



**CAS Outstanding Teaching Fellow Awards
Academic Year 2015/16**

**Monday, May 2, 2016
3:30 p.m.**

CAS 132

CAS Outstanding Teaching Fellows, Academic Year 2015-16

Most of our PhD students are planning to enter the academy, and as such, the training, guidance, and experience we give them in developing their skills as teachers and academic mentors is a critical part of their graduate training. As teaching fellows, these teacher/scholars play very important roles in contributing to the high quality of undergraduate education at Boston University. Very often they are the instructors who get to know our undergraduates best in the earliest stages of their college careers. Each year we honor the best of our teaching fellows – those who stand out already in making a major difference in the teaching mission of Boston University. Please join me in admiring their dedication and work, and in wishing them well as they continue to grow as educators through their later careers.

- Ann E. Cudd, Dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

American & New England Studies

Sarah Leventer

Sarah Leventer came into the American & New England Studies Program with an MFA in Film Studies from Boston University's College of Communications and has become a wonderful interdisciplinary scholar and teacher. Her dissertation project, "Beasts of the Southern Screen: The Global South in Post-1960s American Cinema," addresses Hollywood's changing portrayals of the American south. Sarah says that she is "primarily interested in the intersections between race, gender, sexuality, and visualizations of nationalism on film." Her students comment that, "She is always able to stimulate excitement and interest," and that "Sarah is amazing – personable, knowledgeable, and funny – smiley face."

Anthropology

Dat Nguyen

Dat M. Nguyen served as a teaching fellow for two quite different courses this year: Children and Culture, and our Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. He excelled in both. Students generally appreciated his quiet intelligence and dedication, and faculty praised his leadership and hard work. His talent as a teacher is already clear, and it has been a pleasure to have him teaching in the department. He will be spending next year in Vietnam, conducting field research for his dissertation on Buddhist orphanages and changes in public morality there.

Archaeology

Paulo Medina

Paulo is a Mesoamerican archaeologist who previously served as TF for AR 101 (Introduction to Archaeology) with Professor Carballo, and is currently TF of the Guatemala Abroad Program with Professor Saturno, who notes the following for his exemplary performance there: "This is the second time I've had Paulo as a Teaching Fellow here in Guatemala. The first time in 2014 he did an excellent job, running discussion sections, grading notebooks, supervising and counseling students. This time, however, he has been simply outstanding. He produced a field methods exercise workbook and largely ran the Antigua portion of the abroad program. He repeatedly spent overnights in the local hospital as numerous students suffered from intestinal issues. He was available on weekends designing outings for the students to climb volcanoes. Essentially he took the excellent job he did last time and converted it into something really special." For AR 101 last semester, Paulo incorporated his scholarly interests and knowledge in interpreting burial assemblages into a successful class lecture and an innovative section, which allowed students to evaluate the social meaning of mortuary remains and their associated artifacts using collections we house in the department. Beyond the classroom, Paulo has also been working with undergraduates on calibrating and analyzing lithic (stone tool) samples using our portable X-ray fluorescence (PXRF). We greatly appreciate his commitment to working with, and caring for students.

Astronomy

Danielle Pahud

Danielle has served as a teaching fellow in an introductory course for non-majors, AS101 (The Solar System) during both semesters in 2015-16. Most students enrolled in this course have limited science backgrounds, and many are rusty in their mathematical skills. The professors serving as the lead instructors of AS101 both asked Danielle to take the lead role among the TFs, since the other TFs were graduate students in the Physics Department and therefore less knowledgeable about the phenomenology of astronomy. She has excelled in this role, which has resulted in a high level of student satisfaction with the course. The professors report that Danielle is highly attentive to her students and their needs. In each course, she has taught nearly 50 students spread across 4

laboratories, and she knows them all by name. Her teaching style maintains a high-energy, involved, and motivated environment. She puts in extra effort to be as clear as possible in her explanations of course material and laboratory procedures. She has also been very accommodating of specific student needs. In Spring 2016, there is a graduating senior had to miss several labs due to a visa issue, but requires the course credit in order to graduate. Danielle has been willing to put in the time and effort so that this particular undergraduate can complete the missed laboratory exercises and still graduate. There are numerous other examples of how Daniele's dedication and attention to student needs promotes a successful learning environment for students.

Biology

Sanda Zolj

Sanda has served as a Teaching Fellow for several different courses in Biology including Introductory Biology, Genetics, and Genetics Laboratory. Sanda has also taught high school students through Summer Term and mentored seven undergraduates in the research laboratory. Her nominator Prof. John Celenza writes: "I have had the opportunity to observe Sanda's excellent teaching skills in the laboratory and discussion setting... She has developed a real skill at getting students to interpret their own results and to make conclusions based on their own data.... Sanda does not simply give students answers to problems. She leads them with questions so they can arrive at the answer themselves. Having seen Sanda with students, I note that she exhibits much more patience with struggling students than I have!" Sanda has also taken a leadership role in mentoring other teaching fellows. Prof. Celenza writes: "Sanda routinely helps other TFs develop ways to present problems to their class and also provides suggestions on how to encourage student participation... She further demonstrated her commitment to teaching by serving as a TF mentor in the newly formed Biology TF mentoring program." Sanda is ranked very highly on student evaluations, and comments on her teaching are enthusiastic. She is described as "super kind and caring," "the best TF ever," "excited about teaching," and "great at explaining complicated subjects." One student sums it up very clearly: "She was probably the most enthusiastic TF ever. In the universe."

BU Marine Program (BUMP)

Karina Scavo

The BU Marine Program has nominated Karina Scavo as the Outstanding Teaching Fellow for academic year 2015-2016 in recognition of her outstanding performance in "Tropical Marine Invertebrates." This course, offered as part of the Marine Semester, involves a 12-day field trip to Calabash Caye Field Station, a remote marine lab located 33 km off the coast of Belize. In this course, Karina was responsible for leading students in the field, providing advice and mentorship in their research projects, assisting them in overcoming logistical challenges, and ensuring their safety. In all of these responsibilities, Karina exhibited exceptional professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm, often putting the students' educational experience and safety above her own personal comfort. Her efforts did not go unnoticed by our students, who awarded her a 4.8 out of a possible 5.0 in "overall instructor rating." Their comments on her performance were effusively complimentary. In the words of one student, "Karina always goes out of her way to help students. One of the most dependable people I have ever met." Another described her as "a great mentor and inspiration as a near-peer. Her passion for her work and enthusiasm to engage with students shines through." Karina engaged the students by directly involving them in her own research on the potential role of mangrove habitat as an environmental refuge for corals in times of extreme environmental stress. Karina's innovative research project has recently been recognized by the National Science Foundation, who awarded her a 3-year Graduate Research Fellowship.

Chemistry

Alexis Young

Professor John Snyder writes, "Alexis, a third year graduate student was a discussion and lab TF for CH 211/212 (Intensive Organic Chemistry) last year, and also the lab and discussion TF this spring in CH 212, both of which I taught. This class is designed with a highly coordinated teaching strategy blending lecture, discussion, lab, and office hours of the teaching fellows and myself, which required a substantial amount of effort from Alexis who played a key role in all four venues. Such a plan can only be implemented, and ultimately be successful if the TF's are excellent and capable of functioning as top of the line teaching faculty, and Alexis certainly was super and highly dependable!"

In this class of ~30 students, Alexis alternated between the discussion sections each week, as well as running her own lab section, and attending all lectures. Thus, she had intimate knowledge of the overall goals of the course, and was able to mentor in all aspects. In her role as a lab TF, Alexis had to train the students in the use of MesRec Nova, the software package for off-line NMR data processing, something we would not have been able to achieve without her efforts. These are advanced technological skills that requires superb, patient TFs for appropriate training. Since she worked in both the lab section and in the lecture, she also had to take on grading of the weekly class homework, as well as the lab report grading. She was extremely careful and thorough in her grading, worked with students to improve their writing skills, and did all of this with an exceptionally positive attitude. She was a critical component of the course. Alexis is truly a dedicated, unbelievably disciplined teacher who is really marvelous with these students.

Classical Studies

David West

Since his arrival in our PhD program in 2011 as a Dean's Fellow, David has taught an array of courses in the department, from Greek and Roman civilization to Roman history to the first year of Latin as a stand-alone instructor. According to his teaching evaluations and faculty observations, he has excelled in the classroom, proving himself a lively and effective teacher. A faculty observer remarks on his ability, in a two-hour-long class, to combine humor, patience, and encouragement, and to keep the entire classroom of students engaged. We expect he will have an outstanding career as a teacher.

After completing all other PhD requirements and defending his prospectus in June 2015, David West has made exceptional progress on his dissertation on Cicero's arguments in favor of political engagement from across his many writings. He has also already begun to establish a substantial scholarly profile in the field through several conference papers, including two at our national Society for Classical Studies meetings (competing for a place with faculty as well as students); his 2016 SCS offering was a controversial but very well received paper on Cicero's arguments for political engagement in his philosophical works (part of chapter 1 of the dissertation). Faculty in attendance noted how deftly and confidently he managed a lively question period among major scholars in his field.

Computer Science

Katherine Zhao

Katherine Zhao is a 3rd year PhD student in the BU Computer Science department. She has served as an excellent Teaching Fellow for four semesters, supporting CS 111 twice, CS 210, and most recently CS 591. Prof. Kollios writes: "I have Katherine Zhao as TF for CS 591 K1 this semester and she is great. I do not think that I would have been able to teach this course without a TF like her." Katherine taught four sections of CS 111 lab in 2015 and three sections in 2012, all with extremely positive evaluations. Students wrote, "I would definitely want her in any future classes", " She is very clear and precise when explaining new concepts", " Great TA", "Has an unbelievable grasp on all the topics", "Can explain concepts in the simplest of terms and makes them super easy to understand", "I cannot say enough good things about Katherine.", and "If there is an award for best TF, she should win uncontested."

Earth & Environment

Angela Rigden

Angela is extremely hardworking and professional as a TF. She takes on every challenge with a can do attitude and her instructors receive constant positive feedback from the students in her classes. Angela's dissertation research involves developing, testing, and applying methods to infer past terrestrial evaporation rates from archived weather data records. Her most recent research results show declines in evapotranspiration over the continental U.S. and evidence that these declines are due to plants closing their stomata more frequently due to increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide and to decreases in relative humidity.

Economics

Andrew Busey

Andrew is a 4th year PhD candidate researching the economics of urbanization in developing countries. As a teaching fellow for economics principles courses, his thorough preparation and great presentation skills make him a very effective discussion leader. His students always appreciate the patience, sense of humor, and enthusiasm he brings to each week of his discussion sections.

English

Julia Mix-Barrington

Julia is a scholar of Renaissance Drama, and an inspiring teacher. Her evaluations are always glowing. In her most recent class, she received a perfect score of 5 from ALL her students. One student described her as "the best teacher I've ever had" and another said "this is easily the best class I've taken at BU." Students also regularly comment on how much their writing has improved in her classes. In addition to her exceptional performance in the classroom, Julia brings her knowledge of Renaissance drama to the BU community through her leadership of BU's theatrical group Willing Suspension, which stages non-Shakespearean Renaissance plays. In other words, she is an ideal scholar-teacher who helps her students see how the learning they do in the classroom can extend to a lifelong engagement with literature and the performing arts.

History

Katie Moore

History's nomination is Katie Moore, for her service in HI 101 (Dawn of Europe) and HI 191 (What is Europe?). Professor Haberkern gushes with enthusiasm, writing that, "Katie is a consummate professional. She is very confident with material that falls well outside her expertise; she is entirely competent in arranging field trips, grading, and working one-on-one with students, and she is a great deal of help in working through larger intellectual issues in the class. More specifically, HI 191 was a class I had to teach for the first time, and I found this experience much aided by Katie's involvement and her hard won confidence as an instructor. As a side note, I also worked with Katie in HI 101 in the past, when we moved from required to optional sections, and she was similarly excellent in that semester."

History of Art & Architecture

Steven Burges

Steve has shown himself to be a deeply committed and inspiring teacher. One of the students in his AH 111 section commented that Steve was the best teacher she ever had because he was so enthusiastic, knowledgeable and always could find a way to explain concepts by bringing in a contemporary analogy. His commitment to his students extends beyond the classroom. His students comment again and again on his helpful guidance at office hours and via email-- at literally every hour of the day and night.

Steve is indeed tremendously engaged in the discipline of art history. And his erudition runs deep. He uses his skills as a Latinist to draw students in - reading both classical and medieval inscriptions with his classes to help them interpret images. This lends a sense of immediacy to the material. He is able to expand the meaning of medieval imagery through his profound knowledge of Roman art by way of his thorough understanding of the Greek tradition. His teaching is as lively and witty as it is informed and serious. He is a deeply compelling scholar and he never misses a beat. He stands at the beginning of a brilliant academic career. Any student he teaches will count herself or himself lucky.

Mathematics & Statistics

Aleksandrina Goeva

Quite simply, Aleksandrina is one of the most outstanding teaching fellows we have had in our department in over 20 years. Her nomination is supported unanimously and enthusiastically by the entire departmental Executive Committee. Her performance in the classroom and her help for the students in her classes has been exceptional. Additionally, her work in our brand new MS in Statistical Practice program has been first-rate; she has played an important role in the success of the first year of this exciting program, both for the Masters students she works with and helps to understand the material, and for the faculty who teach in the MSSP.

Philosophy

Valerie Williams

Professor Susanne Sreedhar writes, “Valerie Williams is one of the best teaching fellows the Philosophy department has ever seen. The faculty has agreed that Valerie’s performance in the classroom has been outstanding. Her course evaluations are superb, and a good number of the students who have worked with her go on to major or minor in philosophy. She consistently goes above and beyond the required TF duties. She provides detailed feedback to students on every assignment, even those that are graded pass/fail. This means that many students show real improvement as the course continues. She is a natural in front of a classroom: personable and funny while being clear and rigorous (a hard combination to achieve). I can speak from personal experience, as she has given a number of guest lectures in my courses, and I find myself admiring her pedagogical insight. My own teaching has improved as a result of having Valerie as my teaching fellow.” Valerie’s dissertation is tentatively titled “Engendering Civic Virtue in the Early Modern Contractarian Tradition: The Role of Women.” She defended her prospectus in January 2015 and is well on her way to writing a promising thesis.

Physics

Samuel Kalish

Samuel Kalish is recognized for his hard work and outstanding performance as a Teaching Fellow in the PY211/212 introductory physics sequence for scientists and engineers. Cited by some students as the best TF they have ever had at BU, Sam is known not only for his clarity and patience in explaining concepts, but also for the great amount of time and effort he puts in to help each and every one of his students succeed. We are pleased to nominate him for this award.

Political Science

Valeriya Kamenova

Even though she is just a second year Ph.D. student (entering her first year of teaching), Valeriya has excelled as an instructor in sections of PO 171 (Introduction to International Relations). Her teaching evaluations are superb,

and she was the most highly rated Teaching Fellow in Political Science this semester. One student wrote this evaluation of Valeriya: she is “very determined to help students succeed and do well.” Many other instances of student praise could easily be sighted, but space does not allow. In effect, the department is hugely pleased with Valeriya as a Teaching Fellow and is delighted to nominate this devoted and effective teacher for an award.

Psychological & Brain Sciences

Megan Flom

The Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences is pleased to put forward Megan Flom as Outstanding Teaching Fellow for the 2015-2016 academic year. Megan was nominated by two faculty members for whom she had served as TF, both of whom spoke to her enrichment of the education of students through in-class preparation and successful teaching of discussion sections for the large classes. One of her nominators provided multiple excerpts of student evaluations of Megan, which praised her as knowledgeable, approachable, organized, and passionate about teaching. Many also commented that she clearly cared about the students, asking for their feedback and then actually using it to guide her instruction throughout the semester. Her work as a teaching fellow is regarded by both faculty and students as exemplary.

Religion

Kira Ganga Keiffer

Kira Ganga Kieffer’s research interests center on the role of religion in American history and society, with an emphasis on American evangelicalism and the rise of fundamentalism in relation to politics and culture. Her broader teaching interests include American religious history, Christianity, introduction to world religions, and religion and politics.

Kira has served as a Teaching Fellow for introductory courses on Religion and Islam. One professor she has worked with writes that Kira was “an extremely dedicated Teaching Fellow; she was very engaged during the semester, continuously offering creative ways to deal with student issues, suggesting solutions for grading, volunteering to take on extra work such as creating interactive grading sheets, and pro-actively involving herself in the teaching process, asking helpful questions during lectures to stimulate conversation.”

Another professor notes her poise and attentiveness to matters that have been delicate and/or required special care or attention. One professor writes that “out of [all] the TFs I have worked with, Kira stood out as the most dedicated and promising teacher.”

Romance Studies

Monique Roy

Monique Roy has been teaching with the Department of Romance Studies since the fall semester of 2011. She has taught across the full required course sequence in French and most recently is teaching a LF303 course of her own design entitled Francophone North America. Monique has consistently proven herself to be a skilled instructor who creates a classroom dynamic that motivates and engages students in their study of French. She is a generous colleague who embraces the true spirit of collegiality by always attending coordination meetings, offering to help other instructors when needed, and openly sharing her thoughtfully crafted course materials. She consistently receives excellent evaluations with students commenting on her enthusiasm and effectiveness as an instructor as well as her ability to encourage participation of all students. Monique has always gone above and beyond as a TF in French and her dedication to her students and students at BU in general (she has also served as a resident advisor) is beyond exemplary and worthy of high praise.

Sociology

Rebecca Farber

Rebecca Farber has served as a TF for Professor Alya Guseva’s Sociology of Healthcare class in Fall 2015. “She brought incredible creativity and energy to this role,” writes Professor Guseva. “Not only was she an effective and fair grader and a charismatic discussion leader, establishing incredible rapport with the students, but she went miles above and beyond the usual tasks of a TF. Completely on her own initiative Rebecca set up a blog space for the course, and asked students, as part of their discussion section participation, to make three kinds of contributions, one designed by the instructor and part of the existing class syllabus (a brief critical analysis of 3 pieces of health news), and two entirely new: regular discussion questions to enhance section meetings and two “process reflections” intended to make students think about their engagement

with the class, and to give us needed feedback. Rebecca was also extremely thoughtful and creative in running review sessions prior to exams, putting together sample “warm-up” questions and slides with summaries of topics, all without my prompting and on her own initiative. Rebecca is incredibly organized, reliable and responsive, very sought-after qualities, particularly in moments of occasional classroom crises. Her reliability and creativity made me feel that I had a real partner in teaching this course, someone who would always have my back, if needed, and would do it in style.”

Writing Program

Sam Shupe

A Ph.D. candidate in the American and New England Studies Program, Sam began teaching in the Writing Program in fall 2014. He is now in his fourth semester teaching a WR course with a striking title: "American Sweat: The Origins of Modern Sport and Leisure." Course evaluation numbers have been consistently superb, and students regularly remark on the way Sam combines an infectious passion for his material with a rigorous approach to teaching essential skills in writing and reading.

Comments from the most recent evaluations, fall 2015, give a sense of Sam's qualities as a teacher:

-“Every single assignment and reading given was helpful/useful when it came to writing the paper. There was no instance where I felt like time was wasted.”

-“This was a great writing class that has helped me grow as a writer + reader”

-“Changed my perspective on not only sweat, but American culture.... I was surprised to find how much I've grown as a writer. This knowledge I have gained is priceless and I'm very thankful.”

-“Each class had a particular goal and either assignments or workshop that would assist students.... This course was always the favorite part of my day because Mr. Shupe was always so energetic & kind & helpful &... I know my writing improved so much.”