The College of Humanities Newsletter

From the desk of Humanities dean Elizabeth A. Say

This issue of the College of Humanities Newsletter will introduce you to the five new faculty members who joined the College in the 2018/19 Academic Year. As has become our tradition, we invited them to participate in a Proust-style questionnaire, and we know you will enjoy their responses. We are delighted to have them as part of our community. We also celebrate the outstanding students comprising our first cohort in the HSI Pathways to the Professoriate program (for more on this program, see the Fall/Winter 2016 issue of the Newsletter). These students started their Pathways journey in Spring 2017, and now, 18 months later, they are all poised to begin doctoral programs at some of the finest universities in the United States. I cannot overstate what an incredible accomplishment this is. Among the schools involved in this Mellon Foundation grant-funded initiative to diversify the professoriate, CSUN is the only one that can boast a 100% success rate. Finally, we fondly remember two faculty colleagues lost this past year: Margarita Nieto from the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, and Deborah Averill from the Department of English.

Not quite the PROUST QUESTIONNAIRE...with apologies to Vanity Fair and Marcel Proust

Submitted by Teresa K. Morrison

Each spring the College of Humanities invites new faculty members to respond to a brief set of questions styled after the “Proust questionnaire,” named for Marcel Proust, who, depending on the source, may have answered a similarly probing quiz twice during his lifetime. Regardless of the questions’ origins, they’re an interesting way to get to know our latest faculty hires.

In the 2017-18 academic year the College welcomed new faculty members in the Liberal Studies Program and in the departments of English, Linguistics/TESL, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, and Religious Studies. As their first year drew to a close, we invited them to join in the tradition. Those who opted in selected the questions they cared to answer.

Yountae An, Assistant Professor, Religious Studies

Dr. An earned his Ph.D. in Theological and Philosophical Studies of Religion at Drew University. He specializes in religions of the Americas, with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean. His research interests concern the construction of religion, race, and political identity in colonial and postcolonial Americas. He also teaches in areas of world religions, religion and race, and religion and migration.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
Wandering around the streets of my hometown, Buenos Aires.

What is your greatest fear?
Not being able to live in the present.

What is your greatest extravagance?
The new pair of tango shoes I recently purchased.

When and where were you happiest?
Right now at this very moment!

What is your most treasured possession?
The new tango shoes.

Which talent would you most like to have?
The ability to play classical piano like a pro.
John Garcia  
Assistant Professor, English  
Dr. Garcia earned his Ph.D. in Rhetoric with an emphasis in Critical Theory at University of California, Berkeley. His areas of specialization and research interests include early American literature and cultural history, transatlantic and hemispheric literary history, history and theory of rhetoric, the cultural history of bookselling, and histories of books and material texts.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?  
Teaching at CSUN.

What is your greatest fear?  
I'm sometimes afraid that I'll forget to bring my notes to my classes, but the truth is that I almost always over-prepare.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?  
I look up to writers who are also activists: C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler.

What is your greatest extravagance?  
I generally dislike expensive things. For me, real luxury is having the time to think, study, write, and teach.

When and where were you happiest?  
Here, in Los Angeles, now.

What is your most treasured possession?  
A large record collection and a sense of humor.

What is it that you most dislike?  
I'm strongly opposed to all forms of discrimination and abuses of power.

What is your motto?  
Sí se puede

Krystal Howard  
Assistant Professor, Liberal Studies Program  
Dr. Howard earned her Ph.D. in English Literature at Western Michigan University. Her areas of specialization and research include children's and young adult literature, multicultural children's and young adult literature, comics studies, contemporary American poetry, literary theory, and British romantic literature.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?  
Reading aloud with someone or listening to an audio book while walking in nature. I love hearing the word on the page transform when it is spoken.

What is your greatest fear?  
Running out of coffee...

Which living person do you most admire?  
My mother.

What is your greatest extravagance?  
Books.

When and where were you happiest?  
At my Ph.D. graduation. The day was special not only because I had accomplished a huge goal that I'd spent the last 10+ years working toward and because I knew I would be moving to California to start a new job at CSUN a few weeks later, but also because my spouse of 12 years, both my parents, and my sisters were there celebrating with me.

What is your most treasured possession?  
My wedding ring.

What is it that you most dislike?  
Being late.

Which talent would you most like to have?  
Any musical ability at all, or the ability to drive a stick shift.

What is your motto?  
"Dwell in Possibility." —Emily Dickinson

Tim Watson  
Assistant Professor, Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures  
Dr. Watson earned his Ph.D. in Classics at University of California, Riverside. His research focuses on the relationship between language, identity, and power in the late Roman Empire. He teaches Greek and Roman history, civilization, and mythology, as well as ancient Greek literature and Latin.
Hyung-Jo Yoon
Assistant Professor, Linguistics/TESL
Dr. Yoon earned his Ph.D. in Second Language Studies at Michigan State University. His research interests include second language acquisition and writing, task-based language teaching, task development, computational text analysis, corpus linguistics, and language assessment.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
Sipping good coffee at a café with no work to finish that day.

What is your greatest fear?
Losing somebody I care for.

Which living person do you most admire?
My mother, who has been a great role model to me for a long time.

What is your greatest extravagance?
Eating out (too) often.

When and where were you happiest?
The moment I was offered a position at CSUN.

What is your most treasured possession?
My doctoral diploma, considering the amount of energy and effort I have spent for it.

Which talent would you most like to have?
Amazing athletic talent. It usually takes more time for me to learn new ball sports.

Proust Part Deux: Future Professors

This year saw the graduation of CSUN’s first cohort in the HSI Pathways to the Professoriate program, a grant-funded five-year initiative that groom’s upper-division undergraduates with professorial ambitions to enter elite graduate degree programs. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Pathways aims to diversify academic ranks by providing intensive mentorship to highly motivated students in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at selected USDE-certified Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Eight students in CSUN’s inaugural cohort applied to graduate programs at prestigious research universities, and all eight students received multiple invitations with offers of full funding, an astounding 100% success rate!

Seeing as they are on the road to becoming professors themselves, we thought we’d include them in our new faculty Proust Questionnaire tradition. We think you’ll enjoy getting to know our Pathways scholars as much as we have!

Shawntel Barreiro, Ph.D. Program in Linguistics, The Ohio State University
Barreiro graduated CSUN with a double major in Chicana/o Studies and Linguistics, and a minor in Geography. Barreiro was named the 2017-18 Wolfson Scholar, the most prestigious award bestowed on a graduating senior at CSUN. She credits her persistence to her parents, immigrants who fled El Salvador during the country’s civil war. She worked with faculty mentor David Medeiros (Linguistics), completing the research project “Salvadoran-diasporic Communities and Dialect Convergence with Other Spanish-speaking Communities.” Her research interests include sociolinguistics, identity, and the Central American diaspora. She will pursue a specialization in Central American sociolinguistics at Ohio State.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
A day where I get to catch up on my favorite show and cook and bake to my heart's delight.

What is your greatest fear?
Not doing and not being there enough.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?
I’m really not trying to channel my inner teenage angst here, but I really don’t identify with any historical figure, partly because I don’t think I’ll ever be a historical figure.

Which living person do you most admire?
My immediate family, friends, and loved ones.

What is your greatest extravagance?
My skincare, makeup, and shoes. Though, to give myself some credit, I still haven’t bought the Nike VaporMax.

When and where were you happiest?
It’s hard to say because I think this question depends on how nostalgic you feel about a given time frame of your life. Just because I feel I was happier at one moment in my life doesn’t mean that I wasn’t equally as happy in other periods of my life. But to partially answer the question, I feel pretty happy with my life right now.

What is your most treasured possession?
The photos I have with my loved ones, especially as a child.

What is it that you most dislike?
People who only take interest in you once they see your accomplishments.

Which talent would you most like to have?
I wish I could sing and play some kind of instrument!

What is your motto?
Hanging on in quiet desperation.
Elizabeth Calzada, Ph.D. Program in History, University of Minnesota

Calzada graduated CSUN with a major in History. A first-generation American, she’s motivated to become a professor to see more Latino representation in academia. She worked with faculty mentor John Paul Nuño (History), completing the research project “Euripidean Tragedy: The stage for democracy and patriarchy.” Her research interests include Ancient Greece and Rome and women in Greek tragedies.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
My idea of perfect happiness is being surrounded by large dogs and eating mac and cheese with no deadlines.

What is your greatest fear?
Hard drive failure.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?
Are you asking a history major this question? Queen Elizabeth II, mainly because of the corgis and my passion for The Crown.

Which living person do you most admire?
My mom, obviously.

What is your greatest extravagance?
Venti iced soy chai lattes, or lipsticks in varying shades of sameness.

When and where were you happiest?
I’m happiest when my family gets together and has movie nights, like watching My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2 for the 20th time.

What is your most treasured possession?
My Medusa necklace.

What is it that you most dislike?
Hypocrisy.

Which talent would you most like to have?
My entire family is very artistic. I inherited none of that and would like to be able to draw an anatomically accurate stick figure.

What is your motto?
Fortes Fortuna adivat.

Jared Diaz, Ph.D. Program in Religious Studies, Arizona State University

Diaz graduated CSUN with a double major in Linguistics and Religious Studies. Having struggled with Asperger syndrome in grade school, he notes that he and his parents were sometimes told that college may not be an option. In the fall, he’s poised to enter doctoral studies and prove his doubters absolutely wrong. He worked with faculty mentor Xochitl Alvizo (Religious Studies), completing the research project “On the Incorporation of Chán Doctrine and Practice by Fo Guang Prosperity Theology.” His research focus is Chinese religions, particularly Taoism and Buddhism.

Which living person do you most admire?
I try not to idolize people, so I don’t really know. That said, I do respect scholars whose work is also their activism, trying to improve our world.

What is your greatest extravagance?
Perhaps my hobbies. There are various creative activities I do when I need a break from work.

What is your most treasured possession?
I try my best to not be attached to things, but I would certainly be very disappointed if something were to happen to my books, and not just my physical collection, but also my digital library.

What is it that you most dislike?
Unreasonable, ignorant people. Not those who are simply uninformed, but more those who are so confident in their lack of knowledge that no amount of evidence and/or reasoning will get them to change their minds.

Which talent would you most like to have?
I wish that I had a talent for reading quickly and easily. Learning disabilities often make reading a chore, even for material I enjoy, I’ve always envied those who could read an entire book in a day, and in our line of work, that’s a valuable skill to have.
Brian Mercado, Ph.D. Program in Sociology, CUNY Graduate Center

Mercado graduated CSUN with a major in Sociology. He worked with faculty mentor Mos候 Capous-Desylass (Sociology), completing the research project “High School Administrators’ Perceptions of the Strengths of and Barriers for Low-income Students of Color with Behavioral, Emotional, and Educational Challenges.” His research interests include criminalization and alienation of early adolescent Latinos within the educational system, critical race theory, and disillusionment and anomie theories. At CUNY Graduate Center his sociology studies will have a concentration on education, and as a future professor he believes he will be able to “open doors for people that have had difference experiences.”

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**
That moment when something that I have had trouble understanding finally clicks in my head.

**What is your greatest fear?**
Learning nothing from my failures.

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**
Ralph Lazo.

**When and where were you happiest?**
Every time I’ve been able to fly in my dreams.

**What is your most treasured possession?**
I don’t think of him as a possession, but he is definitely prized: my new puppy.

**Which talent would you most like to have?**
A quick wit and a fast tongue. I would always have great rebuttals and I could probably even freestyle rap.

**What is your motto?**
“Would I rather be feared or loved? Easy. Both. I want people to be afraid of how much they love me.” —Michael Scott, The Office

Yaquelín Morales, Ph.D. Program in Performance Studies, Northwestern University

Morales graduated CSUN with a major in Sociology and a minor in Urban Studies. She worked with faculty mentor Frances Gateward (Cinema and Television Arts), completing the research project “Reclaiming Space: Latina Feminist Poetry as Resistance in Los Angeles.” Her research interests include urban design, performance in communities of color, and critical race theory. A first-generation college student, Morales says she never even considered a graduate degree until she heard about the Pathways program at an information session. Now destined for a Ph.D. program at Northwestern, she plans on doing ethnographic research on performance in women’s activism.

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**
Laughing so hard that my cheeks and stomach hurt.

**What is your greatest fear?**
Running out of time.

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**
Nina Simone is someone I identify with because she always felt a duty to speak up about social injustices through her music. There is a quote where she says, “An artist’s duty, as far as I’m concerned, is to reflect the times.” I feel the same about my research and my responsibility as a future educator, where I have to make sure I honor those I work with and highlight their resilience.

**Which living person do you most admire?**
My little brother. He is so creative and fearless when it comes to expressing himself. I admire his honesty and the way he compassionately delivers it. I forget that he is 12 sometimes.

**What is your greatest extravagance?**
Getting my once-a-year curly hair cut. I go to a curly-hair specialist and it’s one of those all-day events where I just enjoy being pampered.

**When and where were you happiest?**
When I was 7 years old I won a bike in a raffle. We were too poor to buy one, so I was so happy I think I even cried. I can still remember what the bike looked like; it had pink and purple holographic streamers with baby blue tires. It was beautiful.

**What is your most treasured possession?**
My photo albums.

**Which talent would you most like to have?**
I really wish I could sing. I always wanted to be on Broadway.

**What is your motto?**
Enjoy the small lessons and victories along the way.
Kiara Padilla, Ph.D. Program in American Studies, University of Minnesota

Padilla graduated CSUN with a double major in Chicana/o Studies and Psychology. She worked with faculty mentor Martha Escobar (Chicana/o Studies), completing the research project “Parole Suitability for Latinx Migrant Lifers in California Prisons: Psychological Evaluations.” Her research interests include race and violence, U.S. mass incarceration, mental health issues, mental healthcare policy, and U.S./Mexico migrants and deportation. Padilla was very nearly the first in her family to graduate college, but she had the pleasure of attending CSUN alongside her mom, who beat her to commencement by one year! She continues her education with the encouragement of her family, and she hopes to inspire others to engage in research as a form of social change.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
My idea of happiness includes smiles and not having to be on a constant run. Perfect happiness would be calmly having my life together.

What is your greatest fear?
Not being able to help people who have helped me. I want to make sure they're always acknowledged for what they gave me.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?
Pancho Villa and Audre Lorde.

Which living person do you most admire?
My grandma.

What is your greatest extravagance?
My desk. I take pride in decorating it.

When and where were you happiest?
When I didn't have so much to worry about. Possibly in high school because I had no job and only focused on school and sports.

What is your most treasured possession?
My grandpa's hand imprint that the hospital made when he passed away.

What is it that you most dislike?
People chewing loudly.

Which talent would you most like to have?
The talent to sing!!

What is your motto?
Focus on the present, but don't forget about the past and don't lose sight of the future.

Hermes Rocha, Ph.D. Program in Philosophy, University of California, Davis

Rocha graduated CSUN with a double major in Philosophy and Religious Studies. He worked with faculty mentor Linda Alvarez (Central American Studies), completing the research project “The Role of Mestizaje in Latin American Philosophy.” His research interests include Latin American political philosophy and the independence movements of Latin America. Rocha is well aware of the underrepresentation of Latinos in academia, and with equal devotion to philosophical ideas and Mexican culture, he wants to bring greater visibility and attention to philosophies that are not Western European in origin.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
Sitting on a porch with a view of a forest and a cup of coffee on a beautiful misty morning.

What is your greatest fear?
I am afraid of doing the right thing because of selfish reasons and not because it is right.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?
Nikola Tesla.

Which living person do you most admire?
I admire my girlfriend. She is an incredibly strong-willed person, intelligent, and remarkably independent. She is a force to be reckoned with.

What is your greatest extravagance?
Coffee and food.

When and where were you happiest?
Looking up at the Milky Way with my girlfriend.

What is your most treasured possession?
My mind.

What is it that you most dislike?
Being a perfectionist when sometimes it is better to be imperfect.

Which talent would you most like to have?
To play guitar expertly.

What is your motto?
Since it is sometimes better to follow the example of others and to lead by their example, a motto and mantra that I carry with me is not mine to claim, and nevertheless I have learned to heed its wisdom: “Adapt, overcome, and achieve.” A shout out to my brother and all the people serving in the armed forces. Thank you.
Eryn Talevich, Ph.D. Program in Anthropology, University of Michigan

Talevich graduated CSUN with a major in Anthropology and a minor in Queer Studies. She worked with faculty mentor Mario Ontiveros (Art), completing the research project “Appropriate Culture? Complexities of Dress in the Life of Beatrice Wood.” Her research interests include textiles and identity, gender performance, women and work, semiotics of clothing and traditional techniques, folk costume, and drag. Talevich was a nontraditional college student on multiple levels, most notably having been homeschooled for most of her life, from age 7 to 18. When she started attending community college she had little idea what shape she wanted her education to take, until she finally found anthropology and fell in love with the discipline. Pathways helped her define a future she hadn’t yet imagined for herself, and she wants to become a professor to give back to the communities that paved her way as an undergraduate.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
Getting lost and being found in thought.

What is your greatest fear?
Dementia, and squandering time that could have been spent nourishing relationships with my loved ones.

Which historical figure do you most identify with?
Eve, because there ain’t no turning back.

Which living person do you most admire?
Mom. Forever and always.

What is your greatest extravagance?
Textiles! They are like gems of spirit for me, and carry immense meaning. I have never regretted shelling out cash for gorgeous, lush slips of cloth.

When and where were you happiest?
In the corner of the Church of St. Francis in Santiago, embracing strangers in peace. And later, the hostel room.

What is your most treasured possession?
My reputation among my loved ones.

What is it that you most dislike?
Active, enforced privilege and the choice to neglect one’s place in social justice.

Which talent would you most like to have?
To speak any language, of any species. And to be able to TURN IT OFF! (Caveat: I’ve read too much science fiction!)

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In Memoriam

The College of Humanities has lost two dear faculty members this year, both homegrown scholars of the California State University system.

Eva Margarita Nieto, a tenured professor in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, was a renowned academic in the fields of languages, literatures, and visual arts of Mexico, California, and Latin America. She earned her BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees at California State University, Los Angeles, and taught at CSUN from 1987 until her retirement in 2016. During that time, among many other honors and endeavors, she was awarded a Postdoctoral Fellowship by the Smithsonian Institution, served as a consultant and archivist for the Getty Conservation Institute and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, regularly contributed to ArtsScene magazine, and published and lectured widely. Beyond those significant accomplishments, she was beloved across campus as a teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. In recognition of her accomplished service to CSUN, Dr. Nieto was granted Professor Emeritus status in 2017.

Deborah Blakely Averill, a lecturer in the Department of English, was a talented poet and writer who generously shared her passion for the written word as an instructor of composition and creative writing. She also taught in the Humanities interdisciplinary program, prepared future teachers through the Liberal Studies interdisciplinary program, and worked with international students in Tseng College’s Intensive English Program. She was a longtime coeditor at Redheaded Stepcild poetry journal, and a recipient of the Academy of American Poets Prize, the Rachel Sherwood Poetry Prize, and a Polished Apple excellence in teaching award. She earned her BA and MA at CSUN and began teaching here in 2009. Many of her faculty colleagues had also been her teachers and mentors while she was a student here, and news of her passing hit them particularly hard, as they had lost a student, a colleague, and a friend.

Department of English faculty have established a Deborah Blakely Averill Scholarship Fund to honor her academic journey and accomplishments. If you wish to contribute in her memory, please feel free to contact Development director Suren Seropian at (818)677-7135 or suren.seropian@csun.edu.
The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a community of learners who...

- Explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;
- Critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;
- Contribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and
- Act as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy.

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