

## Six named as Vanier honorees

August 03, 2011

Western students Ahmed Hamada, Katie Kryski, Donald Lafreniere, Matthew Quinn, Fabrice Szabo and Jodie Whelan have been named recipients of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, the country's most prestigious scholarships for doctoral students.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the recipients Wednesday, Aug. 3.

Launched in 2009, the award is designed to attract and retain world-class doctoral students from Canada and around the world. This year, 167 Vanier scholars were announced at 26 universities, with graduate students from the United States, Europe, Asia and Africa choosing Canadian universities for their doctoral studies.

Vanier scholars receive \$50,000 annually for up to three years, and each is selected based on his/her demonstrated leadership skills and high standard of scholarly achievement in the social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, engineering or health sciences.

Western's honorees come from a number of disciplines.

Ahmed Hamada

Wesley Moir

Hamada, seeking his PhD in civil and environmental engineering/doctor of philosophy, focuses on the area of fluid-structure interaction with a special focus on wind-related structural problems.

His thesis, *Development of Design Procedures for Transmission Line Structures Under High Intensity Wind Events Using a Fluid-Structure Interaction Model*, addresses the fact most tower failures have been attributed to localized High Intensity Wind (HIW) storms in the form of tornadoes and downbursts.

Despite this, current codes do not account for the loads resulting from HIW events in the design of transmission lines. Hamada hopes to establish a methodology for designing reliable transmission line systems under HIW events resulting in utility companies adopting those systems for implementation in their design guidelines.

"Western has a worldwide reputation as a leading institute in wind engineering through its famous Boundary Layer Wind Tunnel Laboratory (BLWTL)," he says. "Our research group, which consists of more 12 researchers, has been collaborating with researchers from the BLWTL in various research projects."

In his free time, Hamada plays basketball, soccer and squash as well as serves as Graduate Teaching Assistant Union chief returning officer, Society of Graduate Students (SOGS) councilor for engineering and Graduate Engineering Society vice-president. Hamada developed the first Egyptian Student Association in North America, the Western chapter.

Katie Kryski

Wesley Moir

Kryski, seeking a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, seeks to develop models of how biological and contextual factors interact to predict emerging temperamental vulnerability to depression in childhood.

Her thesis, *Exploring Biological and Contextual Influences on Temperamental Vulnerability to Depression*, looks to clarify existing literature on associations between genes, stress and temperamental vulnerability to depression by incorporating biological indices of stress reactivity.

"I love the opportunity for interdisciplinary research that Western offers," she says. "Through my time at Western, I have had the opportunity to integrate testing techniques commonly used in psychological, genetic and physiological research."

Outside of research, Kryski volunteers regularly at the Thames Valley Children's Centre and periodically at the London Food Bank. She plays intramural three-pitch and sits on the SOGS bursary committee and the UWO Psychology Colloquium Committee. She is a member of Advocacy Through Action, a Western clinical psychology student group helping improve access to psychology knowledge by delivering public talks on every-day psychology topics each February.

Donald Lafreniere

Wesley Moir

Lafreniere, seeking his PhD in geography, contributes to the historical understanding of how the urban environment influences how we use the city and interact with fellow citizens. His proposed thesis, *Reconstructing the Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Daily Life in a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Canadian City*, reconstructs many of the daily activities of the men, women and children who lived in the city during the peak of industrialization. He is focused on the most casual social interactions that would occur during ordinary daily activities such as the commute to work, a trip to the market or an evening stroll in the park.

"As Canada continues to grow into a diverse, multicultural society, it is instructive to look to our past to understand how the interactions of different social groups and the intensity of segregation changed over time," Lafreniere says. "Understanding the role segregation plays in shaping the way we built and use our cities will help Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as we strive to create a progressive, multicultural nation."

Beyond research, Lafreniere enjoys playing ball hockey in a local recreational league and bicycling on the many trails meandering through London. He volunteers with a local Scout troop and cheers for his son's ice hockey team on the weekends. Lafreniere works with the Masters in Public History program on local heritage preservation efforts as well as with local archivists on digital history projects.

"The collaborative, multi-disciplinary research environment at Western is truly exceptional," he says.

Matthew Quinn

Wesley Moir

Quinn, seeking an MD/PhD in medical biophysics, focuses on studying the time-course of iron deposition in multiple sclerosis (MS) using high-field MRI.

His thesis, *Magnetic Resonance Imaging of Iron in Multiple Sclerosis at 3 Tesla*, explores whether iron accumulates before or after MS plaques – the hallmarks of the disease – appear, and thus determine whether iron is more likely a cause or consequence of MS pathology. MS is the most common neurological disease in young Canadians, affecting as many as 75,000 individuals.

“I chose Western for its reputation as a world leader in medical imaging research, and for the opportunities available here to explore interdisciplinary and translational research. As a future medical doctor and researcher, I was particularly drawn to Western because of the close ties between its research sites and hospitals,” he says.

Outside the lab, Quinn plays intramurals, goes sailing on Fanshawe Lake during the summer months and enjoys Tuesday night trivia at the Grad Club.

“From my point of view, Western’s medical research community and its facilities are matched in only few other institutions,” he says. “I can’t imagine I will have any regrets by the end of my time here.”

Fabrice Szabo

Wesley Moir

Szabo, seeking a PhD in French, studies adaptations of Victor Hugo’s masterpiece *Les Misérables*.

His thesis, *Toward a Better World for Les Misérables*, establishes adaptation as a mirror that deforms, reforms and informs the original work, thereby making the importance of choice in that adaptation quite clear. His research then explores what filmmakers keep from an original work, how they deviate from it and what they choose to transform.

“I chose Western to benefit from bilingualism,” he says. “*Les Misérables* is a French novel, but many of its adaptations are in English, so it was important for me to join these two ‘worlds.’”

Beyond the books, Szabo enjoys the French Department tradition of ‘Atelier des Cinéphiles,’ a bi-monthly French movie night. He participates in the selection of the movies and its organization.

“The road toward a doctorate can be long and tortuous,” he says. “It’s a good idea to have it pass through Western.”

Jodie Whelan

Wesley Moir

Whelan, seeking a PhD in business administration (marketing), looks to define, describe and explore the potential consequences of the consumer role on both consumer and non-consumer behaviour.

Her thesis, *The Consumer Role*, looks to understand what this role entails, thereby offering insight into how to influence the subject's behavior.

"I chose the Richard Ivey School of Business for the people. My professors are passionate about their research and extremely committed to and supportive of their students," she says. "They also value creative and original thinking and are always pushing us to approach our ideas from new perspectives. The strong support system combined with an emphasis on creativity results in a challenging yet safe environment, which I believe is ideal for graduate students wanting to do novel and interesting research."

In her free time, Whelan is the social director of Ivey's PhD students association, and takes part in organized sports through the Forest City Sport and Social Club.

For a complete list of the 2011 Vanier scholarship recipients, visit [vanier.gc.ca](http://vanier.gc.ca).