

# ARF NOTES

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California State University, Northridge



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WEBSITE: <http://www.csun.edu/arf>



## President's Message: Diane Schwartz

It is the end of the 2024-2025 academic year, and this will be my last *ARF Notes* message as **ARF** President. A new Board will take office, and Cynthia Rawitch will become the 2025-2026 President on July 1st.

Our Spring 2025 **ARF** program schedule continues in full swing. Members will take a "field trip" to the Norton Simon Museum on April 17. **ARF** members and guests will be transported to the museum in a comfortable bus, courtesy of Councilman John Lee. Attendees will spend their time enjoying the museum exhibits and grounds, and eating lunch at the museum.

Next up is the **ARF** Memorial Graduate Project Awards brunch on Saturday May 3rd at the CSUN Orchard Conference Center. Four CSUN graduate students were selected by the Awards Committee for their outstanding graduate projects. These students will give a short presentation on their projects at the brunch. These presentations have always been interesting and

well received by the attendees. Tim Fox chaired the Awards committee.

Finally, there is the traditional Annual Meeting and Picnic on June 7th at the CSUN Arbor Grill patio. All **ARF** members are invited. The 2025-2026 **ARF** Board will be elected at the Annual meeting.

This is the time to thank the current **ARF** Board members, and leaders of the special interest groups, for all the volunteer help and hard work they give to make **ARF** the excellent organization that it is. Thanks to all of you. Special thanks to our Program Chair, Patricia Miller, and her Program Committee who work continuously to provide the great **ARF** programs throughout the year. Another special thanks to Cynthia Rawitch who is taking on the role of **ARF** President for the second time. As Vice President/ President-Elect this year, Cynthia was essential to me for discussions on the sometimes difficult issues that came up. Thank you.

With the big fires in Los Angeles this has been a hard year, but it looks like the area is recovering. Best wishes to all.

Diane Schwartz

ARF President 2024-2025

## ARF PROJECTED CALENDAR : 2025 – 2026 - MEETINGS &amp; EVENTS

Date	Event	Time	Location
Fri. September 12, 2025	<b>ARF Board Meeting</b>  <b>ARF Speaker Series</b> <b>Topic:</b> Artificial Intelligence <i>AI Demystified: A conversation for the Thoughtful</i> Presenter: Helen Heinrich-Assoc. VP for Academic Technology-CSUN	10:30 am – 12:00 pm  Noon – 2:30 pm	Orchard Conference Center OCC
Fri. October 10, 2025	<b>ARF Board Meeting</b>  <b>ARF Speaker Series</b> <b>Topic:</b> First Amendment - <i>“Is There Too Much Free Speech?”</i> Speaker: Our very own Bob Rawitch	10:30 am – 12:00 pm  Noon – 2:30 pm	Orchard Conference Center OCC
Fri. November 14, 2025	<b>ARF Board Meeting</b>  <b>ARF Speaker Series - TBA</b>	10:30 am – 12:00 pm Noon – 2:30 pm	Orchard Conference Center
<b>DECEMBER 2025</b>	Happy Holidays to all!		
Fri. January 9, 2026	<b>Program Committee</b> <b>ARF Board</b>	9:30 am – 10:30 pm 10:30 am – 12 noon	Zoom Zoom
Sat. January 17, 2026 Date tentative	<b>“Glad the Holidays Are Over” Banquet</b>		Location TBA
Fri. February 13, 2026	<b>ARF Board Meeting</b> <b>ARF Speaker Series - TBA</b>	10:30 – 12 Noon Noon - 2:30 pm	Orchard Conference Center
Fri. March 13, 2026	<b>Program Committee</b> <b>ARF Board</b> <b>ARF Speaker Series - TBA</b>	10:00 – 10:30 am 10:30 am – 12 noon Noon – 2:30 pm	Orchard Conference Center
Fri. April 10, 2026	<b>Program Committee</b> <b>ARF Board</b>	10:00 – 10:30 am 10:30 am – 12 noon	Zoom Zoom
<b>April 15, 2026</b> Date tentative	<b>ARF Field Trip</b> – Stay tuned Investigating: F. L. Wright’s Hollyhock House, LA The Nethercutt Collection Skirball Center	9 am – 3 pm	Transportation - TBD
Sat. May 2, 2026	<b>ARF Memorial Awards Brunch</b>	10:00 am – 2:00 pm	OCC Details to come
Fri. May 8, 2026	<b>Program Committee</b> <b>ARF Board</b>	9:30 am – 10:30 am 10:30 am – 12 noon	ZOOM ZOOM
Sat. June 6, 2026	<b>ARF General Meeting and Picnic</b>	11:00 am – 2:00 pm	CSUN Arbor Grill Details to come.
	<b>No ARF Board meeting in June, July or August</b>		

## **Program Committee Report, by Patricia Miller, Chair, Program Committee**

Spring has arrived and to quote Tolstoy “spring is the time of plans and projects” – the **ARF** Program Committee is hard at work planning the 2025-2026 calendar. The full calendar is published in page 2 of this Newsletter so you will be able to save the dates, especially for the September and October Speaker Series events for which we already have confirmation.

Please note that in **January 2026** we plan on resuming the time-honored tradition of the **ARF** “Glad the Holidays Are Over Banquet.” More details will be forthcoming, but the date is tentatively set for Saturday, January 17, 2026. We hope you will attend and support this **ARF** tradition.

### **Reports of Past Programs**

On **March 14, 2025**, **ARF** members attended the panel discussion – “Connection, Commitment, Protection: CSU-ERFSA What Can They Do for You”. Our speakers were Merry Pawlowski, ERFSA Executive Director, and Tim Fox, ARF ERFSA representative.



Merry provided attendees with background information about ERFSA. The Association was founded in 1985 in response to threats to reduce or eliminate CSU retiree rights and benefits and to encourage continuation of retirees as members of the University community. ERFSA officers were instrumental in convincing the CSU to adopt the resolution which established that “emeritus faculty would be deemed to be continuing members of the academic community along with retaining privileges on the same basis as the general faculty”. Both speakers highlighted important points about ERFSA’s commitment to faculty. These points included ERFSA protection of employees’ retirement funds, and securing voting membership for retired faculty on the CSU Academic Senate. We were reminded that the Association maintains a website at [www.csuerfsa.org](http://www.csuerfsa.org). Merry encouraged everyone attending to access the website, it is the best source for detailed information. ERFSA has a presence on the CSUN campus, Melanie Mamakos is the Office manager. Merry ended her presentation by encouraging all affiliate members to contact her with

any questions and/or concerns. The ERFSA office can be reached at (818) 677-6522 and via email at [csuerfsa@csun.edu](mailto:csuerfsa@csun.edu).

### **ARF Field trip, April 17, 2025 to the Norton Simon Museum**

A contingency of 16 **ARF** members joined together for a self-guided visit to the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena. Transportation to the museum was provided by the Office of Councilman Lee.

We arrived to find that the museum is undergoing a major renovation, though the scaffolding did not affect our meandering through the exhibits. The renovation to upgrade the exterior spaces of the Norton Simon is in response to the Museum’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Many of the major works of art in the galleries were collected by founder/entrepreneur Norton Simon, who moved to LA at the age of 18 with a passion for business and subsequently art. He purchased his first painting at an art gallery in the Ambassador Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard and from thence his insatiable passion for collecting art became a lifelong quest. He created a world-renowned collection of European art from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a collection that we all enjoyed viewing during our stay at the museum. Of course, my favorite gallery was the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Century European Art, I never tire of Botticelli, Lippi, Bellini and Raffaello Sanzio though the focus gallery “Retrospect: 50 years of the Norton Simon” was wonderfully curated and very enlightening.

*Pat Miller*



**Attendees enjoying good company, art, and food!**



**IN MEMORIAM**

**Dr. Nirmal Mishra  
(Electrial Computer**

**Engineering)** died on February 13, 2025 at the age of 93.

Born in Jabalpur, India, Dr. Mishra earned his Bachelor of Engineering (1955) from the University of Saugor, India; Master of Engineering (1959) from the University of Jabalpur; MS in Electrical Engineering (1963) from the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn and Doctorate in Engineering Science (1972) from the New Jersey Institute of Technology.



Before coming to CSUN in 1978, Nirmal was director of the pulmonary physiology lab at Cook County Medical Center in Oak Park, Illinois, later moving to the City of Hope in Duarte where he continued his research in biomedical engineering.

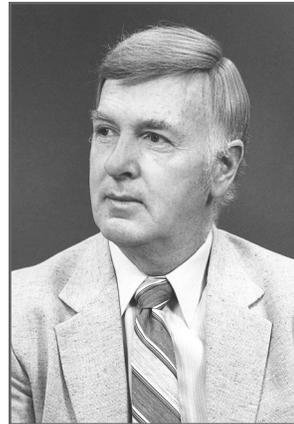
At CSUN, Prof. Mishra’s teaching, research and student mentorship focused on the areas of biomedical instrumentation, signal processing and control systems, while mentoring both his students and junior faculty. During a sabbatical at Harbin Institute of Technology in China, he learned some Chinese and subsequently was very active in CSUN’s China Institute. During 1993-94, Prof. Mishra served as an Interim Associate Dean in the College of Engineering and Computer Science. He joined **ARF** after retiring in January 2003.

Dr. Mishra is survived by his wife of more than six decades, Pratima Mishra; his son Dev and daughter-in-law Cathy; grandson Alec and his wife Celia; and grandson William. *Sembiam Rengarajan* and *Dev Mishra*.

**Dr. James O’Donnell**, retired CSUN administrator who capped stints in cryptology, publishing and teach-

ing with a 20-year career as CSUN’s Dean of Continuing Education, died on March 5, 2025.

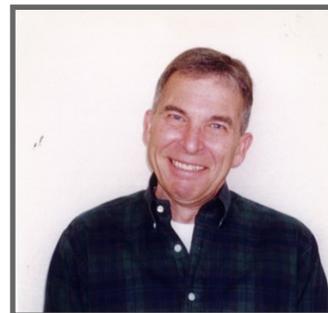
He was 92.



Growing up in Massachusetts, Jim earned his B.A. (1954) and M.A. (1955) in Government and History at Boston College and his Ph.D. in American History (1962) from Boston University. His career before coming to CSUN was a varied one:

cryptology for the National Security Agency, teaching history at both high school and college levels and publishing for Xerox’s education arm, among others.

During his time at CSUN, Dr. O’Donnell helped strengthen the School (later College) of Continuing Education (now Tseng College), expanding its connection to international education through trips to China, South Korea, Japan and India, among others. Jim also was part of the Task Force that helped CSUN recover from the devastation of the 1994 Northridge earthquake. Jim is survived by his wife Pat and four sons. *Cynthia Rawitch*

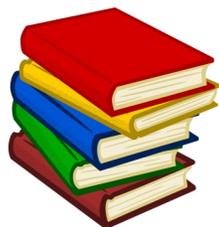


**James Michael  
Torcivia**

**(Psychology)** passed away on March 14, 2025, at the age of 82 in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was living

with his lifelong partner, David Schmittke. “Jim” came to CSUN in 1968 after earning his B.A. at Regis College in 1964 and his M.A. (1967) and Ph.D. (1968) at Loyola University Chicago. If there is a theme of Jim’s professional life, it is love. He was emeritus and a member of the Association of Retired Faculty. Jim was beloved by his students, especially in Psychology 250, now *Physiological Correlates of Human Behavior*, for which students wrote, “upbeat, kept topics

relevant with realistic examples, knowledgeable; cared about students' goals and understanding" and "He is 'on fire' about neurons and his excitement makes you want to learn." Jim's research taught us that there are individual differences in the ways that people make decisions about sensitive topics based on their personal principles vs. social persuasion. Fearlessly breaking ground in 1973, he taught a course, *Psychology and the Healthy Homosexual*, at Fairfax High through CSUN's extension program. He wrote a letter to the editor of the *Daily Sundial* in 1976 in which he said, "To be a homosexual is, above all else, a recognition of the human capacity to love another... And our world has precious little love under any circumstances." Jim warmly welcomed new faculty, showing them local real estate when he lived near Ventura, and even gave the shirt off his back, literally, to a colleague who admired it! Jim often invited his colleagues to his home, where he annotated and played his favorite opera selections. Jim was an authentic and optimistic person who shared himself freely with those around him. He will be sorely missed. *Carrie Saetermoe*



## BOOK GROUPS

### Science Book Group

In February the group read and discussed the book *Nexus: A Brief History of the Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI* by Yuval Noah Harari, published in 2024 (Random House), and in March we discussed *You Are Here: From the Compass to GPS, the History and Future of How We Find Ourselves*, by Hiawatha Bray, (Basic Books, 2014).

In the first book, historian and philosopher Yuval Harari presents a sweeping historical look at information networks leading to artificial intelligence in this *New York Times* bestseller. Harari surveys all of history to show that humankind gains power through large networks of cooperation held together by the glue of information, often consisting of fantasies and mass delusions about gods and a great many other things. Occasionally, this power creates order through exceptionally deluded ideas leading to mass insanity and atrocities such as the witch hunts of the

middle-ages, but modern examples include Nazism and Stalinism. Calamities are sometimes prevented by maintaining self-correcting institutions such as the Catholic Church, independent courts, or peer-reviewed journals, however imperfectly.

Artificial Intelligence, though, has the potential to enslave or annihilate us according to Harari and thus presents a new existential treat should it escape our control. The key is to not be wooed by what Harari calls the naïve view of information, that by gathering and processing much more information than individuals can, big networks achieve a better understanding of science which make them not only powerful but wise. Delusional networks might occasionally arise but in the long term they are bound to lose to more clear-sighted and honest rivals. Harari shows that this view is reckless. For example in 2016 Facebook algorithms helped fan the flames of anti-Rohingya violence in Myanmar leading to the destruction of hundreds villages, the deaths of more than 7,000 civilians and expulsions of 730,000 Rohingya from the country. Other examples show AI trained computers, inevitably mimic human biases and prejudices, use their near boundless ability to learn about and exploit human weaknesses and outright lie to their users.

The science group saw the book's greatest strengths in its ability to weave together an exceptionally wide range of historical events and technological advancements into an engaging story about the dangers of being naive about AI, albeit with some disagreement about the book's level of scariness.

In the March discussion, Hiawatha Bray chronicles the development of location theory and technology from the time of maps etched on cave wall to today. Finding one's way on earth requires knowing where you are, where you need to go, and how to get there. Three thousand years ago humans knew that the earth was not only round but tilted 23 degrees. A few hundred years later Eratosthenes accurately calculated the earth's circumference, and precise global navigation was made possible when Hipparchus divided the earth into lines of latitude intersected by lines of longitude. Yet, although highly accurate maps could be found as early as the 2nd century, humans would have to wait a millennium and a half before John Harrison's marine chronometer would allow safe and reliable navigation anywhere at sea. Since then, gimble mounted compasses, spinning

gyroscopes, radio-wave locators, atomic clocks, ultra-precise optics, orbiting satellites, GPS receivers, cell phones, and wi-fi detectors have solved the location problem anywhere on or above the planet or under the sea. Today, as Bay's book chronicles, losing our way has become a thing of the past, but so is dropping off the map. **Our Next Meeting:** We will be skipping the April meeting, so our next zoom is scheduled for Wednesday, May 21st at 1:30 pm. The assigned book is: *Waste Wars: The Wild Afterlife of Your Trash* by Alexander Clapp (Little, Brown and Company) 2025, 400 pages. *Submitted by Martin Saiz*

### Wednesday book Group

The **Wednesday Book Group's** discussion in March 2024 was somewhat unusual in that all members were enthusiastic in their praise of *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich. The author creates a story that weaves together the lives of over a dozen characters, most of whom are Indians living on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation in North Dakota. Erdrich, herself Chippewa and a member of the Turtle Mountain band, relied mostly on family records and memories, conversations with elders, and government records to understand what life was like on the reservation over sixty years ago.

In the 1950s Congress proposed a bill to cancel federal responsibilities for tribes and in many cases eliminate their reservations. Erdrich's grandfather, a tribal leader, organized a delegation that went to Washington, DC, and testified in a Senate hearing about how termination would imperil his people. Inspired by her grandfather's thinking and action, Erdrich modeled Thomas, the night watchman of a small factory on the reservation, on what she knew of her grandfather's character—kind to others, loyal to his people, thoughtful, and willing to take action that could be effective. Beyond the heroic effort of Thomas and the several other Indians who were quite unused to speaking up or entering the white world of government, the book portrays Indians as valuing their U.S. citizenship and their Indian identity and ways of life.

The author weaves together the lives of a wide range of characters, both Indian and white, as they deal with life, family, and the circumstances that

confront them, such as poverty and the insufficiency of local work opportunities. Some Indians leave the reservation for hoped-for different lives in the city (e.g., Minneapolis), but sometimes that move doesn't work out well. Although some Indians retain more of their tribal traditions than others, all speak English but can use their Indian language to keep conversations private and to connect with traditions and spirits. Patrice, the book's main character, is a high school valedictorian and beauty queen who Wood Mountain, a local prizefighter, falls in love with. But Patrice leaves the reservation to find her sister Vera, who has disappeared into the city. What happens to these three characters is a powerful and touching sub-story.

Altogether, the book gave us what we thought was a realistic portrayal of life on a reservation, at least as of the 1950s. However, the reservation is just the foundation for great story telling by a very talented novelist. It was no surprise for us to learn that Louise Erdrich was awarded the 2021 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *The Night Watchman*.

*Trust*, by Hernan Diaz, was the Wednesday Book Group's reading choice for April 2024. This complicated story about a financier and his wife won the 2023 Pulitzer prize for fiction, which was also won by another book we liked a lot, Barbara Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead*.

*Trust* has stories within or besides stories. The reader is drawn in by an initial captivatingly written account of a successful merchant turned financier in the early twentieth century and his wife, who was a musical prodigy, modest literary and music critic and a generous supporter of the arts. They are united more by avoidance of undue emotional involvement rather than love. This story ends sadly due to a mysterious illness and the frustration of not knowing what to do about it. But next we proceed to another story of a similar financier with tremendous investment talents and his brilliant wife. The financier hires a ghost writer to help him present his wife as a more likable domestic figure but we catch some doubts about his motives and representations. There are other views to consider as well. We will leave it to you to be confused and intrigued by how it works out. Some of us were certain about whose account to trust, and others of us continue to dwell in the land of uncertainty. **We were dazzled**

by the brilliant language and the cleverness of this novel. We recommended it. *James Allen and Joel Zeitlin*



## FILM GROUP

The **Monday ARF Film Group** met remotely on March 10, 2025, via Zoom. The Group discussed the films *Conclave* and *Radical*.

*Conclave* is a political thriller that delves into the secretive process of selecting a new pope after the sudden death of the incumbent. It showed a world of faith, power, and hidden agendas within the Vatican. Ralph Fiennes's portrayal of Cardinal Lawrence delivers a strong performance, carrying much of the film's emotional and intellectual weight. The supporting cast make the internal conflicts within the Church feel real and engaging. The film starts off slow, carefully setting up the world of the Vatican and the political maneuvering among the cardinals. While this adds realism and tension, it did not generate a sense of urgency that one might expect. While *Conclave* does a solid job of portraying the inner workings of Vatican politics, some plot elements seem implausible, especially towards the later parts of the film. The ending felt to be a bit out of left field and may leave some group members questioning its plausibility. The Vatican setting is beautifully captured, and the film successfully conveys the gravity and secrecy of the papal election. *Conclave* is a well-acted and intriguing drama that offers a rare look into the Vatican's most secretive process. Our film group gave it an average rating of 8.7/10, with individual scores ranging from 8.0 to 9.0.

*Radical* is an inspiring drama that showcases the power of education in the face of adversity. Based on the true story of Sergio Juárez Correa, a teacher in Matamoros, Mexico, the film follows his unconventional approach to teaching underprivileged students, proving

that with the right guidance, even those written off by society can thrive. The film does not shy away from portraying the struggles of poverty, showing how limited resources, lack of support, and systemic neglect make education nearly impossible for children in marginalized communities. Yet, it also highlights how a dedicated teacher can break through these barriers, bringing hope to students who had little reason to believe in a better future. Sergio was played brilliantly by Eugenio Derbez. His character rejects traditional rote learning, instead focusing on critical thinking. His methods seem risky at first, and he faces resistance, but the unexpected success of his students proves his approach right. Their ability to solve complex problems and excel beyond expectations brings some of the film's most powerful and uplifting moments. The child actors are equally impressive, delivering genuine and touching performances that make their journey feel real. *Radical* is a deeply moving and thought-provoking film that balances harsh realities with an uplifting message. It's a must-watch for those who believe in the power of education and the impact a great teacher can have. Our film group gave it an average rating of 9.0/10.0, with scores ranging from 8.5 to 9.5.

On April 7th, 2025, the group plans to discuss *Anora* on PRIME DEMAND (\$5.99) and *Sing Sing*, on PRIME DEMAND (\$5.99) *David Schwartz*



## SCCARF REPORT

Nineteen SCCARFers enjoyed a variety of dishes at Los Toros Restaurant in Chatsworth on March 11th. The bean dip was a favorite starter as was the guacamole and chips. Dishes also enjoyed were the soft tacos, enchiladas, fajitas, and mole to name a few. A couple of drawbacks were slower than optimal service and the packed parking lot in back of the restaurant, but both of these attest to its popularity. Trip advisor rates the restaurant 4.2 stars, and 314 out of 9,986 restaurants in the Los Angeles area.

*Sandy Jewett*

## **ARF EXECUTIVE BOARD, 2024—25**

President	Diane Schwartz diane.schwartz@csun.edu	<u>Members-at-Large:</u> Michael Barrett michael.barrett@csun.edu
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## **ARF NOTES**

### **ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FACULTY**

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