New Role Focuses Cohen on Graduate Life

Cathy Cohen

The University of Chicago

The first Deputy Provost for Graduate Education, Cathy Cohen is also the David and Mary Winton Green Professor of Political Science. Cohen talked to Dialogo about taking a broad look at graduate student life.

This academic year has seen vigorous discussion between students, faculty, and administrators of measures to improve graduate student life in the Social Sciences and other schools and divisions of the University. At the center of these discussions of the way the University supports graduate students is Cathy Cohen. Cohen, who came to the University in 2002, has served as director of the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture. In January 2008, she was named Deputy Provost for Graduate Education. This new position was created by Provost Thomas Rosenbaum to evaluate and address the graduate student experience across the University, from the divisions to the professional schools and from master’s to doctoral programs.

“It’s given me a much broader view of the work of the University,” says Cohen. “It has given me an opportunity to think about what a real graduate education looks like for multiple constituencies…. My job is to put all of those hopes and dreams in the context of an institution that works with a budget and that has demands from other constituencies. How do you balance all of this to continue a tradition of really excellent graduate education?”

“So much of the reputation of this place is based on the exceptional graduate education we’ve been able to provide.” –Cathy Cohen

As deputy provost, Cohen is part of a working group instituted by the provost in May 2007 to further explore graduate student life following the announcement in February 2007 of the Graduate Aid Initiative. The Aid Initiative, in effect since last autumn, committed $50 million to enhancing financial aid packages for matriculating students in the Social Sciences and Humanities. In addition to Cohen and Rosenbaum, the group includes Vice President and Dean of Students in the University Kimberly Goff-Crews. “One of the things that Kim and I have committed to doing,” says Cohen, “is really looking at the relationship between academic success and student support. Toward that end, we are meeting with small groups of graduate students to talk about their experiences, challenges, and points of success.”

The University is taking several new actions to continue to address these challenges. It is expanding the Aid Initiative to support matriculating doctoral students in the Divinity School beginning this fall. And, because the Aid Initiative did not cover graduate students who matriculated before autumn 2007, the University is undertaking several new actions to help these students. For example, it is increasing the number of Provost Summer Fellowships and the number of dissertation-year fellowships available.

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Report from the Dean

I recently returned from the Board of Trustees’ retreat. This was an opportunity for the University’s leadership to understand our competitive environment, to articulate our distinctive strengths, and to identify our major opportunities and challenges as we plan for the future of one of the world’s great universities. The retreat made clear that an institution with Chicago’s aspirations must be prepared to make significant investments in its programs, faculty, students, and staff.

The issues before us in this Trustees’ retreat were very closely related to the tasks for a faculty study committee I have convened to help plan for the future of the Division. The committee’s charge is to take stock, to set priorities, and to set an agenda for the departments, the Division, and the University that will guarantee the excellence of the Social Sciences well into the future. We have been working on three main topics: faculty development; research infrastructure; and effectiveness in graduate education.

Over the years the Social Sciences Division has been sustained by the world’s leading social sciences faculty. Living up to the example of our past as we renew the faculty for the future takes hard work and good judgment, particularly on the part of the current faculty in the departments. The competition for top scholars has never been more intense. Accordingly, the need for careful choices has never been greater, nor has the need for effective support for faculty been more pressing.

Second on the committee’s discussion list is support for faculty research. The research in the Division is diverse, and so the needs for research support are also varied, from computers and labs to support for conference planning and Web design.

Finally, it is vital for the future of the Division of the Social Sciences to maintain and enhance graduate education. With the help of the Graduate Aid Initiative, we have improved our ability to support doctoral students in their programs. But we also need to compete in the most important area, the quality of the education we deliver to our doctoral and master’s students. Support for faculty, support for students, and support for research are all essential pieces of a single ecology of excellence. Students come to Chicago to learn from excellent faculty. Faculty come to Chicago to participate in the lively intellectual culture that gathers around bright and inquisitive students. Chicago has always been a one-of-a-kind experience, and we owe it to our successors to ensure that it continues so.

The University is also offering “slots for funding”: departments in the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions have the option of reducing the number of full-package, five-year offers they can make to new students in exchange for additional funding for current graduate students. In the Social Sciences, the departments of political science, history, sociology, and the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought will participate, raising the stipends of their third- and fourth-year students.

Cohen says that the effects of the Graduate Aid Initiative on this year’s new students have been apparent: “Morale among first-year students is pretty high these days. They’re very excited about the funding, excited about having summer support, and excited about having five years to concentrate on doing their best work, building relationships with faculty members, and getting publications out the door.”

Cohen also emphasizes the University’s focus on teaching for graduate students. “It’s something that we see as part of preparing students for a successful career, either in the academy or outside the academy,” she says. “The ability to communicate your ideas, listen to other perspectives, provide careful and constructive feedback—these are things anyone can use in a career, and I think this is what teaching and pedagogical training will be under the Graduate Aid Initiative.” Graduate teaching will be the focus of one of three new review committees the University is establishing to look at particularly pressing issues in the graduate experience and recommend steps to improve these areas. (The other committees will review support services for international students and the advanced residency system.)

Cohen’s new post is a demanding one, but she still finds time for the teaching, advising, and research that remain so important to her. She heads the Black Youth Project, a large-scale research effort to collect and interpret data about “the attitudes, resources, and culture of African American youth ages 15 to 25.” Currently she is completing a book based on data from the project, to be published next year by Oxford University Press.

As committed as she is to that project and its myriad potential real-world applications, Cohen is just as passionate about her work as Deputy Provost. “If you really look at the history and tradition of the University of Chicago,” she says, “so much of the reputation of this place is based on the exceptional graduate education we’ve been able to provide, training some of the most brilliant people in the world who go on to make important inroads and contributions to our larger society. Chicago’s commitment to taking risks, and the contributions Chicago has made by training some of the foremost scholars in the world, suggests that this is a part of the institution we really must invest in.”

(Cohen continued)
Laureate Lectures

As announced in the last issue of Dialogo, the University of Chicago’s newest Nobelist is Roger B. Myerson, the Glen A. Lloyd Distinguished Service Professor in Economics and the College. Myerson was one of three to receive the 2007 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences last December. In the wake of the massive media coverage of that award, Myerson is attending to his usual business of advising students, attending the Economic Theory and Political Economy workshops, writing papers, and enlightening audiences newly interested in game theory and—the area of his research that was recognized with the Nobel Prize—mechanism design.

At the Chicago Architectural Foundation in March, Myerson treated an audience of Chicago-area alumni to a talk that touched on game theory while illuminating recent events in the real world. Addressing a capacity crowd at the Alumni Association-sponsored lecture, Myerson posed a counterintuitive question: Could a nation be seen as more powerful in the eyes of the world if it refrained from using force, rather than applying it? The answer, Myerson argued, is yes.

To make his point, Myerson drew from game theory—a type of applied mathematics that explains how individuals, corporations, or countries use cooperation or aggression to maximize benefits and minimize losses. Applying these lessons to international relations, he gave an example: a small country, when threatened, might emphasize its resolve to use force because weakness would invite aggression. On the other hand, he argued, a large nation such as the United States should emphasize restraint, lest it be seen as trying to profit from aggression. “For the world to peacefully accept the military dominance of one superpower,” he explained, “its restraint must be manifest to all.”

By this model, Myerson concluded, the Bush Administration stumbled when it invaded Iraq in 2003 without the approval of the United Nations and the international community. Nations are less likely to cooperate with another nation that has been uncooperative with them in the past, he said, and the United States has thus diminished its international influence since the war began.

Myerson holds an appointment in political science as well as economics, and his talk straddled these disciplines in true Chicago fashion. That interdisciplinary spirit also emerged at a news conference in Stockholm last December when he spoke about research and policy on such issues as global warming. "It’s a good example of where physical science and social science go together, and we need to be thinking about both,” he said.

Social Sciences Graduate Students on the Market

The spring quarter is always a very busy time for graduate students across the Division. Some have been planning for their graduation since the fall and have spent the months since working with their faculty advisers and department administrators not only on honing their dissertations but also on looking for that all-important first job.

Dialogo spoke to two economics PhD candidates who will be graduating in June, Marie Tomarelli-Petkus and Stefania Garetto, about their experience on the job market.

First, the most important question: what jobs are you going to?

Marie Tomarelli-Petkus: I will be taking an assistant professorship in economics at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, about 30 miles from Lexington.

Stefania Garetto: I will be going for a year to Princeton as a research fellow, then in September 2009 I will start as an assistant professor at Boston University.

Taking us back to the beginning of this process, did you enter into your job search with a particular strategy and idea of where you wanted to end up?

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SG: The only thing I knew was that I wanted an academic job, in a university or at the Federal Reserve or with an international organization. Also, I wanted a job in the same city or area as my fiancé, who is also graduating this year, and this has worked out, as he is going to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

MT-P: I followed a slightly less traditional route. I also wanted an academic position but one with an emphasis on teaching as well as research, which is why I targeted smaller liberal arts colleges. I also kept my options open by applying to some government research positions such as the Census Bureau and the USDA (Department of Agriculture) and a couple of private companies.

You both attended the four-day American Economic Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans with around 30 interviews each scheduled. This seems mind-boggling. Can you tell us what this experience was like?

MT-P: Stefania and I actually did all our planning for the job market together, which really helped.

SG: Before we got to the meeting we were both quite apprehensive but it turned out to be a fantastic experience. In four days we got to meet the full [economics] profession and everyone you meet is interested in your work, asks about your paper, and is excited to meet you. So we came out of those four days happy to see our work coming together.

MT-P: I would agree. It reminded me a bit of a debutante coming out! Here we are coming out to the profession. I would say we both had really positive experiences.

MT-P: I was very fortunate because though I went a less traditional route and had to do quite a lot of research on my own, my advisers were very involved too. Steven Levitt and Chad Syverson and also John List, who is not on my thesis committee, were all very helpful. The three of them gave me a mock interview and that, I have to say, was one of the more valuable experiences. In fact, I was probably more nervous talking to them than to anybody in an actual interview! On the teaching side, Allen Sanderson was really helpful. He has terrific knowledge of what the liberal arts colleges I was applying to would want to hear.

SG: When I talk about my advisers people always ask me, “So who isn't on your thesis committee?” They really divide into two groups, the first group being Bob Lucas and Nancy Stokey, who were extremely helpful from the beginning. They have always been available, involved, and encouraging. I know that both of them made phone calls for me to the universities I was particularly interested in. The other group was Thomas Chaney, also in the economics department, and Christian Broda at the Graduate School of Business. They would meet with me every week, listen to my job talk, and go through my slides. I don't think I would have done so well without their help. Also, I want to mention how amazing the departmental secretaries were. I applied to 153 universities and whenever I needed something sent they immediately got things off. They were totally on top of everything.

MT-P: I want to add that a very important resource for us through all this was each other. I feel very fortunate to have such a close group of friends who were on the market at the same time, not only Stefania but other people in our class. In December we organized a number of mock interviews with each other, working on keeping our

It sounds very grueling.

SG: It is. One day I started my interviews at 7:30 a.m. and finished at 7:00 p.m. I had about 10 each day. I would find myself giving my speech and commenting, “As I was saying before...,” but I didn’t know if I’d said it before in that interview or a previous one!

MT-P: I fueled myself on Clif Bars, which also raises another issue: getting time to eat! I was carrying a big bag with me full of snacks, water, and a change of shoes in case I had to walk quickly between meetings.

SG: Also, you meet lots of other people who are in the same situation as you. People ask you where you’re from, who are you interviewing with, and always when you say you’re from Chicago, there is a noticeable reaction.

Could you talk about the involvement of your faculty advisers in the job process?

MT-P: I was very fortunate because though I went a less traditional route and had to do quite a lot of research on my own, my advisers were very involved too. Steven Levitt and Chad Syverson and also John List, who is not on my thesis committee, were all very helpful. The three of them gave me a mock interview and that, I have to say, was one of the more valuable experiences. In fact, I was probably more nervous talking to them than to anybody in an actual interview! On the teaching side, Allen Sanderson was really helpful. He has terrific knowledge of what the liberal arts colleges I was applying to would want to hear.

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presentations down within 10 minutes for the AEA and asking each other questions.

How are you spending your last quarter here at the University?

MT-P: Well I’m teaching this quarter so I’m spending these final months preparing lecture notes, incorporating comments and feedback into my job market paper, and getting a base down for my next project. So, not as much relaxation time as I thought there’d be!

SG: I’m a teaching assistant this quarter and so have a little more free time than Marie, which I’m spending on my paper and preparing for conferences I will be attending over the summer. I feel I’m finally getting back to work after our six months dealing with the job market.

A Conversation with Charles Bidwell

Charles E. Bidwell, AB’50, AM’53, PhD’56, is the William Claude Reavis Professor Emeritus in the Department of Sociology. Throughout his distinguished career, Bidwell has studied the structural analysis of change in formal organizations and in the social organization of education. He has pursued these interests in research on school organization and instructional processes. He is also currently pursuing research on the adolescent and young adult life course. In February 2008 he was interviewed by Sara Ray Stoelinga, AB’95, AM’01, PhD’04, a Senior Research Analyst at the Consortium on Chicago School Research whose research focuses on teacher leadership in school reform efforts, the sociology of education, and organizational change in schools.

In 2000, I had my five-year College reunion. I was in the alumni line at the very beginning. The line snaked around and at the end of the College alumni line I saw Charles Bidwell. How long have you really been at the University of Chicago?

Believe it or not, that was my 50th reunion from the College. But my history here starts a long time before then. I was actually born at the Lying-In Hospital. My father was an obstetrician at the hospital. We lived in South Shore.

Did you attend school in Hyde Park for all of your education?

I began my elementary school career at O’Keeffe Elementary in South Shore. Then in seventh grade, my parents enrolled me in the Lab Schools. Lab was a wonderful place. The Lab Schools ended at the 10th grade. The question then was should you go on to another high school or do you go into the University College, which at that point started at the 10th grade. You didn’t have to take the College Boards and you were automatically admitted to the College if you were a graduate of the Lab Schools. And so I went to the College. It was a magnificent education, actually, with no distractions of having to major in anything. The approach was different then; you would spend two years doing liberal arts at the College. And then it was the same question again as when you came out of the Lab Schools. Are you going to go to another college and take a bachelor’s degree or do you want to take a three-year master’s degree here? The master’s program was like continuing past the liberal arts program in the College into two years of your major or concentration. You had two years of coursework and then you did a master’s paper. From there, I went through the doctoral program in the education department. So from 7th grade through my doctorate, I was enrolled right here at the University of Chicago.

When did your interest in social science emerge?

I can trace my interest, in fact my first social science research project, to my time at the Lab Schools. Kenneth Rehage was my 7th-grade social studies teacher. He later was my colleague in the Department of Education, which was wonderful. He got me started in social science because he had us do a project in our 7th-grade social studies class. He showed me how to do a content analysis and how to subscribe to newspapers for a month or two months. For some reason I had gotten interested in the TVA and I subscribed to all the newspapers in the Tennessee Valley and I did a content analysis of their editorial commentary on policies in the TVA in that time. That was 1943. I found that project was so much fun and moving then into the College, there was a very strong social science faculty and I just kind of kept going. At every step in my education at University of Chicago I was mentored and inspired by outstanding social scientists. My University of Chicago education molded my outlook. I saw the relevance of the social science perspective in the way I viewed the world.

Say a bit more about that; how so?

Well, I think a wonderful example is my first article in the American Sociological Review. I finished my doctorate in the winter quarter in 1956. I took the degree just short of my 26th birthday. Once I turned 26 I was no longer draftable but in that little window between graduation and my birthday, my deferment expired and the United States mobilized as part of the Suez Crisis and so I got drafted. I went to Washington, D.C. For a while, I was enlisted and then I picked up a job writing speeches for one of the assistant secretaries. My article came out of an observation (continued on next page)
study of what was going on in the barracks. Here were all of these professional guys, cryptographers and lawyers, who were then working as paralegals for the Pentagon. I wrote this study of marginality, how they negotiated being both military and essentially occupationally civilian.

I know a lot of people would hold up your 1965 piece “The School as a Formal Organization,” a chapter in James G. March’s *Handbook of Organizations*, as a seminal work that made a very important contribution to the field of sociology of education. But I also know that you have written a tremendous amount and you have contributed a lot to the field. What is the contribution of which you are proudest?

Well, I am very proud of that one, quite frankly! I really am because it was so hard to do. Jim March called me up and said that he was putting together this handbook and they had a set of theoretical chapters and then there was going to be a chapter on various kinds of organizations and would I do the one for the school. Without thinking very much about it, I said “sure!” And then I sat down and there was no literature, no foundation at all. What in the world was I going to do with it? I was in a position at Harvard at the time, but preparing to accept a position back here in the education department. I was out visiting from Harvard and I had lunch with Morris Janowitz. I was saying to Morris, “I don’t know what in the world I am going to do with this chapter.” He said, “Why don’t you read this interesting book by Willard Waller called *The Sociology of Teaching*”?

I did and it made it possible for me to form that chapter around the idea of the dilemmas of trying to work with this inchoate technology of teaching in what appeared to be a bureaucratic organization. That is what really informed that chapter. That set off my whole career because reading Waller made me realize that we didn’t really know very much about how the social dynamics of schools affect their academic productivity or the socialization of them more broadly.

How does this 1965 piece fit into your career as a whole?

It really informed the whole thing. For the most part, with a few exceptions, my career has been one paper after the other in a direction and I am very happy about that. That is how I ended up on faculty networks, trying to figure out how the formation of social ties between teachers or between teachers and administrators either helps them or prevents them from forming what I call local cultures of practice, which are adaptations of more general doctrines about how to teach.

You received the Willard Waller Award for a Career of Distinguished Scholarship from the Sociology of Education Section at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in New York. What does that honor mean to you?

Well, for one thing I have a nice bronze plaque on my shelf. I look at it every day when I am at work and it makes me
think, “Buster, if you won that you’d better keep going at something like the same level!”

The list of names of the people who have won that award is quite impressive!

It is pretty impressive, yes, so it is a great thing to be brought into that company. But what really means the most is to have the approbation of your colleagues. That kind of recognition is just a marvelous experience. We are all very critical of one another all of the time. It is a tough row to hoe being an academic because we spend so much of our time criticizing one another. Often you will write a paper and, to be sure, you wrote that paper—but what are you going to do next is always the question. The award is a symbolization of the supportive environment at the discipline level, the same sort of supportive environment that I found so palpably here. What you worry about so much as an academic is that you want somehow for the work you do to have some consequence beyond your own lifetime. One way you do this, of course, is through students, and so one thing I have found very rewarding is the caliber of the students at the University of Chicago. But you also would kind of like to know that some of the key things that you have written have a reasonable shelf life. That is what was so nice, I thought, in that citation that was written when I received the award, and really it means the most to me of all that was written. It said something like, “His work is written with clarity and accessibility and will be read and used for a long time to come.” I thought, “Oh my goodness, what a nice compliment.”

You have been associated with sociology and the Social Sciences Division for a long time. I am sure much has changed but what has been the essence of the Social Sciences Division that consistently endures?

What has endured is the intense intellectuality of the place. Jim Coleman used to say that working at Chicago enlarged the value of your work. We all hold very high standards for each other. It means it is challenging sometimes to present to faculty colloquiaums. It is hard to put your ideas out there to such a tough audience. But it was worth it. I have received the most extraordinarily supportive criticism of my work and ideas about what to do next and so on. This critical, intense intellectualism has been absolutely continuous and I think it’s marvelous. This is the culture of the place and it is one of the reasons why I stayed here all these years, that and the quality of the students.

As you look across the development of the Social Sciences Division and the sociology department and the Committee on Education, is there any advice you would give your colleagues about how to keep the Division the place that you have grown to love over your career?

Collegiality, everything that possibly can be done to sustain collegiality, including a rich informal social life for the department, that needs continual attention by the chair and by the senior people. Also, you need very strong attention to nurturing your people. Morris Janowitz, for example, was an extraordinarily successful chair and he operated on the basis of bringing in junior people and nurturing them and providing the intellectual stimulation and resources to the extent that our budget allowed it to make junior people into retainable senior people, to make them grow intellectually. And, you have to have confidence in your collective capacity to make good judgments about the work of colleagues. You don’t look so much at the citation index as a basis for who is a successful scholar. I mean, everyone looks at it, but more so reading carefully their articles and scholarly material to see if this is really exciting and work that needs to be done. That would be my advice.

Which scholars do you think have had the biggest influence on your work?

Willard Waller, for sure. James Thompson because I was much influenced by Organizations in Action. The early Charles Perrow and Joan Woodward and their notion that organizations are formed in good measure in response to their technological bases, much of my work was informed by that. The idea of the instructional technology in a school was very influential to me; not the machines and the books but the interpersonal technology, and that is where Waller comes in. I still am influenced by that. I never really outgrew that despite contingency theory and all the subsequent iterations of organizational theory. This idea really spoke to me.

Beyond content, there were other scholars who influenced me in the ways they went about their work. Morris Janowitz had an enormous influence on me by his continual questioning, his unwillingness to accept anything except with strong evidence. Also, Robert Redfield had a quite powerful influence. I took a course from Redfield early in my doctoral work. He focused on the culture of the Yucatan, and I must say that the subject matter didn’t interest me so much. But he seemed to me to have been a very model academic: concerned for his students, involved heavily in his work, and modest. Students would ask a question and then there would be this long pause while he was trying to formulate the very best answer he possibly could. And sometimes he would blush because he thought that he couldn’t provide an adequate response. These have served as models of the way to do the work that I strive to emulate.
At Home in Social Thought

Robert B. Pippin, Chair of the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, talks about his research and the importance of a place “where questions that don’t fit into normal boundaries can be explored.”

In 1941, Chicago Professor of History John U. Nef worked with President Robert Maynard Hutchins and a small group of colleagues to found it. In 1964, Time magazine called it “the oddest graduate school in the U.S.” and “a generalist’s Elysium.” Today, the University of Chicago’s John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought continues to stand out in the American academic landscape, sometimes imitated but never replicated.

“Many of the philosophers I work on, especially Hegel and Heidegger,” he says, “also write quite a lot about other topics. If I want to study their work in the spirit in which they do it, and take it seriously, I’m naturally led to different areas where ‘philosophy by other means’ goes on.”

Although they have led him outside the traditional boundaries of philosophy, his ventures into other intellectual territory such as literature and film, conceptions of history, and theories of modernity all have their origins in his specialty within philosophy, 19th- and 20th-century German thinkers. “Many of the philosophers I work on, especially Hegel and Heidegger,” he says, “also write quite a lot about other topics. If I want to study their work in the spirit in which they do it, and take it seriously, I’m naturally led to different areas where ‘philosophy by other means’ goes on.”

The liberty to explore such side paths and the opportunity to converse and even co-teach with colleagues with a range of interests is what keeps him interested in the Committee and his work there.

Committee Named for Founder Nef

Last January, the University renamed the Committee on Social Thought the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought. The Committee’s new name recognizes its founder for his role in creating the pioneering, uniquely interdisciplinary committee and guiding it during its early history. “Its goal is as big as the world,” wrote Time magazine in 1964. “The motto is ‘freedom,’ and the result is one of the world’s liveliest intellectual experiences.” (Read the entire article at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,940803,00.html)

The renaming also honors the financial support the Committee has received over decades from Nef and, later, his widow Evelyn Stefansson Nef. At a dinner in Mrs. Nef’s honor, President Zimmer commented, “Research in the Committee connects students and faculty with multiple disciplines, incorporating analysis of texts and ideas fundamental to the origins of our culture through those of the current day. In so doing, the work of the Committee provides a fresh understanding to persistent questions that confront society, such as what is just, what is moral, and what role religion plays in organizing society.”

Mrs. Nef said that her husband “invested everything he had intellectually in the Committee. It was his ideal. Seldom in life do we get to have a vision and then see it fulfilled. He would be very proud to see what the Committee has become.” Mrs. Nef, who makes a point of staying in touch with the Committee and its people, added, “The students seem to get brighter and brighter every year. It’s such a pleasure to talk with them. The faculty always dazzle me because of their brilliance. I think the quality of the Committee improves from year to year.”
of specialties has resulted in a bibliography impossible to pigeonhole. Pippin’s 2000 book *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*, a work bridging philosophy and literary analysis, got its start when Pippin co-taught a graduate seminar in the Committee with novelist Bette Howland. Another project goes even further afield of traditional philosophical matters, considering the political philosophy of classic American Westerns. “The central problem in political philosophy,” he says, “is how you distinguish the organized use of violence by one group against another group from political coercion, or the law. Westerns are often about this issue: the difference between vengeance and justice, and the transition to bourgeois domestic values like peace and security, forgiveness and care, in an environment where the martial and heroic virtues have been more important and powerful.”

“What makes a certain form of political life work, most political philosophers would agree, is its ability to attract to itself certain kinds of allegiance, which means certain kinds of passion,” Pippin says. “Nothing in American literature deals with the dialectical interplay of these passions in a crisis situation better than the really great Westerns. *The Searchers*, for example, was made in 1955, right around the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*. The idea of a transformative moment in a racist society, a moment in which the hold of racism could be broken, is quite significantly played out in the movie.”

In Pippin’s view, Chicago is one of the few schools where such forays aren’t looked at askance by specialists affiliated with traditional departments. “This University has always had a view of itself as encouraging speculative, experimental teaching and research,” he says, “and that comes at a certain price, a tolerance for people wandering into areas where they bear a certain expertise but are not the usual credentialed experts that departments have. The permission on the ground among colleagues in different departments to do that is quite extraordinary here. The relations with other departments are not just tolerant but enthusiastically open in comparison with other universities.”

While distinctive among Chicago’s programs and departments, the Committee, in Pippin’s view, is in part sustained by the commitment to interdisciplinary work across the University at large. “At many schools it’s considered a waste of time to take courses outside your home department as a graduate student,” he says. “But at Chicago, it’s considered a great waste of time if you don’t. If we could figure out how this culture is sustained across many generations, it would be a very interesting thing to know.”
News from Around the Division

Friedrich Katz 80th Birthday Celebration

Last September the Katz Center for Mexican Studies held a conference in honor of the 80th birthday of the Center’s namesake Friedrich Katz, the Morton D. Hull Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Latin American History. The conference, entitled “Land, Politics, and Revolution,” spanned two days and seven panels, and covered subjects ranging from a retrospective of Professor Katz’s life by John Coatsworth to Mexico during the Porfiriato to the Mexican Revolution and its protagonists. One of the highlights of this special event was the dinner held at the end of the first day, which provided an opportunity for the many close friends, colleagues, and former and current students of Dr. Katz (a Chicago professor since 1971) to share experiences and honor their mentor. The dinner also witnessed the debut performance of “El Corrido de Federico Katz” by its composer, Professor Claudio Lomnitz of Columbia University.

“The Politics of Display”—May symposium in honor of Neil Harris

As we go to press, another distinguished Social Sciences faculty member, Neil Harris, the Preston and Sterling Morton Professor Emeritus of History and Art History, is being honored with a symposium on May 3 in the Social Sciences Research Building.

The symposium seeks to explore themes that have informed Harris’s scholarly work over the course of his career. These themes include interest in the personal, institutional, ideological, and artistic forms taken by systems of display such as buildings, body language, museum practices, advertising, civic rituals, staged pageantry, city planning, expositions, department stores, and athletics. Such presentations of self, society, and commodities have been examined by diverse scholars including historians, anthropologists, art historians, sociologists, and others. The symposium seeks to explore these themes by bringing together humanistic and social-scientific approaches to America’s history of spectacle, merchandising, and display.

2008 Iris Marion Young Distinguished Faculty Lecture

In January, Christine Stansell, Stein-Freiler Distinguished Service Professor in United States History and the College, gave the 2008 Iris Marion Young Distinguished Faculty Lecture. For this key annual event on the Center for Gender Studies calendar Stansell gave a lecture entitled “The Revolt of the Daughters: Matriphobia and 1960s Feminism.”

An Economist’s Take on Philanthropy

According to new research by John List, Professor in Economics and the College, and his colleague Dean Karlan from Yale University, matching gifts provide incentive for contributors to give to charitable causes, but the ratio of the matching gift has little influence on the amount donors contribute. An article about their contributions to a growing area of research on the economics of philanthropy was published in the New York Times Magazine on Sunday, March 9, 2008. Working with a liberal political organization as their test group for a field experiment, the two economists set out to see if the common fund-raising strategy of matching gifts really helped groups raise more money. The article also described List as an economist who is a leading proponent of field experiments that test theories and analyze people’s motivations, and one who does not align himself with economists who are either rationalists or behaviorists.

Maestripieri and Macchiavellian Intelligence

Dario Maestripieri, an expert on primate behavior and Associate Professor in Comparative Human Development and Evolutionary Biology, has received widespread media attention and raised a few eyebrows with his 2008 book...
Macachiavellian Intelligence: How Rhesus Macaques and Humans Have Conquered the World, published by the University of Chicago Press. Rhesus macaque monkeys, Maestripieri claims, share with humans tendencies for nepotism and political maneuvering. In the UK’s Daily Telegraph, Michael Bywater called Macachiavellian Intelligence an "excellently embarrassing primate book"—embarrassing because such books "remind us that we’re primates too." And in the New York Times, science writer Natalie Angier pointed to Maestripieri’s book in an article about "nonhuman animals that behave like textbook politicians."

The Psychology of Pain
Jean Decety, Professor in Psychology and Psychiatry, co-authored an article in the October 9, 2007, issue of Current Biology called "Expertise Modulates the Perception of Pain in Others." Together with colleagues at Taiwan’s National Yang-Ming University, Decety offered the first research showing that people such as physicians can “shut off” the part of their brain that appreciates pain suffered by others. Because doctors sometimes have to inflict pain on their patients as part of the healing process, they also must develop the ability to not be distracted by the suffering, said Decety. The findings were reported in international news outlets including the Times of London, Newsweek, and the Washington Post.

Alumni News

Muhammad Salhi, AM’98 (Middle Eastern Studies), PhD’06 (History), and Ruma Niyogi Salhi, AM’96 (History), PhD’05 (History), welcome the arrival of their son Laith, born on January 18, 2008.

Justin Lin, PhD’86 (Economics), has been appointed the World Bank’s new Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics. Dr. Lin, a Chinese national, is expected to take up his position on May 31.


John Winters, AM’62 (Political Science), e-mailed to say that he read the Joseph Cropsey interview in the last edition of Dialogo with interest, as Winters had recently written an article called “Is Captain Bush Hunting for Moby Dick?” that also referenced Leo Strauss.

Godfrey Barrett-Lennard, PhD’59 (Psychology), received an honorary doctorate last year from Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia. Dr. Barrett-Lennard writes:

“The other bit of information of possible interest is that three individually authored books by me have come out in the last decade. It seems I needed to ‘retire’ to bring major writing projects to a head. The first of these, Carl Rogers’ Helping System: Journey and Substance, was longest in the making and most linked to my time in Chicago and its long legacy in my career. As you might gather, some of my interests have led beyond psychology, along a more interdisciplinary and problem-focused path that also fits my sense of much of the inquiry at the U of C.”

Judge Richard Bandstra, AM’74 (Sociology), JD’80, wrote to say:

“After leaving the graduate program in sociology in 1975, I moved across the Midway and earned my JD at the Law School. Although never fulfilling my plan for a doctorate in the Social Sciences Division, the insights and skills I gained while earning a master’s degree there have helped me in positions of elected public service—in the Michigan Legislature for a decade and, for the last 13 years, as a judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals. If any of my former sociology colleagues are ever in Grand Rapids, I would be delighted if they would look me up.”

Thank you to everyone who sent news in response to the message in the last edition of Dialogo. We are always keen to hear more, so please keep sending your contributions to Nina Herbst at nherbst@uchicago.edu or mail to Nina at: Social Sciences Division, University of Chicago, Suite 110, 1126 East 59th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637.
University to Establish Milton Friedman Institute

In May, the University announced that it is establishing an economics research center in honor of Nobelist and longtime Chicago faculty member Milton Friedman, who died in 2006. The Milton Friedman Institute, President Zimmer said, will become “a primary intellectual destination for economics” and “a robust forum for engagement of our faculty and students with scholars and policymakers from around the world.” The Milton Friedman Institute will occupy buildings that currently house the Chicago Theological Seminary, which the University is purchasing to enable the Institute to be centrally located between the University’s main quadrangles and the Harper Center of the Graduate School of Business.

Alumni Weekend Special Events for Economics Graduates

Economics alumni are invited to revisit Hyde Park and join fellow graduates, faculty, and current students to celebrate Chicago Economics during Alumni Weekend. On Friday, June 6, the Division will host an informal lunch with faculty, a workshop, and a TGIF, which has become a graduate student tradition. There will be time during the afternoon to catch up with fellow graduates, visit old haunts in the Social Sciences Research Building, and check out the new space in Rosenwald Hall. Please join us!