



# The *SPC* Scholarly Guide

Saint Peter's College Office of Faculty Research and Sponsored Programs

Vol. 2, No. 2

January, 2006

## **Publish and Flourish Become a Prolific Writer**

On January 21st, Dr. Tara Gray conducted a writing workshop for faculty at the College. There were nineteen participants. Dr. Gray is an associate professor of criminal justice and director of the Teaching Academy at New Mexico State University. She has published three books, including *Publish and Flourish: Become a Prolific Scholar*. The workshop was co-sponsored by the offices of the Provost and Faculty Research. The idea of inviting Dr. Gray to SPC for this worthwhile event can be credited to Susan Tegtmeier, Assistant to the Provost. Many thanks to Sue for all her work in putting this workshop together.

## **Academic Symposium 2006 A Celebration of Student Accomplishments**

This year's Academic Symposium will take place on Thursday, April 20th, from 12:00-2:00 PM in the Roy Irving Theatre. The Symposium is a way for SPC to acknowledge the scholarly efforts of its students. The entire College community is invited to attend. Students representing different majors will present their work. Many of the projects presented were conducted outside the classroom. For additional information, about either attending or having a student present, contact Dr. Laura Twersky (ltwersky@spc.edu).

## **Featured Faculty Lecture Dr. William Luhr**

On December 1st, 2005, Dr. William Luhr, of the English Department, gave the inaugural lecture in a new series that features faculty members from within the College. Dr. Luhr's lecture was well attended by administrators, faculty, staff, and students, as well as by some guests from outside the College. During the lecture, entitled: *Film Noir: Hollywood's Dark Side and American Culture*, Dr. Luhr, who has authored numerous books on film, discussed several film noir clips from a variety of perspectives, including historical, psychological, and sociological.

## **Theology Conference at SPC March 30, 2006**

The Theology Department is spearheading a conference to be held at Saint Peter's College on Thursday afternoon March 30, 2006, entitled, "Common Ground: Pilgrimage and Jerusalem in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam." It will take place 2:00-5:00 p.m. in McIntyre Conference Room C, followed by a reception.

The conference will highlight, through the work of the academic and intellectual community, the breadth and depth of shared traditions among these three religions, while not negating their many and obvious divergences. The speakers will address themselves to two of the many shared traditions incorporated in the sacred writings of the three monotheistic religions, pilgrimage and Jerusalem.

Six brief papers will be followed by discussion. The speakers (in alphabetical order) will be:

**Thomas Ferguson**, Department of Religious Studies, Manhattan College, on pilgrimage and the eschatological Jerusalem in early Byzantine Christian tradition.

**Ruth Gais**, Director, NY Kollel and Community Outreach, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, examining how the early Rabbis addressed the problems of pilgrimage once the Jerusalem Temple is destroyed.

**Marion H. Katz**, Department of Middle Eastern Studies, New York University, on the implications of the Qur'an's references to Jerusalem.

**James D. Pavlin**, Department of Religion, Rutgers University (New Brunswick), on pilgrimage in the Qur'an and Hadith.

**Francis E. Peters**, Department of Religious Studies and Middle Eastern

Studies, New York University, who will propose a synthesis of the traditions on Jerusalem and pilgrimage.

**Robert Paul Seesengood**, Department of Classics, Drew University, on how the Christian New Testament's texts present a Christian "myth of origins" that centers on Jerusalem.

This is an important time for a conference that draws deliberate attention of such an audience to the holy places and the desire of the faithful to visit them, just at a point when the Holy Land and the Holy City of Jerusalem itself is subject to so many political claims and tensions.

The conference also will highlight the relationships between the College and the larger Jersey City interfaith community, and will offer an opportunity to cultivate the mutual respect and understanding among these three faith traditions, and to extend those conversations into the wider campus and regional academic community.

## Faculty Resource Network at NYU Summer Programs

The Faculty Resource Network (FRN) Summer Faculty Summer programs have been announced. This summer ten concurrent seminars that run from June 12-16, 2006 will be offered. The seminars will take place on the Washington Square Campus of New York University. For descriptions of the ten summer seminars and applications please visit the FRN website at <http://www.nyu.edu/frn>. Once you are on the FRN main web page, please scroll down the page and follow the links for further information. Also available at the web page is the application for the Summer Scholar-in Residence program (June 5-30, 2006). The deadline to apply for the Network Summer 2006 programs is Friday, February 17, 2006.

This year's seminars will run concurrently from June 12-16, 2006 and include:

Approaches to Critical/Creative Thinking

Bio 2010: How Genes Act in Populations

Business Education: Changing Practices and More to Come

Conditions for Democracy: From Ancient Mesopotamia to Modern Iraq

Evidence-Based Practice: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Nursing Education

From Punk to Postmodernism: Teaching Contemporary Culture through Archives and Theory

New York City, American Literature, and the Cosmopolitan Ideal

Performance and Politics in the Americas

Reacting to the Past

South Africa at the Moment of Transition

## Scholarly Activities

*Your work is important. If you present at a conference, publish a paper, or disseminate your scholarly work in some other way, please send us the information by e-mail ([Fbonato@spc.edu](mailto:Fbonato@spc.edu)) so that it may be included in the SPC Scholarly Guide.*

**Laura Twersky** of the Biology Department, mentored several students who have received grants from the TriBeta Research Foundation. Jennifer Gillen and Kathleen Starr received a grant for their project, Antimutagenic and reparative properties of curcumin. Sita Gurung and Ambrish Patel's project is entitled, The effects of erythropoietin on early stages of ocular development in *Xenopus laevis* (clawed frog) embryos. Ana Pereira and Raquel Chaves were awarded a grant for their project, The effects of *Ginkgo biloba* on neurulation in *Xenopus laevis* (clawed frog).

**Fatima Shaik** of the Communications Department published an article in the December 22nd issue of the eNewsletter, *In These Times*. The article, *Christmas in New Orleans*, describes post-Katrina conditions in the great city. You can read the article by clicking [here](#).

**William Luhr** of the English Department was an honored guest on September 23, 2005 at an event honoring Blake Edwards (conferral of Honorary Ph.D. and Musical Tribute). Dr. Luhr also co-wrote the narration for the concert. Dr. Luhr also organized and co-chaired a presentation by Professors David Sterritt and Mikita Brottman (both from the Maryland Institute College of Art) entitled "*Cinephilia, Cinemania, Cinema*" at Columbia University on September 15, 2005.

Dr. Luhr also participated as an Invited Scholar in Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (Festival of Silent Cinema) in Pordenone, Italy from October 7-15, 2005. He also organized and co-chaired two presentations at Columbia University. The first presentation, that was held on October 27, 2005, was by Professors Lucy Fischer (University of Pittsburgh) and Paula Massood (Brooklyn College, C.U.N.Y.), and was entitled "*The Shock of the New: Electrification, Illumination, and the Cinema.*" The second presentation, that was held on November 10, 2005, was by Professor Christopher Sharrett (Seton Hall University) and Dr. Luhr. It was entitled "*The Rifleman and the Domestic Frontier.*"

Dr. Luhr delivered the inaugural "Featured Faculty Lecture" entitled "*Hollywood's Dark Side: Film Noir and American Culture*" at SPC on December 1, 2005 (see article in this issue). He also delivered a lecture entitled "*Researching Film Noir*" to the Faculty Resource Network at New York University on December 9, 2005. He was quoted as a film expert in a Fox News Online story by Andrew Hard on the cultural context for *King Kong*, run the week of December 13, 2005. Dr. Luhr also organized and co-chaired a presentation by Professors Russell Merritt (University of California at Berkeley) and Scott Higgins (Wesleyan University) entitled "*Crying in Color: How Hollywood Coped When Technicolor Died*" at Columbia University on December 15, 2005.

**Constance Wagner** of the English Department presented *The War Within: Frodo as Sacrificial Hero* at Tolkien 2005 at Aston University in Birmingham, England, on August 11, 2005. On September 17, 2005, the same paper was presented stateside at the thirtieth annual Colloquium on Literature and Film at West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia.

**Rachel Wifall** of the English Department published a book review of *Shakespeare's History Plays: Performance, Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad*, edited by Ton Hoenselaars. The review appeared in the Fall, 2005 issue of *The Renaissance Quarterly*.

**Eugenia M. Palmegiano** of the History Department presented a paper, "The Press on the Press in Victorian Britain" at the Annual Conference of the American Journalism Historians Association in San Antonio in October, 2005. Dr. Palmegiano also published a book review of *Visions of the Press in*

*Britain*, by Mark Hampton, in *Victorian Studies*, during the summer, 2005.

**Brian Hopkins** of the Mathematics and Physics Department and his co-author Robin Wilson of Keble College, Oxford were awarded the 2005 George Pólya Award for excellence in expository writing by the Mathematics Association of America for their 2004 history of mathematics article "The Truth About Königsberg" published in the *College Mathematics Journal*. Dr. Hopkins co-organized a contributed paper session "Nifty Examples in Discrete Mathematics" at the MAA's summer meeting.

Dr. Hopkins was also part of the Saint Peter's delegation to the Commitment to Justice in Jesuit Higher Education conference at Cleveland's John Carroll University, where he spoke on "The Mathematics of Fairness" and co-organized the discussion "Societal Issues Incorporation into Math and Science Courses." Also in October, he gave an invited talk "Counting Bulgarian Gardens of Eden" at the Integers Conference 2005 held at the University of Western Georgia, and in November presented "Partition Shifts and Gardens of Eden" to mathematics students at Ursinus College in Pennsylvania. Joint research with Dan Schaal of South Dakota State University, " $\sum a_i x_i = x_m$ ," was published in the late 2005 issue of *Advances in Applied Mathematics*.

**Denise Tate** and **Marylou Yam** of the Nursing Department presented their research study *An Intervention to Enhance Self-Efficacy and the Implementation of Health Promotion Behaviors and Decrease Depression in Women Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Abuse* at Holy Name Hospital Nursing Research Day, January 18, 2006. They will also present their results at the Stewart Research Conference at Teachers College, Columbia University, in April.

**William Evans** of the Philosophy Department presented a paper in October 2005 entitled "*Socratic Dialogue and the Aims of Liberal Education*" at the annual meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, at Fordham University. In December, 2005, Dr. Evans presented a paper entitled "*What do Philosophy and the Liberal Arts have to do with Teaching Peace?*" for a panel organized by the American Association of Philosophy Teachers at the Eastern Division

meeting of the American Philosophical Association, in New York.

**Andrea Bubka** of the Psychology Department published an article entitled, *Rotation Direction Change Hastens Motion Sickness Onset in an Optokinetic Drum* in the journal, *Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine*. The paper was co-authored by Frederick Bonato and Meredith Story, a former SPC student who graduated in 2003. Dr. Bubka and Dr. Bonato also published an article entitled, *Chromaticity, Spatial Complexity, and the Perception of Self-motion* in the journal, *Perception*. In the acknowledgment section, the authors dedicate the paper to Rady Khella, a former SPC student who was tragically killed on November 25, 2004. Rady Khella worked on the initial phases of the project when he was a student in one of Dr. Bubka's Human Factors Laboratory classes. Rady's enthusiasm for the project was a significant factor in its development and subsequent success.

Dr. Bubka also co-authored two conference presentations at the annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society that took place in Toronto, Canada last November. One presentation was co-authored by Frederick Bonato and was entitled, *What is the Provocative Stimulus for Motion Sickness?* The second presentation, *Cybersickness and Vection Induced by an Expanding and Contracting Optical Flow Pattern*, was co-authored by Bonato and Stephen Palmisano from the University of Wollongong in Australia.

**Frederick Bonato** of the Psychology Department co-authored two journal articles and two conference presentations (see above). Dr. Bonato also gave an invited talk on November 11, 2005 at the Centre for Vision Research at York University, Ontario, Canada, entitled, *Vection and Motion Sickness in an Optokinetic Drum*.

**Maryellen Hamilton** of the Psychology Department presented, *The Role of Response Competition in Age Reductions in Implicit Memory Performance* on November 11, 2005 at the annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society that was held in Toronto, Canada. The presentation was co-authored by Dr. Hamilton's colleague, Dr. Lisa Geraci of Texas A&M.

**Susan Graham** of the Theology Department presented a paper on "St. Stephen and the Jews in

*Byzantine Jerusalem*," at the Byzantine Studies Conference annual meeting in Athens, GA, that was held October 27-30, 2005. The paper explored the anti-Jewish elements in the choice of the three sites in Jerusalem sites, to which the relics of the first Christian martyr (Acts 7) were transferred after their discovery in 415 C.E.

Dr. Graham also chaired a session on Hagiography in the second and third centuries at the North American Patristics Society Annual Meeting, May 31 – June 2, 2005. She also presented a paper, "Placed in a New Tomb: The Role of the Tomb of the Virgin in Byzantine Jerusalem," at the conference, "Living in Antiquity" at Villanova University, October 5-7, 2005. The paper developed some ideas concerning the late (c. 500 C.E.) development of the Church at the Tomb of the Virgin, which appears to have been a response to local Christian devotional practice, an embodiment of the Christology pronounced by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. and considered normative in Western Christianity, and anti-Jewish polemics in the controversies following the Council.

## Grants and Appointments

### Dr. Eugenia Palmegiano

#### FRN Scholar-in-Residence

Dr. Eugenia Palmegiano of the History Department has been appointed a Faculty Resource Network scholar-in-residence at New York University for Spring, 2006.

### Dr. Katherine Safford

#### Department of Education

Dr. Katherine Safford-Ramus, Associate Professor in the Mathematics Department, has been invited to serve as a numeracy consultant on a \$1 million project funded by a grant from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, a division of the United States Department of Education. The project, the Adult Numeracy Initiative, includes a literature review of current research in numeracy, an environmental scan of innovative numeracy work across the country, and the convening of a work group of experts in the field to identify a research agenda for potential future projects. Dr. Safford will serve as co-director of the project for the first year and, pending a commitment by the Department of Education, will lead the team who will design and present professional development materials to numeracy educators across the United States in the second year.

## **Research Tip:**

### **Dr. William Luhr, English**

I have always considered research and teaching to be mutually reinforcing endeavors. Research can build upon the interest and enthusiasm that initially led us to choose our academic disciplines and subsequently to teach in them. Our research can help us to update and rejuvenate our course materials, to design new courses and to contribute to curriculum decisions. Our students and colleagues can take pride in our professional accomplishments. Our published work can bring us visibility within our fields and help with our professional advancement in areas such as promotion, tenure, grants, further publications, and invitations for professional service and public lectures.

The bottom line for good research is what it has always been—define your topic, your approaches to it, and your goals clearly; learn as much as you can; and write about your discoveries and conclusions lucidly. That having been said, these tips may be of help.

My experience has been in literary and film studies. In recent years, however, cultural studies, which encourages cross-disciplinary research, has had a growing and healthy influence on numerous disciplines and some of my experiences may have application beyond my field.

#### **SELECTING A TOPIC**

When you are selecting a topic for a substantial project (such as a dissertation or a book-length study), one that will involve considerable time and work, I strongly advise choosing one that will stimulate you, one upon which you will enjoy working. Don't choose a topic simply because you think it will sell. If you do so, your interest is almost guaranteed to flag early on and your diminished enthusiasm will show in the finished product. Serious research involves untold hours of exploration, much of it exhausting. If you're delving into stimulating material, however, the research can not only be rewarding on its own terms but it will also expand your grasp of your topic while leading you to unexpected connections with other useful material.

Because research can be lonely work, you might consider coauthoring some of your projects. After searching diligently for weeks for some connection and suddenly making a breakthrough, you can feel jubilant but, sadly, no one can really understand

how that feels, even when they are sympathetic. They'll say it's "good" or "nice," but they haven't traveled the road you've traveled. I've written books by myself and I've also coauthored books. The value of co-authorship is that, when you make a breakthrough, you can share it with someone who understands on a gut level what it means; that in itself can be rewarding. It also gives you a partner who can both share the research burden and bring different theoretical approaches to the material. If you coauthor, however, choose someone you trust and with whom you get along. I have had wonderful experiences with coauthors but have heard of many bad ones, largely due to interpersonal problems.

When I was working on my doctoral dissertation in Victorian Literature at NYU, I learned a valuable lesson from my advisor, William E. Buckler. Like most graduate students in my field, I presumed that the selection of a dissertation topic meant ferreting out something that no one else had touched, such as an obscure work by a minor poet. When I mentioned some possibilities to Buckler, he shocked me by advising me not to waste my time on minor material in which I had little genuine interest; he went on to say, "Why don't you work on Tennyson, or Dickens, or Browning?" Intimidated at the prospect, I said that they were giants in the field and had already been studied by others. His response was that, of course they had been dealt with by others, but not by me, and that I should have the confidence to feel that I could bring new perspectives to their work. Eventually, with his support, I wrote about an impossibly ambitious topic, *Victorian Novels on Film*. Where earlier I had feared the tedium of drudge work on minor figures in whom I had little interest, I now found it exhilarating to tackle such a grand topic. It forced me to open up vast new areas of theory and criticism for myself and led to the publication of my first book, before I had even completed my degree. Buckler's insight was and is a life-saving one. Don't be afraid to attempt ambitious work if it involves material you'll derive pleasure from exploring. That pleasure can fuel the research and lead to other projects.

This is not to say that every project on which you work must be fascinating. At times, for various reasons, you will probably take on work that can be helpful to you but that simply isn't your cup of tea. Do it and do it well but don't get mired in it.

Once you've selected a topic, spend a good deal of time refining it. Careful preparation will save a lot of

needless travel down fruitless pathways. This doesn't mean that, once you are in the middle of your research, you can't find an exciting new path that will lead you to redefine everything.

While you are refining your topic, solicit all the help you can. Speak with people in your field. People in other fields can also lend valuable assistance with structure and organization. Discuss your ideas and plans with people you respect. Some will help; some won't, but exploring multiple alternatives at the earliest stages can prevent wasted work down the line.

#### THE RESEARCH

My main suggestion here is to diversify your research sources. The standard way to begin is to search the existing literature on the topic, which will give you a sense of what has already been done and of the traditional perspectives upon your subject. This is indispensable but it is only a beginning. It should identify the major archives. Whenever possible, travel to those archives and spend time with primary documents.

The internet has changed the landscape considerably for researchers. At a recent dinner I had with the cultural historian David S. Reynolds, author of award-winning books like *John Brown, Abolitionist* and *Walt Whitman's America*, he mentioned that his research for the Brown book involved less travel than for the Whitman one because so much material, like the Abraham Lincoln papers, is now available online. This underscores developments that have been spectacularly helpful for researchers (not to mention the value that laptops and other electronic devices can have for note-taking and organizing data). During the past twenty years, the web has given researchers instant access to volumes of materials earlier unimaginable. This fact does not, however, negate the utility of archives. Good archives almost always have related materials one might not have known about and, furthermore, archivists, many of whom know their holdings intimately, can be indispensably helpful. Archives also lead to other archives (Here I am using the term archives very loosely, primarily meaning depositories of materials. They can be traditional university, governmental, or institutionally-based repositories, most commonly of paper documents. They can also be public records, records and collections of individuals and families, of publishers, of corporations, of laboratories, of learned societies, of enthusiasts.). I began my research for my book on Raymond Chandler at the

UCLA Special Collections Archive. That led me to resources like the Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences and, perhaps most importantly, to the professional organization, The Mystery Writers of America (of which Chandler was president shortly before his death). Members of that organization were particularly generous with materials and contacts not covered in standard Chandler bibliographies. Furthermore, when working with biographical material, the very acts of handling primary documents and of speaking with people directly involved with your subject can give you a special pleasure. I felt it when going through Raymond Chandler's private papers at UCLA and also in interviewing Helga Green (who had been Chandler's literary agent and who had also been engaged to him) in London. Although she generously granted me permission to cite his work, my main pleasure from the meeting came simply from talking with someone who had known Chandler well. This sort of personal contact may or may not directly contribute to your work but it is likely that you will cherish its memory long after you've completed your book.

Beyond traditional archives, there can be great value in going to places where things occurred, in interviewing people who might have been involved or who have friends or relatives involved, and in gaining an understanding of the process. I have written extensively on the work of Blake Edwards and it has been particularly helpful to visit the sets of his films while he was shooting them and to visit the theaters in which he was rehearsing plays he had written and was directing. It has also been productive to interview him and people who have worked with him in order to learn about the process and practical considerations of his creative work. Edwards is a living subject, which presents different considerations from biographical research on a relatively recently (1959) deceased one like Chandler, or a long deceased one like Shakespeare. If I were writing on Shakespeare, I would want to learn about the practices of the Elizabethan theater and also to watch current plays in rehearsal. Many things have changed in theater in the past four hundred years but some have not. Visiting the reconstructed Globe Theater in London last year gave me insights into Shakespeare's work that have been useful for my literature courses.

#### WRITING AND PUBLICATION

Writing and research often blend. Once your project is underway, it is worthwhile to use parts of it for

conference papers and public presentations. This helps you refine your ideas and methods and can also provide valuable feedback from peers. I have always found that a large project yields numerous smaller ones along the way, such as conference papers, articles, public presentations, panel discussions, radio and television and newspaper interviews. These can publicize your association with your topic and help you to streamline your work.

Contact with people involved in your field can be profoundly beneficial and is available in numerous venues. I co-chair the Columbia University Seminar on Cinema and Interdisciplinary Interpretation, a faculty-level seminar that meets monthly during the academic year. We bring in visible people in the field to talk about their works-in-progress. These meetings enable the members to keep abreast of developments in the field and also provide the speakers with feedback on their work. Columbia sponsors roughly seventy-five such seminars in disciplines as diverse as physics and theology. I also belong to the Biography Seminar at NYU, a group of professional biographers that works in a similar way. Comparable groups are probably available to you. If you cannot locate such a university-linked group, the NYC area has numerous public events suited to different fields, events at which you might meet people in your area. They occur at places like the NY Public Library, the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street "Y," the Museum of Modern Art, and various cultural institutions.

Another avenue, with which I am not particularly familiar, is that of chat rooms and other web-based resources. Many people find them extremely valuable.

Participate in professional conferences in your field. They provide venues in which you can share your work and sample that of others. They are also important for publication contacts. Book and journal editors regularly attend them, not only to promote their own books and journals but also to attend the presentations in search of likely prospects for book contracts. I often meet my editors at conferences for a catch-up dinner. When I am editing a book of my own and soliciting essays for it, I often approach people whose work I have heard at conferences. If you have a project underway, don't be afraid to approach editors at conferences to pitch your work. They are looking for new talent. You can often find them at their table in the publication room or at book parties. Before doing this, however, do your

research. Ask people in your field who the likeliest publishers for your project are likely to be. It makes no sense to approach a publisher whose list is not geared to your topic.

Furthermore, if you intend to approach a publisher, prepare a proposal. A proposal should be brief (c 10 pages); it should describe your project, describe potentially competitive works and ways in which yours would differ from them, make a case for the likelihood of wide interest in your book, and demonstrate why you are the person to do this work (you might cite your background, previous works, access to materials, and likelihood of completing it in a timely manner).

Do this while your project is underway; don't wait until it is completed. If a publisher is interested, they may have suggestions about shaping your book. If you agree with them, their suggestions can save you time and rewriting.

I don't have much to say about the actual writing beyond advising you to make your manuscript as lucid, substantial, well-shaped, and accessible as possible. Show parts of it (nobody wants to look at a 400 page manuscript) to people you respect for suggestions. Keep your eye on the clock. There comes a time when you need to move beyond the research phase and begin writing. It can be tempting to continue researching forever. Some people enjoy the research process and don't want to leave it; some become paralyzed by the notion that, if they stop, they will miss new material just around the corner; some are terrified of the writing process. Some of these considerations are legitimate; they can also become quagmires.

I hope you find research topics that you can enjoy. There can be pleasure in the research, pleasure in the shaping of it into something that makes a contribution to your field and of which you can be proud, and pleasure in holding the first copy of the published book in your hands. There is also value in moving on. It doesn't always work that way, but it happens often enough to make it worthwhile.

**Academic Symposium 2006**  
***A Celebration of Student Accomplishments***

April 20th, 12:00-2:00, Roy Irving Theatre

For information contact Dr. Laura Twersky



## Teaching Tip:

### Dr. Joshua Feinberg, Psychology

One of the goals I set for myself as a professor is to enable my students to become critical or scientific thinkers. I have found that many students out of high school really don't understand what is meant by critical or scientific thinking and certainly do not engage in it as frequently as we would like. So, any understanding you can bestow upon them in the short time period of a single semester would be well worth the effort.

In psychology, a major obstacle students have to overcome is the belief that we can know the world through commonsense and intuition alone. People often accept what they are told (especially when the information comes from someone they respect or admire) without critically analyzing the information. I emphasize to my students from the first day of class not to accept any claims, even if it comes from me, without subjecting it to appropriate critical analysis. While using commonsense may be effective in many situations, there are times when commonsense can lead to the wrong answer. By using critical scientific thinking, students can protect themselves from being tricked by "common-(non)sense".

Let me share 2 in-class demonstrations that I like to do early in the semester (often on the first and/or second day):

1. I hand out a "quiz" that allegedly measures students' pre-test of psychological knowledge. After letting the students know the "quiz" will not be graded (and thus the moans die down), I have students answer the true/false items first on their own and then in small groups. The test was designed so that all the items are counter-intuitive and the correct answer is always "false". When I let the students know that all the items are false almost all of them are quite surprised. I explain to the class that the purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate that unless we give critical thought and analyze the information, that our intuition and/or commonsense may give us the wrong answer. As we go through the answers I try and demonstrate how critical thinking could have led them to the correct answer.

2. I make the claim to the class (in a serious tone) that I have ESP. Not surprisingly, I receive many incredulous looks. I then claim that I will "scientifically" demonstrate my abilities. I won't go into the details of the "experiment" (it's a neat trick;

come see me if you'd like the details), but the students are all amazed by my alleged powers. I then give students the opportunity to guess how I performed my trick. To date no student has correctly figured it out. While this trick alone will not convince anyone to believe in psychic powers, it demonstrates an important point. My experiment was not scientific. I did not give the students the opportunity to critically analyze all the materials in my demonstration. If I was forced to use the rigors of the scientific method and had allowed the students time to critically examine my materials, my experiment would not have worked. Once the trick is over, I demonstrate to the class how they could have easily seen through my ruse. Even when a respected teacher presents information, we should never blindly accept their conclusions.

Our students are at constant risk to be persuaded by misinformation. Our minds can often be tricked by illusions or by commonsense thinking. Having your students in the mindset to critically examine all information that comes before them will be useful both inside and outside the classroom. How do we protect ourselves from falling prey to false claims and misinformation? Critical thinking is our shield.

## Important Dates

FEBRUARY	7	<b>Deadline for applications:</b> Funds for research Funds for Attendance at Workshops and Short Courses
	17	<b>Deadline for applications:</b> Faculty Resource Network Summer 06 Programs <a href="#">(website)</a>
MARCH	7	<b>Deadline for applications:</b> Funds for research Funds for Attendance at Workshops and Short Courses
	20	<b>Faculty talk</b> Kari Larsen- <i>Deliberately Indifferent: Government Response to HIV in U.S. Prisons</i> Degnan Room 12pm-1pm
APRIL	1	<b>Deadline for applications:</b> Funds for research Funds for Attendance at Workshops and Short Courses
	19	<b>Faculty talk</b> Fatima Shaik- <i>Societe d'Economie and the foundations of jazz in New Orleans</i> Degnan Room 12pm-1pm