

# MDOCS

JOHN B. MOORE DOCUMENTARY STUDIES COLLABORATIVE

Spring 2015, 1.8



February 20, 2015  
A Bi-weekly Newsletter

## The Missing Clapton Memory—A Talk with Gordon Thompson

Imagine it's the 1970's. You're in your early twenties and, unlike most young adults who are braving the new world, you've got a sweet gig working at a recording studio with young new artists and bands. Later in life you have many fond memories from back in the day, but you can't seem to remember one of the most pivotal moments in musical history, the day that Eric Clapton came to your studio to record with the Beatles. How did this happen? Why can't you remember? What were you doing at such an unforgettable moment?

Gordon Thompson, professor and chair of the Skidmore Department of Music, told the story of Ken Scott, the man who can't remember a "Doc Date," on February 4 in the Scribner Library. I was completely mesmerized. How could someone forget this moment in his or her life?

Who was this man cited in the talk's title, "I Can't Remember Recording Eric Clapton: The Challenges of Interviews about the Past." It was clear that Thompson, too, remained captivated by the story. As he spoke, his face would light up as he shared anecdotes from his research or his own experiences working with musicians or hanging out in London.

Thompson's main point was thought provoking—interviewing someone about their past might not always evoke a true memory. Although we all have our own recollection of events, we reconstruct our memories in relation to what other people remember. Thompson found that although Ken Scott forgot Clapton had played with the Beatles, he began to "remember what was lost through others."

Digging into memory, however, is also how Thompson and Scott

solved the mystery of the missing Clapton memory. It turns out that on that fateful day, Scott *did* record the famous rendition of "My Guitar Gently Weeps" secretly featuring Eric Clapton. However, his attention was focused on problems with the recording equipment, not on musicians in the studio. No wonder he couldn't remember the session.

-Natalie Cabrera, '17

*Professor Gordon Thompson is a musician, ethnomusicologist, and chair of Skidmore's Music Department. His research has taken him from India to England, where recent work on British popular music, especially the Beatles, produced Please Please Me: Sixties British Pop, Inside Out, numerous articles and blog postings. His class on the Beatles began Skidmore's Beatlemania, which has grown into a much-anticipated annual event.*

### Inside This Issue:

- **The Missing Clapton Memory**
- **Sounds that "strike oil"**
- **MDOCS welcomes ...**
- **LI 113 Student Profile:**

***Plus:*** Dates & Events for Spring 2015

A Talk with Gordon Thompson  
Jim Metzner behind the scenes  
Nicky Tavares, Mellon Fellow  
Eli Ruben, '2017



## Sounds that "strike emotional oil"

Jim Metzner knows the power of sound based documentary. The audio documentarian and host/producer of the radio program "Pulse of the Planet" dropped in on the MDOCS intro course *Principles of Documentary*, on Wednesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, to share his expertise. In a dynamic, conversational presentation, Mr. Metzner talked sounds and interviews, and had us listen to some as well.

Focusing on a student interview assignment, he encouraged documentarians to develop "side door" questions—not head on (talk about your mother, what do you think about baseball) but memory eliciting (a song your mother sang, how you call a strike). Listening to "You're Hearing America – Umpires" and "Songs My Mother Sang to Me" drove home how weaving together the ideas and answers can create powerful radio documentaries that "strike emotional oil."

An accomplished sound recorder, Mr. Metzner explained that a sound, implicitly, carries information. He tested that theory in class, having us listen to complex soundscapes layering roosters, brooms, insects and voices. Mr. Metzner encouraged us to discover sound in our lives. Leaving students with the encouraging thought that "the world is your oyster", Mr. Metzner had shared his genuine appreciation for sound, and what's more, the sheer power of sound to tell a story.

-- Rebecca Walker, '18

To listen to some of the stories shared, check out <http://jimmetznerproductions.com/audio-portfolio>



## Director's Note

A real documentarian can find a connection with just about anyone, it seems (photo, p. 1). Gordon Thompson's talk about the challenges of interviewing for memory at February 4's Doc Date, attended by Prof. Eileen McAdam, led to an invitation to lunch with Jim Metzner, noted sound documentarian and storyteller. On campus to chat with students in MDOCS' gateway course (see above), Metzner (a folk musician) compared notes with Thompson (pop) on the London's music scene in the '60s. With David Howson, Jim swapped theater contacts, and with Nicky Tavares, documentarian, artist, photographer and recently arrived MDOCS/Vis Mellon Fellow (p. 3), talk turned to the visual. It's not all lunch, though. Behind the scenes, we're gearing up for a Docu-Trek spring break guerrilla filmmaking class, planning the Storytellers' Institute and fall classes, and catching Vickie Riley's student team filming outside in zero degree weather. Now that's what we're talking about!

-- Jordana Dym

## DOC ON CAMPUS



**2/18** The Land to the Table  
**2/25** Eternal Amazonia  
**3/4** The Facilitator  
**3/11** Marimbas from Hell

*Presented by students in  
 DS 251 Documenting Latin America  
 All films:  
 Emerson Auditorium, 7pm*

**Make  
 Radio**



**AM/FM:  
 Your Own  
 Show**

*with Adam Tinkle*

*Open workshops for Skidmore &  
 community!*

First Mondays

3/2, 2/6. 5/4, 5:30-7:30 pm  
 LI 113 (Scribner Library)

**First Monday of the month: radio-  
 making workshops 5:30-7:30**

**Any Monday: open lab hours,  
 drop in for tech help 6:00-8:00**

- ✧ Use your phone/tablet as a sound recorder
- ✧ Edit sound on your computer with free software
- ✧ Combine interviews, narration, music and more
- ✧ Bring your radio idea, or develop one in the workshop
- ✧ We will air what you create on WSPN 91.1 FM

**Feb 25 & Mar. 4**

**Digital Map Storytelling  
with ArcGIS Online**



A workshop with  
**Alex Chaucer (GIS)**  
for Skidmore and Saratoga  
Community Members  
Wednesdays: 2/25 and 3/4  
4pm, LI 113 (Scribner Library)  
Sign up at:  
[LI113@skidmore.edu](mailto:LI113@skidmore.edu)



and lab hours:

**M:** 4pm-10pm      **W:** 8-10pm  
**Tu:** 9am-12pm, 2-6pm, 7-9pm  
**Th:** 9am-11am and 2pm-10pm  
**F:** 10am-4pm      **Su:** 2-6pm



Meet the LI 113 students +1 –  
we work 30 hours a week to help  
with your visual & documentary  
projects. Let us help you with  
Protools, Final Cut Pro X, Omeka,  
Photoshop, and more! Details at:  
[http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/  
resources/li113.php](http://www.skidmore.edu/mdocs/resources/li113.php)

## MDOCS/Vis welcomes Nicky Tavares



Nicky Tavares' first day of work in early February was one of Skidmore's rare snow days, confirming for this Texas native she'd arrived in the Northeast. But the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Visual and Digital Media studies pulled on her boots and is already putting her stamp on MDOCS & Project Vis.

Over the past two weeks, Nicky has brought order and process to LI 113, dived into planning for a Docu-Trek Spring Break class to jumpstart a documentary film project split between campus and New York City, provided a welcome practitioner's perspective to Storytellers' Institute planning, consulted with American Studies and Psychology professors on video assignments, and introduced the campus to work that engages questions of identity, family, belonging, memory, immigration and self in photography, film, animation, archival and found objects (for an appreciation words can't supply, check out <http://nickytavares.com/>).

She's met the MDOCS Advisory Board, supported visitors Jim Metzner and John Beckman, '94, attended talks and workshops ... and that's only what she's accomplished for MDOCS.

As Interim Director Dym notes, "MDOCS is delighted to welcome Nicky as a talented documentarian with compelling visual skills and ideas about our Storytellers' Institute. She's ready to hit the ground running with workshops and courses in photography, video and multimedia. In her first weeks, she's already reached out to faculty, staff and students across the disciplines. We look forward to the energy she will bring to this part of the Project Vis initiative."



Eli Ruben joined LI 113 in Fall 2014, and pioneered the first student-led workshop.

Q: Tell us about yourself. A: I'm from Lexington, MA. Class of 2017, Management and Business major. After college I don't know what I'm doing yet! I enjoy participating in the Lively Lucy's club that throws events on Thursdays in Falstaffs. Currently I'm taking two DS classes-- Interviewing Musicians (Lei Bryant/Music) and working on the Senior Center 60th Anniversary documentary project (Crystal Moore/Social Work & Jordana Dym/History-MDOCS).

Q: Do you have any documentary projects now? A: I am working on making a documentary about musicians and music in general. I am also working on the Senior Center 60th Anniversary documentary. I am gearing up for Season 3 of my YouTube series on modified cars, fineTUNED, <http://www.youtube.com/ignitiontube>) this summer.

Q: What is it like to work in LI 113? A: Working in Li113 is great! I'm there 8-10 on Tuesdays and 7-9 on Wednesdays. I enjoy helping the students with video projects for sure! This was the second time that I've led a workshop on introduction to Final Cut Pro X. The participants worked with footage that I took at the Saratoga County Animal Shelter, and created their own trailer for adoptions at the shelter after I taught the basics. At the end of the session, we all gathered around each computer and watched all of the trailers as a group.

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Maggie Clark '15

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