

Faculty News@Hunter
April/May 2009
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News and Announcements

Reminder: **Hunter Commencement** is Thursday, May 28, 2:00 pm at Radio City Music Hall. U.S. Secretary of Labor, The Honorable Hilda Solis, will address the 2009 graduates. We hope you are able to join the graduates and their families on this special day.

President Raab announced that Hunter College received a \$5 million gift from an anonymous donor, making it one of 14 colleges and universities – mostly headed by women – that have received similar donations. “This gift couldn’t have come at a better time,” said Raab. “It is our largest-ever donation, and it’s an extremely important gift.” The donor stipulated that \$4 million be used to fund scholarships and \$1 million go into a presidential discretionary fund, which President Raab has earmarked for updating the library, improving technology and providing students with more group-study space. A \$1 million allocation in scholarship funds has already been offered to accepted minority-group and female students. “It’s wonderful that there are people who feel it’s about the project and not themselves,” Raab added.

The news of the Hunter gift and interviews with President Raab were covered by major media outlets, including ABC News, MSNBC, *The Daily News* and *USA Today*. The story was also picked up by AP and UPI and appeared in news outlets around the country as far away as Alaska, Nebraska, Michigan and Alabama.

Hunter ran a full-page ad in *The New York Times* on Mother’s Day, Sunday, May 10, Section A. This is the third consecutive year that the ad has appeared. It acknowledges all scholarship gifts to the **Hunter College Mother’s Day Scholarship Fund** of \$2,500 and above, that go directly to scholarships for Hunter students.

On April 29, Earl S. Richardson, chair of Hunter's evaluation team for the **Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)**, summarized the team’s findings to the Hunter Community, which indicated that Hunter College met all 14 standards of excellence cited by the commission. The team will submit its report to the College and the MSCHE by the end of May, and the Commission will send Hunter a formal statement of action in November.

A book party to celebrate the publication of **Philip Alcabes’** (Urban Public Health) widely publicized new book, *Dread: How Fear and Fantasy Have Fueled Epidemics from the Black Death to Avian Flu* (Public Affairs Books, 2009), will be held on Monday, May 25 (the Memorial Day holiday) from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at Housing Works Bookstore, 126 Crosby Street, in New York’s SoHo neighborhood. A reading and conversation with Harriet Washington, author of *Medical Apartheid*, which won the 2008 National Book Award, will follow the party.

For details of the extensive media coverage Alcabes has received on his book, go to the third section of this newsletter, “In Print and On Air.”

As part of Educator Appreciation Week, Barnes and Noble in Fresh Meadows, Queens, held a book signing on April 23 featuring **Professor Victor Bobetsky** (Music), who signed copies of his recent book, *The Magic of Middle School Musicals* (Rowman & Littlefield Education, December 2008).

Jeffrey Parsons (Psychology) is a member of a delegation of five U.S.-based HIV experts invited by the Chinese government to conduct a series of workshops and seminars in China about HIV and MSM (Men who have Sex with Men). The delegation, sponsored in part by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, left for China on April 23.

A memorial was held for Professor **Gail L. Gordon** (English) on April 29.

The family has asked that donations in memory of Gail L. Gordon be made to the Hunter College Foundation. The Department of English will be working closely with the College to create a scholarship in her name. Checks should be made payable to the Hunter College Foundation, noting that funds are in memory of Professor Gordon, and forwarded to Room 1313 East.

We are saddened to report that Professor **Susan Peterson** (Art) died on March 26 at her home in Scottsdale, Arizona, after a long illness. Peterson started the ceramics program at Hunter in 1972, where she taught for almost 25 years. A renowned ceramicist, artist, educator and writer, Peterson was the author of numerous publications, including exhibition catalogues, biographies and a number of titles that have been widely used as textbooks. Her area of specialization was in female Native American potters.

Spotlight: Faculty Awards and Presentations

Peter Carey (English) has been nominated for the prestigious International Booker Prize. The prize, awarded once every two years, recognizes “one writer’s continued creativity, development and overall contribution to fiction on the world stage.” The winner will be announced in May. The nominees – leading writers from around the world – include such luminaries as Peter Carey (Australia); Evan S. Connell (USA); Mahasweta Devi (India); E.L. Doctorow (USA); James Kelman (UK); Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru); Arnošt Lustig (Czechoslovakia); Alice Munro (Canada); V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad/India); Joyce Carol Oates (USA); Antonio Tabucchi (Italy); Ngugi Wa Thiong’O (Kenya); Dubravka Ugresic (Croatia); and Ludmila Ulitskaya (Russia).

The National Science Foundation has recognized the interdisciplinary research of **Charles Michael Drain** (Chemistry) in its official brochure released at the national meeting of the American Chemical Society, held this past March. The NSF’s division of chemistry is in the process of “realigning” the chemistry disciplines and subdisciplines to reflect changes in the relationships among the various fields that constitute modern chemistry. Drain’s recent article, “Fabrication of Metal Nanoparticles Using Toroidal Plasmid DNA as a Sacrificial Mold,” published in *ASC Nano* (the award-winning new international forum for the communication of comprehensive articles on nanoscience and nanotechnology research), examines his theory explaining the necessity of this realignment.

As part of Immigrant Heritage Week, **Nancy Foner** (Sociology) made a presentation entitled “Across Generations: Immigrant Families in America” at the Museum of the City of New York on April 18. Her discussion, which is also the title of her new book (New York University Press, May 2009), explored the relationships between parents and children growing up between two worlds.

Philip Ranlet (History) was elected a Fellow of the New York Academy of History. This fellowship is limited to authors, archivists, public historians, teachers and administrators who have demonstrated a record of accomplishment in the area of New York history.

Howard Sage (English) presented a talk, “‘The Art of Losing’ Wins over the Class” to the NYS TESOL’s (New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) 30th Annual Applied Linguistics Winter Conference, held March 7 at Teachers College of Columbia University. NYS TESOL is a nonprofit group of professionals concerned with the education of English-language learners at all levels of public and private education in New York State.

Tom Sleigh’s (English) poem, “At the Pool” was chosen to be included in the publication *The Best American Poetry 2009* (Scribner, September 2009).

Sleigh was just selected by the Clinton State Department, along with Chris Merrill, head of the International Writers Program at the University of Iowa, to investigate conditions in refugee camps in northern Kenya, where Somali, Ugandan, Sudanese and Congolese refugees are interned as a result of area wars. According to Sleigh, this appointment resulted from a piece he wrote on Lebanon that was funded by President Raab’s Presidential Grant Program. Sleigh is scheduled to depart in early June.

In Print and On Air

Philip Alcabes (Urban Public Health) has received wide-ranging media attention on his newly released book, *Dread: How Fear and Fantasy have Fueled Epidemics from the Black Death to Avian Flu* (Public Affairs Books, 2009). He has also been consulted for his knowledge and expertise in connection with the recent outbreak of the H1N1 flu. Major media coverage has included:

- * An appearance on *The Daily Show* with John Stewart on April 22
- * An interview with John Hockenberry and Noel King on “The Take Away” (820 WNYC AM and 93.9 WNYC FM), a new national news and analysis program co-produced by Public Radio International and WNYC Radio in collaboration with the BBC World Service, *The New York Times* and WGBH Boston. The interview aired on April 28.
- * An interview on April 14 by the NPR affiliate, WILL, in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois
- * A book review by Marc Siegel in *The New York Post* on April 26, where Siegel examines Alcabes’ claim that we are far more troubled by our fear of pandemics than we are of actual diseases.

In addition, Alcabes has been cited in *The Smithsonian* (“Dreading the Worst When it Comes to Epidemics,” April 28); in the article “Fear Spreads Like a Virus” on *tampabay.com* (May 1), which explores different reasons why people are so scared of the possibility of a viral outbreak; in the *Canada.com* (May 1) article “Flu a Concern, but No Reason for Hysteria,” in response to the potential for panic surrounding international reports of swine flu; in a story titled “Philip Alcabes: My Own Advice is to Stop Worrying” in *The Independent* (May 2), the largest newspaper group in Northern Ireland; and in a feature-length interview, “Should People Fear Swine Flu?” in Toronto’s *The Star*, (May 3) on Alcabes’ book and the potential fear of swine flu.

In “Mother-Daughter Bonds: A Love of Science and NSF Support,” an article in the May issue of *Currents*, the National Science Foundation newsletter, Liana Epstein, an NSF Graduate Research Fellow in social psychology at UCLA, credits her mother, **Susan Epstein** (Computer Science) as “the driving force in my enjoyment of, excitement about, and involvement in science since I was a little kid.” The article will be featured on the NSF Web site through Mother’s Day at http://www.nsf.gov/news/newsletter.may_09/index.jsp

Neal Cohen (Social Work) was quoted in the story “Health Officials Prepare for Possible H1N1 Flu Resurgence” on NY1 News (May 5) regarding the longer-term threat of the H1N1 virus and the critical need for vaccine development: “It is very difficult to say at this point how the virus is going to continue to evolve. It is certainly capable of mutation. We know from prior pandemic experience, particularly in 1918, that the 1918 virus initially did not appear as lethal and after about six months it reoccurred and was highly deadly throughout the world.”

Louise DeSalvo’s (English) new book, *On Moving*, was favorably reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review* on Sunday, March 29. In her book, DeSalvo describes the psychological impact of her own moves and those of writers including Elizabeth Bishop, Eugene O’Neill, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, among others.

Robert P. Dottin (Biological Sciences), director of the Center for Study of Gene Structure and Function, wrote an article reporting on the scientific collaboration between the Hunter Gene Center and the Weill Cornell Medical College Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC), which resulted in a major breakthrough in the detection of disease of the eye using focused laser photoacoustic ultrasound. Dottin’s article, “High Resolution Focused Laser Technology Reveals More than Meets the Eye,” was submitted to the *NIH/NCRR* (National Institutes of Health/National Center for Research Resources) *Reporter* and the Hunter internal newsletter *Gene Center Brief*, as well as the CTSC newsletter.

Randall Filer (Economics) was quoted by Reuters in the article “Frustrated Americans Cheer Obama’s Tough Auto Moves” (March 30) on the administration’s controversial decisions regarding the auto industry: “Politics is certainly entering the process. GM should have gone into bankruptcy in the fall. We would be much further along with the workout by now.”

Nicholas Freudenberg (Urban Public Health) was quoted in the ABC News piece “School Flu Closings Put Working Moms in a Bind” (May 2): “It’s a very serious thing to close down a school or a school system because parents need to work. It’s almost easier to shut down a whole

city rather than one part of it. If you shut down the schools and you don't shut down workplaces, what are the parents of a 7-year-old to do?"

Karen Hunter (Film and Media Studies) was quoted in the *Forbes* article "E-Communication Might Be Outpacing Emotion" (April 12): "It's almost like 'Cliffs Notes-ing' the news, and that doesn't service anyone." Her comment echoed the concern expressed in the article that the ability to empathize with others may be impeded by the speed of online communications.

The New York Times quoted **Peter Kwong** (Asian-American Studies, Urban Affairs and Planning) in "A Heated Campaign for a Ceremonial Post," which covered the contested election for the presidency of the Korean-American Association of Greater New York, a volunteer position. The article pointed out the special importance of associations in the lives of Koreans in the United States, a tradition brought from their native country. Kwong said that "organizations were central in the lives of Chinese immigrants in the United States," but he added, "Where most of the Chinese-American organizations in the United States are transplanted from China, Korean-Americans tend to create their own organizations here."

Marnia Lazreg's (Sociology) book, *Torture and the Twilight of Empire: From Algiers to Baghdad* (Princeton University Press, 2007) was accepted for translation into Arabic for September release. In addition to the reviews cited in the last issue of *FacultyNews@Hunter*, Lazreg's book was also well received in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (July 2008), *INAMO* (Informationsprojekt Naher und Mittlerer Osten, Vol. 54#60, 2008), *Journal of Academic Studies Turkey* (August – October '08) and *Muslim News* (November 28, 2008).

Michael A. Lewis (Social Work) was the lead author of the article "My Neighbors Made Me Do It: An Explanation of a Neighborhood Network Model of Activism" in the physics publication *The Journal of Statistical Mechanics: Theory and Experiment* (August 2008). This was an unusual placement for a social worker, as this journal usually publishes work by physicists and other scientists who apply tools from physics to the study of social issues.

Andrew Polsky (Political Science) was quoted in the *Las Vegas Sun* story (April 29) "Obama's First 100 Days, Future Looks Better as President Takes a Sharp Turn from his Predecessor" in praise of Obama: "You'd be hard put to find another president facing those kinds of challenges who has acted as intelligently and aggressively to meet the challenges head on. He hasn't pushed things to the back burner."

Polsky was chosen by the U.S. Department of State to meet with the director of Taiwan's Global Views Survey Research Center, which is Taiwan's leading political polling organization and renowned for its expertise in political trends. The discussion focused on the social and economic dynamics that helped determine the last presidential election and the ways in which American academics study and follow such phenomena.

Kenneth Sherrill (Political Science) was quoted:

* In the May 3 article in *The New York Times*, “Challenge for Bloomberg: Vacancies at the Top,” regarding the recent and, until now, unusual problem for Bloomberg of departing senior level members of his administration: “Staff turnover at the end of the second term often is a curse for the third term, because there’s a strong temptation to reward people who have been loyal rather than conducting a full search for a new person. That leads to governing by automatic pilot: this is what we’ve always done, this has always worked, and we’ll keep on doing it.”

* On April 16 in the *Christian Science Monitor* piece “New York to Introduce Same-Sex Marriage Bill,” in support of the historical role of the courts in defining legal protections for minorities: “Initially, gay marriage was clearly in the domain of the courts because there really was no hope that legislatures or executives would act in the area. One impact of the court rulings in Connecticut and Iowa is that legislators came to realize this is a serious issue involving real rights. It wasn’t a frivolous demand by a fringe group.”

* In *The New York Times* article “Much Vilified, Financial Titans Find a Friend in Bloomberg” (April 13): “When the economy is bad, people are angry, and they look to politicians to mirror that anger, and it creates a problem for Bloomberg because he cannot be an ‘I feel your pain’ candidate. I think he’s gentler on people in the private sector on whom, in his view, the city is dependent. He just holds his tongue.”

* In the NY1 News (April 15) story “Cuomo Announces Charges Against Former Liberal Party Boss” regarding the charges against Liberal Party leader Raymond Harding by Attorney General Andrew Cuomo: “If you wanted to get something done, you would ask Ray Harding for help. That help is never out of the goodness of one’s heart, there is always something in return and we are beginning to see what it was.”

Joseph Viteritti (Urban Affairs and Planning) received media coverage regarding his views on mayoral control of schools in the following outlets:

* “The Take Away,” a new national news and analysis program co-produced by Public Radio International and WNYC Radio in collaboration with the BBC World Service, *The New York Times* and WGBH Boston. He was interviewed for the story “A Closer Look at School Governance under Mayoral Control” (April 13).

* *Education Week* (online April 6; in print April 8) published Viteritti’s article, “Should Mayors Run Schools?”

* Viteritti is a featured author (*When Mayors Take Charge*) on the video *The Voice* (Simon Doolittle, April 2009), where he discusses his view that mayoral control is most effective when executive power is balanced with public accountability.

On March 20, Viteritti testified before the Education Committee of the New York State Assembly on the future of mayoral control in New York City.

Must Reads: Faculty Publications

Nicholas Freudenberg (Urban Public Health) is the lead author of “Public Health Campaigns to Change Industry Practices that Damage Health: An Analysis of 12 Case Studies,” which appeared in *Health Education & Behavior* (Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 230–249, 2009).

Joe McElhaney's (Film and Media Studies) book, *Albert Maysles* (University of Illinois Press, 2009) has just been released. In this in-depth study, McElhaney tells the compelling story of one of America's most renowned documentarians, whose credits include *What's Happening: The Beatles in the U.S.A.*; *The Beatles: The First U.S. Visit*; *Salesman*; *Gimme Shelter*, and *Grey Gardens*.

The announcements in this bulletin are drawn from faculty submissions to Hunter College Communications at news@hunter.cuny.edu and do not necessarily reflect all of the activities, publications and awards of Hunter College faculty. For future issues, please submit information to news@hunter.cuny.edu and be sure to include details on book publishers and publication dates, journal issues, proper names of professional associations and conferences.