

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

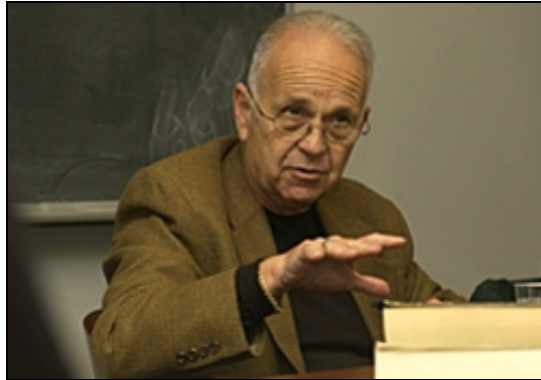
PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

Fishing for Controversy



Stanley Fish, the outspoken critic and author, brought his challenging views to four days of classes and public events at UVM. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Stanley Fish, a literary and social critic who consistently manages to infuriate critics left and right, spent four days at UVM trying to demolish ideas long cherished in universities: the sanctity of free speech, the endless scope of academic freedom, the notion that university administrators are soulless bureaucrats whose green-eyeshade gazes stupefy all they survey.

[FULL STORY ►](#)

PREVIOUS ISSUE

[Fall Institute Aims to Counter Bias](#)

[Gaitskill to Conduct Writer's Workshop](#)

[Faire Winds Gonna Blow](#)

[Marketing the Gridiron](#)

[President's Lecturer to Explore the Policy of Caring](#)

[Peter Ellison Lectures](#)

[Leaders of Drive to Create an India-Pakistan 'Peace Park' Meet at UVM](#)

[Survey of Influence](#)

[Professor's Book Thinks Through Complexities of Sexual Consent](#)

Assaying the Spine The

26 intricately linked vertebrae that comprise the spine are among the body's most troublesome parts — back ailments are the second-leading cause of missed work days, and treatment costs are in the billions annually. Those painful facts inspire many doctors to criticism: The back is a lousy piece of structural engineering, they say, an evolutionary kludge. Pain is the price of walking upright.

Environmentally Clean

Vibes Anna Borofsky is standing in the middle of a sea of trash at a former air force base in northern Maine. The 1999 UVM graduate is about to spend the next seven hours orchestrating the cleanup of 700 tons of garbage produced by 70,000 Phish fans.

THE WEEK IN VIEW

Oct. 23, 4 p.m.
Colloquium: "A National Missile Defense System: Will It Work?" with Daniel Kleppner of MIT. Room B112, Angell Hall. Information: 656-2644 or [physics department](#)

Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m.
Musical: "Beat the Heat" by the Underground Railway Theater of Vermont. Ira Allen Chapel. Information: 656-3803.

Oct. 23, 7:30 p.m.
Lecture: "Making The Vermont Encyclopedia" with authors Ralph "Harry" Orth and Sam Hand, both UVM emeriti professors, and Johnson State College professor emeritus John Duffy. Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building. Information: 656-4389.

Oct. 23, 7:30 p.m.
Lecture: Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Ross Gelbspan, author of "The Heat is On" gives his perspective on climate change. Ira Allen Chapel. Information: 656-3803.

Oct. 23-25, 7 p.m.
Event: Second Annual Tibet Festival kicks off Thursday with "Tibet and China: the Case for and Against Tibetan Independence," argued by the university's Lawrence Debate Union. Room 427, Waterman. Information: [Asian Studies](#) or call 656-5764.

Oct. 24, 7:30 p.m.
Concert: UVM Lane Series presents "The Hot Club of San Francisco" featuring an all string instrumentation of violin, bass, and three guitars. UVM Recital Hall. Tickets \$25. Information:

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

NEWS BRIEFS



For Jim Petersen, associate professor and chair of anthropology (left), the permanent loan of 1.5 million-year-old artifacts from South Africa brokered by Professor Robert Gordon (left), is thrilling. "It's wonderful to have the real stuff, instead of looking at a drawing or slide," he says. "South Africa is where the record of early humans was figured out first. Some of these new artifacts come from a dig where a seminal archaeological site report was written." The department will use the ancient artifacts in classroom teaching. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Med Students Unveil Survey on Physician-Assisted Suicide at State Meeting

About 38 percent of Vermont doctors say physician-assisted suicide should be legal, according to a survey conducted by seven UVM medical students.

The survey, based on responses of 1,052 physicians around the state, also found that 16 percent of physicians believe physician assisted suicide should be illegal, while another 26 percent think the practice shouldn't be legislated. Additionally, 15.7 percent say they're undecided and four percent did not answer.

Results of the public health project, a graduation requirement of the medical school, were compiled by second-year med students Beth Cronin, Alexa Craig, Will Edward, James Metz, Ria Vergara, Logan Murray and Eric Suess. The students, who conceived and completed the ambitious project, presented their findings to the Vermont Medical Society at its annual meeting on Oct. 17. (See [this story](#) for background on the project.)

Students mailed out surveys to all 2,770 of Vermont's allopathic and osteopathic physicians during the summer. With 561 returned as undeliverable, 2,208 physicians actually received the survey. The 48 percent response rate (1,052 returns) is the highest return rate of any of the studies conducted on the controversial topic, currently being debate by the Vermont State Legislature.

The bill currently being considered by the legislature

Berkeley Sociologist to Argue that Race Matters in Research

Although the mapping and sequencing of DNA has provided new tools to understand and unlock the genetics of race, many scientists claim that race has no function in their research. Sociologist Troy Duster argues otherwise.

A professor of sociology at New York University and the University of California, Berkeley, Duster will discuss the debate over race and genetic research on Oct. 23 at 7 p.m. in Billings North Lounge. The talk, which is titled "Human Molecular Genetics and the Subject of Race: Contrasting Theory and Rhetoric with Practical Applications in Law," is part of the President's Distinguished Lecture Series.

Duster concedes that some genetic studies look too narrowly at race, but asserts that race must continue to be a part of social scientific research. "The concept of race has been buried alive in contemporary scientific literature," says Duster.

In his role as president-elect of the American Sociological Association, Duster defended the government's racial classification of data: "African Americans may have more prostate cancer because of nutrition or because they have a higher likelihood of living near toxic waste dumps. Hypertension may be higher among blacks because they are being profiled by police on the highway and followed in department stores. We must continue to collect data and to study race as a social phenomenon because it makes for better science and a more informed policy debate."

Duster is a member of the Social Science Research Council's Board of Directors and has served as chair of the national advisory committee on Ethical, Legal and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project. A former director of the American Cultures Center and the Institute for the Study of Social Change at UC Berkeley, he has published numerous books in his field including, *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Colorblind Society* and *Backdoor to Eugenics*.

The lecture will be hosted by Sherwood Smith, assistant professor of integrated professional studies. For more information, contact the Center for Cultural Pluralism at 656-8833.

UVM, Plattsburgh State to Use Grant Money to Recruit Next Generation of Canadianists

UVM and Plattsburgh State University have teamed up to recruit and train new Canadian Studies teachers and researchers in the United States. Announced Oct. 15 and christened CONNECT, the program will be funded by a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the Canadian government. The new initiative comes at a time when retirement has diminished the number of Canadian

would require that patients wanting physician-assistance to die be at least 18 years old; have been given a diagnosis of less than six months to live; and be mentally competent and not depressed.

The student survey, titled "Survey of Vermont Physicians' Opinions Concerning Physician-assisted Death and End-of-life Care" had the following demographic breakdown:

- Mean age: 53.6 years (range 22-90)
- Gender: 70.6% male; 26.3% female; 3.1% declined to answer
- 80.4% currently practicing; 14.9% retired; 4.7% declined to answer
- 56.7% care for terminally ill patients through end of life
- County of practice: Chittenden 38.6%; Washington 7.1%; Rutland 7.0%; Windham 6.3%; Bennington 5.8%; Addison 5.3%; Windsor 4.1%; Lamoille 3.8%; Caledonia 3.6%; Franklin 3.2%; Orange 2.5%; Orleans 1.5%; Essex 0.2%; Grand Isle 0.1%; declined to answer 10.7%

Folklorist Mieder to Say 'Rats' on History Channel

A television program about scurrying creatures may seem an unlikely place to find folklorist Wolfgang Mieder. But when the History Channel sought to trace the mythology of rats for an upcoming program, Mieder was happy to participate. The resulting show is part of a three-part series, "Rats, Bats and Bugs," hosted by 1970s shock rocker Alice Cooper, that will air on the History Channel on Oct. 27.

The "Rats," segment, which will start at 9 p.m., delves into the complicated relationship between humans and rats, the plague and other rat-borne diseases, and popular misconceptions about the ubiquitous rodents. Providing perspectives will be biologists, exterminators and historians, as well as UVM's chair of the Department of German and Russian. Mieder will discuss the most famous of rat-tamers: the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The legend's origins, history and use in literature, media and art, "is one of my specialties," says Mieder, who has published extensively on the topic. Additional one-hour segments, succinctly titled "Bats" and "Bugs," will follow "Rats" from 10 p.m. to midnight. Chittenden County residents who subscribe to Adelphia cable's expanded basic service can view the program on channel 62. The series will be repeated on Nov. 2, from noon to 3 p.m.

Studies instructors in the United States.

"CONNECT will help ensure we have a new crop of American Canadianists, and will contribute toward the institutionalization of Canadian Studies in U.S. higher education," said André Senécal, director of UVM's Canadian Studies program.

The quest for potential new American Canadianists will begin at UVM, where computer searches will target advanced graduate students, recent recipients of doctoral degrees and new faculty. Many of those individuals will hold degrees in disciplines such as political science and history, but also will have expertise in Canadian Studies.

Plattsburgh State's Center for the Study of Canada will contact those candidates and invite them to a summer seminar in Ottawa that will focus on the social, economic and political realities of America's "neighbor to the north," as well as Canadian history and culture. The new Canadianists will be paired with mentors and regularly updated on funding and conference opportunities suited to their academic backgrounds and interests.

UVM's College of Arts & Sciences established the first comprehensive Canadian Studies program at an American university in 1964, and currently offers both major and minor concentrations in the discipline. In addition to receiving funding from the governments of the United States, Canada and Québec, the program maintains, in Bailey-Howe Library, one of the best Canadian collections in America.

Canadian Studies programs at UVM, Plattsburgh State and the University of Maine also constitute the National Northeast Resource Center on Canada, a consortium to promote a better understanding of Canada in the United States.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee

Some of the teaching in Canadian Studies focuses on the relationship between Canada and the U.S., and the sometimes overlooked contributions of America's neighbor to the north. Canada is America's largest trading partner and oil supplier, for example, and Vermont's nearest international neighbor.

A number of inventions came from Canadian residents such as the snow blower, electronic organ, antigravity suit, IMAX, dental mirror, and the board game "Trivial Pursuit." The electric light bulb was created by Henry Woodward of Toronto in 1874. He later sold a share in his patent to American Thomas Edison, who designed a more practical bulb in 1879.

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

EVENTS



An upcoming three-day festival will celebrate the culture and religion of Tibet.

Three Days in Tibet

Longing to visit Asia but haven't the time to spend seven years in Tibet? UVM's Asian Studies Program will host its second annual Tibet Festival Thursday through Saturday, Oct. 23-25.

Events kick off Thursday with "Tibet and China: the Case for and Against Tibetan Independence," argued by the university's Lawrence Debate Union at 7 p.m. in Waterman room 427. On Friday, Geshe Thupten Jinpa, official translator for 10 years to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, will discuss "The Dalai Lama's spiritual mission" at 8 p.m. in Billings CC.

The Festival moves to Memorial Auditorium Saturday for a day of Tibetan food, crafts, song and dance; photographer Jan Reynold's presentation of her journey by yak caravan across the Himalayas, and more. For a full schedule go to [Asian Studies](#) or call 656-5764.

President's Initiatives on Diversity to Co-Sponsor Two Flynn Events

The President's Initiatives on Diversity will co-sponsor two upcoming events at the Flynn Center. August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, "Fences," will be performed by the Weston (Vt.) Playhouse Theatre Company on Oct. 29 at 7:30 p.m. The play portrays the pain and legacy of segregation in the 1950s as a father struggles to confront his past and his son tries to claim his future. This powerful family drama has drawn vivid comparisons to Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman." Emily Bernard, assistant professor of English, will give a pre-performance lecture at 6 p.m. in the Flynn's Amy E. Tarrant Gallery. Her remarks will investigate the role of drama in African-American literary history.

"Drummers of West Africa" will take the stage at 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 30 at the Flynn. The 35 musicians of the

Political Ethicist to Discuss Election Wrinkles in Time

In the republic where recalls reign, chads dangle, and a state legislature dispatches a posse after redistricting-shy colleagues duck out of the state, the expertise of Dennis Thompson, Alfred North Whitehead Professor of Political Philosophy at Harvard University and author of *Just Elections*, is more timely than ever.

Thompson will explore the special mechanics of elections, and their ethical implications, in the Department of Political Science's Donald R. Brown Memorial Lecture at 4 p.m. on Oct. 30 in John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill. The title of Thompson's talk is, "Election Time: Redistricting, Exit Polls, Issue Ads, and Other Vices."

The "time" in Thompson's title has multiple resonances for the scholar. A distinctive feature of elections, with deep implications for their conduct, is their multiple positions in time: Elections take place at periodic points at time, but all votes are cast during a narrowly bounded time period, and their results are final for a set interval.

But each of those crucial time periods, Thompson says, are under assault by electoral "vices." The periodicity of elections – which ensures that a current, ever-fluctuating population is not perpetually governed by decisions made in the past – is threatened by political redistricting, which lets current legislatures stack the decks for future elections. The simultaneity of voting is compromised by wide-reporting of exit polling, which may discourage citizens from casting ballots in elections they perceive as already decided.

The finality of elections, Thompson argues, makes them a worthy object for restrictive regulations that would not be acceptable elsewhere. But a theme in his work is that American elections are plentiful, but poorly managed – and, given their importance, the citizenry spends absurdly little time pondering better mechanisms to elect leaders.

Thompson, who earned a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard, is also the author of *Democracy & Disagreement* (with Amy Gutmann), *Political Ethics and Public Office* and *Ethics in Congress: From Individual to Institutional Corruption*. He has served as a consultant to the Joint Ethics Committee of the South African Parliament, the American Medical Association, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Information: 656-4324

Storm Water Workshop Will Bring Key Players for Crucial Discussion

Senegalese troupe comprise one of the world's most revered percussion orchestras. Expect the drummers, chorus and choreography to raise the rafters with sounds steeped in ancient traditions. A pre-performance lecture by Moustapha Diouf, associate professor of sociology, will focus on debunking archaic concepts of so-called "primitive" Africa. Diouf will speak at 6 p.m. in the Tarrant Gallery.

A limited number of two-for-one ticket vouchers will be available for both Flynn performances on a first-come, first-served basis. Vouchers may be picked up with a current UVM ID in the President's reception area, 349 Waterman, during normal working hours. Redeem the vouchers for tickets in person at the Flynn by 5 p.m. on the day of each show. Pre-performance lectures are free. For more information go to [Flynn Center](#).

MIT Professor to Discuss Missile Defense Study

"Boost-phase defense," or intercepting missiles while their rockets are still burning, has been discussed as a potential element in a National Missile Defense System. But a recent independent study conducted by the American Physical Society concluded this approach would not be effective in defending the United States against attacks by an important type of enemy missile.

Full results of the study, which focused on missile threats from North Korea and Iran, will be published as a supplement to an upcoming issue of the journal *Reviews of Modern Physics*. Meanwhile, those who want to learn about the study first-hand can attend a free, public lecture by Daniel Kleppner, co-chair of the APS study and professor of physics at MIT, at 4 p.m. on Oct. 23 in Angell, room B112.

Information: 656-2644.

A forum on one of Vermont's most vexing environmental issues — storm water run-off — will attract scientists, educators, and representatives from state, federal and local regulatory agencies to a meeting on Oct. 24 in South Burlington.

"This workshop was planned a long time ago, but could not be timelier now as Vermont officials and citizens struggle with how to build communities within the EPA guidelines," said organizer Alan McIntosh, professor and director of the Vermont Water Resources Center at UVM.

The event, which will run from 8 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, is sponsored by the Vermont Water Resources Center, the UVM Lake Studies Center and the Lake Champlain Committee.

"Vermont can take a leadership role in solving the problems of storm water pollution," said Donald DeHayes, dean of the School of Natural Resources. "Many states are watching how Vermont will handle this, and the University of Vermont is providing the scientific research to help people make decisions."

One panel discussion will be "Redesigning the American Neighborhood: Cost Effectiveness of Interventions in Storm Water Management," a project by Breck Bowden, Patrick Professor for Watershed Science and Planning and several UVM colleagues.

Other panel discussions will discuss educating and involving community members; the status of Potash Brook, a stream that flows through South Burlington to Lake Champlain; and future cooperative ventures.

The public is welcome, but space is limited. A registration fee of \$25 covers the workshop, light breakfast, break and lunch. E-mail [Murphy MacLean](mailto:Murphy.MacLean) or call 656-4057.

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[News Briefs](#) | [Events](#) | [Notables](#)

[Print This Issue](#) | [Print Past Issues](#) | [About Us](#) | [Feedback](#)

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

NOTABLES

Oct. 22, 2003

Awards and Honors

Harold Leitenberg, professor emeritus and founder of the clinical Ph.D. program in psychology, will receive the 2003 Outstanding Contribution by an Individual for Educational/Training Activities award from the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy on Nov. 21 in Boston. Leitenberg was named founding director of the Ph.D. program in clinical psychology in 1969 and established the Behavior Therapy and Psychotherapy Center in 1972, which provided clinical services to the community and funded between six and 10 graduate students a year. Leitenberg is also the author of four books and over 100 journal articles.

Luis Vivanco, assistant professor of anthropology, received a 2004 Fulbright fellowship to teach a graduate course on "Culture and Globalization in Central America" at the University of Costa Rica. He will also conduct research on Costa Rica's national sustainable tourism certification program.

Publications and Presentations

Caroline Beer, assistant professor of political science, recently completed a book, titled, "Electoral Competition and Institutional Change in Mexico" published by the University of Notre Dame Press.

Declan Connolly, associate professor in education, was an invited speaker at the U.S. Ski Federation and Vermont Alpine Racing Association's annual meeting on Oct. 18 in Killington. Connolly spoke on nutritional concerns for cold weather athletes.

Judith Cohen, associate professor in nursing, **Mary Val Palumbo**, manager in the office of Nursing Workforce Research, Planning, and Development, and **Betty Rambur**, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences, had a chapter published in the book, *The Nursing Shortage: Strategies for Recruitment and Retention in Clinical Practice and Education*. The chapter, "Combating the Nursing Shortage: Vermont's Call to Action," focused on Vermont's efforts to address the nursing shortage.

Judith Cohen has been selected to be a member of a national E-mentoring project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Women's Bureau. Group E-Mentoring in Nursing uses Internet technology to facilitate mentoring, allowing participants to communicate with each other regardless of time and distance. The GEM-Nursing community presently consists of hundreds of students and nurse mentors from across the country.

J. Tobey Clark, lecturer in electrical and computer engineering and director of instrumentation and technical services, gave a talk titled, "The Future of Clinical Engineering," in August at the World Congress on Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering in Sydney, Australia. The triennial event was sponsored by the International Union for Physical and Engineering Sciences in Medicine, the International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering, and the International Organization for Medical Physics. Clark was also part of the Pan American Health Organization-sponsored faculty at the July Advanced Clinical Engineering Workshop held in Roseau, Dominica for representatives from ten eastern Caribbean nations.

In Memoriam

David Kinsey, emeritus associate professor of music, died on June 19 in Burlington. Professor Kinsey retired from the department in 1983, after having served as a teacher of piano performance and counterpoint for over thirty years. "David Kinsey was possessed of a wonderful intellect, marked by the passion and humor that have been hallmarks of so many great musicians throughout time," said music professor and colleague David Neiweem.

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

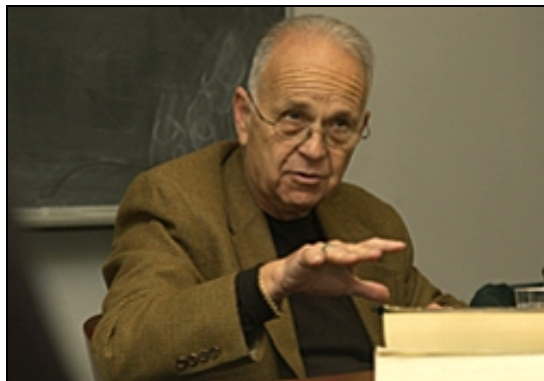
PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

Fishing for Controversy

By Kevin Foley



Stanley Fish, the outspoken critic and author, brought his challenging views to four days of classes and public events at UVM. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Stanley Fish, a literary and social critic who consistently manages to infuriate critics left and right, spent four days at UVM trying to demolish ideas long cherished in universities: the sanctity of free speech, the endless scope of academic freedom, the notion that university administrators are soulless bureaucrats whose green-eyeshade gazes stupefy all they survey.

The dean of the College of Letters and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago and author of

Surprised by Sin, a canonical work of criticism that introduced ideas that still dominate Milton scholarship, spent his time on campus visiting undergraduate and graduate classes, speaking at public events on Milton, university administration and freedom of speech, and inspiring, at least for Lisa Schnell, the associate professor of English who organized his visit, “the best hallway conversations I’ve ever had here.”

The visit, which was sponsored by the Department of English’s Buckham Fund, was intended in part to, in Schnell’s words, “stir things up.”

This it did.

Free-speaking Fish

The scholar, who tends to worry more about being boring than giving offense, opened an Oct. 16 “free speech forum” featuring a dialogue with President Daniel Mark Fogel by reading the text of the First Amendment. Fish went on to argue that academic freedom protects only a professor’s right to teach and research within his or her discipline, and that freedom of speech hardly applies at all within the university: he would forbid faculty members from placing leaflets promoting political and social views on their doors, because a professor’s office is a site of instruction.

The audience, by and large, was unsympathetic to his points — especially in regards to ideologically charged door decorations and discussions.

“I stand comfortably to the left of Dean Fish on this,” Fogel said when it was his turn to speak, indicating their relative positions on the Ira Allen Chapel stage. “Any fear I had that we might agree enormously has been dispelled.”

But the two professors-turned-administrators did, in fact, agree on many points — the obligation of universities to regulate hate speech and “fighting words,” the special resonance of words from university administrators and the concomitant obligation for leaders to weigh what they say carefully, and the dangers of allowing the university to become overly responsive to the currents of partisan political discourse.

Their widest differences might be attributed partly to Fish’s rhetorical enthusiasm. After emphasizing again and again that the First Amendment merely forbids *Congress* from making laws abridging free speech, Fish said that, say, a private university should use its

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[Assaying the Spine](#)

The 26 intricately linked vertebrae that comprise the spine are among the body’s most troublesome parts — back ailments are the second-leading cause of missed work days, and treatment costs are in the billions annually. Those painful facts inspire many doctors to criticism: The back is a lousy piece of structural engineering, they say, an evolutionary kludge. Pain is the price of walking upright.

[Environmentally Clean Vibes](#)

Anna Borofsky is standing in the middle of a sea of trash at a former air force base in northern Maine. The 1999 UVM graduate is about to spend the next seven hours orchestrating the cleanup of 700 tons of garbage produced by 70,000 Phish fans.

legal right to regulate employee expression for the purpose of barring political asides from the classroom.

"If, in the context of an Introduction to Physics course, [an instructor] announces and promotes his opinion on withdrawal from Iraq, or the wisdom of going into Iraq, he should be fired, not by the state but by his administrator, because he is acting as political agent. There should be a line an instructor should not cross..." Fish said. (Under questioning from the audience, Fish's answers indicated that these "lines" are dependent on circumstances. Political discussion in an academic context is generally acceptable to Fish — his unfortunate physics instructor could, for example, probably critique missile defense in class.)

Fogel was more lenient. Paraphrasing Wordsworth, he suggested that faculty members are human beings speaking to other human beings, and at times might need to speak "out of the fullness of that humanity." Faculty, therefore, should be able to express opinions on matters outside of their disciplines in class without risking being fired.

Fish admitted that his purist views on academic speech were unpopular, but he vigorously argued for them all the same, repeatedly attacking the idea that universities have some special burden to promote democracy and free speech in everything that they do. "We in universities are not in the democracy business," he said. "What we do, when we're doing it, is teach and learn."

What universities do

The headline talk of Fish's visit, "Take This Job and Do It" on Oct. 14, laid out his approach to university administration. Fish, who built two extremely highly regarded and controversial academic departments of the 1980's and 1990's through his leadership of Duke University's English department and the Johns Hopkins Humanities Center, sees administration as creatively fulfilling and more about facilitating than dictating.

He told an audience of 150 at the Fleming Museum auditorium that when people ask him "Why administration?" it is with a tone similar to what they would use for the question "Why prostitution?" His answer: "Because it is an interesting intellectual task."

Fish argued for the relevance of administration as a task distinct from being a faculty member, but essential to faculty enterprise. While he has no time for critics who accuse administrators of "forgetting they are faculty" (forgetting professorial ties is part of an administrator's job, Fish believes), he believes that the key object of administration is to creatively seize entrepreneurial opportunities and accidents with the sole goal of helping faculty do their work better.

In typical Fish fashion, his administration talk didn't shy away from seeming contradiction. At one point, Fish said that he is a "classic instance of someone who is compulsive, who has the need to implement managerial control." And yet, he said, he sees his job as helping, say, a political science department reach its fullest potential by "adopting its self-conception as if it were mine."

He went on to explain that he chose his current deanship in Chicago because of its challenge.

"I just like to clean things up no matter where they are," said Fish, who added that he vacuums his apartment twice a day. That sensibility, he said, is key to his style as an administrator: "I don't dictate or inspire your teaching or research. I'm here to remove structures that impede or drain those energies."

Passing the Buckham

The Buckham endowment supports a number of English department speeches and events throughout the year, with the scholar-in-residence program the annual headliner. Schnell is excited about the strong quality of past and future Buckham scholars. Of course, as the program attracts visitors of increasing prominence, it makes it harder to find subsequent guests in the same league. "Next year is Michael Ondaatje. How are we going to match that?" Schnell said, clearly relishing the challenge that she and her colleagues will face.

NEWS BRIEFS

EVENTS

NOTABLES

SEARCH

PRINT THIS ISSUE

PRINT PAST ISSUES

FEEDBACK

UVM HOMEPAGE

Assaying the Spine

Research snapshot: James Iatridis, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, and director

By Kevin Foley



Back mechanics: Mechanical engineer James Iatridis uses a worldwide wide web of collaborators to chart the complex interplay of materials, motion and molecular biology in the human spine. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

The 26 intricately linked vertebrae that comprise the spine are among the body's most troublesome parts — back ailments are the second-leading cause of missed work days, and treatment costs are in the billions annually. Those painful facts inspire many doctors to criticism: The back is a lousy piece of structural engineering, they say, an evolutionary kludge. Pain is the price of walking upright.

James Iatridis, assistant professor of mechanical engineering and founder of

the Spine Biomechanics Lab, disagrees.

"Back pain is the price of sitting in a chair all day," he says in his Votey office. "It's the outcome of industrial society."

But as an engineer, it's not the pain that intrigues Iatridis about the back, it's the structure. His team brings an eclectic package of expertise (from materials engineering to environmental modeling techniques to orthopedics to cell biology) to understand how mechanical events generate biological responses within the fragile intervertebral discs that cushion the spine.

The work, which is supported by a National Institutes of Health grant and a recent three-year, \$240,000 grant from the Whitaker Foundation, is geared toward gathering data and finding correlations that will help develop ways to detect degenerative disc disease early and, hopefully, facilitate the creation of less invasive and more successful ways to repair intervertebral discs. Another line of study involves developing models and simulations that measure healthy and damaging loads on the spine, and how tissue responds to damaging events. The different prongs of his group's efforts has lead Iatridis in dozens of intellectual directions, but he remains unabashedly an engineer. And from the perspective of his specialty in materials, the spine gets a bad rap.

"The spine has all the complexity you want, properties that are different in ever dimension. It's not exactly solid, but it's not a liquid either," he says, picking up speed and enthusiasm. "It's a fiber-reinforced composite laminate — the same kinds of layers as your skis. It's just a great, fascinating material."

Strengthening relationships

Iatridis fires up his computer and leaps into the story of his early detection project, which is working to use magnetic resonance imaging not just to image the spine, but to give an indication of its material properties through measures of its composition. Tying spectrographic data on fixed-charge densities to measured levels of indicator substances like glycosaminoglycans, which help regulate the health and function of discs, could eventually give doctors an early indicator of impending problems.

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[Stanley Fish](#)

Stanley Fish, a literary and social critic who consistently manages to infuriate critics left and right, spent four days at UVM trying to demolish ideas long cherished in universities: the sanctity of free speech, the endless scope of academic freedom, the notion that university administrators are soulless bureaucrats whose green-eyeshade gazes stupefy all they survey.

[Environmentally Clean Vibes](#)

Anna Borofsky is standing in the middle of a sea of trash at a former air force base in northern Maine. The 1999 UVM graduate is about to spend the next seven hours orchestrating the cleanup of 700 tons of garbage produced by 70,000 Phish fans.

He's also interested in measuring intervertebral cell response to disc compression and immobilization, and setting up living spinal environments in the lab that could be used to safely test genetic and chemical therapies for disc problems. As his work takes a biological turn — Iatridis says his take on biomechanics involves “a capital ‘B’ and a capital ‘M,’ an equal weighting of the two” — making progress and attracting grants in a crowded field has required him to expand his web of relationships.

“You compete day to day as best you can by making collaborations with excellent people,” Iatridis says. “I felt like I needed a lot more biological skills. How do you get them? You set up a collaboration.”

Iatridis works with researchers at MIT, McGill and elsewhere, but one of his deepest collaborations involves the AO Research Institute in Davos, Switzerland. AO, a non-profit institute with ties to a Swiss pharmaceutical company, has exchanged post-docs, master's students and undergraduates with the school. In Burlington, Iatridis has worked with Ian Stokes in the Department of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation, Jeffrey Laible, an environmental engineer with expertise in modeling soil transport, Helene Langevin in neurology, Jun-Ru Wu in physics, and others.

The range of external and internal collaborators, Iatridis says, is typical of modern biomechanics. Over a generation or two, the field has moved from clinical specialists teaching themselves some engineering, to highly specialized divisions of labor. That's an aspect of the work he particularly enjoys.

“You might want to bring a chemist and biologist together with an experimentalist and a theoretician, depending on the problem,” he says. “The work forces you to be able to communicate with people outside of your specialty so you can form these exciting combinations to solve problems.”

“Research Snapshot” is a new occasional feature of *the view* profiling a UVM investigator and his or her research interests. Suggestions for future profile subjects are welcome at theview@uvm.edu.

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UVM HOMEPAGE

Environmentally Clean Vibes

By Jon Reidel



Converting "hippiecrites": When UVM alumna and eco-entrepreneur Anna Borofsky meets jam fans whose actions don't meet their ideals, she doesn't get mad, she gets cleaning. (Photo courtesy of Clean Vibes.)

her ecological mission was having such an impact on young concertgoers, why was she knee-deep in enough refuse to fill a city dump?

After a brief scan around the former Loring Air Force Base-turned massive receptacle, and the 70 people she's hired to clean it up, Borofsky realizes that not only is she educating her employees, who include UVM students and alumni, but also the people who responded to her company's contest that resulted in the recycling of 100 tons of waste. Other contests and promotions seem to be having a positive effect as well.

Borofsky is subtly educating a young generation of Americans in a setting that may have a more lasting impact than more formal methods of teaching about environmental issues.

"Fans of jam bands like Phish and the Dead tend to think of themselves as environmentally conscious, but their actions don't always show it," says Borofsky. "We like to call them 'hippiecrites.' But the fact that a lot fans are responding to our raffles and other ideas shows that they're starting to respond, and that they share the same values as us. I think we're educating people in sort of an alternative way. Even though I feel like a camp counselor sometimes, I'm getting the opportunity to educate an entire popular culture through music."

More than trash talk

Borofsky and her partner Evanglyn Morse, devised a program that gives fans who turn in five bags of trash a chance to win autographed CD's and other band-related items. Green bags are distributed for recyclable items and clear bags for trash. Handing in five bags gets fans an "I Help Keep The Scene Clean" t-shirt and a raffle ticket for the more coveted items. Borofsky has other ideas to promote recycling, such as a food waste diversion program that would separate pre-consumer food waste from trash produced by the 100 or so food vendors that work major outdoor festivals.

The response has grown, resulting in more cleaning up by fans, and an easier workload for Borofsky's crew, which has also become more efficient. This combination has resulted in Clean Vibes being able to cut its cleanup time in half. It took the company 14 days to clean up Phish's Great Went Festival in Limestone in 1998, but only half that time at the 2003 It Festival at the same location.

At the latter concert, Clean Vibes used more than 60,000 trash bags and 1,200 pairs of

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It's moments like these that the co-owner of Clean Vibes, an environmentally conscious concert-cleanup company in Portsmouth, N.H, wonders how her profession relates to her undergraduate thesis on environmental education. If

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[Stanley Fish](#)

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[Assaying the Spine](#)

The 26 intricately linked vertebrae that comprise the spine are among the body's most troublesome parts — back ailments are the second-leading cause of missed work days, and treatment costs are in the billions annually. Those painful facts inspire many doctors to criticism: The back is a lousy piece of structural engineering, they say, an evolutionary kludge. Pain is the price of walking upright.

latex gloves to collect and haul away 300 tons of garbage. More than six tons of plastic and aluminum, and enough glass to fill a 150-yard dumpster, were also collected for recycling.

Cleaning up in the wake of four days of camping and partying by Neil Young fans isn't what Borofsky envisioned herself doing as an undergraduate in the environmental studies program. Although her commitment to environmental education has never waned, it veered slightly off course when she started working for Clean Vibes in 1997, then a division within Boston-based Great Northeast Productions, as a cleanup crew member. After working at such major Phish festivals as Clifford Ball, Great Went, and Lemonwheel, Borofsky was given the opportunity to make an amicable break from Great Northeast and run Clean Vibes with Morse, an environmental conservation graduate of the University of New Hampshire.

The business of the environment

Borofsky credits some of her choice as a professional to the flexibility and self-designed nature of UVM's environmental program, which she says allowed her to explore different fields of interest. Three students completed a research paper on Borofsky and her company and a number of others students and alums have worked for her. As for the business aspects of her chosen profession, that has been learned through trial and error.

"We knew going into it that it would be a challenge from a business standpoint," Borofsky says. "Every step is trial and error. It can be scary because we're very dependent on a very unstable market. If one festival goes wrong, it hurts the entire market. I have to be careful because I can get caught up in the business-side of it and forget why I got into this in the first place."

Clean Vibes continues to clean up about a dozen of the world's largest concert events each summer, including Phish's Camp Oswego festival and the band's four-day campout at Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, which drew 80,000 fans to the heart of the Florida Everglades. She's considering expanding into NASCAR events and festivals with different fan bases such as Ozzfest, but she realizes she's close to reaching the limits of what she can handle.

"I don't see myself running around concert fields cleaning when I'm 40," Borofsky says. "But there will always be a need for it. Americans are messy everywhere — no doubt about it. I feel fortunate to be able to employ and support over 100 people each summer. It provides an atmosphere where they can meet people with similar interests and talk about their environmental beliefs."

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