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Life after Sabbatical

Dr. Sharon Meagher



Sabbaticals are a time for break from our usual activities so that we may spend more concentrated energies on projects that need special attention. I spent the past year working on two projects that support public philosophy. “Public philosophy” is publicly engaged philosophy—projects that involves collaboration with academics from other disciplines and various public partners to address issues of public concern. I am the co-founder of an international organization called “The Public Philosophy Network” or “PPN.” Founded in April 2010, our purpose is to encourage and support publicly engaged philosophical work. We now boast more than 820 members from all over the globe. We have held two major conferences and also host a large website that allows members to network with one another. One of my major research projects was funded by the Kettering Foundation; it entailed studying the work being done by PPN members to develop guidelines for promising practices in public philosophy. My other sabbatical project is a monograph—an authored book by me entitled *Philosophical Streetwalking: Grounding Philosophy in Public Life* (to be published by SUNY Press). I wrote the book to provide a reconceptualization of phi-

losophy that is grounded in public life and work.

My work in public philosophy is informed by my interest in Latin American Studies and Women’s Studies and also helps shape it. Philosophy remains a very male-dominated discipline, but it is not because women don’t do theory or aren’t capable of it. Rather, we have found that when many women do theory they often theorize about concerns about which many male philosophers have not—including a wide range of social and political issues. Women’s philosophical work is often therefore labeled as something other than philosophy. So part of my motivation to both found the Public Philosophy Network and to write my own book is informed by feminism; I want us to understand philosophy in a way that includes the excellent work of all and helps us reconnect to philosophy’s ancient Athenian legacy. Socrates and a lesser known philosopher Isocrates developed philosophical practices that firmly linked philosophy to the city. My book begins with a discussion of them and ends with an analysis of the work of two great philosophers who were active in city life but are not usually read as philosophers—Jane Addams and Jane Jacobs. Jacobs was a native of Scranton, so my work is grounded in our local city and also draws on my experience as a non-profit leader and community organizer in Scranton’s Hill section. I am doing work that re-values philosophy and its role in public life and that helps us see the value of community engagement as a way of enriching philosophical thinking.

I also had the opportunity to write some papers for conference presentation at national and interna-

tional conferences, including the Urban Affairs Association meeting in San Francisco and the American Association of Geographers in Los Angeles. I presented my research on urban planning that I did while in Kigali, Rwanda doing consulting and teaching at the Center for Gender, Culture, and Development in 2010 and 2011. My work with women in rural Mexico (in conjunction with LAWS 395: Women and Development in Latin America) has also had an impact on the way that I understand urbanization and development processes in the global South, and I wrote about some of that work too.

And last but not least, I worked on improving my Spanish language skills, as I had the opportunity to live in Mexico for two months. Although I used the getaway primarily to have a quiet place to finish writing my book, I learned a great deal about the impact of tourism and foreign investment on the Yucatan peninsula, and I am considering developing a new course for Latin American Studies and Women’s Studies on the Ethics of Tourism. I am also planning my next book, one on the influence of philosophy on urban planning in colonial and post-colonial cities in Africa and Latin America. One wonderful thing about sabbatical leaves is that they allow you to finish some projects while planting the seeds for new ones!

Dr. Sharon Meagher,
Chair of LA/W/S,
Director of Women’s Studies

Letter from Dr. Yamile Silva, Director of LAS



Welcome back to what promises to be an exciting fall season, not just at our university but also in the Americas. Our mission in Latin American Studies is to educate and create critical awareness among our students about Latin America's history, politics, economics and cultures. With that goal in mind, our program will connect to multiple events throughout the Americas in marking the 40th anniversary of the September 11, 1973, military coup d'état in Chile that led to a 17-year repressive dictatorship by Augusto Pinochet. While we remember the specific events in Chile, we must recognize the universal and continuous struggles for justice, truth and above all, life. We should not forget that in Chile in 1973, while the military troops were cruelly killing and torturing hundreds of Chileans, the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda lay sick in his bed. The military denied him medical attention and he died twelve days after the military coup. Here is one of his verses that invites us to not forget:

"These are not memories that have passed each other/nor the yellowing pigeon asleep in our forgetting/these are tearful faces/and fingers down our throats/and whatever leaves falls to the ground:/the dark of a day gone by/ a day that has tasted the grief in our blood."
(*There's no forgetting (Sonata)*)

Events: Focus on Chile



LAS Film Series

LAS will show 3 movies during Fall 2013. All movies will be shown in Brennan 228 and start at 7:00 PM.

Tuesday, September 24, "Machuca"

Tuesday, October 22, "No"

Tuesday, Nov 19, "Nostalgia for the light"

Keynote Speaker Talk

"What's New and What's Not: Chilean Elections Forty Years after the Coup"

Dr. Lisa Baldez

Dartmouth College

Monday, Nov 4th, LSC 133, 6:00 PM

Afghani Women's Rights Activist Suraya Pakzad, visits campus

The Women's Studies Faculty hosted a special guest at their annual fall faculty meeting. Suraya Pakzad, Director of the Afghani NGO [Voice of Women](#) (VoW) made a presentation to the faculty. Pakzad is recognized as a global leader on women's rights (in fact, she was named to [Time Magazine's list](#) of most influential people in 2009).

Pakzad's organization began as a small, underground school for girls that was founded when the Taliban banned education for girls. The organization has since grown to become a multi-service agency that supports women and girls in a wide range of ways in five provinces in Afghanistan. Services now include legal services, family counseling, and the provision of safe shelter for women and their children. The first shelter was founded in 2005 and regularly exceeds its capacity, as do the additional shelters built in other provinces. To help women and girls in the shelter make the transition back to the community, Voice of Women now also provides vocational training.

Pakzad came to tell us about one of VoW's latest projects, the establishment of a restaurant where young women can develop marketable skills and earn a wage to support themselves. Young women and girls have had to leave their family homes for any number of reasons: 1) fleeing an arranged marriage while they are still children; 2) leaving violent homes; 3) facing persecution for being in public places unaccompanied by an escort. The restaurants will be women for women restaurants, providing a safe space for both the workers and their customers.

Local men and women in the Scranton community are assisting with the fundraising effort to support the restaurant project. Attorney Judith Price founded a local nonprofit organization, Women Matter, Inc.; their aim is to support Voice of Women.

Ms. Pakzad noted that there are many ways that University of Scranton students might get involved. First, VoW is seeking volunteers and interns who might serve as on-line newsletter editors and writers for the VoW website. They also need volunteers and interns with web design experience. Second, women in the VoW shelters make beautiful handicrafts, and UofS students might organize to offer a sale on campus of the handicrafts. They need volunteers to do market research and provide them advice on what types of handicrafts might best sell. And they then also need students who would volunteer to organize the campus-based sale.

"Suraya Pakzad is one of the people I admire most. She faces grave danger when doing her work, but remains fearless and driven to achieve her goals. Pakzad and Voice of Women gives hope to many Afghani women who have lived lives of quiet desperation since the Taliban came to power. I hope that we at the University of Scranton will join her in her work," said Dr. Sharon Meagher, Director of Women's Studies and Chair of LA/W/S.



If you are interested in volunteering or interning for Voice of Women, please contact Dr. Meagher at x 4075 or Sharon.meagher@scranton.edu

Research Note

Dr. Jamie Trnka's book *Revolutionary Subjects: German Literatures, Geoculture, and the Limits of Aesthetic Solidarity with Latin America*

LA/W/S faculty member Jamie H. Trnka returned to The University of Scranton this Fall having spent her sabbatical year completing her book, *Revolutionary Subjects: German Literatures, Geoculture, and the Limits of Aesthetic Solidarity with Latin America*. Aesthetics and solidarity share a common touchstone in that both are fundamentally about representation and what we can or are willing to see in our daily relationships. While many people approach both aesthetics and solidarity as if they express values that are universal and outside of history, Trnka's book demonstrates that they are in fact historical and contingent. Using contemporary research in cultural and political history, economics, philosophy, and sociology, she explores East and West German literary engagements and solidarity with Latin America.



The book advances a concept of geoculture, coined by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein in analogy to geopolitics, as a rubric for understanding historical cultural formations which exceed national or regional parameters, and it demonstrates how East and West German authors developed an aesthetic solidarity that anticipated conceptual reorganizations of the world commonly associated with the transnational or the global.

Revolutionary Subjects explores the literary and cultural significance of transnational solidarities and intervenes into major theoretical debates about Germany's relationship to colonialism and postcolonial studies. Most accounts of postcolonial studies focus on French and British colonialism. By considering histories of German and Latin American relationships dating back to the Conquest, new and productive ways of thinking about the past and the present come into focus.

German preoccupations with Latin America as a site for understanding both oppositional agency and engaged literature were central to inter-German cultural politics during the Cold War. Latin American authors and theorists were important to thinking about what literature could and should be in Cold War German cultures. Literary-political interests in Latin America coincided with a series of debates on the role of the author in society that were themselves heavily influenced by a Cold War conflict in which East and West German authors mobilized the idea of Latin America to distinct literary and political ends even as they drew on a common tradition of colonial fantasies about it.

As the Cold War neared its end, however, literature began to foreground more complex relationships between Germans and Latin Americans that subverted long-stable Cold War paradigms and geographies, including the division of the globe into three worlds. This representational shift favored transnational histories of German migration and Latin American exile where before internationalist imaginaries had been the norm. With this shift, Trnka demonstrates the inadequacy of existing scholarship to the task of interpreting literary and political subjects that consistently exceed and elude the areas deemed proper to both German and Latin American Studies. On this basis, she argues for a new form of interdisciplinary studies that no longer treats national culture as a territorially circumscribed phenomenon.

Dr. Jamie Trnka is an Associate Professor at the World Languages and Cultures Department, an associate faculty in Women's Studies and an affiliated faculty member in Latin American Studies

From our Students' Desks

Melissa Olsakowski's Reflection on the Need for Bilingual Professionals in the Medical Field

This past summer I had the opportunity to intern at a local hospital in New Jersey, where I shadowed a wide array of doctors in numerous subspecialties. The purpose of the internship was to observe the life of a doctor and focus on their doctor-patient relationship. By the end of the four-week period, I learned a few very important lessons.

First, every patient has his or her own story, coming from a unique background that is unlike any other. Some patients were local, while others drove long distances. Some came alone, while others came with a family support member. Some spoke English, while others' first language was something very different.

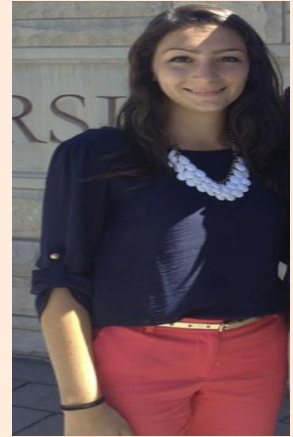
Despite these differences, it was imperative for the doctor to connect on a personal level with the patient. This connection was difficult to be made if their means of communication was not the first thing in common. Language became a huge barrier if the doctor and patient could not communicate to each other independently and effectively. Although the hospital was not in a prominent Latino location, there still were a considerable number of patients who spoke Spanish as their first language.

In the emergency room, I shadowed a doctor who was bilingual. He was able to walk into a room and speak with his patients effortlessly. Upon greeting a female patient, I witnessed the patient's body language immediately relax as she admired the doctor for speaking in her native Spanish language. The doctor conversed with the patient about her personal background and family. She smiled, nodded, and cooperated with the medical staff.

In the same week, I shadowed a Rheumatologist who could not speak Spanish. Instead, a translator phone was used, in which the doctor listened to one telephone as the patient held another. They both listened and spoke to the translator on the line – not to each other. Although both were tolerant of each other, there was no time spent making the patient comfortable. The appointment started as quickly as it ended. The environment of the room was distinctly different from that in the emergency room just days before.

Studying both pre-medicine and Spanish, I learned what I believe is the most important lesson of all: There is an incredible need for bilingual personnel in the medical field. A patient deserves to feel at ease, and a great doctor will be willing to develop this connection as best as possible. Not only will “translator phones” eventually become obsolete, but also the ever important bond between the patient and the doctor will flourish. I believe the language barrier is a growing problem in many hospitals. There is a need for bilingual medical professionals, especially for the Spanish-English patient. Every patient deserves to feel they have a strong relationship with their doctor. I saw firsthand that a patient would immediately respect you for trying to connect with them via their own language, and that respect will be reciprocated by both parties.

At the end of my internship, the Rheumatologist told me that she wished she could speak Spanish; she believed it would have been a great asset to her career to work with a larger population of patients. I could not agree more. I plan to pursue my education with every intention to become bilingual. I hope to inspire people to use their love of a language to not only better themselves, but benefit their professional environment as well.



Melissa Olsakowski is a student of the LAS Concentration