THE JOHNSTON CENTER'S
COZ McNOOZ
Coming Soon....

45th Renewal
JOHNSTON
AT HOME
&
IN THE
World
FEBRUARY 14-16, 2014

www.redlands.edu/johnstonrenewal2014
November 2013

Greetings Johnston Community!

It has been a long time since the last Coz, but you’ve been on my mind more than usual. In fact, with the 45th Renewal just around the corner, you’re practically all I’ve been thinking about. And I’m certainly not the only one. Students, faculty, staff, and alumni across the country are working hard on the weekend’s plans. And you’re thinking about it too, right? I hope you’ve visited the Renewal website. You can find all sorts of information there, including information about pricing, hotel accommodations, mini-courses, and our very own interactive Johnston Renewal map. On-line and paper registration will also be available soon. We’ll keep you updated via email and Facebook. If you don’t think we have your address, now is the time to let us know! It is going to be a great weekend of celebration and renewal. You won’t want to miss it. For all the details, check out:

Of course, we’re multi-taskers here. As is our way, we always have a lot going on. In this Coz, you’ll find out about our first 2013 alumni speaker, a student award, student classes, a new member of our staff, the 2013 & 2014 Summer Seminars, Vintage Johnston, and more.

Happy reading and see you in February!
Kelly Hankin, Director and Professor of Film Studies

JOHNSTON’S NEW RESIDENT HALL COORDINATOR:

ADAM GHOVAYZI

In the summer of 2013, Johnston welcomed new alumnus Adam Ghovayzi as our Resident Hall Coordinator, and we couldn’t be happier! Adam graduated from Johnston May of 2012 with an emphasis in “A Study in Pretending: Film, Theater, and Philosophy.” In addition to his official Residence Life duties, enhancing Johnston’s intentional living/learning community is his most important passion. Adam writes, “Johnston is nothing if not in constant change. While certain core principles remain, the life of the center is in constant flux, and I am taking steps to ensure
that this change continues while still being founded by an understanding of the deep historical nature of this place.” Certainly, Adam has hit the ground running, as he’s constantly finding ways to help students connect living to learning and participate in the gift of community. What does Adam enjoy most about his new position? Top for him is “being able to give back to Johnston, a place which helped him ‘manifest apathy and complacency into tangible products’ and craft what he jokingly calls ‘a B.A. in BS’.” Adam is “truly jubilant” in his new role with the Johnston Center, and we can assure you that his jubilance is infectious.

**PLANNING THE RENEWAL**

On October 5th, students, faculty, and alumni met in Holt Lobby to continue our work on the Renewal. All had a good and productive time.

Renewal planning is fun! (Photo by Carlie Kozlowich, 2014)
Two current students, who also happen to be the children of Johnston alumni, listen attentively to Renewal ideas. (Photo by Carlie Kozlowich, 2014)

Brainstorming. (Photo by Carlie Kozlowich, 2014)
Renewal menu planning in daytime Java (Photo by Carlie Kozlowich, 2014)

**Johnston @ 45** by Professor Julie Townsend

During the initial planning meetings for the 45th Renewal, I was once again impressed by the discussions that involved current students, alums from across Johnston’s history, and faculty members. Given the work involved in the Renewal planning and the ever-present interest among current students about Johnston history, I decided to offer a seminar that would bring together current students (and, as it turns out alums and current staff) to read and talk about Johnston AND, perhaps most importantly, design projects related to the Renewal. Here are descriptions of some
of our projects. We’d love to have alumni contributions to the podcast and mapping projects:

**Mapping Johnston:**
Mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have become a big deal here at the U of R. Broadly speaking, GIS is a way of collecting data, presenting it spatially, and analyzing it. It is a great way to re-imagine data and make it accessible to the spatial learner!

Several Johnston students have incorporated mapping into their Graduation Contracts – and two have even gone on to get Master’s degrees in our GIS program. For the Johnston alumni map, current students Devin Wright and Leigh Mitchell have joined up with alumna Victoria Beckley (’13) to design an interactive Johnston Map. Devin’s interest in this began with Mapping Ancient Christianity, a Proudian May term course. Leigh has integrated GIS in many of her courses, and has assisted environmental studies and sociology/anthropology classes utilize this mapping program. They would love help collecting data!

**Please email the following to johnstonmap@gmail.com:**
Name:
Graduation Year:
Emphasis:
Location (City, State):
Current Endeavors: Interests:
Contact (email address, facebook, personal website):
Photo (Send a jpeg please):
Planning to Attend Renewal?:

Devin, Leigh, and Victoria will populate the map and you’ll be able to access it very soon to find long lost friends and see Johnston in the world.

*Current Students Leigh Mitchell and Devin Wright*

"mapping" Johnston then and now!
Podcasting “This Johnston Life”
Dear Johnston alumni, we need your help! As senior and sophomore students, and as the current Community Director and second floor Holt CA, we have our hearts invested in Johnston and love hearing stories about this place. It is grounding and inspiring to learn about those who have been here before us and to connect though our common, yet different, experiences of Johnston. This is why we are creating “This Johnston Life”, a series of podcasts that collects Johnston stories from alumni near and far. The stories serve to create an archive of our history and to remind us all of what we love about Johnston, just in time for the 45th Renewal. We are looking for stories that embody the Johnston spirit: they can be sentimental, funny, ridiculous, sad, happy, bizarre…What are the stories that you like to tell about your time in Johnston? We want to read them!
Please submit to: thisjohnstonlife@gmail.com or, if you want more of an idea of what to write about, or the length, or any other questions, send us an email, and we can send you our list of what we hope to be helpful guidelines. – Giulia Zoppolat and Harlin Kahn

Johnston Books Project
For this project we will read an array of alumni books. We will write a short summary of each one, in addition to crafting a short packet introduction describing the overarching themes of the collective works. For the Renewal, we’ll have a book table. If you’ve published a book and would like to display a copy of it at Renewal, please email us to tell us about it! – Samantha Brusca (Samantha_brusca@redlands.edu) and Anjelica Cortes

Johnston in Video
For Johnston at 45 Ben Silesky, Adam Ghovayzi, and myself are working on a short video project that will aim to be both informational and insightful in terms of what Johnston truly means as of an alternative educational experience. The hope is that this video project will be useful for many purposes. We would like for prospective students to understand and feel the impact that this place can have on an individual. We would like for Johnston alumni to view the video in a nostalgic way to revive a passion for their experience. And we would like the university to gain a deeper connection with the institution by comprehending our unique methodology more fully. All the people working on this project are deeply involved in the community and want to utilize the film medium as a means to share and boost others sentiment of loyalty to The Johnston Center. – Julia Lesser
Mural Project
During my time at Johnston art has been an integral component of my emphasis and heavily incorporated into my community life. I believe most art should be communal, an experience to be shared amongst people that helps foster a sense of togetherness and discourse. I plan to recreate a painting I made of a buffalo skull, but on a much larger scale. In my mind the buffalo in Johnston represents the strength and will to survive, to stay in existence despite adversity and obstacles. I’ve always admired skulls for both their beauty and their symbolism of preservation. I believe skulls illustrate that a form can change and evolve into something different, still hold onto a core piece of what it once was. Thus, my painting will represent the way Johnston has changed yet remained a community of people devoted to integration and interdisciplinary thinking. - Anjelica Cortes

The Johnston @ 45 class meets at 10 am on Fridays… here we are the morning after Halloween festivities!
Current Student Mini-Courses

Mini-Courses

Devin Wright is working with Professor Pat Wasielewski on creating a mini course broadly considering what it means to travel Johnston-style. The idea came from Pat’s experience in creating a Johnston-specific cross-cultural program, what most of us have come to refer to as ‘the Oaxaca thing’. The Johnston process Pat has incorporated into her program is uncommon for most other study abroad/travel experiences. Pat and Devin, want to look at how Johnston travels differently. What sorts of experiences, relationships, and locations do we find to be the most significant, as compared to a more traditional study abroad experience, or even compared to other notions of ‘Johnston travel’. Johnston’s guidelines for the cross-cultural component have changed over our 45 years, have our values within the requirement shifted? In the interest of keeping things fresh, there will be a panel session with the students on the 2014 trip through Skype, while they are IN Oaxaca. The hope is that this perspective, and those of various other Oaxaca alums will create a dynamic array of notions of what Johnston travel is and what is the best for our community here, and our found communities abroad.

Sophie Shuyler and Samantha Brusca are facilitating a mini-course on mental illness. They invite alumni, current students, faculty, and any other members of the community to watch a video clip about the portrayal of mental illness in the media, and then share their personal experiences with mental illness and the stigma surrounding it. This sharing will hopefully open up a wider discussion on how society views and treats mental illness. How do/did students deal with mental illness in college? What role has mental illness played in our emphases and career paths? How have alumni dealt with mental illness in the "real world?” What messages do society and the media send to us about mental illness? These are questions they intend to investigate together, as a way to disintegrate stigma around mental illness and provide support for those who struggle, as well as help those who do not suffer know how to be effective allies.

Julia Lesser and Julie Townsend will facilitate a Movement Lab inspired by the community choreographic work of Anna Halprin. This series of movements and discussion will center on self-perceptions, connections with others, and the communities that emerge from value laden actions.

VINTAGE JOHNSTON

As usual, we had a great time this year at Vintage Johnston. We also celebrated the fact that we’ve been successfully raising money for student projects through this fundraiser for seven years! If you haven’t had a chance to come to Vintage next fall. The event never disappoints!
Lovely Johnston Senior selling raffle tickets. (Photo courtesy of UR Marketing)

Alums Debbie Heap and David Danielson (Photo courtesy of UR Marketing)
Hanna Bratton (2014) talks up Vintage Johnston to some wine enthusiasts. (Photo courtesy of UR Marketing)
JOHNSTON STUDENT WINS FILM CONTEST! 
YAY FOR CARLIE KOZLOWICH

From Carlie ~

*Project Accessible Hollywood* (PAH fest) is a digital media festival created by University of Redlands alum, Christopher Coppola (yes, related to). For this year's festival, Christopher Coppola decided to pit his two schools against one another: University of Redlands, his alma mater, versus San Francisco Art Institute, where he currently teaches film. The main purpose of this year's contest was to utilize Redlands' School of Music and SFAI's film school. A few extra Redlands film students were included in this as well. There were two main contests: a filmmaker's challenge (including a very strict set of requirements, echoing that of the 48-hour film challenge) in which four film teams (two in Redlands and two in SF) worked with four School of Music composers to create a 5-minute paranormal/psychological drama film. The second contest teamed one filmmaker with one composer to make a Tone Poem, which is a film that would visualize music, while the music works to portray image (a reversal of processes in essence). All writing, filming, editing, and scoring took place between Saturday September 21, and Saturday September 28, 2013. The films were then put online for public judging, as well as judged by other directors and composers working in San Francisco. Awards were presented at a closing ceremony in the Frederick Loewe Performance Hall.

The awards I won were the “Filmmaker's Challenge” (with teammates Hannah Lim and Ian Sharpe) and the “Redlands' Tone Poem Creativity award” (with composer Laura Evans), both selected by Christopher Coppola and a team of directors and composers.
Here are links to the videos. Enjoy!

Filmmaker's Challenge: https://vimeo.com/76087282
Tone Poem: https://vimeo.com/76010048

The lovely and talented Carlie Kozlowich, 2014 (photo courtesy of Carlie)
Bulldog-BUFFALO Weekly!

The UR Student Newspaper is often a Johnston affair and this year is no different. Co-edited by Johnston seniors Michael Hardin and Laura Perea, the Bulldog-Buffalo Weekly features many stories about Johnston events, including the two featured below. The first one is about Larry Singer’s return to Johnston for an alumni talk, the second highlights a visiting speaker who came to speak on campus for a student taught Johnston course. Both are reprinted here courtesy of the authors and the newspaper.

Johnston Alum Doesn’t Sell Post-Collegiate Life Short
Ella Hastings (Johnston, 2016)
Staff Writer
“By the way, I never use PowerPoint anymore. If you have enough power and know your point then you are fine.”

Johnston alum Larry Singer visited campus packed with advice like this. An entrepreneur and a man with stories not unlike an “Ocean’s Eleven” screenplay, Larry Singer recanted his experiences after leaving Johnston.

Singer followed Johnston Director Kelly Hankin’s introduction by filling the room with laughter. He started by recounting his first year at Johnston in 1975.

“There were three kinds of kids those days in Johnston, and I was one of the irrepressible geeks, here for the freedom of intellect and education.”

Singer fondly recanted how his dorm floor was nicknamed the “What?” floor, since no one there allegedly had any idea what they were studying. Singer described how different the campus was back then and how much he has changed since he was a student. He chuckled slightly before telling the story of his first haircut in Redlands right before a job interview.

“So I walked into a barber shop, first one in around four years and I said, ‘I have a job interview this afternoon, make me into a Republican.’” Singer motioned to his hair and claimed that he has never changed the hairstyle since. Larry Singer decided to emphasize in Entrepreneurship and left the University having learned “the skills and confidence to be alone while also being involved with a community.”

After leaving the Johnston Center, Larry Singer became the youngest district sales managers at Procter and Gamble. However, Singer did not stay long in sales. Instead he took a job working for social welfare before being recruited by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to help instate a more beneficial child welfare reform in Georgia. Singer returned to entrepreneurship after helping the state of Georgia’s Health and Services Commissioner fix their child welfare problem. He was hired at Hewlett Packard as district manager and he worked for several years earning enough money to support his wife and five children.

“And then I decided to retire,” he recalled. “I was traveling ninety percent of the time and I had five children, I wanted to stay home and be with them.” Singer and his family moved to a farmhouse and he stayed retired for a grand total of three days.

Singer clarified that he couldn’t stay retired because he felt like he had more to do.

“I’ve come full circle, from Johnston to bringing Johnston education further.”

With his most recent job at textbook publisher Pearson North America, the alum brings children the chance to study in a Johnston-esque educational environment; finding their passions, recognizing their goals and having the ability to ask for help.

Ahmed Benchemsi Brings Fresh Insight to Arab Spring

By: Piper Blank

Staff Writer

In 2011, the Arab world erupted with a series of revolutions called the Arab Spring. A new generation of young citizens utilized social media to start fighting for rights they felt had been long denied. Two years later, we are still feeling the effects of those revolutions and the issue is still widely discussed around the world.

Ahmed Benchemsi, a Moroccan journalist and a fellow at Stanford University with the Arab Reform and Democracy program, addressed these and many other issues in his talk in Hall of letters on
September 18.

Rather than focusing on specific countries that were a part of the Arab Spring, Ahmed talked about the larger ideology behind the movement and outside perceptions of Islamic culture. He specifically spoke about what the Arab Spring was lacking: organization and a concrete doctrine that made the revolutionaries different from the Islamists. He then spoke about how societies are not really Islamic and Muslims are not really Muslims. What Benchemsi meant was that just because something is law in an Islamic country—not drinking for instance, does not mean that people do not do it, because they do. He went on to say that, “Islam is not the number one paradigm defining the Arab world, delusion is.” And it is this way, he said, because the norm has become to lie to the government.

Benchemsi is specifically researching how a few Facebook activists managed to start a series of revolutions. In Morocco he started two magazines, TelQuel and Nishan, the two best-selling magazines in Morocco. He was awarded “Best investigative journalist in the Arab World” by the European Union twice, in both 2005 and 2007. Benchemsi did not go into detail about why he left Morocco, simply saying that he could not continue his work and stay in Morocco, so he came to the United States.

Rose Gunson, a senior Johnston student with an emphasis in Global Media Production, wanted to teach young people how to use social media to be journalists. This interest took the form of a class called Citizen Journalism, created and taught by Gunson. The class is currently in session for the fall semester. In order to give her students real world perspective, she brought Benchemsi to campus because he has had first-hand experience living in the Arab world during the tumultuous Arab Spring, and is pursuing his life’s work as a journalist in a country where free press is not a given right.

Benchemsi’s final message was to promote secularism from within the country itself and not from an outside party. In the question and answer session after the talk, students asked about his experience in the U.S. with racism. He responded that Islam is not a race, it is a personal choice, and that is why there is so much miscommunication globally about the Arab world.

Benchemsi concluded by emphasizing that the western world perceives the Arab world as so different from the west, but that is not actually the case. Ahmed said, “When you’re a journalist on the ground you report what is happening—you aren’t talking ideology, you are talking real stuff.”
THE JOHNSTON ALUMNI SUMMER SEMINAR:

A REPORT

By Kevin O’Neill

I never expected it would turn out this way. Two months after the fact I find myself absorbing what happened during the last week in June at the Aldersgate Retreat House in Pacific Palisades. The official title was “Death in Philosophy and Popular Culture.” The event was a Johnston seminar for alumni and friends. What did we do that has me so preoccupied?

We did a lot of things, which I will detail in a minute. But what we really did was talk. We all talked, and we talked all the time. We never seemed to stop talking, and, as we talked, we trusted one another; as we trusted, we formed a community that seemed new. But at the same time it was an old community, one to which most of us had belonged, actively or in spirit, for decades or years. Three among us had never, except indirectly, belonged to that community at all. By week’s end those three were as much part of it as our oldest member.

Together we made Johnston happen all over again. As it always has, and always will, when people come together to learn, by listening to each other and by teaching each other. Johnston continues to prove itself a moveable feast that can spring into life wherever and whenever people with the right intentions come together.

What did we do as we talked? We met for seven days, from Friday dinner on the 21st through lunch on Friday the 28th. One day was devoted to my presentations on death in philosophy (morning session on Saturday) to death in American popular culture.
(afternoon session Saturday). This was followed by a communal dinner in our oak-paneled dining room, where we all crowded around one long table. Sunday, after a shared lunch, we spent a single long session, that ran more than five hours, in which every seminar member recounted his or her experience with death. Dinner followed.

I decided, in classic Johnston fashion, that seminar members knew enough about many of the authors we were slated to discuss to run all the subsequent sessions. So, all day Monday, Tuesday morning, and Thursday all day – five two to three hour sessions, teams of seminar members ran the discussion and made brief presentation.

On Tuesday afternoon Bill McDonald graced us with his presence and gave a brilliant two and half hour presentation on death in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. After more discussion we all repaired to a local Persian café, where we shared a grand meal and Bill generously donated select bottles from his storied cellar. We were joined by Dena Gilbert, our Redlands Alumni office liaison, who had proved invaluable in setting up the nuts and bolts arrangements for the week. Wednesday morning a battered van showed up at Aldersgate to transport the seminar to a day at the original Forest Lawn in Glendale. There we were received by my friend Galen Goben, a grief counselor and ordained minister, and his associate, and offered an extensive introduction to how Forest Lawn does business and how it handles grieving families. After Larry Singer had finished grilling Galen about how Forest Lawn maximized its profits, we visited the ‘store’, rooms where caskets, memorial urns and jewelry, as well as lists of services and prices, are displayed. There was a separate, unnerving room that offered coffins for infants and children, as well as stuffed animals and children’s funeral clothing. This room made an impression, as you will read in the comments that follow.

We lunched together with Galen at a local Greek-Armenian restaurant, then returned to the park. There, among other activities, we searched out the grave of Dick DeLauer, a high level TRW executive and former undersecretary of defense who also happened to be an original Johnston Overseer as well as the grandfather of seminar member Alison DeLauer. Alison had described how close she was to her grandfather.
and also how, because of family issues, his funeral had only been attended by four people, of whom Alison was one. She had always felt uneasy about this because her grandfather had been a public figure with scores of friends and associates. When we found his grave, we spontaneously formed a circle around it. Someone suggested that we hold hands, which we did. Then Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann offered an impromptu but powerful prayer. Without planning it, we had just held a proper funeral service for Alison’s grandfather, and for one of Johnston’s most vocal and stubborn early defenders.

Typical of Johnston, we spent a good deal of time at dinner that night arguing about the hand-holding, which some people found very uncomfortable. We had a raucous, good-natured argument about how we had conducted the funeral! Anyway, that night we went to our home in the heart of Los Angeles and feasted on a meal prepared and served by Layne Drebin (Johnston ’77) whose husband John Murphy was a seminar member and whose son Leo, who was also present helping his mom, is a current Johnston student.

Thursday was back to two-a-day sessions, which kept getting longer as the week went on. That day was largely devoted to discussions of and arguments about the possibility of an afterlife, and as usual the conversation extended through dinner and beyond.

Friday, people began to depart. That morning, among leave-takings and hugs, my friend Shirley Hirschberg, a person who has worked with grieving people for thirty years, offered practical advice and information about the grieving process, and she stayed well after the morning session answering questions and offering her suggestions. Friday lunch was our last act together. But almost immediately emails began to fly, and soon the group had decided, without a hint from me – I had long since assumed my proper advisory rather than directive role – to meet again, at the 2014 Renewal, for an extra day so we could cover some of the ideas we did not get to during the week.
I cannot think of a better indicator of the rightness of the Johnston form of life than this: people busy with other things, people from all over the country, agreeing to tack a day unto a reunion to finish a class!

This account is minimalist because I want to leave plenty of room for the participants to tell their impressions. Here, then, is a collection of excerpts from emails written in the wake of the 2013 Johnston Alumni Seminar. Note: I have also collected writings that came to me after the seminar ended. I have posted them at the following URL, for your edification.

We will begin with comments from the three "outsiders", people who are not graduates of Johnston but who are connected to people who are.

The first comment is from Sarah Lawton-Speert, whom Rabbi Patricia Carlin-Neumann invited to participate:

I want to thank every last one of you for your warmth, inclusiveness, and hospitality. I was like an interloper into your vibrant family – and you welcomed me. I appreciate that deeply. I felt a bit like a refugee looking for a country – and I have decided that I want to apply to immigrate. Yours is a rich, generous, stimulating country –

I have pure memories of the losses that each of us has endured and how some of those experiences tempered the steel in us. I thank everyone for those memories and the wisdom that each of us will derive from them. I particularly thank people for their respectful stance to the stories retold. It felt like a risk for me to share my peace with all of you I don't so briefly – and I haven't been sorry.

Warmly and with thanks, Sarah.
The second comment is from John Murphy, who is a professor at DeVry Institute in Los Angeles, and whose spouse, Layne Drebin, as well as his son, Leo, are members of the Johnson community.

John wrote this:
I found Kevin O'Neill's "Death in Philosophy and American Popular Culture" alumni seminar a profound experience. As a parent of a current student (Leo '15) and the husband of a graduate (Layne '77), I was happy to be accepted by a welcoming community that attests well to the Buffalo Spirit and the mutual trust we all placed with each other as we studied a sensitive and challenging subject. Unlike probably any other topic, it confronted us with the type of inquiry that combined the intellectual with a personal in a way that demanded open-ended discussion.

I admired the confidence Kevin placed in each of us to meet the difficult material on our own terms. Readings led to our own investigations and I liked the way he set it up so subsequent discussion sessions were introduced by each of us, tied to our own interest or expertise. This is to establish the foundation for, as the week progressed, increasingly intense and deeper exchanges as we had an individual investment in the outcome.

The third "outsider" comment comes from my partner, Dorothy Clark, who is not a complete outsider, but whose observations throw a compelling light on what we were doing:

I was profoundly moved by my experience. I had had some exposure to Johnston – reunions, graduations, and I knew its history, its philosophy, so I thought I kind of knew Johnson. But I didn't. Not until that week with all of you at Aldersgate. I now have a noncognitive, visceral understanding of what Johnson is in me. It is lighted a passion inside of me. I was/am astonished by the strength of the community, by the passions of, by the profound trust created in space of learning and feeling that produced what can only be described as a transformational experience. I teach a large, urban, commuter school right now, somehow, want to create accounts don't be in
sense of community. In fact I am now driven by the ideas of community I experienced with all of you.

(As you see, the Johnson spirit can reach out and embrace people with extraordinary, even alarming, speed. It makes me understand that there are no strangers in a community based on a shared love of learning and a high level of trust. We should always be aware of that and work to make sure that we are worthy builders of this extraordinary world.)

The Alumni

(Note: One member of the seminar is not represented here. But John Rubio was a thoughtful member who wrote many sophisticated glosses on the hardest readings and participated fully in every discussion, helping lead one of our discussions.)

TJ Stutman, whose extraordinary honesty and gift for writing added so much to the seminar, writes this:

The first night at Aldersgate, we went around the table each mentioning why we came so close to the beach only to talk about death. I spoke about wanting to revitalize a part of myself that I sometimes forget exists outside of Johnston. I feel like a better person when I remember that I came from Johnson. At person takes on new intellectual challenges for sheer education, thinks creatively, and takes inspiration from a close community of fellow strivers. I lose this person sometimes, when I been away too long. The alumni seminar was to help me recall my potential to be that person.

I probably cried more in our week at Aldersgate then I have in the decade plus since I left Redlands. I wasn't grieving a recent loss. I cried just when grasping the inevitability of death. No one wants to die without realizing potential. The children's room at Forest lawn broke me, just by reminding me that we each owe a death, even the innocent and invincible. We all fulfill our potential to die.
On the last day, our grief counselor addressed my experience; advising me that crying like I did and coming to grips with the role of death will make me a better father. And that's fitting. That's who I want to be. And I couldn't have cried without close-knit group of Johnstonians inspiring me, and reminding me who I am.

I've forgotten lots of stuff since graduation, but I never want to forget that. What a blessing to be able to remember that potential. To be a better father, a better person, a better philosopher. And someday a finer corpse.

Responding to TJ's writing, Kathryn Green wrote:

Inspired by TJ's eloquent words and the voice I hear when I read them, and by the bright sun shining through the leaves of the loquat tree outside my window, I will add that being at the seminar and participating in it reminded me to listen without speaking and then to respond instead of reacting.
In gratitude.

Larry Singer is a busy, busy man. His original Johnston concentration was in Entrepreneurial Studies and he has enacted that degree in his life, working with several tech startups. His work – running a major project for one of the world’s largest textbook publishers - kept him from joining the seminar until Tuesday but from the moment he arrived he contributed. His evocation of his recently deceased father at the dinner Dorothy and I hosted at my home (a dinner that Layne Drebin graciously prepared and served, with help from her son Leo) moved everyone and his sharp questions to Galen Goben, the Forest Lawn grief counselor, deepened the week's take on death considerably.
Here is what Larry wrote:

I take this opportunity to again thank all of you for your indulgence of my irritating comments and goings! It is so rare for me to find myself with a group from whom I expect nothing commercially, and will expect nothing from me, other than to join them in the community of intellectual strivers. In fact the only other time I enjoy this as an adult is a Torah study, and this event had a similar spiritual bent. Even in those Torah sessions I don't have a sense of trust, faith and I can be myself and be supported by loving and caring people who share the Johnston bond in a way that resembles the bonds that we ordinary really only half with family.

The timing of the seminar was great for me ... to process my father's death with the intellectual framework that made my feelings more accessible worked for me. So thank you Kevin for all of your hard work. Thank you all.

Bambi Schmidt is as busy as Larry. She just wrote her comments because she has been in Europe all summer. (It is an interesting aside that Bambi was instrumental in hiring away the person who was running Aldersgate at the time of the seminar. He now manages a women's club in San Diego.) Here is what Bambi said:

What is apparent immediately is that my fear of an 'ultimate end' has evaporated. The week long experience together was proof at both a visceral and a thoughtful level that who 'I' am is a conversation and stands a chance, with all of our work together, as a community, to morph, live on and represent the essence of who I am more than my own current, very present and real individual piece/expression of it. Johnston and the utopian aspirations to forge a world beyond self aggrandizement and survival lives!

Allison De Lauer’s grandfather, Richard "Dick" De Lauer, was an original Johnston College trustee. He was an undersecretary of defense in the Reagan Administration, an important executive at TRW, and instrumental in establishing and maintaining the American missile defense during the Cold War. And he was an early and persistent
defender of the Johnston program in all its 1969 countercultural glory. Such are the complexities of history.

Allison revealed that she was very close to her grandfather and that his original funeral had been unfortunate, for reasons we need not go into. In any event, we searched Forest Lawn and found his grave and, spontaneously, formed a circle and held each other’s hands as Patricia Carlin-Neumann intoned prayers. We conducted an impromptu and much-delayed Johnston funeral for one of our own. It was a powerful experience. Of course, this being Johnston, we had a long discussion after the fact about how it felt to hold hands, how uncomfortable some of us felt, how authentic it was nonetheless, and on into the night. Would it be Johnston otherwise?

After the seminar ended, Allison, who is a poet by vocation, sent this:

Thank you everyone for an incredible week. Especially to Kevin for bringing us all together. I am still processing the week but I feel deeply privileged to have heard your stories and share at this time with you.

I thought I remembered how special Johnston was – but I am reminded even more that this important living, soulful, dynamic, legacy – that we are all a part of – continues to be a strong force in my life. I just feel lucky. And while the judging mind will cast doubt on the nature of these exchanges, the point of it all, do we really have to hold hands, (!?!) etc. – I know that I carry a bit of each of you with me always – your ideas – your words – and your commitment to bear witness to this very difficult part of life, we all had the courage to explore. And I am so grateful.
Nacole Haslep is an attorney in Anchorage, Alaska. She is currently working for an organization that manages health care for a large variety of native peoples. She sent all of us fascinating information about the place of death, death rituals and suicide in different native cultures, which is included in the material you can access by using the URL provided with this article. Nacole wrote:

The alumni seminar was a rare gift. It offered the best of Johnston and more. Know Neil’s generosity and genius continued to be phenomenal. Not only did he integrate a breathtaking variety of insights and perspectives into the seminar, but also he gave us a glimpse of his own research and created a space where the students greatly enriched the seminar by integrating their own knowledge and experiences into the discussion.

We had several fabulous speakers, including the incomparable Bill McDonald. You know a wild rumpus is at hand when Kevin kicks off the key discussion with a disclaimer – you need a professional philosopher here. This isn't for amateurs! Don't try this at home!! Naturally, that simply inspired the undaunted Johnstonians to jump in. Amateurs are not, we literally could not get enough full: we added sessions and materials. We continue discussions during breaks and meals and field trips and deep into the night. We are still emailing new ideas to each other, selecting new things to read together, and planning to meet again. With Kevin's help, we were able to re-create a living/learning environment of great depth in a very short time, and environment the more remarkable for the diversity, openness, courage, friendship and contributions of the students.

Taylor Rockwell's connection to Johnston extends as far back as one can want, almost to the beginning. He, like Larry Singer, survived one of the original, grueling Greek trips. Today he is a clinical psychologist practicing in a small city in Illinois. Taylor has always kept his solid midwestern sensibilities and his common sense and therapeutic
insights helped a lot. What follows are excerpts from what he wrote for publication in the Coz McNooz:

I've been reading all your posts since our fabulous week together ended. I'm particularly touched by Nicole's account of Native American views on death and life in the nature of things. I resonate with that circular view. Step for them is a transition from life as we know it to something else, even if we know not want.

It was/is a little difficult being in the minority as a believer in "something after death". While I got excited and may have seemed fanatical during our afterlife discussions, please understand that my beliefs are completely vague, no clearer than being summed up by the phrase "something after death".

One question I been wondering about for: did any member of our seminar at their view on the afterlife change during the course of the seminar? If yes, what the seminar led to that shift? If not, why not?

Kevin, the seminar was elegantly conceived. Kicking it off on day one with your overview of how you got interest in the topic of death was perfect; it set the tone for the rest of the work we had ahead of us. You then turn the light on the whole group on the second day, inviting all of us, including yourself, to lay out all of our personal experiences with death. How grounding. And how touching to hear you reveal yourself that day, just as the rest of us did – I think it had a profound effect on everything that came after.

When we discuss the philosophers, Kevin, you suggested, Johnson style that each of us lead a two-hour segment on one philosopher. I was up first, with our youngest alumni, Eli, class of 2013, co-leading.

I will never forget, Kevin, when you suggested that each philosophers like a painter, offering his own interpretation of the subject matter, whether it's Dasein, the Id, or the texts that Derrida
deconstructs. What I heard is that this work is less about truth claims and more about taking the time to really understand the philosopher’s point of view.

Thank you to Bill McDonald, our guest speaker on Wednesday, for bringing his scholarship to us, with a compelling focus on death in the Iliad. And then his added gifts of a wine tasting and feast at a local café. Thank you thank you thank you, Bill!

I love that our seminar was attended by people from all the Johnson decade – 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s and even our youngest and perhaps brightest alarm, Eli Kramer, JC ‘13.

The Aldersgate retreat center, perfectly embraced our Johnston energies. Our first day, we started out in her beautiful rustic chapel, and the first thing we did was bust out their in-line pews to form a circle of pews so we could have a good JC style seminar circle and see each other! The main living room where we also met with transforming into a perfect circle of catches, lounge chairs, rockers, etc., just like every other place I’ve ever seen Johnstonians gather.

Taylor mentions our youngest member, Eli Kramer, who is about to begin graduate school in philosophy of education at Southern Illinois University. We were all captivated by Eli’s fearlessness in joining our group, and by the fact that anyone so young could be so self-possessed and so wise. He wrote a piece in which he compared graduating from Johnston with entering the afterlife. (As Kathryn Green remarked, this very serious seminar was not without humor.)

My Afterlife- Transitioning from being a Johnston undergraduate to being a Johnston alumnus.

Through the graduation review, Johnston Students have the unique chance to attend their own funerals. A Graduation Review gives students the opportunity to see their
impact on the Johnston Community before they leave into the unknown. The student’s advisor is the clergy who eulogizes him or her through the précis. The committee is the student’s family who comes up to speak and reflect on the soon to be departed. Finally, the Johnston community are the mourners. Depending on the individual, they are small or large, intimate or grand, sad or filled with laughter, or most often, some interesting combination of all of the above.

Last January, I graduated early and had the unique privilege to attend my own funeral. Like my eventual biological death, I had always been in denial about what comes after. In my mind I would always be living as a Johnston undergraduate in Bekins or Holt. Life after college seemed unreal. It was something I could imagine but would never truly happen. Yet the more experience one has in a special place, the quicker time seems to move. Soon I found my graduation review upon me, and just as quickly, it passed and I was off into the unknown.

The Johnston Alumni Seminar was my entrance into the Johnston afterlife. Thanks to a generous scholarship made available through the support of Johnston Alumni I was given the privilege to take part in this powerful experience. I found on the other side a range of iconoclastic individuals who had numerous different experiences with Johnston (some only had friends or family who went) but who immediately and clearly were Johnston students. I was humbled to see the care that Johnston Alumni provide to their respective communities. We committed to a seminar where emotions and personal experience not only enriched us, but informed our theoretical understanding of death. We crossed borders between the ironic and the sincere; between heated discussions that lead to impasses; and to ones filled with love and laughter.

This community has opened doors in my post-Johnston life. I have joined Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann on a research project that explores Johnston students’ relationship to service and how Johnston educational practices can address the current crises in American higher education. Hopefully, I will be co-teaching a mini-course with Rabbi Patricia at the next Renewal that will explore these trajectories further. We will be in contact with many of you to interview and/or survey.
The Johnston Alumni seminar in Death in Philosophy and Popular Culture was an experience I will never forget. I am indebted to the generous support of alumni for this opportunity. For those nearing their imminent demise as seniors, I highly recommend finding a way to come to an alumni seminar. Not only is it an immensely rewarding experience for recently graduated students, but it also helps bring a spectrum of experiences to the seminar. Johnston did not die in 1979, but rather found a second life in the ashes. Only in Johnston do we get a chance to live again, and this afterlife is just as real and rich an experience as my time as a Johnston undergraduate.

And how better to end this review of remarkable shared experience then to invoke the words of our informal chaplain, Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann, Director of religious life at Stanford University, as she builds on what Eli said about Johnston and resurrection, and adds a wonderful paragraph that captures something precious, not just about this seminar, but about Johnston, and about any community:

I am hoping to write a Yom Kippur sermon on death, inspired by our time together. As I am going through our notes and the subsequent email correspondence, I am again so appreciative of what we created together, how generously everyone contributed and what Kevin envisioned and brought to life--to paraphrase Eli, a kind of resurrection of Johnston and eternal life for the precious gift of learning in community. The range from the personal and poignant to the philosophical and esoteric meant that there was a place for each of us, and often multiple places, depending upon the discussion, day or digression.

Last night I watched "The Loved One", and both the satire and the setting brought me back to our time there (our visit to Forest Lawn)--Larry's awareness of the astute marketing, TJ's visceral empathy in the children's room, the god-awful video, the earnest grief counselor and of course, our heartfelt send-off to Allison's grandfather... the balance of irony and unabashed care in our motley crew moves me still. Thank you.
Johnston Alumni Summer Seminar 2014

Johnston is delighted to announce the next in our growing series of summer alumni seminars led by Johnston-connected faculty, past and present. This year’s week-long gathering, led by Bill McDonald, focuses on Lawrence Durrell’s interrelated set of four novels, *The Alexandria Quartet* (1957-60), set mostly in Egypt during the WW II era. The choice of the *Quartet* began with several alums from earlier seminars lobbying for its pleasures and challenges as a perfect subject for Johnston’s “unsolitary readers” across the decades. Bill agreed to head up the effort, and Johnston is ready to make it happen.

The seminar will take place at the famous California conference center, Asilomar, on the ocean near Monterey, from the evening of Friday, June 27 to the morning of July 4th, 2014. We must limit enrollment to twenty in order to keep seminar dynamics, and nearly half of those places are already spoken for, so if you are interested, please contact Bill soon at bill_mcdonald@redlands.edu for details and information about costs. There will be some limited scholarship help, much of it donated by alums themselves, for participants, especially recent alums, who want to join.

Our first two seminars, on “Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*” (Bill) and “Death” (Kevin O’Neill), were great successes, and included Johnstonians from the 1970s to the most recent graduating class. This promises to continue those traditions. So if you’re looking for an exciting literary holiday with gorgeous scenery, great food and wine, and a crew of terrific readers, you won’t do any better.