FALL/WINTER 2015

GW

Arts & Sciences

The Plight of the Honey Bee
A SCIENTIFIC MYSTERY

Inside SEH
SCIENCE PLUS TEAMWORK

Holocaust Killing Centers
A HISTORICAL NIGHTMARE REVISITED

Human Trafficking
ALUMNA EXPOSES DARK MYTHS

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
COLUMBIAN COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

GW Arts & Sciences

FALL/WINTER 2015

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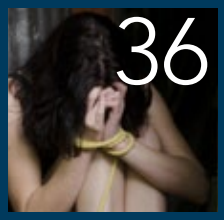

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COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Dean's Message

Where is history made? Is it only in the pages of old textbooks and the lives of long-ago presidents and generals? Of course not. As students and scholars—and as a historian myself—the Columbian College family knows that history is made every day, all around us.

It's made in our biology labs, where a professor and a team of undergraduates race to save the world's vanishing bee colonies. It's made in a health clinic in South Africa, where our students volunteer to help keep women safe from sexual violence. It's made by an economics major toiling through late nights and discarded drafts to perfect a concept model, by a graduate student helping brain-injury patients regain speech skills and by a study-abroad choir hearing its voices resonate in the ancient churches of Eastern Europe.

History can be public—and personal. It can be widely acclaimed—and cherished quietly in our hearts. It can occur in a classroom on campus—or in a field site across the world. As dean of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, I see history all around me. I see it in the breadth and depth of our talent, and in our rich reservoir of skills and citizenship. In this issue of *GW Arts & Sciences*, I am proud to share the remarkable stories of the people, discoveries and events that make Columbian College a home to history.

Each day, the Columbian College community writes its own chapter in the history of arts and sciences. No matter the field—science, social science, the arts, the humanities—our students, faculty and alumni foster intellectual curiosity, encourage academic and artistic creativity and develop knowledge around the globe. Their intellectual determination and commitment is on display throughout this magazine: Disabled Studies scholar **David Mitchell** leading his class to Germany on an eye-opening investigation of a Nazi euthanasia campaign, postdoctoral research fellow **Summer Sheremata** discovering how the brain recovers from stroke damage, alumna **Caroline Ayes** touching lives as a Peace Corps volunteer in Morocco. Each one highlights the vitality of an extraordinary—and historic!—community of students and scholars; artists and scientists; visionaries, romantics, communicators and thinkers.

It's been a year of growth and transformation at Columbian College. We saw the opening of the new Science and Engineering Hall, which doubles our lab space and gathers world-class researchers from an array of disciplines under one roof. In these pages, you'll see that the state-of-the-art facility is already opening doors to collaborations and discoveries. We welcomed the inaugural class of the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design, where our young artists challenge conventional perspective and continue our tradition of innovative arts education in the nation's capital. And we were honored to announce a $7 million gift from alumnus **Gilbert Cisneros** to create the GW Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute, a landmark initiative to encourage diversity in higher education and grow leadership skills.

Of course, our college's vision and accomplishments are built upon the commitment of those whose service and philanthropy supports everything we do. We are grateful to those who have advanced our work through their generous gifts of time, talent and treasure.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you. Join one of our many outreach events. Or stay in touch by simply dropping me a line. In the meantime, turn the page and learn more about the amazing men and women making history at Columbian College.

Ben Vinson III
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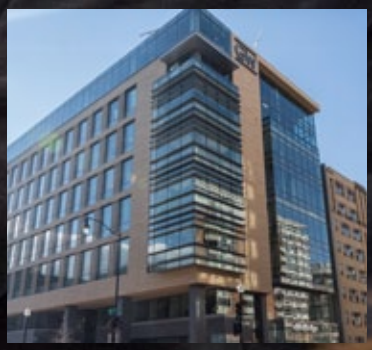
Inside Science and Engineering Hall, faculty and student researchers share science and space. With so much talent in so many disciplines under one roof, great collaboration and discoveries are just an experiment away.

SEH: Science Plus TEA

The SEH labs offer students greater opportunities to interact with faculty like Bernard Wood.

COWORK



The 500,000-square-foot research hub is home to 140 faculty members from 10 departments.

For the faculty and students of the Center for the Advanced Study of Human Paleobiology (CASHP), coordinating research activities within the program—much less across other disciplines—once felt as slow-moving as evolution itself. From the hard tissue biology center at Corcoran Hall to the evolutionary neuroscience lab in Ross Hall, the trouble wasn't uniting scientific specialties or even synchronizing crowded schedules.

The biggest stumbling block was geography.

The open labs and teaching space facilitates collaboration.

Until recently, the varied pieces of human paleobiology—from researchers and their experiments to skeletal remains and digital datasets—were scattered across half a dozen buildings. Some labs were hidden in low-ceiling townhouse basements, others in the converted hayloft of an old horse-and-carriage fire station.

"It was virtually impossible for someone from, for example, hard tissue science to drop in on someone from archaeology because they were on the other side of campus," said **Bernard Wood**, professor of human origins and CASHP director. And casually consulting with colleagues from the biology or physics departments was out of the question—unless you had the time and patience to navigate city blocks, broken elevators and a labyrinth of twisting staircases and narrow hallways. "I don't think I've ever exchanged more than three sentences with the biologists," Wood joked.

But the landscape changed for human paleobiology and the other science disciplines with last January's opening of Science and Engineering Hall (SEH), the eight-story, 500,000-square-foot research hub that is now home to 140 faculty members from 10 departments, including four Columbian College disciplines. The state-of-the-art building represents a giant leap forward in core lab facilities, resource capacity and teaching space. Freed from makeshift laboratories in dusty storage rooms, or cross-campus—if not cross-region—commutes, SEH has cleared the path for the university's science infrastructure to catch up with its research profile.

"Whether you have an idea that you need somebody else to test or you have an instrument that can solve somebody else's problem, successful science is all about collaboration. There can't be any walls between scientists." —Michael M. King

"You can't underestimate the improvement in the size and quality of the new space," said Assistant Professor of Biology **Mollie Manier**, who moved her microscopy equipment from a "remodified one-person closet" in Bell Hall to a work space that comfortably fits four people and three microscopes. "It adds a professionalism and a competence to our science culture. This is a place where students say, 'Wow, we are doing serious research here.'"

Along with the advancements in facilities and technology, SEH offers another vital boon to scientific progress: proximity. The building brings together a mix of specialists, from physicists and biologists to computer scientists and engineers, under one roof. Its open layout, accessibility and lack of physical barriers are intended to break down silos between departments, and to promote cross-disciplinary conversation and inquiry—ultimately leading to collaborations that yield new technologies and discoveries.

"Today you cannot do science without collaboration," said Department of Chemistry Chair **Michael King**. "Whether you have an idea that you need somebody else to test or you have an instrument that can solve somebody else's problem, successful science is all about collaboration. There can't be any walls between scientists."

Now, researchers who might previously have only connected through symposiums and email chains are exchanging ideas in SEH atriums, common rooms and kitchens, as well as over networking coffees and happy hours. While waiting for a fourth-floor elevator, Assistant Professor of Chemistry **Cynthia Dowd** and Professor of Physics **Chen Zeng** recently compared notes on trends in tuberculosis and malaria research. When anthropology post-doctoral student **Fenna Krienen** needed assistance with RNA extraction, she merely walked across the sixth floor to Manier's biology lab. In the past, when junior biology major **Simon Wentworth** needed to consult with his computer science counterparts, he scheduled a bus ride

"We moved from a closed box to a place that is spacious and full of light, where everyone wants to show you what they are working on. It's good for your psyche as well as your science." — Hannah Yi

to the Loudon County-based Virginia Science and Technology Campus. Now, when he's stumped by a computer algorithm for mapping the genetics of the fat-head minnow, he peeks his head over a glass partition and asks for help from the computer science majors in the neighboring cubicle.

"Sooner rather than later, those 'hellos' will be converted into tangible research," Wood said. "It's the natural next step. Once you form these relationships, you begin collaborating. For now, we are enjoying the enthusiasm of anticipation."

Science and Psyche

Nearly the entire chemistry and human paleobiology faculty now resides in SEH along with about half the biology department and a third of physics. More science faculty and equipment will be relocated to the new building in the future. But already, King suggested, SEH has had a hand in recruiting faculty and students. He pointed to Manier as well as Assistant Professor of Biology **Scott Powell** and Associate Professor of Biology **Amy Zanne** as faculty members who at least partly based their decision to come to GW on the allure of the new facility.

"SEH was definitely a selling factor," Manier agreed. And with help from the enhanced prestige of the new facility, the 2015-16 chemistry graduate class is the biggest in the department's history, King said. "Top students and faculty want to be in a space where they are surrounded not only by the most modern equipment but also by other people who are making science happen."

Indeed, for students, the modern teaching laboratories provide hands-on learning opportunities while the larger work spaces make it easier to interact with both faculty and colleagues from other disciplines. Senior chemistry major **Hannah Yi** moved from the cramped Corcoran Hall office of Assistant Professor of Chemistry **Adelina Voutchkova-Kostal** to her state-of-the-art SEH green lab. Yi has already toured Assistant Professor of Biology **Hartmut G. Doebel**'s bee lab with his research assistants. "We moved from a closed box to a place that is spacious and full of light, where everyone wants to show you what they are working on," Yi said. "It's good for your psyche as well as your science."

Before relocating to SEH, physics' Zeng and Associate Professor of Chemistry **Michael Massiah** teamed up on an investigation of a protein that causes birth defects like cleft palates in boys. Their new surroundings have boosted their ongoing collaborative efforts. Massiah's Corcoran Hall lab was so constrained that student research assistants worked in shifts. But the new chemistry lab has added space for vital resources like autoclaves and walk-in cold rooms. With Massiah and Zeng's offices mere steps from the shared labs, chemistry and physics students can work in concert while enjoying easy access to their professors.

"Now we can all work together as a team," Massiah said. "There's no way to stress how critical that group dynamic is to student learning and to productive scientific collaborations."

While it may be too early to credit SEH with sparking new collaborative projects, Dowd said just the potential for an exchange of ideas in labs, classrooms and hallways has everyone from incoming students to veteran researchers brimming with excitement. "We are professional thinkers and it's hard to think in a bubble," she said. "The great thing about being together in SEH is the mix of new blood and expertise. It can only ignite our thoughts and increase our creativity."

The eight-story facility was designed around accessibility and lack of physical barriers.

CORCORAN *Completes Historic* INAUGURAL YEAR

From a historic partnership to a vibrant influx of talent to the naming of a new director, it was a year of transformation for the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design at GW. It began in August 2014 with the announcement of the finalized agreement between the Corcoran, the university and the National Gallery of Art, promising to build upon GW's arts education while preserving the Corcoran legacy. It continued with the arrival of nearly 370 Corcoran students on campus, adding creativity and an artistic spark to the GW community. And it culminated with a convocation ceremony for the inaugural graduating Class of 2015 and the appointment of **Sanjit S. Sethi**, a veteran arts education leader, as the inaugural director of the Corcoran School.

"It has been an exciting year of growth and change for GW and the Corcoran," said Columbian College Dean **Ben Vinson**. "We are creating something dynamic and unique in the landscape of arts education."

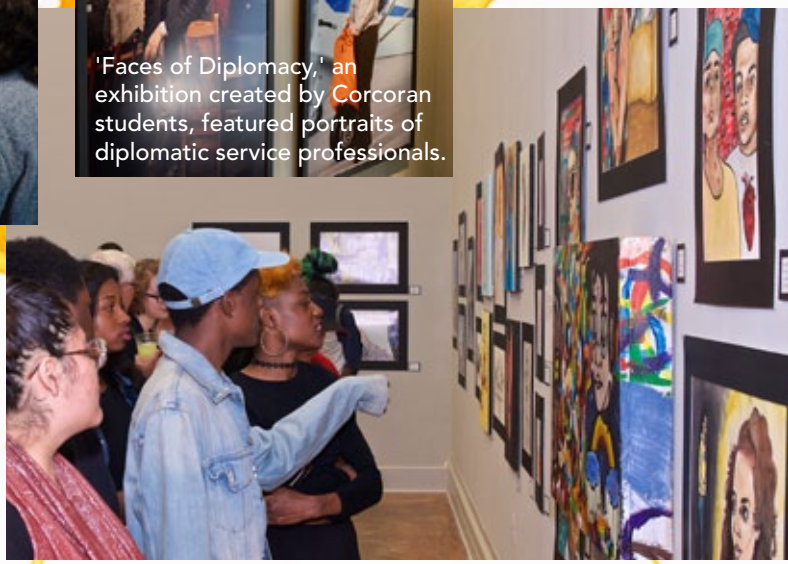
Sethi arrives at the Corcoran with a reputation as an artist, arts educator, administrator and collaborator. As director of the Santa Fe Art Institute, he implemented dynamic programming, cultivated new funding sources and led collaboration efforts with local, national and international institutions. A former Fulbright Fellow, Sethi holds a master's in advanced visual studies from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an MFA from the University of Georgia and a BFA from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to be a part of a legacy institution like the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design at the George Washington University," Sethi said. "I look forward to working with students, faculty, staff and administrators across the Corcoran and GW to cultivate diverse forms of creative practice and educate the next generation of critical problem-solvers."

Whitney Waller, MA '15, in her NEXT project, 'Dasein.'

A high school student shares her work with professors at National Portfolio Day.

'Faces of Diplomacy,' an exhibition created by Corcoran students, featured portraits of diplomatic service professionals.



Duke Ellington School of the Arts students showcased their works for the D.C. community at the 'Experience the Unexpected' exhibition.

Photo: Brian Nielsen

A YEAR OF HIGHLIGHTS

A highlight of the year was NEXT, an annual student thesis exhibition that both showcases and serves as a launching platform for burgeoning designers and artists. The month-long public exhibition—which received multiple design awards this year—attracted thousands, including gallerists, curators, curiosity seekers, alumni, family and friends. And the installations by the 103 graduating Corcoran students were stunning in their scope: broad panoramas of leaves and clay, sculptures cast from an artist's own body, powerful photo series that both engaged and intrigued, intricate architectural design models and breathtaking brush strokes of color on canvas.

"The fact that we now can count this remarkable event as one of the most exciting parts of the academic year makes us all at GW extremely proud," said President **Steven Knapp**.

In addition to NEXT, other snapshots from the year include:

- High school students toting thick portfolios and sketchbooks to the Corcoran's vast atrium for National Portfolio Day, an annual college recruiting event for aspiring young artists.
- Corcoran photographers, videographers and designers collaborating with the U.S. Department of State on "Faces of Diplomacy," a multimedia exhibition with displays featuring professionals from the diplomatic service.
- Corcoran ceramists transforming clay into contributions for the homeless by creating more than 500 clay bowls that were later auctioned off to donors by the nonprofit So Others Might Eat.
- Duke Ellington School of the Arts' seniors gaining the enviable opportunity to showcase their work on the Corcoran's storied walls.

Major milestones also included the sale of the Corcoran's Fillmore Building in Georgetown, the migration of the Corcoran's 40,000-volume collection to the Gelman Library and the launch of a multi-year, multi-phase renovation of the historic Corcoran building. The work includes renovations to second-floor gallery spaces, which will enable the venerable galleries to again showcase contemporary art through exhibitions of masterpieces of the Corcoran Collection by the National Gallery of Art.

Corcoran ceramists created more than 500 clay bowls that were auctioned by a nonprofit to feed homeless people in D.C.

ALUMNUS' $7 MILLION GIFT CREATES GW CISNEROS HISPANIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Sociology's Daniel E. Martínez named director for inaugural year

Columbian College alumnus **Gilbert Cisneros**, BA '94, and his wife Jacki, donated $7 million to create the GW Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute, which will assist high-achieving high school and college students across the nation.

"Gil and Jacki Cisneros's magnificent gift will play a crucial role in creating the next generation of leaders of the Hispanic community," said GW President **Steven Knapp**.

The institute will offer a pre-college program to high school juniors, with plus-factor consideration given to students of Hispanic heritage who are committed to leadership and service within the Hispanic community. Prior to their senior year in high school, students from around the country will participate in a summer workshop in Washington, D.C., and will learn about the fundamentals of enrolling at selective universities. In addition, they will engage in a variety of activities and experiences designed to increase their knowledge and interest in attending and graduating from a top university.

Assistant Professor of Sociology **Daniel E. Martínez** is serving a one-year term as the institute's inaugural director. A Mexican-American scholar, Martínez's research and teaching interests include the sociology of race/ethnicity, criminology, immigration and the legal and social criminalization of unauthorized migration in the United States.

The institute, which was established through an endowed fund, will provide college scholarships to select students, named Cisneros Scholars, who enroll at GW, demonstrate a commitment to leadership and community service, and have aspirations to give back to the Hispanic community. Additionally, the institute will offer mentorship and support opportunities to the Cisneros Scholars and other interested students by connecting them with leaders and mentors within the Hispanic community.

Central to the institute's mission is addressing the issue of undermatching, which occurs when students of high academic potential do not matriculate to selective universities.

"Undermatching has become a significant problem for Hispanic students and, because of this, we're lacking much needed diversity in our future leaders," Gil Cisneros said. "My wife and I are excited to partner with GW to create a program that will help deserving students gain the leadership skills and confidence needed in order to apply to and attend a selective university.

"Our goal is to have the institute help these students feel more at home in a higher education environment, while providing them with mentorship programs and networking opportunities led by successful Hispanics in Washington," he continued. "By creating this type of supportive atmosphere, the students will be more inclined to get involved in university life, take on leadership roles and ultimately graduate, which will greatly assist them in reaching their full potential."

Within four years, the university hopes to enroll 20 Cisneros Scholars. Each entering class of students will be granted at least $250,000 in scholarships, which are renewable for four years. The university will welcome the first class of high school scholars in the summer of 2016 and the first enrolled full-time undergraduate students during the 2016-17 academic year.

The new institute complements the university's focused efforts to look for new ways of encouraging college attendance by students from a variety of backgrounds and ensuring their success on campus, which is the cornerstone of the university's Access and Success Task Force.

This gift comes from both Gil and Jacki Cisneros and the foundation that bears the Cisneros family name.

"I have always believed that since this university is the nation's university, the students should be reflective of the nation's population," Gil Cisneros said. "As more students begin to realize their dreams of higher education, the George Washington University will be able to educate the next group of citizen leaders—just as President George Washington once envisioned."

"This transformative gift from our dear friends, Gil and Jacki Cisneros, is a real game changer," added Columbian College Dean **Ben Vinson**. "All of us look forward to the exciting work ahead."

The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum

The museum collections feature examples of fiber arts dating as far back as 3000 BC.

STUDENTS BRING *Art to Life* AT NEW *Museum*

Long before 2,000 visitors enjoyed the grand opening festivities in March of the new George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum, dozens of students—primarily from the Museum Studies graduate program—put what they had learned in the classroom into practice. They spearheaded projects on exhibition design, collection inventory, curatorial research and educational programming. Even history students lent a hand, contributing copy to a Smithsonian Press catalogue on the museum's collection.

The museum brings together two venerable Washington artistic collections: the internationally renowned Textile Museum, featuring the greatest collection of fine textiles in the world; and the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection, an assortment of rare papers, maps, drawings and artifacts chronicling the history of the nation's capital.

"A major component of the museum is to create genuine opportunities for GW students throughout our operations, our collections and our education programs," said Museum Director **John Wetenhall**. "We are creating a bridge for students ... to add to their professional development and enhance the museum as a whole."

Students from Assistant Professor of Museum Studies **Barbara Brennan's** class designed two of the inaugural Washingtoniana exhibitions: "Seat of Empire: Planning Washington, 1790-1801," which used historic maps to illustrate early blueprints of the city, and "The Civil War and the Making of Modern Washington," which looked at the transformation of D.C. from the 1800s to today. "This is hands-on education at its finest," Brennan said. "Students learned the exhibition design process by working directly with professional curators, presenting and defending their design ideas and producing refined design concept packages."

For the "Civil War," **Sydney Katz**, MAT '14, created a sepia-toned mural of the Capitol under construction. Katz, now a designer at the Orlando Science Center, imagined arranging snapshots of the district during the war around a larger image of the half-built dome. Her mural stretched across a wall in Woodhull House as an entrance treatment to the exhibit. "I wanted to walk you through Washington-in-the-making and show how the Civil War literally shaped the capital," she said.

"There was never a dull moment," said **Lauren Shenfeld**, BA '13, MA '15, of her role as a community liaison. "It was a remarkable experience and a professional development jackpot. How many students get to be intimately involved in the opening of a brand new museum?"

A "Student Corps" developed by Shenfeld was launched to train students from across the disciplines to be amateur tour guides. Part of the training involved having them design their own 10-minute interactive presentations for their classmates. "The idea is to give students a peer-to-peer experience that allows them intimate access to the galleries," she explained.

Political communication senior **Zinhle Essamuah**'s "Superheroes: Fact to Fiction" tour was based on items in "Unraveling Identity," the largest exhibition in The Textile Museum's 90-year history. The "Superhero" tour drew parallels between exhibits like a fireman's helmet and a knitted Batman costume.

Many students were also involved in devising social media strategies to enhance the new museum's digital presence and garner financial support. "If you think about all the people and the roles involved in museums, the field really is all about working collaboratively," said **Natalia Febo**, MA '14, a student in Professor of Museum Studies **Kathy Dwyer Southern**'s class on fundraising.

The museum is open to the public daily, except Tuesday. For more information on hours of operation and current exhibitions, visit museum.gwu.edu.

POLITICAL SCIENCE JUNIOR EARNS MSNBC *'Women-in-Politics'* HONOR

Victoria Gonçalves has followed her political passions through every destination in her life—from her birthplace in Caracas, Venezuela, to her hometown of Miami, Fla., to GW's Washington, D.C., campus. Championing causes like immigration reform and gender equality, the political science junior has eagerly assumed the mantle of student government leader and proud advocate for Latino Americans. And her next stop may well be Capitol Hill.

She's off to a good start. In 2015, she was recognized as one of MSNBC's "Women in Politics: College Edition," a web-based series that highlights promising women leaders in student government on campuses across the country. MSNBC editors and political commentators identified future movers and shakers among female college activists, highlighting their accomplishments and soliciting their voices for online discussions of female candidates and women's issues on a national level.

"I'm really excited about corresponding with the other women who have been chosen and talking to them about the issues they are working on at their colleges," she said. "I'd like to compare notes on how we are all trying to enact change."

> *"My GW courses have inspired me to continue fighting for social justice."*
> *—Victoria Gonçalves*

Gonçalves has made a difference on campus—both as a senator in the GW Student Association and an executive board member with the GW chapter of the Organization of Latino American Students (OLAS). She sponsored a Student Association bill to create a student-run peer support hotline for young people who are hesitant to approach counselors or professionals with a problem. She is also working with the OLAS to start a Latino student mentorship program. During GW's Latino Heritage Celebration, Gonçalves organized a panel discussion on the Latino vote in the 2014 elections, bringing College Democrats and College Republicans together for a bi-partisan debate.


Victoria Gonçalves

"It's easy to get students to sit together and identify a problem, but the tough part is coming up with real solutions," she said. "A big challenge that I've faced has been turning great conversations into real actions."

Gonçalves's parents came to the U.S. from Venezuela on work visas in 2001, when Gonçalves was in the first grade. As a child growing up in Miami, her eyes were opened to the impact of politics on real lives. Many of her family's friends were undocumented immigrants, living under the constant shadow of deportation. "I've known since I was in elementary school that [my friends] did not have the same opportunities as I because they were undocumented," she recalled. "I've seen mothers and fathers and children deported, and I can honestly say that there is nothing more heartbreaking than the despair in their eyes."

Spurred by the plight of undocumented immigrants struggling to forge lives in the United States, Gonçalves is outspoken in her support of comprehensive immigration reform. In Miami, she tirelessly volunteered on voter-registration drives for newly naturalized citizens. Through her campus activism, she has advocated for issues like extending financial aid benefits to undocumented immigrants and their children who want to attend four-year universities.

Gonçalves has always marched to her own political drummer. Her heroes are political pioneers who champion gender and race equality, such as Hillary Clinton and MSNBC commentator Melissa Harris-Perry. "My GW courses have also inspired me to continue fighting for social justice," she said, singling out Associate Professor of American Studies **Elaine Peña's** Latinos in the U.S., and Associate Professor of Political Science **Ismail White's** African American Politics.

Gonçalves is on a path to turn her education into activism, aspiring to eventually work as a candidate's campaign manager—or even hold public office herself. For now, she has set her sights on the biggest benchmark in her life: In 2015, she will officially become a U.S. citizen.

"I feel incredibly blessed to be where I am today and to be able to say that I will be a citizen," she said "I'm so excited to be able to vote and participate democratically in this country that I love so much."

News Briefs

SLAVE SHIP ARTIFACTS

Historical relics from a sunken 18th century slave ship recovered by Associate Professor of Anthropology **Stephen Lubkemann** and an international team of maritime archaeologists will be displayed at the 2016 opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in an exhibit called "Slavery and Freedom."

The long-lost artifacts were found off the coast of Cape Town as part of an ongoing collaboration called the Slave Wrecks Project. The Portuguese ship carried 400 enslaved people when it set sail from Mozambique in 1794 for a slave market in Brazil. But violent winds and swells sank the vessel on the Cape of Good Hope, killing half of the people onboard.

Sarah Binder

SARAH BINDER HONORED

Political Science Professor and Brookings Institution senior fellow **Sarah Binder** added her name to a coterie of the world's most highly regarded scholars as an inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a leading center for independent policy research. Binder joined an illustrious class of inductees including Nobel Prize-winner Brian Kobilka, Tony Award-winner Audra McDonald and novelist Tom Wolfe. "I was both surprised and thrilled to hear about my election," she said. "I'm grateful to my department colleagues at GW for creating such a supportive and fun place to grow as a political scientist."

MAIDA WITHERS' 'MINDFLUCTUATIONS'

Maida Withers headlined Lisner Auditorium's spring season with the premiere of "MindFluctuations," a bold new show that marked the culmination of her 40-year career as a dancer, choreographer and artistic director. The innovative presentation featured the work of computer artist and alumna **Tania Fraga** and performances by professors, alumni and students. Dancers wore neuro-headsets as vibrant 3-D virtual artwork of their brain waves projected onstage. A GW professor for five decades, Withers also received a special recognition at the 2014 Mayor's Arts Awards, D.C.'s highest artistic distinction.

'BEST OF THE BEST'

Three Columbian College faculty members were recipients of the Oscar and Shoshana Trachtenberg Faculty Prizes, the university's top faculty award, recognizing the "best of the best" in teaching, writing and research. The honorees were **Joseph Cordes**, associate director of the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration and professor of economics, public policy and public administration and international affairs; **Nathan Brown**, professor of political science and international affairs; and **Alexander Dent**, associate professor of anthropology and international affairs.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE MARKS ANNIVERSARIES

The **GW Confucius Institute** hosted festivities this year to mark its two-year anniversary at GW and the institute's 10th anniversary worldwide. Several Chinese dignitaries participated in the celebration, including Vice Premier Liu Yandong, the highest-ranking female official in China. GW leadership and U.S. State Department officials also joined Cheng Chongqing of Nanjing University in declaring the partnership a "remarkable success." The institute was established at GW to promote

Nanjing University's Cheng Chongqing

the study of Chinese language and culture, support Chinese teaching through instructional training and certification and encourage increased research and cultural exchange in China studies.

LGBT HEALTH FORUM

Columbian College's LGBT Graduate Certificate Program addressed the health care crisis in the transgender community during the 2015 LGBT Health Forum, an annual event that spotlights LGBT-related health issues while celebrating the program's students and alumni. Program Director **Stephen Forssell** moderated a dynamic panel of health and public policy experts to discuss why transgender people are disproportionately uninsured and explore strategies for meeting their health care needs. The forum also showcased accomplishments by certificate graduates, including **Jeff Goodman**, BA '14, who created anti-LGBT-bullying guidelines for the American Public Health Association, and **Lore Espinoza Guerrero**, BA '12, who was honored for her volunteer work with homeless transgender women in Bogota, Colombia.

THE HO

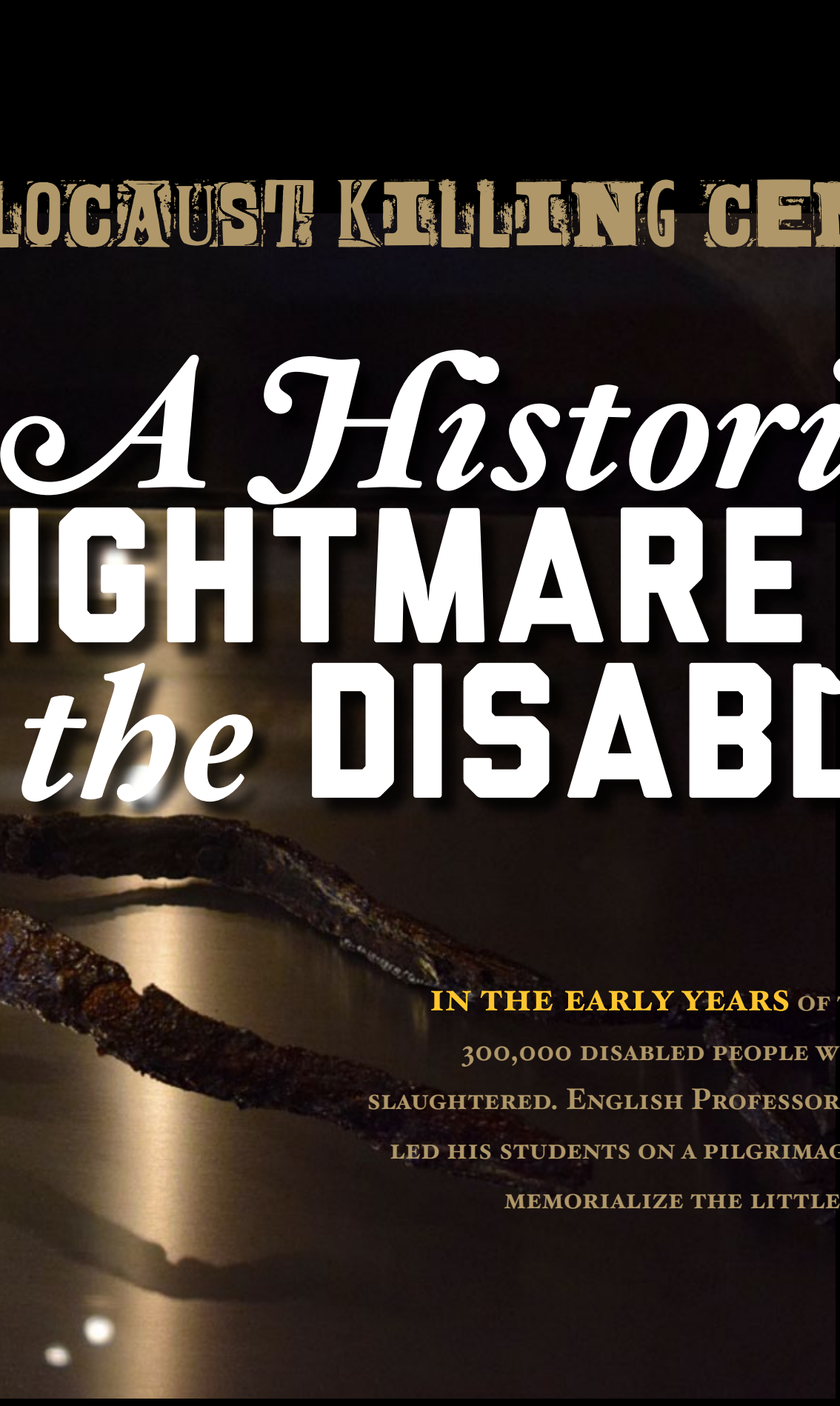
N

"How is it that so few people know what happened here?"
— Maria Willhoit

A rusted leg brace from a victim at the Bernburg killing center.

LOCAUST KILLING CENTERS

A Historical IGHTMARE for the DISABLED



IN THE EARLY YEARS of the Nazi regime, 300,000 disabled people were systemically slaughtered. English Professor David Mitchell led his students on a pilgrimage to Germany to memorialize the little-known tragedy.

"It's one thing to read about these places but it's another to have a visceral, physical immersion in these tainted spaces. There's something powerful about being at the scene of a historical nightmare." — David Mitchell

They are known as the killing centers—six buildings dotting the German countryside. Some are brick castles transformed into state mental hospitals. One is a dismantled jail. Others are psychiatric institutions guarded by razor wire. When English major **Maria Willhoit** first stepped through the gates of a killing center—the Bernburg psychiatric institution in Saxony—there was no denying the echoes of the past. Here, inside the antiseptic halls and cramped sterile wards, thousands of disabled people were systematically slaughtered by the Nazi regime in a little-known "euthanasia" program.

As part Professor of English **David Mitchell**'s Dean's Scholars in Globalization course on Disabled People and the Holocaust, Willhoit and her eight classmates spent spring break on a heart-wrenching tour of German historical sites related to Hitler's clandestine medical murder campaign. She walked through the same corridors where disabled people were stripped of their clothes and their belongings, and then led to their deaths. She peered into the same makeshift gas chambers and shower stalls, where the Nazis first tested their extermination technology on those who were diagnosed as deaf, blind or people with an array of disabilities, from congenital impairments to psychiatric disorders.

"Being here, seeing how these victims died, I feel like we are memorializing them by remembering their experiences," she said. "But there's also a shameful feeling. How is it that so few people know what happened here?"

That's one of the questions that Mitchell's undergraduate students explored in their semester-long classroom seminar and on their 10-day trip to Germany. Students immersed themselves in the Nazi medical murder program known as "T4," a reference to the location of the public health administration building in Berlin where the killing strategy was supervised. Mitchell challenged students to not only understand the plight of the victims but to also grapple with hard questions about a relatively neglected Holocaust narrative: Why was there seemingly less outrage over the killing of disabled people than other Nazi murders? Why did many of those who participated in the extermination scheme escape prosecution? And why did it take 70 years to erect the first T4 memorial—a 79-foot-long wall of blue tinted glass unveiled in Berlin last September?

In addition to visiting a concentration camp and memorials to other Holocaust victims, students participated in discussions with German students and faculty at Humboldt University of Berlin and attended lectures by Holocaust scholars. But the emotional centerpiece of the journey was the killing centers. The students toured three sites: Bernburg and Sonnenstein-Pirna in Saxony, and Brandenburg on the Havel River near Berlin.

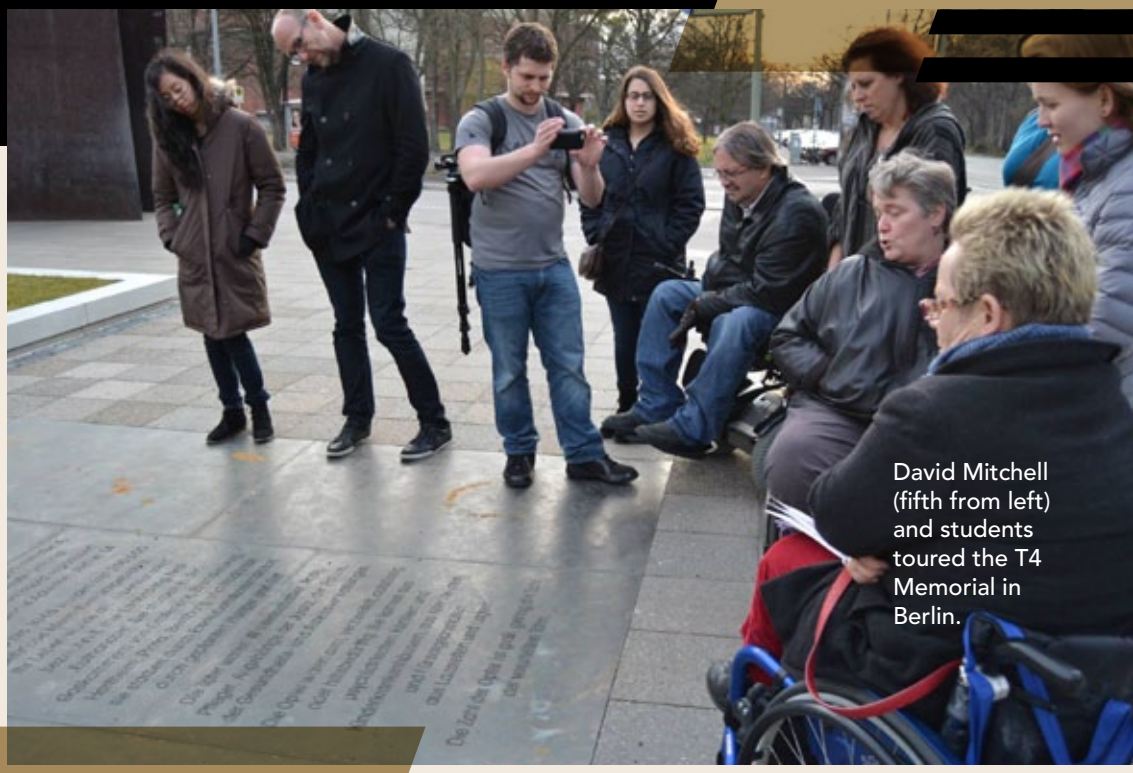
"It's one thing to read about these places but it's another to have a visceral, physical immersion in these tainted spaces," Mitchell said. "There's something powerful about being at the scene of a historical nightmare."

Crimes Against the Most Vulnerable

It's a largely unwritten chapter in Holocaust history. Between 1939 and 1945, Nazi doctors, under the guise of medical advancement, killed 300,000 disabled children and adults. Throughout German cities and townships, disabled "patients" were identified by clinicians, psychiatrists and social workers, and required to register with Nazi officials. Diagnostic records characterized them as "useless eaters," "lives unworthy of living" and "burdens upon themselves and the nation's resources." They were loaded into vans with black-painted windows—nicknamed "death buses" by local children—and transported to the killing centers, countryside hospitals and institutions just outside of picturesque cities such as Dresden and Potsdam. In Berlin, "death committees" of physicians determined whether disabled people should be released or, if their documents were marked with an ominous red cross, taken to their deaths.

The killings began with disabled children as young as 3, many of whom were starved to death in hospital beds or killed with lethal overdoses. As a direct precursor to the Holocaust death camp murders, adults were herded

Photos of victims killed in the Bernburg gas chamber.



David Mitchell (fifth from left) and students toured the T4 Memorial in Berlin.

into crowded air-tight chambers; those who relied on wheelchairs or crutches were carried inside by orderlies. Heavy metal doors slammed behind them, and the chambers flooded with poison gas. Afterward, some dead bodies were carted to a nearby crematorium; others were singled out by medical staff for autopsies for research.

Touring the chambers and autopsy room of Bernburg, senior English major **Rodrigo Duran** tried to separate himself from his emotions and view the facility from an academic standpoint. "We're coming here as scholars. You acknowledge that it's devastating, but you know that your job is to try to understand these events," he said. But the relics on display at Bernburg—from the victims' photos to a rusted metal leg brace—tested Duran's resolve. "Just imagine how many people were taken into these rooms. They were wall-to-wall," he shook his head. "It's hard to comprehend."

Depth of Knowledge

Mitchell, who has a disability, first envisioned the course with women's studies professor and research colleague **Sharon Snyder** in the early 2000s, while lecturing at the University of Frankfurt. During the trip, he and Snyder visited the killing centers. "The depth of my knowledge on this topic expanded significantly," he said. "I wanted to offer students that same experience."

Mitchell challenged students to use the power of the horrific settings as a jump-off point for exploring attitudes toward the disabled throughout history and into today. He and Snyder noted that Nazi euthanasia programs were influenced by American notions of eugenics in the early 20th century, which advocated coerced sterilizations and permanent institutionalizations.

The T4 program represented medicine run amok, the consequence of doctors serving the state rather than individuals, Mitchell said. "These people had bodies that didn't work right and couldn't be productive for the nation." At the same time, as Duran noted, the program was built on long-standing views of the disabled as less than human. "They argued that Germany was a body, and the disabled were a tumor," he said. "They needed to remove that tumor to make the body stronger."

Indeed, many of the perpetrators were never tried for the crimes they called benign "medical interventions." And while local townspeople may not have participated in the slaughter, Mitchell suggested that the stigma surrounding the disabled made it easier for many to rationalize the medical murders. "It's difficult to imagine that someone living in Bernburg during the 1940s would not know what was happening down the road," he said. "The smell of human flesh and bones burning is very distinct."

Senior women's studies major **Faith Weis** said the trip inspired her to "reclaim a historical narrative" for forgotten victims like the disabled. "History has to be seen through a broader lens," she said. "We are uncomfortable talking about the disabled. But we're going to have to learn how to talk about our differences if we are going to give them the historical context they deserve."

Reem Al Shabeeb

GROWING UP IN A WAR ZONE

Biology major Reem Al Shabeeb and her family fled war-torn Iraq, leaving behind friends and memories.

When **Reem Al Shabeeb** thinks back on her childhood in Iraq, a stream of conflicting images comes to mind: her family's New Year's celebrations with plates of her mother's lamb kebobs and dolma leaves; playing bingo with friends at Baghdad social clubs while the grown-ups drank coffee and discussed politics in hushed tones; afternoons splashing in resort swimming pools to escape the stifling summer heat.

But just as quickly, visions of an idyllic youth are pushed aside by darker scenes of violence and bloodshed: deafening explosions leveling buildings during the 2003 American-led invasion; bullet holes chipping her home's stone façade and shrapnel landing in her front-yard garden; sirens that seemed to wail endlessly through the night.

"No one misses Iraq," said Al Shabeeb, a sophomore biology major whose family fled Baghdad in 2009 when she was 14. "It seems like you are having a normal childhood, with your family, your friends, your school. But you look back and there are things you wish you could forget."

Today, Al Shabeeb has other matters on her mind, mostly involving white laboratory coats, microscopes and scalpels. As a research assistant in Assistant Professor **Mollie Manier's** biological sciences lab, her responsibilities include dissecting fruit flies to examine their reproductive systems—great training for Al Shabeeb's goal to become a brain surgeon.

And her professor couldn't be more impressed. "Reem has the rare ability to think creatively and independently," Manier said. "And she's so enthusiastic. She's the lab cheerleader."

For Al Shabeeb, the lab can be a sort of escape, a place to lose herself in formulas and experiments. Given the turmoil of her childhood, contemplating questions of molecular evolution and behavioral ecology are easier than thinking about her past. "There's something about science, seeing how neatly things work and interact with each other, that makes me feel like I can understand all that's happened in my own life," she said. "If I can figure out what's going on inside a fruit fly, it shouldn't be hard to make sense of the things I've seen."

A CHILDHOOD UNDER FIRE

As a child in Baghdad, Al Shabeeb had no idea she was living in a dictatorship. The extent of her knowledge about Saddam Hussein came from lessons in her first-grade class, where mornings began with a loyalty pledge to the despotic ruler. Her parents, both doctors, never discussed politics in front of her. She had no way of knowing that, like all physicians and other professionals, they were barred from leaving the country. "As far as I was concerned, they just went to work at the hospital each day, like anybody going off to a job," she recalled.

Al Shabeeb was just 7 when the invasion began. Suddenly her parents had a new set of worries—like how to make it home before curfew or where to seek shelter when the warning sirens sounded. When bombs rained on Baghdad, her family huddled in a back bedroom, away from shattering windows. Al Shabeeb remembers her annoyance over missing *Lizzie McGuire* reruns after the TV stations were bombed.

When her school reopened, Al Shabeeb's class tore pictures of Saddam from their textbooks. Some of the desks around her were empty. Classmates had been cut off from the rest of the city and couldn't make their way back to the school. Others had left Baghdad altogether. Still others were never heard from again.

In 2006, when Al Shabeeb was 9, as many as 3,000 Iraqis a month were being killed amid sectarian violence. Twice, Al Shabeeb's school day was interrupted by gunfire, forcing her class under desks to escape a crossfire of bullets. She regularly heard bomb blasts nearby—once so close that her milk glass shook from the aftershocks. The sight of troops with guns was so ubiquitous that she often confused the words "American" and "soldier."

Still, Al Shabeeb said she became accustomed to growing up in a war zone. The shootings, the explosions, walking past the rubble of razed buildings on her way to school—all were soon commonplace. "My whole life was going to school, studying hard and getting home as quickly as I could," she said. "Sometimes I'd cry about why my life was like that. But mostly, everything felt normal."

At the height of the violence, professionals like Al Shabeeb's parents were sometimes targeted for kidnappings and assaults. When fellow doctors saw their children abducted or killed, her family decided it was time to leave the country. They packed in secret and warned 14-year-old Al Shabeeb not to tell a soul—a vow she quickly broke when she asked her best friend for a farewell photo.

The family's first stop was Malaysia, one of the few countries that welcomed Iraqi immigrants without visas. They soon moved to Jordan and, two years later, settled in Silver Spring, Md. At 17, Al Shabeeb had little trouble fitting into her American high school. Classwork came easy to her. "In [the Middle East], we memorized textbooks and spent whole days studying to pass our exams," she said. "In the U.S., it's more important to understand your lessons than to memorize them. And homework doesn't take up all your time."

Al Shabeeb chose to attend GW partly because of its diverse student body. She rarely talks about her past and most of her friends don't even know that she's an observant Muslim. "It's not like I walk around saying, 'I pray five times a day and it's great to fast at Ramadan,'" she said. "I focus on what I have in common with other people. I don't spend much time thinking about Iraq. I'm too busy thinking about fruit flies."

On Baltic Tour, CHOIR HITS ALL THE RIGHT NOTES

From the churches of Latvia to the castles of Lithuania to the town squares of Estonia, the Baltic States of Northern Europe are renowned for their rich musical tradition. In the streets and concert halls of the three small nations, folk singers pluck ballads on the strings of zithers and classical choirs fill baroque cathedrals with rousing hymns. Dubbed the "Land that Sings," the region was home to the so-called Singing Revolution, where, from 1987 to 1991, hundreds of thousands of Baltic people protested the Soviet occupation by singing banned patriotic anthems.

"These are countries where music matters," said **Robert Baker**, assistant professor of music and director of performance study at Columbian College. "They have preserved their culture and traditions through song."

A chorus of 26 GW students added their voices to those Baltic harmonies as part of a 10-day, four-city study abroad tour. Organized every two years by the Department of Music, previous choirs have taken their talents to South Africa, Brazil, Croatia and Italy. They study international musical cultures, sing with local performers and express their thanks to the host countries with service projects, such as instructing school children and staging concerts at orphanages.

"Our students are better musicians thanks to these trips and they are better citizens of the world," said Baker, one of three faculty members from the Department of Music who accompanied the choir abroad.

The tour is part of the Study Abroad Program, which annually supports approximately a dozen student trips, from art therapy excursions to India to interior architecture

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In Vilnius, the choir practiced with esteemed Lithuanian choral conductor Vytautas Miskinis.

The choir, conducted by Gisele Becker, performed at the historic 15th century Church of St. Casimir in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The GW Troubadours with soloist Matt Ricci perform at the Tartu University Museum in Estonia.

Chorus, continued

and design treks through Paris. With student input, Baker and **Gisèle Becker**—an adjunct music instructor and director of choral activities—chose the Baltics for its musical heritage as well as its exotic locale. "We wanted to offer [students] a travel experience they may never have considered before," Becker said.

To prepare for the Baltic tour, students rehearsed for as many as 10 hours a week, crafting their repertoire of spirituals, standards and sing-alongs. "We feel strongly about bringing American music on international tours; that's who we represent and that's what audiences want to hear," said **Kevin Frey**, a former president of University Singers who graduated in spring 2015 with a BA in journalism and a minor in music. "We think of it as an exchange of international musical genres." With churches comprising three of four venues on the Baltic tour, the choir deemphasized works by Gershwin and Copeland in favor of choral arrangements and American spirituals.

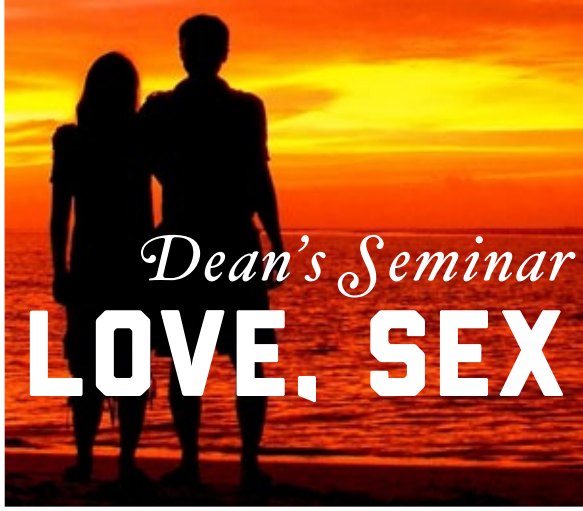
By the time the choir landed in Lithuania after a 13-hour flight, the jet-lagged singers had just hours to prepare for a concert at the Church of St. Casimir, a historic 15th century cathedral in the capital of Vilnius. The students were less awed by the church's gold-domed ceiling and 13 ornate baroque altars than by its remarkable acoustics. Singing to an audience of more than 100 fellow performers, students and local music lovers, their voices echoed for a full seven seconds after each note. "It was beautiful," said Jennifer Sherman, a senior political science major and soprano with University Singers. "We sounded crazy good."

For 10 days, the choir held joint concerts with local singers and school choruses. In Riga, Latvia, the students shared the stage with the Latvian Voices, a world famous female a cappella vocal group. In Šiauliai, Lithuania, they visited the Hill of Crosses, a monument of 100,000 crosses memorializing deceased loved ones, including victims of Nazi and Soviet massacres. Junior **Katie Costello**, a GW Troubadour soprano, draped her late grandmother's rosary around a cross. "She always regretted never traveling the world," she said. "It was a special moment for me."

The highlight of the trip was a performance at Keila SOS Children's Village, an orphanage in a remote township outside of Tallinn, Estonia. Choir members distributed clothing, toys and gifts and swapped their hymns for light-hearted pop tunes from the Jackson Five and Young the Giant. At first, Frey said, the audience of "doe-eyed" children seemed intimidated by the boisterous singers. "But we soon had them dancing and imitating boom box beats," he said. "It was the best concert of our trip," Baker said. "It was wonderful to see the joy on the faces of both the staff and children."

Throughout the trip, the choir endured the inevitable backstage dramas. Senior **Ally Carter**, a geography and international affairs major and GW Troubadour soprano, landed in Lithuania with laryngitis and lip-synced through her first performance. A stomach bug struck a handful of students in the middle of an Estonian concert. "We were dropping like flies," Costello joked.

Forced to fill in for ailing soloists, Frey memorized song lyrics just moments before his cue—comforted by the likelihood that few audience members spoke English. "When you are touring, you have to roll with the punches and perform by the seat of your pants," he said. "It's part of the fun—even though it's slightly terrifying."



Step into Assistant Professor of Philosophy **Laura Papish**'s Dean's Seminar on the Philosophy of Love, Sex and Friendship and you might think you took a wrong turn on your way to a lecture hall. You won't find a speaker behind a lectern waxing about Sigmund Freud. Instead, you're likely to land smack in the middle of a whirlwind discussion among 15 engaged first-year students arranged in a semicircle, their arms shooting into the air as they compete to have the last word on whether there's any philosophical merit to *The Bachelor*.

"This is one wild class," said **Dori Goodman**, who took the seminar when it was first offered in spring 2015. "The conversation moves really fast and in all different directions. It can be hard just to get a word in."

That's exactly what Papish was hoping for when she designed her course, which—like other Dean's Seminars—allows Columbian College freshmen to focus on specific topics with an emphasis on critical thinking and inquiring discourse. Even the class title is meant to draw attention. "If I were flipping through a course catalog and I saw something called 'Love, Sex and Friendship,' that would jump out at me," Papish said.

Rather than leaning heavily on a syllabus and lectures, Papish invites her students to jump head-first into free-flowing debates on what-we-talk-about-when-we-talk-about-love. And while Aristotle and Plato are among the heavy hitters on the reading list, Papish encourages her class to draw on everything from philosophical texts to personal experiences as they reflect on the seminar's big questions: Are friends different

Takes 'Wild' Ride Through

AND FRIENDSHIP


Laura Papish

from lovers? Why do we want to be involved in intimate relationships when they cause us so much heartache? Are these relationships morally good, or can they pose an ethical threat? And what to make of controversial topics like pornography and censorship?

"These are questions that we may live with every day, but we don't really take time to think about them," Papish said. "I want students to look at their relationships in ways they've never done before."

BUILDING A PHILOSOPHY MINDSET

Papish set out to create a course that would appeal to freshmen, many of whom have never taken a philosophy class. While the seminar attracts students with an array of interests—from budding philosophers to math majors to ROTC cadets—most are unaccustomed to philosophy's lengthy reading requirements and scholarly writing assignments, much less its spirited discussions. Indeed, Papish revealed that the first teaching hurdle she faced wasn't eliciting debates on love and sex. It was showing her students how to think like philosophers.

"As a freshman, you don't necessarily have any philosophy background, so part of the challenge is simply introducing them to what philosophy means," she said. Philosophy isn't sitting cross-legged on the floor, talking about your feelings, Papish stressed. "There are some pretty dense readings. There are papers that must be backed up by citations and well-constructed arguments. Once you've mastered all that, then you can talk about how you feel."

In one sense, political science major and ROTC member **Michael Rossi** noted, the class is particularly applicable to the freshman experience. "When you first get to college, you want to be friends with everyone. You don't want to be lonely or bored," he said. "The class taught me how to be more cognitive of my relationships. It met me right where my life was at."

For **Mady Alfieris**, a double major in computational mathematics and economics, a philosophy course on love and sex seemed like a fun way to earn humanities credits. Attracted to the intimate class size of a Dean's Seminar, she still had butterflies when she first entered Papish's raucous semicircle.

"Philosophy is not my strong suit so I was a little nervous," she said. "But Laura is so open and friendly. She didn't lecture; she had conversations with us. After the first class, I walked out thinking, 'OK, I can do this.'"

Still, Papish expects her students to roll up their sleeves for philosophical skirmishes. For example, do we love someone because they have valuable qualities, as Aristotle argues, or do we ascribe value to the ones we love, as Henry Frankfurt contends? On pornography, should we side with Stanford philosopher Helen Longino's claims that pornography should be banned as libel against women or bioethicist Mark Wicclair's cautions against sexual censorship? Other topics included the infighting between sex-positive and sex-negative feminists and a discussion on sadomasochism.

Papish knows that while a smattering of her students may go on to study philosophy, others may never step into a philosophy classroom again. "I only have this brief moment to help them see things differently," she said. As far as organizational sciences major Goodman is concerned, Papish's mission was accomplished. "She taught me to read things from a different point of view and think 'Wow, I never considered that before,'" she said. "After every class, I actually felt enlightened."

From left: Irissa Cisternino, Michael Rossi and Mady Alfieris in Laura Papish's Love, Sex and Friendship seminar.

Speech Pathology Students

AS CLINICIANS, RESEARCHERS, MAN


Jordan Sender

On a typical day at the GW Speech and Hearing Center, graduate student **Jordan Sender** might spend her afternoon leading a stroke patient in vocal exercises as he struggles to regain communication skills. Or she guides a client with Parkinson's disease through a software program that allows the client to monitor the volume and tone of his voice. Or she may end up corralling a feisty 4-year-old with apraxia—a disorder that prevents the brain from organizing intelligible sounds—and persuading him that it's more fun to play with her colorful flashcards than race around the brightly painted treatment room.

But patient treatment isn't the only job for Sender and the 60 students in the Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Program, which requires the completion of a series of four-month clinical rotations. At the center, Sender is just as likely to fill her hours puzzling over insurance forms, solving scheduling snafus and making sure the clinic rooms and equipment are infection-free.

"I thought I was prepared for anything," Sender said. "The clients, the research, the classes—I knew what I was getting into. But there's a lot more going on here."

"Intensive. Demanding. Rewarding." That's the way graduate student **Katie Winters** describes the Speech and Hearing Center experience. "We essentially give them the clinic," said **Michael Bamdad**, the center's director. "It's up to them to make sure everything in it runs properly."

Most speech pathology programs offer students some degree of client interaction, but GW's clinic is unique in the diversity of clients and the range of responsibilities. From patient treatment to clinical research to administrative tasks, students are fully immersed in a full range of responsibilities. "Students work hard . . . but when they graduate, they are prepared for anything the field throws at them," Bamdad said.

Students see clients experiencing an array of issues: audiology; aural rehabilitation; voice disorders; adult neurologic disorders resulting from brain injuries or strokes; literacy challenges; fluency issues such as stuttering; motor speech disorders; and developmental issues like autism. While certified speech pathologists and instructors keep a watchful eye on patient sessions, students devise their own treatment plans and assessment tools, relying on both evidence-based research and experimental technology and techniques.

"It's important to put the students in the lead," Bamdad stressed. "The patient should see them as the caretaker."

Speech pathology is a burgeoning field with employment opportunities expected to rise by 19 percent in the next 10 years—higher than the average for any other occupation, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With the high demand for jobs in schools, hospitals, rehab centers, nursing homes and even private practice, students are stepping into a promising career market. "We produce very qualified, job-ready graduates," Bamdad said. "Parents love us!"

The treatment rotations are complemented by the clinic's on-site research lab. For example, in addition to collecting data for her own thesis on societal perceptions of stutterers, Winters assisted Assistant Professor **Cynthia Core** and Associate Professor **Shelley Brundage** with research on bilingual language development. And Sender co-authored a journal paper with Bamdad on brain injury cases in which people lose the ability to lie or recognize sarcasm. Together, their research focuses on therapy to ease these sometimes socially awkward patients into societal structures where they may struggle to maintain jobs and relationships.

FACE-TO-FACE WITH CLIENTS

Students find that sitting across from a real-life client feels like a different world than their classrooms or labs. "Here's someone who is paying for your services and hoping you will help them, and you feel like you aren't exactly sure what you are doing," Sender said. "You can practice in class. You can observe as an undergraduate.

But when it's just you and that person face-face, it's intimidating."

Winters quickly learned that client interaction requires as much patience as technical prowess. While walking a stroke patient through a sentence-structure activity, she noticed her client growing increasingly frustrated by his lack of success. Rather than push him forward, she put the exercise aside and

AGERS

lent him a sympathetic ear. By the time she looked at her watch, the session had ended. Winters expected her supervisor to discipline her for straying from the treatment plan. Instead, he complimented her empathy.

And the hard work has real-life rewards. The center regularly works with male-to-female transgender clients through the laborious process of acquiring a feminine sounding voice. Using software called Visipitch, students and clients can measure changes in tonal frequency and pitch. Sender recalled working with a transgender patient who had only recently begun to self-identify as a woman. She took her first hesitant steps in Sender's treatment room to alter the cadence of her deep masculine voice. After their four-month session, Sender worried that she had made little progress, and that the student had been unable to guide her patient through a tumultuous time. But weeks later she received a thank-you note from the client, saying their sessions had inspired her to persevere with her transition.

"We are working with people who are struggling with the basic ability to communicate," she said. "The best days are when you go home knowing you made their lives a little bit easier."

Learning Briefs

CLASS SAVORS EATING SCIENCE

A Columbian College service-learning course showed students that they don't have to sacrifice dollars for wellness. Biology of Nutrition and Health, taught by Teaching Assistant Professor of Biology **Tara Scully**, examined the science of healthy eating and the importance of nutrition education to our diet, our health and our communities.

The class focused on food, how the body uses it and major dietary-related issues, including diabetes, heart disease and celiac disease. The students worked with community organizations and visited elementary schools to teach children in underserved communities how to cook healthy meals.

DANCING THE DREAM

In his young dance career, junior **Ben Sanders** has joined international tours and performed at Washington institutions like the Kennedy Center—all by the age of 20! But the dance phenom pulled off his biggest triumph yet when he won a professional contract with the Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company, led by the renowned choreographer and Department of Theatre and Dance chair. Working with **Dana Tai Soon Burgess**, whom Sanders referred to as "a legend in the dance world," is the latest exhilarating step toward the young performer's long-term goal: Like his mentor, Sanders hopes to one day run his own company.

TRAILING LINCOLN'S KILLER

From Ford's Theatre to Petersen House, students in English Professor **Thomas Mallon**'s Dean's Seminar on The Assassination of Lincoln followed John Wilkes Booth's path to infamy—in the classroom and on Washington, D.C., streets. The popular course uses the assassination as a backdrop to observe 19th century American culture. Shadowing Booth's footsteps, the class hiked from the scene of the shooting and the house where the president died to the headquarters where the deadly plot was hatched. "We're learning what happened in the exact place where it happened," said sophomore **Camille Kidd**.

PRESIDENTIAL PERFORMANCE

Marianna Sotomayor has followed her passion for political journalism to roles with CNN and POLITCO. The

Marianna Sotomayor with President Obama and the first lady

Media and Public Affairs graduate student added to her acclaim when she won the inaugural George Washington University–White House Correspondents' Association scholarship. The $2,500 award included a meeting with President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House Correspondents Dinner. Among journalists, celebrities and world leaders, Sotomayor literally enjoyed a front-row seat to watch Washington's most illustrious celebration—and had a photo snapped with the president to prove it.

RESEARCH STAR

As a chemistry student in Assistant Professor **Peter Nemes**' lab, **Sydney Morris** helped develop technologies to probe biological processes at the single-cell level. As a 2015 recipient of the prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, Morris is on her own research star track. With boundless opportunities before her, Morris wants to become a professor and research scientist. Outside the lab, she has dedicated herself to educational outreach at DC Science Fests, the USA Science and Engineering Festival and the Grassroots Project, which recruits Division I athletes to teach HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention to local youth.

The Plight of the HONEY

GW's eight hives on the roof of Lisner Hall each swarm with as many as 80,000 bees.

Y BEE

Nearly half the U.S. bee population has mysteriously disappeared, spelling bad news for farmers and perhaps heralding a global agricultural disaster. Can Biology's Hartmut Doebel and a team of undergraduates crack the bee crisis?

Where have all the honeybees gone? It's a question that has baffled scientists for nearly a decade. Around the world, healthy hives that once teemed with tens of thousands of bees are suddenly empty. The colonies have vanished, abandoning their hive homes, and ominously never returning. No bee corpses found on the scene. No clues left behind.

"One day, the bees are in the hive; the next, they're gone," said **Hartmut Doebel,** assistant professor of biology and an insect ecologist. "And nobody has a good explanation for how it happened."

Dubbed Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), the mysterious malady has claimed 40 percent of the world's honeybees since it was first identified in 2006. Almost half of America's bees have disappeared in just a decade. During the 12 months that ended in April 2015, 5,000 beekeepers reported losing about 42 percent of their bee colonies, according to *The New York Times*, well above the 34 percent loss reported for the same period in 2013 and 2014. The alarming numbers have caught President Obama's attention. The White House announced a federal plan aimed at reversing America's declining bee population trend. The plan's proposal includes making millions of acres of federal land more bee-friendly, increasing research funds and examining the use of fewer pesticides.

Doebel has witnessed the bizarre phenomenon firsthand. Two of the eight hives he keeps on the rooftop of Lisner Hall have been plagued by CCD, driving away as many as 80,000 bees per hive.

"One day, the bees are in the hive; the next, they're gone. And nobody has a good explanation for how it happened." — Hartmut Doebel

No one has yet tracked down the culprit behind the bee disappearance, but the list of suspects is growing. Are pesticides poisoning the hives? Are bee colonies under attack from lethal viruses spread by insidious Varroa mites? Do genetically-modified crops starve bees of life-saving nutrition? Or is a climate-changed ecosystem forcing flowers to blossom too early and shrinking supplies of pollen?

"It's no exaggeration to say we are facing an environmental crisis," said **Ricky Zhu**, BS '15, the lead research assistant in Doebel's bee lab. "We need to solve this—quick."

Doebel and his undergraduate research assistants are on the case. In a three-year student-led study, the biology team is zeroing in on one shady CCD suspect: a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids. Working with 1,000 bees from Doebel's hives, the students are testing the effects of these widely used insecticides on the bees' behavior and physiology. They are investigating whether the pesticides so severely impair neurological functions that the insects are essentially unable to find food. "If there's proof that neonicotinoids have an effect on the behavior of honeybees, everybody will wake up and take notice," Doebel said.

Honeybee Habits

Albert Einstein is rumored to have proclaimed that "if the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, man would have only four years to live." His calculations were a bit alarmist, but scientists fear the honeybee disappearance presents a profound threat to our food supply—along with an undetermined ecological impact. The Department of Agriculture estimates that honeybees pollinate about a third of the nation's diet and account for $15 billion in U.S. crop production.

Most researchers pin the decline in bee populations on a combination of factors that include viruses transmitted by mites, environmental shifts and, most notably, insecticides. In fact, neonicotinoids—insecticides such as imidacloprid and clothianidin—are thought to play such a leading role in bee disappearance that the European Commission recently banned them for two-years. Neonicotinoids are sprayed on approximately 75 percent of U.S. crop acres. To limit their use would require air tight studies and irrefutable scientific evidence, Doebel noted.

Building on their observation of bee behavior, Doebel's team is taking a deceptively simple approach to connecting the dots between neonicotinoids and CCD. Foraging bees rely on memory to repeatedly locate food patches. They associate a flower with a particular smell, color or even shape. And they learn to return to that same food source again and again. "They don't just randomly fly around," said research assistant **Michael Stover**, a senior chemistry major. "They know where they are going." But, the team theorized,

Harmut Doebel (right) with his undergraduate research assistants, (from left) Mehreen Arif, Kelvin Lim, Ricky Zhu and Michael Stover.

Mehreen Arif (right), a bee research assistant majoring in biology and English, is also a trained beekeeper.

neonicotinoids could damage the bees' cognitive abilities, affecting their nervous systems and blocking both their foraging and communication capabilities.

In Doebel's lab, students trained bees to associate certain scents— essential oils like lavender, lemon grass and rosemary— with a reward. Holding the insects in a tiny "bee harness," they touched a sugar water-coded glass rod to their antennae receptors. At the same time, they used a syringe to release a puff of the oil-scents. Eventually, the bees recognized the scent and expected a treat. Exhibiting a reaction called Proboscis Extension Reflex (PER), the scent caused them to stick out their tongues, even when the sugar water wasn't present.

The trained bees were then divided into a control and a test group. The test group was fed sugar water mixed with a low-dose of neonicotinoids. Within hours— in some cases just minutes—the team recorded alterations in the bees' PER. They would no longer stick out their tongues at the puff of the essential oils.

The bees then entered the team-built "Choice Box," a 12x12 wooden cube separated into two compartments. Using an attached fan, one chamber was scented with the essential oil aromas; the other wasn't. The control bees, conditioned to associate the smell with a reward, flew into the scented compartment. The neonicotinoid-dosed bees showed no preference for either the scented or unscented sections, indicating that they had already forgotten their olfactory training.

The team is still finalizing its results for an upcoming research paper, but Doebel is encouraged by the findings. "Our preliminary results clearly show evidence that bees, after a short exposure to very low levels of neonicotinoids, alter their behavior," he said. "They do not remember as well as before."

Pets, Not Pests

Doebel, who learned beekeeping while attending graduate school in Berlin, encourages student-led research in the bee lab. With 12 undergraduate assistants working on four different projects, his students say Doebel expects them to take charge. "He gives us motivation to create our own innovative projects," Zhu said. "We don't think of [the neonicotinoid experiment] as his project as much as ours. We nurture it. It's our baby."

The professor and his students are also eager to dispel the popular perception of bees as hostile stinging threats. Doebel describes the insects as "defensive," attacking only when they feel threatened. He often amazes his introductory biology students by allowing bees to crawl over his bare hand or perch on the tip of his nose. Zhu has come to see bees as "pets," he said, although he concedes he has been stung 39 times, most painfully on the top of his head.

"Handling bees is all about patience and treating them properly. You have to remember you are intruding on their living space," said senior **Mehreen Arif**, a double major in biology and English and, like Zhu, a trained beekeeper. Still, working as a bee lab researcher since last spring, Arif has been stung at least 10 times, from her neck and ear to the bottom of her feet. "It's inevitable: You can do everything right and still get stung," she said. "That's just a byproduct of science."

ECONOMICS *for Dummies*

Economic concepts can be baffling. But a Luther Rice scholar found a way to make econ accessible—and sparked a new teaching strategy.

Pop economics quiz: After your high school graduation, you're presented with the two options of going to college or accepting a $30,000-a-year job managing the local video-game store.

What is the "opportunity cost" of choosing college?

You may need a brief Econ 101 refresher. An opportunity cost is the value of the next-best alternative—essentially, the benefits you would have derived if you made the other choice. By pursuing college over a job, your opportunity cost, or the option you are forgoing, is seemingly the $30,000 salary. In some economics classes, that answer would earn you a top grade.

But don't reserve your spot on the Dean's List just yet. Did you factor in the financial toll of college, from books and board to tuition and interest on loans? How did you calculate the value of education over employment? The video-store gig has its perks too, from a steady paycheck to all the games you can play. But would a degree have led to a higher-paying and, perhaps, a more fulfilling career?

Basic economic concepts often seem as simple as supply-and-demand. But that's the riddle of economics—a discipline that puts the science in poli-sci. Dig a little deeper and each equation can reveal variables, indicators and exceptions that would confuse a Nobel laureate. A cursory understanding of economics may be fine for balancing your checkbook. But too often students, teachers and even world-class economists stumble over basic concepts.

Senior economics major **Connor Delaney** may have hit on a method for making econ more accessible—and his idea resulted in a Luther Rice Undergraduate Research Fellowship, which provides funding support to Columbian College undergraduates engaged in faculty-mentored research projects.

With Assistant Professor of Economics **Irene Foster** as his mentor, Delaney theorized that economic concepts themselves aren't the sticking point, it's the way they are taught. As part of his Luther Rice project, Delaney devised a teaching strategy using easy-to-understand concept maps to unpack the hidden complexity behind fundamental ideas. By testing his method in Foster's Principles of Microeconomics class, Delaney hopes his approach will help students decipher everything from basic to complex economic ideas. And, Delaney suggested, the implications may reach farther than the economics lecture hall.

"This sounds starry-eyed, but the long-term potential of our work is to change the way we teach almost anything," he said.

A PERPETUAL CYCLE

As a tutor to students from Foster's introductory classes, Delaney encountered freshmen who struggled with rudimentary "opportunity cost" concepts, which often hindered their progression to more complex analytical thinking. "Opportunity cost is a fundamental aspect of economic theory and contributes to almost every higher-level concept in the field," Delaney said. "Lacking a comprehensive understanding of opportunity-cost can affect your understanding of all of economics."

And, according to Foster, the lack of understanding goes well beyond GW's classrooms. Georgia State University researchers quizzed 200 top economists from 30 universities. They were asked pop quiz-style questions on basic opportunity-cost concepts. Only 20 percent answered correctly. "If educators

Connor Delaney and Irene Foster display their concept map.

have incomplete knowledge, they will pass it on to their students," Foster said. "It's a perpetual cycle." Foster herself admits that "since my students get these problems wrong over and over again, I am obviously not teaching it well."

With that in mind, Delaney modified his own slide presentation for struggling students into a teaching strategy involving concept maps—visual tools for representing a single idea along with all of its many related sub-concepts. Picture a series of interlocking circles and boxes that are connected by straight lines. The center box contains the main concept—in this case, opportunity cost. Surrounding that principle node are connected topics and subtopics.

'THIS IS RESEARCH'

Like economic theories themselves, designing a concept map was deceptively complex. For weeks, Delaney and Foster tore through a dozen prototypes, scratching out one design after another. "We sat across from each other at my desk, sheets of paper between us, passing the maps back-and-forth, drawing all over them," Foster recalled. Some iterations were skillfully constructed "and quite conceptually brilliant," Foster noted, "but they weren't practically useful in solving problems." Each crumpled piece of paper tossed into the trash brought more frustration and disappointment. "We went back to the drawing board again and again," Foster said. "I told [Delaney]: 'This is research; this is how it goes.'"

Finally, they settled on two maps—a "static" map that defined the scope of the concept, and a "dynamic" map that not only explained opportunity cost but also worked as a guide to solving problems. They pilot-tested their design on Foster's 700-student microeconomics class. At discussion sections, students were asked to solve two moderately difficult opportunity-cost questions. One was a question that students had seen many times during the semester, while the other was relatively unfamiliar. They were given study aids that, according to Delaney, "straight-up told them how to answer the question." Half received blandly written text explanations, a standard economics teaching tool. The other half were handed the concept maps.

The results of the pilot test were initially disheartening. There appeared to be no significant difference in the concept map scores versus the text format. But on closer inspection, Delaney noticed that the map group scored higher on one of the quiz questions—the one that dealt with unfamiliar material. While the statistics weren't conclusive, they suggest that concept maps may help students understand new ideas but are less effective in teaching familiar material.

The next step was to expand their work into a semester-long experiment, using the maps as both a teaching tool for instructors to prepare their curriculum and present it to their classes, and as a learning tool for students to build their understanding of a concept.

Numerous studies have shown the effectiveness of concept maps in teaching STEM topics, but they have never been widely tested in economics. Delaney's preliminary map results were far from conclusive; still, his Luther Rice project earned him an invitation to present his research at the American Economic Association's annual conference, a rarity for an undergraduate. "It's a special honor," Foster said. "There are professors who can't get their papers accepted [at the conference]. Connor has hit on something new and interesting."

Indeed, the teaching maps not only provide a much-needed framework for relaying economic concepts, but they could herald a shift in education strategies. "This research actually helps improve my teaching," Foster said. "The next time I cover opportunity cost with my class, I am going to do a much better job thanks to Connor's work."

Working in South Africa, Students Take Stand

For victims of sexual violence, the house in the South African district of Observatory is a safe place. From the outside, along a quiet tree-lined street, the building looks comfortable and unassuming. No one would guess it's the headquarters of the Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust, the nation's oldest organization for supporting rape and sexual violence survivors. Inside, women seeking help find a homey and welcoming space—couches and pillows, not bland offices and intimidating clinics. They meet friendly staffers, sympathetic counselors and, for the last four years, enthusiastic Columbian College students.

"This is a beautiful place," said **Ariella Neckritz**, a human services and women's studies major who interned in the western Cape Town center last fall. "It's a place where people who have had horrible experiences of violation and disrespect can come to receive so many healing options. I'm lucky to be a part of it."

Thanks to a long-time partnership between the Rape Crisis center and **Dan Moshenberg**, associate professor of English and director of the Women's Studies Program, students like Neckritz have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to aid women in distress and gain hands-on experience in nonprofit management and social activism. While working with Rape Crisis to enhance its advocacy efforts, Moshenberg arranged for several students—including Neckritz and women's studies and biology major **Shakti Naidoo**—to intern at the trust while studying abroad at the University of Cape Town.

The students participated in every aspect of the trust's work, from writing grant proposals and posting social media alerts to organizing community and peer education programs. Their efforts were integral in shoring up the trust and addressing the needs of survivors.

"Shakti and Ariella arrived at a time when the organization was in a serious financial crisis and nearing the brink of closure," said Rape Crisis Director Kathleen Dey. "They brought new energy and skills to our team. They made huge contributions to keeping our doors open."

CONFRONTING A CRISIS

Since the days of apartheid, South African women have faced a sexual violence crisis. The nation's sexual violence rate is among the highest in the world, with an estimated 500,000 rape cases each year. The horror of the situation is compounded by the fact that 10 percent of South Africans are HIV-positive. Dey explained that much of the violence has its roots in the institutionalized dehumanization of the apartheid system, fostering disrespect for women's lives and dignity. The current legal atmosphere, she said, has improved but still often falls short. Rape victims know little about navigating the complex criminal justice system. There are no provisions for survivors to receive psychosocial care. And, Dey said, law enforcement officials can be biased against survivors and treat their cases insensitively.

"We have a vision of a South Africa in which women are safe in their communities and where the criminal justice system supports and empowers rape survivors," Dey said. "Our mission is to promote safety in communities, to reduce the trauma experienced by rape survivors, to encourage the reporting of rape and to work actively to address flaws in legal system."

"We need to help people learn about their resources and create spaces for survivors to share and talk. This issue massively affects lives—whether here at home or oceans away." — Ariella Neckritz

Since 2003, Moshenberg has been part of that mission. An expert in the many aspects of gender-based violence, he has worked with Rape Crisis to develop a multi-platform communications campaign and broaden the trust's advocacy efforts. His projects have included designing and conducting workshops, helping women develop writing and editing skills and strategic planning. He created the trust's BlogSpot, which solicits articles authored by health counselors, lawyers, GW students and survivors themselves. "The blog is a place where people can participate in a conversation that will spark a public discourse," he said.

But as the trust faced critical funding and staffing issues, Moshenberg approached students in his women's studies courses about working in its offices while studying abroad. "I look for savvy students who have a political sense," he said. He found ideal candidates in Naidoo, a pre-med student who hopes to eventually specialize in women's health, and Neckritz, a long-time student activist who has worked with groups like the Washington Peace Center and GW Students Against Sexual Assault (SASA). "They came to my office and asked if there was something they could do while they were in Cape Town," Moshenberg said. "I told them: 'I have exactly the right place for you.'"

Arriving in Cape Town for their internships, both Neckritz and Naidoo were uncertain about their actual roles. "I went in blind," Naidoo said. "I honestly didn't know what to expect." Based on her experiences volunteering with U.S. nonprofits, Neckritz was ready to lend a hand with everything from filing to answering phones to typing grant requests. "When you come into a space like this you know it's not about what you want to do. It's about what they need you to do," she said.

While neither student was qualified to counsel survivors, they both made an impact on outreach efforts and social media campaigns. "Shakti and Ariella brought fresh ideas to the table," Dey said. "Their Facebook posts, blogs and Twitter updates supported ideas like behavior-change communication strategies, tactics and campaigns that can help change public perceptions about rape, women and sex."

During her six-month internship, Naidoo participated in a teen peer-education program called "The Birds and Bees." Through discussion-based seminars on relationships, rape and gender equality, she helped train high schoolers from low-income neighborhoods to be role models. "A 14-year-old boy said to me, 'Rape Crisis changed me a lot. I can tell another person about how to treat a woman,'" she said. "That's uplifting."

The experience inspired Naidoo to try the same approach at home. Upon returning to GW, she volunteered with Peer Health Exchange (PHE), an organization that trains college students to teach sex education to inner-city ninth graders. Naidoo persuaded PHE to transform its lecture-style lessons into a Rape Crisis-like model that relied on interactive activities and discussions. "The goal is not to tell students what they should and should not do, but rather teach an effective decision-making process so they can do what's right for them," she said.

Neckritz also translated her Cape Town experience into campus activism. She helped SASA successfully lobby to make sexual violence prevention and education sessions available to incoming students. "Coming back to GW, I recognized that, regardless of where survivors are, they need support," she said. "We need to help people learn about their resources and create spaces for survivors to share and talk. This issue massively affects lives—whether here at home or oceans away."

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION: *The Politics of Melodrama*

From 9-11 to presidential elections, global drama can often feel like a movie. Elisabeth Anker understands how melodrama can be a powerful political force.


Elisabeth Anker

The images of 9-11 are seared into our collective consciousness: A clear September sky erupts in flames as planes hurtle into the World Trade Center. The towers collapse in a hail of smoke and debris. Thousands of loved ones are lost. An insidious villain claims victory. A wounded but determined hero vows to rise from the rubble and fight for freedom.

To many observers, 9-11 seemed to have all the elements of a movie script, and according to **Elisabeth Anker**, assistant professor of American studies and political science, it's no coincidence. In her recently published book, *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom*, Anker suggests that melodrama, a genre we associate with pulp paperbacks and Hollywood potboilers, has become a persistent and influential force in political discourse. The framing of world events—from a politician's histrionic language to TV's explosive images—can be as melodramatic as an action blockbuster. Leaping from the silver screen to our real lives, Anker says melodrama can captivate nations, embolden leaders and even change the course of world events.

Q: What exactly is melodrama?

A: It's a genre that we associate with books and movies. And it's a global phenomenon, from Hollywood films and Bollywood videos to telenovelas and Nigeria's Nollywood. Melodrama often has three standard characters: villain, victim and hero. It offers an intensely emotional narrative that travels from victimization and injury to heroic redemption. It can make people cry for the suffering of others, and make them cheer a hero to victory. So you can see how this translates into our political stories: There's a grievous crime that causes innocent people to suffer. But then the victims' injury is righted, the villain gets punished and the hero saves the day. That melodramatic framing of events appeals to us because it's reassuring. It gives us a way to explain all the ways that we feel powerless or vulnerable after an event like 9/11.

Q: In your book, you argue that the elements of melodrama are so powerful that we apply them to our political discourse. How does that happen?

A: In the case of a 9-11, we are using this simplified and emotionally wrought moral narrative to make sense of what was an incredibly complicated, frightening and ambiguous event. We, the good guys, were attacked. They, the bad guys, attacked us. The nation gets a lot of moral power from being the victim. And it justifies a militarized understanding of heroism. There's also a particularly American narrative to this melodrama: the idea that the villain wants to take away our freedom. In the U.S., where freedom is such an important constitutive idea for how we understand our nation, that's what hits home. Think about President Bush's first words to the U.S. after 9-11. He said, "Freedom was attacked by a faceless coward and freedom will be defended." He's invoking the language of freedom, which is then followed by a heroic response. That signals to us that we are in the realm of melodrama.

Q: Is this a calculated effort by political leaders? Or do we create our own melodramatic stories?

A: A little of both. It's not like there's a cabal of media producers and elites across the political spectrum who decide to employ melodrama. Melodramatic narratives are so culturally available to us from decades of film, television and literature that we latch on to them very easily. Still, in the post-World War II era, melodrama genre conventions have become increasingly popular in political speeches and discourse because they are often successful in galvanizing national sentiment behind the proposals of whoever is in office.

For example, look at FDR's speeches after Pearl Harbor. We don't hear a lot of emotional tones in his voice. He didn't use descriptive adjectives. He wants to appear objective and rational. Bush, after 9-11, is very different. He talks a lot about moms and dads, friends and neighbors. He pulls at our heartstrings, and describes the attackers through a moralized language of good and evil that Roosevelt didn't use. This language resonates for us now, where it might not have 60 years ago. Bush is harnessing a message that he thinks we want to hear. Melodramatic discourses have ended up legitimating a lot of policies in the war on terror. But we have seen this in the past too, from Reagan describing the Soviet Union as the "Evil Empire" to legitimate his cold war security strategy, to Truman using the language of melodrama in the "Domino Theory" to justify state intervention in Greece and Turkey. These presidents employ melodrama to justify expansions of state power by

claiming they are necessary and heroic acts to protect virtuous victims and fight for freedom.

Q: But 9-11 was a game changer. Why?

A: I would say it was an intensification of trends that were already ongoing. In many ways, 9/11 was the perfect storm for all of these melodramatic elements. It seems so clearly to be an act of evil-against-good, so it very readily absorbs melodrama as a way of making sense of horrific events. But it also occurs at the height of the greatest media era of all time—and visual imagery is a very important aspect of melodrama. There was a horrifying spectacle of terror that everyone watched live. You saw planes fly into buildings, and the buildings collapse. Throughout the coverage there were so many pictures of people who were injured, and cinematic-like close-ups showed the deep, intense emotions in their faces. It's visual proof of good and evil.

Q: It sounds like we, the public, are manipulated by melodrama. Should this make us mad?

A: I am not sure I would say we are manipulated by melodrama, since many of us find it appealing for a host of complex reasons. So the response may be less to get mad and instead to spur us to be self-critical. We should be more aware of why certain things appeal to us. In my classes, I ask students to think critically about how thoughts and actions can come from outside influences. I ask them to think about the political narratives we use to make sense of complex events and encourage them to scrutinize how they understand our roles as political agents. If we want to resist melodrama, we first have to recognize its powerful allure and understand why we find it so compelling.

RECOVERING AFTER A STROKE:
Unlocking the Brain's Secret Strategy

A study spearheaded by **Summer Sheremata**, a postdoctoral research fellow in Columbian College's Attention and Cognition Laboratory, may help decipher how the brain recovers from damaging strokes and could lead to possible therapies to help stroke patients regain at least partial visual perception.

In her paper, "Hemisphere-Dependent Attentional Modulation of Human Parietal Visual Field Representations," published recently in *The Journal of Neuroscience*, Sheremata suggests that the right hemisphere of the brain may be able to assist a damaged left hemisphere in protecting visual attention after a stroke.

"Patients with damage to the right hemisphere often fail to visually perceive objects on their left, but the reverse is much less common. That is, damage to the left hemisphere does not typically lead to deficits in attention," Sheremata said. "Psychologists have hypothesized that the right hemisphere could help out the left hemisphere in attending to objects on the right, both in healthy individuals and patients recovering from stroke. But until now it remained an assumption."

Visual attention functions like a spotlight to focus the brain's resources on a specific location or object, Sheremata explained. The world around us is full of far more visual information than our brains can process at any moment. Our visual attention abilities enable our brains to select the relevant information and filter out the irrelevant.

For example, while we may see crowds of people as we walk down a street, we generally focus on one factor, such as the direction in which we are headed or the stoplight at the corner; we pay little attention to the faces of passersby. A stroke may damage our visual attention, making it more difficult for our brains to pick out important information from a myriad of visual details.

Sheremata's research was conducted at the University of California, Berkeley, with co-author Michael Silver, associate professor of optometry and vision science and neuroscience. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging technology to measure volunteers' brain activity, the researchers asked participants to focus their attention in two different ways.

First, the patients were instructed to pay attention to a central box while ignoring a moving object in the background. Then they were asked to do the opposite: ignore the central box and only pay attention to the moving background object.

The first scenario measured the patients' visual response, confirming that the right side of the brain represents the left visual field and that the left side of the brain represents the right visual field. The second scenario tested the effects of visual attention and indicated that, while the left side of the brain only focused on the right visual field, the right side of the brain was able to represent both sides of the visual field.

While the research was conducted on healthy, non-stroke patients, the results suggest a possible brain mechanism for how the visual field can be recovered if it is damaged by a stroke.

"The tasks we do every day change how the brain pays attention to the world around us. By understanding how these changes occur in healthy individuals, we can focus on behaviors that are impaired in stroke patients and provide a focus for rehabilitation," said Sheremata, whose next round of studies will examine attention and memory functions among stroke patients and healthy individuals.

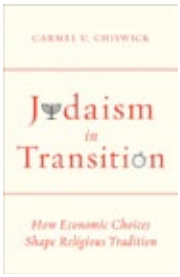
SAMPLING OF NEW BOOKS BY COLUMBIAN COLLEGE FACULTY

IT'S BEEN BEAUTIFUL: SOUL! AND BLACK POWER TELEVISION

Professor of English **Gayle Wald** examines the cultural and social impact of the first African American variety show on public television "Soul!" From 1968-1973, the pioneering program—where Stevie Wonder sang, Toni Morrison read from her debut novel and James Baldwin discussed gender and power—was instrumental in beaming black culture, arts and political discourse directly into America's living rooms. Wald argues that "Soul!" united both the radical and traditional voices in the civil rights movement with performances that ranged from opera to rap. The "brave, bold and downright simply wonderful" show, she writes, was influential in expressing the diversity of black popular culture, thought and politics, as well as helping to create and define the notion of black community.

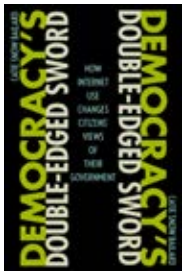
JUDAISM IN TRANSITION: HOW ECONOMIC CHOICES SHAPE RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Drawing on her Jewish upbringing, her journey as a Jewish parent and her academic perspective, Professor of Economics **Carmel Chiswick** uses the lens of economics to reveal the various constraints facing Judaism in the United States and the overall Jewish culture. By casting religion as a "good," she illustrates the "cost" of being a mainstream American Jew—financially and in terms of time and effort—and examines the ways economic decisions affect religion. She asks, "How does one maintain a distinctive Jewish culture while keeping pace with the steady march of American life?" Chiswick demonstrates how tradeoffs, often on an individual and deeply personal level, produce the brand of Judaism that predominates America today. Along the way, she explores controversial topics, such as intermarriage, immigration, egalitarianism and connections with Israel.



LIBERTY, EQUALITY, POWER: A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

How did America transform itself, in a relatively short period of time, from a land inhabited by hunter-gatherer and agricultural Native American societies into the most powerful industrial nation on earth? Co-authored by Associate Professor History **Denver Brunsman,** this volume uses a pop-culture lens to examine the surprising impact of the ideals of liberty and equality, which, for better or worse, are intrinsically tied to the American story. Featuring essays that follow the country from Reconstruction and industrialization to the economic, social and cultural shifts of the late 20th century, the book helps readers recognize how dominant and subordinate groups have affected and been affected by an ever-shifting balance of power. Individual sections discuss movies and other forms of popular culture that tell the stories of the nation's past.



DEMOCRACY'S DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Digital media is omnipresent in our lives. It has transformed the way we communicate and share information, and has profoundly altered the global political spectrum. In *Democracy's Double-Edged Sword,* **Catie Snow Bailard**, assistant professor of media and public affairs, examines the intersection of politics and digital media and considers the political repercussions of having an ever-growing volume of information at ordinary citizens' fingertips. Bailard urges political scientists and communication scholars to recognize digital media's influence on all aspects of the political process, from campaigning to governance. She argues that the Internet directly influences the ability of individuals to evaluate government performance, affects public satisfaction with the quality of democratic practices and helps motivate political activity. Ultimately, she concludes, access to information does not necessarily ensure that democracy will automatically flourish.

STONE: AN ECOLOGY OF THE INHUMAN

Stone is often characterized as the most lifeless of substances—heavy, inert and motionless. But in *Stone*: *An Ecology of the Inhuman*, Professor of English **Jeffrey Jerome Cohen** attempts to rescue stone from its mundane geological reputation. "Stone like water is alive," he maintains, as he maps the force, vivacity and stories surrounding the much-maligned matter. From ecological examinations to medieval myths, Cohen charts the history of stone in its relations to humans, pointing to stone's remarkable incarnations like the architecture of Bordeaux and the spectacle of Stonehenge. Traveling from the Yucca Mountains to the cliffs of Iceland, Cohen shows how stone shapes cultures and civilizations.

Research Briefs

NASA STAR LIGHTS UP NEW FACULTY

NASA Senior Scientist and National Academy of Sciences member **Chryssa Kouveliotou** contributes star power and astrophysics expertise as the newest addition to the physics department faculty. Among the world's leading experts on gamma-ray bursts, her self-described "detective work" pieces together puzzles on how the universe operates.

Kouveliotou is one of 12 new full-time faculty members this year, bringing the total number of full-time scholars to 494—and strengthening disciplines across the sciences, social sciences, the arts and the humanities.

INSTITUTE MAPS BRAIN

Scientists from the GW Institute for Neuroscience, an interdisciplinary center teaming researchers in Columbian College and the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS), are looking deep into brain dysfunctions to uncover the root of major disorders.

Brain synapse

Guangying Wu, assistant professor of psychology, and **Anthony-Samuel LaMantia**, the institute's director and professor of pharmacology and physiology, are leading current investigations on two puzzling brain disorders: schizophrenia and autism. Both are examining the brains of mice for a more detailed map of these abnormalities. Their shared research allows Wu to understand why humans with schizophrenia experience hallucinations and helps LaMantia trace the link between autism and brain development.

DETECTING THE UNDETECTABLE

How do you analyze contaminants that are billions of times smaller than a speck of dust? A new palm-sized technology called REDIchip, invented by Professor of Chemistry **Akos Vertes**, solves a riddle that has thwarted scientists struggling to detect—much less combat—these all-but-invisible chemical threats. The nano-device is capable of rapidly analyzing materials made up of as few as 100,000 molecules. The technology has widespread implications for drug development and early disease detection as it may lead to more precise and rapid diagnoses of conditions like diabetes or heart disease. It can also analyze hazardous chemicals in the environment,

Akos Vertes and the REDIchip.

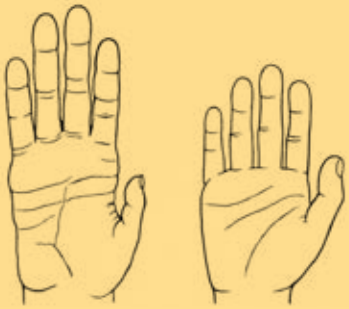
perform chemical imaging and even locate cancer tumors.

AN EYE ON BIOMOLECULAR MYSTERIES

New discoveries in biology and medicine are on the horizon with the launch of GW's Center for Biomolecular Sciences (CBMS), a cross-disciplinary collaboration that brings fresh perspectives to a complex realm of scientific research. Eight core faculty members—including CBMS co-directors **Xiangyun Qiu**, assistant professor of physics, and **Michael Massiah**, associate professor of chemistry—are leading efforts to study biomolecules, tiny particles that are especially difficult to comprehend. Based at the Virginia Science and Technology Campus, the research group also includes faculty from biology, computer science, mechanical engineering and biochemistry. Different labs are dedicated to strategies focused on advanced X-ray tools that unravel biomolecule 3D structure, mathematical models that chart unique dynamics, and a big data approach to understand disease implications.

CHIMP VS. HUMAN HANDS

Many researchers have long speculated that the human hand evolved significantly over time—from ape-like to adept, modern-day appendages. But a new study by Assistant Professor of Anthropology **Sergio Almécija** suggests just the opposite: Human hand proportions have not changed much since the human and chimp lineages last shared a common ancestor around 7 million years ago. The chimpanzee hand, by contrast, once resembled something akin to a human's and evolved into something quite different. The findings, published in *Nature Communications*, reverse assumptions about what the common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees may have looked like. They also challenge the belief that the human hand evolved as a result of pressures from natural selection to become better toolmakers.



Chimp hand (left) has longer fingers and shorter thumbs compared to human hand (right).

Image credit: Denise Morgan

Priya Dhanani

Alumna Shines Light on HUMAN TR

Priya Dhanani teaches teens and adults to overcome myths about child sex trafficking—and to take a hard look at their own biases.

on Dark Truths of AFFICKING

Priya Dhanani, MA '14, draws confused looks each time she steps into a Washington, D.C., high school. She's prepared a four-hour presentation on human trafficking. The students are expecting a dull lecture from a cop or a nurse. Instead, Dhanani hits "play" on her iPod and the booming rhythms of rapper 50 Cent's "P.I.M.P." fill the classroom.

Now shorty, she in the club, she dancin' for dollars

She got a thing for that Gucci, that Fendi, that Prada...

She's feeding fools fantasies, they pay her cause they want her

An hour later have [her] up in the Ramada

Invariably, the teens sing along to the familiar tune. That's when Dhanani asks them to think about the words. This isn't a party song. It's not about dancing at a club. It's about sexually exploiting a young girl. And worst of all, the lyrics imply that it's exactly what she wants.

"That's the light bulb moment," Dhanani said. "They start to realize what human trafficking really looks like—a young person exploited in exchange for money, clothes, affection. And not only do we often glorify that culture, we even go as far as blaming the victim."

As the director of prevention education for FAIR Girls, a D.C.-based nonprofit that works to eradicate child sex trafficking, Dhanani is turning preconceived notions on their head. She conducts as many as four presentations a week, reaching 3,000 young people in schools, shelters, detention facilities and youth centers—as well as hundreds of adults from social service agencies, law enforcement and teaching. And despite the varying ages and expertise of her audience, she encounters the same stereotypes.

"People think of this life as a choice. They still use those derogatory terms like slut and ho," she said. "Our message to them is simple. These aren't party girls. They are exploited children. And it's not their fault. It's never their fault."

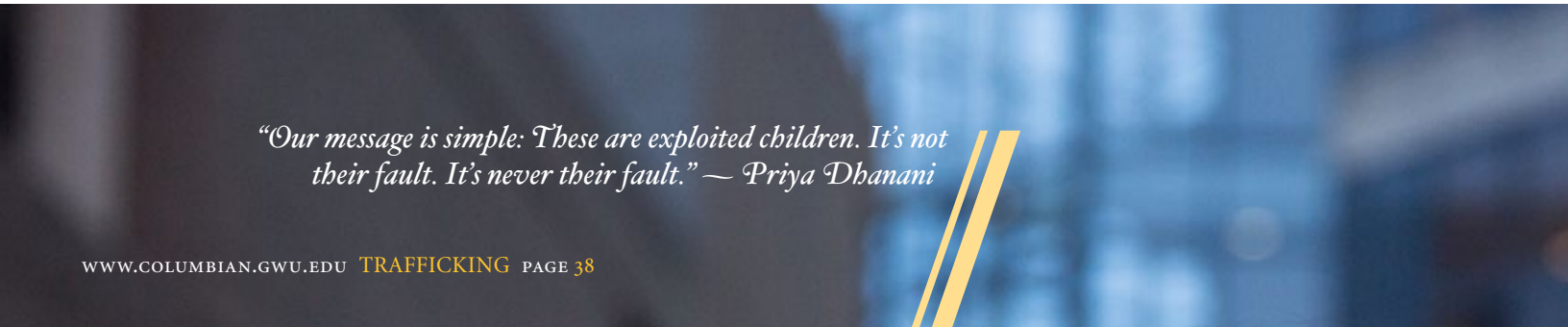
Fighting an Epidemic

Youth sex trafficking is a hidden epidemic, a $32 billion industry that ensnares 1.2 million children each year. An estimated 100,000 children, as young as 12, are sexually exploited in the United States alone.

But, when most people hear "trafficking," they think of a young person's shadowy abduction into a seamy underground network. The true face of trafficking strikes closer to home: 65 percent of the victims are runaways, most of whom have fled because they have been molested or exploited by someone close to them. Far from the Prada-chasing party girls in 50 Cent's song, they are usually vulnerable, neglected and lack basic necessities like food and shelter. In exchange for what first seems like a helping hand—money, affection, even a meal and a place to sleep—they are routinely raped an average of five times a night.

Dhanani once knew as little about trafficking as her students, until she discovered that a house in her well-manicured Atlanta suburb was actually a brothel. "I always thought those places were run down shacks in big cities," she said. "But there it was, right next to the Subway shop and the strip mall."

Her eyes opened to the realities of the sex trade, Dhanani volunteered for anti-trafficking causes throughout high school and college. Even before she began her sociology graduate studies at Columbian College in 2012, she



"Our message is simple: These are exploited children. It's not their fault. It's never their fault." — Priya Dhanani

moved to Washington to work for FAIR Girls, which offers outreach and education programs as well as direct services to young victims of sex trafficking. The organization works with survivors to find jobs, housing, lawyers and medical resources.

Dhanani's "boots on the ground" experience, as Associate Professor of Sociology **Ivy Ken** put it, gave her a unique vantage point while pursuing her degree. "Most people think of sociology as all theory, when in fact it gives you a broad lens to understand almost any issue—from violence and trafficking to housing and food issues—and prepares you to put your degree to work," Ken said. "Priya is doing just that. She's applying her studies by helping real people on a day-to-day basis."

The FAIR Girls' anti-trafficking curriculum, called "Tell Your Friends," is taught in six states, from schools in Houston to shelters in Wichita to police stations in Baltimore. Using video, drawing and song, the interactive curriculum defines human trafficking, identifies risk factors for teen girls and boys and talks about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

FAIR Girls also operates programs outside of the United States. Dhanani is now working with partners in Russia to create an online *Cosmo*-style quiz that helps young woman in both countries connect with resources if they are at risk for trafficking.

A Hot Topic

Prevention and education efforts are making an impact, Dhanani believes. Recently, President Obama announced new anti-trafficking initiatives, including the first-ever national assessment of the problem and a $6 million grant to organizations like FAIR Girls that aid trafficking victims. In D.C., among the 10 worst American cities for human trafficking, the city council passed a bill that ensures child victims receive support services, instead of being arrested for prostitution. And while movies like Liam Neeson's *Taken* are typically inaccurate, they have thrust the issue on to the public's radar. "It's a hot topic," Dhanani said. "People are talking about it more than ever. And any dialogue is good dialogue."

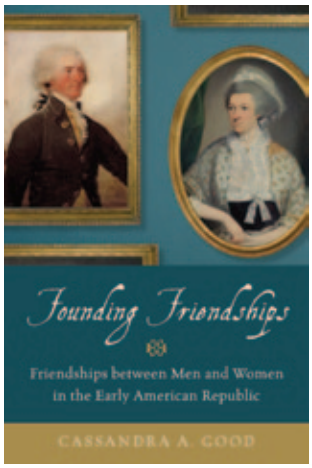
With 50 Cent's "P.I.M.P." thumping in the background, Dhanani talks to D.C. high school students about abusive relationships and presents resources they can use if they are being exploited. But she still hears push-back when she asks students to describe traffickers and victims—comments like "Sure, the pimp is bad, so why didn't she leave him?" Or "When she's wearing a skirt that short, you know she's looking for it."

When the class breaks for lunch, Dhanani collects the students' confidential comments cards. They tell a different story: "What can I do to help a friend who is being hurt and exploited?" "I have an older boyfriend who is pressuring me to have sex and do things. Should I just give in?" "I always thought I deserved it. I didn't know it wasn't my fault." "Some days, this job makes me feel like a very tiny person battling an enormous issue," Dhanani said. "Other days, I walk away from the classroom feeling like I may have gotten through to someone, that maybe I planted a seed."

Dhanani has students draw pictures of what they think trafficking looks like.

UNCOVERING THE PRIVATE LIVES OF FOUNDING FATHERS—*and Mothers*

Cassandra Good, BA '04, MA '05, couldn't believe her luck. While researching her American studies senior thesis in 2004, she stumbled upon an 1809 letter written to Thomas Jefferson's sister from Washington socialite Margaret Bayard Smith. Jefferson was leaving the capital, retiring from public life for his home in Monticello. But Smith's letter didn't read like a simple goodbye. In flushed detail, she described catching sight of Jefferson across a crowded hall at his farewell reception. Her heart beat wildly. She could barely contain her excitement as he walked toward her. They held hands for several breathless minutes. Even recalling the evening in her letter filled her with such a rush of emotions that she had difficulty writing through her tears.



Good was stunned. Had she just uncovered a salacious footnote in early American history? Was Jefferson having an affair with the married Smith?

Today, Good, an accomplished historian, chuckles at her undergraduate enthusiasm. She recalled rushing to reveal her discovery to her faculty adviser, Professor of American Studies **Terry Murphy**. But Murphy informed the eager student that the romantic flourish of Smith's letter was just a common means of expression at the time. The letter didn't prove that Jefferson and Smith were lovers. It just showed that they were close friends.

"I found that answer equally as compelling," Good said. "How could these men and women be friends without people assuming the relationship was romantic?"

That quandary lingered with Good after she graduated with a BA/MA in American studies. It followed her through her first job with the Smithsonian Institution and to her current position at the University of Mary Washington as editor of the Papers of James Monroe project. Good spent a decade traveling to dozens of archives and museums, scouring through early American letters and diaries, all in search of an answer to that nagging question.

"How did they make this work?" she said. "It's complicated enough in the 21st century to have male-female friendships. How, given the period's restrictions on women and the risks to their reputation, could a married woman write a letter like that about a single man?"

Good's intellectual obsession became the topic of her first book, the recently published *Founding Friendships: Friendships Between Men and Women in the Early American Republic*, a detailed examination of friendships between men and women from 1780 to 1830.

Using historical examples like the close relationship between Jefferson and Abigail Adams, Good argues that, despite the risk of gossipy whispers and accusations of impropriety, friendships between men and women were not only possible but common—and quintessentially American. "Elite men and women formed loving friendships that exemplified the key values of the new nation: equality, virtue, freedom and choice," Good writes in *Founding Friendships*. "These friendships were building blocks of American systems of politics, gender and power."

For example, when Good first examined the letters between Jefferson and Abigail Adams, they appeared to hint at a more-than-friendly acquaintance between the Declaration of Independence author and the wife of his friend and sometimes rival John Adams. Abigail Adams praised Jefferson as "one of the choice ones on earth." He compared her to a goddess. The pair were inseparable in Paris where Jefferson resided after his wife's death in 1782. They attended the theater and dinner parties together—sometimes with John Adams, often without.

"They had a very affectionate relationship," Good noted. "They bonded quickly. She was smart, well-read and

politically astute. He got along well with women. His letters to women such as Adams are warm and playful. It's hard not to like him."

The emotionally rich language of their letters is seemingly effusive to modern readers. But it was fairly tame for the time, Good discovered. Hunting through archives of correspondences, Good compared the era's friendship letters to true courtship notes. Friendly letters assiduously avoided romantic buzzwords like "heart" and "love." Jefferson always addressed his letters to "Dear Madam," instead of using Adam's first name. "First names were a tip-off to a romance," Good said.

With watchful eyes always searching for signs of an illicit affair, Jefferson and Abigail Adams were careful to follow the era's unwritten etiquette. Jefferson unfailingly included John Adams as the third leg in the relationship stool. He asked permission from Adams to write his wife; often he addressed his letters to both of them. Without the implied approval of her spouse, Good said, even a woman as renowned as Abigail Adams courted scandal. "For a woman, especially if she was unmarried, gossip could be very serious," she explained. "You could lose your reputation and your ability to be married and provided for. That's everything to you."

Despite the risks, the frequency of male-female friendships offers insights into the ideals of the burgeoning nation. Gender roles were flexible. Freedom of choice—whether picking your leaders or your friends—was valued. And, as Good stresses in her book, women's voices were major influences in shaping American history. "We often look at men's historical narratives and women's like they are two separate stories," she said. "But all those voices—voices of gender, race, class—are intertwined. They are all fundamental to building the story of America."

For her next project, Good is exploring the lives of George Washington's descendants. "They were the first First Family in a country terrified of monarchy" she said. She's prepared for more nights and weekends huddled in the vaults of the National Archives and the stacks of the Library of Congress. But Good attributes her passion for research, or what she calls "detective work," to her GW studies. "The idea of looking at a cultural phenomenon through many types of sources—literature, art, letters—came out of my training in the American Studies program," she said. "My professors encouraged me to think creatively and test out new ideas."

TRUE DETECTIVE: ALUMNUS SOLVES FORENSICS MYSTERIES

Each morning when **Adrienne Borges**, MS '06, arrives for work at the Bode Technology Group's Cellmark Forensics Lab in Lorton, Va., she dons her white coat and safety goggles and examines her workload for the day: A drop of blood discovered at a Washington, D.C., crime scene, a brittle bone chip from a skeleton found in the Arizona desert, a hair fiber recovered from the rubble of an earthquake in Peru.

Every tiny thread that lands on her lab table—from tissue traces to jagged fingernails—is a clue in a larger puzzle. By extracting and examining DNA from her samples, Borges, a veteran data analyst in Bode's Human Identification Group, solves mysteries for international governments, local police and families searching for lost loved ones. Her skills have helped identify missing World War II soldiers, catch a serial killer in Canada and bring closure to cold cases.

"What I love about this job is that I'm actually helping people," she said. "I'm giving a voice to families who may have spent years looking for answers. I can bring them some peace of mind."

As a forensic sciences student in Columbian College, Borges was initially drawn to the field's technical aspects. The graduate program's molecular biology track fit nicely with her undergraduate degree in biology. But, through her studies, she quickly realized the field's strong connection to real-world scenarios.

"Every student is aware of the responsibility they have as a forensic scientist; their job will immediately impact society," said **Daniele Podini**, assistant professor of forensic molecular biology and biological sciences. "They may help a victim find relief because a criminal was apprehended or an innocent suspect was freed based on DNA findings. Our students understand that what they are doing in the lab changes people's lives. Not in the future, but right now!"

After graduation, Borges worked for the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, identifying the remains of lost soldiers. She brought her skills and experience to Bode where she handles as many as 500 cases a year. Although friends invariably compare her to TV's *CSI* heroes, Borges said she sometimes eschews the flashier high-tech methods when searching for hidden clues. When examining a piece of bone, for example, Borges conducts what she calls a "laborious manual extraction process" that often involves slicing the sample and physically


Adrienne Borges, MS '06

pulverizing it with steel blender cups. "You don't see that on *CSI*," she said.

The condition of the remains can make her job even trickier. Bones found in deserts may have decayed in the heat and sunlight. Old samples may be chalky and crumble. "You have to be very careful and follow strict protocols," she said. When dealing with criminal cases that hinge on DNA evidence, "even the tiniest human error can cause big problems." Take too small a sample and the results will suffer. Take too much and there may not be enough left for future examinations.

Borges' lab does use a high-tech sample-extracting robot and a state-of-the-art capillary electrophoresis machine that aids in yielding DNA profiles. Keeping abreast of the field's fast-moving technology is critical for forensic analysts, a fact that Podini stresses in class. "The technology changes so rapidly that students must always be learners," he said. "I can teach them the technology they will use on their first case. But I have no idea what technology they will use on their last case before they retire. It probably hasn't been invented yet."

Indeed, Borges said field-savvy professors like Podini, who has a history in both law enforcement and professional forensic analysis, prepared her to seamlessly step into her career. "My teachers weren't just academics, they were speaking from life experience," Borges said. "They talked about the stresses they faced, the mistakes they made and what really goes on in the forensic world each day."

For Borges, each day brings both wins and losses, and a staggering variety of cases. Her lab has helped identify people lost in conflicts and natural disasters around the world—from mass graves uncovered in Guatemala to victims of Hurricane Katrina, earthquakes and airline crashes. She has worked with U.S. and Mexican authorities to examine skeletal remains found in Arizona deserts of Mexican migrants who have perished attempting to cross the border. Comparing DNA from the scorched bones to samples from family members, Borges can often help resolve a missing migrant's fate. "We can't bring back their loved ones, but maybe we can give them some closure," she said.

Not every case has a satisfying ending. Borges is haunted by the unsolved story of a teenage girl who disappeared in 1958. Arizona police brought her a hair recovered from a shallow grave. While circumstantial evidence indicated it belonged to the missing girl, Borges was never able to establish a definitive link. "That one sticks with me," she said. "The family had waited so long for an answer. I couldn't give it to them."

But Borges has also scored incredible successes. She was part of an international team that DNA-tested the 70-year-old bone fragments of Private Lawrence Gordon, a missing World War II soldier. Gordon's family knew he'd been killed in 1944 during an Allied attack on a German stronghold in France. Of the 44 casualties in his division, 43 were identified and returned to their families. Gordon was the only one unaccounted for—until Borges and her team helped positively identify his remains. He had been mistakenly buried as an unknown soldier in a German cemetery. Gordon's family was able to recover his remains and bury the soldier with his family in Canada.

"Each day can be like two sides of a coin," Borges said. "Sometimes, things just don't work out. Other times can be rewarding and remind you that every second in the lab affects a real life."

BRINGING

Everyone in the tiny Moroccan village of Gfifat knows **Caroline Ayes**, BA '13. She's the American instructor at the Dar Chabab youth center who teaches English to their sons and daughters. She's the enthusiastic volunteer who converted an old garage into an exercise studio for house-bound Gfifat wives. And she's the energetic architect of a development program that connects youth to the country's natural environmental beauty.

And no one here at home—including her classmates who voted her Miss GW in 2013 for her dedication and service—is surprised by the impact she continues to make within this modest, predominantly Muslim hamlet surrounded by acres of orange and banana farms.

"Caroline has that rare and increasingly precious combination of compassion and pragmatism that is essential to making social change stick," said Associate Professor of Media and Public Affairs **Kerric Harvey**, a mentor whom Ayes credits with "teaching me how to think differently."

"You don't dabble in the Peace Corps," Harvey noted. "It's a serious commitment to bettering the world. It takes alert, energetic, committed and big-hearted people to do that. People like Caroline."

AN INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

Ayes is no stranger to foreign countries and cultures. As a political communication major, the Pennsylvania-native took five alternative break trips, volunteering for excursions from South America to South Africa. She worked with young people in underserved Honduran villages, promoted community empowerment in impoverished Nicaraguan neighborhoods and manned

COMPASSION, PRAGMATISM TO MOROCCO

"You don't dabble in the Peace Corps. It's a serious commitment to bettering the world. It takes alert, energetic, committed and big-hearted people to do that. People like Caroline." —Kerric Harvey

Caroline Ayes, BA '13

aid centers for neglected children in South African townships.

"I have always had the community service bug, and my time at GW broadened my international focus," Ayes said. "Those travels made me realize what I wanted to do with my life."

But none of her journeys quite prepared Ayes for her Peace Corps experience. Fully expecting that her Spanish fluency would land her a Central American assignment, she instead found herself in the northern African kingdom of Morocco, a placement that, she said, "came out of left field."

A self-described "outspoken, liberal woman," Ayes is spending 26 months immersed in Morocco's conservative Muslim culture and its sensitive gender dynamic. A youth development specialist, Ayes' responsibilities range from encouraging young women to pursue their education to engaging teens in environmental awareness—all while learning to hold a passable conversation in Darija, a hybrid of French and indigenous languages that even many Arabic speakers find unintelligible.

"Coming here was like being dropped on the moon," Ayes said. "I didn't know the local customs. I couldn't speak the language. I thought, 'Holy cow, have I made a terrible mistake?'"

A year later, Gfifat feels like home. Dressed conservatively in pants and a long-sleeved shirt, she is comfortable strolling along the town's lone main road—a busy thoroughfare where speeding cars kick up dirt clouds on their way to Agadir. She greets male passersby's with a respectful downward glance and a traditional touching of her hand to her heart. And while she hasn't quite mastered Darija, she is fluent enough to order a kilo of tomatoes from a street vendor, compliment a neighborhood mother on her lamb tajine and joke with local teenagers about their grades.

"At first, I felt like a stranger in a strange land," Ayes said. "But I absolutely think this is the best place for me."

Morocco has a long history with the Peace Corps. Since 1963, more than 4,300 volunteers have served there, including 220 current workers. With its relative amenities like Internet access and indoor plumbing, volunteers jokingly refer to a Morocco assignment as the "Posh Corps." But the 99 percent Muslim nation can be challenging, particularly for female volunteers. While Morocco is considered more tolerant than other Muslim countries toward Western cultural norms, it's still a traditional, patriarchal society; couples rarely mix in public and many women spend most of their time inside the home.

Ayes said she initially struggled with finding an appropriate way to reach out to Gfifat's women. "Gender is a very complex issue here," she said. "I want to help women, but I have to do it in a respectful way. As a Peace Corps volunteer, you realize that the way you live is as much a teaching lesson as any class."

Gradually, she began introducing new ways for women to connect, like offering all-female aerobics sessions and art classes for young girls. At the youth center, her nuanced approach resulted in an uptick in teenage girls stopping by for everything from English instructions to first-aid workshops.

"The thing I'm most proud of is transforming this base into an environment where girls can now flock to learn," she said.

Her most ambitious project, called CLIMB (Creating Leadership in the Mountains and Beyond), involves Ayes taking young people on outdoor excursions to teach team-building, leadership and environmental skills. Each month, her class takes a hands-on approach to topics like preserving Morocco's natural landscapes and tackling Gfifat's troubling waste-disposal problems. At the end of the program, the 15 teens—including eight girls—put their training into practice by hiking to the 13,000-foot summit of Mt. Toubkal, North Africa's highest peak.

"Morocco is blessed with an amazing and varied physical landscape—beaches, deserts and mountain ranges," she said. "But there's a lack of knowledge about the environment among Moroccan youth. I want young people to appreciate what their home has to offer."

Ayes' Peace Corp assignment ends in April 2016. She's not sure where her travels will take her next but she knows she'll be emotional about leaving Gfifat behind.

"I've grown so attached to the families and young people here," she said. "These are the most hospitable, welcoming people I've ever met. We don't always think alike, but they have gone out of their way to make a stranger feel at home."

Gift Embraces the PHILOSOPHY *of* PHILANTHROPY

Marie Sansone, BA '78, built her career around helping those in need. Whether she was protecting Alaskan wildlife as a crusading environmental lawyer or spearheading youth HIV-prevention programs as a pioneering public health advocate, Sansone's path has been defined by a lesson she learned while studying philosophy at Columbian College.

"If you are alive, you need help," she said, quoting British psychologist Robert Holden.

Sansone has used her education to make a difference in the lives of others—as a lawyer, health professional and head of Washington, D.C.'s disease prevention and treatment agency. Now, the Columbian College alumna is practicing the philosophy-of-giving-back with a $250,000 planned gift to the Department of Philosophy. Sansone's philanthropy established the Marie G. Sansone Endowed Fund in Philosophy, which will provide unrestricted annual support for the department's most pressing needs.

"If GW's philosophy department performs well, then its actions will impact all areas of human endeavor," Sansone said.

As a student, Sansone was drawn to GW's political science, history and philosophy traditions. She was part of a unique residential program for freshman called Political Science and the Contemporary Imagination. It was the first of its kind in the D.C. area and emphasized in-depth studies of political problems combined with extracurricular activities and discussion. The program fostered Sansone's love of philosophy and her passion for public policy. "It entailed a lot of hard work, but it got us out to congressional offices and federal agencies for interviews and research," she recalled. Sansone not only graduated with special honors in philosophy but was one of two graduating students to receive the Charles E. Gauss Prize for Excellence in Philosophy, a top departmental distinction for undergraduates.

After graduation, Sansone pursued her childhood dream of becoming a lawyer. Along with her philosophy degree, her legal training equipped her for a career of public service that has touched thousands of lives. Her accomplishments include helping to create the nation's first student-run environmental law society, championing Alaskan environmental protection as the state's attorney and playing a pivotal role in the creation of the D.C. Department of the Environment in Washington.

Her tenure as chief of staff for the D.C. Department of Health's HIV/AIDS Administration (HAA) was nothing less than extraordinary. She developed strategies for youth HIV prevention, improved the HIV-testing program, launched successful initiatives like a needle-exchange program and was instrumental in publishing the first reliable statistics on D.C.'s HIV epidemic.

These achievements, she said, were aided by institutions like the Milken Institute School of Public Health. "In all our endeavors at HAA, we had assistance from GW professors and students," she noted.

Sansone also credits the rigorous education she received at GW and the multifaceted application of her philosophy studies with preparing her for a broad-reaching career. "When you are dealing with something like disease surveillance, you draw on many principles: objectivity, accuracy and precision, data integrity, privacy and confidentiality, and statistical analysis," she explained, "and that all goes back to the very same foundational skills that you learn in philosophy classes."

Sansone has supported the philosophy department with annual gifts for more than 20 years. But after leaving the D.C. area to return to her hometown in upstate New York, she reflected on how she could give back to a department that played such an integral role in her success. Her answer: a planned gift.

"A planned gift makes a great legacy," she said. "While it's probably a bit cliché, I view my contribution as an investment in the future." Indeed Sansone said she hopes her gift will help GW students and faculty make the world a better place.

"Philosophy is the most useful subject that you can pursue because, more so than any other, it teaches you to inquire, to think critically, to analyze and to communicate complex thoughts," she said. "With all the problems that we have in the world today, we desperately need people who can bring reasoned and principled analysis to the table."

Alumni Briefs

Alex Dickinson, Sara Neumann and Marcia Newbert

ALL-STAR COUNCIL

"Meet the Press" moderator **Chuck Todd** and notable political scientist **Stephen Haber,** BA '79, were among the distinguished new members of the dean's National Council advisory boards this past year. Other prominent additions were Morgan Stanley financial advisor **Marc Bianchi**, BA '83; CNN Washington, D.C., bureau chief **Sam Feist**; public relations consultant **Susan Smirnoff**, BA '74; prominent pollster **Cornell Belcher**; and Minton's Fire & Security Specialists President **Charles Minton**. The volunteer councils work to advise the dean on issues impacting Columbian College's growth and development. "We are so proud to add these renowned professionals to our already impressive roster of council members," said Dean **Ben Vinson**.

Chuck Todd

EMERGING LEADERS

Three Media and Public Affairs alumnae added to their list of accomplishments with honors from Washington Women in Public Relations (WWPR), a premiere professional organization that recognizes young women in communications. **Alex Dickinson,** MA '11, and **Sara Neumann**, BA '07, were named two of WWPR's three Emerging Leaders for 2014. The award honors young women who "have made a distinct mark in the communications industry and will indubitably become the next generation of PR leaders." **Marcia Newbert,** BA '10, was also a finalist for the award.

EXPOSING NATURAL BEAUTY

As a professional photographer and videographer for more than a decade, Corcoran alumna **Katie Schuler**, MA '07 has traveled

to 20 countries and contributed to *National Geographic*, the Smithsonian Institution, Conservation International and PBS. The globe-trotting conservation filmmaker recently took her camera into the jungles of the Philippines for an environmental storytelling project, part of a Luce fellowship secured through GW. The exotic creatures she photographed included the tarsier, a tiny primate with shining alien-esque eyes; the sleek black myna, which distinguishes itself by imitating cell phone rings; and the Binturongs, or "bearcats," whose fur-coated bodies smell like popcorn.

ALUMNA ON EBOLA FRONTLINE

"Disease detective" **Lauren Epstein**, BS '03, MD '07, is no stranger to public health crises. An infectious disease specialist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Epstein has applied her biology training to lead investigations on drug-resistant organisms and E. coli outbreaks. But the stakes were never higher than when she played a central role in combatting the Ebola crisis. "The whole world was watching," Epstein said, as she raced to Dallas to investigate the scene of the first diagnosed case of Ebola in the United States. She monitored health care workers exposed to the deadly virus—and, despite some "very scary" moments, helped manage a potential health disaster.

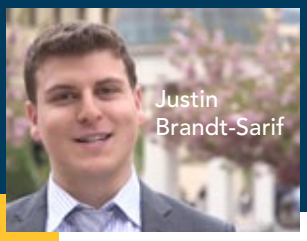
DO WE KNOW EACH OTHER?

Dueling TV commentators **Sally Kohn** and **Tony Sayegh** don't share a political party or ideology. She's a progressive pundit; he's a conservative strategist. But they have one common bond: They both graduated the same year from Columbian College. A dozen years later, the Colonial politicos reconnected—on the air. Preparing to debate on a Fox talk show, Kohn, BA '98, and Sayegh, BA '98, MPA '00, exchanged puzzled stares in the green room—until they recalled their campus connection. Now they offer smooth rapport and friendly banter as frequent on-air guests.

Sally Kohn and Tony Sayegh

SMPA CELEBRATES SILVER ANNIVERSARY

The School of Media and Public Affairs launched a year-long Silver Anniversary celebration in September—a recognition of the school's contributions to preserving an informed and engaged democracy through its students, faculty and the 3,700+ alumni who drive innovation in media and communication. All alumni who received degrees in journalism, electronic media, radio and television, political communication or media and public affairs are invited to reconnect with peers and celebrate the school's legacy and future. Visit *go.gwu.edu/youaresmpa* to learn more about the anniversary and how you can get involved and support the next generation of media professionals.



STUDENT

"The thing I love most about GW is the community—a community of friends and teachers and role models. I've felt really supported in my time here, whether from all the close friends I've made or from the professors who are committed to helping every student learn and grow and become better individuals. My favorite moment was seeing Hillary Clinton speak at Lisner Auditorium. She's one of my role models. It was very inspiring to be in her presence and hear her thoughts about the future."

— Kate Bell, Philosophy

"My most memorable experience was my media seminar class trip to Paris. We met with so many different and important journalists. We hung out with the publisher of the *International Herald Tribune* and were invited into the homes of CNN reporters. It just amazes me how our professors set up that trip. But they always astonish me with their enthusiasm. They are completely open to having a cup of coffee and bouncing around the theories we discuss in class. The collection of talent we have here is incredible."

— John Perrino, Political Communication

"I was in ROTC, and one day during my freshman year I was coming back from an event in Georgetown with several of my ROTC buddies. We were all in uniform when we noticed the presidential motorcade rolling by. We stood at attention on the sidewalk and saluted the motorcade. The line of cars stopped, one of the windows rolled down and—would you believe it?—the president himself looked out the window and saluted us back! That was a pretty great moment."

— Justin Brandt-Sarif, Political Science

"I came to GW certain I would be a bio major. But then I took **Richard Grinker's** Sociocultural Anthropology class and everything changed for me. He has such passion for his subject that I fell in love with anthropology and switched majors. I have never regretted it. There are so many great things about GW. But if I am going to be honest, the coolest thing that happened to me was strolling through campus one day on my way to a stats class and seeing Magic Johnson. You never know who you'll run into around here!"

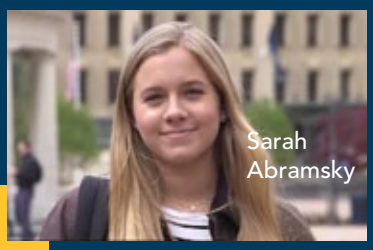
— Jonathan Nkangabwa, Biological Anthropology

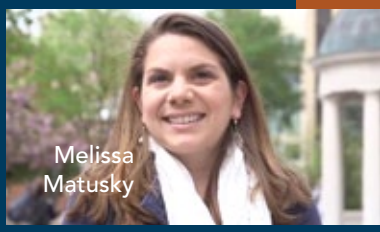
"On Election Night 2012, my friends and I watched the results come in from our dorm and then ran down to the White House to celebrate. The atmosphere was electric. There were people from all over the country—all over the world!—hugging and laughing and dancing. It's an experience I'll never forget. As a political science student, studying in the nation's capital is like a dream come true. The environment, the people, the location, the classes—it's all helped me see politics and political theory through a different lens."

— Jevin Hodge, Public Policy and Political Science

"My favorite class was Great Performances in Dance, a Dean's Seminar by **Dana Tai Soon Burgess**. I'm undeclared right now, but I'm probably going to major in biology so I'm not sure how long I'll be able to indulge my love of dance. His class talked about great performances throughout the history of dance. But what I really liked about it was that it didn't just stop in the classroom. We went to dance performances at the Kennedy Center and other theaters around D.C. I love how he made the connection between the 'class world' and the 'real world.'"

— Sarah Abramsky, Undeclared





REFLECTIONS

Columbian College students look back at their favorite memories—and ahead to new opportunities.

"I took Professor **Tom Long's** The Price of Freedom: Normandy, 1944. We researched the lives of soldiers who died in the D-Day invasion during World War II and then traveled to Normandy over spring break to visit their graves. It was a really emotional experience. I was struck by just how international our student body is. In that class alone, there were students from the U.S., England, the UAE and Korea. And I'm from China. Being here makes me feel like I'm part of a global society."

— Matthew Jiang, History and Economics

"My most memorable experience was taking part in the 'Battle of the A Cappellas,' the annual competition between GW's singing groups. I am part of the Voice Gospel Choir and we went up against groups like the GW Troubadours, the GW Vibes and the Sons of Pitch. Each group had to sing a rendition of Pharrell William's 'Happy.' The GW MotherFunkers came out on top, winning the audience favorite award and the best overall act. But it was incredibly fun and a great way to meet other students in the performing arts."

— Michael Olujimi, Biology

"I took an amazing English class with Professor **Ayanna Thompson** that focused only on Shakespeare's play *Othello*. It was a lot of heavy reading but she made sure we were engaged not only with the text but with its connection to D.C. We went to the Folger Library and studied early modern books that influenced Shakespeare. We saw first editions of Shakespeare's plays. We talked with people who worked at the Shakespeare Theater Company and met a local playwright. And we capped the class by traveling to New York City to see Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. It was an awesome, awesome experience."

— Melissa Matusky, English

"On days when I'm overloaded with classwork or I'm having a hard time with something or if I just want to get away for a little while, I walk along the National Mall and look at the monuments. When I walk around the city, I feel like I'm not far removed from my future. My whole life and so many opportunities are right here in front of me. Going to school here is so inspiring."

— Cyprian Christian, Economics and Arabic Studies

STAY CONNECTED!

Alumni are an important part of the Columbian College and GW community. Get involved in these ways!

- Connect with alumni and faculty at industry-based networking events, professorial lectures, the Culture Buffs series and more (alumni.gwu.edu/calendar)
- Share your insight and professional experiences with current students. Volunteer for a career panel or a student-alumni networking event (columbian.gwu.edu/alumni-volunteer)
- Pursue your passion for lifelong learning through our alumni travel and course audit programs
- Network with alumni through the Columbian College and GWAA LinkedIn groups, Facebook and Twitter
- Be a Part of *Making History: The Campaign* for GW by supporting students, enhancing academics and breaking new ground on research (campaign.gwu.edu)

Visit columbian.gwu.edu/alumni for details about all our events, news and volunteer opportunities, or contact:

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ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS

An Investment in Long-Term Excellence

In academia, endowed professorships are the coin of the realm. They enable institutions to attract and retain top scholars and increase the number of full-time faculty dedicated to research and teaching excellence.

At Columbian College, the need for endowed professorships is crucial to powering the rise of our academic reputation and providing students with more opportunities to develop meaningful, collaborative partnerships with the very best academic leaders.

For more information on establishing an endowed faculty position, contact Phillip Horne at jphorne12@gwu.edu or 202-994-5432.

Photo Credit: Dave Scavone

"GW has been at the forefront of encouraging those of us who are teachers and researchers to address concerns beyond the ivory tower. I look forward to many, many more years of collaboration ahead to promote the history of . . . American labor."

Dr. Eric Arnesen
James R. Hoffa Teamsters Professor in Modern American Labor History
Columbian College of Arts and Sciences

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