A Busy Mind is Never at Rest

Though a sabbatical by definition means a period of rest, it appears that most professors at TC have too much to do to actually spend their time off resting. Janet Miller, Professor of English Education, is no exception. Janet earned a sabbatical during the spring of 2009 and arguably did more in a semester than many people do in an entire year.

During the early part of that semester, Louisiana State University hosted Janet as a Distinguished Research Visiting Scholar for five weeks. She spoke as a guest lecturer in a number of doctoral classes as well as presented three public lectures. One of these was the Invited Centennial Lecture at the LSU School of Education, on "Engaging Hopeful Visions and Complex Realities in Teaching and Educational Leadership," to a large audience of pre- and in-service teachers, LSU and surrounding universities' faculty and administrators, school principals and superintendents, and local educational activists.

Janet also spent a portion of her sabbatical preparing the Keynote Address for the 30th anniversary of the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, the annual conference of JCT: Journal of Curriculum Theorizing. Janet, along with colleague William Pinar, founded JCT in 1979 as an interdisciplinary and academic journal of curriculum studies. Her keynote was the "culmination" of the conference, which took place this past October. As fitting for an anniversary, her keynote was to some degree retrospective and entitled “Nostalgia for the Future: Imagining Histories of JCT and Bergamo” and dealt with the history of the journal and its conference as well as with theorizing nostalgia.

In addition to these engagements, Janet continued her work on two separate book projects. The author of Sounds of silence breaking: Women, autobiography, curriculum as well as Creating spaces and finding voices: Teachers collaborating for empowerment, Routledge Press asked her to submit two book proposals as extensions of her research and writing. One of these projects is a study of “narrative, qualitative research,” with a particular focus on poststructuralist and feminist theorizings of “autobiography.” For this project, Janet is bringing in members of her “string group,” a close-knit study and research group of current and former doctoral students with whom she has been working for nine years. The group got its name from a discussion they had about the physics concept of string theory in relation to poststructuralist notions of subjectivity as irreducibly multiple, contingent and constantly shifting. Configurations of “the string group” have presented work at a number of academic conferences.

As if all of these endeavors were not enough to fill a semester, Janet continued to meet with her doctoral students and somehow managed to squeeze in a trip to Paris. We warmly welcome her back full-time to TC.
Dear colleagues, friends, and students,

One of the articles in this issue addresses the idea of “fusion” as it relates to music. “Fusion” might be an appropriate theme for this entire issue of the A&H Gazette.

Many articles cover TC students, faculty, and staff fusing seemingly disparate items – cultures, music styles, curricula, and realms of study – into something new. This wonderfully interdisciplinary activity relates directly to the Arts & Humanities Department’s mission “to explore the purposes, practices, and processes of education both within—and across—disciplines.”

The examples of fusion described here include: Professor Janet Miller of the English Education Program and her sabbatical work with former students, who have dubbed themselves the “string group” after looking at connections between the quantum physics concept of string theory and their own field of curriculum studies; Dr. Barbara Hruska’s experiences of cultural exchange, fusion, and perhaps even some temporary con-fusion in cross-cultural work with educators in Jordan and Japan; and Lisa Daehlin, A&H Program Secretary, who brings creativity to her career in many distinct ways, even finding some points of connection across her teaching, musical performances, and passion for knitting.

Let us know your reactions to the Gazette and ideas for future editions.

Happy Holidays! We’ll be back next semester.

Best,

Margaret Crocco

Photos provided by Lori Custodero

A Very Special Thank You To:

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Professor Marc Lamont Hill
Professor Barbara Hruska
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Professor Janet Miller
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If you would like to be included in a future issue of the Gazette, please contact Margaret Crocco at crocco@tc.columbia.edu or Allison Curran at amc2254@columbia.edu.
Learning to Play, Playing to Learn

Children at the Rita Gold Center at TC may accompany their play with singing made-up songs and rhythmic chants, respond to music heard by bouncing up and down or inventing a dance, or perform a “Wipeout” solo on a tabletop-turned-drum, but everyone else here has left such youthful pursuits far behind. Or have they?

Lori Custodero, Associate Professor of Music Education and Music Education Program Coordinator, offers an interesting answer to this question. Lori gave a keynote speech at the “May of Musical Methexis” conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, this past summer, entitled “Hypothesizing Possibilities through Artistic Experience: Musical Engagement as Educative Process.” This speech touches on one aspect of her career, the idea that play serves a central purpose in our scholarly lives, no matter our age.

Lori’s history of working with educators in Greece can be traced back to a friendship made many years ago with Lelouda (Lida) Stamou, then a Michigan State doctoral student from Greece. The two stayed close even after Lida returned to Greece, and eventually wrote a grant proposal to the European Union together. The grant was for support in improving the quality of music education research in Greece. It involved a “teachers as researchers” approach and focused on “flow experience” – a construct closely related to play.

Lori defines flow experience as “a state of optimal enjoyment occurring when one is feeling highly challenged and highly skilled for the activity in which s/he is engaged.” When in flow, people feel like they have control over the outcomes of their actions – that what they can imagine can be accomplished – much like children at play. We can learn from watching children, who are flow seekers and who respond to teaching that is not a match for their skill with alternative activity. When teachers become researchers they can see what is commonly called “off-task behavior” as a signal about what interests their students, and they can incorporate “what children are telling [them] into the immediate learning context” to create an “ideal learning situation.”

With this grant, Lori and Lida began a research project in 2006, involving a professional development seminar with 30 music teachers conducted over three weekends. In preparation, Lori asked the instructors to talk about what aspects of classroom learning they wanted to improve and to describe some memorable teaching moments. She found that the answers to these questions were often “diametrically opposed” – that is, instructors wanted to make classes more regimented, but the most effective teaching moments had come from more improvised and engaging activities – practices that helped trigger flow experience. Lori and Lida worked with the music educators to help them recognize what flow might look like and led discussions on how to incorporate activities that might lead to such enjoyable learning. As a result of this work, Lori has since returned to Greece three times, each time meeting with the educators. She is currently working on a 3-5 year grant to return and follow up on her work.

Music’s complexity has been expressed in Greece since ancient times, with academic aspects of music symbolized through Apollo’s lyre, and the emotional side through Dionesius’ aulos. In our teaching and scholarship, this dichotomy continues to exist to an extent, as academic learning and the emotional content are sometimes kept separate. This “polesis” greatly interests Lori, who believes that we may take a lesson from children in the way they embody what they know and try on different roles as they play. Such action involves taking risks, learning more about the world around them and paying close “attention to the subject and materials [they are] working with.” It is also a “way we challenge ourselves and develop our own skills” to meet those challenges.

The idea of play as enjoyable, challenging activity is something very central not only to the way that Lori teaches but also to the way that Teachers College prepares its students. “You play with something because you want to know it better.” We should keep in mind “our spirit of inquiry…our sense of wonder about what we do.” As she says, “playing with ideas often generates new thinking…[and that’s] why we are here.”
Teaching Around the World

Professor Barbara Hruska, Assistant Professor of Language and Education, has been teaching educators around the world during her time at TC. In the past year, she has had several particularly notable projects -- two in Jordan and one in Tokyo.

In July 2008, Barbara did a four-day “Design Retreat” with Jordanian K-12 English teachers, who were handpicked by the Jordanian Ministry of Education. The program itself was a partnership with Queen Rania Teacher Academy. Barbara explained that TC was invited to bring TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) to Jordan because many teachers there have no formal preparation for this work. Instead, a university graduate with an English degree, for example, can become an English classroom teacher without having undergone any professional teacher preparation. Along with Professor Jim Purpura, Barbara helped design a plan to lay the groundwork for a teacher education curriculum. After the four-day retreat, the Jordanian teachers worked over the next academic year with both local and TC support to develop the courses and modules that will be used to prepare English teachers.

In addition, Barbara and other TC instructors, including Professor Purpura, Linda Wine, and Charles Combs, offered the six-week Teachers College TESOL Certificate Program to a group of 35 public elementary and secondary school English teachers in Amman, Jordan. Courses were run on site for three weeks during the summer of 2008 and three weeks in January 2009. In January, classes were held in the new Columbia University Middle East Research Center. During each three-week session, students participated in intensive courses completing assignments between sessions during Fall 2008.

Barbara and her colleagues looked for opportunities within the required Jordanian public school English curriculum to introduce teaching methods where students could use English and interact with their classmates, as well as write and make choices about lessons or units instead of relying on memorization and recitation. She also mentioned the importance of finding material that would be “contextually appropriate to Jordan.” This was facilitated by field visits into public school classrooms that Barbara made prior to designing and teaching her courses.

The opportunity for cultural exchange brought about by the program was one aspect of the trip Barbara particularly enjoyed. While mostly Muslim, some teachers were Christian. Some were from urban areas, and others from more rural locations. One of the course activities included “dialogue journaling,” which involved writing about topics of interest and exchanging them with the instructor. These exercises provided much insight into the differing cultural traditions between participants. Students were able to ask about life in America as well as share information about Jordan; Barbara could share information about U.S. customs and practices.

Jordan is not the only place outside New York where TC has a presence. Barbara also traveled this past summer to the TESOL Program in Tokyo to teach for a month. She was the first K-12 educator traveling to this program from the New York campus. While Japan does not offer a specific K-12 track, a high percentage of the TESOL Tokyo students are K-12 teachers. The importance of teaching English will soon become even more crucial in Japan, as the government is requiring English instruction in all elementary schools by 2010.

Barbara explained that her Tokyo course was designed with the aim of educators’ gaining a repertoire of practical teaching skills based on sound second language teaching principles. The students in the course taught English to children from preschool to 12th grade in a wide variety of settings, including public and private schools and afterschool programs.

In both programs, Barbara encouraged spoken English in the classroom, “creating language for a purpose,” as well as helping the educators feel more comfortable using academic English. Recent e-mail messages from students in both programs indicate that they continue to build upon the work begun by TC.
Students Taking the Spotlight: History and Education

TC’s History and Education Program always makes a strong appearance at the History and Education Society annual meeting, a gathering featuring many of the leading historians and scholars in the field. The conference took place in Philadelphia from October 22-25. The History and Education Society was actually founded at TC, and will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year. TC students were out in force this year, with nearly fifty percent of the History and Education Program presenting their own work.

Cally Waite, Associate Professor of History and Education and History and Education Program Coordinator, encourages her students to attend, calling the meeting a wonderful opportunity to meet many scholars and historians whose work they have studied in class. The HES meeting draws between 250 and 300 participants each year. This is smaller than many other conferences, so the students “get a chance to meet and talk to icons of the field.” She also encourages her students to submit their work to be presented at the conference. The application process requires submitting paper proposals six months before the meeting for a blind review process. The individuals selected then write a paper, due in September to be presented as part of a panel at the conference. This year five students from the History and Education Program were selected: James Alford, Deidre Flowers, Natalya Niewdach, Nia Soumakis, and Eric Strome.

For some participants, presenting a paper at such a prestigious conference can be a little nerve-racking. Doctoral student Natalya Niewdach made her third trip to HES this year but presented for the first time. She offered a paper entitled “Historiography: Missionary Teachers of the Freedmen During Reconstruction.” She found herself on a panel with an author whose work she had critiqued in her paper. She said that the situation was a little “intimidating,” and she made sure her paper was very “clear and concise.”

Although most presenters spent the summer writing and perfecting what they would say, other students’ work could not be completed until the weekend of the meeting itself. Eric Strome and Nia Soumakis applied to be part of an American Philosophy Society archival project, the results of which were presented on the final day of the meeting. The project involved analyzing the responses to a 1795 contest on the best form of education for America as an emerging nation. Eric and Nia spent the summer doing extensive research in preparation for working with the manuscripts.

The American Philosophical Society was founded by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson as an organization for the “promotion of useful knowledge,” essentially the nation’s archive before the Library of Congress. The archives contain all subjects the APS considered important to preserve in writing – everything from philosophy to the use of street lamps to the prevention of peach tree rot. The Society often held “contests” for participants to enter and answer a philosophical question. Over the course of the week, Eric, Nia, and the other members of the research team transcribed and analyzed the responses from the 1795 contest, and actually identified one of the respondents (the contests were done on a blind review basis with pseudonyms, and the applicants’ identities, except for the winners, were never revealed). Nia said the project was a “truly collaborative effort,” and both particularly appreciated that their mentors in the archives let them do the vast majority of the hands-on work. Both also enjoyed the tour they received of the Rare Book section of the archives, the treasures of which include Jefferson’s first draft of the Declaration of Independence and Lewis and Clark’s diaries. They presented their findings that Sunday and plan to present the work more fully at next year’s conference, with the hopes of eventually contributing their findings to a book.

Other students, in addition to presenting, participated in setting up the conference. Deidre Flowers, a third year doctoral student, served in this capacity as well as presenting her paper, “The Shadow of a Leader: Presidential leadership at Historically Black Colleges for Women during the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1969.” She says that she really values the History and Education Program’s opportunity to let her research and write, calling it the “free space” where “I get to be me.” In addition to presenting, Deidre helped plan activities with the graduate committee that would help the graduate students network with historians and each other. Such activities helped them become more active participants in the meeting, rather than merely spectators. All of the TC students at the conference agreed that these events were wonderful additions to HES, with Nia remarking specifically that a committee dinner with graduate students and professors was a “learning experience in and of itself.”

The History and Education students took away many of the same reflections from the conference. Eric remarked that one could literally walk up to a famous historian and initiate a conversation, and that everyone was willing to socialize and share ideas. They also felt their work was appreciated and valued by all attendees, and mentioned how refreshing it was that there were so many opportunities for graduate students to present their work to a captive audience. Professor Waite shares this sentiment, emphasizing that the “most important piece is what they’re doing.”
Everyone in the Department of Arts and Humanities has had contact with Lisa Daehlin, whether through her e-mails to various Arts & Humanities listservs or as the friendly secretary in the A&H office. What everyone may not know is that Lisa is a talented vocal performer, a published knitting designer, a TC student, and a TA in one of the Music Education courses this semester. While these might seem like disparate talents and interests, she is increasingly finding ways to bring them all together.

Lisa has long been a singer, majoring in vocal performance in college. Her style ranging from opera to cabaret, she performs in many different capacities and venues. This past summer, she was invited to Bolzano, Italy, as a resident artist in the Silver Lake Music Festival. The festival’s Vocal Artistic Director, Louis Menendez, is a conductor, pianist, and vocal coach with whom she has worked for a few years, and the two are “artistically on the same wavelength.”

Singing has always been Lisa’s passion with teaching music only recently emerging as one of her goals. Through a connection made from selling her designs, she became the first knitting teacher at Cooper Union. Having taught primarily in one-to-one settings, teaching a group was a new experience, but her class quickly became very popular. Lisa says that she “did not know [beforehand] how much I would love teaching,” a love that may stem from the fact that teaching “has some similarities to performing.” This joy of teaching was something she “wanted…to manifest within my music as well,” and so she returned to school to earn her Masters degree in Music Education.

Lisa says, “I had considered singing and knitting to be separate aspects of my identity…but by bringing them together, it’s part of who I am.” These interests “inform and support each other,” and she had the chance to integrate them last May for Performance Space 122’s “Yarn Theory” exhibition. In collaboration with Maestro Menendez and performer/writer Flash Rosenberg, she created “OperaKnit Cabaret,” a blending of opera, art song, cabaret, and poetry, which she has collected and commissioned about the handwork women do. Her own handwork made an appearance as well, in the form of a dress knitted from glow-in-the-dark “jelly yarn.” The evening was a success and very well attended, with some of the audience knitting and crocheting along with the music, adding pieces of their work to a chain of fiber which was subsequently displayed in the gallery exhibition, thus participating themselves in the performance and the exhibition.

Lisa believes that artists must constantly find ways to present and market themselves. Over time she has realized that one of her assets is that of “not fitting into a [set] category.” She enjoys creating new and varied ways to blend all her multifaceted interests. Balancing interests is, to her, as crucial as balancing one’s “physical, spiritual, and mental health.” As she says, “once you find a way to integrate the factors of your life…it’s really amazing.” Her next performance, December Songs at The Players (December 2nd), integrates that song cycle with music by various New York composers, including Richard Pearson Thomas, adjunct faculty at Teachers College.

When Worlds Collide in the Best Possible Way

Stay tuned…

Megan Laverty, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Education, will travel as an official visitor to the Department of Educational Policy and Administration of The Hong Kong Institute of Education next month. She will be there for ten days, meeting with faculty members at the Institute and working as an advisor on program development. She will also teach a student seminar on philosophy and education and present on her own research interests. She has been invited to address education faculty at the University of Hong Kong, as well as those in the Department of Philosophy at Lingnan University, also in Hong Kong.

Megan is greatly looking forward to her trip, and the Gazette will have a full report of her experiences when she returns!
Helping Students Explore the Big Questions of Life and Self: The Philosophy Outreach Program

The Philosophy Outreach Program is an after-school project designed to engage high school students in philosophical discourse. A collaboration between the Philosophy and Education Program at TC and the Department of Philosophy at Columbia University, the Program involves eight neighboring high schools and forty high school students. The Outreach Program’s teachers visit the schools in pairs, one student each from TC and Columbia University, in order to engage high school students in philosophical discourse. Guillermo Marini, a Philosophy and Education Ph.D. student and one of the Program’s founding members, says that the collaboration between programs has proved to be an exceptional opportunity for benefiting the community.

Guillermo explains that most high school students throughout Latin America and Europe study philosophy. These experiences have inspired many international students in TC’s Program of Philosophy and Education to pursue the field as a career. He wonders if this opportunity “happened to American students, what might it lead them to?”

The Philosophy Outreach Program believes that high school students are in a wonderful place to begin studying philosophy, as the decisions many of them make at that age about college, careers, self are closely related to universal questions addressed by philosophy. Tim Ignaffo, a Philosophy and Education Ph.D. student and coordinator of the Outreach Program, says that everyone asks themselves the same questions. Giving students the vocabulary to discuss these questions can be very empowering. He also notes that at a certain point in these discussions a realization dawns that “the questions that are popping up in my head have been engaged by every generation.” Tim and Guillermo stress that high school students seek out such discourse. As a result, the students’ testimonials about their enjoyment of philosophy have increased participation in the Program at every school. The Outreach Program’s teachers have also been invited to be guest lecturers in some of the high school classrooms, speaking, for example, to science and English classes.

The Program has received both acclaim and financial support from TC over the last year. Guillermo and Tim appreciate the “great leadership” of Philosophy and Education faculty members, David Hansen and Megan Laverty. The Squire Foundation gave a generous grant to the Program, which was matched by the Teaching Center at Columbia and the Arts and Humanities Department.

The Squire Foundation’s long-term goal is for U.S. schools to follow the European and Latin American example, making philosophy part of the core curriculum in all high schools. Though Guillermo admits this goal is “extremely ambitious,” a similar outreach program at the University of Toronto recently led to all Ontario public schools adopting philosophy as a required course. The Columbia University Secondary School has recently added philosophy to its curriculum. David Hansen notes that for millennia philosophy has played a distinctive role in human culture in posing “deep, rich, challenging questions” as well as articulating embodied ways of responding to them. As such, he says, philosophy itself becomes a mode of education.

Please welcome two more new Arts & Humanities faculty members!
Full profiles on each of our faculty are available on the TC site at http://www.tc.edu/a&h/

Marc Lamont Hill
Associate Professor of English Education
Teaching: Popular Texts: English Classroom and Special Issues: Sociocultural Approaches to Reading/Writing

“I am preoccupied with understanding the intersections with literacy, identity, and schooling. This type of work takes me in a range of interdisciplinary directions. The TC community provides me with the type of first-rate colleagues and students that make this work more rich and productive.”

Kirby Grabowski
Lecturer in Language and Education
Teaching: Pedagogical English Grammar and Second Language Assessment

“I am passionate about linking theory and research to practice, particularly with respect to the teaching and assessment of English as a second language. All too often findings from empirical research do not find their way to the classroom. Making research accessible to our students at TC is a fantastic way to keep this knowledge flowing.”
The first session featured a panel of eight students from Columbia and TC who are participating in the Philosophy Outreach Program (see page 7 for more information about this innovative program). The students were joined by a high school participant, and together they discussed the program’s many benefits and the ways in which it serves as an “example [and] enactment of Dewey’s philosophy of education.” David noted that it was an “appropriate session to begin the whole conference,” since Dewey was “very dedicated to students.” In other sessions, speakers’ presentations led to fascinating discussions with the audience ranging over a wide variety of Dewey’s thought, including his views on science, inquiry, education, and politics, among others. The keynote speaker was Larry Hickman, the Director of the Center for Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University.

David compares Dewey’s legacy at TC to that of our great-grandparents; though we may not talk about them every day, their choices and way of life have certainly influenced us. According to David, “even if we don’t [always] talk about [Dewey’s] work, what we do still bears its imprint.”

Philip Kitcher, Professor at Columbia University’s Department of Philosophy, approached David and Megan with the idea for the conference. The two philosophy programs had previously discussed doing something for Dewey’s birthday; the idea of bringing the two schools together for a joint conference was “totally fitting,” David commented. Dewey historically had a “foot in both places,” teaching courses and advising students at both Columbia University and TC.

Have a safe and happy break!

Stay tuned for the next issue of the Gazette!