to know about college. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

How do you make friends in college? What professors should you avoid, and which should you seek out? How do you get through academic difficulties? What's the fastest way to get from Old Mill to Aiken in a wheelchair? What's it like being a person of color on this campus? First-year students have many questions not covered by official university brochures — and, increasingly, they're turning to peer mentors for the answers.

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Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edward P. Jones would rather be a wood carver. If he admires the artistry and skill that allow a man to cut a character from a formless block, he envies the carver's ability to judge a work in a glance, discerning in that instant if a figure's features are right, if the likeness is both striking and true. Not so with fiction-writing.

UVM has added at least three peer mentoring programs in the last four years to go along with a handful of long-established efforts to help meet the increasingly diverse needs of college students. The growth in the program mirrors a nationwide trend in peer mentoring fueled by a research suggesting that students adjust and perform better in school when they have a peer mentor as well as a faculty advisor. Studies also show that mentoring is correlated with higher retention rates.

Two well-established university peer mentoring programs, one in the ALANA Student Center and the other in the School of Business Administration, serve more than 275 students. Additionally, Meeting Academic Potential, offered through the Living/Learning Cooperative to help students on academic probation in the College of Arts & Sciences, and Accommodation, Consultation, Collaboration & Educational Support Services, which pairs students with disabilities with upper-division students with similar disabilities who are familiar with navigating all aspects of the campus. Other departments and colleges also offer less formal methods of peer tutoring and mentoring.

### Mutual benefits

Hillary Burrows and Gina Guerino sought out peer mentors as first-year students in the School of Business Administration. Now seniors, both students are among 23 mentors assigned to 12 students each to cover all 244 incoming first-year business school students in the class of 2008. Marti Woodman, a business school lecturer and former assistant dean, started the program in 1989 after a student advisory committee pushed for it.

"The students really made it happen," Woodman says. "They saw the need to have someone to be able to ask questions that you may not want to ask a faculty advisor. In many cases, the peer advisors get more out of it than the younger students."

Burrows and Guerino say the peer relationship usually starts with an email telling their mentees about themselves and other more school-related information like when add-drop is and how to access student services. Once students become more comfortable with each other, the nature of the questions can change. Burrows recalls one student calling a mentor in a panic after sleeping through an exam. Other queries are routine.

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"Some just want to know where to take their parents out for dinner," says Guerino. "We're really just another resource to help them with all the change that comes with starting college."

The MAP peer program, which supports students with academic difficulty, deals with serious issues. Frances Kahn, a lecturer in the education department and director of L/L's Learning Skills Program, requires potential MAP peer counselors to take a class, "Tutoring, Theory & Practice."

Students enrolled in the course work with at-risk youth at Edmunds Middle School. "Skills like goal setting, motivation and test-taking strategies are applicable at the college level," she says of the class's applicability to peer counseling. "It's also good to just have someone to talk to."

Kahn plans to present the details of the MAP model to deans in other UVM colleges and schools as a way of helping students on probation.

The ALANA peer mentoring program focuses more on involving students in all aspects of campus life as well the academic side. John Mejia, a staff assistant at the ALANA Student Center, recently took a group of mentors and their mentees on a canoe trip to Upper Saranac Lake and accompanied some students to a lecture by Jean Rhodes, a professor of psychology at Umass-Boston, who was discussing her book *Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth*.

Keith Smith, ALANA student services advisor and director of the mentor program, says it can be difficult for some students of color to adjust to a predominantly white campus in a setting that is sometimes more rural than where they came from.

"Many of our students are from urban environments and having a mentor from a similar environment and who has already experienced campus life as a student of color, can be helpful, but not always. It depends on the student," Smith says. "I'm most impressed with the willingness of students to take the time with no financial gain to help out other students. I think both students get a lot out of the experience."

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UVM HOMEPAGE

## Talking Trade

By Kevin Foley

Article published Oct 19, 2005

Jagdish Bhagwati, the pioneering international trade economist who is often rumored to be on the short list for the Nobel Prize, gave a witty, wide-ranging lecture on globalization on Oct. 17 at Ira Allen Chapel as part of the 30th annual Aiken Lecture Series. The Columbia University professor's message: The American middle class has many things to worry about — but trade isn't one of them.

Disputing *New York Times* columnist and author Thomas Freedman, who argued in a best-seller that technology has "flattened" the globe, allowing call-center workers in Bangalore, India, to fill jobs until recently reserved for employees in Burlingame, Calif., Bhagwati said, "The idea of a flat world is as wrong now as it was in the time of Copernicus."

The globe, Bhagwati said, still looks mighty bumpy. While some services, granted, are no longer location-dependent, many more still require geographic proximity. Countries will always retain different strengths and niches. India has a powerful information technology sector; China does not. "Why not?" Bhagwati said. "Because of an authoritarian system. The CP, communist party, is incompatible with the PC."

Japan has incredible high-tech manufacturing capabilities, but its financial system, still, is a "disaster." And fretting over America's competitiveness may have some justification, but it's important to recognize that the United States has powerful comparative advantages over the rest of the world in many areas, advantages that flourish with open trade. As one small example, he cited Indian firms developing their presence in Silicon Valley to tap into the area's networks of capital, innovation and talent.

The world is a "kaleidoscope of comparative advantage," drawing and redrawing patterns of capital and trade, Bhagwati said. Jobs and industries move and thrive based on these patterns far more than on the basis of low wages. Factors like education, infrastructure and productivity are more important than wages in the most desirable industries, he argued. "Labor costs are not a huge factor for multinationals," he said.

Bhagwati argued that American critics of free trade often use scare tactics to argue for prosperity-limiting protectionism, including raising the misleading specter of "billions" of Chinese or Indian workers ready to take over American service jobs.

"The large population numbers make people worry, but if you look at the college-educated cohort in India, only a small percentage can read English, a smaller percentage still can speak English, and even smaller number of them can speak English in a way that you or I can understand it. The actual number of competitors is negligible," he said.

### Trade's discontents

Bhagwati's account of trade's manifold benefits was about as rosy as one would expect from the author of *In Defense of Globalization*. Global free trade, he said, increases aggregate wealth, as he put it, "the size of the pie," spreading prosperity and fighting poverty. Poor countries that embrace freer trade, he said, have done substantially better over the past 40 years than countries that haven't.

While a tiny minority of economists disputes this view of trade's economic power (largely to gain attention, Bhagwati mischievously suggested), he believes that its ability to increase prosperity is firmly established. Other key questions revolve around trade's social impact. But these social negatives

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aren't usually what critics say they are, Bhagwati said.

Touching on a few examples, he argued that global trade generally has a liberalizing effect. Firms locked in global competition, he argued, can't afford the inefficiency of paying men more than women. The male-female wage gap in identical jobs shrinks most rapidly in global trade industries. Studies show, he said, that trade doesn't encourage child labor; as the poor in Vietnam saw their incomes rise because of trade, they respond not by trying to grab more by putting their children to work, but by putting their kids into school.

A more damaging consequence of global trade, he said, might come from short-term currency trading, or portfolio capital flows. He favors restrictions on them, a position he said raised some eyebrows but doesn't compromise his overall pro-trade views.

He's quite negative about the forms of trade regulation most commonly discussed. Protectionism is almost beneath the pale for Bhagwati. He also rejects the notion of "fair trade," the idea discussed by candidates like John Kerry and Howard Dean of requiring partners to raise labor and environmental standards to something approximating U.S. standards.

"Export protectionism," Bhagwati said of this, and said it was futile meddling in complex processes that will hurt the poor in other countries and make the U.S. a less desirable trading partner.

The most damaging critique of trade, he said, is "distribution" — the uneven spread of winners and losers in a global economy. While trade reduces misery in some poor countries, some of globe's most impoverished are left out. African farmers who can't produce enough food for their own people are unlikely to build wealth producing goods for a global market.

"The doors are open, but many countries still cannot find the traction to move through them," Bhagwati said.

In the richer, northern half of the world, the obstacle is managing change. Without an effective education system, universal health insurance, and effective programs to help displaced workers adapt, the squeezed middle class in America and elsewhere will inevitably begin questioning trade and asking for protection from it. The resulting wave of protectionism would be a "tragedy" for a huge swath of the globe, and wouldn't get at the real issues facing workers, Bhagwati said, making a coherent, timely response to middle-class issues crucial.

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*Vermont Public Radio will broadcast Jagdish Bhagwati's UVM lecture at 6 p.m. on Nov. 3. Following the lecture at 7 p.m., VPR's call-in "Switchboard" program will facilitate discussion of the talk.*

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## Professor's 'Performance Theory' Takes on Cold War Culture

By the view Staff

Article published Oct 18, 2005

Jackie Orr, associate professor of sociology at Syracuse University, will give a talk, "Daddy Does Cybernetics: Diary of a Mental Patient," on Oct. 24 at 4:30 p.m. in 207 Lafayette. Her talk is part of the Department of Geography's Women in Science Lecture Series.

"Daddy Does Cybernetics" explores the story of U.S. Cold War culture caught between the threat of contagious panic and the government-sponsored imperative to "Keep Calm!"

Orr teaches and writes in the fields of cultural politics, contemporary theory, and feminist studies of technoscience and psychiatry. Her forthcoming book, *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder* (Duke University Press, January 2006), chronicles the entanglements of bodies, pills, computers, power, capital, war and (social) scientific discourses that have shaped and re-shaped "panic" in the 20th century United States. She is also a performance theorist, using visual media and performative writing to promote collective political dis-ease.

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## Group Collecting Medical Items for Gulf Coast Relief

By the view Staff

Article published Oct 19, 2005

A coalition of local agencies including the UVM Center for Disability and Community Inclusion is asking for help in responding to an urgent request for durable medical equipment for families in the Gulf Coast.

Organizers are collecting clean, functional medical equipment in good condition Nov. 1-2 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the parking circle in front of Patrick Gym.

The Mississippi Children and Families Division and Center for Independent Living is seeking items to distribute to families of children and adults with disabilities who have lost everything in the recent hurricanes and floods. Families are now returning to new or repaired housing but many of them lost items that contribute to quality of life or allow for independence.

The items requested include assistive technologies like scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, as well as items needed for daily living for people with disabilities, things like bath chairs and positioning equipment. Organizers are also looking for cash donations to help offset fuel costs and support costs related to fitting, adjustment or minor repair of equipment. Tax-deductible financial contributions will be accepted during the Nov. 1-2 events. They can also be sent to UVM-CDCI and mailed to Chigee Cloninger, CDCI/UVM, Mann Hall-3rd Floor, 208 Colchester Ave., Burlington, VT, 05405.

Equipment donations can be left at Mann Hall before the event (call first), and CDCI organizers are also looking for volunteers to help with accepting donations and loading the Mississippi-bound truck.

Information: 656-1143

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By the view Staff

Article published Oct 18, 2005

The sixth annual "Fall Institute on Racism, Heterosexism, Bias and Oppression," a public conference sponsored by the Department of Psychology, will take place Oct. 26-28.

The institute, which is constructed as a series of colloquia by internationally recognized researchers as well as faculty, graduate students and undergraduates from UVM, is designed to engage the university and greater Vermont community in discussion and action to challenge prejudice, biased behavior, discrimination and hate. All events are free and open to the public without registration, however registration is requested and attendance is limited for Shahin Sakhi's pre-institute workshop.

Events and talks scheduled include a keynote address by Teresa LaFromboise titled "The Impact of Perceived Discrimination on Psychological Resilience: An American Indian Youth Response," an exploration of the ethics of multicultural research, the economic toll of obesity, a screening of the classic film "The Battle of Algiers," a participatory workshop on bias, power, authority and human rights, and more.

Information: [Fall Institute](#)

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### [Cutting Truth](#)

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edward P. Jones would rather be a wood carver. If he admires the artistry and skill that allow a man to cut a character from a formless block, he envies the carver's ability to judge a work in a glance, discerning in that instant if a figure's features are right, if the likeness is both striking and true. Not so with fiction-writing.

### [The Power of Peers](#)

How do you make friends in college? What professors should you avoid, and which should you seek out? How do you get through academic difficulties? What's the fastest way to get from Old Mill to Aiken in a wheelchair? What's it like being a person of color on this campus? First-year students have many questions not covered by official university brochures — and, increasingly, they're turning to peer mentors for the answers.

### [Talking Trade](#)

Jagdish Bhagwati, the pioneering international trade economist who spoke on campus Oct. 17, enthusiastically defended globalization and argued that the American middle class has many things to worry about — but trade isn't one of them.



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## NOTABLES

October 19, 2005

### Awards and Honors

**Laurel Broughton**, lecturer of English, was elected to a Derek S. Brewer Visiting Fellowship at Emmanuel College, Cambridge University. She will be in residence at Cambridge for the spring term of 2006, continuing her research on medieval miracles of the Virgin.

### Publications and Presentations

**Martha Dewees**, associate professor of social work, is the author of a new book for social work students and practitioners. *Contemporary Social Work Practice* is the second in a series by McGraw-Hill of innovative texts, software and custom electronic content primarily aimed at foundation courses in social work. Dewees' intent was to translate the guiding theoretical perspectives of the UVM department (social justice, human rights, the strengths perspective and critical social construction) into purposeful social work practice with real people in real contexts. The book's primary audience is senior-level undergraduate students with some crossover into the first year of MSW preparation. The book is accompanied by a custom Web site, online reader and CD-ROM.

**Rebecca McCauley**, professor of communication sciences, presented a nationally attended video-enhanced teleconference conference on the subject of childhood apraxia of Speech from her office in Pomeroy Hall on Sept. 29. It was attended by 100 individual speech-language pathologists and 132 groups ranging in size from 5 to 20 from around the country, making it the largest of such conference ever sponsored by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. McCauley presented with Shelley Velleman of the University of Massachusetts. Childhood apraxia of speech is a severe speech sound disorder in children that, although rare, is often associated with speech production difficulties that persist into older childhood and increased risk for literacy difficulties. With suspected genetic and neurologic etiologies, this disorder has received increasing research attention in the past 20 years.

McCauley also conducted a one-day workshop on the assessment motor speech disorders in children for the Vermont Speech-Language-Hearing Association in Burlington on Oct. 6. More than 90 speech-language pathologists from Vermont and neighboring states attended this workshop to learn about current methods used in the identification and description of motor planning and execution problems affecting speech production in children.

October 12, 2005

### Awards and Honors

**Craig Trumbo**, a research associate professor in the Office of Health Promotion Research, will be supported by a grant from the Decision Risk and Management Sciences program at the National Science Foundation to conduct a survey of Gulf Coast residents concerning their perception of future hurricane risk in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The project, "Proximity to extreme events: The effect of Katrina-Rita on optimistic bias in Gulf Coast counties," is being funded under NSF's program for Katrina-related Small Grants for Exploratory Research. Trumbo investigates risk perception and communication in a variety of contexts, especially public health and the environment.

### Publications and Presentations