

NEWS BRIEFS

Written by Jaskaran Singh

GIFT CREATES NEW CHAIR OF INDIA STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Starting in September 2007, the University of Alberta will become one of the first postsecondary institutions in Canada to host a chair in classical Indian studies. The creation of the new program owes thanks to a \$1.5 million donation to the Faculty of Arts by the Singhmar family.

The Saroj and Prem Singhmar Chair in Classical Indian Polity and Society, named after the benefactors, was set up to study various aspects of ancient Indian culture, such as economics, philosophy, literature and arts.

"[From 500 BC to 500 AD] was when India was at its zenith. At this time India had contributed a lot to the world in terms of politics, society and education. If we have an understanding through academic pursuits, then we will increase more of an understanding to of India in the modern day," Prem Singhmar said.

The creation of this chair also includes the opening of four new positions in the study of ancient India.

"We are hoping to have people by the September session," Prem Singhmar said.

Of the 40 history professors present at the U of A, none teaches modern or historical India, according to Dean of

Arts Daniel Woolf. Two of the new positions are to occupy the Chair, with the other two being for junior academics: one to focus on philosophy and religion, and the other to focus on Indian economics. And if the four new positions are occupied, this will make the U of A the first university in Canada to teach the period of Indian history from 500 BC to 500 AD.

"We believe that this was a very important era for India, at this time the two big religions of India began, Buddhism and Jainism. There was a lot of work done in literature, the Mahabharata [a great Sanskrit epic of the Hindus] was completed in 1200 BC, and there were further improvements on the Upanishads [a series of Hindu sacred treatises]," Singhmar said.

STUDY FINDS PAINTERS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE KIDS WITH BIRTH DEFECTS

A recent study, done in co-operation with the University of Alberta, shows that heavy exposure to paint thinners and other aromatic solvents can lead birth defects in newborn children.

The study, conducted in the Netherlands by the University of Nijmegen with help from U of A researcher Dr Igor Burstyn, showed that painters are twice as likely to father children with birth defects than carpenters.

The results yielded by the survey didn't exhibit any dramatic or profound irregularities; however, there were slight indicators towards the detrimental effects of solvents, such



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: ERINNE FENWICK

PAINTING A GRIM PICTURE Research has found professional male painters are putting their future of spring at risk.

as decreased birth weight, and a slight increase in birth-defect rates for painters over carpenters.

"We saw an increase in congenital and all birth defects combined. These estimates are some very small numbers but we did see a doubling of risk for painters compared to carpenters," explained Burstyn, the only Canadian participant in the survey.

The study did warn that professional painters, who are exposed to solvents such as those found in industrial paints and thinners, are more at risk due to long-term contact with aromatic solvents.

However, there have been some questions of the validity of the research, and that there may be problems with the methodology used.

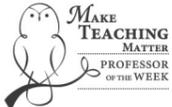
"We lumped them all together, and that's really one of the great weaknesses of the study. For example we had four cardiovascular malformations, two gastrointestinal, one of central nervous system, one eye malformation, and it was all kind of lumped together. These are fairly serious defects, but because we had so few people in the study we could not analyze them separately," Burstyn said.

According to Burstyn, this news shouldn't alarm aspiring artists, or recreational painters fearing that exposure to art materials is linked with this study.

"Generally people who paint recreationally would not get near the level of exposure, they wouldn't be exposed to it day in and day out, for hours and hours as construction workers are," Burstyn explained.

The research was funded in part by the Dutch Union for Construction Workers, according to Burstyn this narrowed the research to long term exposure to industrial strength solvents.

PROFESSOR OF THE WEEK



DR. AL MELDRUM
PHYSICS 114

"Dr Meldrum is **passionate and informed** about the subject material. He clearly **sees value in his students** by encouraging and recognizing good questions. He has clear, reasonable expectations, as well as **engaging lectures**. And, like many good professors, he's interested in **growing with the class** and becoming a better teacher. **Top notch!**"

MAKE TEACHING MATTER!

NOMINATE YOUR OWN PROFESSOR FOR PROFESSOR OF THE WEEK

Excellent teaching is the foundation of an outstanding undergraduate education, and the university community needs to begin to value everyday achievements in undergraduate teaching.

The Students' Union is looking to recognize professors who demonstrate sincere enthusiasm for teaching undergraduates, innovative methods of engaging students in the learning process and a willingness to go beyond what is normally expected of a professor.

Don't let great teaching go unrecognized.

Nominations can be picked up/submitted at any Faculty Association office or InfoLink desk, or at the SU Executive Office front desk. Nominations can also be emailed to the Associate VP-Academic Tasneem Karbani at avpa@su.ualberta.ca.

YOUR GROUP PLAN FOR STUDENT HEALTH



Don't Forget to Submit Your Health & Dental Claims from Last Year

Important notice for students who were enrolled in the GSA Health and/or Dental Plan in 2005-06

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING CLAIMS FROM LAST YEAR (for students covered in 2005-2006)

All health and/or dental claims incurred on or before August 31, 2006 (for the 2005-06 policy year) must be **received** by the insurance company (**Sun Life**) by **November 30, 2006**.

In order to ensure that studentcare.net/works can transfer your claims by the deadline, they must be dropped off at the GSA Office **no later than Tuesday, Nov. 21, 2006**. If you're mailing claims directly to the insurance company, please leave adequate time for delivery. The address for Sun Life is recorded on the back of all claim forms. Claims received after the deadline will not be reimbursed.

Claim forms are available at www.studentcare.net.

GSA Health & Dental Plan
2006/2007

WWW.STUDENTCARE.NET
Take Good Care



University of Alberta
Graduate Students' Association

studentcare.net/works
GSA Office
206 North Power Plant
University of Alberta
Toll-free: 1 866 795-4430

STUDENTCARE
.NET/WORKS

1996-2006
10 years
serving students