

Book Club to read autistic's memoir

By **BRIAN CHU**
Staff writer

This semester, the Ohlone book club will be reading a book by an autistic author, Temple Grandin's "Thinking In Pictures: My Life With Autism."

Recommended to the book club by Disabled Student Programs and Services counselor and English teacher Terry Taskey, "Thinking In Pictures" is an autobiography/memoir/case study on the often-misunderstood condition of autism.

Temple Grandin is a well-respected speaker on both animal sciences and autism. Taskey had the opportunity to meet and speak with Grandin last fall when she was present at a conference on students

with learning disabilities.

According to Taskey, the book is interesting because of the dual perspectives it gives on autism. Grandin writes with insight of a person suffering from autism and, at the same time, that of an observant scientist with an unusually high set of spatial skills. The book details how Grandin experiences life while dealing with autism in her personal and professional life.

The difference in writing style between autobiographies, memoirs or documentary case studies and "Thinking In Pictures" is immediately noticeable in the beginning of the book. This is largely due to the way autistics, including Grandin herself, approach social situations. "As the title says, they think in pic-

tures and not words, and if you try it yourself you realize how different it is," Taskey said.

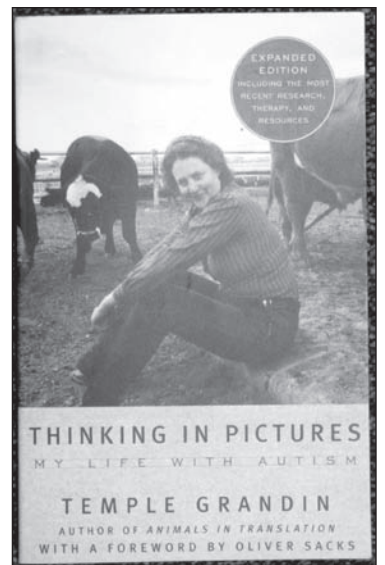
Drawing from experiences working with autistic students, Taskey said, "They are typically shy and when they are social, because their interpersonal skills develop slower, they end up to be blunt and sometimes offending." However, Taskey emphasized the importance of not stereotyping students with learning disabilities and above all that, as individual human beings, we are all unique and have our own special qualities. "This book helps convey that message."

"Even if you do not attend the book meeting, I really suggest that you put this book on your to-read list. It is really hard to put

down, and definitely worth a read," Taskey said. She has been given positive feedback from several students already about her recommendation.

The day of the Book Club meeting is April 20 but the location has yet to be announced. The discussion will consist of an informal open forum and will be led by Taskey. Students are encouraged by the book club organizers to ask questions and speak out openly during the discussion.

Taskey will be present and will briefly discuss her personal meeting with Grandin. The book can be purchased from K.G. Greenstein at the library front desk for \$9, instead of the \$15 standard price available elsewhere.



Temple Grandin's book is available in the library for the discounted price of \$9 this semester.



Ohlone instructor Christine Bolt will head the Sydney semester abroad.

Program lets students study in Sydney

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the meeting should contact Kay Harrison, who will be handling the applications.

The trip's organizers are working on group air pricing rates, transportation, and trying to get financial aid and scholarships involved.

Students will get spring/summer temperatures all over again, as well as a week of spring break during which their time is their own for a journey to the outback, New Zealand or an extended prowl in Sydney.

There are some changes this semester, but not too many.

The trip now offers the option

of students staying in host homes by themselves instead of having mandatory roommates. In addition, the caves tours are being cut to make the schedule a little shorter.

The theater programs offered may also be run a little differently this semester.

According to Cynthia Katona, the supervising professor during the Fall 2006 trip, the only low point of the semester was that a number of students got sick from the flight over.

Otherwise, she said the trip was wonderful - from the beaches to the theater, wine tasting, famous Blue Mountains and a drinking

age of 18.

As before, breakfast and dinner will be covered by the Australian families students will be housed with, but travelers will need to bring their own funds for clothes, extra food, books, liquor and miscellaneous things you find to do or buy in Sydney.

"In Sydney, Australia you will find the friendliest people, a very open, welcoming group of people, and eager to show you their world," said Bolt.

The option of exploring the country after the official semester ends is also in the works.

The study abroad program has

gone to Cambridge and Oxford, England before.

A trip abroad to India was planned for this semester but was canceled due to a lack of applicants, as worries over the ongoing unrest in the Middle East kept students from embracing the destination.

The Ohlone drama department is currently planning a trip to New York. Students will leave May 24 for eight nights of "enjoying Broadway, shopping, and all that Manhattan has to offer" according to Mark Nelson, the organizer of the trip. He can be contacted at (510) 659-6298 or MNelson@ohlone.edu.

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