Faculty Center A newsletter for faculty and librarians



April 2014

Rita Nnodim to present 'Bombay, City of Dreams' April 4, Faculty Center

Professor Rita Nnodim, Interdisciplinary Studies, will present "Bombay—City of Dreams and City of Awakening from Dreams," in a Brown Bag lecture Friday, April 4, at 3 p.m. in the Faculty Center.

Her presentation, subtitled "Literary Imaginings of a Metropolis in Contemporary Anglophone Indian Fiction" is a critical look at Bombay literature.

Rita will discuss three contemporary novels, Thrity Umrigar's *Bombay Time* and *The Space Between Us*, and Aravind Adiga's *Last Man In Tower*.

She writes: "My presentation will reflect on contested notions of Bombayite 'citizenship' and more local notions of neighborliness and 'apartment' sociality, highlighting how these are shaped and reshaped by class, ethnic, and gender distinctions, as well as by multiple intersections of space and time,

memory-stories, and the continuing presence of the imagined 'unruly' city."

The public is invited.







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Ever so slowly comes the Spring. Yet who cannot pause on an early morning drive to greet a white horse at a Route 7 farm.

Photo by Ben Jacques

Teaching in a Diverse classroom: 'Across the Queer Spectrum' is focus of Teaching Roundtable April 2

Anthropology professor Sumi Colligan will facilitate a Teaching Roundtable on Wednesday, April 2, at 1 p.m. on "teaching students across the queer spectrum."

Held in the Faculty Center, the Roundtable is the fourth in a series of Teaching Diversity series. All faculty, full and part time, are invited to participate.

The workshop will focus on issues that arise in classrooms settings when teaching students across the queer spectrum. It will place special emphasis on issues faced by transgender students.

Two transgender students will be guest speakers and share their perspectives on classroom dynamics. Andrew McNamara is a senior, psychology major, and the president of BGLAD. Ollie Freda is a sophomore, English major and Women's Studies minor, and the treasurer of BGLAD.



The format of the workshop will be the following: from

1–1:20 p.m. faculty will discuss concerns/issues/experiences among themselves; from 1:20–1:50 p.m. Andrew and Ollie will present, and from 1:50–2 p.m. faculty will have a chance to process what they learned among themselves.

Service learning is topic of April 23 Roundtable in FC

Art Keene, emeritus professor of anthropology at UMass Amherst, will lead a teaching roundtable April 23 on how faculty can best prepare students for service learning. The Roundtable will run from 1–2:30 in the Faculty Center.

Keene founded two service-based leadership programs at UMass, was an associate dean of the Commonwealth Honors College, and served as national chair of Educators for Community Engagement. He is currently associate editor of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service*.

Calendar

March 31— The Changing Nature of Higher Education: Politics and Policy. President Mary Grant convenes series of campus conversations. Murdock 218, 3 p.m.

April 1—"Crisis in Crimea," a discussion with Professors Robert Bence, Petra Hejnova, Ben Taylor and Peace Corps volunteer Robin Picard, Feigenbaum Science Center, 6:30 p.m.

April 1—"Tricks of the Trade: Collective Impact: Working together," art workshop, Gallery 51 & PRESS Gallery, 6 p.m.

April 2—Portfolio Workshop for faculty members seeking reappointment, promotion, tenure and PTR. Murdock 218, 10 a.m.

April 2—Teaching Diversity: Across the Queer Spectrum, Teaching Roundtable, Faculty

Center, 1 p.m.

April 3—"Permaculture and **Resilient Food** Systems," led by Jono Neiger, Green Living Seminar



series, M218, 5:30 p.m. April 4—"Bombay, City of

Dreams," Brown Bag lecture by Professor Rita Nnodim, Faculty Center, 3 p.m.

April 5-MCLA "Scholar Saturday," Academic Achievements Brunch & induction of students to Lambda Iota Tau (National English Society for English Literature) and Delta Mu Delta (International Business Honor Society).

April 14—The Changing Role of Faculty. VP Cindy Brown and Prof. David Eve lead conversation, Murdock 218, 3 p.m.

April 16—Ribbon Cutting, MCLA's Veterans Resource Center, Venable Hall 309. 12 noon.

April 17—Undergraduate Research Conference. Posters presented in Venable Gym from 8:30-10:30 a.m. . Paper presentations, exhibits, and performances, Murdock Hall and Venable Theater, 9–5 p.m.

April 23—Teaching Roundtable:



History Professors Frances Jones-Sneed and Ely Janis (4th from right in back) gather at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. Photo by Buffy Lord, a member of our Board of Trustees, who accompanied the Freedom Trail study tour during spring break.

Faculty Notes & Credits

History Professor Frances Jones-Sneed was honored at the Second Annual Berkshire Awards on March 21 at the Berkshire Museum. One of three awardees, she was recognized for her extensive work in discovering and documenting the heritage of the black community in Western Massachusetts.



Frances Jones-Sneed

A story by Jenifer Augur, "Coasting Down the Rockies," will be published in the online magazine, Route Nine, published at the University of Mass., Amherst. Jen teaches journalism and fiction writing in the English/Communications Department.

An article co-authored by Psychology professor **Rebekah Benjamin** has been published in Reading & Writing Quarterly. The title is "The longitudinal relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension skills in second grade children."

Education professor Ellen Barber received the One of Us award March 24 in a reception held by the Women's Center. She was honored as "an outstanding alumna, leader, role model, teacher and and inspiration."

Art professor Tony Gengarelly and his wife, Ann, recently hosted 10 students from the Navajo Nation in a poetry-art workshop. For many years Tony and Ann

> have worked with Navajo educators and community members in exploring the creative arts in Navajo culture.

> Modern Languages professor Mariana Bolivar has been elected an assembly delegate to the Modern Language Association (MLA) for a 3-year term.

> Glenn Lawson, supervisor of Library Circulation Services, attended a conference hosted by the Irish Rugby Football Union on "Collegiate Rugby Club & Team Development," in Dublin, Ireland March 8-10.

Head Women's Soccer Coach Deb Raber presented a Champions Coaches' Clinic earlier this month with Olympic Gold medalist Tony DiCicco.



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Forum Moving to a four-credit-course curriculum at MCLA



With renewed discussion on campus about changing MCLA's course structure to a 4-credit model, I have been asked to write about a few implications of that change. First, the overall picture: the standard course at MCLA is currently for 3 credits (with obvious exceptions). The new model for a standard course would be 4 credits (with exceptions). Instead of taking 5 courses per term (15 credits),

students would customarily take 4 courses per term (16 credits). All of our current exceptions for lab courses, course overloads, and other administrative accommodations would remain roughly similar.

The structural difference: students would now need 32 courses to graduate rather than 40—a pattern that is fairly widespread among private liberal arts colleges around the country.

The biggest change for faculty would be that our teaching responsibility would shift from offering four 3-credit courses to offering three 4-credit courses. We would continue to hold 12 class sessions, or hours, per week, but we would not be meeting a fourth course. (Illustration: if the average class size equals 20, then we would have 60 students on our course rosters rather than 80.)

The benefits of this 4-credit arrangement are considerable. It means students could concentrate their attention more closely on a smaller range of subjects. It would also allow courses more time to focus on dimensions of learning (critical thinking exercises, writing and revision, mathematical competency) that need reenforcement and application to "stick" with students. The arrangement would also allow faculty to concentrate attention on students who are having difficulties.

The chief drawback for this 32-course model is that students would not (customarily) take the same wide range of courses that they currently do. Highly motivated students could still take a wide range of courses (as they already do now by taking a sixth course), but course structure would reduce the number of courses most students would take.

About 15 years ago, when MCLA considered this change, we contacted the faculty at Framingham State University, whose course load has been a 4-credit model for decades. The faculty members at Framingham were universally enthusiastic about the plan, and their emissaries to MCLA recommended it highly. Because Framingham has the work-load for this model already

written into the MSCA contract, there is no extra level of concern about re-negotiating the contact—except to include MCLA in the formulas that currently apply only to Framingham.

Another advantage of Framingham's experience is that their curriculum has already sorted out some of the decisions regarding course sequence and number of credits for different major programs. MCLA would certainly not be obliged to follow Framingham's pattern, but at least we would not need to re-invent the wheel from scratch. Based on our former conversations with the Framingham faculty, I think a fair number of them would be happy to visit MCLA again and explain their rationales for the curricular decisions they have made in fine-tuning a 4-credit model.

The idea of a 4-credit model has always appealed to me. I would concentrate my work on fewer students; I would have greater flexibility in the range of courses I teach; the students would receive a more substantial immersion in the topics and methods for their courses. The Framingham faculty's endorsement of the idea also helped persuade me it was workable and stronger than what we do now.



Support starts at "home"

Few of us have not at one time felt like the late Rodney Dangerfield. As faculty members, we feel a lack of respect when faculty concerns are not taken seriously. Or when only a few show up for an important faculty event.

We want the administration to show respect and support. We want the same from our colleagues, our students, our fellow employees and the community.

Yet respect and support, like charity, begin at home. How can we expect support from others when we fail to support each other? We get too busy to show up for a faculty-author's reception, or a Brown Bag lecture, or workshop.

Or we fail to show support for adjuncts and contingent faculty, who face daunting obstacles in building careers and making a living.

Or we are too busy to join our community when it rallies to protest the closing of a hospital.

Before I go any further, let me express gratitude and appreciation to the many faculty who daily and yearly find ways to support their colleagues and their community in all sorts of ways.

We need more of this. We need more respect. We need to show respect. — Ben Jacques

The Faculty Center • Ben Jacques Program Director/Editor h.b.jacques@mcla.edu



China—the old and the new Spring Break study tour Photos by Heron Rapp











The trip was mind-blowing for me, my 12 year old son, and MCLA students. We were exposed to a society with stark differences to our own, yet with striking similarities. Specifically, Chinese students spoke about disparity of wealth, the Chinese 1%, ecological destruction, and the inability to find middle-income jobs to support their families. Sound familiar? The same economic forces in play in the US are also to be found around the world, including China.

My favorite parts of the trip were getting to know MCLA and Chinese students, getting off the "beaten track" laid by American tourists, and smelling the fresh air of the Berkshires after 10 days of smog.

I believe students learned that the history of the US empire is rather short compared with China's 4-5000 years.

Every student should have this experience.

- Dana Rapp, professor of education

Faculty Art: Laura Christensen

Did you hear about the magic tractor?

It drove down the lane and turned into a field!

Photo art & text from Laura Christensen's Collage Heaven on www.etsy.com/uk/shop/ ChristensenArt





The tractor in this picture would have to stand off against a Grandma Moses girl perched on the foot of a humongous Picasso woman before even thinking about turning into a field!

I found the photograph of the tractor in a pile of old snapshots. The driver and location are as much a mystery to me as they are to you. To create this surreal scene, I cut up reproductions of paintings from art history books and adhered them to the original photograph. An art historian might recognize the woman hanging upside down from the Ellsworth Kelly sky... Hint: She's not exactly human.

You can find this collage plus other fun collages and prints at my new Etsy shop, Laura's Collage Heaven. Please check it out, share it, and let me know what you think.

Just one caveat: Though the tractor here is a John Deere, this is not a plug for green John Deere over red Farmall tractors. There've been many a feud about which is better.



