Remembering JoAnn Miller

As Interim Head of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, I often wonder where we would be had JoAnn Miller not passed away on December 25, 2014. She was the one who envisioned a new unit encompassing all the interdisciplinary studies programs in the College of Liberal Arts and worked doggedly to make that vision a reality. All who knew her would undoubtedly agree — JoAnn was a force of nature. In her passing, Purdue University lost a passionate teacher, influential scholar, skillful administrator, and an engaged citizen-intellectual. We in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies lost all that and a strong leader.

There is not sufficient room on this page to list JoAnn’s many scholarly accomplishments. But I want to draw attention to a few aspects of her career at Purdue that shaped her vision for the School. First, JoAnn Miller did not let borders — be they disciplinary or international — stand in the way of her research. She was a first-rate sociologist, but she pursued knowledge at the intersections with other fields. Notably, she developed the field of law and society as a program of study in the Department of Sociology at Purdue, and she raised awareness of the ways that social dysfunction affected the administration of the law. She appreciated interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge production, crossing those disciplinary boundaries as needed to get at an essential truth. She also crossed numerous national borders to present her work. She delivered the keynote address at a national conference on family violence in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1991, and presided over a panel at the International Congress on Mental Health and the Law in Berlin twenty years after that.

Second, JoAnn believed in sharing the fruits of her research with a wider public and in using her expertise to build the community, goals that are shared by many faculty and students in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies. JoAnn published seven books and dozens of book chapters, articles, and reviews. Locally, she worked with public officials in Lafayette to figure out how to reduce crime in the community by identifying and addressing some of the underlying social causes of crime and recidivism. She collaborated with city officials to create innovative programs; perhaps best known of these was the Weed & Seed grant from the U.S. Department of Justice that enabled the city to implement numerous programs to address the social roots of crime. Her work in the public square made a palpable difference.

Finally, JoAnn was a community builder, not an empire builder. She operated on the assumption that bringing the interdisciplinary programs in the College together would strengthen them and create a space that welcomes interdisciplinary endeavors. After a little more than a year as a unit, SIS reflects that sense of common interests and aspirations that JoAnn helped to inspire.

We shall remember JoAnn Miller as the founder and first Head of SIS, with gratitude for her efforts and affection for her generous spirit.

Susan Curtis
Awards

**FACULTY**

### African American Studies

**Venetria Patton** (AAS & ENGL) received the College of Liberal Arts’ Kofmehl Undergraduate Teaching Award. The award is named after Dr. Kenneth T. Kofmehl, professor emeritus of political science who was an award-winning teacher during his tenure at Purdue from 1957-1990. Awards are made on the basis of teaching service, student ratings, student and faculty nominations, integration of teaching and scholarship, and efforts to engage students outside the classroom.

### Jewish Studies

**Rebekah Klein-Pešová** (HIST & JS) was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of History.

Also promoted are JS affiliates, **Jen William** (GER), **Rachel Einwohner** (SOC), and **Daniel Aldrich** (POL).

### Religious Studies

**Michael Bergmann** (PHIL) was awarded a Senior Research Fellowship in Religious Experience by the University of Notre Dame’s Center for Philosophy of Religion, where he will be a visiting scholar for the 2015-2016 academic year.

**Stacy Holden** (HIST) received a Faculty Fellowship for Study in a Second Discipline in American literature.

**Melinda S. Zook**’s (HIST) recent book, *Protestantism, Women and Politics in Britain, 1660-1714* was awarded Best Book on Gender for 2013 by the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women.

### Religious Studies

**Nadia Brown** (AAS & POL) has been promoted to Associate Professor. This comes after the publication of her award winning book, *Sisters in the Statehouse: Black women and Legislative Decision Making* (Oxford University Press). The National Conference of Black Political Scientists awarded Dr. Brown’s book the DuBois Book Award, while the Association for the Study of Black Women in Politics honored it with the 2015 Anna Julia Cooper Best Publication Award.

**Professor Brown**
AASRC had the privilege of recognizing one of our teaching assistants, Sharonda Woodford, who was selected as the Masters level recipient for the H. H. Remmers Memorial Award. This award, established in 1969 in honor of Dr. Remmers, assists African Americans pursuing graduate study in the social sciences. Sharonda was presented with a plaque and a $1,000 award. She was nominated by Rosalee Clawson, Head of the Department of Political Science, for involvement in departmental talks and activities as well as her intellectual acumen. Sharonda has been an effective research assistant for Professors Valeria Sinclair-Chapman and Nadia Brown and was selected to present her research at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.

AASRC Teaching Assistant, Keturah Nix, received a Teaching Academy Graduate Teaching Award for her excellent work teaching AAS 271, Introduction to African American Studies. The awards are sponsored by the Purdue Teaching Academy and the Office of the Provost.

Christina M. Weiler, a fourth-year graduate student in the Comparative Literature Program, is a recipient of the 2015 Graduate School’s Excellence in Teaching Award, the highest honor presented by the University in recognition of graduate student teachers. Christina has taught comparative literature courses, as well as German in the School of Languages and Cultures. She was awarded a plaque and cash award at Purdue’s Celebration of Graduate Student Teaching Excellence. Furthermore, she is the winner of a teaching assistant award in the School of Language and Cultures, plus a multiple winner in literary awards. She has been the representative of the Comparative Literature Program to the Office of Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs and featured in a Purdue video promoting graduate education at Purdue. She also represented the Comparative Literature Program in the Graduate Student Senate.

The winner of the 2015 Jewish Studies Simon Essay Prize is Lukas Plank, a senior in History and English. The topic of his prize-winning essay is “Holocaust Denial.”
In April, Nick Marino, Esther Teixeira, Mandy Wheadon, and Juanita Crider were honored for earning their Graduate Certificate in WGSS at a special event called the Celebration in Excellence.
Summer 2015

Publications

Comparative Literature


Film and Video Studies

Lance Duerfahrd (ENGL & FVS) will publish an article about his production of Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot* in Zuccotti Park during the Occupy Wall Street protests in the journal *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui*. His article on audience response to cult films as been accepted for publication in the forthcoming critical anthology *Playing Offstage* (Palgrave). Lance is currently at work on a book titled: *A Semester of Bad Films: What are They Good For?*

Jewish Studies


Religious Studies

Student Achievements

African American Studies

Maurice Simon and Tyler Pitts were among twelve students across the country who were inducted into the Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society sponsored by the National Council for Black Studies.

Maurice Simon, a double major, strives to create an empowering atmosphere for black men at Purdue. He is active in multiple campus organizations, including Breaking Bread, the Black Male Excellence Network (BMEN), and Men of Color in Human Affairs (MOCHA). Each organization has a unique mission, but they all work to enhance self-esteem and build professional skills.

Graduating senior, Tyler Pitts was selected as the Outstanding AASRC senior. She will graduate with a BA in Law & Society and minors in African American Studies and Forensics, and a Spanish certificate. After graduation she will be attending the Indiana Law Enforcement Academy, after which she will be a Merit Deputy at the Hendricks County Sheriff's Department.

American Studies

Stephanie Allen, Ph.D. (2014) is the Associate Director of Multicultural and Equity Services at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania. In this role, Stephanie promotes and advocates for diversity, multicultural, and global education at Mansfield University by creating and supporting programs and events designed to educate students, faculty and staff on issues relating to cultural sensitivity, social awareness, and global information.

Arthur Banton, Ph.D. candidate in American Studies, has been appointed a Dissertation Fellow at Middle Tennessee State University for the 2015-2016 academic year. The year at MTSU will provide Arthur the opportunity to complete his dissertation, “Running for Integration: the story of the first racially integrated College Basketball team to win the National Championship.” While in residence, Arthur will teach as well as work on the dissertation. Congratulations to Arthur for this prestigious fellowship!

Heather Moore, Ph.D. (2015) is an Assistant Professor of Community and Justice Studies at Allegheny College. This is an interdisciplinary program that educates and engages students in social action and its ethics. The major goal is to teach students about the nature of citizenship, service-learning, and democracy in order to educate them for civic engagement.

Film and Video Studies

Jack Klink (FVS major) directed Rise Above the Mark, a documentary narrated by Peter Coyote, that brings to light the heartbreaking realities of public education. The film includes interviews with such experts in the field as Diane Ravitch (Assistant Secretary of Education and Counselor to the Secretary of Education during the George Bush administration), Professor Linda Darling-Hammond (Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at the Stanford Graduate School of Education), Pasi Sahlberg (educator and policy adviser in Finland), and high school educators and administrators throughout Indiana. The film premiered to 2000 people at Butler University where Diane Ravitch sat on a panel with proponents and opponents of the messages in the film. The discussion at the event harbored an invigorating dialogue about the issues being faced in public education. Jack is submitting his documentary to festivals.
More Highlights

Events

Film and Video Studies

Director of FVS, Lance Duerfahrd (ENGL & FVS), with help from students interested in careers in film curation and festival management, created the Under 15 Movie Festival showcasing the incredible film work by the young creative talent in our state.

In spring ’15, the FVS program offered a course in Documentary Film Production taught by Andrew Cohn, director of Medora and the ESPN film Danny Boy.

Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

WGSS was honored to feature 13 of the most dynamic feminist professors from within Purdue as well as the from around the country to the WGSS students and the Purdue community. Every Tuesday of the Fall semester a different member of this “Dream Team” presented their favorite lectures on varying topics and research that lie at the heart of the women’s, gender and sexuality fields to light each week. One of the highlights of the lecture series was Dr. bell hooks—feminist author, scholar, and social activist. Her work focuses on contemporary popular culture and politics, examines the multiple networks that connect gender, race, and class, and is aimed at producing a liberatory perspective on American culture. She has held professorships at Yale University, Oberlin College, and the City College of New York where she held the position of Distinguished Lecturer of English Literature. She was a featured speaker at the 2014 Cummings-Perrucci Lecture Series on October 28.

Another phenomenal speaker was Angela Davis. She is mostly known for her views that were once considered a threat to the United States government in the 1970s. In February 2015, her speech in the Elliott Hall of Music inspired many to become involved in contemporary struggles and to stand up for their beliefs. Her topics ranged from the lynching of the 1930s to the struggles that relate to the fight for minimum wage, environmentalism, and the unrest in Ferguson. Davis believes that we should always ask questions and find a way to involve ourselves in struggles characteristic of the transformative time of history in which we live. Creativity is essential in defining each moment of our battle against social injustice.

Religious Studies

The department of Religious Studies and the Aquinas Educational Foundation sponsored a successful ISIS Panel Discussion in February; according to one account, over 500 people attended.
Grants

Charles Ross (ENGL & COMP) reworked and resubmitted a $200,000+ grant to the NEH for the project “Restoring Sidney’s Arcadia.”

Internships

Lance Duerfahrd (ENGL & FVS) arranged internships for FVS majors and minors in Live Video Production with Bill Callison, whose company oversees production of the Super Bowl halftime show, global concert tours by Lenny Kravitz, Taylor Swift, AC/DC, and Kenny Chesney, the Country Music Awards, and the upcoming papal visit.

Professional Engagement

Comparative Literature

Charles Ross (ENGL & COMP) served on the jury selecting the winner of the MLA Scaglione Prize for translation. He was on the Book Committee for the American Comparative Literature Association. At Purdue, he served on the University Senate and the Primary Committee for the new School of Interdisciplinary Studies. For the profession, he reviewed two book manuscripts and refereed nominees to a Humanities Center at a major university.

Scholarly & Community Impact

Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Cheryl Cooky (WGSS) is emerging as an influential public intellectual on issues related to gender and sport. Dr. Cooky and researchers from USC recently published a study, intended as public advocacy social science research, titled “It’s Dude Time! A Quarter Century of Excluding Women’s Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows,” in Communication & Sport. The study is having an impact on the national dialogue about gendered media representations of sport. It has been quoted in an article in The New York Times and discussed in articles in the U.S. News and World Report, Washington Post, Slate, and the feminist magazine, Bitch. Dr. Cooky has appeared on several radio programs including NPR and Edge of Sports/XM Satellite radio. She has also appeared on the HuffPost Live webcast “Does Sex Overshadow Women’s Sports?” and as guest expert on PBS Newshour with Judy Woodruff to discuss the Women’s World Cup and its impact on women’s sports. Dr. Cooky is invested in the public translation of her research. She actively collaborates with women’s sports advocacy groups, like the Women’s Sports Foundation, and sports governing bodies to advocate for equitable treatment of female athletes in sports institutions and in media coverage.

Study Abroad

A new initiative aimed at internationalizing our programming and expanding our study abroad options began this year. Building on our successful summer feminist service-learning program in Uganda (Ki Kati!), we initiated a study abroad opportunity to study gender and feminist movements. Beginning in June 2015, three students from WGSS will be traveling to Mumbai, India where they will study at Sophia College until November 2015. Stay up-to-date with their educational voyage by logging into https://www.cla.purdue.edu/wgss/