



FALL 2024
Arts & Sciences

**Humor, Health
and Humanity**

Finding common ground
on a connected planet

S Syracuse University
College of Arts & Sciences



FEATURES

The Subversive Power of Humor	2
Why Do We Laugh?	7
You Banbury Cheese! Timeless Humor	8
Seventh-Generation Thinking	12
Creative Climate Action	16
Florence Graduate Program Turns 60	20
Fund Honors Beloved Professor	22
Shortening 'Bench to Bedside' Time	24
Helping, Healing in Our Home City	26

IN EVERY ISSUE

From the Dean	1
Meet the Faculty	25
A&S Bookshelf	28
In the Headlines	30
A&S Updates	32
Arts & Sciences Celebrates	34
Alumni Dispatches	36
Dean's Advisory Board	37



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ON THE COVER Paul Almásy, *Portrait of smiling boy wearing baseball cap*, Peru, 1961. Gift of Dr. James and Debra Pearl. Syracuse University Art Museum, 2021.0306

SUNG KYUNKWAN UNIVERSITY



Mortazavi with Professor Kyung-ha Lee
at Sungkyunkwan University.

Dear Alumni and Friends—

I recently joined a Syracuse University delegation traveling to South Korea to explore partnerships with some of that country's universities. During my 15-hour journey there, I reflected anew on the ease with which we can cross the planet, the speed with which we can rekindle or create connections.

With this ease—this convenience—comes a larger obligation. An obligation of caring, of compassion, of respecting commonalities across peoples. An obligation to share experience and expertise when invited. An obligation to address collective challenges, answer questions, advocate for our shared home.

These obligations—or perhaps better said, these values—are foundational to A&S' work. As humankind grapples with issues related to health and wellness, social justice and human thriving, and climate change and the environment, we in A&S have ample opportunity to help find new ways forward. From chemistry to religion, English to mathematics, physics to philosophy, every discipline has a part to play.

In the example of climate change, there's research happening in Earth and environmental sciences that will help better predict major storms and thus save lives. At the same time, scholars in other departments are advising the United

Nations on food insecurity and environmental justice and their influence on health; and developing innovative teaching and learning resources such as Art and Ecology digital exhibits and the Green Teaching summit (p. 33).

It was in perusing those digital exhibits of the Syracuse University Art Museum that I encountered what became our cover photo. Taken by internationally acclaimed Hungarian photojournalist Paul Almásy in 1961, this striking image of a smiling boy reminds us that laughter is a universal language, and our humanity is a common bond.

I hope you enjoy this selection of articles touching on the themes of humor, health and humanity. You'll get a glimpse of how together we are thoughtfully responding to the important questions facing people and our planet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Behzad Mortazavi' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Behzad Mortazavi
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

‘How About Never?’ The Subversive Power of Humor



“No, Thursday’s out. How about never—is never good for you?”

Mark Twain wrote, “Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand,” referring to humor’s efficacy in defusing tense situations. For prominent cartoonist Bob Mankoff, who worked for major publications including *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*, humor’s transformative potency was first impressed upon him on the campus of Syracuse University.

“I did a lot of outrageous things at Syracuse that many people still remember,” says Mankoff, who graduated with a degree in psychology in 1966. “There was a rule in the cafeteria that you had to wear socks, so I painted my socks on. What was driven home to me was the power of humor as a subversive force that lets you have an identity within an institution.”



Mankoff’s “Never—Is Never Good for You?” (facing page) became *The New Yorker*’s bestselling cartoon of all time. Before becoming a prominent cartoonist, Bob Mankoff, an alumnus of the Department of Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences, was crafting his comedic talents on the campus of Syracuse University.



“A liberal arts education illustrates the idea that now is as it was and as it will be. Reading Blaise Pascal, Montesquieu or any of these important thinkers, you’ll say, the knowledge is all there.”

Bob Mankoff
(above) in a 1965 portrait
from *The Daily Orange*.

Shipping up to Syracuse

Mankoff grew up in Queens, and when it came time to pursue his post-secondary education, he was torn between Queens College near his home or Syracuse University. He ultimately decided to head Upstate to Central New York for a change of pace and a chance to explore his identity.

“College is almost like going to the Army in a way,” says Mankoff. “You’re just thrown in with a whole new set of people that you don’t know, and that’s a shock and an opportunity. The opportunity is you get to invent yourself if you have something to invent. I had something to invent. I knew I was funny and creative.”

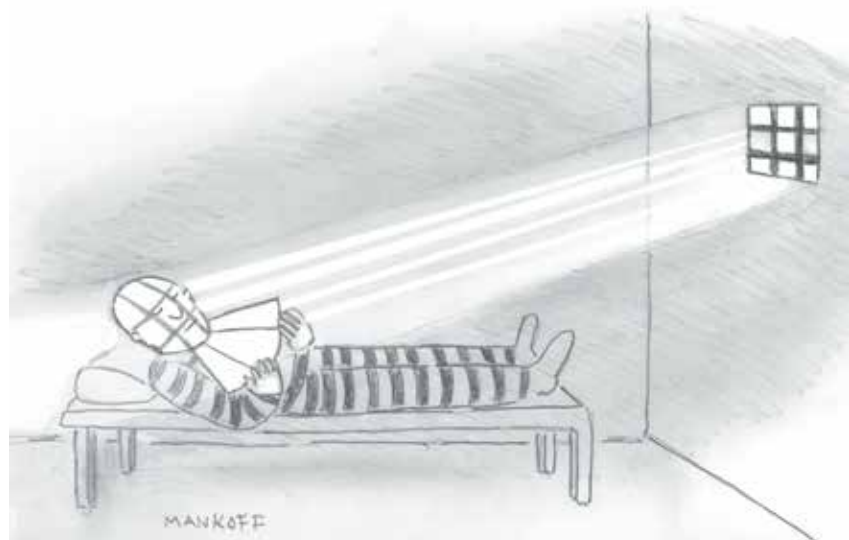
In the early and mid-1960s, a time when most men on campus were clean shaven, Mankoff broke the mold by sporting a goatee. This drew the attention of *The Daily Orange* student newspaper, which published a feature article highlighting people on campus with goatees, including an image of Mankoff. His basketball talents also gained the notice of some notable athletes on campus.

“I was there at the same time with Floyd Little and Dave Bing,” says Mankoff. “Although I never tried out for the varsity team, I was a good basketball player and remember playing pickup games with Dave Bing. I think I even recall scoring against him. I was a big basketball fan, so following the team was a big part of my experience at Syracuse.”

As can be expected with anyone trying to recall specific memories from 60 years ago, Mankoff notes that the particulars from his days on the Hill are a bit hazy. But what he does often reflect on are the relationships, the emotions and the impressionistic feel of that time.

“All of these experiences can’t be overrated,” he says. “Part of what college does is socialize you and start to give you a freedom to explore who you’re going to be.” And it didn’t take Mankoff long to figure out that his future might involve comedy.

“In English 101, one of the first classes I took, we had to write an essay and I took a humorous approach,” Mankoff says. “The arc was, I’m an only child, I’m coming from Queens and I’m going to be all by myself, so who’s going to take care of me? I found out that my roommate is such a neat freak that he’s going to be the one ending up serving that role. While handing back the papers, the English teacher said, ‘Here is a really interesting and good one,’ and he had me read mine to the class. Having the teacher respond to my humorous paper in a positive way was affirming. Being exposed to this experience at a university like Syracuse set me on a lifelong path to respect learning.”



Cartoon created by Bob Mankoff as a student at Syracuse University.

The Psychology of Humor

Mankoff credits the wide range of classes and learning experiences in the College of Arts and Sciences for helping him to remain curious and continue to learn throughout his life.

“I think it is hubristic to only focus on one area of study and not engage with all this past knowledge that humanity has acquired,” he says. “A liberal arts education illustrates the idea that now is as it was and as it will be. Reading Blaise Pascal, Montesquieu or any of these important thinkers, you’ll say, the knowledge is all there. We’ve been here before and that’s what a liberal arts education teaches you, that the human experience remains the same.”

For Mankoff, his academic interests in psychology and philosophy have informed his comedic pursuits. At Syracuse, he enjoyed exploring philosophical questions like determinism and free will, and investigating the psychology behind people’s actions and what they find funny. Those curiosities coupled with his deep understanding of comedy and the creative process even inspired him to teach classes later in his career on the psychology of humor at Swarthmore College and Fordham University.

“The psychology of humor is actually a fairly well researched topic,” says Mankoff. “In my classes we discuss humor theory (why something is funny), superiority theory (comedy based on the misfortunes or others), incongruity theory (juxtaposition of contradictory elements) and benign violation theory (humor that goes against one’s beliefs but in a safe or acceptable manner). And while these are all fascinating to study, none of them will tell you how to create a joke.”

Finding Career Success

When people ask Mankoff how he found success as a cartoonist, his response is that he really had no choice.

“I couldn’t do anything else,” he admits. “I worked for the welfare department; I was terrible. Every place I worked wanted to fire me because I wasn’t a good employee. With my Jewish background, being funny is part of that culture, and I knew comedy was my true calling.”

In a different world, Mankoff notes that he might have been a stand-up comedian, but limited opportunities and the bruising nature of the business had him choose a path as a cartoonist.

“Cartooning was safer because there was a buffer, and in 1972 there weren’t a lot of places where you could workshop stuff nor were there books about how to do stand-up,” he says. “But with cartooning, I could look in the library at all the cartoons in *The New Yorker* and I could look at magazines, so I could immerse myself in all that.”

Cartooning was a passion for Mankoff that took shape at Syracuse University. In his book, *How About Never—Is Never Good for You?*, Mankoff spotlights some of the gag-style cartoons he developed while a student at Syracuse, which he tried to sell to magazines in the late 1960s after he graduated.

“Nobody bought any,” he says. “I did 27 cartoons and thought, well, how many more cartoons could anybody do? In retrospect, I can see that the editors were encouraging, but I was young. I didn’t think they were encouraging, I thought they were idiots for not seeing my genius.”

Following this setback, Mankoff decided to put his cartoon career on hold and pursue a doctoral degree in experimental psychology at the City University of New York. But it did not take long before he figured out that this career path was not for him. He left graduate school and began cartooning again. While he started to have some luck selling to various magazines, garnering the attention of high-level publications remained elusive.

After submitting around 2,000 cartoons to *The New Yorker*, he finally got his big break and had one of his comics published. Soon thereafter, he signed a contract with *The New Yorker*, solidifying his budding cartoon career. Over the next 20 years

BOB MANKOFF LIFE AND CAREER SNAPSHOT

1944

Born in Queens

1958–1962

Attends the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art in Manhattan

1962–1966

Attends Syracuse University, graduating with a degree in psychology

1974

Attends the Ph.D program in experimental psychology at the City University of New York and eventually leaves to pursue a career in cartooning

1977

After submitting 2,000 cartoons to *The New Yorker*, Mankoff has his first sketch published and signs a contract with the magazine

1992

Launches Cartoon Bank, a cartoon licensing platform

1993

Publishes the cartoon, “How About Never—Is Never Good for You?” which becomes *The New Yorker*’s best-selling cartoon

1997

Named cartoon editor of *The New Yorker*

2017

Leaves *The New Yorker* and becomes humor editor for *Esquire* for two years

2018

Launches Cartoon Collections, parent company to CartoonStock.com, which offers the world’s largest online database of cartoons for licensing



“People say it [work] keeps you young. Spoiler alert: It does not keep you young. You still get old! But it keeps you engaged and that’s important.”

Bob Mankoff



“Hey honey, did you know if you hold a glass up to your ear you can hear the sink?”

Cartoon created by Bob Mankoff as a student at Syracuse University.

he would publish nearly 1,000 cartoons in that magazine, including his most popular and best-selling comic of all time, “How About Never—Is Never Good for You?”

In 1997 he would transition away from cartooning when he was named cartoon editor of *The New Yorker*.

“That was my first time serving in that type of role in a very big organization,” says Mankoff. “I went from being a freelance cartoonist, where my day was my own as a creator, to having a set schedule. There were great amounts of satisfaction in bringing new cartoonists in and mentoring them.”

Supporting other cartoonists has remained an important mission for Mankoff. His own experiences as a struggling cartoonist motivated his pursuits to elevate the work of others. In 2018 he created Cartoon Collections, which through its website cartoonstock.com, features over 500,000 cartoons from artists whose work has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications. Anyone can purchase and digitally download these cartoons for personal or business use. This in turn creates financial support for cartoonists, preserves cartooning as an art form, and develops new opportunities for artists.

“This is really for the benefit of the cartoonists,” says Mankoff. “Fifty percent of all the revenue for the sales of the cartoons goes directly to them. It’s hard to be a cartoonist, so if I can help others sell their work, I’m thrilled to be a part of that.”

Tina Brown, former editor of *The New Yorker*, once said, “Bob is not only a brilliant cartoonist himself, he’s also an impassioned promoter, defender and curator of the art of cartooning.”

“I turned 80 this year and I’m grateful to still be doing all this; and if I wasn’t doing all of this, I might not have reached that milestone,” jokes Mankoff. “People say it keeps you young. Spoiler alert: It does not keep you young. You still get old! But it keeps you engaged and that’s important.” 🍷



Why Do We Laugh?

Probing the mystery behind this universal form of communication.

While there are thousands of languages throughout the world, there is one form of communication common to all: laughter.

Why? Laughter makes us feel good, increasing the brain's production of endorphins and boosting mood. "Humor is essential for easing interpersonal tensions, reducing stress, relieving physical and emotional suffering and even improving the body's immune response," says Lauren Mavica, associate teaching professor of neuroscience in A&S.

While the relationship between laughter and the brain is not fully understood, scientists know that emotional responses are largely the function of the brain's largest region, the frontal lobe, as well as the motor cortex, which controls muscles. Here is what we do know:

LAUGHTER SERVES A SOCIAL FUNCTION.

Laughing is a way for us to signal to another person that we wish to connect with them. According to social psychologist Laura Machia, professor of psychology and associate dean for academic initiatives and curriculum in A&S, laughter affirms a shared connection.

That's why people frequently list "the ability to make me laugh" as a

top quality they seek in a romantic partner. "Laughter seems to improve communication and makes people feel like they're kind of bonded," says Machia.

And probably why we're 30% more likely to laugh in a group and enjoy funny movies or stand-up comedy.

"The act of laughing in a group seems to affirm a shared value or shared experience, which is really important for humans in terms of feeling connected," says Machia.

There's a physical reaction behind that. A study of PET scans taken 30 minutes after subjects watched laughter-inducing comedy with close friends found that social laughter increased pleasurable sensations and triggered endorphin release in the brain while elevating pain thresholds.

LAUGHTER HAS HEALING POWERS.

That's a big reason humor is often used therapeutically, ranging from watching movies or clown doctors, to humor training, such as stand-up comedy skills.

"Humor-based therapeutic interventions improve numerous psychological factors across a wide range of populations, including healthy people, geriatric patients and individuals with mental disorders," says Mavica.

"These interventions have been effective

in reducing depressive and anxiety symptoms, improving self-esteem and boosting social and communication skills."

At Syracuse University's Gebbie Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic, humor is used therapeutically with clients living with conditions that impact language processing and production. People with aphasia, for example, lose the ability to retrieve language. "Not being able to communicate is frustrating and affects a person's self-esteem," says Ramani Voleti, associate teaching professor of communication sciences and disorders in A&S. "We start group therapy sessions for people with aphasia with memes and jokes as a way to temporarily deflect issues they have with communication, to have fun and to build relationships. This sets the tone for the rest of the session."

Voleti says those who suffer stroke on the right frontotemporal regions of the brain often do not understand or appreciate subtle humor such as puns or idioms because that's the part of the brain that processes multiple meanings. "The part that's affected doesn't come back, but with consistent practice and therapy, new neural connections can be built in other parts of the brain," she says.

As the saying goes, laughter is indeed the best medicine. 🙌

“You Banbury Cheese!”*

Humor and jokes from Shakespeare to Spinal Tap.



**From the Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I, scene 1.*

Humor takes many forms, from literature to music to stand-up comedy. But crafting the perfect joke is no laughing matter. Three A&S professors deconstruct what makes something funny.

Throughout history, there have been many theories to explain the role of humor and why we find some things funny. The oldest, purported by Aristotle, Plato and Hobbes, is the superiority theory, which argues that we find others' misfortunes and shortcomings funny because they make us feel superior. What do you think?

KF: I think some political satire falls into that category. When you watch the late-night talk shows, many of the hosts employ satire to poke at political figures in a way that positions the rest of us as superior.

TC: A recent, huge social media hit was “Old Town Road” by Lil Nas X. It’s a song that is in many respects poking fun at country music clichés sung by a queer Black male singer. So, if you were inclined to laugh along with someone putting country music in this odd context, you might feel superior for being in on the joke. Others might feel they are being made fun of and be put off.

SS: Shakespeare was certainly very interested in the psychology of humor and humiliation, especially in shared humor at the expense of another. Consider *Twelfth Night*’s humiliation of the stick-in-the-mud, uppity steward Malvolio, who is cruelly pranked by lower order members of his household. It is hilarious in its exposure of Malvolio’s fantasy life and his ludicrous erotic and social aspirations, and the audience seems to enjoy the joke more fully because we watch the pranksters and the pranked at once, as if this somehow exonerates us from spectating on Malvolio’s misfortune.

Some say people laugh to release pent-up psychic energy. In particular, Freud argued that humor permits the expression of normally taboo impulses and desires. Thoughts?

KF: That’s certainly true in stand-up, which allows people to express things that they ordinarily are not allowed to express, particularly in a time where there is controversy over the bounds of acceptable speech. That’s why stand-up comedy is generally more effective than a canned joke you can tell anywhere—because it taps into emotions, anxieties, desires or aggressive feelings.

SS: Shakespeare used lots of ribald and scatological jokes, especially about cuckolds and venereal disease. But I don’t think it’s limited to the vulgar or taboo. Humor was used in early modern writing across genres as a way to cope with difficult life experiences—grief, illness, death. Laughter was—as it still is—understood to be a good antidote to lift and lighten heavy spirits that were believed to cause or worsen disease, both physical and spiritual.

TC: In popular music, I think of “Poison Ivy” by the Coasters, which was popular in the 1950s. It employed witty wording and used poison ivy as a metaphor for venereal disease, which certainly wouldn’t have been talked about in a popular song. Figuring that out is what makes the song funny.

OUR EXPERTS:

Theo Cateforis

Associate professor, director of undergraduate studies in music history and cultures and director of undergraduate studies in fine arts, an expert in popular music



Ken Frieden

B.G. Rudolph Professor of Judaic Studies, teaches the courses Jewish Humor and Satire, and Humor, Irony and Political Satire



Stephanie Shirilan

Associate professor of English, has studied the use of comedy in early modern writing



“The shared joke only works if both sides find it funny. In order to make you laugh, you have to know what you’re laughing at.”

Ken Frieden

So, things become funny when they’re not what we expect?

TC: Parody is a good example because it plays on familiar conventions and tropes that are given an unexpected twist. This is *Spinal Tap* poked fun at the excess of rock masculinity and sexuality that had built up over the 1970s and early 1980s and was easy to laugh at. A song that immediately comes to mind is Weird Al Yankovic’s “Amish Paradise,” which is his parody of “Gangsta’s Paradise” by Coolio. Placing a rap song in an Amish community is an unexpected twist on a familiar convention that is able to draw laughs.

KF: The comedian John Mulaney has a great sketch about a horse loose in a hospital, which was a brilliant way of describing how people felt when Trump was president and no one knew what was going to happen next. “There’s never been a horse loose in a hospital before.” It was very effective because it was an unexpected metaphor.

SS: My first book was on Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, a 400-year-old medical text, that is often laugh-out-loud hilarious. While most of the book is what we might call “serious,” I do think there’s much in it that’s deliberately funny.

So, the element of surprise is an important component of humor?

TC: It goes back to the unexpected. In mainstream music, that could be as simple as clever wordplay, puns and metaphors, through absurdist lyrics, like the B-52s’ “Rock Lobster,” or the deadpan vocals used by the New Wave group The Flying Lizards in their cover of “Money.” It’s the juxtaposition and incongruity of knowing the original and hearing it done by a monotone British female singer that makes it humorous.

KF: Incongruity is a big element of stand-up—something out of the blue that’s not expected or a non sequitur. In my stand-up class, students always try to write transitions. I tell them they don’t need transitions because sometimes the lack of a transition is funny in itself. If you jump from one topic to another and it’s surprising, that in itself is a laugh.

Does sharing a joke with others make it funnier?

SS: Certainly, Shakespeare’s plays were written for a social setting on which the jokes absolutely depend. The pleasures of a “bad” joke capitalize on social energies and emotions that have to do with social norms. Live theater also makes seemingly silly things thrilling or wonderful in ways you would not expect adults to find pleasurable. Take, for instance, the myriad versions of disappearing and reappearing gags that seem like variations of peek-a-boo.

TC: A lot of the comedy that happens between music performers and listeners is in live settings, with the artist interacting with the audience. A heavy metal riff at a concert is not in itself funny unless it’s performed unexpectedly by a country artist, for example, as a musical joke. It all comes down to having an understanding of the artist and their references.

KF: The shared joke only works if both sides find it funny. In order to make you laugh, you have to know what you’re laughing at. I invited students to see a Jewish comedian who used a lot of Hebrew and Yiddish terminology. A lot of the non-Jews didn’t get it. Jewish humor actually evolved because Jews were outsiders and had a different perspective. Borscht Belt humor was specifically targeted to a Jewish audience.

Three professors are sitting around talking about humor. What's the punchline?

KF: Humor is truth told in jest.

TC: A great song can make you cry—sometimes tears of laughter.

SS: The line “The worst is not so long as we can say, ‘This is the worst’” in *King Lear* can be delivered as a statement of existential horror or as a Monty Pythonesque punchline. The latter is often much more moving. 🙌



FUNNY FLICKS

Planning your next movie night? Professor of English Will Scheibel, who specializes in English-language film, shares his top five favorite comedies.

ALAN PARTRIDGE

Declan Lowney, 2013

When Steve Coogan brought his satirical character from BBC television to the big screen, Alan Partridge assumed his toughest job yet—as a hostage negotiator.

THE HEARTBREAK KID

Elaine May, 1972

Newlywed nebbish Charles Grodin falls for Cybill Shepherd while honeymooning with Jeannie Berlin in one of the darkest, cringiest and funniest romantic comedies ever made.

REAL LIFE

Albert Brooks, 1979

A narcissistic documentary filmmaker (Brooks) attempts to film the “real” daily life of an ordinary American family. Uproarious antics ensue.

THIS IS SPINAL TAP

Rob Reiner, 1984

—TIE—

WAITING FOR GUFFMAN

Christopher Guest, 1996

Comedy doesn't get more well observed than this pair of “mockumentaries.” *Spinal Tap* pokes fun at aging rock bands, while *Guffman* skewers small-town community theater.

ED WOOD

Tim Burton, 1994

This biopic of the so-called “worst director of all time” could have been mean-spirited, but it's actually a sincere tribute, equal parts heartfelt and hilarious.

What Does Seventh-Generation Thinking Mean?

Indigenous values offer alternative roads to sustainability.



"Creation Story," a mural by Brandon Lazore at 113 Euclid, a gathering space for Native students and home to the CGIC.

"We want to make these concepts more understandable to a larger public and show there are intellectual and ethical resources that Indigenous communities offer by reaching back to our values."

Scott Manning Stevens

When Haudenosaunee gather for a meal or event, they begin with the Thanksgiving Address. "Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue," opens this statement of values, translated from the Mohawk version to English. "We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things."

"The Thanksgiving Address is a valuable act of remembering, and it is meant to have the opposite effect than taking something for granted," says Scott Manning Stevens, associate professor and director of the Center for Global Indigenous Cultures and Environmental Justice (CGIC) at the College of Arts and Sciences.

"It's meant to slow time down and produce mindfulness and keep attention on key values," he continues. "What does it really mean to pause and give thanks to all of the things that make our lives so much better?"

The answers not only broaden students' cultural literacy, but may help create a more just world as it faces existential questions amid the climate crisis and rampant inequality.

"We want to support those Indigenous societies that are trying to maintain their traditional values, much of which we now call sustainable practices," says Stevens, a citizen of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation. (The Haudenosaunee include the Mohawk Nation as well as the Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca and Tuscarora nations.)

The center was created as part of a three-year, \$1.5 million Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant to strengthen Indigenous studies at Syracuse University.

"We want to make these concepts more understandable to a larger public and show there are intellectual and ethical resources that Indigenous communities offer by reaching back to our values," Stevens says.

The center draws broadly from the rich culture of the Haudenosaunee, on whose ancestral land the University is located. Meanwhile, a diverse faculty that includes Percy Abrams, citizen of the Onondaga Nation; Melissa Chipman, who is of Cherokee descent; Mariaelena Huambachano, Quechua, Peru; Aaron Luedtke, Suquamish descent;

Danika Medak-Saltzman, citizen of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Nation; and guest speakers share perspectives from a variety of Indigenous communities.

Contributions from diverse Indigenous experts help students get firsthand descriptions of Native communities and their challenges. And the approach reinforces that not all Indigenous people are the same. “There are key concepts across cultures, but obviously there are different techniques among different people,” Stevens says. “We should be aware that one size does not fit all.”

A New Perspective for Students

The center aims to introduce students to a new way of thinking about broad issues like interconnectedness, equity, responsibility and respect. It then challenges students to apply broad Indigenous concepts to concrete practices, such as those related to climate change, land stewardship and sovereignty.

Ethical Land Use

Take ethical land use, for example. “Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer. Never take the first. Never take the last. Take only what you need,” Robin Kimmerer wrote in her bestselling book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Kimmerer, an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, is a SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry professor of biology with an appointment at the center.

“That sounds easy enough, but of course that is not the premise of capitalism, which is to take as much as you can and sell it back at a profit,” Stevens says, pointing to practices like fracking and extracting minerals that strip the land. Those actions, he said, typically enrich some people at the cost of irreparably damaging the land and displacing local communities.

“It is Western capitalist practices that got us in the situation we are in today and Indigenous values that could save us,” Stevens said. “We’re not saying we all should be living with so much less, but that there are different ways we can get what we need.”

One example is farming practices. Most Indigenous farmers practice intercropping—growing several species of plants together, rather than harvesting just one crop in a field. It’s not just that corn, beans and squash—the Haudenosaunee and Cherokee Three Sisters—taste delicious together, but they’re grown in a circle rather than a line because that’s how they grow best.

“Through long observation of nature and the way things work best over millennia, they recognized which plants are symbiotic with each other,” Stevens explains. “We now know the science that beans structurally pull nitrates out of the air and corn wants a nitro-rich environment and beans are bringing the nutrients. The beans grow up and do not hurt the stalks.



“[Food sovereignty] is more than meeting caloric needs. It encompasses a community’s autonomy and right to control its food systems, and includes spiritual nourishment, cultural history and long-term health.”

Mariaelena Huambachano (above)

The squash is ground cover and provides moisture and protects it from insects.”

Food Sovereignty

The center co-sponsored a conference on food sovereignty in 2023. Stevens explains the concept: “If political sovereignty is the recognized right to govern oneself, and linguistic sovereignty is the right to speak your own language, food sovereignty is the right to eat the foods your ancestors did...We don’t eat the same way as our ancestors because often we can’t.”

Huambachano, an Indigenous scholar, lived for many years in Aotearoa, the Indigenous name for New Zealand, and teaches courses including Food Fights and Treaty Rights, Indigenous Food Cosmologies and Reclaiming Indigenous Intellectual Sovereignty. Her new book, *Recovering Our Ancestral Foodways: Indigenous Traditions as a Recipe for Living Well*, was just released this past August by the University of California Press.

Food sovereignty “is more than meeting caloric needs,” Huambachano says. It encompasses a community’s autonomy and right to control its food systems, and includes spiritual





“We have to get together to think: How will this affect the Seventh Generation? It’s an act of imagination, not research. There is no data.... If you are in the Seventh Generation, what do you think about our decision?”

Scott Manning Stevens

nourishment, cultural history and long-term health, she says.

“Unfortunately,” she says, “environmental degradation, the loss of rights to ancestral fishing areas and hunting grounds, and the impacts of climate change and industrial food systems have eroded food sovereignty for many Indigenous communities. They can no longer grow and enjoy our ancestors’ gifts—food—and instead consume processed foods, with harmful effects on their health and well-being.”

Rematriation

Many traditional women’s roles and authority in Indigenous cultures “were eroded with the patriarchy that came with Christianity,” Stevens says. “Rematriation’s goal is to identify and reclaim that identity. It recognizes that our community is made up of all people and all people have something to give.” In 2023, Huambachano organized “Rematriating Well-Being: Indigenous Foodways, Sovereignty and Sowing Seeds of Hope for Tomorrow,” a symposium that brought together Māori, Quechua and Onondaga women leading the Indigenous food sovereignty movement.

Today, the center is collaborating with the Haudenosaunee women-led organization Rematriation to present the conference Haudenosaunee & Indigenous Matrilineality Feb. 28-March 2. Rematriation’s founder, Michelle Shenandoah G’19, is a traditional member of the Wolf Clan of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and a Syracuse College of Law professor affiliated with CGIC. Through film production, digital content creation and community engagement, Rematriation focuses on uplifting Indigenous women’s voices and reclaiming their place in the world.

The spring symposium’s theme also parallels CGIC’s mission: to share principles of Haudenosaunee and Indigenous matrilineal knowledge to address critical global challenges. “We acknowledge this moment in our world and the necessity to share what we know about the important role of women to return balance in our connection to Mother Earth and for everyone’s survival,” Shenandoah says.

For the Seventh Generation

The center’s focus is timely and relevant as we face the existential threats of climate change, Stevens says. The Western view, rooted in the Old Testament, favors “dominion” over the land (Genesis 1:26-28). The Indigenous view generally sees nature and the land as things to live well with, as the Thanksgiving Address reminds us.

“Our relationship to land has much more to do with responsibility than rights. It’s not my right to tear it up because I own it, or I own it so I’m going to frack it. There’s something about the Western tradition that is very short-sighted: We’re going to move forward and create progress and if it creates problems, we can fix it with progress.”

The Haudenosaunee concept of the Seventh Generation (considering the welfare of seven generations into the future before taking any action) “makes us be responsible,” Stevens says. “Should we allow this dam or road to be put in our territory? We have to get together to think: How will this affect the Seventh Generation? It’s an act of imagination, not research. There is no data. It looks good right now to have that road. If you are in the Seventh Generation, what do you think about our decision?”

He does not expect the center itself to solve the big, ethical questions around land use, technology and environmental degradation. Nor does he want students to see Western and Indigenous practices as binary perspectives completely at odds with each other.

“I see the passion of our students for a better world,” he says. “I want to make sure part of their University experience makes this perspective appealing and knowable and recognize there’s another way to do business. It can make the business better.” 🍌

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Creative Climate Action

Thinking about the enormous actions needed to address the grand challenge of climate change can seem overwhelming. But A&S faculty are finding creative ways to reimagine, rethink and restore the resources around us. Go underground with three researchers as they contribute to a better understanding and potential solutions for our planet.

There are 120,000 documented orphaned oil and gas wells in the United States and hundreds of thousands more undocumented ones, all leaking contaminants into the air and water.



Orphaned oil well pump in a farm field. (Inset) Tao Wen.

Reimagining Abandoned Wells as Renewable Energy Sites

Many American rural areas harbor forgotten sources of pollution underground, stranded assets of the fossil-fuel industry that moved on. There are 120,000 documented orphaned oil and gas wells in the United States and hundreds of thousands more undocumented ones. Abandoned wells can leak airborne methane, a potent greenhouse gas. They can release methane into groundwater and streams, mobilizing toxic elements such as arsenic. As the world shifts increasingly to renewable energy, many marginal or increasingly unproductive wells could become newly orphaned ones.

“Abandoned wells are a problem because there are no legal parties responsible for them,” says Tao Wen, a hydrogeochemist and assistant professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences.

“The majority were drilled and constructed decades ago under a different standard,” adds Wen. “The original owners have moved on. Now the bill for fixing them is paid with taxpayers’ money.”

Wen collaborated with a team of scientists to assess air and water quality problems associated with orphaned and abandoned wells and their impacts on rural communities. The team’s study was published in *Environmental Research Letters*, laying out environmental risks and opportunities of remediation strategies and information that still needs to be gathered.

But Wen also sees this crisis of orphaned wells as an opportunity to address climate change.

“If we want to remove carbon dioxide from the air and store it in the subsurface, many of these wells could be potential places to sequester it,” says Wen. “You could use wells as injection channels for carbon dioxide, which could react with rock to form a [hard] carbonate” underground such as limestone.

Furthermore, orphaned well sites could be used for geothermal energy production and hydrogen storage for electric generation. The land around orphaned wells could be used to produce wind power turbines and electricity generation facilities.

Rethinking Fungi’s Role in Forest Health

A nutrient-rich microbial network spreads beneath New York state’s diverse woodlands, where trees of many different species share the same root fungi. Climate change, though, is expected to stress these forests and their fungal symbiotic organisms with hotter temperatures and more intense and frequent droughts.

Trees draw carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. Plants use photosynthesis to produce carbon needed for tree growth. Fungi acquire carbon in the form of sugars from their tree hosts, and in response, they provide the trees with nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous.

New York woodlands anchor a vast region where two major ecosystems—boreal and temperate—overlap and mix in a transition zone. The boreal-temperate zone sweeps west from New England, across lands bordering the Great Lakes into northern Minnesota. The boreal ecosystem is the globe’s



Amanita muscaria, an ectomycorrhizal fungus. These fungi play an important role in forest health and may be in danger under current levels of climate warming. (Inset) Christopher Fernandez.

farthest-north forests. The temperate ecosystem is the next major one to the south.

Needle-leaved boreal evergreens such as jack pine and spruce thrive in New York, although they are more dominant farther north. New York forests also have many deciduous temperate hardwoods such as oaks and maples that are more dominant farther south.

A research team from Syracuse University and the University of Minnesota conducted an experiment exposing boreal and temperate tree species to warming and drought treatments to learn how fungi and their tree hosts respond to climate change.

The study, led by Christopher W. Fernandez, assistant professor of biology, was published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The researchers found that drier soils driven by drought and warmer temperatures associated with a global temperature rise of 3 degrees Celsius altered types of root fungi. Fungi with more limited ranges prevailed.

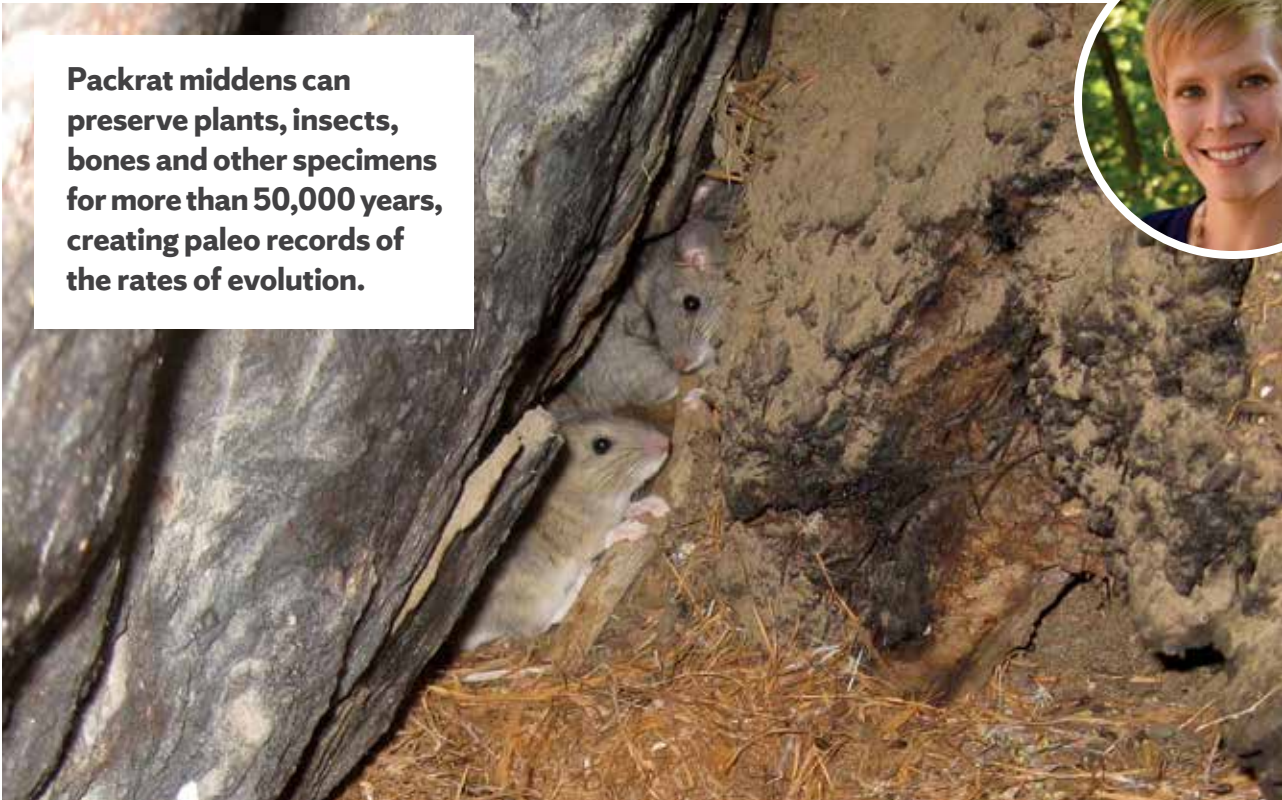
“In moister soil conditions, more photosynthesis occurs, and plants have more carbon to allocate to fungi with longer distance exploration strategies,” says Fernandez. “Adding drought and elevated temperatures to the system, the plants are not photosynthesizing as much carbon, so they have less carbon to allocate to mycorrhizal fungi. And we think that has cascading effects on the type of fungi that are colonizing the roots.”

Boreal species in New York are especially vulnerable to climate change because they are colder-winter plants surviving at the more southern edge of their native range.

“Given the challenges we face with climate change going forward, it’s important to understand, appreciate and protect these important but fragile symbioses so we can develop management strategies,” says Fernandez.



Packrat middens can preserve plants, insects, bones and other specimens for more than 50,000 years, creating paleo records of the rates of evolution.



Neotoma rodents (packrats) in a nest, also known as a midden, at City of Rocks National Reserve in Idaho. (Inset) Katie Becklin.

Restoring Knowledge of Ancient Middens

Hidden among caves and other sheltered places in many semi-arid regions are ancient rodent nests, which some scientists use as data libraries for studying past climate changes and evolutionary and ecological processes.

Packrats, also known as woodrats, are the original hoarders, collecting materials from their environment to make their nests, called middens. In deserts throughout western North America, for instance, packrat middens can preserve plants, insects, bones and other specimens for more than 50,000 years, offering scientists a snapshot into the past.

“If we can look at midden records from thousands of years ago, we can see periods when organisms had more time than today to respond to climate change,” says Katie Becklin, assistant professor of biology. She is lead author of a prospectus paper published in *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, calling for improved preservation of middens, new research in existing archives and a revival of field studies.

Packrats and numerous other rodent species gather plants, insects, bones and other items into their nests from a radius of about 50 feet and urinate over them. The urine dries and crystallizes, hardening the nests into rock-like masses and preserving the items inside.

Ancient rodent middens have allowed scientists to reconstruct the ecology and climate of semi-arid ecosystems in the Americas, Australia, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. These natural time capsules are unparalleled archives for observing how plant, animal and microbial species and assemblages have responded over millennia as environmental conditions have changed.

Researchers have learned from the fossil record how paleo populations of plants and animals were impacted by climate change, which can provide clues about how populations might respond to modern increasingly rapid disruptions.

“How well did certain species keep up with these changes? Were they able to migrate? Were they able to adapt evolutionarily? What contexts allowed species adaptation or migration to happen? How much time did it take? We need the longer perspective offered by paleo records to understand rates of evolution,” says Becklin.

Midden research into climate’s impacts on ecological and evolutionary change, however, has limitations.

“We can’t control for every variable that might be important in determining how past climate affected a particular organism or system,” says Becklin. “That’s where modern experiments can help us by controlling different factors and using the scientific process, so we could tease apart important drivers of evolution.”

By combining findings from paleo studies and modern experiments, scientists can understand both fossil environments and current ones and the evolutionary links between them.

“Paleo populations experienced changing climate conditions that exerted evolutionary pressures that selected for certain traits,” says Becklin. “Those climate pressures determined traits that we see today. How organisms respond to climate change now and in the future belongs to a longer history of their experiences in the past.” 🍌

SAFEGUARDING A SYRACUSE WATERWAY

What is behind the significant fluctuations of an urban stream in the City of Syracuse?

Wen is working on another water quality project, this time in urban streams, with a long-term aim to make Syracuse a climate-resilient community.

The Great Lakes region is expected to experience less snow, more rain and more extreme precipitation events as the climate changes. That means more flooding, which typically causes water contamination, especially in urban areas. Urban streams often lack vegetation along their banks and floodplains that can absorb pollutants from the waters and protect water quality.

Wen is collaborating with members of a community partner, Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today, to safeguard some Syracuse neighborhoods from urban flooding and water quality issues.

For about a year, Wen and community members have manually collected water quality and quantity data to survey the baseline status of City Line Brook, which flows through the disadvantaged Valley community on the South Side of the City of Syracuse.

Wen is working with community volunteers to install sensors to collect data for a hydrological model, which includes water level, temperature, conductivity and other water parameters.

“When we know the condition of this urban stream, we can build a model to project water quantity and water quality conditions in the future as the climate continues to warm,” says Wen.

“When we know the condition of this urban stream, we can build a model to project water quantity and water quality conditions in the future as the climate continues to warm.”

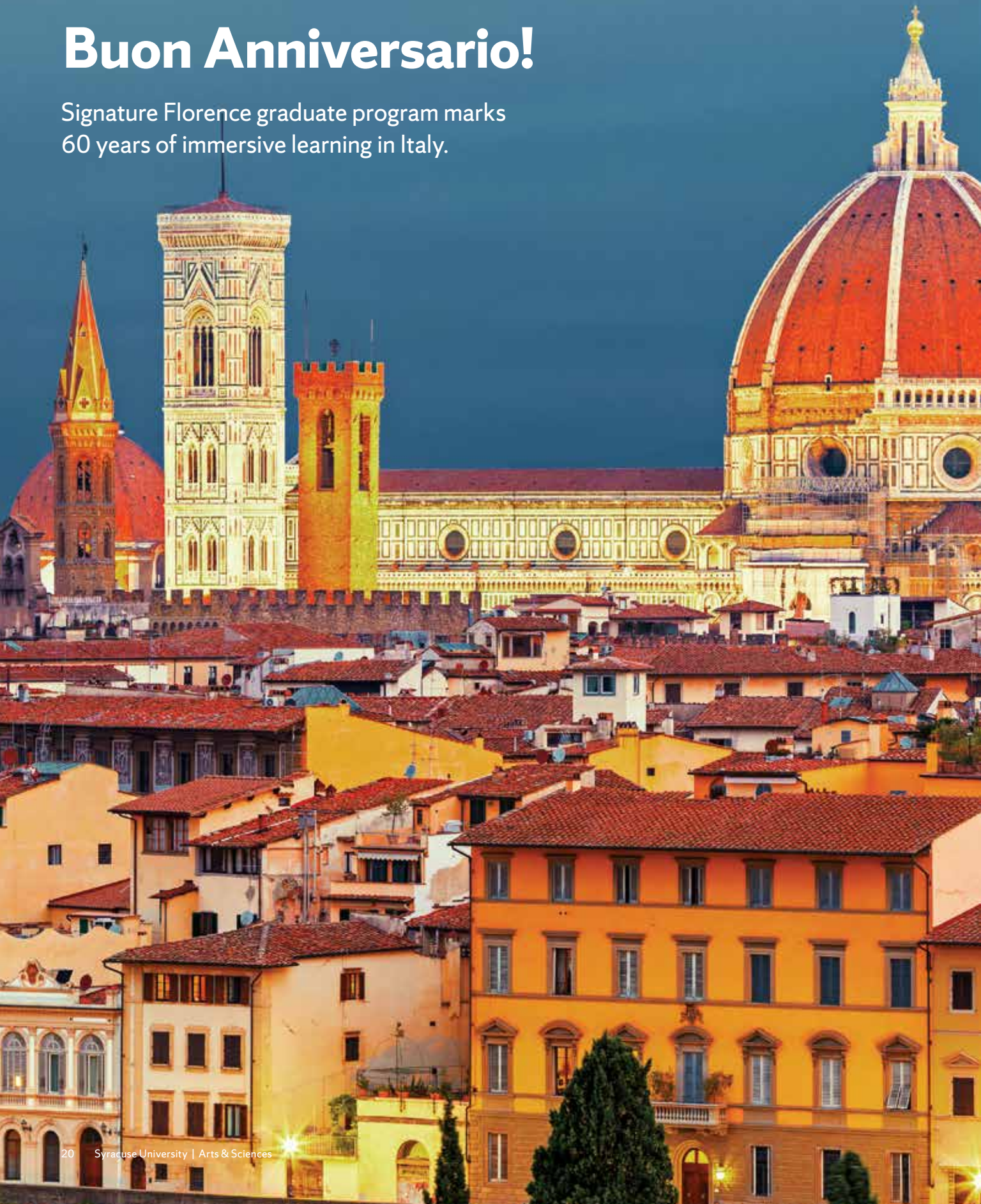
Tao Wen



Professor Tao Wen (right) discussing the water quality at City Line Brook with Kathleen Stribley (left), professor emerita from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and student researcher Aamna Khan '26 (center).

Buon Anniversario!

Signature Florence graduate program marks
60 years of immersive learning in Italy.



For M.A. art history students, the city of Florence is an unsurpassed classroom, immersing them in some of the most storied art in the world. Since 1964, the Florence Graduate Program in Italian Renaissance Art has been preparing students to earn their degree while developing the skills and knowledge to go on to earn a doctoral degree or leading position in academia, museums, library sciences, art conservation, tourism or architecture.

The Florence program is the oldest M.A. art history program accredited in the United States in which most of the study is offered in Italy. This year, the program celebrates its 60th anniversary and will host a pair of events that will showcase the program's rich history and enduring excellence.

Taking the Learning to the Source

Florence is home to some of the Renaissance's most notable works, including Michelangelo's *David* and Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. "The Italian Renaissance is a period that holds perennial appeal," says Professor Sally Cornelison, director of the Florence Graduate Program in Italian Renaissance Art. "You might think that there's nothing else to say about an artist like Michelangelo, but there's always more to say, and our students are saying those things."

Seminars are led by internationally recognized scholars and conservators, and the program offers field study opportunities in museums and important archives. It culminates with a symposium at which students publicly present their research.

Isaac Messina '14, G'17, who now works as an assistant paintings conservator at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, credits the program with fueling his interest in art conservation.

"The program includes a history of conservation seminar, and also conservation work is so visible during everyday life in Florence—walking by scaffolding in a piazza for the restoration of an outdoor sculpture or in a church for the restoration of a fresco," he says. Indeed, Messina assisted a conservator on a large-scale chapel fresco conservation project while he was in Italy.

Julie James G'17, a lecturer in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Washington University in St. Louis, says the Florence graduate program positioned her for success in academia.

"The Florence Program enabled me to fully embrace and experience the Italian Renaissance through art, literature and language," she says. "It prepared me for my doctoral work, and I also got my first publication through the program. My M.A. symposium paper was published as an article in the *Sixteenth Century Journal* in 2021."

Giving Back to the Next Generation of Art Historians

Carol Bullard G'67, Ph.D. '73 was in one of the Florence program's first cohorts of graduate students. She says the rigorous nature of the program prepared her to tackle hurdles throughout her career teaching art history and later as an administrator in higher education.

"I learned so much while I was in Florence, and I absorbed everything like a sponge," she says. "Getting to work with world-renowned scholars had a profound effect on my career and is something I always carried with me."

Bullard was so moved by her time in Florence that she established and endowed The Abraham Veinus and William Fleming Founders Fund in 2021. The fund is named for the two founders of the program, in recognition of their vision and commitment to giving students like Bullard a life-changing educational experience. "I hope this fund empowers many students to experience the transformative benefits of the Florence program," Bullard says.

The Florence Graduate Program will celebrate its six decades with a reception at Lubin House in New York City on October 25 and at its annual graduate symposium in Florence on December 6. 🍷



(From top) Students getting up close and personal with a masterpiece during their studies in Italy; Carol Bullard G'67, Ph.D. '73 with Luca della Robbia's Cantoria; and statue of Michelangelo's David.

New Fund Supports Psychology Students, Honors Beloved Professor

For more than 30 years, Vernon “Vern” Hall, professor emeritus of psychology, took a special interest in fostering research and learning opportunities for students at Syracuse University.

Among them was Danny Kaye G’76, Ph.D. ’77, who worked alongside Hall in the late 1970s. Now, Kaye is honoring Vern by establishing the Professor Vernon C. Hall Endowed Psychology Scholarship. This fund will support undergraduates majoring in psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences through Syracuse University’s Forever Orange campaign. Kaye wants to pass along the spirit of Vernon Hall’s mentoring to today’s students, so they can succeed in whatever field they choose.

A Leader in Psychology

Hall came to Syracuse University in 1966 after teaching at the University of Nebraska and SUNY Buffalo. At Syracuse, he would serve on the faculty of the Department of Psychology for over 30 years before retiring in 1999. Hall’s record of teaching, departmental leadership and service to the

University have made a lasting impact on the success of SU and the student experience.

Hall was a proponent of experiential learning and would encourage his students to pursue research opportunities in local schools to help them bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

“As a way of giving back to public schools that supported my research, I developed a program that gave experience credit to students for working with underprivileged elementary school pupils in Syracuse,” says Hall.

Among the many students whose community-engaged research he sponsored were well-known basketball players Roosevelt Bouie ’80 and the late Louis Orr ’80. Hall also mentored more than a dozen Ph.D. students, many of whom later achieved success in psychology and various other industries, with one of them being Danny Kaye.

Kaye and Hall collaborated on several research studies at Syracuse. After graduating in 1977, Kaye remained at the University for two years as an acting assistant professor before taking a postdoctoral research position at Yale and then moving out west to teach at UCLA.

VERNON HALL SERVICE SNAPSHOT

Professor, 1966-1999

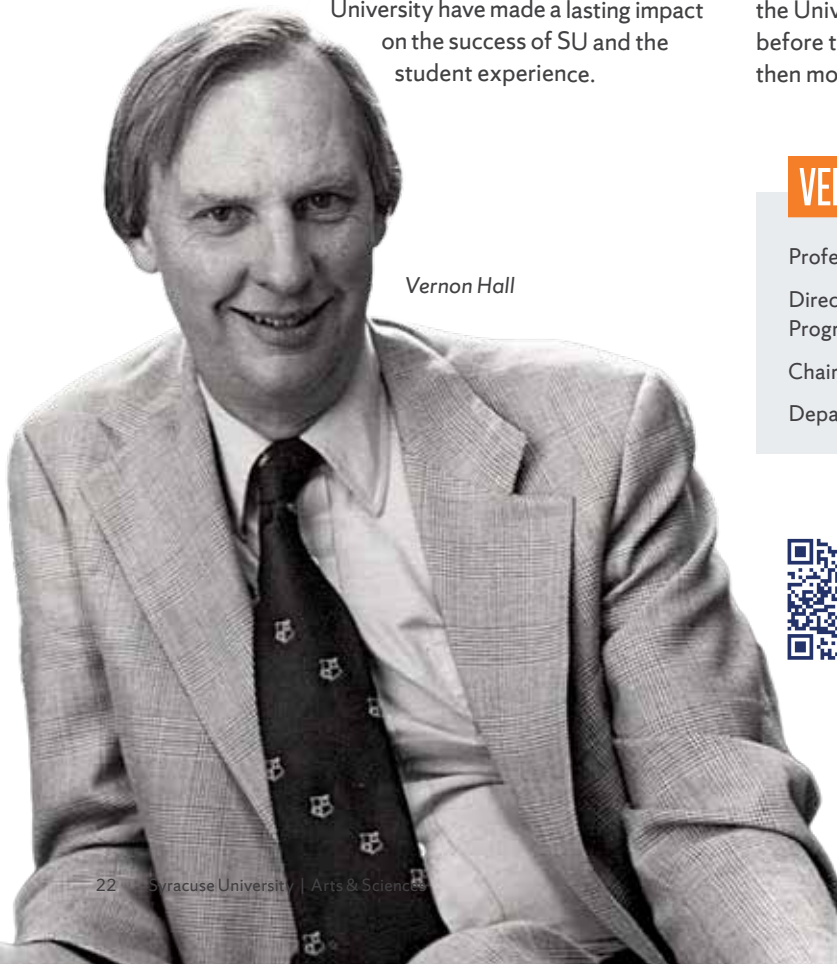
Director of the Educational Psychology Graduate Training Program (1973-95)

Chair of Undergraduate Advising for Psychology (1975-80)

Department Chair of Psychology (1981-96)



Scan the QR code to give to the Professor Vernon C. Hall Endowed Psychology Scholarship fund.



Vernon Hall



Hall's mentorship and encouragement of creativity led Danny Kaye to a career that included co-founding the Fox Innovation Lab. This photo shows Kaye accepting the lab's induction into the Variety Home Entertainment & Digital Hall of Fame in 2017.

The Freedom to Flourish

Kaye's interest in applied research and technology would eventually prompt him to switch gears professionally and shift from education to the business sector.

In the late 1990s, after stints at Mattel Toys, Applause and Universal Studios, he accepted a position with 20th Century Fox. He co-founded the Fox Innovation Lab, which was 20th Century Fox's research and development center established to drive the advancement of groundbreaking technology and new consumer experiences.

Kaye says his career successes stem from the creativity instilled in him at Syracuse working with Hall.

"That's one of the reasons I'm establishing this fund in Vern's name because it was a great opportunity he gave me," Kaye says. "While I was at Syracuse, Vern allowed me to pursue whatever I wanted research-wise, and that idea of allowing others to flourish creatively stuck with me forever."

Scott Brown Ph.D. '80, another one of Hall's students and now a distinguished professor emeritus of educational psychology at the University of Connecticut, echoes that sentiment.

"The training and mentoring I received from Vern had a powerful and long-lasting impact on me, both personally and professionally," says Brown. "I owe much of my own career to what Vernon taught me during my graduate studies, and I have passed along his wisdom to my own students."

After graduating from Syracuse, Jane Steinberg G'78, Ph.D. '80, another student of Hall's, held many leadership roles with the National Institutes of Health and retired as the director of extramural activities at the National Institute of Mental Health in 2015. She says it was all made possible thanks to Hall's mentorship.

"Vern rescued me from my dreary master's work and introduced me to exploring real-world problems," Steinberg says. "He spent hours poring over my coffee-stained printouts and rethinking approaches with intensity and humor. His generosity in mentoring guided me through graduate school and my career, for which I am terrifically grateful."

With this new scholarship, Kaye aims to honor Hall's enduring legacy of supporting undergraduate psychology students at Syracuse.

"This scholarship might allow a student that otherwise wouldn't have the luxury of pursuing unique avenues of research to have a meaningful opportunity like I had, and I don't think there's a better way to honor Vern," says Kaye. 🙏



1986 photo of psychology Professor Emeritus Vernon Hall (standing, center) and his students. Danny Kaye G'76, Ph.D. '77 (seated, second from right, holding sign) has established a scholarship in Hall's honor which will support undergraduate psychology students. Also pictured, from left to right, are Scott Brown Ph.D. '80; Alan Kraut G'75, Ph.D. '77; Jane Steinberg G'78, Ph.D. '80; Marc Baron G'75, Ph.D. '78; and George Rebok G'76, Ph.D. '77.

"Vern rescued me from my dreary master's work and introduced me to exploring real-world problems."

Jane Steinberg G'78, Ph.D. '80



PSYCHOLOGY MAKES A BIG MOVE

The Department of Psychology recently moved from its previous residence in Huntington Hall to the Marley Education Center. The space provides a centralized location for faculty and students in psychology to teach, learn and conduct research in a collaborative environment, instead of going to separate locations across campus.

Hover your smartphone's camera over this code to take a tour of Marley.



Shortening ‘Bench to Bedside’ Time

Walters Endowed Fund for Science Research supports discovery in global and human health.

Doctoral students in clinical psychology Alexa Deyo and Alison Vrabec spent their summer testing a theory that a certain kind of therapeutic technique called motivational interviewing could improve sleep and overall health among adolescents. According to the National Institutes of Health, sleep problems can impact how people learn, think and get along with others. “If teens are sleeping better, their mental health is improved, they are more emotionally regulated and less impulsive,” says Katie Kidwell, assistant professor of psychology, who is supervising the clinical research.

Their research is exactly the kind of promising work that alumni Kathy Walters ’73 and her husband, Stan ’72, had in mind when they set up the Walters Endowed Fund for Science Research in 2016. According to Kathy Walters, they were hoping to create new opportunities for research that would benefit humanity.

stellar faculty, so they can contribute their enormous expertise to solving challenges in the environment and climate, health and wellness, social justice and human thriving.”

The fund has supported research by graduate students in physics, chemistry, biology and psychology. “Thanks to Kathy and Stan Walters, I was able to spend the summer of 2023 in the



Kathy Walters ’73 (above), and her husband, Stan ’72, established a fund to support science research.

lab full time,” says Favour Chukwudumebi Ononiwu, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in cell biology.

“Bench to bedside research” like this takes years of toil at the “bench” in the lab to reach the “bedside” where people can benefit. Deyo and Vrabec were able to accelerate the launch of their sleep study this past summer, recruiting a significant number of teens aged 13 to 17.

The intent of their research, of course, is to help teens and college students problem-solve and deal with stressors that impact their well-being. The research aligns with Kathy Walters’ sensitivity to the impact of stress on health. “The world is moving at such a rapid pace that it’s difficult for people to prioritize and focus amidst the change and anxiety,” says Walters. “Helping faculty and students make the most of opportunities to improve health and humanity remains our priority.”

“We are so grateful to Kathy and Stan for their generosity and vision in establishing this fund,” says John Quigley, A&S assistant dean for advancement. “We hope others who are similarly passionate about academic and research excellence at the University will follow suit.” 🙌

“Thanks to Kathy and Stan Walters, I was able to spend the summer of 2023 in the lab full time.”

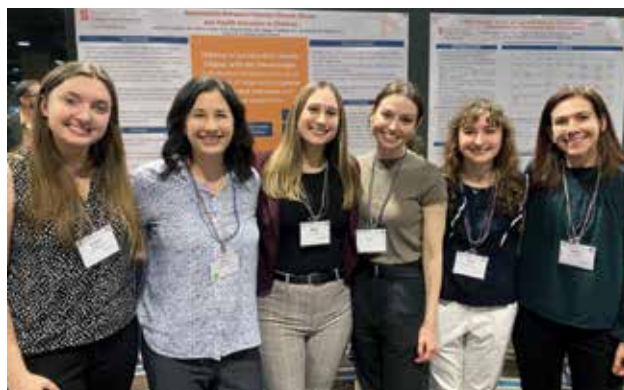
Favour Chukwudumebi Ononiwu



“Researchers tend to see things that those of us not immersed in science would never see,” says Walters. “I’m not a big believer in telling capable people what they should be researching.”

The funding is awarded at the discretion of the A&S dean and associate dean of research to recognize outstanding research faculty. “With Kathy and Stan’s gift,” says A&S Dean Behzad Mortazavi, “we can invest in more of our

Professor Katie Kidwell (second from left) with members of the Child Health Lab, including graduate students (from left) Toni Hamilton, Alison Vrabec, Lyric Tully, Alexa Deyo and Megan Milligan.

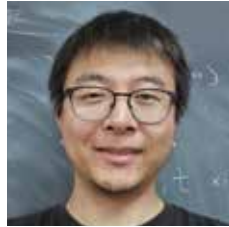


Meet the New Faculty

12 professors joined A&S this fall.



Christopher Bousquet
Visiting Assistant Teaching Professor, Philosophy



Shukai Du
Assistant Professor, Mathematics



Katie Duchscherer
Assistant Teaching Professor, Psychology



Ellen Hebden
Assistant Professor, Art and Music Histories



Lynne Henry
Assistant Teaching Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders



Colm Kelleher
Assistant Professor, Physics



Alexander Maloney
Kathy and Stan Walters Endowed Professor of Quantum Science; Director, Institute for Quantum and Information Science, Physics



Jessica Mejia
Assistant Professor, Earth and Environmental Sciences



Shahar Sukenik
Assistant Professor, Chemistry



Britt Tevis
Phyllis Backer Professor of Jewish Studies and Assistant Professor of History (Maxwell)



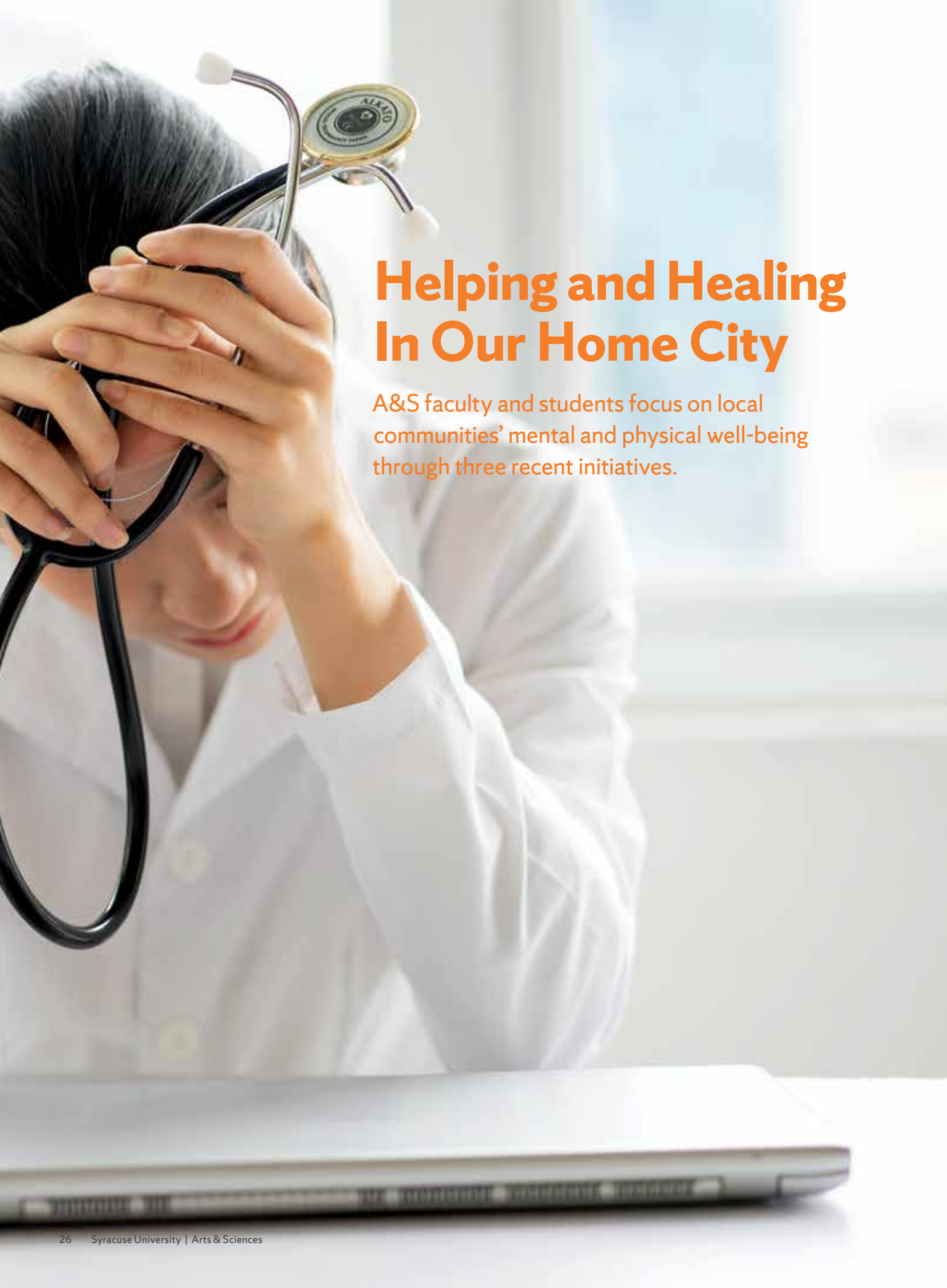
Elizabeth Tollar
Assistant Teaching Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders



Jiwoon Yulee
Assistant Teaching Professor, Women's and Gender Studies



Hover over this code with your smartphone's camera for a link to more information about these new faculty members.



Helping and Healing In Our Home City

A&S faculty and students focus on local communities' mental and physical well-being through three recent initiatives.

WRITING AN IDENTITY

Developing marketable job skills is important for the formerly incarcerated. Project Mend, an online and print magazine of works by people impacted by the criminal justice system, encourages participants to stretch their writing skills and allows them to write into new identities.

Writing and rhetoric professor Patrick W. Berry, Project Mend founder, says, “We wanted to create a space for that, to not always have their identity trace back to prison.”

Participants come to campus to work on Mend magazine and receive stipends for their work. “The year ends with the published issue,” says Berry. “This initiative creates a space where those impacted can engage with humanities programming through a paid apprenticeship, while learning practical skills in publishing and editing.”

Professor Patrick W. Berry (right) with members of the 2023 Project Mend team including Brian T. Shaw (left), Troy White (back) and Fátima Bings Martínez '24 (center).



HEALING THE HEALERS

People who experience traumas or catastrophic events can become overwhelmed emotionally and physically.

To help Syracuse-area social and health care workers boost their mental and physical resilience, writing and rhetoric professor Lenny Grant founded the Resilience Writing Project, which teaches workshops on the health benefits of expressive writing.

“Every day, these workers help people who are having the worst days of their lives,” says Grant. “They sometimes don’t have the time to care for themselves.”

The process of writing makes a person slow down and create a narrative about their own experience.

“That’s when healing happens,” says Grant. “Traumatic events often leave us with a whirlwind of unresolved emotions, images and thoughts. The expressive writing process helps us to examine those feelings and memories closely. Through writing, we can take something that didn’t make sense before and make meaning of it.”



SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

A pair of initiatives in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) is responding to the health needs of some Central New Yorkers.

Nationwide, clinicians are feeling under-prepared in serving U.S. refugee populations.

In response, CSD launched SOAR (Supporting Outcomes and Healthcare Access for Refugees), led by CSD professors Jamie Desjardins and Stephanie McMillen. It trains future speech language pathologists and audiologists about the health care needs and challenges that New Americans encounter.

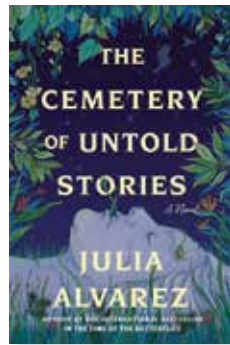
CSD also teamed up with Special Olympics New York to provide athletes with hearing screenings. Through this experience, students gained familiarity working with a population of adults they may have less exposure to in their clinical education. 🙌

Through SOAR, students took part in live-action scenarios, learning how to provide linguistically and culturally sensitive clinical services.



A&S Bookshelf

Thinking of books as holiday gifts? A&S faculty and Department of English alumni have you covered!



The Cemetery of Untold Stories

A Novel

Julia Alvarez G'75

Whose stories get to be told, and whose buried? Julia Alvarez reminds us that the stories of our lives are never truly finished, even at the end.

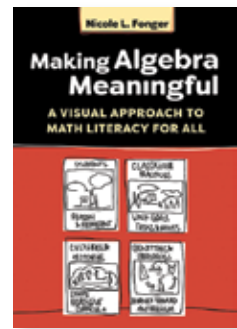


A Sense of Arrival

Kevin Adonis Browne

Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric

A singular meditation on the art of Caribbeanness, *A Sense of Arrival* is a statement on how the Black Caribbean self comes to be.



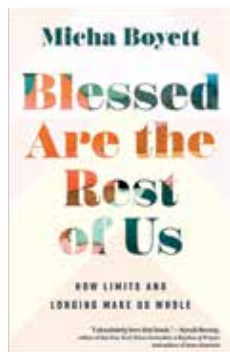
Making Algebra Meaningful

A Visual Approach to Math Literacy for All

Nicole L. Fonger

Associate Professor of Mathematics

Award-winning researcher Nicole Fonger addresses how to support all learners in experiencing algebra as meaningful.

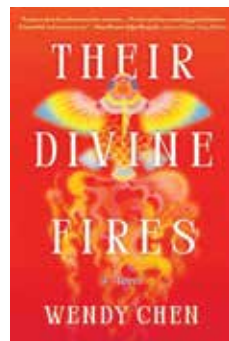


Blessed Are the Rest of Us

How Limits and Longing Make Us Whole

Micha Boyett G'05

Beautifully reassuring and liberating, this book calls readers to rest in God's rich and abundant love.



Their Divine Fires

A Novel

Wendy Chen G'17

Wendy Chen's debut novel tells the story of the love affairs of three generations of Chinese women across 100 years of revolutions both political and personal.



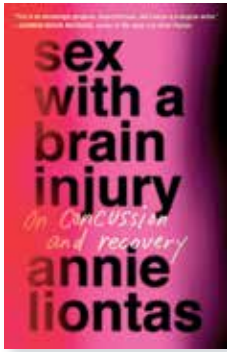
Dumb Luck & Other Poems

Christine Kitano G'10

These poems delve into how questions of selfhood and identity for a gendered and racialized body take on greater urgency during times of increased social unrest, panic and violence.

Scan the QR code to find more books by creative writing alumni.





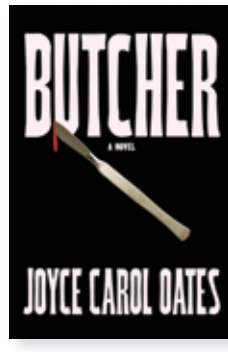
Sex with a Brain Injury
On Concussion and Recovery
Annie Liontas G'13

A powerful and deeply personal memoir in essays that sheds light on the silent epidemic of head trauma.



Feeding the Ghosts
Poems
Rahul Mehta G'03

This debut poetry collection is a magnificent celebration of our own ordinary yet miraculous daily lives—an acknowledgement of the “messy beauty... ugly beauty” in the world.



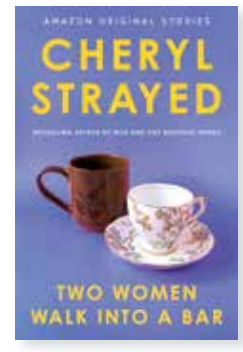
Butcher
A Novel
Joyce Carol Oates '60

In this harrowing story based on authentic historical documents, we follow the career of Dr. Silas Weir, “father of gyno-psychiatry,” as he ascends from professional anonymity to national renown.



Last Acts
A Novel
Alexander Sammartino '15, G'18

A riotous, irreverent yet big-hearted debut novel about a broke father-son duo who go all-in on some of America’s deadliest obsessions.



Two Women Walk into a Bar
Cheryl Strayed G'02

Cheryl Strayed, the bestselling author of *Wild* and *Tiny Beautiful Things*, finds humor and connection in a poignant short memoir about love, family secrets and reconciliation. 🍷

PODCASTS & SHOWS



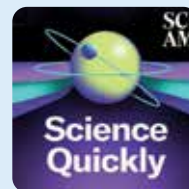
A&S Alumni Academy
Gain new and exciting perspectives as A&S faculty from various departments present their research and discuss how it intersects with current affairs.



The Interview
Pop singer Dua Lipa interviewed Professor of English George Saunders G'88 as part of her book club's October focus on his bestselling work, *Lincoln in the Bardo*.



The Roundtable
Native American and Indigenous Studies professor Scott Manning Stevens speaks about the exhibit he curated at the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, “Native Prospects: Indigeneity and Landscape.”



Scientific American
Kathleen Corrado, executive director of the Forensic and National Security Sciences Institute, speaks on the episode “How Forensic Breakthroughs Are Still Helping Identify 9/11 Victims Today.”



Twenty Thousand Hertz
Research by biology professor Susan Parks is featured in the episode Silent Sea. The episode discusses the impact of underwater noise pollution on whale survival.

In the Headlines

A&S faculty put news, science and culture into perspective, so individuals and policy makers can make better decisions.

**“After Eclipse:
Nature’s next big show—
cicada double emergence”** ↘

ABC News | April 8, 2024

“Most of the time we think about them as being kind of annoying and something that we don’t want to interact with, and we tend to ignore them. But it’s pretty fantastic to see this many insects that have been hidden in the ground that emerge all at once.”

David Althoff, associate professor of biology



“Mona Awad on reading horror, fairytales, and children’s books”

The Boston Globe | May 16, 2024

“I got into scary stuff through my interest in the fantastic, which I had at a very young age with fairy tales, which have these creepy elements. Then I was a child of the ’80s, when slasher movies were a big deal. I think that definitely planted a seed. In my early teens, I loved Lois Duncan and Stephen King. Edgar Allen Poe was one of my first loves.”

Mona Awad, professor of English and bestselling author of four books including *Bunny*, *All’s Well*, *13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl* and *Rouge*



“What it takes to build a next-generation observatory”

Digital Trends | January 27, 2024

“It’s on some level a service to the next generation of physicists. But also, when you sit down and see what’s possible with these machines—that you can build something that sees every black hole right back to the very first stars, that you can observe phenomena from stellar size objects that are in these galaxies that even the Webb telescope has trouble resolving—not trying to do that would be almost a crime.”

Stefan Ballmer, professor of physics and inaugural director of the Center for Gravitational Wave Astronomy and Astrophysics



Scan the QR code to check out AA&S' latest media hits.

“Examining the history and legacy of the Black church in America”

Spectrum News | February 27, 2024

“Spirituals (songs of hope) have a way of saying that this reality that slave owners are creating—it’s supposed to be your whole reality until death—is not true, and you do have value; you have mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and people who are not your blood, [who] can be your people because you value human life.”

Joan Bryant, associate professor of African American studies

“Solar Eclipse Warning Issued to Pet Owners”

Newsweek | April 4, 2024

“How will pets, other animals react to the solar eclipse?”

The Boston Globe | March 25, 2024

“Researchers have found that most animals react to a solar eclipse by beginning their nighttime routines as totality approaches. Common animal vocalists in evening choruses, such as frogs and crickets, may begin singing, while animals that vocalize during the daytime, such as most cicadas, may stop.”

Austin Garner, assistant professor of biology



“The Earth Unlocked: Syracuse University Lava Project”

The Weather Channel | June 2024

“You can observe all the tiny details of what’s going on as the lava flows without worrying that you’re in the midst of a big eruption...In many lava flows, there’s a hope that barriers can be built or that water can be used to slow down the lava flow and to at least deflect its path. I think we’re moving toward a better understanding of how that lava behaves.”

Jeffrey A. Karson, professor emeritus of Earth and environmental sciences



“Isolation, Loneliness are Major Mortality Risk Factors for People with Obesity”

Healthline | January 25, 2024

“I think (a practical intervention is one) that is motivating adolescents, youth and adults as well, to get engaged in an activity and in their community. To feel like they’re a part of something, to feel like they’re a part of a community.”

Katie Kidwell, assistant professor of psychology

A&S Updates



Protecting Marine Life Through Acoustic Monitoring

What are the links between whale communication and behavior? This data is important to help scientists refine future conservation efforts. Members of biology professor Susan Parks' lab are using a novel method of simultaneous acoustic tagging to find out.

A suction cup sound and movement tag is being deployed on the back of a humpback whale in Massachusetts. These tags allow researchers to track movement and audio of individual whales. (NMFS Permit # 27272-01/SBNMS/Parks). (Inset) Julia Zeh, left, and Valeria Perez during a field research trip off the coast of Massachusetts. Both Zeh and Perez are Ph.D. candidates in biology and members of Professor Susan Parks' lab. (Courtesy: Julia Zeh)

New Study Abroad Program for Science and Pre-Health Majors

Studying abroad was long just a dream for many science and pre-health students, given their majors' strict course sequence requirements. But it's now a reality with Health and Science in Madrid, a new program that provides a strong cross-cultural experience while ensuring on-time graduation. A&S participants will graduate with a keen edge for careers in today's multicultural and multinational hospitals, labs, pharmaceutical companies and board rooms.





Better Climate Forecasting to Safeguard Lives and Property

With climate change causing increased torrential rainfall in the eastern United States, better modeling is critical so populations and policymakers can be prepared. The National Science Foundation awarded a three-year grant to Thonis Family Professor Tripti Bhattacharya and postdoctoral researcher David Fastovich to improve climate modeling accuracy and uncover atmospheric processes using the geologic record.



First-Ever “Green Teaching” Summit Held

At its simplest, ecological thinking refers to humans being part of, not separate from, nature. The Green Teaching Summit, led by William P. Tolley Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Humanities Mike Goode (back row, second from left), emphasized the humanities’ role in addressing climate challenges and provided participants (above) with resources to incorporate ecological thinking into their teaching.



Creating STEM Pathways for Local Students

STEM careers are not always accessible to historically excluded groups. To help rectify this, the National Science Foundation is funding a three-year initiative through the Department of Physics. Led by professors Jennifer Ross and Mitch Soderberg, the Syracuse University Physics Emerging Research Technologies Summer High School Internship Program provides a paid research internship for Syracuse-area high school students. 🏠

Six A&S Titles on ‘100 Best Books of the 21st Century’

The *New York Times* list of The 100 Best Books of the 21st Century recently included three books by bestselling author and Professor of English George Saunders G’88. Saunders, who teaches in the creative writing M.F.A. program, was joined on the list by three former M.F.A. faculty: Junot Diaz, Mary Gaitskill and Sigrid Nunez.

Saunders’ 2021 bestseller, *A Swim in a Pond in the Rain*, was also included in Oprah Daily’s “The Best Nonfiction of the Past Two Decades” list.

Books by A&S-affiliated authors and their rankings:

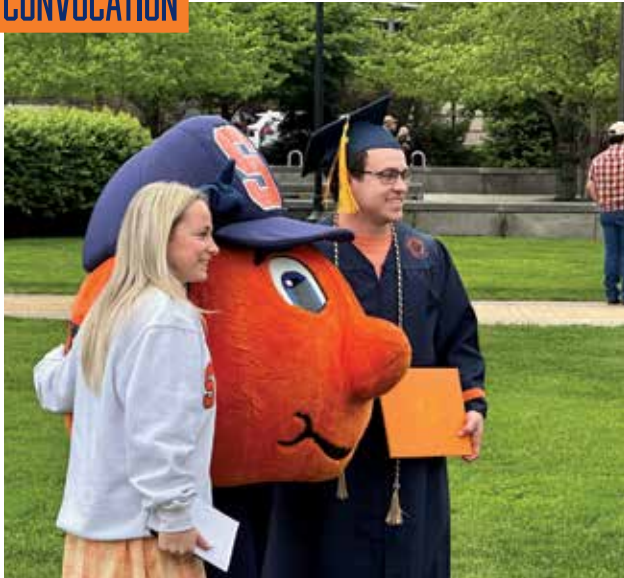
- #11 ***The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao***
Junot Diaz (2007)
- #18 ***Lincoln in the Bardo***
George Saunders (2017)
- #54 ***Tenth of December***
George Saunders (2013)
- #63 ***Veronica***
Mary Gaitskill (2005)
- #68 ***The Friend***
Sigrid Nunez (2018)
- #85 ***Pastoralia***
George Saunders (2000)



Arts & Sciences Celebrates

Whether we were sending off our latest graduates, meeting our newest students or welcoming back alumni, family and friends, A&S had plenty to celebrate in 2024.

CONVOCATION



(Clockwise, from top right) Boris Sanchez '09, an award-winning journalist and CNN news anchor, served as this year's alumni speaker. Hugs all around! Family and friends show their support above a sea of graduates. Can't miss the chance to snap a photo with Otto.

SYRACUSE WELCOME



(Clockwise, from top left) Biology professor Austin Garner showing off his gecko, Grits, to a group of students. A&S Dean Behzad Mortazavi welcoming new students and their families to Syracuse University.

COMING BACK TOGETHER



(Clockwise, from top left) It was a full house for A&S' alumni lunch in the Milton Atrium of the Life Sciences Complex. Attendees smiling for the camera. Current students learning about career options through "speed mentoring" by A&S alumni.

A&S Alumni Dispatches

As the snow begins to fall on campus, the basketball season heats up. These students from the early 1990s celebrated the occasion by building a basketball-themed snowman. Know who they are? Send us an email at ASNews@syr.edu. We may publish your answer in a future issue.



Essie Chambers '93

published her debut novel, *Swift River*.

Susan Silver Cohen '67

was named chair of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts by Gov. Josh Shapiro.

James Ten Eyck G'69,

Ph.D. '73 published his first poetry collection, *Footprints*.

Joseph G. Fazzary '89,

L'92 was awarded the Frank S. Hogan Award from the District Attorneys Association of the State of New York, the state's highest prosecutorial award.

Phyllis Greenberger '64

published *Sex Cells: The Fight to Overcome Bias and Discrimination in Women's Healthcare*.

Joshua Koopman '99

starred as Michael in *Earlybird*, a comedy film about a desperate theater owner resuscitating his struggling business with off-the-wall productions.

Marilyn Wolfe Levinson '61

(writing as Allison Brook) published *Overdue or Die* and *Booked on Murder*, the final installments in the Haunted Library series.

Alan Miller '55, G'58,

L'68 published the books *Holding Court* and *A Reluctant Madonna*, and produced the TV and YouTube series *Writers' Corner*.

Milton R. Shefter '56

was named to the executive committee of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' newest branch, Production and Technology.

Gina Siple G'06

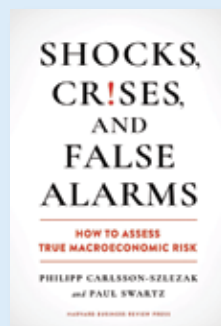
published her academic crossover book, *Just Here for the Comments: Lurking as Digital Literacy Practice*.

Bill Utley '68

co-authored *Fort Niagara: The British Occupation 1759-1796*. 🇺🇸

Updates based on alumni submissions or public news sources. Send career and contact information to cc.syr.edu/AandSUpdate. Updates may be published at the editor's discretion and may be edited for length and clarity.

IN THE SU SPOTLIGHT



Paul Swartz '05

published *Shocks, Crises, and False Alarms: How to Assess True Macroeconomic Risk*. The book speaks to the key financial and macroeconomic controversies that define our times—and provides a compass for navigating the macroeconomy.



The Dean's Advisory Board

The College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Advisory Board is composed of accomplished alumni, parents and friends who are among our most generous supporters, staunchest stewards and fiercest advocates. With their diverse professional expertise and leadership experience, the members of the board are important advisors in enhancing student programs, scholarship, research and experiential learning.

Susan Church Andersson '84

Lifelong Friend of Syracuse
Skaneateles, New York

Don Andres '68

Northrop Grumman Corp. (retired)
Los Angeles

Stephen Barton '12

Director of Intergovernmental Relations
Office of Senator Charles E. Schumer
New York

S. Jeffrey Bastable '69, G'73

Principal, B+L Consulting
Director of Philanthropy,
Honor Flight Syracuse Inc.
Syracuse, New York

Alicia Carroll '88

Owner and Surgeon
Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
Hickory, North Carolina

Kia Chandler '00

Managing Attorney, The Chandler Law Firm LLC
Arnold, Maryland

Ron Chin '97

Director, Prime Services TD Securities
Chicago

Lisa Courtice '84 (Chair)

President and CEO, United Way of Central Ohio
Columbus, Ohio

Claude Cowan '68, P'05

Ophthalmologist
Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center
Washington, D.C.

Renée Crown '50, H'84

Civic Leader and Philanthropist
Life Trustee, Syracuse University
Board of Trustees
Wilmette, Illinois

John Duffy G'87, P'20, P'27

NVR Inc. (retired)
Baltimore, Maryland

Laura A. Feldman '81

Attorney and Owner, Feldman & Pinto LLC
Philadelphia

Winston C. Fisher '96

Partner, Fisher Brothers Management
Life Trustee, Syracuse University
Board of Trustees
New York

Karen Au Frank '03

Associate Partner
Organizational Change Management
IBM Corporation
New Canaan, Connecticut

Ronald W. Gill '81, P'09

Attorney, Fortunato & Fortunato PLLC
Stamford, Connecticut

Stephen Huttler '71

Senior Partner
Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP
Washington, D.C.

Daniel Jaffe '81

President at Property Environmental LLC
West Newton, MA

Alexander Kadish '01

Managing Director, Investment
Wells Fargo Advisors
Aspen, Colorado

Connie Matteo L'91, P'25

Assistant General Counsel, Pfizer Inc.
Peapack, New Jersey

Joan K. Nicholson '71, G'89, CAS'99 P'95, P'99, P'04

Associate Professor and Dietetic Technician
Program Director, School of Science,
Technology & Health Studies, SUNY Morrisville
Life Trustee, Syracuse University
Board of Trustees
Cazenovia, New York

Anthony Noble '99

Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer
American Tower Corporation
Washington, D.C.

Gezzer Ortega '03

Instructor and Investigator
Department of Surgery, Brigham and Women's
Hospital, Harvard Medical School
Boston

Elliott I. Portnoy '86

Global Chief Executive Officer, Dentons
Member, Syracuse University Board of Trustees
Washington, D.C.

Michael Putziger '67

Chairman, WinnCompanies
Boston

Andrew Rasanen '73

Director, Corporate Communications, MUFG
Union Bank, N.A. (retired)
New York

Joann ("Jan") Raymond '65

Artist
Darien, Connecticut

Debra Adams Simmons '86

Senior Director of Editorial Projects, GBH
Boston

Flavio Somanji '15

Senior Scientist at Novartis Corporation
Boston

Megan Stull '00

Senior Manager, Regulatory Policy and
Government Affairs, Apple
Washington, D.C.

Paul Swartz '05

Senior Economist
Boston Consulting Group, Henderson Institute
New York

Alan D. Sweetbaum '78, P'10

Partner, Sweetbaum Sands Anderson PC
Denver

Michael Thonis '72

Co-founder and Retired Senior Advisor
Charlesbank Capital Partners LLC
Member, Syracuse University Board of Trustees
Boston

David Tobin '91, P'25

Senior Managing Director
Mission Capital Advisors LLC
New York

Judy Pistaki Zelisko '72

Vice President-Tax, Brunswick Corporation
(retired)
Lake Forest, Illinois

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Signature career-building experiences, such as the annual Stocks and Finance immersion on Wall Street (Fall 2023 cohort shown), prepare students for success after graduation. When you support A&S, you create a world of possibilities for students and faculty as they help address the important questions facing us today.

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Thank you!