LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Warmest wishes for a healthy and successful 2016. We look forward optimistically as this year’s seniors who completed the arduous task of applying to graduate school await offers from universities around the country. Good luck to you all! In preparing their applications for national grants and doctoral programs, the Fellows drew on the support of faculty mentors whose generosity and dedication are essential for the success of our program. Sincere thanks is never enough to repay our debt to faculty mentors who enrich Fellows’ education and open doors to their professional success.

In addition, the Fellows appreciated the participation of CCNY faculty in our Fall 2015 workshops. Prof. Dan Gustafson (English) provided seniors with invaluable guidance on how to conceptualize and polish their doctoral statements of purpose. Prof. James Booth (EAS) tapped the expertise of our multi-disciplinary community of Fellows to conceptualize a new course on weather, society, and culture, energizing the room. Prof. Emily Greble and Jennifer Lutton encouraged the Fellows to be pro-active in seeking funding and academic opportunities, while they provided a wealth of information about how to find and succeed in winning such support.

Congratulations to the six new City College Fellows. We anticipate that your diverse backgrounds and interests will enrich our community, sustaining the intellectual excitement and camaraderie that help to foster the Fellows’ success. Welcome!

Looking forward to the spring semester, please join us on Friday May 6th for the City College Fellowship Program’s 14th Annual Research Conference. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend the panels on which Fellows will present their research and to participate in the discussions that follow. We hope to see you there!

Susan Besse

Journal Excerpts

In addition to attending academic talks and conferences in New York, Fellows frequently travel to professional conferences outside the city. Three Fellows report on their experiences during Fall 2015.

Mina El Gheur (Art History). The Middle East Studies Association (MESA) conference held in Boulder CO was the first professional academic conference I had ever attended. It was an amazing experience, and the most difficult part was deciding which panels to attend when three fascinating ones were held at the same time. However, I soon discovered that some presenters had not prepared well and delivered what can only be described as awful presentations. One of the indicators of an ill-prepared presentation was “this paper is a work in progress, so please bear with me.”

I made contacts with several scholars, including Professor Said Graiouid, who teaches communication and cultural studies at the Mohamed V University of Rabat (Morocco’s capital). He presented a paper on visual cultural production in Morocco, arguing that the Moroccan public art sphere does not fit within the typical orientalist East versus West dichotomy, because historically the culture and nation of Morocco has developed in close contact with many different foreign powers, from the Arabs to the French. To categorize artistic production as either Western or Eastern is to over simplify a nation with a long and complex history of various cultural interactions.

This summer, I plan to travel to Morocco to conduct research. Professor Graiouid expressed a willingness to help me with future academic endeavors, and he can potentially put me in contact with students and programs that would benefit my research in Morocco this summer.

It was very stimulating and exciting to be around academics of all ages presenting on such a range of topics, including orientalism, post-colonial studies, decolonization, women and gender studies, and visual culture. I learned a lot, which led me to shift the scope of my current research agenda. I am now working to develop my analysis of photographs of Lalla Essaydi of Morocco by comparing them with illustrations of Shahzia Sikander of Pakistan; these artists, both from Muslim majority countries, draw upon different art historical traditions to deconstruct orientalist, colonial, and postcolonial discourses.

Chayanne Mercano (Anthropology). In November, I attended the American Anthropological Association’s 114th Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado. Titled “Familiar Strange,” the conference centered on...
familiar seem strange and the strange seem familiar. In preparation, I recalled suggestions I had received from CCNY’s Anthropology faculty on how to get the most out of the AAA’s 2,000-person meetings: plan ahead in selecting panels to attend, and attend panels related to my research interests. This advice paid off. At a Museum Anthropology panel, Dr. Erica Lehrer’s discussion on the concept of “memory” caused me to reflect on the power dynamics at play in museum exhibitions. She asked the audience to question who is being called on to remember in exhibitions, and why. In my own research, I focus on museums’ uses of community, culture, and ethnicity in the face of gentrification and urban development. When museums exhibit the histories of communities located in highly contested neighborhoods, I often ask to what extent these exhibitions fully acknowledge the experiences of members of these communities, or to what extent they are designed to appeal to outside consum-
ers. Because of Dr. Lehrer’s question, I plan to explore the theme of memory in my research.

Networking is difficult at such a huge conference. However, I thoroughly enjoyed meeting Dr. Riché Barnes (a cultural anthropologist and professor at Smith College) at the Black American West Museum in Denver’s Five Points neighborhood. Dr. Barnes mentors my best friend, who has been trying to get us to meet for the past three years. Finally, this happened at a small museum dedicated to Black “cowboys” in the town once considered the “Harlem of the West,” where we had both escaped the convention center to pursue a mutual passion for educating ourselves on the social histories of Black Americans.

Wendyliz Martinez (English). Thanks to funding from the CUNY Graduate Center’s Pipeline Program, I attended the American Studies Association conference in Toronto. Although I did not pres

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**SPRING 2016 SCHEDULE**

**SPRING 2016 CCFELL SCHEDULE**

* Required attendance for all Fellows
Please see the “Guide” for other events required for Fellows at different stages.

All events begin at 12:30 in NAC 6/309 and lunch is served, unless otherwise noted.

**TH Feb 4:** Orientation for all new Fellows (in NAC 6/319)

**FRI Feb 5:** *Fellowship Dinner
(6:30 dinner, followed by discussion with graduated Fellows in NAC 6/316)

**TH Feb 11:** Workshop: Evaluating (real) Doctoral Statements of Purpose

**TH Feb 25:** Workshop: The Mentoring Relationship

**TH Mar 10:** *Forum: “On Research”

**TH Mar 24:** Workshop: Balancing Career and Life

**TH Apr 14:** *Workshop: Applying to Graduate school

**TH Apr 21:** Workshop: Public Speaking

**TH May 5:** Round-table: Applying to Graduate school (Q&A follow-up discussion)

**FRI May 6:** *City College Fellowships Program Annual Research Conference (9 AM - 5 PM) (Held in 6/316 and 6/309.)

**DEADLINES**

Learning Agreements are due as near to beginning of the semester as possible. Except for new Fellows, spring stipends are payable only after submission of the signed spring Learning Agreement.

**MON Apr 11:** DUE: Applications for summer research funding

**TU Apr 12:** Submit paper titles for CCFELL Research Conference

**TU Apr 12 (NAC 6/316):** Recruitment meeting for CCFELL Fellows

**SUN May 1 (11:59 PM):** DUE: Applications for City College Fellowships

**MMUF EVENTS & DEADLINES**

**TBA:** DUE: Submit paper titles and synopses for MMUF Research Conference

**TU Mar 1 (NAC 6/316):** Recruitment meeting for MMUF Fellows

**TH Mar 10:** DUE: MMUF applications

**FRI Apr 8:** Fourteenth Annual NY Regional MMUF conference, Hunter College, 9 AM - 5 PM

**FRI May 20:** MMUF Annual Dinner (5:30 round table at CCNY; 7:00 dinner at Covo Restaurant)

**The Fourteenth Annual City College Fellowships Research Conference**

The Fourteenth Annual City College Fellowships Research Conference is Friday, May 6, 2016, from 9 AM – 5 PM in NAC 6/316. All students, faculty, family members, and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend. Fellows who wish to present their work at the Research Conference must submit a title by Tuesday, April 12, 2016.
ent a paper at this conference, I experienced a pressure of a different kind, equally exciting and nerve-racking. It was exciting to attend panels on topics that caught my eye, but also nerve-racking because I understood that I would benefit by networking at the conference. I attended panels led by professors whose work I have used in my research, including Juana Maria Rodriguez. Happily I had to courage to introduce myself to her, and she gave me plenty of good advice. Ever since I participated in the MMUF summer 2014 research program at the University of Chicago, I have wanted to lean more queer theory, and this conference provided a welcome opportunity to do so. Another panel introduced me to the fascinating concept of “how trauma travels.” After the conference, I followed up with the speaker, Professor Carrie Tirado Bramen, and she sent me a reading list that has been helpful.

I also made contact with Professor Kinohi Nishikawa, a professor of English and Africana Studies at Princeton, who invited me (along with other students) to participate in a reading group he was coordinating at Princeton. We discussed Latin Numbers: Playing Latino in Twentieth-century U.S. Popular Performance, which analyzes how “Latino” became a racial category and the ways it has operated in U.S. popular culture. It was a fruitful experience to learn how reading groups operate in graduate school. And we enjoyed the brief tour of Princeton that Prof. Nishikawa gave us.

CCNY faculty members contribute to the success of the Fellows through their dedicated mentoring. In addition, faculty also lead some of our workshops. This semester, all three faculty-led workshops received raves.

Gage Williams (Philosophy). In this year’s workshop on writing the statement of purpose [led by Professor Dan Gustafson, English], we slowly analyzed several Fellows’ drafts. It was interesting and informative because the one I liked the most ended up receiving the most criticism. After the discussion I realized that all the comments were useful, that it is very important to get as many people to read your statement as you can, and that it is normal to write many drafts. I particularly enjoyed workshopping Joel [Sati’s] statement (a fellow philosophy major). From this discussion, I understood that we must not assume that all the admission committee members will be well versed through their dedicated mentoring. In addition, faculty also lead some of our workshops. This semester, all three faculty-led workshops received raves.

Rebecca Wellington (Philosophy). During Fall 2015 semester, I worked with an excellent mentor, Professor Katherine Ritchie. Because her research focus on metaphysics and the philosophy of science is the polar opposite of my interest in critical race theory, social and political philosophy, and epistemology, I was initially reluctant to consider her as a mentor. She is also an Anglo woman. But to my surprise, our differences in identity and worldviews led to healthy philosophical discussions, which helped to solidify our relationship.

Taking her course on Feminist Philosophy and also an independent study with her proved extremely beneficial. In both contexts, we worked on improving my writing, learning research methodologies, and exploring the philosophical frameworks I need to develop my writing sample. I appreciate that Prof. Richie insisted—when I initially showed up late and failed to complete assignments on time—that an independent study is not an excuse to slack. This forced me to get my act together and make the independent study a priority. While the feminist philosophy course gave me important insights for my personal research project, I produced a 25-page paper for the independent study that can develop into a writing sample for doctoral applications.

When I first entered City College, I could barely write a 3-page essay; now, it has become easier to get my ideas out on paper. Though it can be tedious and time consuming to write clearly and well, I have accepted that developing my writing is a process that will never end. It remains difficult for me to solicit and accept constructive criticism of my writing, but I now understand that scholars take years to produce their work and that they develop their ideas through soliciting feedback from colleagues. Even though I am nervous as hell, I plan to present my research at several conferences this spring. I hope that the audience will give me useful feedback and that the experience will help me overcome my shyness and self-doubt.

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GRE PREP COURSE

Just a reminder that the City College Fellowships Program will cover the cost of GRE Prep for all Fellows (up to $650), whether they choose to enroll in a Kaplan GRE-prep course (at the CCNY discounted fee) or in any GRE online tutorial (such as Magoosh). Fellows may also receive reimbursement for the purchase of any GRE prep materials, up to a total of $650 for all GRE prep course fees and materials. If you would like to take the Kaplan course, you MUST apply for the CCNY discount. To receive the CCNY half-price discount, you must:

- Enroll individually by contacting Kaplan directly (1-800-KAPTEST = 1-800-527 8378)
- Provide Kaplan with your CCNY email address and copy of CCNY ID.
- At time of enrollment, students must be prepared to pay at least 1/3 of the final cost (after the discount).

You must obtain approval from Renee (RMPhilipi@ccny.cuny.edu) before registering for any of the courses mentioned above or before purchasing GRE prep materials.
Other fall 2015 workshops also featured Fellows. The journal excerpts below reveal that Fellows can be important mentors to one another.

Ofer Klein (History). At the round-table on summer research experiences, I was grateful to Lediona Shahlollari for admitting the difficulties and anxieties she experienced while trying to conduct research in disorganized Albanian archives. Lediona could have easily sugar coated her experience, focusing on her success in discovering valuable primary sources and her retrospective feeling of satisfaction. Instead, she admitted to feeling utterly overwhelmed by the uncertainties and the chaos of the process. The takeaways are: don’t expect smooth sailing; it’s normal to experience your first attempt at archival research as stressful; you will not fail if you learn from the experience.

Lediona Shahlollari (History). I appreciate the willingness of Conor McGlone (English), Emilie Gruchow (History), and Jonathan Perlow (Psychology) to speak candidly about their struggles and strategies for coping with stress and anxiety. Among the most interesting topics of discussion was the issue of what counts as “productivity.” Conor stressed that time spent not studying can be “productive,” especially if we accomplish things that promote health and reduce stress, such as cooking, doing the laundry, exercising, and/or connecting socially, rather than procrastinating by watching T.V. or Netflix. Like Emilie, I can be very hard on myself, and I respect that she had the courage to speak about her experiences, which reassured me that I am not alone. Finally, I learned a strategy that I have used to reduce anxiety about writing. By allowing myself to stop writing in the middle of a sentence—rather than always trying to finish my thought—I find I waste less time and can more easily pick up where I left off when I return to my draft.

The workshop on risk-taking followed well from the workshop on mental health. Reading “On Risk” (in Howard Becker, Writing for Social Scientists) revealed that even accomplished tenured professors continue to experience writing as a risk. But it is also a risk to produce nothing.

Fellows who have spent a semester in the program can study abroad in order to take advantage of opportunities to improve their foreign language fluency and pursue their research interests while staying in touch with their faculty mentors online. Two Fellows made productive use of the fall 2015 semester in Europe.

Ali Noori (Philosophy). Spending the fall semester in Paris was a refreshing break from routine and an educative rehearsal for graduate-school life. I attended classes just two days a week, which left most of my time free to pursue an independent study under the direction of my fellowship mentor, Dr. Anna Akasoy [Hunter College, Classical and Oriental Studies]. The lack of structure—being entirely in control of how I spent my days—initially felt overwhelming, but I learned a lot from it. First, I had to learn how not to misuse this freedom by procrastinating. Gradually, I discovered how rewarding it is to do research, and to engage with works essential to my studies, without the pressure of a specific objective or rigid deadline. This allowed me to dig deeper, to follow up on leads, and to simply get lost in the subject. My readings and informal writings over the semester in Paris have prepared me to write a senior thesis in spring 2016 that will fulfill the Pipeline thesis requirement and give me a strong draft of a writing sample for doctoral applications.

Being happy in Paris led me to reflect on the importance of one’s life outside of academia. The beautiful fall weather, the cafés, the fresh natural food, the abundance of cultural events and the well-educated populace all created a sense of contentment that made me more productive and more creative. This lesson will shape my decision about where to pursue doctoral study.

Sasha Whittaker (Art History). My semester abroad at Charles University in Prague gave me the opportunity to pursue projects that would have been impossible in New York. My Czech professors delivered lectures that were detailed, thorough, and illuminating; from these I gained broad knowledge and deep insight into Czech history and Czech art, both of which are essential for my research on [Czech photographer] Josef Sudek. At the same time, these professors demanded little in terms of graded work, leaving me plenty of time to devote to my internship at the National Gallery (which I had arranged through one of my CCNY art history professors, a doctoral student who had a connection at the National Gallery). There I discovered my greatest resource: two curators—Adam Budak and Michaela Pěčoňová—who supervised my internship and introduced me to scholars and other curators. In assisting with preparations for Generosity—a large-scale exhibition commemorating the 220th anniversary of the founding of the National Gallery—I shadowed meetings with artists and studio managers, wrote concise biographies of artists and authors for the museum’s website and the exhibition catalog appendix, composed a letter requesting funding from the Swedish Embassy, and also revised a letter requesting a loan from the Hirshhorn Museum.

While in Prague, I attended as many exhibitions, lectures, and conferences as I could, including the city’s fifth annual Fotograf Festival. And I visited two places important to Sudek’s life and career: his apartment, now a division of the Museum of Decorative Arts; and his atelier, now an independent exhibition space, where a gallery sitter kindly led me to a back room to look through Sudek’s camera into his garden, a moment of pure magic. Thanks to Mr. Budak’s introduction, I also spent a memorable afternoon at the National Gallery with Ian Jeffrey, a professor at the Central European University and a specialist on Sudek whose book I had read. Wandering with him through the collections, we engaged in a long and winding discussion about Sudek and his connections with the modern Czech painters and sculptors whose works we passed. Mr. Jeffrey insisted that there is much about Sudek that remains to be investigated, and he suggested a whole range of fascinating questions about Sudek’s relationship to the artists, musicians, writers, and philosophers of the world in which he lived, both Czech and foreign.

Thanks to a two-week intensive Czech language course and then continuing language instruction, I began to be able to read Czech books with the help of a dictionary. An untranslated collection of primary sources titled Josef Sudek v rozhovorech a vzpomínkách [Josef Sudek in Conversations and Remembrances], became a sort of language textbook for me, which I used to acquire vocabulary specific to my field. After three months, my growing command of Czech language proved most useful in establishing a relationship with the Museum of Decorative Arts’ curator Jan Mlčoch. In an hour and a half conversation (in Czech), Mr. Mlčoch led me to the question that has reshaped my senior thesis research.

City College Fellowships Program is an umbrella program that administers several undergraduate fellowships. See our website for information: https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/fellowships

The City College Fellowships Office is located in NAC 6/316, 212/650-8388.