

# Wasch Center for Retired Faculty

Newsletter Vol. 12, No. 2 | Spring 2021

*Edited by Krishna Winston*



## Table of Contents

### Director's Mesage

*Krishna Winston*

### History: The Development of the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty, Part II

*Karl Scheibe*

### News & Notes

*Ron Ebrecht*

*Rick Friswell*

*Joyce Jacobsen*

*Charles Lemert*

*Rob Rosenthal*

*Nancy Schwartz*

*Yoshiko Samuel*

*Khachig Tölölyan*

### Reflections: "Why I Write"

*Peter Schwaber*

### Profiles & Memories of Former Students

*Allan Berlind: Karen Ocorr, Ph.D. '83*

*Stew Gilmor: Ellis Neufeld '79, M.D., Ph.D*

*Joyce Lowrie: Julie Scolnik '78*

*Priscilla Meyer: Nicky Pessaroff '01*

### Afternoon Talks: Spring 2021 on Zoom

### WILL Courses: Spring 2021

### Necrology

*Frances Sheng*

*Donald Russell*

# Director's Message



## Director's Message

Krishna Winston

Marcus L. Taft Professor of German  
Language and Literature & Professor,  
College of the Environment, emerita

A recent call for contributions to this newsletter has brought in a bumper crop, so I will keep this short. I hope you are well and managing to maintain a sense of optimism in this time of acute physical danger, political division, economic distress, and overwhelming loss and sadness. The arrival of two safe and effective vaccines, with more to come, holds out the promise that one of these years we will be able to crawl out of our various caves and start putting our lives back together. The Wasch Center remains closed, and the proposal I submitted recently to the Administration, outlining how those with office space there might regain regular access once they have been vaccinated, has been turned down. The pandemic planning committee is very concerned about the new variants of the virus that are circulating, and has decided to err on the side of caution. I hope that Connecticut's pandemic statistics continue to improve, and I will continue to advocate for our return to the Center.

Last spring we could not host the traditional festive reception for newly retiring faculty members that takes place on Commencement Weekend. The situation will be no different this year. In lieu of raising an actual glass, I shall simply welcome the following colleagues to our ranks and pledge that when we pitch the tent in the Wasch Center's back yard in the spring of 2022, you will be invited, along with the 2021 and 2022 retirees: Richie Adelstein (Economics and CSS); Irina Aleshkovsky (Russian Language & Literature); Jeanine Basinger (Film Studies); Alice Hadler (English and International Student Services); Patty Klecha-Porter (Physical Education); Leo Lensing (Film Studies); Bruce Masters (History); Bob Steele (Psychology); and Xiaomiao Zhu (East Asian Studies). I look forward to seeing you there and hearing senior members of your departments celebrate you.

In the fall we hosted three lectures, and for the spring Duffy White has organized a timely series focused on climate change. For the WILL program Rick Friswell has gathered a rich assortment of courses under the general heading of "Embracing the Great Outdoors." Some details of both programs remain to be worked out, but we already know that the lectures and most of the WILL courses will be offered virtually. We will send out reminders and information on this listserv, complete with links, and I encourage you to participate.

I am grateful to all who have contributed to this newsletter with their news and updates, reflections, and profiles of former students. The second installment of Karl Scheibe's history of the Wasch Center provides a wealth of information that needed to be recorded for posterity. I also thank the colleagues who are keeping the Wasch Center's signature programs alive and well in this difficult time. Our new administrative assistant, Elizabeth Moemeka, who joined us in October, quickly learned the ropes and has been providing wonderful support under the less than ideal conditions of working from home.

Finally, in this time when Wesleyan has had to tighten its belt, the Wasch Center has felt the pinch. We do have a modest endowment, and should you feel inclined to contribute to the continued vitality of this institution within the larger institution, it would be for a blessing.

With all good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krishna Winston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. It is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

# The Development of the Wasch Center for Retired Faculty, Part II

By Karl Scheibe, Director Emeritus



In the last issue of the Wasch Center Newsletter, I presented a brief history of the formation and construction of our Center, culminating in our formal opening in October 2005. Here I present some of the programs we developed once our physical and organizational platform was securely established.

By the end of 2005, we could boast of having a handsomely renovated three-story house with parlors, an attractive lecture room, and a reception area on the first floor and space for about a dozen individual offices on the upper floors. An active and enthusiastic group of retired faculty members constituted the Advisory Board, which met monthly. This Board had evolved from the earlier ad hoc committee that had provided direction and advice during the construction period. The Board maintained a connection with the Office of Academic Affairs, under whose authority we functioned, and with what was then called the Center for Faculty Career Development. As the director of the Wasch Center, I met monthly with the Office of Academic Affairs.

As we proceeded with program development, we had a sense of strong and secure support from the Wesleyan Administration. Although we did not win approval for all our initiatives, we always received a fair hearing and often did obtain approval for proposals on their merits. My objective in this brief history is to present the more important programmatic developments that occurred between October 2005 and the present. While most activities of the Wasch Center had to stop in their tracks in March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced to University to cease in-person events, our signature programs resumed—remotely—last fall.

## The Original Advisory Board

The original Advisory Board, appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Judith Brown, in the fall of 2005—Bill Barber, George Creeger, Puffin D’Oench, Paula Paige, Wis Comfort, Andy Szegedy-Maszak, and Karl Scheibe—were all retired, with the exception of Szegedy-Maszak. All had been members of the ad hoc planning committee. John Martin, Professor of Art, emeritus, had designed the reception area and administrative assistant’s station on the ground floor.

## Faculty Offices

The Advisory Board developed a plan, still in effect, for assigning available office space to retired faculty members. Space was assigned upon application and was awarded for three years, with the possibility of renewal. In our first year, ten retired faculty members moved in, six of whom (including the Director) were given individual offices, while four shared space with others.

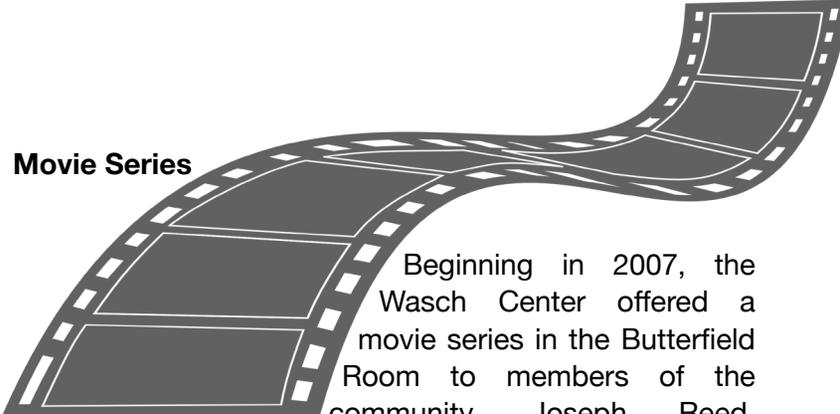
## Wednesday Programs

The Advisory Board launched a series of bi-weekly talks, with the twin objectives of providing a forum for exploring timely topics of interest to the Wesleyan community and giving retired faculty members and others an opportunity to present their own work and projects.

In our first year, the seven-talk series ran from December to May. Bill Wasch gave the inaugural talk, describing his work on designing spaces for living and working geared to the needs of senior citizens. Five of the first talks were presented by retired faculty members.

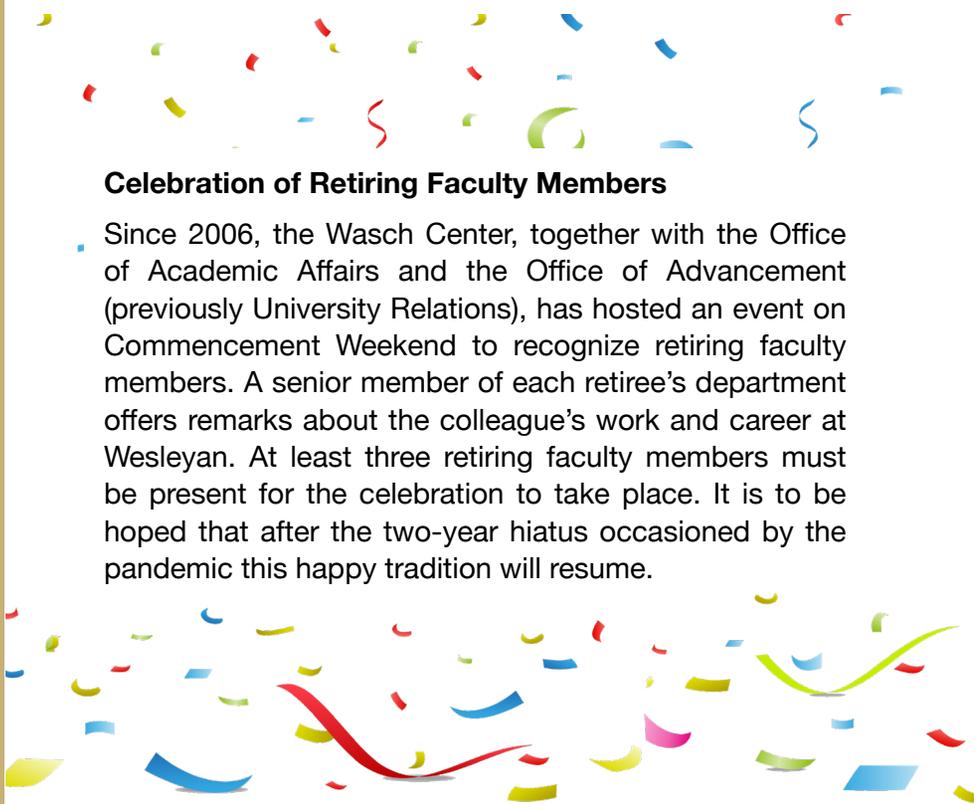
The talks were followed by a reception with refreshments. This program quickly became a main programmatic feature of the Wasch Center and continues in much the same form to this day. The series remains a source of pride for the Wasch Center, exhibiting the central function of the Wasch Center—to encourage and support the continuing professional lives and intellectual engagement of Wesleyan faculty members after retirement.

Over the years most of the Wednesday afternoon talks have been recorded and preserved. This collection comprises a significant archive for future historians of Wesleyan.



## Movie Series

Beginning in 2007, the Wasch Center offered a movie series in the Butterfield Room to members of the community. Joseph Reed, Professor emeritus of English, selected, introduced, and provided commentary on the films. During the first year we presented seven films on alternative Tuesday afternoons. This program continued for ten years. Around 2012 the task of organizing the showings was assumed by Yoshiko Samuel and Paula Paige. The program was discontinued in 2018 because of dwindling attendance. With films so readily available on Netflix and other streaming services, the Wasch Center's series had come to seem superfluous.



## Celebration of Retiring Faculty Members

Since 2006, the Wasch Center, together with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Advancement (previously University Relations), has hosted an event on Commencement Weekend to recognize retiring faculty members. A senior member of each retiree's department offers remarks about the colleague's work and career at Wesleyan. At least three retiring faculty members must be present for the celebration to take place. It is to be hoped that after the two-year hiatus occasioned by the pandemic this happy tradition will resume.

# { Oral Histories }

## Oral History Program

In the spring semester of 2012, the Wasch Center established its Oral History Program, with the objective of gathering and publishing oral histories from retiring faculty members. With the collaboration of Anne Greene, Suzy Taraba, and Sean McCann, we recruited five students who received training and were then assigned to five faculty members who had agreed to be interviewed.

After the first year's experience, we decided to proceed with paid interviewers, who would also have the responsibility of transcribing the recorded interviews and passing them along to the library for posting in WesScholar and inclusion in the Wesleyan Archives. Funding for this program came from the Friends of Olin Library, the library itself, and the Wasch Center's Lifelong Learning program.

Over the last nine years we have collected 30–40 interviews of faculty members and administrators that will be permanently available to the Wesleyan community. At least six of the colleagues who granted us interviews are now deceased. The memories and reflections of figures like Robert Rosenbaum, Bill Barber, and Wis Comfort constitute a precious resource for our community.

For the past three years, Allan Berlind, Professor emeritus of Biology, has coordinated and managed this valuable program, finding new interviewers and recruiting subjects. Even with turnover in Olin Library and the Archives, we have been fortunate to enjoy the staff's support for this worthy venture.

### **Faculty Mentoring Program**

Beginning in our first year, the Office of Academic Affairs gave us a list of newly arrived faculty members every fall. A subcommittee of the Advisory Board would invite these new faculty members to participate in a "social mentoring" program organized by the Wasch Center to help acquaint them with the Wesleyan and local communities. Those who expressed interest were assigned retirees as mentors, with whom they could meet for lunch at the Faculty Club. Mentors were instructed to leave professional mentoring up to the respective departments, instead sharing with their new colleagues their knowledge of various resources and opportunities at Wesleyan and in the surrounding area.

This program prospered for a time but then languished. Turnover in our ranks and in the administration reduced advocacy for a program that had decided benefits for the mentees and mentors alike, but was hardly essential. It is included in this report in case the suggestion that such a program might be revived strikes someone as worthwhile.

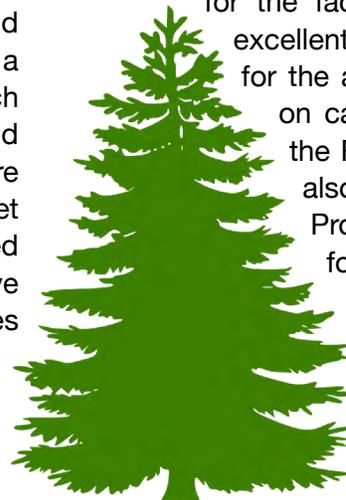
### **Information on Retirement**

Every spring the Wasch Center has invited all faculty members over 60 to a discussion of issues to consider as they look ahead to retirement. These meetings have featured presentations by representatives of TIAA-CREF, the Office of Academic Affairs, Human Resources, and the Wasch Center Advisory Board. Topics can include financial planning, support for continued research and teaching, available health benefits, and the facilities, programs, and collegueship offered by the Wasch Center. In addition, the Director of the Wasch Center is typically asked by a number of faculty members every year for private meetings in which their questions about retirement can be discussed.



### **Other Recurring Events**

In the first year of our operation, the Office of Academic Affairs began to sponsor occasional informal social gatherings for the faculty. The Wasch Center proved to be an excellent venue, and initially offered meeting space for the ad hoc faculty planning group. Other places on campus—such as the Center for Humanities, the Russell House, and the Usdan Center—have also served as sites. Like the Faculty Mentoring Program, the custom of holding get-togethers for the community has tailed off. But once again, it is noted here as a custom that might warrant revival. One celebration that remains popular is the Wasch Center's annual holiday party in December.



## Connections with Other Retirement Organizations

Part I of this historical report noted that the Wasch Center originally benefitted greatly from support and the example provided by the Koerner Center at Yale. Through this Center we learned of the existence of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education, with headquarters at UCLA.



We quickly joined AROHE, and the Director and some others have attended their biennial meetings. I had a three-year term on the governing board. In October 2010, the Wasch Center sponsored and hosted the biennial meeting, which brought together representatives from about 75 colleges and universities. The meeting was recognized as a great success. From time to time we have been consulted by other schools considering establishing retirement centers. These include Trinity College, the University of Hartford, Williams College, and Connecticut College.

## The Wesleyan Institute for Lifelong Learning

Following the example of Trinity College's Academy of Lifelong Learning, we established a program of short, non-credit courses for adults, taught mostly, but not exclusively, by retired Wesleyan faculty members. The Wesleyan Institute for Lifelong Learning (WILL) offered its

first courses in 2010. (The name for the program was suggested by Sean McCann, at the time a member of our Advisory Board.) Since then WILL has presented 8–12 courses every semester,

usually organizing a one-day program on a special topic as well. In a typical semester WILL courses cumulatively enroll between 100 and 175 participants.



THE WESLEYAN INSTITUTE FOR  
LIFELONG LEARNING

The WILL program has served as an important link between Wesleyan and the wider community. It gives retired Wesleyan faculty members a chance to continue teaching, and also recruits as instructors experts from neighboring colleges and universities and the community. Since 2015, this program has been directed by Rick Friswell, a Graduate Liberal Studies advanced-degree recipient, author, and the editor of ARTES magazine. The program has continued to develop and prosper under his leadership, and even in the face of the pandemic has forged ahead, offering courses on Zoom.

## Faculty Brown Bag Luncheon

During the last 10 years of his life Michael Lovell was a loyal and active presence in the Wasch Center. In his last five years, before he died in 2019 at 88, Mike established and led a “Brown Bag Luncheon” series. Retired colleagues were invited to make brief introductory remarks and lead discussions on developments in their fields of study over the last 50 years. These irregularly scheduled gatherings invariably proved stimulating and informative. Typically 10–15 colleagues would attend, their discussions often extending well beyond the scheduled hour. There is sentiment for reviving this program, but someone will have to take the initiative.



## The Wesleyan Emeritus College

Retired faculty members at Wesleyan have long had opportunities to teach courses in the regular curriculum, supervise honors theses, and give tutorials. The initiative used to come in an ad-hoc fashion from departments or the Office of Academic Affairs. In 2015 the Wasch Center proposed creating a more formal structure, and in 2016, following approval from Academic Affairs, we began to enroll instructors in the program.

Even before his retirement Richard Adelstein assumed coordination of the Emeritus College. The instructors receive modest compensation from the Office of Academic Affairs.

### A Final Note

The Wasch Center was born as an idea almost 20 years ago. Since our opening ceremony in October 2005 we have grown and prospered. We have had a few false starts and some concerns about how to continue our growth and development. But the initiative made possible and generously nurtured by Susie and Bill Wasch has become a shining example of what the continued exercise of initiative, dedication, and creative thinking can bring to life and sustain. We are grateful to President Bennet and many others in the Wesleyan Administration who have provided encouragement and support for the later professional lives of Wesleyan faculty members.

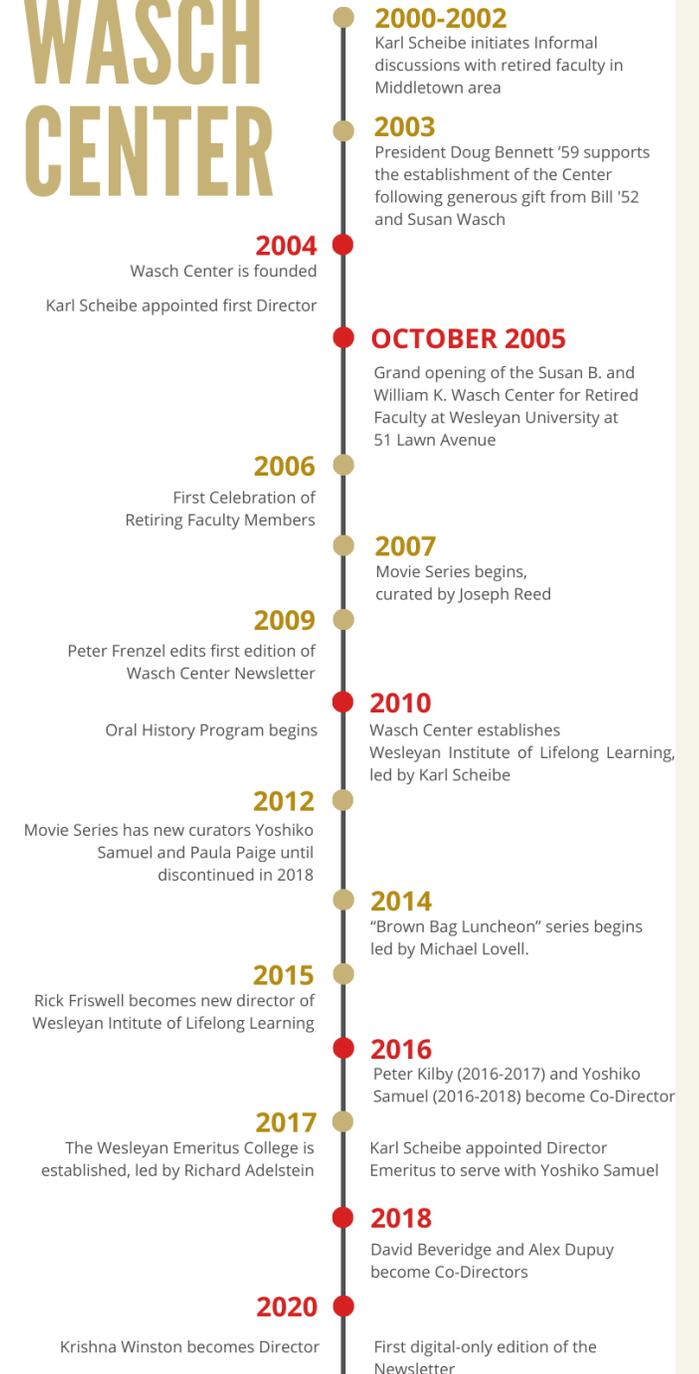
This report is hardly comprehensive, for many of our activities have not been recorded or reviewed here. But we may be allowed to take some satisfaction in the results of our labors—in the “pleasure of taking pains,” in the words of Robert Frost.

Last semester I was teaching a course to 14 Wesleyan students when Spring Break brought the devastating news that the COVID-19 pandemic would force all in-person teaching to stop. We picked ourselves up and, thanks to Zoom, carried on, the students and I, through the end of the term, and could proclaim the exercise a success. But we all know that our future is by no means assured—we can only hope that the Wesleyan University that has endured through thick and thin since 1831 will survive and be able to maintain its commitment to the faculty members who have given so much to generations of students through their teaching, and to the world through their scholarship.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF

# THE WASCH CENTER

Dedicated to providing programs and services that contribute to the continued vitality and welfare of retired faculty members. The Center provides a means of connection among retired faculty members as well as a link to the ongoing activities of Wesleyan University and the surrounding community.

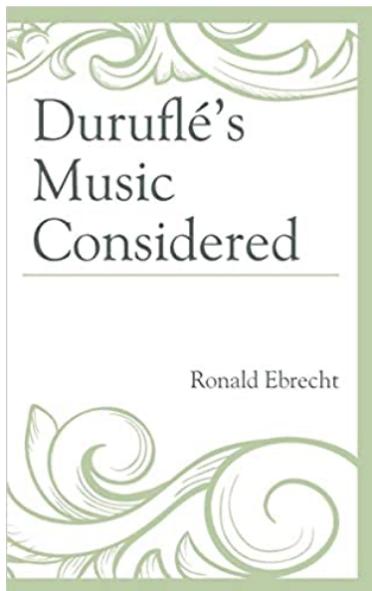


# News & Notes:

Updates and Announcements from Retired Faculty Around the Globe

## Ron Ebrecht

My colleagues may well wonder how organists are managing to practice their art during a pandemic. A related question might be how my successor, Alcee Chriss, and his organ students at Wesleyan are faring. I leave it to the curious to inquire directly of Alcee.



I have been very preoccupied with the production of my new book, <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781498527873/Duruf%27s-Music-Considered>

This book continues my decades of inquiry into the music of Duruflé. In it I seek to answer many questions I have heard or posed to myself over the past 45 years. Although since my first book appeared in 2002 two biographies have been published, one in English and another in German, neither deals with the music in detail. My research on Duruflé's musical works over these two decades was published mostly in French, in annual volumes issued by the Duruflé Foundation in Paris. While writing these papers provided good exercise for my French, my reflections were not accessible to those who do not know that language. Once I started some years ago to translate my texts into English, I of course found new things to say about the works. Simultaneously I gained access to a large manuscript archive and two smaller ones that had previously been closed to researchers. Thus

far I remain the only person to have studied all three. The new research, a desire to publish hundreds of photographs from these manuscripts, and the need to continue my Wesleyan teaching until my retirement slowed my progress on the book.

My retirement and the pandemic gave me that precious commodity: uninterrupted time. Having exhausted my outside grants and no longer eligible to obtain funding from Wesleyan, I had to prepare my own index. But even that proved to be a good development, motivating me to cull entries and in other respects make the index both concise and, I hope, easy to use.

My concerts were all "postponed," but I now hope that the vaccine will make possible a revival of live music-making, something I miss as a performer and even more as a regular listener. Shortly before my retirement I was musing whether I should continue to rely on Yale's practice and concert organs for my own rehearsal time. Once the pandemic arrived, I had reason to be very grateful for having had a practice organ built in my house. I attach a few recent photos that show I am thriving and productive in this time of the new cholera.

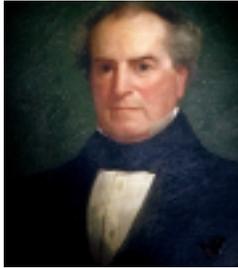


# News & Notes:

Updates and  
Announcements  
from Retired  
Faculty Around  
the Globe

## Rick Friswell

### *Merchants of Deceit: A work of historical fiction due in spring '21*



The Samuel Russell House, a neoclassical ‘wedding cake’ located on the corner of Washington and High Streets, occupies a prominent place on the Wesleyan campus. It constitutes an important part of the legacy of the architect Ithiel Town, who planned and coordinated the 1827–28 construction of the Russell home. But many are not aware of the

fact that Russell’s rise to prominence in Middletown derived from the fortune he amassed from the sale of opium, a significant feature of the early 19th-century China trade. The detailed documents left behind by Samuel Russell speak volumes about his skills as a fastidious financial record-keeper and prescient businessman, but tell us little about the heart and soul of the man who accomplished so much for himself, his family, and the busy trading hub of which he was a lifelong resident, Middletown, CT.

In this work of historical fiction, *Merchants of Deceit: Opium, American Fortune & the China Trade*, I have created a narrative that both humanizes and animates the life and times of Samuel Russell. He built his career during a crucial moment in American history (1800–1840), when slavery was being abolished, global trade was thriving, thanks to modern production methods, improved transportation, and international trade alliances, and a newly emerging merchant class was coming to occupy center stage in the U.S. economy.

My book follows Russell as he grows up in ‘post’-slavery America; becomes part of the international trade scene, meeting famous men of the time; undertakes the long journey to Canton, China, where he encounters the reality of the opium trade, which holds the key to his

future, and finds and loses love in the process; risks life and limb, dodging death and disease as he strives to earn his ‘competence;’ while eluding the emperor and his minions as they scheme to defeat the scourge of opium flowing into their country. During Russell’s trial by fire, he struggles with feelings of despair, isolation, and guilt, even as the men around him—representative of contemporary Western society—condone the active promotion and sale of yāpiàn—opium, “mud,” to a nation considered by colonialists as unworthy of respect.

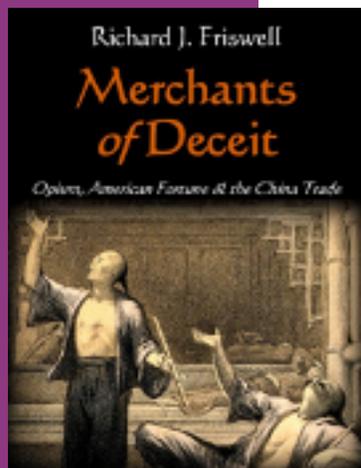
*Merchants of Deceit: Opium, American Fortune & the China Trade* (Hammonasset House Publishers, 2021); approx. 250 pages, with color illustrations and appendices. Price TBD.

## Joyce Jacobsen

A warm hello to all of my Wasch Center colleagues; I am excited to join the ranks of the emeriti! Though having a full-time job as President of Hobart and William Smith Colleges doesn’t make me feel very retired yet. As you might imagine, it has been a very challenging first eighteen months on the job. The first eight months went by in a blur as I spent my time getting to know the campus by touring all the buildings and areas, meeting as many faculty, staff, and students as possible, and learning the ins and outs of the Colleges’ finances, bylaws, and curriculum. I also traveled regularly to meet alumni and parents across the country. There were some great moments, including when our women’s soccer team made it to the NCAA Division III championship game, and I went to UNC Greensboro to watch them play (sadly, they lost, 0-1). I loved watching our sports teams compete, attending performing and visual arts events on campus, introducing speakers, and cheering for our champion debate squad.



HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH  
COLLEGES



# News & Notes:

Updates and  
Announcements  
from Retired  
Faculty Around  
the Globe

Then, in March 2020, the party shut down. Since then, it has been a different kind of blur, one in which I have learned as much as possible about managing the pandemic in a campus setting. Not only did we have only a one-week spring break in which to pivot to full remote for the second half of the spring semester, but then we had to figure out first how to reopen the campus for staff and researchers over the summer under the very strict New York guidelines, and then how to welcome our students back safely in the fall. While a number of neighboring colleges had to close their campuses at various points during the fall, we beat the odds and made it through the fall semester with the majority of our students and faculty on campus, without having to have a campus lockdown or send students home early. As I write these words, we are preparing to start spring semester classes, again in a mix of in-person, hybrid, and fully remote, having first required all of our students to test back in, followed by a quarantine period and a test back out of quarantine. Being responsible for a campus full of employees and students, all of whom are anxious, fearful, and stressed, has been very challenging. This fraught situation was compounded by Black Lives Matter, election, and presidential transition concerns during the summer and fall. But throughout, I have been impressed by how competently and professionally the HWS faculty and staff have met these challenges.

Meanwhile, I have also had to create and begin implementing a strategic plan for the Colleges, hire a provost, balance the budget, start planning a capital campaign and the Hobart bicentennial celebration (1822), and get to know thirty-four trustees. After years of procrastination, I managed to finish my book, *Advanced Introduction to Feminist Economics* (Edward Elgar, 2020). And Bill and I have been enjoying getting to know our new neighbors

here in Geneva and touring the beautiful Finger Lakes region of Upstate New York. That said, I miss all of my Middletown and Wesleyan friends and neighbors and look forward to seeing you again once the world opens back up for travel. We're always happy to host you here (Peter Mark was one of our first visitors). You can stay in the President's house (1836) guest suite, where Eleanor Roosevelt and both Clintons have preceded you, see our octagonal study where seances were supposedly held back in the days when spiritualism held sway locally (indeed, William Smith, the College's namesake, was a believer), and admire Seneca Lake from our front porch.

## Charles Lemert

First, I must say that the past year was terrible for me, as it was for most. But in my case, the year will forever be remembered as the terrible year my son Noah died of cancer. Noah was a member of the class of '96. His days at Wesleyan were difficult due to his struggle with various addictions. Yet in the end, after a year away—and a disciplined recovery program that allowed him to be clean and sober for the rest of his days—he finished his studies. Though Noah was truly brilliant, his academic work at Wesleyan was barely good enough to get him into graduate school at Harvard. I am grateful to Wesleyan for many things, none more than how it stood by my boy and allowed him to get on with his all-too-short life.

I've already used up most of my allotted space, so I'll be brief as to my academic year. I finished two books: *Capitalism's Uncertain Future*, with Kristin Plys of the University of Toronto; and the 7th edition of my social theory textbook, unimaginatively titled *Social Theory*. I am at work on four other books, including *Americans Thinking American: Elements of American Social Theory*,



# News & Notes:

Updates and Announcements from Retired Faculty Around the Globe

which will be finished this year. Among several shorter writings, the most notable is the entry on Charlotte Perkins Gilman for an Oxford University Press encyclopedia of important social theorists.

## Rob Rosenthal

Like many of you, I imagine, I've spent most of the last half year or so coping with the pandemic and fixated on the elections. Re the latter, I've discovered political texting and spent many hours doing that. Did you know on a good day you can send out 5,000 texts? I look forward to the studies of how effective (or not) this newish weapon is.

Coping with the pandemic has mainly meant figuring out how to shop most safely and doing plenty of walking in Wadsworth Forest, which we're fortunate to live near. Sunny and I have a four-mile loop that goes up and down, up and down, and gets the blood pumping pretty good. (But I long for this all to end soon, so I can get back on the basketball court before I forget how to shoot a jump shot.)

We've also had somewhat extended stays from each of our adult children (after appropriate quarantining), a rare gift of the pandemic. Since they're both working remotely, it was possible for them to stay for longer periods than they could have otherwise. Wonderful.

I continue to write, working on a book on decision-making that I've been working on for years. I had the good news recently that the book I co-edited with my son, Sam, *Pete Seeger in His Own Words*, is being reissued in paperback and audiobook.

I miss terribly playing in my band, Smokin' Lillies. Some day soon.



## Nancy Schwartz

Together with a visiting colleague in political science, Sam Rosenfeld from Colgate, I published an article, "A Mix of Motives," in the *American Review of Politics* (37:2, December 2020), on the Georgia challenge to the 1968 delegation to the Democratic National Convention. The GA delegation ended up being co-chaired by Julian Bond and had a young John Lewis as one of its delegates. I draw on my experiences as a young volunteer in Atlanta, and Sam



writes about the implications for party polarization, and we both argue for super-delegates at national party conventions.

Here is an abstract from the abstract:

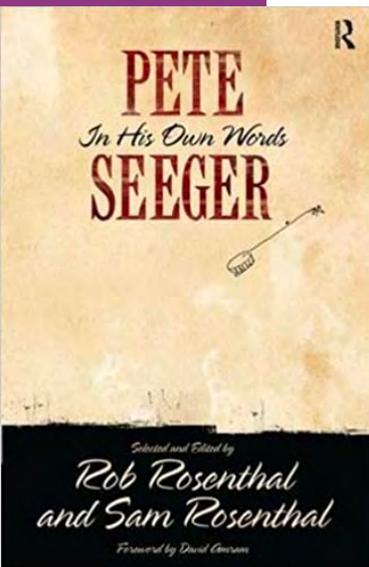
"Scholarly debates over the nature of political parties and the identity of their principal actors have been hampered by relative inattention to the historical processes of internal party change. This study, drawing on archival sources, interviews, and one of the co-author's personal experiences, analyzes the Georgia delegate challenge to the 1968 Democratic Convention as a case of internal party conflict generating lasting institutional reform, with implications for existing theories of party development, nominating politics, and democratic representation."

## Yoshiko Samuel

I've read randomly to stay sane throughout these maddening Coronavirus months, and I would like to share some of the works that have spoken to me:

Fang Fang, *Wuhan Diary: Dispatches from a Quarantined City*, trans. Michael Berry (New York: Harper Collins, 2020)

The author, a prominent Chinese writer of fiction and essays, began writing on line two days into the city's Coronavirus lockdown. She wrote about her fear and anxiety for the



# News & Notes:

Updates and Announcements from Retired Faculty Around the Globe

safety of those around her and her anger over the official “no people-to-people transmission” statement. She mourned the lost lives of fellow Wuhanians while generously sharing information about where to find masks and food to buy and news from her “doctor friends.” Despite attempts by the authorities to silence her, she continued to fill her blog, now a community forum of sorts for the 9 million Wuhan residents, for 60 consecutive days. This book convinces one that we are indeed “in this all together,” no matter where we live.

**BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER**

I’ve also found the two books below very important for understanding the significance of the Black Lives Matter effort:

Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Begin Again: James Baldwin’s America and its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (New York: Random House, 2020)

Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origin of Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020)

## Khachig Tölölyan

I want to report that on 12/31/2020, at the age of 76 years and 4 months, I retired, after teaching at Wesleyan for 46.5 years. I write therefore at the end of my third week of retirement. So far, no regrets. Questions yes, regrets no. Two people who know me well have told me just what scholarly book I should write and why, and another has told me that I should write some sort of memoir—a very fashionable thing to do, as you know. Instead I have been writing e-mails at a blistering pace while thinking I must e-mail less and eat less, since I am unlikely to exercise more. I enjoy being still connected to Wesleyan, reading colleagues’ comments and students’ queries—as in “I need a tutorial, could you do one even

**46.5  
years**

though you’ve retired?” I am reading a newly published novel in my native language, Armenian, preparing to write a review of it. I have refereed two articles on the topic of diaspora. I daydream about travel a little, but have no intention of venturing out until September at the earliest. Given my age and the fact that I have a pacemaker, I live in Providence under careful and pleasant house arrest with my wife, Ellen Rooney, who teaches at Brown in English and Modern Culture and Media. Ann duCille, a dear former colleague, lives in retirement less than a mile away, so there is someone with whom I can reminisce about Wesleyan. I will sign off, heeding North College’s strong admonition that I must not, I just must not call myself professor emeritus until the Trustees in their May meeting decide whether to confer that title upon me. Therefore, until then, Kach, aka Khachig Tölölyan of the College of Letters and English

## ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Allan Berlind continues to arrange for retired faculty members and administrators to be interviewed; four interviews have been completed this year, with more to come. Once the interviews have been archived by Olin Library, links will be posted on the [Wasch Center Web site](#).



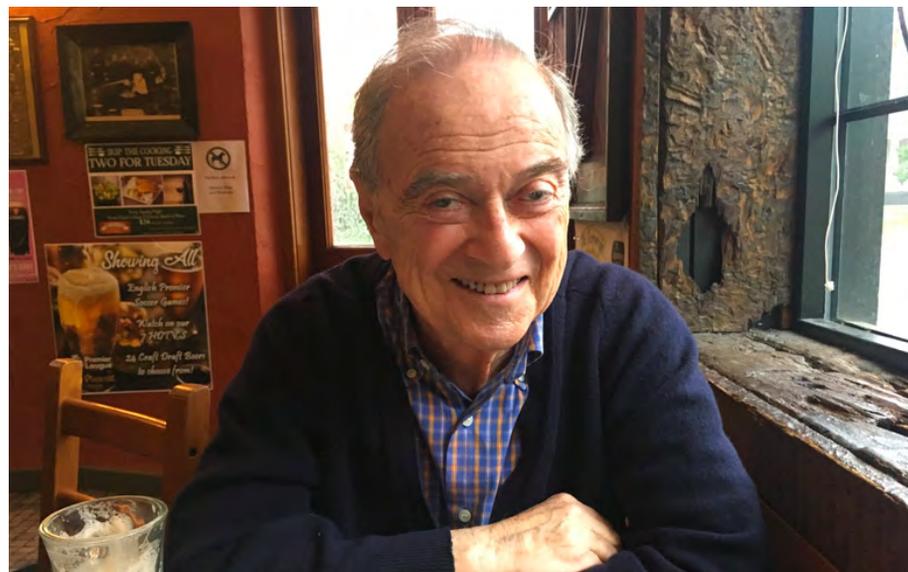
## “Why I Write”

by Paul Schwaber

**B**efore pondering why I write, I should first explain why I don't write. I don't because it's lonely, daunting, burdensome. It's not like teaching, or leading a discussion, both of which I much prefer for their social immediacy, the sense I get quickly of whether I'm reaching others and they me. On my own, I don't easily feel that what I'm delivering is worthwhile, to say nothing of original, or even illuminating. There is also a recurrent self-recognition of minor depression, which requires realization and transformation. It is not easy getting started. Nor is it easy to stay at it.

But I do write because I've come to believe I have something to add—off the couch, as we say—about linkages between my two professional ranges of interest: imaginative literature and psychoanalysis, their enlivening commonalities and significant differences. If literature offers “imitation of life,” which the fascinations of shared language can communicate, psychoanalysis does also, though in different ways. Both enhance recognition of others and oneself. Both open us to the wonders, puzzlements, and pains of human experience. Both enable empathy for and reflection about the dilemmas, limits, and

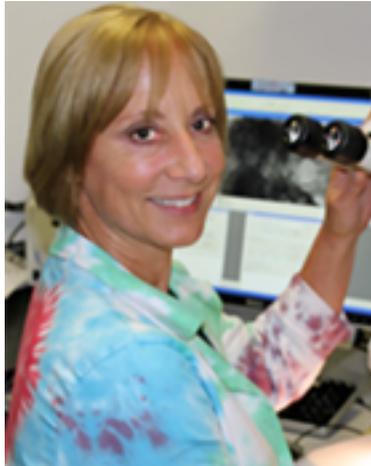
*But I do write because I've come to believe I have something to add—off the couch, as we say...*



desires of persons, and of course of one's own. Thus, though I have published quite a bit, if not as consistently as many in either of my professions, my particular pride is a book I published on James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Yale UP, 1999), focusing especially on the central personalities—indeed, as my book's title indicates, “the cast of characters,” and dealing with the brilliance and challenge of that great novel's narrative techniques and major figures. The book is informed by traditions of literary scholarship and psychoanalytic understanding—while expressing, as is only fitting, my own range of understanding, feeling, and appreciation.

**ALLAN BERLIND**

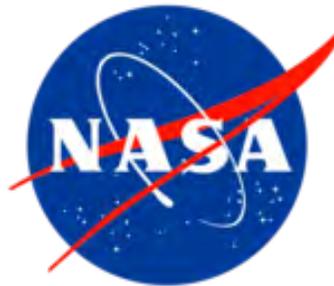
I'd like to report on the current research of one of my former students. **KAREN OCORR** received her Ph.D. in the early 1980s for work done in my lab on the neural regulation of heartbeat in lobsters. After she left my lab, she supplemented the training



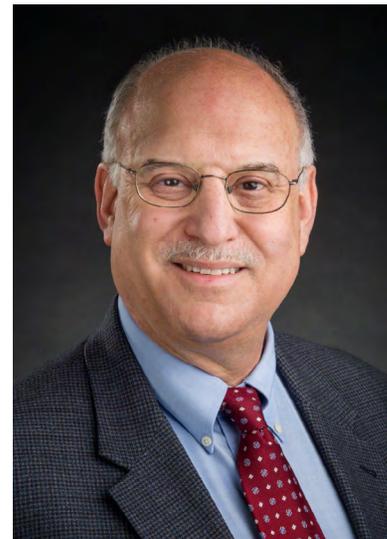
she had received in neurophysiology and neurochemistry by gaining expertise in biochemistry and molecular biology. She currently works at the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute in San Diego.

For the past several years, Karen has been sending

experiments up into space, collaborating with NASA on studies of the long-term effects of weightlessness on heart physiology and biochemistry. She now works on fruit flies (*Drosophila*), but she has found that several ion channels that are important in heart function in the flies are also important in mammalian hearts. A more detailed description of her work, and a recent four-minute interview with her about her work with NASA can be found at her website, <https://ocorrlab.org/>

**STEW GILLMOR**

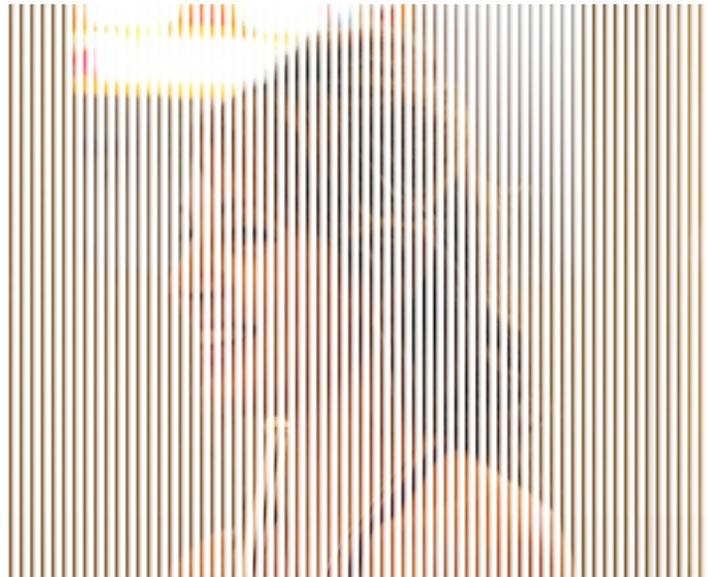
One of my best remembered students is **ELLIS NEUFELD** '79, M.D., Ph.D. Ellis is memorable not only for his splendid performance in two of my courses in the history of science but also for his leadership of the Wesleyan Pep Band as tenor sax player. Ellis graduated in chemistry or biochem, I believe, and went to medical school at Washington University in St. Louis. He practiced at Harvard Medical School for 26 years and at Dana Farber Children's Cancer Center as hematologist and pediatric oncologist. Four years ago Ellis was named Executive Vice President, Clinical Director, and Physician-in-Chief of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee and its nine clinics in eight different states.



Ellis was a vigorous Pep Band leader, forcefully urging the band to "get your horns up, sit up and play out." As most of us who listened to the band in those days recall, no one was ever ruled out of the Pep Band for not being "good enough." Ellis was a delight as a student and a real credit to Wesleyan in his brilliant career thereafter.

## JOYCE LOWRIE

After majoring in French at Wesleyan, **JULIE SCOLNIK '78** has gone on to have a distinguished career in music, playing the flute as a soloist, a chamber musician, and orchestra member. Together with her husband she founded, and since 1997 has served as the artistic director of, a chamber-music series originally known as Andover Chamber Music; her own group, MISTRAL, has been its ensemble-in-residence. Today the series also carries the name MISTRAL. Like so many of our students, Julie has a strong commitment to social justice; she is committed to bringing fine music to low-income communities, and has organized concerts to raise money for underserved women suffering from breast cancer. She has also written a memoir, "A Certain Shade of Blue," which has just found a publisher and will be available for preordering in early August. It harks back to her time in Paris when she was a participant in Wesleyan's program. Reading her work has been a trip down Memory Lane for me. To learn more about Julie, go to MISTRAL's Web site: <https://www.mistralmusic.org/about-us-2/>.



## PRISCILLA MEYER

*I have two mini-tales involving connections between former students of mine and Nabokov.*

**Tale 1:** Susanne Fusso and Joe Siry are friends with Nicholas Adams, a retired professor of architectural history at Vassar, whose father was in the English Department at Cornell when Vladimir Nabokov was teaching there. Nicholas Adams was finishing an article about Nabokov's fountain pens (actual and in his fiction), and had a permission problem, so Susanne and Joe referred him to me. In the course of our correspondence, we discussed our shared love of fountain pens, and Italic nibs. He must have obtained the permission he needed, because he submitted his piece to *Pen World* magazine. Shortly thereafter I received an e-mail from a former student of ours in the Russian Department, **NICKY PESSAROFF**, who wrote that he is the editor-in-chief of *Pen World* ("the only English-language magazine about collectible fountain pens and handwriting culture"). After seeing my name in Professor Adams's acknowledgments, he wrote to say how much he'd enjoyed studying Gogol with us.



**Tale 2:** I was teaching Nabokov's *Pale Fire* in 2018 and a student brought in a letter from his grandmother, which he read to the class. It moved us all. I reproduce it here, with his grandmother's permission (honoring her request to remain anonymous):

**W**

## Profiles and Memories of Former Students

“To My Grandson Jack:

I am so pleased to hear you are reading Nabokov. I took a class with him in 1950, in the Spring of my sophomore year at Cornell. It was not a course on his own work or other Russian literature. It was titled: *The Thematic Lines in Charles Dickens’ Bleak House*.

He was of some renown then, but was not yet the towering figure he would become. He had written only two novels in English to date, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* which we knew quite well, and a dystopian novel called *Bend Sinister*, which none of us had read at the time. I should expect that Mrs. Meyer has had the privilege of reading some of his earlier works in the original Russian. I have since gone back and enjoyed many of them in English and French, but I doubt they read perfectly as intended.

“As a professor, he was quite aloof. I can see him now in my mind’s eye seeming rather eccentric, always moving about the room, pacing relentlessly. He was rarely at ease. Not a patient man, he took joy in improving the understanding his students possessed about literature, but was not always kind in his approach.

“His wife, Vera, sat in the front row for every class. It was rather unusual, but her presence seemed to calm him. At the

precise moment a smile from Professor Nabokov could have warmed up the room, it was often his wife who would adjust her shoulders a half turn and offer a warm beam to the room, as if to say her husband was doing his best.

“In class, Nabokov would rarely speak of his career. Once, however, in disciplining a student who had been unable to produce the required piece for the day and cited poor working conditions in his flat as an excuse, Nabokov explained to the young man that he wrote *Sebastian Knight* in the bathroom of his Paris apartment, using a bidet as a makeshift desk, so surely writing can take place under most any condition.

“I can say there was one student of whom Nabokov was rather fond. It was my friend Ruth, whom I had gone to grade school with and was taking this class as a Freshman at Cornell. Ruth was amongst the brightest in the class, but beyond her intelligence, she seemed to understand how displaced he felt, so far from home, she being the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants herself. I remember being somewhat jealous of the attention my friend received, but genius has a way of finding genius, and this was no exception. Four years later, my friend Ruth Bader got married and became Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Thirty-nine years after that, she was nominated to the United States Supreme Court.

“Anyhow, I do hope you enjoy *Pale Fire*!

“All my love,  
Your Adoring Grandmother”

## Emeritus College

This program currently has 17 faculty members listed who have been approved by their departments to offer courses or tutorials. In the fall of 2020 tutorials were supervised by Susan Lourie, Nancy Schwartz, and Krishna Winston. If you would like to join the college, please get in touch with Richie Adelstein ([radelstein@wesleyan.edu](mailto:radelstein@wesleyan.edu)).



Wasch Center Programs

## The Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series

All the lectures will be delivered over Zoom at the traditional time, 4:30 on Wednesday afternoons. Reminders, with links, will be posted on the Community Forum and sent to all on the retiree listserv.



**February 24:**

**Elizabeth Bobrick**

“Teaching Classics in Prison through the Center for Prison Education”

**March 3:**

**Brian Stewart**

“Observations of Insects in my Backyard”

**March 17:**

**Ellen Thomas**

“Mass Extinctions Over Geologic Time”

**April 7:**

**Joop Varekamp**

“Living in a Polluted World”

**April 28:**

**Jennifer Raynor**

“The Economics of Climate Change Policy”

**Around Earth Day, celebrated on April 22,**

**Brian Stewart**

will deliver his traditional Earth Day Rant;  
information will be forthcoming....



# The Wesleyan Institute for Lifelong Learning

Note: Some courses will take place outdoors in late spring/early summer, with appropriate social distancing. Visit the [WILL site](#) to register and for complete course descriptions, dates and times.

## SPRING 2021: “Embracing the Great Outdoors”

### History

**Lighting the ‘Dark’ Ages: Uncovering Early European Culture & History.**  
R. Friswell

**Hiding in Plain Sight: New England’s Complicity in a Slave Economy.**  
Meadow Dibble

*day-long event*

**WWII Day-Long Event: Envisioning Peace—Former Allies Jockey in a Postwar World.**  
Giulio Gallarotti & R. Friswell

**\*\*Guilford Architectural & History Tour: At a Crossroads in Time.**  
Tracy Tomaselli & Dennis Culliton

### Literature

**Tristan: Love Story for the Ages.**  
Herb Arnold

### Art

**Mary Cassatt: American Artist, Modern Woman.**  
Rhea Higgins

### Psychology

**Hope! Strategies in Times of Isolation, Loss and Grief.**  
Jan Carlsson-Bull

### Writing

**\*\*Fiction-Writing Workshop: Engaging the Great Outdoors.**  
Sari Rosenblatt

### Science

**\*\*A River Runs Through It: Exploring the Connecticut River and Environs.**  
M.S. Riverquest & Wick Griswold

**Regenerative Farming: Sustainable Agriculture & Global Well-Being.**  
Rachel Lindsay

NOTE: \*\* denotes on-site, outdoor classes, NOT available on Zoom.



# Frances Sheng

Dear friends,

I am sorry to inform you that Frances M. Sheng, Adjunct Associate Professor of Asian Languages and Literatures, emerita, passed away on January 3 at the age of 95.

Frances completed her undergraduate degree at Fu Jen Catholic University in Beijing, and her MA at the University of Connecticut. In 1972 she arrived at Wesleyan, where she founded Wesleyan's Chinese language program and inspired generations of students by teaching Chinese faithfully until her retirement in 1994. During her 22 years at Wesleyan, Frances was involved in the establishment of the East Asian Studies program as well as study abroad in China, and she founded the Frances M. Sheng Prize, which is still awarded today for excellence in Chinese language and excellence in Japanese language.

Longtime colleague and John E. Andrus Professor of History William Johnston recalls: "Frances' students loved and admired her for being a demanding but caring teacher. Frances created a foundation for our program in Chinese language instruction, whose continued success is itself a tribute to her earlier efforts. CEAS and Wesleyan owe a debt of gratitude to Frances."

Ellen Widmer, Professor of Asian Languages and Literatures, emerita, remembers Frances as "full of dignity but also humor. She cared about people's qualities as a person." Ellen also said that although Frances ran a "tight ship," her classes were also always full of laughter. Mansfield Freeman Professor of East Asian Studies, emerita, Vera Schwarcz said: "How well I remember Frances' kindness in my first years at Wesleyan. Her great sense of humor. How she pushed her students to do their best. May her soul rest in peace."

Frances is survived by her sister, Rita Mao Hechler;

her brother, Mao Yuan; her daughter, Diane Sheng; her niece, Lucille Sheng-French; and four grandchildren: Stacy Tarver Patterson, Andrew Herzer, Aaron Tarver, and Alexandra Herzer. If desired and in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the CAF/Suzanne Sheng Fund, a scholarship fund for Connecticut architectural students, c/o Connecticut Architecture Foundation, AIA Connecticut, 370 James St., Suite 402, New Haven, CT 06513.

Sincerely,

*Nicole*

Nicole Stanton  
*Provost and Vice President for Academic  
 Affairs, Professor of Dance*



*Other tributes to Frances include the following:*

From Hsiao-Ching Hsu,

"Frances dedicated most of her life to Wesleyan. There is a Chinese idiom describing a successful teacher: 'Peaches and plums (indicating students) all over the world.' That is our Frances."

From Yoshiko Samuel, who first reported Frances's passing and played an invaluable part in collecting information and coordinating Wesleyan's response with the family,

"She was, and remains, one of my most valued, respected colleagues and dearest friends."

From Tony Chambers, after the on-line memorial organized by Frances's family,

"It was a wonderful gathering, to celebrate a wonderful person. I feel as though I'd lost a sister."

# Donald Russell

Dear friends,

I am sorry to inform you that Donald Russell, Professor of Physical Education, emeritus, and former Director of Athletics and Head Football Coach, passed away on February 2 at the age of 93.

Don earned his BA from Bates College, where he played offensive and defensive tackle for the football team. Arriving at Wesleyan in 1960, he served as an assistant football coach under Norm Daniels, then became Head Football Coach from 1964 through 1970, after which point he stepped down from that position, though he remained as the head of athletics until his retirement in 1991.

Don led the Cardinals to three Little Three championships ('66, '69, '70) and to a stunning undefeated 8-0 record in 1969. All of this took place during tumultuous years on campus with demonstrations, bomb threats, and sit-ins. In fact, the year the football team was undefeated, Wesleyan had to get a restraining order to prevent a demonstration from interfering with the homecoming game with Williams. John Biddiscombe, Adjunct Professor of Physical Education, emeritus said:

“Throughout this difficult time, Don’s steadfast leadership and strong relationship with the players was instrumental in the team’s focus on football and accomplishing what no Wesleyan football team has done since.” Don was elected into the Wesleyan Athletics Hall of Fame in 2016.

Throughout his career, Don was also a leader at the national level, serving in many prestigious positions with the NCAA, as the chair of the Division III Advisory Council, and as



President of the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference. “Don was a founding administrator of the NESCAC and a strong advocate of the scholar-athlete model,” recalled Gale Lackey, Adjunct Professor of Physical Education, Emerita. “His leadership was instrumental in shepherding the advancement of Title IX as it pertained to women’s athletics at Wesleyan. Under his directorship, fourteen of the existing fifteen women’s varsity sports were initiated. He was a well-loved coach and a highly respected administrator.”

In addition to all of his work at Wesleyan and nationally, Don was a very active Middletown citizen, serving as a member of the Middletown Board of Education, the Middletown Common Council, the Police Commission, the Middlesex Hospital Board of Cooperators, to name just a few of his many volunteer roles. Finally, Don was also a Justice of the Peace, and conducted the marriage ceremony of an athletic department staff member.

Don is survived by his wife of 38 years, Joyce Hughes Russell; his children Beth Russell Campo, Cathy Russell Pleines, Andy Russell, and Debbie Russell Smith; his first wife, Helen O. Russell, the mother of his children; and

Joyce’s two children; as well as 14 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

Sincerely,

*Nicole*

Nicole Stanton

*Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Professor of Dance*



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Retired Faculty  
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Middletown, CT  
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860.685.3005

[www.wesleyan.edu/  
waschcenter/](http://www.wesleyan.edu/waschcenter/)

Designed by  
Mariah E. Reisner '00, MA '04  
Samari Studios, LLC

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of  
*The Wasch Center Newsletter*.

We welcome news and notes (and features too!)  
for our next issue, planned for the start of the  
fall semester.

Please submit contributions to Krishna Winston  
at [kwinston@wesleyan.edu](mailto:kwinston@wesleyan.edu).