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Spring 2011





McGill School of Environment www.mcgill.ca/mse

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Director's Message

by Marilyn Scott, Director of the McGill School of Environment

What a semester! Incredible, intense, inspiring, and maybe even "insane" are just a few words that capture activities over the past four months!

First, we have hired TWO new professors. Adam Millard-Ball will be arriving in July as an Assistant Professor jointly appointed between the McGill School of Environment and the Department of Geography. His background includes Geography degrees from the UK, work as a consultant in the US for several years and a PhD in the area of urban sustainability at Stanford University. Chris Barrington-Leigh will join us in September, as an Assistant Professor jointly appointed between the MSE and the Institute for Health and Social Policy. After training in atmospheric and space physics, he switched fields and obtained his PhD in economics at the University of British Columbia. His current research focuses on a quantitative understanding of the social and economic determinants of life satisfaction and on how to apply these new insights to frame and drive policies for the 21st Century. Watch for their profiles in the Fall Newsletter.

We were delighted to learn that Elena Bennett, one of our professors, was named as one of 20 Leopold Leadership Fellows for 2011. Fellows were selected because of their exceptional scientific qualifications, demonstrated leadership ability, and strong interest in communicating science beyond traditional academic audiences. This is a tremendous honour both Elena, and also for the MSE!

And that's not all! Geoff Garver, one of the graduate students in our Graduate Option in Environment has been appointed by President of the United States, Barak Obama, as one of five U.S. members, to the Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). We are gearing up for a particularly exciting summer. The MSE was delighted to receive seed funding from the Provost Priority Pool to develop a Montreal-Based Field Study Semester that would provide an opportunity for intensive applied learning using McGill and Montreal as



Prof. Marilyn Scott, Director, McGill School of Environment

a big laboratory. One of the secrets to our plan is to have undergraduate students help us design and pilot test the program. Six interns will work together with several of our faculty over the summer, including our newest hire, Pete Parker. He is joining us as a Faculty Lecturer and will play a major role as coordinator and instructor in the Field Study Semester. Most recently Pete has been an instructor at a Field Study Semester based in the Turks and Cacaos Islands in the Caribbean. His background in Hydrogeology and Geographic Information Systems, in Environmental Awareness, and Tourism and Recreational Studies provides the perfect mix for the MSE, and we welcome him to our team!

During the next few weeks, students will be writing exams and submitting final projects, then walking across the platform at Convocation, and making decisions about where to go next. Others will be making decisions about where to start their university education. Today, a prospective student (Jess) and her parents dropped by my office, in the process of scouting out Environment programs. As I explained to them all the amazing aspects of the MSE, it was so exciting to see my two MSE Honours students nodding their head vigorously, and jumping into the conversation. What a great way to kick off the summer!

Marilyn Scott has been chosen as the 2011 recipient of the "Macdonald Campus Award for Teaching Excellence".

The Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences recognizes outstanding teachers by presentation of the Award for Teaching Excellence. The Faculty honours teachers who present course material in an effective and stimulating manner; create innovative teaching methods and have the ability to enhance lecture material.

Marilyn will receive her award at the Spring Convocation, May 27.



Naomi Oreskes on the Climate Change Denial Campaign

by Aaron Vansintjan, MSE Reporter

Dr. Oreskes (Ph.D., Stanford) is a Professor of History and Science Studies and the Provost at University of California, San Diego's Sixth College. Her research highlights the disconnect between the state of scientific debate and the way it was being presented in the mass media and perceived by the American public.



Why has it taken so long for the

public to accept climate change, let alone implement policy changes? Naomi Oreskes says much of this has been due to a network of scientists, think tanks, and corporations practicing "doubt-mongering" and obscuring of scientific facts.

Oreskes visited the MSE to give our annual Public Lecture, which is supported by the Beatty Memorial Fund, and to discuss her book, co-written with Erik Conway, Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured The Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming. We sat down together to discuss her work.

Oreskes believes there a climate change denial industry. She calls it a "network". This network acts upon the idea that they're keeping the U.S. strong, defending the free world, and fighting the communist threat. It's not about profit, quite the opposite; they understand what they are doing as serving their country, as being quite selfless, and that they're patriots.

She thinks it's been hard for scientists to accept that there are people out thee who will knowingly misrepresent data for their own purposes. In a way scientists have been very innocent and even naive about what they've been up against.

The entire interview can be read on the MSE Blog at: http://blogs.mcgill.ca/mse/2011/02/

The podcast of Dr. Oreskes' lecture can be viewed on: http://bcooltv.mcgill.ca/ListRecordings.aspx?CourseID=4506

Environmental Research Symposium April 13-14, 2011

The McGill School of Environment hosted its 4th Environmental Research Symposium on April 13th and 14th.The theme, Global Environmental Change, is motivated by the need to bring together ideas and research findings from different disciplines to develop new approaches to environmental research.

Presentations were made by McGill professors, research associates, and students, and a panel discussion on the challenges of translating environmental research into policy. The panelists included Dr. Norman Yan, who splits his time between the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's Dorset Environmental Science Centre and York University, the Keynote Speaker for the symposium; Dr. David Pearson, Laurentian University/Science North Graduate Diploma program in Science Communication; Prof. David Green, the Director of McGill's Redpath Museum and the former Chair of Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada; and, Prof. Nigel Roulet, former MSE Director who was a contributing author to the 2nd through 4th scientific assessments by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

This distinguished panel debated the challenges of translating environmental science into policy and concrete action in a world driven more by public perception than by scientific consensus. One major challenge is uncertainty: policy makers must make 'black or white' decisions over environmental issues, whereas environmental scientists are trained to report their findings in shades of grey. Among the questions to be addressed are the following: How can scientific findings and their uncertainty be effectively communicated to the public and to government? Are environmental science students being properly trained to interact with stakeholders? Are Canadian policy makers sufficiently receptive to scientists? Must scientists learn to become activists and politicians to bridge the gap between science and action? The panelists will offer insight into these questions from their own experiences dealing with the most pressing environmental issues in our country.

Please check our website in the next few weeks for podcasts of this exciting symposium: http://www.mcgill.ca/mse/symposium/

The winners of the MSE Research Symposium Best Postercompetition are:Ist place:Team of Patrick Dostie: including Linnaea
Fyles, Samantha Sabo, Martinus McEachern2nd place:Sara Statham3rd place:Rowshyra Castaneda



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Montreal-Based Field Internship Semester - Summer 2011

The McGill School of Environment (MSE) has recruited senior undergraduate students, or recent graduates, of McGill University to assist in the design of a Montreal-Based Field Study Semester, centered on inquiry-based learning through large-scale, ongoing applied research on environment and sustainability.

Interns will assist in developing a curriculum for the Montreal-Based Field Study Semester including a description of how students would use their residential living experience to model sustainable living practices, and how lessons learned in one year can best be transferred to the next cohort of students. They will organize a 2-day workshop on pedagogical aspects of active learning. They will also work with faculty to develop inquiry-based active learning modules on sustainable education, sustainability of urban and periurban green spaces, or green buildings and sustainability of the built environment.

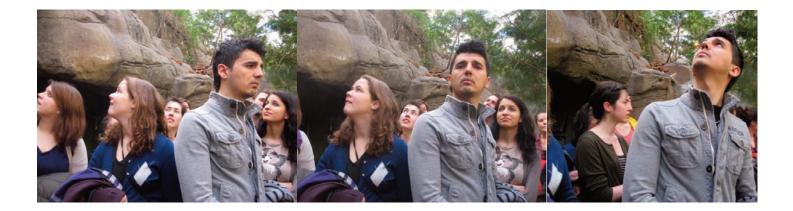
Faculty of Law and MSE Trip to the Montreal Biodome

In Search of the Balanced Lifestyle: A Voyage of Discovery Generously supported by the Mary Brown Fund and the Faculty of Law Career Development Office

MSE and Law students had a rare opportunity of a guided tour to find out what happens "behind the curtain" at the Montreal Biodome Museum, where plants and animals are cared for, and where ventilation and aquatic systems maintain a unique indoor ecosystem.

The mission of Montreal's Nature Museums is to increase public knowledge of nature and related disciplines, to contribute to the study and preservation ob biodiversity and to promote responsible environmental behaviour. The Biodome, whose name means "house of life", shows visitors the "true nature" of the Americas, by offering up their loveliest and most amazing ecosystems. Their goal is to encourage everyone to become more aware of the need to preserve our unique and extraordinary natural heritage.

Two groups of 16 students toured with two biologists/interpreters who work to maintain this "house of life". They climbed stairs, ducked ventilation ducts, walked kilometres of back passages, and poked their heads into "hold tanks" to get a glimpse of stingrays and sturgeon. They walked through rooms of poisonous frogs, anacondas, and macaque monkeys; then got to see what they ate - forzen rats, mice, worms, fish, vegetables, and fruit. Visit our website: http://www.mcgill.ca/mse/public/msenews_students/march2011/ for a gallery of photographs taken by the participants.





Travelling to Cancun for the Climate, but not for the Beaches...

by Maggie Knight, U3 BASc Environment (Hons) & Economics

I was lucky to be one of three McGill students (Amara Possian and Audrey Yank) attending the COP16 climate change negotiations in Cancun, Mexico this past December as part of the Canadian Youth Delegation (CYD), a group of 29 young Canadians from across the country.

During a whirlwind two weeks of negotiations, we witnessed Japan refuse to make emissions reduction commitments under a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, with the support of Canada and Russia (they eventually backed down). We were dismayed to hear Environment Minister John Baird dismiss the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR) as a "sidecar" issue (CBDR is a central principle of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), essentially encompassing the idea that developed nations have a greater historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions as well as a greater ability to adapt and mitigate climate change as compared to developing countries, but that coping with climate change will require a global effort).

After a significant effort by the Mexican government, we saw the return of a sense of trust and cooperation between nations that was lost in the collapse of the COP15 talks in Copenhagen last year. In the final agreement, the 194 nations assembled made some incremental progress, particularly on some of the technical issues which were stumbling blocks in Copenhagen. While some have lauded this as a beacon of hope for achieving a fair, ambitious, and legally-binding global climate treaty later this year at COP17 in Durban, South Africa, others are deeply concerned about the overruling of Bolivia's calls for stronger action during the closing plenary, and ultimately what this means for consensus at the UNFCCC negotiations.

A month after the negotiations wrapped up, we are still debating whether Cancun was ultimately a success or a failure. Certainly we know Canada could do better on the international stage; for the fourth year in a row, we won the "Colossal Fossil" award given by the Climate Action Network to the nation doing the most to detract from progress at the talks.



Jonathan Williams (University of Ottawa) and Maggie Knight, MSE, BA&Sc (Hons) Environment, Minor Concentration Economics staff the Canadian Youth Delegation booth in the Cancunmesse.



Students on Ice Antarctic University Expedition

February 14-27, 2011 Eric Galbraith, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences, McGill University

Launched 10 years ago, the award-winning educational expedition program is an extraordinary opportunity for students to explore and study the region up close and collect specialized scientific data. To date, over 1,500 students, teachers and scientists from around the world have traveled to the Arctic andAntarctic. Though the program has broad range of sponsors from sectors as diverse as private corporations, environmental groups, research organizations and international NGOs, university students are responsible for covering the costs of their trip, which can cost as much as \$10,000. This is the first year McGill will participate,

thanks to Galbraith's efforts – and the hard work and savings by his determined students.

Bringing his students on the trip is a way to empower them with an empirical experience that will demonstrate how and why what happens in Antarctica matters. In addition to writing up research reports upon their return on Feb. 28, Galbraith and his students plan to document their experience and the work they are doing in word and on film.

The expedition had 7 different courses offered on board through 28 different universities, 15 different countries (total of 57 students). The McGill course offered was EPSC 552 Antarctica and the Earth System (focus on oceanography) taught by Eric Galbraith. Five of the 10 McGill students chosen are MSE students:

Nehal Al Tonobey, BSc, Environment, Ecological Determinants of Health - Cellular Domain

Zoe Baker, BA, Faculty Program Environment, Minor in Political Science Dominique de Groot, BA, Faculty Program Environment, Ecology & Earth's Environment Domain

Mya Sherman, BA, Faculty Program Environment, Ecological Determinants of Health in Society Domain, Major in Latin American Studies Tanya Taggart-Hodge, BA&Sc, Interfaculty Program Environment,

Minor in Anthropology

Visit www.uantarctic.org to read about their experience. Watch their YouTube video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=J175DKZO_Uo

Photographs generously shared by Tanya Taggart-Hodge.





Top row, left to right: Karley Campbell, Univ. Manitoba, Prof. Er Fiona Ashman, Imperial College London, Dominique de Groot, Middle row, left to right: Laura Drudi, Medicine, McGill, Maryai Front row, left to right: Christopher Barrett, Finance, McGill, Ne Carly Ziter, Univ. Guelph, Audrey Yank, Bioresource Eng., McGill



Nehal Al Tonobey, MSE



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Left to right: Fiona Ashman, Imperial College London, Dominique de Groot, MSE, Carly Ziter, Univ. Guelph, Tanya Taggart-Hodge, MSE, Katrina Adams, Biology McGill, Prof. Eric Galbraith (salute in the middle)



raith, Mya Sherman, MSE, Katrina Adams, Biology, McGill,

an, Jacobs Univ. Bremen onobey, MSE, Zoe Baker, MSE, Tanya Taggart-Hodge, MSE,

Rob Eagle, PhD Postdoctoral Scholar, California Institute of Technology Research Associate, University of California, Los Angeles



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Left to right: Dominique de Groot, Tanya Taggart-Hodge, Zoe Baker, Nehal Al Tonobey, all MSE students

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What comes next?

Joël Thibert, B.A. Fac.Prog.Envr. : Environment & Development; Minor East Asian Language & Literature, May 2004; M.A. Urban Planning, May 2007 by Devon Willis, BA Joint Honours in Political Science and Environment, Minor in International Development Studies



Joël Thibert, an alumnus of the MSE and of McGill School of Urban Planning, paid a visit to campus to hold a round table discussion with students about what comes after life at the MSE.

Thibault discussed the inevitable and important "zigzags" that our generation takes in both our education and careers. "The detours

we take make us who we are," he said. These different experiences are something that students should capitalize on, not just in the value they add to our lives but also the value they add, when done properly, to our CVs, cover letters, and applications.

He himself zigzagged quite a bit. A native Montrealer, he traveled to Thailand after high school. He had a keen interest in development but soon realized that he was not very useful in Thailand without any knowledge of Thai. He returned to Montreal and went to McGill where he completed the MSE program. His time in Panama made him realize that, while the environment was his passion, it was not the Amazonian rainforest environment that he would focus on - it was the built environment, the city. After graduation, he left for a year and lived in Bogotá, where he worked on an environmental education program. It was there that he saw some of the most impressive feats of urban planning, "people always talk about North America, Europe, and Asia – but what is happening in Latin America is truly impressive." He decided to study Urban Planning which brought him back to McGill for two years, during which time he did a project with the Urban Ecology Center, and upon graduation worked with the Quartier international de Montréal project for three years.

Joël described four important crossroads that we may soon reach after the MSE. The first is whether or not to go to grad school. The second, if one decides to go, what kind of research you will pursue. Third, when you are done, will you work on advocacy and activism? Policy and governance? Consulting, private or not-for-profit? He said that one needs to believe very strongly in a particular issue to take the route of activism. Finally, what will you be? A technical specialist (for all those GIS and statistics whizzes); a professional generalist; an academic and policy specialists; or rather an academic and policy specialist. He conceded that those who aim to be technical or academic and policy specialists will have a much easier job finding work, but that those who yearn to be generalists will be able to find their niche, though it may take some more time and perseverance. Companies are starting to realize that they need generalists to bridge the gaps."

Thibault also advised against starting your career with a government job. "It is best to get some field experience – and life experience – first." At the United Nations, for example, "people often get comfortable and never leave." It's much easier to get a middle managerial position in the United Nations than an entrance position where the competition is fierce. Why not travel and try other things before stepping into government and sitting down at a desk?

Michael von Buttlar trades in his parka for a buba!

Diploma in Environment, Major Environment, 2009



My name is Michael von Buttlar and I will be working as a Project Officer – Local Initiatives in Dakar, Senegal. This is an opportunity of a lifetime for me and I am excited to be able to work in Africa. During my stay I will be working with IAGU (L'Institut Africain de Gestion Urbaine) and the city of Dakar on a recycling and composting centre and working on urban

greening through a new municipal tree nursery.

I started studying anthropology and archaeology at the University of Saskatchewan but ended up studying French literature at Concordia and then Environmental studies at McGill. Trees and composting, I can't wait to dig in!! I am passionate about the environment and have worked on all types of environmental and community projects. One of my most recent experiences was as a research assistant for a PhD student while living in Montreal. We travelled the forests extensively in the Monteregians hills of southern Quebec for an entire summer on foot measuring trees and sampling caterpillars. It involved baseball bats and bed sheets - go figure!

In Senegal I will be taking over where the former interns have left off and contributing to the foundation of work they helped establish. I am also looking forward to the challenge of working in French and learning some Wolof .This is going to be such an amazing experience interacting with the community and participating in some excellent projects.



Mining and Climate Change

by Lachlan Crawford, B.Sc.Hon. Environment; Kate Bodkin, B.A. International Development Studies, B.Sc. Environment; and, Kate Whysner, B.A. Environment



The largest convention in Canada was held in Toronto this past week from March 6-9 for the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) to bring together the world's mineral industry. A wealth of information was shared over the four days of the conference reflecting a broad range of issues- from technical aspects of exploration and development, company finances and management, investor information, and specific country prospects to environmental impacts and corporate social responsibility (CSR). As members of MICLA (the McGill Research Collective for the Investigation of Canadian Mining in Latin America), we decided to attend this convention to get a real perspective of the workings of the extractive industry upon which our economy is so dependent.

One of the most memorable talks we attended was the keynote address at the luncheon held by the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum (CIM) and PDAC, sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The address, titled 'Climate Science? The Real Social, Environmental and Economic Costs', was delivered by Lawrence Solomon, who was introduced as 'One of Canada's leading environmental scientists''. Solomon is the founder and managing director of Energy Probe (an "environment and consumer research group"), and author of the book on arguments made by climate change skeptics, 'The Deniers'. On the heels of Naomi Oreskes' MSE-sponsored talk at Mcgill about the climate change denial campaign, it was fascinating to witness firsthand the arguments of a real, live, self-proclaimed climate change denier.



Solomon's sensationalist lecture was about his and other 'deniers' disagreements with the damaging policies and regulations designed to support the climate change policies such as the Kyoto protocol, and all the bogus science behind claims of global warming. According to him, regulations of GHG emissions are not only unnecessarily restrictive but also just plain bad news for everyone. Everywhere. He began by explaining how the development of the 'green industry' is effectively destroying the economy and driving up unemployment rates. European countries such as Spain and Germany that have invested in alternative energies have experienced rising costs of energy and fuel poverty, and now whole economies are crashing because of "the failure of the green industry". No mention was made of any other possible explanation for recent economic downturn. For every green job created in the UK, he said, an average of 3.7 traditional jobs are actually lost. Fossil fuels are the most economic option for the future, he explained, and countries are starting to wake up to this and seriously rethink their transition to a 'greener' economy.

The good news is that Solomon's opinion appeared not to be reflective of the general regard for the environment held by the industry. Although his claims were met with some nods, there was also evident disbelief and shakes of the head by some of the 250 industry members in the room. Changes in the industry are being promoted to address the impacts on the environment. One such initiative on display at the convention included PDAC's new promotion of industry-wide corporate social responsibility certification called E3plus. Although E3plus is still only a CSR guideline framework for projects, many hope for its future development into corporate environmental and social regulation.

The full article can be read on our Blog: http://blogs.mcgill.ca/mse







Dr. Elena Bennett has been named a Leopold Leadership Fellow

Elena is an Assistant Professor in the MSE and the Department of Natural Resource Sciences.

The Leopold Leadership Program at the Woods Institute for the Environment, Stanford University, is the first formal

effort in North America to train mid-career academic environmental researchers to communicate effectively to nonscientific audiences.

The program is designed to provide professional development training opportunities to outstanding mid-career academic researchers in a broad range of environmental fields, from ecology and marine biology to environmental engineering and natural resource economics. The training complements their research knowledge base with the communication and leadership skills required to effectively convey to non-scientists the relevance of their work in addressing some of today's most pressing environmental challenges. Through a competitive application process, up to 20 researchers from the U.S., Canada and Mexico are selected each year as Leopold Leadership Fellows and participate in the training program.

More information about this fellowship can be read on-line: http://leopoldleadership.stanford.edu/fellowship-information

Yes, you can!

Geoff Garver, an MSE Graduate Option Program and Ph.D. candidate shows us all where a "can do" attitude can lead us.



President of the United States, Barak Obama, has appointed Geoff Garver, one of five U.S. members, to the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC).

Geoff is an MSE Graduate Option Program and Faculty of Geography Ph.D. candidate. He is "delighted and honored

that President Obama selected me for this appointment".

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) composed of fifteen citizens (five from each country) advises the Council on any matter within the scope of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, and serves as a source of information for the CEC Secretariat.

JPAC's vision is to promote continental cooperation in ecosystem protection and sustainable economic development, and to ensure active public participation and transparency in the actions of the Commission.

As a group of volunteer citizens, JPAC sees itself a microcosm of the public: independent individuals who contribute diverse but rich institutional experience and cultural perspectives. The Chair is elected for a one-year term and by rotation from among the members. The JPAC meets throughout the year in different locations within the three countries, typically in conjunction with CEC events.

MSE New Initiatives Grants

Congratulations go out to the following recipients:

Colin Chapman and Jonathan Davies, "Zoonotic Disease Transmission Among Primates"

Raja Sengupta, Margaret Kalcska, Colin Chapman and Rafael Angel Reyna Hurtado, "The Union of GIS and Agent-Based Modeling to Study the Ecology of Infectious Disease"

Tony Ricciardi and Lauren Chapman, "Predicting the Optimal Refuge for Mitigatin gEffects of Invasive Predators"

Jeanine Rhemtulla and Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, "Following Neo-Tropical Landscape Cultures over the Longue Duree: The Santa Maria River Watershed (Panama), 11 000 BP to the Present"



The MSE is:

Director—Marilyn Scott

Faculty Members

Madhav Badami (School of **Urban Planning**)

Christopher Barrington-Leigh (Inst. for Health & Social Policy)

Elena Bennett (Natural Resource Sciences)

Peter G. Brown (Geography)

Colin Chapman (Anthropology)

Sylvie de Blois (Plant Science)

Jaye Ellis (Faculty of Law)

Frédéric Fabry (Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences)

Iwao Hirose (Philosophy)

Nicolas Kosoy (Natural Resource Sciences)

Brian Leung (Biology)

Gregory Mikkelson (Philosophy)

Adam Millard-Ball (Geography)

Jeanine Rhemtulla (Geography)

Anthony Ricciardi (Redpath Museum)

Raja Sengupta (Geography)

Renée Sieber (Geography)

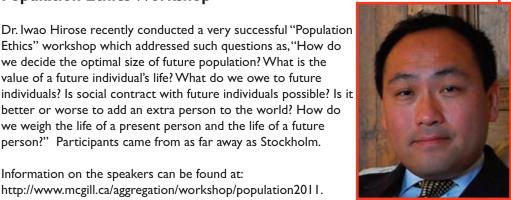
Ismael Vaccaro (Anthropology)

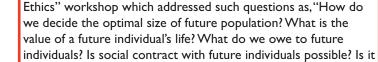
Faculty Lecturers

Joan Marshall George McCourt **Pete Parker** Kathryn Roulet

Staff

Danielle Lefebvre Shannon Scott **Christina Zhu**





Population Ethics Workshop

better or worse to add an extra person to the world? How do we weigh the life of a present person and the life of a future person?" Participants came from as far away as Stockholm.

Information on the speakers can be found at: http://www.mcgill.ca/aggregation/workshop/population2011.







June 10-12, 2011, Joint Cross-Border Sustainability Conference, Faculty of Law, co-hosted by the MSE and the School of Urban Planning

This will be an interdisciplinary and comparative workshop on the challenges posed by sub-national, national, and international attempts to achieve environmental sustainability objectives in the face of growing climate change concerns.

More information can be obtained at: http://francais.mcgill.ca/sustainability/channels/announcments/169863.



Tanya Taggart-Hodge, MSE Student with new friends Students on Ice, Antarctic Field Expedition February 2011

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"Your support helps us to address the environmental challenges of our time"