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# SPU Scholarly Guide

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## Editor's Note

In addition to highlighting some of the most recent research and creative work of Saint Peter's faculty, this edition of the Scholarly Guide offers faculty perspectives on pedagogical issues of particular relevance to the SPU community as a number of initiatives come to the forefront of our teaching efforts. As departments and faculty begin developing course materials for the "pluralism" designation, we share classroom/assignment tips from some of this year's participants in the Title V inclusionary curriculum seminar – over 80 of whom our faculty have completed in the past four years. Also valuable are the databases we introduce here that members of the library staff developed in relation to their work during the seminar.

While many folks prepare courses for a "writing-intensive" designation, we include teaching and research tips from faculty from across the disciplines: in this issue, Fatima Sheik from Communications and Stephen Cicirelli from Composition share insights on how they connect reading and writing goals with student experience.

With service-learning as well as other classes engaging collaboratively with community-based organizations gaining an increasing presence and pedagogical foothold here at Saint Peter's, Dr. Daniel Murphy, our service-learning program director, shares some contextual historical and classroom-community connections on his programming efforts. This issue, of course, also highlights a number of faculty research efforts and milestones. Dr. Alexander Mirescu describes how his Kenny Fellowship-funded field research in Tunisia has informed both his scholarly pursuits and teaching practice.

Finally, we're particularly excited as well to introduce a new feature, a faculty showcase—an endpaper, if you will—to our newsletter. In this inaugural segment, Beatrice Mady discusses a work of art from a recent series of pieces she created from her SPU-supported trip to India. It is important to recognize that there is a broader definition of scholarship than traditional papers and presentations. We hope you find the issues and ideas put forth here valuable to your own thinking and teaching.

Sincerely yours,  
Paul Almonte & David Surrey

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# Faculty Scholarship

*As always, we're excited and proud to highlight faculty accomplishments. Congratulations to our colleagues' efforts recognized below. As a reminder, please help us share your scholarly work—conference papers, publications, exhibits and the like—by sending notice of them to us ([palmonte@saintpeters.edu](mailto:palmonte@saintpeters.edu)).*

## Mary Kate Naatus—Business Administration

Mary Kate Naatus, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, received a “Best Paper Award” at the 2014 Business and Applied Sciences Academy of North America International Conference (held at Ramapo College, NJ in June) for her paper entitled “Impact of Yelp on Small Businesses.”

## Nickolas Kintos, Mathematics

Nickolas Kintos, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, co-authored the following article published in the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics (SIAM) Journal of Applied Dynamical Systems: “A Modeling Exploration of How Synaptic Feedback to Descending Projection Neurons Shapes the Activity of an Oscillatory Network” (Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 1239-1269).

## Daniel Wisneski, Psychology

Daniel Wisneski, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, co-authored an article “Morality in Everyday Life” published in the journal Science (September 2014, Vol. 345, No. 6202, pp. 1340-1343). The research work described focused on “the science of morality” and “assessed moral or immoral acts in a large sample using ecological momentary assessment.” It was profiled in an article in The New York Times (September 11, 2014) entitled “In a Study, Text Messages Add Up to a Balance Sheet of Everyday Morality.”

## Fatima Shaik, Communication and Media Culture

Fatima Shaik, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication

and Media Culture, spoke at a recent rally—representing the PEN American Center's (PEN) Children and Young Adult Committee—bringing attention to the continuing need to provide and ensure open access to the internet and “preserve net neutrality” for the sake, in her own words, of “children's literacy, for adult intellectual engagement, and for democracy.” The full text of Professor Shaik's remarks can be found [here](#).

## WeiDong Zhu, Physics Program, Applied Science and Technology

WeiDong Zhu, Associate Professor, and one of his student researchers, Prajwal Niraula, have published an article entitled “The Missing Modes of Self-Organization in Cathode Boundary Layer Discharge in Xenon” in the journal Plasma Source Science and Technology (PSST). The electronic version of the article can be found [here](#).

## WeiDong Zhu, Physics Program, Applied Science and Technology

## Dr. Debing Zeng, Physics Program, Applied Science and Technology

The Independent College Fund of New Jersey (ICFNJ) recently awarded Saint Peter's physics majors Prajwal Niraula (class of 2015) and Nnamdi Ike ('17) \$2,500 for conducting research on “Self-Organization in Cathode Boundary Layer Discharge in Noble Gas Mixture”. Niraula has spent three years researching microplasmas here at Saint Peter's. This is his second research grant from ICFNJ. An additional \$2,500 was awarded to physics major Joseph Ghobrial ('16) for conducting research on “Optimizing Melamine Detection by the Application of Novel Substrate in Surface Enhanced Raman Spectroscopy (SERS)”. Like Niraula before them, both Ike and Ghobrial have shown strong interest in conducting research with our faculty and were recently recruited by the Center for Microplasma Science and Technology (CMST) as student research assistants. Niraula and Ike will be advised by Dr. WeiDong Zhu and Ghobrial will be advised by Dr. Debing Zeng in the Department of Applied Science and Technology.

# Teaching Tip #1: Service Learning

*Daniel Murphy, Associate Professor, Philosophy Department, and Director of Service-Learning*

Service-learning (SL) at Saint Peter's University is an experiential form of learning which brings together academic course curricula, the mission of the University, and the wider community. SL integrates community-based service with the content of academic courses, complementing and enhancing traditional pedagogical methods. In this way, SL generates and strengthens the reciprocity of the relationships between the University and partner organizations, thereby helping to integrate the Jesuit mission of the University within the fabric of the community.

At SPU, SL is driven by active faculty and student involvement and energy. In a service-learning course, students engage in community-based service organized within the framework of the course and guided by the instructor and local partners. The service and the learning inform each other, helping the student to master the course material through a balanced combination of study and active application through service. Structured reflections by the student are essential to this mutual enhancement. Faculty members who teach SL courses also attend training sessions held each year, in order to facilitate the development of their courses as SL courses.

As we begin AY 2014-15, SPU begins the fifth year of its SL program. As a small but steadily growing program, since Fall 2010 over 700 students have participated in the SL program in more than 50 SL-designated courses, taught by faculty members across 17 departments. External partners have been numerous, including Hudson Community Enterprises, A Free Bird (Cancer Kids), ASPIRA, The Food Bank of Hillside, The Hoboken Shelter, Sacred Heart School, Pearson's RED Challenge, and MarbleJam Kids.

Over the last several years of the SL program, the Pearson's (RED) Challenge has been the source of a couple of the many highlights in the SL program. In Spring 2012, a section of Principles of Marketing (BA-155) developed an SL-based marketing plan through its participation in Pearson's (RED) Challenge, and a team of students in that section were

selected as one among ten national finalists. The following spring, another section of Principles of Marketing was successful in having another top-ten finish.

Other highlights include the Bridging Theory To Practice grant, which the SL program shared in winning in early 2013. The SL portion of the grant funded a luncheon, and invitees included selected SL faculty, administrators, and the directors and primary contacts of several external partners the SL program has worked with. Attendees learned more about the SL program, and enjoyed a faculty presentation on a recent SL project involving SPU's partnership with MarbleJam kids. This illustrated how much the SL experience contributes to the education of our students and to the wider community.

In addition, in the past two years, two different SL sections in the sociology department have produced a running blog documenting these sections' exploring inequalities in healthcare. The blog can be found [here](#).

As these and many other recent SL examples show, in addition to providing a new way to optimize the student learning experience, service-learning fosters compassion and the development of leadership skills. As well, service-learning encourages students to commit themselves to long-term civic engagement as adult citizens who are agents of positive change and justice.

The service-learning program at Saint Peter's University is primarily based in Academic Affairs, but also coordinates its activities and goals with the Office of Community Service and with Student Affairs in order to enable students, faculty, and community partners to build service-learning experiences that are as rewarding, educational, and mutually beneficial as possible.

For more information on the SL program, please contact [Daniel Murphy](#).

# Title V Curriculum Infusion Seminar

## Title V: Looking in the Mirror

Currently over 75% of our day students are classified as minority versus less than 13% of our faculty. The former percentage has been growing and the latter remaining stagnant in my ever so long tenure (I had hair at the beginning) at Saint Peter's College University. As good as we are, and we are very good, this cultural gap often leads to lost opportunities for learning for both us, as faculty, and for our students. It does so in and out of the classroom. More to the point, that mysterious body called the literature overwhelming maintains that when students see reflections of themselves in front of the classroom, and in the material covered, they become more engaged, do better work and have higher retention. We have not been able to provide these reflections at Saint Peter's. Nonetheless we also know that when faculty become more comfortable and aware of diverse learning populations and learning styles, they can be more effective in the classroom as well as learn more about themselves. This, although it is not a substitute for diversification of the faculty, we can and are doing.

Made possible by our Title V Grant, over the past four summers 80 faculty from 17 departments and the library have participated in weeklong Inclusionary Cultural Workshops. These are followed by sessions during the semester with the ultimate goals of presenting a more representative curriculum, understanding different learning styles, and raising comfort levels for the entire community. All part of a more complete college experience for both faculty and students. While Title V is official directed at our Hispanic population, the activities are shaped for all our students especially other immigrant or generation 1.5 (students born in the U.S. where English is not the first language at home), and first-generation college students.

In our attempts to understand and accommodate different learning styles and develop "comfort" among all learners, during the summer workshops we have used a number of approaches:

- External Facilitators are brought in to help explore various strategies that we have generally not been exposed to
- Introduced is a wide range of readings in both subject matter and style that reflect the cultures of our students and ourselves
- We utilize experiences of each year's current participants who often have more in common with our students that they realize but also have common areas that they would like to see improved
- We invite returning faculty from the previous summer workshops who can demonstrate how they have modified their own classes and out of the classroom interactions as a result of these sessions. This provides to the current group a street cred to why we are doing this
- We invite The Center for English Languages and Acquisition of Culture (ESL) which both explains its services as well as provides specific teaching strategies
- There is a strong focus how to raise Academic Standards through a more inclusive curriculum in the context of our mission, our core, or student learning outcomes and our insatiable hunger of more assessment

While each one of these strategies, standing alone and combined have been proven effective by the annual evaluations and the data presented below, our most

impressive asset is our own first generation and generation 1.5 students. We generally begin the week with a panel of these students sharing their experiences at the university, including concrete examples of what has worked and what as proven to be obstacles. They also introduce the faculty to their complicated worlds outside the college. Usually they are first generation college who, even more than the rest of our students, have to work, serve as cultural interpreters for their parents and have financial challenges.

It is important to emphasize that most of these students have had generally positive experiences at Saint Peter’s University; however, they also have very realistic suggestions for what we can do both in and out of the classroom that the majority of our participants have implemented.

Is it working? All the four years of evaluations of the summer workshops emphatically suggest yes. One problem that we love is that the engagement of the participants has been so great that we run out of time. Each year we have cut back on sessions and each year we still run out of time. This is active learning at its best.

We also have hard data to back up our success. While the Title V Inclusionary Workshops were initially aimed at Hispanic Students, with some many faculty engaged they really cover our entire population. It is important to note that much of the success demonstrated below is not just a result of the training faculty or the numerous other Title V activities aimed at increasing retention and graduation. There are many other

initiatives on campus with the same goals and we all generally work together. However, the fact that 80 of our faculty have been willing to give their time and refocus their efforts plays an important role in this success. The data shows increases in first-year retention, six-year graduation rates and GPA for Hispanic students.

Objectives	Base 9/10	9/14*
Increase Hispanic first-year retention from 71% to 75%	71%	81.5%
Increase Hispanic six-year graduation rate from 45% to 48%	41%	48.3%
Increase average first-year GPA of all Hispanics from 2.50 to 2.65	2.50	2.74

\*As of October 29, 2014

In the next issue we will share some of the specific outcomes that faculty have implemented from these workshops. For now, thanks to the 80 faculty who have given their time and minds to this effort and a reminder to the others that we will be announcing shortly the last summer of the workshops as well as a reunion set of sessions.

### Fatima Shaik, Assistant Professor, Communications and Media Culture

*During this past summer’s “Curriculum Infusion” Seminar, Professor Shaik shared ways in which she helps students to read and think beyond their particular experience and history as a means to explore the diversity of perspective we all encounter. The following two summaries are representative of that effort:*

In Cu202 (Media Communication I), I ask students to bring examples from their own cultures when we discuss newspapers; everyone, then, gets to see papers that are diverse -- ethnically, nationally, and geographically. We try

to bring in newspapers that are printed in the same week.

In Cu419 (Magazine Writing), I encourage students to make themselves familiar with magazines that might be markets for their own articles. Some students bring in Spanish language magazines like Latina and others bring in magazines reflective of their particular interests such as Car and Driver. We share the contents aloud and notice the differences in the ways materials are approached.



The [Diversity and Inclusion Subject Guide](#) was produced as a result of collaboration by four professional members from the Theresa and Edward O'Toole Library. The primary objective was to create a resource that complemented and expanded upon the discussions brought forth during the Oscar Romero Title V Curriculum Infusion Workshop. This web page is intended to facilitate the research of diversity, from multiple perspectives, by students and faculty. It also promotes the library and institutional departments. Participation in the workshop provided the opportunity to develop an online resource which is standard at most colleges and universities, and broadened awareness of issues faced by our students. Updates to the guide can be made at any time. The category Inclusive Teaching Strategies was added as a result of the follow-up meeting.

The guide was developed by the following contributors:

[Mary Kinahan-Ockay](#), University Archivist: Generation 1.5, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Title V and feedback on layout.

[Ilona MacNamara](#), Associate Librarian, Reference: Citation Guides-Style Manuals, Databases, E-books, ESL, Inclusive Teaching Strategies, Organizations, Relevant Subject Guides, Saint Peter's University Resources, Statistics/Data and links to journals on Adult Education, Culture, Disabilities, Diversity, Gender, Multiculturalism and Women.

[Hao Zeng](#), Systems & Electronic Resources Librarian: Technical expertise, creative support and feedback on layout.

[AnnMarie Ziadie](#), Collection Development & Reference Librarian: ESL and feedback on layout.

Please feel free to contact any one of us with feedback or recommendations.

## Teaching Tip #2: Literary Autobiography

*Stephen Cicirelli, Lecturer in Composition, English Department*

The first essay assignment I give in all of my Composition classes is a narrative essay. If there is anything that students love more than telling stories, it is telling stories about themselves. In the classroom, narratives also have the added benefit of requiring very little explanation (I almost never provide a typed-up prompt when assigning a narrative); Saint Peter's students are instinctive storytellers. Usually I assign my students a narrative that is based on the in-class writing completed on the first day of class. Last year, for example, my Composition students wrote, in class, about why cigarette smoking, despite all the scientific research about its adverse effects, is still so attractive to young people. The narrative assignment I gave them, in conjunction with the in-class writing, was to tell me a story about a time they either quit something or were unable to quit something. The results, narratively speaking, were

good. But the students all tended to write about the same things: breakups, near-breakups, and television shows they were "addicted" to. Also, I found that my main objective in giving this assignment—getting to know my students better—was not being achieved. Culture, I thought, was a better way to learn about them. This semester, on the second day of class, we discussed what it means to be "literate"—the many definitions of literacy. Language, of course, steered the conversation toward culture. I asked the students if there were any other languages, besides English, in which they were literate. Many claimed literacy in at least one other language. "But how do we know," I asked them, "when we have become literate in a language?" My question was met initially with silence. Then, after some guidance, the students decided that things like creativity, metaphor, and mood (and other

literary terms that typically are not introduced until their literature courses) were each hallmarks of literacy. I asked one more follow-up question: “How do we become literate?”

This was a much easier question for them to answer because, I think, becoming literate always involves a story—a student’s own personal story: What, if any, books were read to them as children? Did they keep journals? Which teachers inspired or discouraged them? Did literacy in one language prevent them from achieving literacy in another language?

At the end of class, I assigned what I called their Literacy Autobiography. I told them that I wanted to know the stories of how they became literate. The instructions I gave them, adapted from Southern Polytechnic State University, were as follows: “Describe either 1) a single important event in your literacy history or 2) a more complete literacy history.” I emphasized that a Literacy Autobiography did not have to be a story “with a happy ending.” For some, I said, the path to literacy has been full of failure and frustration, and that is okay. I did not want the students to feel that they had to kowtow to me because I was their Composition professor; if they hated reading and/or writing, I wanted to know that.

The object of the Literacy Autobiography is to learn how a student’s history with reading and writing has come to shape his or her ideas about them in the present.

## APPLYING FOR GRANTS: A REMINDER

When applying for either a private or government grant first submit the Grant Submission Intent Form. This form should be submitted at the beginning of the grant writing process.

Once the intent form has been approved by the University’s administrators, you can begin work on the actual proposal. Assistance with the entire grant proposal process is available. For private grants, [Rebecca Kalejaye](#) can be reached at (201) 761- 6108. For government grants, [Paul Almonte](#) can be contacted at (201) 761-6317.

Before a grant proposal can be submitted by the University for a faculty member’s project, you must obtain final approval from the administrators. The final version of the grant proposal should be accompanied by the Grant Proposal Approval Form. Both forms are available on the Faculty Research and Sponsored Programs [webpage](#).

A number of workshops on grants and fellowships will be presented in the Spring semester.

The results of this assignment far exceeded those of other narratives I have assigned. With the Literacy Autobiography, students are able to discuss their histories and cultures compassionately and critically. The assignment highlights something educators have always known: that is, how well students do, in class, is related in large part to how they perceive themselves. Making students better writers begins, and ought to begin, with a change of perspective.

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## Research Tip: The Value of Being in the “Field”

*Alexander Mirescu, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science*

Field research is an essential part of social scientific work. In political science, most especially, while statistical analysis still occupies a certain segment of data gathering and processing, trends in methodology in recent years have confirmed a marked shift away from quantitative analyses to more narrative-based, qualitative approaches. Richer, primary-level explanations of how social phenomenon unfold, often times, provides us with clearer images of events, gives us insights into attitudinal

behaviors and may produce indices for explaining future outcomes that more quantitative analyses could miss. Most importantly, it gives the researcher a chance to experience cultural constraints and observe local-level processes, those the many inter-connected cogs of “small” politics that may influence grander events.

By tracing the step-by-step processes and identifying the most decisive policy ‘moments’ along this chronological

order, my research tends to delve into the narrative-rich raw data, which I collect from archives and interviews with local actors and agents, oppositional leaders, party elites, members of civil society and government representatives and functionaries. In formulating a strategy to best capture the *longue durée*, ebb-and-flow of policy and to concomitantly construct narratives that flesh out crucial points along a policy's trajectory, I typically liked to employ the methodology literature on *process tracing*.<sup>1</sup> Currently, I am working on explaining the democratic paths in Tunisia, the country that gave birth to the Arab Spring in December 2010 and January 2011. While the rest of the MENA states (Middle East and North Africa) remain either engulfed in conflict (Libya, Syria, Iraq), experience large-scale violence and upheaval (Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon) or remain mired in deeply entrenched corruption and authoritarianism (Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia), Tunisia has emerged as the only viable option for democracy to take hold in a majority-Muslim, Arab state.

Last summer, with the help of a Kenny Grant, I was able to conduct nearly five weeks of field research, which sought to locate and map the development of civil society – a highly unique characteristic of Tunisian politics not found in most of the MENA region. Like most social phenomenon, civil society in Tunisia developed over time with small nodes pre-Arab Spring filling in the social gap after January 2011. The sequential nature of the interaction between civil society and the new Tunisian state corresponds with an approach stemming from the process-tracing and path dependency literatures: causal feedback loops. This tool claims that “changes in the dependent variable at one point in time may lead to changes in the independent variable at a later point, which, in turn, leads to further modifications in the dependent variable.”<sup>2</sup>

While my current research on Tunisia methodologically focuses more on processes rather than measurable, independent variables, causal feedback loops provide an additional nuance in linking processes over time. Path dependency's often-cited weakness of self-reinforcement leading to predictable outcomes, which encourage initial moves in a particular direction to deterministically move along the same path, is thereby avoided.<sup>3</sup> As my research progresses, I have discovered that early events do not necessarily trigger self-perpetuating, repetitive processes that directly link cause to effect.<sup>4</sup> Inputs from multiple actors into the mechanisms of creating, maintaining and regularly overhauling politics in Tunisian in time in the pre- and post-revolution period at different periods in time provide for divergent outcomes, when we compare Tunisia with other MENA states. In other words, processes put into play in Tunisia before the Arab Spring, while important, do not deterministically get us the same results throughout the MENA countries. Instead, field research offers me the ability to go to the source, as it were, to discover which micro-level decisions at important chronological junctures post-Arab Spring. Therefore, it is my hypothesis that a set of decisions in both periods, taken at key “policy moments,” provided for a fluid back and forth of contestation in civil society, which, among other key factors, may have produced a set of conditions more favorable for democracy in Tunisia rather than in the rest of the Arab world.

Hence, field research has enabled me to peer into some of the inner workings of civil society development in Tunisia. At its most recent elections on 26 October 2014, Tunisia took another historic step forward by handily removing a staunchly conservative Islamist party from power, replacing it with a Western-oriented, secular block. Civil society will have an even more important stake in ensuring that democratic consolidation remains on a solid path.

<sup>1</sup>Alexander L. George and Timothy McKeown, “Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making,” *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* 2 (1985): 35. Also, Charles Tilly, “Means and Ends of Comparison in Macrosociology,” *Comparative Social Research* 16 (1997).

<sup>2</sup>Tulia G. Falsetti, “Theory-Guided Process-Tracing in Comparative Politics: Something Old, Something New,” *American Political Science Association Newsletter on Comparative Politics* 17.1 (2006): 8.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Pierson, “Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes,” *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (2000): 64. Also, Theda Skocpol and Paul Pierson, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science,” *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, ed. Ira Katznelson and H. V. Milner (New York: W.W. Norton Press, 2002): 703-707.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur L. Stinchcombe, *Constructing Social Theories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 101-103.



## UPCOMING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

The following is a list of Spring semester workshops to be presented by the Office of Faculty Development. Dates are listed below, with each session scheduled for noon in the Emeritus Room.

JANUARY 21	Assessment, SLO's and Evaluation
FEBRUARY 11	Learning Styles: Multi-Model Classrooms
FEBRUARY 23	Getting Grants
MARCH 4	What the Students See
APRIL 15	Renewal, Promotion and Tenure
APRIL 27	Faculty Fellowships and Fulbright Scholarships

## Faculty Arts Spotlight: Beatrice Mady, Associate Professor, Fine Arts Department and Graphic Arts Coordinator

My digital prints are created entirely in Adobe Illustrator and printed on a large format Epson printer on Hahnemühle paper. Each series of images is limited to small editions. Wandering Cow was inspired by my trip to India this past winter. I was enamored with the colors and patterns I saw everywhere. My prints are a dialogue between the drawn form and color. This conversation continues between the spontaneous gesture and the calculated mark, the morphic and the geometric shapes, finally coalescing into a complex internal space. The layering of color, both opaque and transparent, can be likened to the layers of consciousness or the veils of reality. There is a spiritual state in which dualistic elements, such as vertical-horizontal, dark- light, warm-cool and positive-negative can play out their parts. Although these forces are seemingly contradictory, as in the symbol of the yin/yang, they function in a complementary fashion to create a union of opposites that harmonize in perfect equilibrium. I believe in endowing my work with a spiritual quality that transcends stylistic trends, adhering to the truth of my inner process.

