

**AcademiCast Transcript**  
**Texas Tech University**  
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Tarpley: Hello and welcome to *AcademiCast* – Texas Tech University’s biweekly podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Troy Tarpley, and I’ll be covering the top academic stories on campus. This edition of *AcademiCast* will also spotlight *Lone Star Law*, which was recently published by Texas Tech University Press. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will present a profile of Horn Professor Bruce Clarke.

First, the news...

The Environmental Protection Agency has awarded a \$1 million grant to Texas Tech researchers in Junction. Funds from the grant will support a protection plan for the Upper Llano River watershed. The watershed runs through the Junction campus, and its namesake river flows into the Colorado River in Central Texas. Researchers in Junction will evaluate water quality and biological conditions in the area, as well as consider other ecological data that could be used in the plan.

The university’s wind farm project is expanding to include a partnership with turbine manufacturer Vestas. Texas Tech has also been collaborating with Sandia National Laboratories. Together, Vestas and Sandia will deploy three research turbines at the wind farm to be constructed at Reese Technology Center. The wind farm is expected to be operational by October.

In an effort to boost its international standing, Texas Tech’s School of Law is introducing a Master of Laws degree in U.S. Legal Studies this fall. The master’s program is targeted to graduates of foreign law schools. Students will learn about the American legal system through courses in legal research and writing, constitutional law, and contracts, among other subjects.

The Texas Tech University Press has also recognized the importance of jurisprudence, especially in relation to the culture of the state of Texas. The press recently published *Lone Star Law*, written by St. Mary’s University law professor Michael Ariens. Professor Ariens sat down with *AcademiCast* to discuss his book.

Ariens: The purpose of the book was to write the first true legal history of Texas. A number of people had written different aspects of it, but I thought it was worthwhile to get a comprehensive history of the legal history of Texas. These are stories about human beings, and it’s not about some abstract law; it’s about how law affects people. I try to tell stories about what kinds of law in Texas are unique and what parts of law we borrowed from other states—how we have used and sadly, occasionally abused power, how law affects culture, and more importantly, how culture affects law—stories of both hope as a people and stories sometimes of despair of folks, stories of law reform, and especially the stories in which lawyers and judges and other legal officials have really helped aid the people of Texas by improving its legal system.

Tarpley: Last month *Lone Star Law* was named the Best Book on Texas History by the Texas State Historical Association. More information about *Lone Star Law* can be found on our website at [\*\*academicast.ttu.edu\*\*](http://academicast.ttu.edu).

The Horn Professorship is the most prestigious designation bestowed upon a faculty member by the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents. The professorship is named for Paul Whitfield Horn, the first president of Texas Tech University. Horn professors are nominated by their colleagues and selected for their outstanding teaching, research, and creative accomplishments. Provost Bob Smith spotlights Horn Professor Bruce Clarke in this edition of *AcademiCast*.

Smith: Bruce Clarke is a professor of English in the College of Arts and Sciences. His specialty is in the area of literature and its connections to science. A dedicated teacher and prolific scholar, Clarke was named a Horn Professor in 2011.

He has come a long way from Columbia University in New York City, where he spent his undergraduate years and became part of the band Sha Na Na. Despite the seductive attraction of a life in musical performance, Professor Clarke found himself drawn toward a career in academia.

Clarke: We were just a bunch of college kids at Columbia University. We were not like hardcore rock and rollers. We were undergraduates that formed around the nucleus of an a cappella singing group. In the years I was with it, we were all taking classes and doing gigs. We would fly out on Thursday, do four nights of shows, fly back on Monday, and take classes...it was extremely hectic, but it was pretty amazing as well. Nonetheless after a couple years I just found I was spending more time in my motel room reading books rather than going out and doing the after-show parties. I mean, there was always a party. I just wasn't cut out to...dedicate myself to that kind of life.

Smith: Professor Clarke went on to earn a Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo, now known as the University at Buffalo. When he joined the faculty at Texas Tech, Professor Clarke taught British literature. His connection to the subject and a book on chaos theory sparked his interest in the connections between literature and science.

Clarke: In this thing called 'Chaos Theory,' which is now kind of called 'Chaos and Complexity Theory,' anyways there's the concept of entropy that most people have heard about, which is the Second Law of Thermodynamics. In a closed system Entropy tends to a maximum, which basically means things fall apart unless energy is applied to keep them from falling apart. And this science developed in the mid 19th Century, and the laws of thermodynamics were codified, and then they began to be expounded, especially in British Culture, some of the major early thermodynamicists were British scientists, and I'm a British literature person, so I could begin to see that I knew—I could see that in the literature that I was familiar with, the impact of these concepts began to register. I could see refractions of thermodynamic anxieties about energy and loss of energy and in the British Empire. In other words, the British Empire was already paranoid about if it could keep it up, right, in other words, their mastery. Or would they fall apart? And then these scientific ideas kind of predicted, well...yes (laughs). The Empire will fall just the way the sun is going to burn out.

Smith: In addition to developing his integrated literature and science specialization, Professor Clarke became involved with a professional organization that has an international presence. He believes that aligning with and taking on a leadership role within a professional association is important for academicians, especially those who aspire to become Horn Professors.

Clarke: We're ambassadors, scholarly ambassadors. So what I'd say is...go international as soon as possible. The Society for Literature and Science only began in the late 80s, and I connected with it in 1989, so I wasn't a founding member, but I kind of found it when it was young. I just felt at home there. And I met good people, made friends, made colleagues, and so I just stayed with that. Find your professional home and stick with it, and then at a—when the time is right, seek office. That looks real good on the vita.

Smith: Professor Clarke has also contributed professionally to the university through his editorial work associated with journal—INTERTEXTS: a Journal of Comparative and Theoretical Reflection—published by our own TTU Press. Additionally, he is Director of the Center for the Interaction of the Arts and Sciences. He believes that professional service is critical for all academicians, but recommends being thoughtful about undertaking service projects.

Clarke: Don't get sucked into more service than you should be doing, especially before you get tenure. And usually departments are concerned not to overload their people still working toward tenure, but things arise, and people may just kind of think that if I just serve beyond the call of duty, that that will, that will cover over deficits on the other part of my profile, and that's not a good way to think. I mean your teaching is your teaching.

Smith: With regard to his own teaching, Professor Clarke has worked to meld the findings of his research into his lectures. He also strives to blend his efforts in teaching, research, and service projects. In other words he practices the ethos of the integrated scholar, which involves another good suggestion for faculty members.

Clarke: I've been the beneficiary of what I would consider good decisions by my deans and provosts to allow me to kind of try different things. It's kind of obvious advice, but you really want to try and align and do what you have to do to make sure that the classes you teach by and large, or at least as much as possible have you developing and researching the material that you're then going to write your papers and your books on.

Smith: An academic administrator once said: "To be effective you have to make things count double or even triple." Professor Bruce Clarke seems to have intuitively adopted this advice while becoming an exceptional academic—one who personifies the ideal qualities of a Horn Professor. His curiosity has led him to carve out a niche in an emerging area of scholarship, and his commitment to science and literature has allowed him to influence many through his teaching, research, and service.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Tarpley: Thanks, Dr. Smith!

That concludes this edition of *AcademiCast*. If you would like to learn more about our program or the stories featured here, please visit our website at [academicast.ttu.edu](http://academicast.ttu.edu). Thanks for listening, and join us again in two more weeks for the latest academic news from Texas Tech University.