

PSP 2011

Short Profiles

Dr Liezel Alsemgeest (Behavioural Finance)

Lecturer: Centre for Financial Planning Law

Liezel Alsemgeest, 32, completed her PhD in 2011. The focus of her doctoral work was on the relationships between customer perception and the sustainable profitability of agricultural businesses in South Africa. Alsemgeest subsequently published prolifically from her doctorate and was recognised by the Global Conference on Business and Finance in Las Vegas for “outstanding research”. She recently moved to the UFS Faculty of Law’s Centre for Financial Planning Law, after gaining extensive teaching experience in business management. In her new position, Alsemgeest combines postgraduate and diploma teaching in aspects of financial planning with postdoctoral research on behavioural finance. Her interests are the exploration of the psychological impact of childhood experiences, personality and background on an individual’s personal finances. This is a fairly novel line of investigation in South Africa, and creates unique and exciting opportunities for future interdisciplinary work.

Dr Liza Coetsee (Phosphor Solar Cells)

Senior Researcher: Physics Department

Liza Coetsee’s scholarship won her a Y2-rating from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF). At thirty years of age, Coetsee is a prolific author, with publications in high impact factor journals. Post-doctorate, Coetsee is leading the development of phosphor solar cells as new research area in the Department of Physics. Her current interest is on a hitherto neglected approach: how to combine a phosphor material with solar cells for the maximum electricity production by using the down-conversion approach. Down-conversion represents the quantum cutting of one high-energy photon into two lower-energy photons. Work has already begun on the production of a material that can adapt the solar spectrum, but practical application has been limited. This offers potentially productive research opportunities to Coetsee, also tasked with the responsibility to operate nanotechnology research equipment in the best equipped facility of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

Dr Katinka de Wet (Medical Sociology)

Lecturer: Department of Sociology

Katinka de Wet (36) is a graduate of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Bordeaux and holds a doctorate from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris (2007). More recently, she joined the UFS Sociology Department where she contributes, among others, to a new master's programme, *The Narrative Study of Lives*. De Wet's research has received extensive financial support from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), both from their Blue Skies programme (2010-2012) and the Thuthuka programme (2013-2015). Her most recent work, "The Hybrid Identity of the HIV and AIDS patient," is a collaborative venture with Edwin Wouters from the University of Antwerp. The project represents a longitudinal narrative of twelve HIV positive men and women respectively. The research subjects are all on antiretroviral treatment. As a significant contribution to the sociology of chronic illness, the study investigates ways in which people negotiate their HIV status and the concomitant lifelong treatment regime. De Wet has presented results from her fieldwork at both the 19th International HIV/AIDS conference in Washington DC and at the British Medical Sociology Conference in Leicester in 2012.

Since 2010, De Wet has managed to build a body of publications in medical sociology and research ethics. Early in 2013, she played host to Harvard medical anthropologist, Arthur Kleinman. De Wet organised *Constructions of Illness and Identity: Subjectivity and Chronic Illness in the South African Context*, with Kleinman as keynote speaker, and invited several South African and international scholars of note to participate in the colloquium.

Dr Lizette Erasmus (Surface Chemistry and Heterogeneous Catalysts)

Lecturer: Chemistry Department

Lizette Erasmus (33) holds a Y2-rating from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF). Erasmus joined the physical chemistry group at the University of the Free State (UFS) in 2009, after invaluable experience working as senior researcher at the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). She works in surface chemistry and heterogeneous catalysis and the associated challenges with the manufacturing of bimetallic heterogeneous catalysts by using a single source catalyst precursor. These bimetallic heterogeneous catalysts have application in the synthesis of fine chemicals such as aerobic oxidation of alcohols and selective hydrogenation of unsaturated aldehydes. In the recent past Erasmus has spent time in the laboratories of Hans Niemantsverdriet at

the Technical University of Eindhoven in the Netherlands (2009-2010 and 2011) and with Bruce Gates at the University of California Davis (2011). Erasmus has an active publication record and supervises a number of graduate students. She is well regarded by her international peers who laud her as a future leader in the field of heterogeneous catalysis research.

Dr Marieka Gryzenhout (Plant Mycology)

Senior Lecturer: Department Plant Sciences

Marieka Gryzenhout is a University of Pretoria graduate and Y1-rated scholar by the National Research Foundation (NRF). She specializes in mycology (fungi): fungal systematics, plant pathology and ecology. Gryzenhout had already authored or co-authored 25 peer-reviewed papers at completion of her doctorate and in 2010 she was the recipient of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations' (IUFRO) Outstanding Doctoral Research Award. A book followed from her doctorate, co-authored with Brenda and Mike Wingfield: *Taxonomy, phylogeny, and ecology of bark-infecting and tree killing fungi in the Cryphonectriaceae* (APS Press, St. Paul, USA). The systematic work that culminated in the monograph is instrumental to the field of forest pathology: it enables rapid identification of numerous tree pathogens, some of which are ecologically and economically devastating. At 37, Gryzenhout has an h-index of 13 (Scopus) and close to 60 peer-reviewed publications to her name, two chapters in books and a number of popular publications on mycology, including a field guide to South African mushrooms. Subsequent to her doctorate, Gryzenhout's work has earned her a L'Oreal National Fellowship (2007); Claude Leon postdoctoral fellowship (2008-2009); a South African Department of Science and Technology's Best Young Woman Scientist Award: 1st runner-up (2009, 2010); an Ethel Mary Doidge Award for the Best Young Mycologist from Africa (International Mycological Association, 2010); and finally the coveted NRF Y1 rating and exclusive membership to the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS). She has recently established a research programme, Mycotoxigenic and Phytopathogenic Fungi, at the University of the Free State. She is president of the African Mycological Association, general secretary of the International Society for Fungal Conservation and member of the Nomenclature Committee for Fungi.

Dr Louis Holtzhausen (Sport and Exercise Medicine)

Head of Division: Sport and Exercise Medicine

Louis Holtzhausen completed an MPhil (Sports Medicine) at the University of Cape Town under the tutelage of Tim Noakes. He holds a PhD in Health Professions Education, as well as fellowship of the Academy of Family Physicians of South Africa. His research is focused on the development of a strategic framework for research in sport and exercise medicine; barriers to exercise in the community; prevention of sports injuries; and the use of drugs in sport. Holtzhausen's research and work contributes to prevention and rehabilitation of chronic disease by means of exercise, as does his membership of the International Forum on "Exercise is Medicine" of the American College of Sports Medicine. Holtzhausen is also on the editorial board of the *South African Journal of Sports Medicine* and chairperson of the Doping Control Review Board of the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport. He is chairperson of the steering committee for the International Advisory Committee of the Exercise is Medicine in Africa, as well as a member of the steering committee of the African Physical Activity Network (AFPAN).

Holtzhausen served most recently as medical officer for the FIFA World Cup (2010), All Africa Games (2011) and for Team South Africa in the London Olympics (2012). He is also past president of the South African Sports Medicine Association (SASMA) and of the South African Rugby Medicine Association (SARMA). Holtzhausen is team physician to a number of sports teams past and present. He was awarded honorary life membership of the South African Sports Medicine Association (SASMA) in 2009. He is currently collaborating with Tim Noakes on a book devoted to research management in sport and exercise medicine.

Dr Vernon Louw (Transfusion Medicine)

Associate Professor and Acting Chair: Department of Internal Medicine

This alumnus of the University of Stellenbosch received both MBChB and MMed (Internal Medicine) degrees *cum laude*. Louw also holds a PhD in Health Professions Education from the University of the Free State (UFS). At 34, Louw became one of the youngest associate professors appointed in the Medical Faculty. He is principal specialist, consultant and head of the Clinical Haematology Unit of the Department of Internal Medicine and, at 43, Louw currently also acts as chair of the department. Louw completed a fellowship in Clinical Haematology at the Catholic University of Louvain (Belgium) and is registered to practice medicine in the United Kingdom, Belgium and the European Union.

Louw is a prolific scholar, with more than 60 publications in peer-reviewed journals to his credit. He is also co-author of Kumar and Clark's *Clinical Medicine*, a volume that won first prize in the Medicine Category at the 2006 British Medical Association Awards. He sits on the editorial board of *The Cancer Journal* (South African excerpts edition) and he is an international editorial advisor for the *African Journal of Haematology and Oncology*. Louw's most recent scholarship focuses on the epidemiological aspects of the major transfusion medicine related haematological diseases such as myelodysplastic syndromes, multiple myeloma, thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura (TTP) and the acute and chronic leukemias. As these conditions often require blood transfusion as part of therapy, these also put huge strain on resources, as blood products are scarce and expensive. Louw's research predicts that a better understanding of the prognostic and demographic background to these diseases, along with identifying risk factors, will allow significant improvement in planning by policy makers, funders and health managers. The role and impact of HIV on these diseases, especially in the South African context, adds contextual weight and urgency.

Louw is committed to teaching, hence also his doctorate in Health Professions Education. Subsequent to his doctorate, Louw and his team developed the only Anglophone postgraduate programme in transfusion medicine in Africa. The same team, under Louw's leadership, is now developing an online learning environment based on screencasting-type video clips of basic medical concepts with the aim of turning series of these clips into massive open online courses (MOOCs).

Dr Nalize Marais (Higher Education)

UFS Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP)

Thirty-one year old education specialist Nalize Marais' 2011 PhD in Educational Management and Policy was a finalist in the American Education Research Association's "Politics in Education" Best Dissertation Award. Marais currently works in Academic Planning for the Directorate for Institutional Research and Academic Planning (DIRAP) at the University of the Free State (UFS), but remains invested in teaching, including undergraduate and graduate programmes and doctoral supervision. Her current focus on higher education curriculum translates from her position in Academic Planning at DIRAP. Fundamental to her current research interests is the pivotal role of the higher education curriculum in the mapping of academic and transformative strategies for an educational institution. Her involvement in academic planning requires the interpretation and implementation of national policies within the ambit of the institutional academic plan. She is involved in the development of framework and institutional policy to

support programme development. Marais is a member of the accreditation committee of the South African Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and participates as member of several task teams to coordinate national programme development and accreditation.

Dr Gerda Marx (Molecular Genetics)

Junior Lecturer: Department of Haematology and Cell Biology

Gerda Marx (34) completed her PhD in 2011, funded by a scarce-skills scholarship from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF). Her doctorate investigated the use of molecular techniques to monitor GM food that has not been approved for human health and safety. Marx developed a scheme for monitoring unapproved GMOs. Her work also included the use of molecular techniques to examine the extent to which GM had entered the human food chain; and also to verify GM-related food labels in South Africa. At the time of this study, South Africa had no mandatory GM food labelling regulation. The publications resulting from her research provided evidence to indicate a need for such labelling regulation. Towards the end of 2011, the South African Consumer Protection Act was passed into law, thus mandating the labelling of GM food.

Marx's postdoctoral research focus has moved to genetic polymorphisms of chronic diseases of lifestyle, such as diabetes. She is participating in the investigation of the risk factors for diet-related disorders in a local urban population. Marx is also considering genetic risk factors for bone density in patients with type 2 diabetes. She intends to screen for genetic polymorphisms identified in global populations, subsequently to identify novel mutations in African patients. She is currently collaborating with research teams from the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Western Australia on HIV and bone health, with the emphasis on pain.

Dr Zacheus Matebesi (Social Movements)

Senior Lecturer: Department of Sociology

Zacheus Matebesi, 42, is chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of the Free State and serves on the editorial boards of the *South African Review of Sociology* and *Journal for Development Studies*. Matebesi's graduate work focused primarily on district healthcare information systems, primary healthcare, as well as the socio-economic impact of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. His earlier work on tuberculosis – the focus of his PhD – was funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation; with subsequent work sponsored by Anglo Gold Consolidated Mines and the Flemish Government in Belgium. More

recently, Matebesi's research focus has moved to governance, development and social movements, with a specific interest in service delivery protests at local government level. In 2007 the South African Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Provincial and Local Government invited him to present the main findings of his study, entitled: "Conflict in South African Cities: An analysis of service-related protests." By 2009, Matebesi's research also resulted in an invitation to serve as a political analyst for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, thus making an important contribution to public scholarship. The Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) has invited Matebesi to publish a chapter in a monograph on peace-building initiatives of civil society organisations in Africa. His immediate focus will be local municipal demarcations and community protests and the role of community trusts in mining towns. This work is funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF).

Dr Mpho Priscilla Moagi-Jama (Student Development and Support)

Lecturer: Health Sciences Education

Moagi-Jama (56) is a Fulbright scholar to the University of California (Los Angeles). Her research expertise is intertwined with her work as support practitioner for student development in the health sciences. This follows from doctoral work on the design of an academic support and development programme to combat attrition among medical undergraduates. Moagi-Jama's current research focus explores the manner in which humane values are modelled in the academic environment. She places a particular emphasis on students, often subjected to inordinate stress resulting from hostile learning environments. Moagi-Jama has participated as part of a panel of experts at a recent Student Access and Success conference funded by the USA Kresge foundation. She serves on the executive of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa (HELTASA) and as reviewer for the National Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition in South Carolina.

Dr Munene Mwaniki (Linguistics/Language Management)

Senior Lecturer/Researcher: Department of Linguistics and Language Practice

Munene Mwaniki, 40, holds master's degrees in Linguistics and Public Administration, providing the basis for a PhD in Linguistics, specialising in Language Management. His doctoral research focused on dilemmas attendant to South African multilingual language policy and planning implementation. This led to the development of the Language Management Approach as a paradigm in sociology and politics of

language that seeks to achieve and deepen theoretical adequacy of language policy and planning and its application(s), especially in multilingual settings. The intention is to develop and deploy frameworks and strategies that harness and optimise language resources in society. Currently, his work targets the interfaces between language – specifically multilingualism – and the public space. This has already yielded a book, *Multilingualism and the Public Sector in South Africa*. In 2012, Mwaniki returned from a four-month sabbatical at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington DC. His forthcoming book, *Language Management: Theory, Method, Discipline and Practice*, published by Palgrave Macmillan (2014), is the result of the research conducted during this visit.

Abiodun Ogundeji (Climate Change)

Lecturer: Department of Agricultural Economics

Abiodun Ogundeji (33) teaches in the Department of Agricultural Economics. His research focus, intertwined with his doctoral work, concerns the economics of climate change adaptation strategies in the Ceres region of Western Cape of South Africa. At the cusp of a promising research career, Ogundeji has been lauded by the 49th annual conference of the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa for his contribution: “Impact of climate change on planning and dealing with flood disaster in South Africa: a case study of Soweto-on-Sea.” Working with collaborators, including the National Laboratory for Sustainable Energy at the Technical University of Denmark, Ogundeji’s contribution to scholarship aims to assist farmers to anticipate and manage climate change, thereby ensuring food security and even leading to an increase in food productivity.

Dr Dirk Opperman (Structural Biology)

Senior Lecturer: Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology

Dirk Opperman (32) is senior lecturer in Biochemistry at the University of the Free State (UFS). Returning from a post-doctoral position at the Max-Planck-Institut für Kohlenforschung in Germany, Opperman joined the UFS in 2010. Manfred T Reetz lauded him as “one of the very best postdocs that I have had in a long time.” Opperman established a Structural and Evolutionary Biology research group at the UFS. His research focus is on structure-function relationships and natural and directed evolution of enzymes, specifically Baeyer-Villiger monooxygenases (BVMOs) from fungi. This group of enzymes is not only remarkable biocatalysts, but also targets for inhibition against aflatoxin production through structure-guided drug design. His research is funded through government and industry. Opperman has an

impressive body of publications to his credit and he has been the recipient of several scholarships and awards. He has a rich network of international collaborators, including the Biocatalysis and Organic Chemistry group at the Delft University of Technology (the Netherlands).

Dr Nthabeleng Rammile (Brand Management and Consumer Behaviour)

Lecturer: Department of Business Management

Nthabeleng Rammile (35) holds a doctorate in Marketing and teaches Consumer Behaviour and Relationship Marketing at the University of the Free State (UFS). Her doctorate investigated the role of cultural diversity in successful brand management in the South African cellular industry. In response to a subsequent visiting lecture at the University of Bremen, her work on this topic was described as both “insightful” and “relevant to a global audience.” Rammile continues to build a body of publications on this and related topics. Her most recent work aims to develop a comprehensive model to demonstrate how consumer attachment style influences brand attachment through the mediating role of implicit theories and brand communication. She will be spending the latter part of 2013 and early 2014 at the University of Washington, Tacoma, where she will be working under the tutelage of Gregory Rose. This will allow her to embed her work in a cross-cultural study (United States and South Africa) to identify and observe the characteristics of consumers’ brand attachments.

Tania Rauch van der Merwe (Occupational Therapy)

Lecturer: Department of Occupational Therapy

Tania Rauch van der Merwe’s (41) clinical expertise is in mental health and medico-legal work with a strong pedagogical focus on social justice. Rauch van der Merwe comes from clinical practice, with protracted experience working not only in South Africa, but also the United States. This informs a doctorate entitled, “*The Political Construction of Occupational Therapy in South Africa: A critical analysis of curriculum as discourse,*” using Foucauldian archaeology as method in looking at the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in a South African occupational therapy curriculum. She has to her name a developing body of publications in the fields of cultural competence and student responsiveness; as well as human rights in occupational therapy education, the latter of which has been cited by WFOT (World Federation of Occupational Therapy). Rauch van der Merwe has most recently been invited as visiting scholar by the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht.

Dr Olihile M Sebolai (Microbiology)

Lecturer: Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology

At 26, Olihile Sebolai made international headlines for a groundbreaking discovery in future nanotechnology, earning him a master's degree in Microbiology and six awards. Now, at 34, with a PhD in the same field, Sebolai's research focus addresses the causative agent of an AIDS-defining illness, a pathogen which, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), claims just over 500 000 lives in sub-Saharan Africa annually. His research on *Cryptococcus neoformans* investigates the interactive battle between this pathogen and the host's immune system, determining the causes of one triumphing over the other. This may point towards a better understanding of strategies to control this human pathogen. In turn this will contribute towards future drug development that, in combating the disease, will save lives. Sebolai has most recently spent six months at the University of Birmingham as visiting scholar. Late in 2013, he takes up a Fulbright fellowship at the University of Missouri.

Dr Bradley Smith (Family Law)

Senior lecturer: Department of Private Law

At 25, with undergraduate degrees BCom and LLB, Bradley Smith co-authored his first publication. The South African Supreme Court of Appeal would subsequently refer to this article in *Napier v Barkhuizen* 2006 4 SA 1 (SCA). This reference served as catalyst for a career in legal scholarship. Now, at 35, with an LLM in Trust Law and an LLD in Family Law, Smith's primary area of legal expertise is the impact of the validation of same-sex marriage and the requirement of greater legal recognition for domestic partnerships (that is, persons who cohabit in intimate relationships without marital commitment in terms of South African marriage legislation, irrespective of sexual orientation).

Smith's work is cutting edge and anticipates major legal (and ethical) developments in South Africa and abroad. He is cited by South African and international scholarship. His first article on the legal consequences of the potential legalisation of same-sex marriage in South Africa was published a year before the promulgation of the Civil Union Act in 2006. Subsequently Smith has focused on the consequences of the Act by analysing its provisions for the interrelationship between the legislation of same-sex marriage, existing matrimonial (property) law and the rights of domestic partners. Smith identified an interesting legal dilemma: within the space of a few years same-sex domestic partners have become legally entitled to many marital benefits, while the same does not hold true for their single heterosexual counterparts in domestic partnerships. The accelerating significance of Smith's work for

South African law is underscored by its citation by the Supreme Court of Appeal as recently as 2012. Smith has just returned to South Africa from a short research visit and some teaching at Oxford University where his work is described by a prominent Oxford scholar in the field as representing that of a ‘top-class forensic scientist.’

Dr Helene Strauss (English Literary and Cultural Studies)

Professor: Department of English

Helene Strauss, 38, joined the University of the Free State in September 2011 after eleven years in Canada, where she obtained a PhD from the University of Western Ontario, before taking up a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. She is, among others, the recipient of a Standard Research Grant (2009-2012) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and a Canadian Governor General's Gold Medal for her doctoral research (2007). Strauss was awarded a Y1 research rating by the National Research Foundation (NRF). Strauss currently works on a critical analysis of representations of intimacy in post-TRC South African literary and cultural texts. Her aim is to map the possibilities for social, civic and interpersonal responsibility in the current phase of post-apartheid political life. Her research on this topic has been published in *Subjectivity*, and has informed a Special Issue of the journal *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* devoted to the topic “Postcolonial Intimacies.” The latter she also co-edited. The Special Issue includes an interview Strauss and her co-editors conducted with cultural theorist Sara Ahmed. Other publications have appeared in journals and books such as *African Identities*; *Wasafiri*; *Journal of Literary Studies*; *English in Africa*; *English Academy Review*; *The Dictionary of African Biography*; *Under Construction: ‘Race’ and Identity in South Africa Today*; and *Burdened by Race: Coloured identities in Southern Africa*.

Strauss is finalising the manuscript of her book, *Hesitating at the Intersection: Intercultural Interaction in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. The book offers an analysis of representations of intercultural interaction in post-apartheid South African literary and cultural texts. Strauss serves on the editorial boards of the journals *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* and *English in Africa*.

Dr Chantel Swart (Nanotechnology)

Researcher: Department of Microbial, Biochemical and Food Biotechnology

Chantel Swart (29), microbiologist and former Claude Leon Foundation postdoctoral scholar, is described by the trustees of this foundation as a “star.” As young doctoral candidate she already had the distinction of her scholarship highlighted on the cover of *Canadian Journal of Microbiology* (2009). Swart, with project leader Lodewyk Kock and their team, recently made international headlines when they discovered that fermenting yeasts used in brewing, produce intracellular gas bubbles. This nanotechnology, consisting of Auger electron atom physics linked to scanning electron microscopy and Argon nano-etching, was used to affect a paradigm shift: visualising gas bubbles for the first time inside fermenting yeast cells. This breakthrough is predicted to have an important impact on the fields of biology and medicine. It is showcased on the cover of all issues of 2013 *FEMS Yeast Research*. Further, *BiotecVisions* and *Global Medical Discovery* (GMD) both selected this discovery for worldwide promotion at the end of 2012 – GMD from a selection of 20 000 articles. Swart’s future research will use this newly developed nanotechnology to visualise and explore new avenues of research. This will include work on the architecture of cells, so-called Auger-architectomics. (A virtual tour is available at: <http://vimeo.com/user6296337/videos>)

Dr Oriel MM Thekisoie (Parasitology)

Senior Lecturer: Zoology and Entomology

Oriel Thekisoie (39) holds a PhD in Molecular Parasitology (Veterinary Sciences) from Gifu University in Japan (2007) and subsequently spent two years as postdoctoral fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at Obihiro University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine before his return to South Africa. He is rated Y2 by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) and currently teaches Medical, Veterinary and Forensic Entomology, as well as Parasitology at the QwaQwa Campus of the University of the Free State. Thekisoie’s research interests include the development of molecular diagnostic tools for rapid detection of parasites and the application thereof for epidemiological studies. His work is supported by a South African National Research Foundation (NRF) Thuthuka grant and has benefited from working with his mentor, Banie Penzhorn, at the University of Pretoria. Thekisoie has developed Loop-mediated Isothermal Amplification (LAMP) assays for the diagnosis of various parasitic diseases and has published widely on LAMP assays for the diagnosis of trypanosomiasis and real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assays for bovine theileriosis. Currently, he is also involved in research

aimed at discovering therapeutic agents for parasitic diseases from medicinal plant extracts. In 2012, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) funded a research visit to Hokkaido University's Research Center for Zoonosis Control, where he was hosted by Chihiro Sugimoto. In 2013, Thekisoie will spend two months at the National Research Center for Protozoan Diseases at Obihiro University with Noboru Inoue. Thekisoie's work also has direct socio-economic benefits: the potential to lead to the development of several commercial diagnostic kits for parasitic diseases of veterinary and economic importance, as well as the discovery of therapeutic agents for some of these diseases.

Dr Chitja Twala (Political History)

Senior Lecturer: Department of History

Chitja Twala, 44, received a PhD on the history of the African National Congress (ANC) in the Free State during the period 1994-2004, from the University of the Free State. Special emphasis was placed on the pivotal role of Winkie Direko's contemporaneous premiership. Twala is currently collaborating with Peter Limb (Michigan State University) on a book project on the ANC. His contribution includes extensive archival research. Twala has a substantial publication record and he is the author of chapters in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Vol. 4 (1970-1980)*, some in collaboration with the late Leo Barnard (UFS) and Jeremy Seekings (University of Cape Town). Twala's most recent invitations include research visits to the Departments of History and Africana Studies at Binghamton, James Madison and Appalachian Universities in the USA.

Dr Cilliers van den Berg (Comparative Literature)

Senior Lecturer: Department Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

Cilliers van den Berg, 35, holds PhDs in German (2003) and Afrikaans and Dutch (2009), which suggests something of the scope of his research interests. The nature of his work is inter-disciplinary, with a current focus on collective memory: coming to terms with traumatic pasts from the perspective of the perpetrator. With Bill Niven (Nottingham Trent University), Van den Berg is co-applicant of a project funded by the British Academy entitled, "Contemporary German and Afrikaner Cultural Responses to Issues of Trauma, Reconciliation and Reparation." This project brings together six scholars from the United Kingdom and South Africa to analyse the viability and meaning of comparison for the Afrikaner and German contexts. The joint approach is the fruit of Van den Berg's extensive international network on the representation of trauma, as well as collaboration with Stuart Taberner of Leeds University. Van

den Berg most recently spent a year (2012-2013) as visiting scholar in the Comparative Literature Department at Cornell University, funded in part by the South African National Research Foundation's (NRF) Thuthuka programme. Previous research visits (University of Augsburg and Leiden University) were supported by funding from a number of international agencies. Cilliers van den Berg has a rich and varied publication record and contributes to public scholarship by actively participating in literary debates in the media and in public forums.

Dr Paulina van Zyl (Clinical Pharmacology)

Senior Clinical Pharmacologist/Senior Lecturer: Department of Pharmacology

Paulina van Zyl (51) is senior lecturer and clinical pharmacologist in the Department of Pharmacology of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Free State. An alumnus of Stellenbosch University, Van Zyl obtained the degree MB ChB in 1985. Her graduate work was done at the University of the Free State. Van Zyl's master's degree on neuro-endocrine functions in mentally-challenged patients with aggression (2004) was followed by a PhD on the treatment of substance dependence in 2010. Results from her doctorate have been published in the *South African Journal of Family Practice*, with presentations at pharmacological conferences in Portugal, Denmark and Italy.

Post doctorate, Van Zyl works on acetaldehyde production capacity of gastro-intestinal microflora in recovery from alcohol dependence. Her bio-medical research into relapse in alcohol dependence was recently evaluated by a review panel as carrying the potential to yield data that would put Van Zyl and her collaborators at the cutting edge based partly on the "novelty of its framework," Van Zyl has been invited by the Medical School of the University of Groningen for an upcoming sabbatical. She favours an interdisciplinary approach supported by international collaborators.

Dr Andréhette Verster (Extreme Value Theory)

Senior Lecturer: Department of Mathematical Statistics and Actuarial Science

Andréhette Verster (31) holds a masters degree in Risk Analysis and completed her PhD in Mathematical Statistics in 2008 on modelling multivariate extremes. Post doctorate, Verster's work in the Extreme Value Theory domain continues with a special interest in the prediction of high quantiles and small tail probabilities and the choice of optimum threshold in Peak over Threshold distributions. Verster has a commendable publication record in journals such as *The Journal of Structure and Infrastructure Engineering*; *Journal of Mathematical Geosciences and Environmetrics*. Verster is also the author of a

number of technical reports. Her research on high quantile and tail prediction is funded by the South African National Research Foundation's (NRF) Thuthuka programme. This includes a research visit to work with Yuri Goegebeur at the Syddansk Universitet in Odense, Denmark. The nature and applicative value of Verster's current and future contribution to scholarship is best expressed by a recent reviewer of her postdoctoral project: "Her research may lead to a more economic, cost-effective and safe design of civil structures, such as flood defence and dam structures, from an inspection, maintenance and rehabilitation point of view."