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Despite hard times—perhaps because of them—we feel that what we do in the School of Arts and Sciences has never been more important. In coming years, our highest priority will be to sustain the quality of our core mission, which is providing outstanding undergraduate and graduate education and supporting our faculty’s essential research.

Research remains vital to our nation’s future, and it is a vital part of the education we offer to our intellectually hungry students. A liberal arts education not only feeds minds, it gives our students a diverse portfolio of knowledge and skills that helps them navigate a complex and changing world. It prepares them for many jobs and a variety of careers. More than ever, ours is an uncertain world, and graduates need the broad and rich “cross-training” of a liberal arts education. It’s not just our graduates who need it; the world is starved for the multi-dimensional, agile-thinking leaders that we are educating in SAS.

The School itself has benefited from the wise counsel and generosity of such leaders. Chris Browne, C‘69, recently stepped down after ten years of service as chair of the SAS Board of Overseers, and David Silfen, C‘66, has stepped in as our new board leader. I am deeply grateful to both Chris and David for their guidance and friendship. With their support and that of the entire School of Arts and Sciences community, SAS rests on a solid foundation of sufficient financial resources, excellent faculty, dedicated staff and ambitious students, which will sustain our important work of research and teaching and learning for years to come.
The 2009 Goldstone Forum in the Philosophy, Politics and Economics program featured Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman speaking on the economic challenges lying ahead for the United States and the world. Dubbed “the most celebrated economist of his generation” by the Economist, he is the author or editor of 20 books and more than 200 journal articles—many of them on international trade and finance. His most recent book is The Conscience of a Liberal, and his previous work, The Great Unraveling, was a New York Times bestseller.

Nobel laureate Paul Krugman is a professor of economics and international affairs at Princeton University, Centenary Professor at the London School of Economics and a columnist for the New York Times.

In his lecture, Krugman emphasized how different the current global economic crisis is from previous 20th-century recessions, which were generally caused by changes in monetary policy to counter inflation. “This is not your father’s recession,” he said. “There was no inflation, and the economy was going along. Then, at a certain point, people realized they had made investment decisions that didn’t make sense: they had lent money to people who couldn’t repay it, and the whole structure came crashing down. It’s much harder to produce an end to a recession that happened in that way.”

Throughout the spring semester, history department faculty engaged in a series of public conversations focused on recently published faculty books. Exploring a variety of topics—ranging from the geographic boundaries of slavery in the United States to the evolution of body care in early America—Not Even Past: New Perspectives on American History featured Richard Beeman, Kathleen Brown, Thomas Childers, Steven Hahn, Barbara Savage and Thomas Sugrue in dialogue with Sarah Barringer Gordon, Bruce Kuklick and Kathy Peiss.

Alumni can view video clips from the series and take part in online discussions of each book this summer through a free program hosted on Penn’s Open Learning Commons. Visit www.sas.upenn.edu/notevenpast and see “Open Learning,” p. 7 for more information.
If you leaf through a coffee-table book on archaeology, you’re likely to see photos of magnificent relics and ruins. Much of our knowledge of ancient civilizations comes from archaeological sites—points on a map where archaeologists dig, layer by layer, back into time to study, piece by piece, the artifacts buried there.

“The site is like a sacred category that organizes all of archeology,” says Clark Erickson, an associate professor of anthropology. But what about the map itself, the expanses of land where the coffee-table-book sites are situated? “We think a site has clear boundaries,” he notes, “so all the space around it has been pretty much ignored by archaeologists. Over the years, I’ve gotten more and more interested in what all that landscape between sites can tell you.”

Erickson is curator of the American section of the Penn museum. He is a specialist in—and a pioneer of—landscape archaeology, particularly of the pre-Columbian civilizations that peopled the Amazon in Bolivia and Peru. In that part of the world, Erickson has discovered forgotten trails, silted canals and eroded earthworks crisscrossing savanna and forest from horizon to horizon. Seen from an airplane, the geometric patterns of straight lines, perfect circles and elevated rectangles leave no doubt that these “geoglyphs” are the works of human hands. “In Amazonia,” he argues, “nature more closely resembles an abandoned garden than a pristine wilderness.”

Erickson and his colleagues occasionally excavate a trench through some of the earthworks to date the layers of original construction and renovations by later inhabitants. “So much of landscape archaeology is just reading the pattern on the surface at different scales,” he comments, “from satellite imagery all the way down to walking the area on the ground to get that human perspective.” He spotted many ring-ditch geoglyphs using Google Earth.

The prodigious feats of ancient digging and piling of dirt, Erickson surmises, took more labor than went into the building of antiquity’s greatest monuments. The earthworks he studies make up a vast, engineered system designed to capture water during the wet season and move it through a network of canals, raised fields for crops, fish weirs and settlement mounds. “They completely transformed these landscapes,” Erickson says, “disturbing the soil, in many cases, a meter below the surface.” He estimates the countryside supported tens of thousands of people with hundreds of miles of causeways and canals.

Carbon dating suggests some raised fields were built as long as 3,000 years ago and fell out of production around the time the conquistadors arrived 500 years ago. “In many societies, the state collapses and the big cities are abandoned, but people go on living out in the countryside as if nothing had happened,” he says. “They were able to sustain large populations, densely packed on these landscapes, and they lived pretty good lives. A vast indigenous knowledge spanning hundreds of generations is physically embedded in the landscape. We could learn a lot from the Amazonians.”
The human brain's sensitivity to unexpected outcomes plays a fundamental role in the ability to adapt and learn, according to a recent study by a team of Penn psychologists and neuroscientists. Published in *Science*, the study used microelectrodes to observe neuronal activity in the brains of 10 subjects while engaged in a computer-based, probabilistic learning task. Results suggest that neurons in a brain structure called the substantia nigra play a central role in reward-based learning, modulating learning based on the discrepancy between expectations and outcomes.

"Similar to an economic theory, where efficient markets respond to unexpected events and expected events have no effect," explains senior author and Professor of Psychology Michael Kahana, "we found that the dopaminergic system of the human brain seems to be wired in a similar rational manner—tuned to learn whenever anything unexpected happens but not when things are predictable."

Previously studied in animal models, this is the first study to directly record neural activity underlying this learning process in humans, confirming the hypothesized role of the basal ganglia—which includes the substantia nigra—in models of reinforcement including learning, addiction and other disorders involving reward-seeking behavior.

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**Water Work**

In March, a group of 14 graduate and undergraduate students in Stanley Laskowski’s Global Water Issues course took a 5,000-mile class trip to the World Water Forum in Istanbul. The course is offered through the Master of Environmental Studies program in the College of Liberal and Professional Studies. Laskowski’s students were among the more than 33,000 participants who took part in this weeklong international gathering dedicated to deepening discussions on 21st-century water issues and raising their importance on the political agenda.

In addition to attending a variety of panels and sessions organized under the forum’s six themes—including global change and risk management, the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, and managing and protecting water resources—Penn students also presented a special workshop on “women and water.” They were the only university students selected to host such an event at the forum.

“I am proud of the leadership shown by our students on the important issues of clean water and sanitation,” says Laskowski, “problems that, on average, claim the life of a child every 20 seconds.”

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Grammy winner and soul singer John Legend, C’99, spoke to the class of 2009 at the College graduation. “Sometimes there isn’t a single answer,” he said, reminding them of life's gray areas, “but there’s always the truth. ... Searching for the truth, in many ways, is the same as searching for your soul.” His speech can be seen on YouTube.
In a three-minute online video called “Man on the Street 2,” an interviewer’s voice asks, “Do you know what the current size of the national debt is?”

A self-consciously stiff college student on camera responds, “Three trillion dollars?”

“Well, actually the answer is 10 trillion dollars,” the voice declares.

The student gasps visibly beneath a BOING! sound effect.

The video short was put together by undergraduates John O’Malley and Will Son for the Future of American Politics, a freshman seminar they took last fall. The light-hearted serious documentary won first prize in a national contest sponsored by Facing Up, a nonpartisan program for students concerned about what the federal budget means for their future.

On the first day of the seminar, which met at the height of the presidential campaign season, the instructor told the class, “We’re going to talk about the one thing that politicians won’t be talking about in the upcoming election: fiscal policy.” The students learned about spending on health care, Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security, and the coming retirement of baby boomers with its fiscal burden for future workers. As the housing market collapsed and the stock market crashed, the instructor would come into class each Monday and comment, “Everything we talked about last week—forget about it; it’s all different now.” During class breaks, students consulted their BlackBerrys for real-time updates on the unfolding economic crisis.

Things finally became so bad that candidates did start talking about fiscal policy—sort of. “Politicians don’t want to say we’re going to stop spending because then they’re not going to get elected,” O’Malley observes. “All those bailout bills and all these companies going under that want government money—the problem is the government’s spending too much. We’re 10 trillion dollars in debt!”

O’Malley’s and Son’s video gauges student awareness of the federal budget and tries to educate them on the fiscal health of America’s government and society. In the film, several College students at Penn are asked if they know the number for the national debt. They all underestimate it—by a lot. The man-on-the-street students were equally uninformed about—and alarmed by—the federal government’s $455-billion deficit for fiscal year 2008. “It’s kind of amusing, but it’s also really sad that we’re so uneducated,” notes O’Malley, who’s learned that government’s deep pockets have a bottom. “It’s just that we’re going to run out,” he says, “and politicians don’t want to talk about it.” That makes him angry.

“The future of American politics seems so distant, but it’s right now,” adds Son, who is the interviewer in the video. “The decisions and policies we’re making today will affect us in 10 or 20 years. With our film, we’re trying to get the younger generation to tell politicians that we do care about our future.”

“It’s kind of frightening when you have to think about it as a freshman,” O’Malley remarks. “You’re just trying to get through college and then hopefully get a job. But when you graduate, you’ll need that job because you’ll need to pay for your parents and your grandparents and all your aunts and uncles.”

As for his share of the $500 in prize money, O’Malley says, “Most of it went to textbooks.”

“Yeah,” echoes Son, “I spent 243 bucks on textbooks this semester. At least we were investing in something important—like our future.”

To view “Man on the Street 2,” visit pound-it.org and click on “video.”
“As a fieldworker,” writes sociology professor Charles Bosk, “I seek medical settings where ‘What would you do in my situation?’ is most likely to be asked.” Bosk is a medical sociologist who observes and analyzes the everyday talk and action of health-care workers in major medical centers. On the front lines of clinical care and medical research, the “perils, pains and pressures of terrifying choices” are abundant. “I am not a player of this game,” he confides, “I record the moves of others.” An ethnographer of hospital life, Bosk has spent more than 30 years watching the life-or-death game and has produced substantial participant-observer studies of surgeons and genetic counselors.

In his new book, What Would You Do? Juggling Bioethics and Ethnography, Bosk is on display “juggling the concerns of bioethics and the sensibilities of an ethnographer.” In part, the book examines how bioethicists came to stand with doctors and nurses at the hospital bedside and what it is they’re doing there. When is their expertise needed? How do they make decisions? Whose interests are they serving?

His study of the emerging discipline of bioethics, he writes, “impelled me to think harder about the ethics of my own practices.” Looking back over his experiences in the field, Bosk details the inadvertent betrayals, innocent-seeming ruses and broken promises that are part of being an outside observer or protector of a source’s confidentiality. Ethnography, he concludes, is not entirely harmless, despite the aspiration to “do good” by doing research.

As a witness of the game, Bosk, throughout his career, had to sidestep the question, What would you do? In the July 18 issue of The Lancet, one of the world’s leading medical journals, Bosk is lead author of an essay that reflects on how the public seizes on quick fixes to patient safety—like checklists—while ignoring messier factors like physician socialization and health-care culture. The ethnographer’s outside perspective on the hospital ward still has something important to offer, he suggests in What Would You Do? “[W]e … need to find ways to demonstrate that we can be useful without being helpful.”
Penn’s College of Liberal and Professional Studies (LPS) has harnessed the power of social networking to develop the Open Learning Commons, a new interactive online learning platform that is open to anyone, regardless of enrollment status, education level or geographic location.

“We developed the commons both as an exciting new platform to host online courses and communities, as well as a space for important new open-educational resources,” says Marni Baker Stein, director of program development at LPS.

The first course offered on the commons, which launched in January, was Global Environmental Sustainability. This multi-continent discussion of issues about global environmental policy and sustainability was led by faculty at Penn as well as colleagues at Kyung Hee University in South Korea and Ritsumeikan University in Japan. Students enrolled in the course focused on framing an American approach to the next round of climate change policy, and they made a virtual presentation of their project to attendees at the United Nations World Civic Forum in Seoul, South Korea.

Lectures from the course can be accessed through the commons at www.pennlpscommons.org, the LPS YouTube channel or iTunesU. Online participants can read and comment on student-led blogs; contribute to discussion forums; view the course syllabus and reading list; and engage with students and faculty as well as other professionals in the field of global sustainability.

“This allows participants beyond students enrolled in a particular course, program or even university to join the debate and create a global discussion that crosses national, international and cultural barriers,” Stein says.

The Global Environmental Sustainability course drew more than 4,500 visitors from dozens of countries, and 550 students from 31 countries have enrolled in a non-credit positive psychology course to be offered this summer. Additional summer offerings include Not Even Past: Conversations on American History, an online book discussion series guided by faculty authors from the Department of History and available free of charge. (See back cover and visit www.sas.upenn.edu/notevenpast for more information.)
A new book by Peter Conn, the Vartan Gregorian Professor of English, argues against the assumption that the Depression decade was characterized culturally by leftist politics and aesthetics. In *The American 1930s: A Literary History*, Conn explores both historical events and the literature of the time to support his claim that, despite the pressures of the Depression, the United States was “a place of enormous ideological and imaginative complexity.”

“The past few decades of scholarship have tended to simplify the imaginative work of the decade by concentrating overwhelmingly on leftwing writing,” Conn says. “On the contrary, as the material in my book demonstrates, the 1930s saw a vigorous cultural debate in which the left, the right, and the downright apolitical competed for attention.”

Conn examines this complexity through the lens of a subject to which many writers in the 1930s turned—the past. Responding, in part, to a present in crisis, many Depression-era novels, non-fiction books, plays, poems and paintings deliberated over history and its symbols. “This sustained absorption in the past,” Conn says, “became for writers on all sides of the various debates a vehicle for testing their competing views of American values.”

At a ceremony presided over by a tribal chief in Tepa, Ghana, communications major Jennifer Tytel, C’09, had to stand up and sit down three times. “The third time I sat down,” she explains, “I was a part of their tribe.” From then on, Tytel was Queen of the Youth of the Ashanti Tribe and would be known as Nana ya Poma.

Her ascent to royalty was the outcome of nearly four years of work on campus and in Africa on behalf of Doc to Dock, a program that collects surplus medical supplies and ships them to where they are needed. Tytel established a Doc to Dock chapter at Penn, which helped raise funds and awareness. A sonogram machine that was shipped to Tepa saved the lives of 20 pregnant women and their infants in the first three months, she reports. The Penn chapter collected shipping funds but has also worked to gather textbooks for Tepa’s library, hair dryers for beauty schools, clothing, sewing kits and other items. Doc to Dock recognized Tytel’s efforts with its Collegiate Surplus into Survival Award.

Tytel has also developed an AIDS education program, which she will bring to Tepa this summer before starting law school. As an Ashanti queen, she is obliged to return to Ghana three times each year. “They offered me a husband,” she comments, “but I declined.”
“Since lifespan can be inherited, this means it can evolve over time in populations,” says biology doctoral student Annalise Paaby. “If that’s the case, then we should not only be able to identify some of the genes that determine how long an organism lives but also be able to understand how natural selection acts on those genes to eventually produce the different lifespans that animals have.” Working in the lab of Associate Professor of Biology Paul Schmidt, Paaby has been studying the microevolutionary forces affecting lifespan in *Drosophila melanogaster*—the common fruit fly.

All the genes currently identified as affecting longevity also affect other traits. So, although scientists don’t believe there would ever be a case where natural selection would favor an allele—or version—of a gene that would cause a short lifespan, that allele might be favored because it confers other traits that benefit the fitness of the species. One tradeoff well demonstrated across animal models is that alleles which result in a short life span also result in high reproductive success, and vice versa.

Paaby’s research tests the hypothesis that fruit flies living in high latitudes must have adapted to survive seasonal cold stress, requiring alleles that confer a longer lifespan and the ability to resist stress, but also lower fecundity. In flies occupying lower latitudes, she posits, these alleles would be selected against because they confer only a disadvantage, since the tradeoff between reproductive success and stress tolerance is no longer beneficial. Her work builds on mutational genetics research, which induces lab-derived mutations at specific genes in an organism to determine how they impact phenotype, which are the observable traits of an organism.

Paaby sequenced the insulin receptor gene—previously identified by mutational screens as affecting aging in *Drosophila*—in natural populations of fruit flies collected in orchards from Maine to Florida. She found a naturally occurring mutation, a polymorphism, in the insulin receptor gene that varies across latitude. “One polymorphism allele was more common in northern fly populations and increased with latitude,” Paaby says, “and another was more common in southern populations and decreased with latitude.” When she tested this polymorphism for functional significance, she discovered that the allele more common in high latitudes conferred stress tolerance and the allele more common in low latitudes conferred high fecundity.

Paaby’s work has been in collaboration with researchers in Australia who sequenced the same gene in fruit fly populations on that continent. They found that the polymorphism there shows nearly identical latitudinal patterns. “This is exciting,” Paaby explains, “because we know these populations have been separate for a really long time and were founded by different source populations. The fact that this pattern is repeating itself suggests it is not random and that there is a deterministic process causing it.” Her next step is to test the alleles to see if they impact lifespan. “I have every expectation,” she says, “that the high-latitude allele that confers the stress tolerance phenotype is also going to confer the longer lifespan phenotype.”

Paaby believes her research provides a powerful example of how scientists can apply findings from mutational genetics to natural genetic variation in order to better understand the nuances of genetic function. “If you want to make the claim that you found something adaptive, you have to come at it from many levels,” she says. “You have to explain its genetics, its phenotype, and you have to make a case that you can correlate the environment to the genes and the phenotype. My research helps complete that circle.”
President Obama is commendably committed to leaving Iraq responsibly, and Americans concur. But what does a responsible departure require?

Prevailing wisdom suggests that the U.S. should leave only after power is handed over to a “strong central government.” The premise is that “Baghdad” should be capable of replacing America’s military and “holding the country together.” Bush administration diplomats insisted that Baghdad should organize reconciliation between Sunni and Shiite Arabs. And they wanted pesky Kurds to shut up about Kirkuk, considered an internal matter best left to “Iraqis” after the U.S. departs.

The prescription sounds like common sense; it even sounds principled, but it is folly dressed in blue-suit diplomacy and treachery in the mask of honor. It would jeopardize the few benefits of America’s intervention, notably the defeat of Baathism, the establishment of a prosperous and democratic Kurdistan, and the drafting of Iraq’s 2005 Constitution. And it would increase the likelihood of further catastrophes and likely oblige the U.S. to return.

In a referendum validated by the United Nations, elected Iraqi politicians and four out of five Iraqi voters endorsed a new Constitution. Provisions in Article 140 call for a peaceful resolution of “disputed territories,” particularly Kirkuk.

Article 140 was to reverse the consequences of Arabization, which involved the genocidal destruction of Kurdish, Assyrian Christian and Turkmen communities. Arabization was part of the Baath regime’s assault on the Kurdistan national resistance and other ethnic groups. The 1974–75 war between the Iraqi government and the Kurdistan National Movement was triggered by the failure of the Baath to implement the 1970 Agreement on Autonomy for the Kurdistan Region. The war led the regime to descend into ethnic expulsions, coercive assimilation and boundary-maneuvers.

Arabization was, in short, intended to destroy the effective presence of indigenous non-Arab peoples within their historic homelands. Fortunately, it did not succeed. Moreover, the constitutional program to reverse Arabization democratically is imperative, not only for a just and lasting resolution of conflict between Kurds and Arabs, but also for Iraq’s stability.
Encouraged by successive American and British ambassadors, the Kurdistan government has waited patiently for Baghdad to fulfill its obligations under Article 140—to restore Kurds to their homelands, return property, pay compensation, return Kirkuk Governorate to its 1968 boundaries before Saddam cut it in half, and conduct referendums to permit the accession to the Kurdistan Region of Kirkuk and other districts where there are decisive Kurdish majorities.

The December 2007 constitutional deadline to implement Article 140 has not been met. Some in the Obama administration seem to expect Kurdistan’s patience to endure throughout a furtive U.S. exit. No one should wager a dollar or one marine’s life on that prospect.

Quite aside from America’s moral debt to the Kurds, whose soldiers gave their lives for a new Iraq, supporting re-centralization fails any realistic appraisal of U.S. interests. It will strengthen America’s foes, not weaken them. Sunni Arab jihadists judge that a centralized Iraq will prevent Kurds and Shiites from consolidating power, making Sunni prospects of engineering a coup and monopolizing natural resources much better. The same view is held by Sunni Baathists—renamed the Awakening Councils and the Sons of Iraq—whom the Pentagon put on its payroll under General Petraeus. If the Shiite Arabs who want Iraq re-centralized in their image should succeed (read Prime Minister Maliki), they will generate renewed war with both Kurds and Sunni Arabs.

A strong, central government in Iraq will inevitably renew zero-sum conflict between Sunni and Shiite Arabs. Shiites do not trust Sunni Arabs. Why would they, given the conduct of most Sunni Arab leaders, parties and people—before and after 2003? Re-centralization offers only one highly likely prospect: Shiite domination. The most likely scenario, aided by an ill-thought-out departure, is an Iraq dominated even more by Iran, which has warm relations with the major Shiite parties. The next most likely scenario is a series of coups, counter coups and civil war, which will lead to armed interventions by neighboring powers and drag the U.S. back.

Why has Washington favored centralization at the expense of Iraq’s Constitution? It has nothing to do with oil. The U.S. would do just as well through the decentralization of Iraq’s oil production. It has certainly got something to do with appeasing Sunni Arabs, the ones who have killed most U.S. soldiers. But it has most to do with an old American obsession with having a strong Baghdad to “balance” against Iran.

Such thinking is not realistic. Shiites are pre-eminent in the new Baghdad government. The U.S. intervention and democratization created this new fact that cannot easily be reversed. The outcome has benefited Iran, which is friendly to almost all Shiite factions.

Fortunately, there is a better exit strategy, a principled one that would not betray America’s commitments to Iraq’s new democracy. It is based on realistic assessments of Iraq’s history and political sociology, and is the logical opposite of the conventional wisdom.

In organizing its departure, Washington should commit to supporting Iraq’s Constitution, which mandates an autonomous Kurdistan with the right to unify with Kurdish-majority areas on its southern boundary. It enables Arab Iraqis to organize in their own governorates with a greater role for the Baghdad Federal Government than the Kurds want in their region. This “asymmetric federation” is best for all Iraqis, not just Kurds: it minimizes the extent to which any of its three major communities are governed by the others against their will; it enables each to have local security arrangements, and it enables each to develop its own natural resources and share revenues from all fields in production in 2005.

This strategy is more likely to inhibit outside neighbors from intervening after the U.S. leaves. Kurdistan’s relations with Turkey are improving, notably in energy matters. All that Turkey needs is assurances that the Kurdistan Regional Government will not become the basis for a Greater Kurdistan movement. This is fully within the ambit of America’s power to facilitate. Under the alternative strategy, Iran’s gains would be confined to Shiite-dominated Iraq. Sunni Arabs, those who most support Baathism and neo-Baathism, would have their own provinces to govern and their own quarrels to settle with their jihadists, and they would be kept from exercising racial and religious hegemony over Kurds and Shiites.

President Obama and his Cabinet are all highly intelligent people. They need to “stress test” the re-centralization program that is supported on autopilot by some officials in the State Department and Pentagon. At the moment, Washington is regrettably on course for a reckless departure, led by people with good intentions. The victims will not be just Arabs and Kurds, but U.S. soldiers, U.S. revenues and U.S. interests.

Brendan O’Leary, the Lauder Professor of Political Science, has acted as a constitutional advisor for the Kurdistan Regional Government. His most recent book is How to Get Out of Iraq with Integrity.
THE CITY AS CANVAS
Graduate Student Beth Citron Traces the Rise of India’s Contemporary Art Movement

by Priya Ratneshwar

In a New York Times editorial following the terrorist attacks that ravaged Mumbai last fall, journalist Suketu Mehta described the city as “a mass dream of the peoples of South Asia.” Mumbai’s propensity toward extremes—expressed in images of destitute shantytowns amid sleek skyscrapers—commanded further international attention by way of this year’s Oscar-winning film, Slumdog Millionaire. As India makes its place in the ranks of global powers, this teeming, diverse and often contradictory metropolis is becoming the face of the country’s contemporary zeitgeist.

While Mumbai may be the world’s window to India, it can also be considered India’s window to the world. “I think people in Bombay see themselves as looking as much to other cosmopolitan centers as they do to India,” says art history doctoral student Beth Citron. She prefers the name “Bombay” over “Mumbai” for personal and political reasons shared by many of the city’s residents. Assisted by a Fulbright Fellowship, Citron recently spent two years in Mumbai studying the work of contemporary artists who are experimenting with international modernist styles and ideas while also tackling local subjects and aesthetics. “The result,” she says, “is a vibrant contemporary Indian art movement that has launched the country to the fore of the global art world.”

Citron explains that immediately following India’s independence from British rule and partition from Pakistan in 1947, artists in the country struggled with the issue of national identity. But by the mid-1960s nationalist priorities gave way to what Citron dubs an “urban, cosmopolitan creativity” centered in Mumbai. In addition to becoming the main intellectual and economic heart of post-colonial, post-Partition India, Mumbai was also becoming the center of the country’s commercial art world.

Despite the existence of this burgeoning art scene, Citron found that most surveys on Indian art extended only through the Mughal era, which ended in the 18th century, and that art history research on more recent periods tended to focus on folk art. She also found that her courses on modern and contemporary art rarely covered work produced outside the Western world.

Citron’s dissertation, The City as Canvas: Five Exemplary Artists and Bombay, ca. 1965-1995, offers the first historical assessment of art from this period and region through case studies of artists whose works epitomize India’s contemporary art movement. Her research also provided an opportunity to co-curate an exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum, titled Gateway Bombay, which featured pieces by her dissertation subjects as well as other Mumbai artists.

Citron approaches each of her subjects through the lens of a major issue explored in their work. For example, Tyeb Mehta and Akbar Padamsee, in the late 1960s and ’70s, tried to work through the dichotomy between figurative and abstract art. This was an especially pressing issue for...
contemporary Indian artists who were absorbing Western ideas of abstract expressionism and minimalism, but also had to grapple with the human figure's traditionally central role in Indian art. “The dialogue between abstraction and figuration became key to Indian artists’ creating and asserting their artistic identities,” says Citron, “both at home and abroad.”

Sudhir Patwardhan’s paintings explore the assertion of regional identity and politics, while Bhupen Khakhar’s body of work parses ideas of displacement. “Khakhar’s personal experiences of straddling class and regional boundaries, as well as of coming to terms with his own closeted homosexuality, profoundly informed his paintings,” Citron explains. As a result, he serves as a touchstone for new generations of artists navigating the increasing fluidity of India’s traditionally rigid social structures.

Atul Dodiya, the youngest subject of Citron’s research, is the first Indian artist to explicitly identify himself as global and postmodern. Having adopted postmodernism’s embrace of pastiche, appropriation and the blurring of high- and low-art distinctions, his work is often constructed in mixed media and is rich in stylistic and iconographic allusions to the pop culture and politics of his native Mumbai, as well as to his own artistic genealogy. For example, one of his most famous works, *The Bombay Buccaneer*, features a self-portrait modeled after a Bollywood film poster. The sunglasses Dodiya wears in the painting reflect in one lens British artist David Hockney, and in the other Khakhar, whom he considers a mentor.

The two years Citron spent in India allowed her to cultivate the relationships needed to gain an intimate understanding of Mumbai and its art world. “Gallerists became like family; collectors welcomed me into their homes, and younger artists became my friends and colleagues,” Citron recalls. She was also able to arrange in-depth interviews with all four living artists treated in her dissertation. (Khakhar died in 2003.)

“I called *Art India* magazine,” says Citron, “and I said, ‘Hi, I’m a Ph.D. student at the University of Pennsylvania; I’m doing research, and I’d like to get in touch with some artists. Could you give me their phone numbers? I’d call the artists, and they’d say come by on Tuesday or something. This was just three years ago, but you can’t do this anymore. That’s how quickly the Indian art world is changing.’

According to Citron, the Indian art world is rapidly transforming from a loose collective of groundbreaking artists to a formidable establishment as big and plural and international as Mumbai itself. “Through the formal qualities of their art, their politics and their articulation of artistic positions,” she says, “these artists collectively gave rise to something so much bigger than themselves.”
In the mid-19th century, Italian physician Cesare Lombroso was doing an autopsy on Giuseppe Villella, a notorious brigand who’d spent years in the prisons of Pavia. Peering into the dead criminal’s skull case, Lombroso thought it resembled the crania of “inferior animals,” particularly rodents. “At the sight of that skull,” he wrote, “I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal.”
Often credited as the father of criminology, Lombroso hypothesized that violent behavior could be explained by cranial, skeletal or neurological deformities. Some people were just “born criminal,” he reasoned. Biological malformations—“stigmata” he called them—suggested that lawbreakers were throwbacks to an earlier, more brutish stage in human evolution.

“He was fascinated by the idea that there was a biological brain difference between criminals and the rest of us,” notes neurocriminologist Adrian Raine. From that day on, Lombroso took careful measurements of faces, jaws, heights, weights and other physical traits to gather data in support of what he called his “revelation.”

Lombroso’s empirical and systematic study of offenders gave birth to the science of criminology, but the field almost immediately turned from the biological basis of crime to social, economic and family causes. Poverty, abuse, gangs, joblessness, racism, poor education, bad parenting and other more readily observable social deprivations were seized upon and explored as roots of crime. Biology was left behind.

“Lombroso’s theories sound a bit ridiculous to us,” Raine comments, “but in a way he was right.” With the emergence of new and powerful imaging technologies, scientists can see detailed pictures of the brain and trace activity along its neural networks. “The brain was forgotten until neuroscience techniques evolved to a level where we could, for the first time, really look at brain structure and function,” he says. “And from then on, we found that there’s certainly a brain basis to crime—that the brains of violent criminals are physically and functionally different from the rest of us.”

Raine is chair of the criminology department. Before emigrating to the United States, he worked as a psychologist at two maximum-security prisons in England. But before that, he seemed to be heading for a place on the other side of the bars. Raine confesses to having been an “antisocial kid”: joining gangs, letting air out of tires, setting fire to mail and getting into the usual mischief of wayward kids. “I was one of these boys, but I didn’t end up in prison. Why? I’m still trying to answer the question, not just for myself personally but, I think, for all kids like me. Why did I change? That intrigues me.”

He likes the word “intrigue” and puzzles over the scattered bits of brain- and social-science data his research finds, trying to piece them all together into a coherent picture. Raine is one of the world’s leading researchers using neuroscience techniques to understand the roots of crime—how wrongdoing might be wired into the brain or even written into the genes of malefactors. It’s not that he spurns more conventional theories that point to failed social structures as sources of aggression and violence. “Our thoughts come from the brain,” he muses. “Our behavior comes from the brain, and there are social processes going on. I’m intrigued about how social processes can have an outcome like crime. Biology is the black box in the middle that we are just starting to open up.” Using the new tools and technologies of neuroscience, Raine is peering far deeper and more finely into the criminal brain than Lombroso ever could more than a century ago.

In a study of clients pooled from temporary employment agencies in Los Angeles, Raine tested and diagnosed a group with antisocial personality disorder. People with APD are chronic liars and coldly manipulative individuals who show a pattern of disregard for others. Together with a control group of temp workers, the brains of 21 APD clients were scanned using structural magnetic resonance imaging. The scans revealed that the volume of gray matter in the sociopaths’ prefrontal cortices was 11 percent less than in normal brains. The prefrontal cortices sits right behind the forehead and is the stop-and-think...
part of the brain where reasoning and decision making are processed. Raine calls it the “guardian angel” over impulses and aggressive feelings that rise up from the limbic system, an older, deeper region of the brain.

“Seventy-five percent of us have had homicidal thoughts,” he observes. “What stops most of us from acting out these feelings is the prefrontal cortex.” It turns out that the angel watching over these sociopaths has far fewer neurons on which to run the calculus that considers the cost of carrying out the dark prompts that come from the primitive brain.

Related studies confirm the neural paucity of criminals’ prefrontal circuitry. Positron emission tomography (PET) makes a picture of brain activity by tracking injected radioactive chemicals that propagate along networks of firing neurons. PET scans of 41 murderers and 41 control subjects carried out by Raine and colleagues revealed “significantly lower” neural activity in the prefrontal cortices of murderers. “When the prefrontal cortex is not functioning too well,” Raine speculates, “maybe an individual, when angry, is more likely to pick up a knife and stab someone or pick up a gun and pull the trigger.”

Looking deeper into the limbic brain, Raine did PET scans of the amygdala and associated circuits in the neural networks of convicted murderers who pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. A critical module in the brain circuitry that processes emotion, the amygdala is activated when people are solving moral dilemmas and occupied with feelings about what is right and wrong. In scans of normal brains parsing a moral conundrum, the amygdala...
lights up. In psychopathic brains, it is noticeably dimmer. “The feeling for what's right makes most of us behave in a moral way,” says Raine. “Psychopaths break all the rules. They don’t have that same feeling for what's moral, and it's missing due to impairments in the neural mechanisms underpinning moral judgment.”

Raine has looked beyond the brain in his scrutiny of biology's connection to crime. Research suggests that there is a strong genetic basis to criminal behavior. In more than 100 studies of twins, he notes, if one individual in a pair of identical twins is criminal, there is a 50 percent chance that the other will be criminal too. Identical twins have all of their genes in common. Among pairs of fraternal twins, who share only half of their DNA, the chance is cut to 25 percent.

In their own twin study in Los Angeles, Raine and colleagues have been following 600 pairs starting from age nine. They are now 16. He has also carried out a 20-year study of children on Mauritius, a tropical island in the Indian Ocean. “People who are psychopaths or who have antisocial personality disorder are literally cold-blooded,” he explains. “They have lower heart rates. When they’re stressed, they don’t sweat as much as the rest of us. They don’t have this anticipatory fear that the rest of us have.” This nervousness and fear of being caught and punished helps stop many of us from committing crime, Raine points out. “We’ve got good brakes.”

The Mauritius study measured the biological brakes in nearly 1,800 subjects and found that three-year-old children with poor fear conditioning are much more likely to be criminal offenders by age 23. The research also showed an association of heart rate with aggression. Kids who have a low resting heart rate at age three tend to be more aggressive at age 11.

In yet another study, Raine looked at over 4,000 Copenhagen males who suffered birth complications—forceps delivery, breech birth, lack of oxygen. Infants who experience such difficulties at birth often suffer damage to the hippocampus, a part of the brain that regulates aggression. The investigators devised a way to assess maternal rejection in the first year of life and then looked at police records for violence by age 18. The research showed that neither birth complications nor rejection by the mother alone raised the odds of violence. But when both misfortunes fell upon the same individual, there was a threefold increase in the rate of violent crime.

“Our prisons are bursting full of prisoners. I think one of the things we’re not doing right is taking enough account of biological and genetic processes in helping us to understand the causes of crime.”
“The message is that it’s not just biology; it’s not just the environment. But when you put the two together, that’s when you get the toxic mix,” asserts Raine, “an explosive increase in violence 18 years later. What I’m intrigued about is how social experiences and social processes can change biology and change behavior.”

Despite the flawed science, Lombroso turned out to be right about his revelation—but only half right. Efforts to understand and deal with crime have long been filtered through the tradition of sociology. But crime, says Raine, is the product not just of economic but neural poverty, not just of dysfunction in society but biochemical misfires in the body. “The harsh reality is we’ve gone decades trying to stop crime. What’s happening? Our prisons are bursting full of prisoners. We’re not doing something right. I think one of the things we’re not doing right is taking enough account of biological and genetic processes in helping us to understand the causes of crime.”

That’s the challenge for criminologists in the academic pipeline today, says Raine: broken families and broken brains. “It’s not biology versus environment, he maintains, “it’s biology plus environment that give rise to crime.” The coming generation of criminologists will need to understand both to explain crime and to formulate better prevention and intervention programs.

“The dream has always been to really understand all the causes and processes that make up the criminal offender,” he says. “We’re on the threshold of the dream of having a much, much greater understanding of the early routes to crime and violence. Once we know earlier in life who the kids are who really need intervention, that’s when we’ll do a better job stopping future generations of crime.”

Is it wrong to punish prisoners? Well, isn’t it wrong not to punish them? These people know the difference between right and wrong. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Shylock in The Merchant of Venice took a pound of flesh from Antonio. And rightly so because all successful societies are predicated on the key concepts of justice and responsibility.

But before we plug in the electric chair, let’s consider some of the latest neuroscience knowledge on the brains of psychopaths. When we make a moral decision, a brain area called the amygdala lights up. But in psychopaths, this light that guides conscience and moral behavior has long since gone out.

Now, they didn’t ask to be born with the broken amygdalae that pushed them into a criminal career. So what’s a good juror to do when faced with criminals with broken brains? Isn’t it immoral of us to punish criminals as harshly as we do? Freedom of will is not as free as you think, and for some the die is cast early in life. Can we in good conscience really blame them?

But at what price mercy? Isn’t this argument just a slippery slope to hell, to an irresponsible society and ultimately Armageddon? Mayhap. But consider the point of Portia when she defended Antonio. In her words, “So, good citizens of Locust Walk, though justice be thy plea, consider this: that in the course of justice none of us shall see salvation. We do pray for mercy, but that same prayer doth render us all to the deeds of mercy.”

So before your finger starts fiddling on that switch on the electric chair, consider one other behavioral response: turn the other cheek. For in the name of neurocriminology it is wrong to punish prisoners.

Adapted from Adrian Raine’s 60-Second Lecture, delivered September 10, 2008. To view this and other 60-Second Lectures, visit www.sas.upenn.edu/60secondlectures.
Thomas Sugrue is the Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Endowed Term Professor of History.
Conventional narratives of the civil rights movement focus on the epic struggles against Jim Crow in Southern battlegrounds such as Selma, Alabama and Memphis, Tennessee. But historian Tom Sugrue recalls stark examples of racial inequality and conflict punctuating his childhood far north of the Mason-Dixon Line in Detroit, Michigan. The city, Sugrue says, “was intensely racially divided during a period of enormous contestation over race and politics, from urban riots and uprisings to the furious debates surrounding the election of Coleman Young, the city’s first black mayor, in 1973.”

At five years old, Sugrue remembers watching National Guard vehicles roll past his street during the 1967 riots, which lasted five days and left 43 dead. He recalls his neighborhood changing from being all white to almost all black over a period of three years in the early ’70s. And he remembers leaving Detroit at age 10, when his parents followed the migration of whites out of the city to the suburbs.

As a child, Sugrue did not fully understand these formative experiences, but their impact is evident in his influential body of research on 20th-century American politics, urban history, civil rights and race. His 1996 book, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, won numerous awards for its exploration of the economic decline that has plagued Detroit and other industrial cities since World War II. Most recently, Random House published *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*, which was a finalist for a Los Angeles Times Book Prize. The book challenges traditional histories of the civil rights movement with its high-resolution account of the struggle for racial equality in the North.

“The story of civil rights in the North has been ignored, in part, because the Southern story we tell is a very compelling one,” Sugrue says. “The Southern story follows a narrative framework that is easy to tell and retell—of immorality, nonviolent struggle, suffering and redemption.”

Many of these conventional histories begin with the 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* and end with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, all of which...
with groups ranging from business leaders in riot-torn communities to members of the Nixon administration.

_Sweet Land of Liberty_ expands the chronology of the civil rights struggle to cover more than 80 years—from the 1920s to the present—and reveals battles not generally associated with the North. For example, Sugrue uncovers forgotten boycotts against segregated restaurants, movie theaters and swimming pools in the North that predated and inspired some of the famous sit-ins in the South during the ‘60s. He also found that the North was critical in combating segregated education.

“I found dozens of cases of grassroots activists, of black women mostly, taking their children out of inferior schools, picketing and marching, and often supporting lawsuits to try to change the patterns of education in the North,” he says. “This is especially prevalent in the 1940s and in the years right after _Brown_. By the late 1950s, Northern activists are taking the Brown decision—which really was viewed by the lawyers who argued it in the Supreme Court as applying mostly to the South—and they begin to argue that it has application for education in the North.”

Housing was another crucial civil rights issue in the North. Activists fought this battle on a number of fronts, from attempting to open suburban housing markets to African Americans to building self-consciously integrated neighborhoods to improving conditions in inner-city tenements and apartment buildings. However, for much of the 20th century many whites fought the movement of African Americans into their communities. And even some of the best attempts to diversify housing in the suburbs failed because of local opposition to the construction of low-income or high-density housing. “It’s the area where there have been the fewest victories in the North,” Sugrue says, “and where the obstacles to change are the greatest.”

Sugrue begins _Sweet Land of Liberty_ by noting that almost all of the 25 most segregated metropolitan areas in the United States are in the Northeast and Midwest. That observation serves as a sobering reminder that many of the issues surrounding the struggle for racial equality remain unresolved.

go back much further than the mid-1950s and involved all sorts of activists whose stories were more prosaic and who were dealing with issues that couldn’t always be defined in moral binaries.”

Sugrue explains, for example, that many scholars of the Black Power movement offer a simplistic dichotomy between “good” Black Power and “bad” Black Power. They claim either that the movement offered a radical challenge to the status quo or that its strident rhetoric led to the rise of white backlash politics and a new conservatism.

The unexpected twists and turns in Sugrue’s research on the history of Black Power led him to disagree with both of these interpretations. He found that the movement was not something new that emerged in the ‘60s when civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael coined the phrase “Black Power.” Black nationalism and self-determination, Sugrue says, have had an important place in African American politics since the periods of slavery and Reconstruction. Sugrue also found that Black Power advocates formed surprising alliances in order to advance their goals, working with groups ranging from business leaders in riot-torn communities to members of the Nixon administration.

Obama himself publicly identifies with the Southern freedom struggle—with Martin Luther King, Jr., and
John Lewis—but he’s really the product of the Northern struggle,” Sugrue says. “Obama moves to Chicago just as the city elects its first African American mayor, and he cuts his teeth as a grassroots community organizer there. He’s involved in the kind of economic development and empowerment projects that are very much an outgrowth of the 1960s. And Obama is in many respects the heir to Northern black politicians, such as Jesse Jackson and former Philadelphia mayor Wilson Goode, who forged interracial coalitions as a way of getting elected to office.”

Sugrue thinks that coalitions—those which crossed not only racial boundaries, but also political, economic and cultural ones—are key to some of the greatest victories in the history of civil rights. The epilogue of *Sweet Land of Liberty* describes the 40th anniversary meeting of one such coalition—West Mount Airy Neighbors (WMAN). Founded in the late ’50s by a group of religious and secular civil rights activists, WMAN aimed to create, in the Philadelphia neighborhood of West Mount Airy, a deliberately integrated community. After four decades of the group’s work, West Mount Airy was designated by a Department of Housing and Urban Development study as one of the most successfully racially integrated neighborhoods in America.

Sugrue has called West Mount Airy his home for nearly two decades and has himself served as president of WMAN. His neighborhood’s demographics give him grounds for optimism, but he believes there is still much to overcome. “Economic development and self-determination, the issue of relationships with the police and police brutality, questions of workplace discrimination and effects of the economy on African Americans, and inequality in education—these are all issues we grapple with today,” Sugrue says. He feels the time may be ripe for achieving greater racial equality by taking advantage of a new administration that is open to anti-discrimination regulations and seems compelled to reevaluate how the nation deals with issues ranging from employment to housing to infrastructure.

“Ultimately the struggle for civil rights in the North was a political one,” Sugrue says. “One thing I learned in writing *Sweet Land of Liberty* was that at key moments in the past—the New Deal, World War II, the early 1960s—activists looked at government and saw the potential for greater responsiveness. I think there are possibilities at this particular junction in our history. But that said, it’s incumbent upon those who want to address the persistent problems of inequality to keep pushing.”

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**New Perspectives on African American History**

*Sweet Land of Liberty* is just one in a crop of recent books by Department of History faculty that bring new and more nuanced perspectives to African American history.

In *Black Philosopher, White Academy: The Career of William Fontaine*, Bruce Kuklick, Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor of American History, explores the little-known career of William Fontaine, who was the only black member of Penn’s faculty in the 1950s and ’60s. Kuklick’s book offers a biographical sketch of a pioneering African American intellectual caught up in mid-20th-century issues of race, as well as an intellectual history of African American life and letters at that time.

*Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion* by Barbara Savage, the Geraldine R. Segal Professor in American Social Thought, counters the assumption that African American religion and progressive politics are inextricably intertwined. Savage tells the story of a highly diversified African American religious community and of nearly a century of contention—as well as cooperation—between black churches and political activists.

Steven Hahn, also a Nichols Professor of American History, takes to task the traditional slavery-to-freedom narrative in *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* by uncovering hidden stories of African American political organization and activism. “I try to interrogate that narrative and suggest it is more complicated than we make it out to be,” Hahn says, “and that we ought to take the aspirations that don’t fit neatly into this narrative more seriously.”

Watch video of Sugrue, Savage and Hahn discussing their books as part of the public lecture series, Not Even Past: New Perspectives on American History, at [www.sas.upenn.edu/notevenpast](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/notevenpast).
Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Music Carolyn Abbate is the author of *In Search of Opera* and *Unsung Voices*, and co-author of the forthcoming *Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years.*
Opera Scholar Carolyn Abbate Considers the Future of Old Forms in the Age of New Media

By B. Davin Stengel

Photo by Gregory Benson

Just by glancing at a bibliography of her published works, it’s easy to surmise that Carolyn Abbate loves opera. What many wouldn’t guess, though, is how she loves opera. “I often imagine that my ideal experience of an opera,” she explains, “would be one where I’ve got my own box. There are curtains in front of it; I can have a little snack nearby, and if I get tired, I can go to sleep on a couch.”

From cartoons to car commercials, the perception of opera as an inscrutable object of interest for high-society caricatures is so deeply embedded in the psyche of popular culture that the uninitiated can be forgiven their wariness. Abbate understands why someone accustomed to rock concerts, for example, would be perplexed at the sight of a typical opera audience, with many operagoers appearing “shut down” or uninvolved. But this phenomenon is relatively new, she stresses, and it isn’t necessarily desirable.

“The operas themselves were not calculated to bear the degree of attention that we’re asked to bring upon them,” says Abbate. “So people will say, ‘Oh, god, opera is so boring.’ Well, actually that’s part of it. There are long stretches where it’s more or less just keeping time, and that was OK because originally people knew to let their attention go in and out. And they were able to do that. Now we’re forced to pay attention all the time, and the pieces themselves were not made to hold that weight.”

A fixture on the Metropolitan Opera’s Live From the Met radio broadcasts, Abbate is widely recognized as a transcendent critic, but she isn’t content to remain on the sidelines. She’s worked as an operatic dramaturge for productions at several major houses, and she explores interests in film and sound technology as a member of Saggitaria, a group of musicians, artists and writers working as directors, designers and producers to innovate multimedia stagings of classical music. Drawn to Penn last year by the strength of the School’s music department, she’s currently working on a new book while inspiring the next generation of music lovers and scholars.

Q: You just finished teaching a freshman seminar on film music, for which being able to read musical scores was not a prerequisite. How do you approach teaching undergraduates with limited music backgrounds?

Abbate: The first thing I do is demonstrate for students how to really pay attention to what they’re hearing. You can do this by starting out with big forms. With opera, for example, you ask what does a recitative sound like—as opposed to an aria—and how do you hear where you go from one to the other? That’s really easy; nobody can mistake that. So you gradually add these building blocks, directing students on what to listen for, and by the time the course is over they really are listening differently. One of the students in the film music seminar said at the last class, “Now I hear music in movies in a totally different way. I’m constantly thinking, ‘Oh, that’s what that is; that’s how that’s working.’”

Q: Today’s college students are arguably the first true “iPod generation,” having grown up with computers and digital files largely supplanting home stereos and CDs. Are you noticing changes in the classroom related to this?

Abbate: What’s really different, I find, is that there used to be students who were classical music specialists, and that’s all they knew. They didn’t really go anywhere else. That’s unheard of now. Today students have such an eclectic range of things that they listen to and that they can cite and hear in relation to. It’s wonderful in certain ways, because they
can hear, for example, the crossovers between folk music, or exotic music, and imitation music in opera. I no longer have to tell them what kitschy exotic music sounds like. They've analyzed that for themselves.

But it is striking that students are completely accustomed to iPods and getting music online. CDs are a kind of foreign object to them, or, in a funny way, they prefer not to have the material object. They really want all of this stuff to be floating without weight. The problem, though, is the sound quality.

Q: In 2004 you published an influential article entitled “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” in which you questioned some popular assumptions of musical scholarship. Were you surprised by the intensity of the response?

Abbate: No. For a large part of the later 20th century, the study of music has essentially involved saying, “So what is music a code for?” You know, if music has significance, it’s a kind of code, and our job is to decode it and tell people what it means. So it’s a very distancing thing. I wrote that article to put a bee in the bonnet and say, “Look, there are certain fallacies in the thinking that music is a code,” and I tried to point out what they were—certain slips in logic and irrational assumptions.

Q: How did you become interested in studying film music?

Abbate: Music for film grows right out of opera, historically, and there’s a lot of early film music written by people who are channeling opera composers; so it’s a natural crossover. On the other hand, with some musics it’s very different because the technology is different as well as the assumptions about how present the music is supposed to be. It’s a lot more covert in certain ways.

I was actually one of the first people in the institution of musicology who started using film and the way music functions in film to think about meaning in music. I’ve been doing that since the 1980s, which is almost the prehistory of musicology in film music. Once you could rent videos, I just watched a lot of videos—a lot of videos. People always ask me questions like, “How did you find that movie where Salome is being lip-synched in a transvestite nightclub?” And I say, “It’s Premiere Video; it’s Blockbuster.” You go there, and you pick something off the shelf. Of course nobody does that anymore, right? Video stores—talk about defunct. It’s not the same; it’s like not being able to go to the stacks in the library.

Q: Audiences for opera and classical music performance appear to be graying, and opera companies and symphony orchestras are under serious financial pressures. What do you think this could mean for the future of opera?

Abbate: Is the audience for opera graying as much as the audience for symphony? Because my impression is that it’s not. This is entirely subjective. It’s based on just being at the opera and seeing who’s there—versus being at a symphonic concert—and I have the vague impression that the opera audience is not as gray. And if you go to the live simulcasts, the ones in movie theaters, it’s actually a completely mixed audience. There aren’t a whole lot of teenagers there, but it’s a pretty wide age spectrum, and I think it’s because opera is multimedia. As a theatrical format, it resembles film, and I
think that makes it more accessible for beginning audience members. In other words, it’s an easier thing to do, if you don’t know anything about it, to go to an opera and enjoy yourself.

Although opera houses will probably not do this, I think that one way to solve the graying of the audience problem—and this would go for symphonic concerts, too—is to make them less of a religious experience where you have to be quiet and stay put. That kind of attentive, completely transfixed experience is historically pretty new. Before about the 1870s, no one would go to an opera expecting this to be the situation. So I often wonder, if concerts and operas could be done today the way they were in the beginning of the 19th century—when audience members could go in and out, and when they could converse with friends in a moderate way—whether people wouldn’t find it to be a more lively experience. The problem is that I don’t think the artists would ever agree to something like that.

In terms of financial pressures, this has happened before, and obviously it’s a typical pattern in times of economic uncertainty. In Europe in the 19th century, when crashes or dips came, the smaller urban opera theaters would shut up for a while, and usually they didn’t come back in the same form once things were better. So there was always a kind of recycling of small theaters. It’s hard to say whether this will happen now, because in the 19th century opera was a current genre.

Q: If opera is no longer a current genre, how would you describe it?

Abbate: Opera isn’t a living compositional form anymore, despite the fact that there are obviously big commissions for new operas. The most interesting of those tend not to really be operas but theater pieces with music that could be performed in other situations, not necessarily just for an opera audience. It’s really rare to get new pieces performed, and they don’t tend to have an enduring life. In many cases a new work will be performed in one season, but revivals are few and far between; so it’s a very different situation from that of the entrenched great repertory.

The book that I’m writing now with my co-author, Roger Parker, takes on this question of what exactly does it mean for a genre to be contemporary, as opposed to a museum genre. Opera, like all museum genres, is more and more vulnerable as time goes by. But I have a lot of faith in technology. Despite the fact that small theaters may close, I think that more people will experience opera, because it’s bound to become more of a technologically distributed phenomenon.

Loathly Lady Live

The Penn Humanities Forum celebrated the close of its 10th anniversary year with the world premiere of an original, sung-through comic opera inspired by Chaucer’s The Wife of Bath’s Tale. Librettist and Richard L. Fisher Professor of English Wendy Steiner describes The Loathly Lady as a “romp through 600 years of the woman question, as well as 600 years of music.” The partially staged April 1 performance in Irvine Auditorium, enhanced by image projections of original artwork by John Kindness, garnered a standing ovation.

Visit Steiner’s website at www.english.upenn.edu/loathlylady to view pilot animation of what she and Kindness hope will one day be a feature-length animated film.
If you come into Professor Simon Richter’s literature class, you might notice that the windows are covered with dark-blue fabric. “What is he trying to hide?” you might wonder. In e-mails to the course listserv, he addresses the class as pact members. “What pact?”

Rows of students are scribbling in notebooks or tapping on laptops. Their dog-eared volumes of Goethe’s *Faust* have lines of text highlighted in yellow and pages marked with thickets of pink, green and purple Post-its. Nothing unusual there.

Richter enters the room and flicks a switch at the podium. A little motor hums to life lowering a big screen. Projected images of demons—some sinister, some silly—then appear. Is this a nightmare? At a screening of *Rosemary’s Baby*, one of the films studied by the class, actress Mia Farrow is heard exclaiming, “This is no dream! This is really happening!”

The class is the Devil’s Pact in Literature, Music and Film. Several years ago, Richter decided to rename the Faust Legend in Literature, an old German-department staple, working in movies and music as a way of luring students into reading and thinking about substantial works of literature. Enrollments jumped 500 percent.

The retooled course mixes “serious” literature, such as Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* and Klaus Mann’s *Mephisto*, with pop-culture creations like *The Simpsons* and the Rolling Stones’ “Sympathy for the Devil” along with Hollywood star vehicles like *Angel Heart* and art films like Kurosawa’s *Ikiru*. Richter points out that Goethe himself drew inspiration from popular puppet shows about the 16th-century scholar Doktor Faustus, who sold his soul in exchange for knowledge. “We sometimes forget that today’s television and movie writers are frequently graduates of Penn or other colleges,” he says, “and that great works of literature often have their beginnings in popular culture.” His course tracks how the devil’s pact legend gets retold and refracted in various artistic media as well as through history and across cultures. In Sherman Alexie’s novel *Reservation Blues*, for instance, the class looked at how the legend played out among Native Americans.

Richter is a professor of Germanic languages and literatures, and president of the Goethe Society of North America. A precise and engaging lecturer, he is full of a playful—almost innocent—enthusiasm for his subject despite the diabolical undertones. “This course uses the Faust story and the devil’s pact legend to explore what it means to be modern,” he explains. In novels, films and songs, the class examines the restless and unmoored self-awareness of the modern individual whose ceaseless striving can yield astonishing progress but also bitter tragedy.

“Another thing the course is doing,” Richter confides, “and I’m not too explicit about this with the students, is tempting them to look at the humanities anew. I assume that, by and large, students are not excited about literature. They may have had some bad or just neutral experiences in high school. But I want to tempt them by involving them in the very exciting process of interpretation. I want them to look at literature and works of culture afresh, not in order to win them for graduate study, but just so that the humanities continue to be a part of their lives in a way that’s really significant.”

Some of the students who unknowingly entered into Richter’s diabolical pact now find their souls singed by the experience.

Pre-med science major Derek Mazique reports that the course “really rounded out my undergraduate experience. My education primarily concerned understanding processes of the natural world, but to me, being human is more than being an upright hominid. … Connecting the dots between Faust adaptations can be tricky, but the more investment you put into it, the richer the Faust relationship becomes—it encourages self-discovery outside of class.”

Jose Varela, a freshman in the Huntsman Program in International Studies and Business, observes that the devil’s pact legend “sheds light on everyday life. Literature and film are to life, he discovered, as economics is to business. “Through the arts,” he says, “concepts are learned and these can be used to better understand application—or life.”

“When a class can challenge your assumptions about humanity and indeed your own life,” adds pact member Penny Metchev, another Huntsman freshman, “then you know it’s worth taking.”
I went down to the crossroads, fell down on my knees.

“Cross Road Blues”
Robert Johnson
AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMMING IN TELEVISION STUDIES

Described by colleagues as an outstanding teacher who had a terrific impact, Wolf Visiting Associate Professor in Television Studies Victoria Johnson won the 2009 Katherine S. Kovacs Book Award during her recent time at Penn. Granted by the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, the award recognizes original works that significantly advance scholarship in the field. Johnson received the honor for her 2008 book, *Heartland TV: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for U.S. Identity*, which examines the Midwest of popular imagination in the context of television’s development, programming and marketing, as well as public debates over the medium’s cultural worth.

During the spring semester, Johnson taught two popular undergraduate courses—an introduction to television studies and TV Nation: Television and the Imagination of Community. She also took part in the annual Cinema Studies Pedagogy symposium, which provides ongoing training for faculty and graduate students in teaching at the undergraduate level. Johnson is the second scholar appointed to the Wolf Visiting Professorship since its inception in 2007. Established through a gift by Dick Wolf, C’69—the Emmy-winning creator and executive producer of *Law & Order*, among other achievements—this professorship plays a key role in attracting leading television scholars who share their talent and expertise with the Penn community.

If time is money, then President of Disney Channels Worldwide Rich Ross, C’83, has made students in the School of Arts and Sciences wealthy indeed. Over the last 15 years, Ross has traveled to campus 17 times to speak to—and with—students across the University campus about planning their career paths. Most recently, he was the first alumnus to speak via video conference with undergraduates as part of the College Alumni Mentoring Series.

One student who has benefited from Ross’s time and personal engagement is Bing Chen, who graduated from the College in May with a degree in English. Chen has his own aspirations for a career in the media industry, managed to hear Ross speak every year during his time at Penn and also received one-on-one counsel from the Disney executive. “He has been an incredible mentor,” Chen says, “and he’s incredibly candid and honest with his advice, which has proven to be very helpful in my professional trajectory thus far.” Ross helped Chen identify his personal interests in media and entertainment and recommended the College student for his first summer internship at Disney-ABC Media Networks, an experience Chen says taught him a “host of transferable business skills.”

Chen believes the fact that Ross has returned to campus regularly for the past 15 years to speak—particularly with College students—is a testament not only to his loyalty to his alma mater but also to his belief in the importance of a liberal arts education. “He will often emphasize the importance of the softer skills that he learned as an English and international relations major to his daily life today,” Chen explains. Indeed, says Ross, “What can be better than to have the opportunity to avail yourself of the wide range of learning that comes from a liberal arts education, especially when you know there is a world out there today that demands thinkers, not just graduates?”

There is no way to put a price on what students can learn from alumni experiences, but alums like Ross get a lot out of the interaction as well. “I believe returning each year to see students provides for them clear evidence that their career possibilities are as endless as their dreams,” Ross says, “and for me, that there are new dreamers at Penn ready to enter the work force.”
A distinguished alumnus, businessman and one of the University’s most dedicated citizens, Christopher Browne, C’69, can now count among his accolades the SAS Dean’s Medal—a special recognition that has only been given at one other time in the School’s history.

“I can think of no one more deserving of this honor,” remarked Dean Bushnell as she presented the medal at the Dean’s Forum reception in April. “A man who always speaks his mind, Chris has said many times that volunteers need to bring at least two out of three things to the table: work, wealth or wisdom. I can say confidently that Chris has provided all three in abundance.”

Browne’s legacy of giving at SAS includes not only the 10 Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professorships but also the Christopher H. Browne Center for International Politics. “Chris’s generosity to the School of Arts and Sciences is legendary,” said Dean Bushnell, “and has touched more departments, programs, faculty and students than I can name.”

As a co-chair of Penn’s Making History Campaign and a Charter Trustee of the University, Browne believes that supporting the School is critical to Penn’s future. “My long involvement with the University has been motivated by my desire to see that the University I leave behind is even better than the one that helped to shape me as an undergraduate,” he explains. “That can’t happen without a strong School of Arts and Sciences.”

Christopher H. Browne has been a trustee of the University since 1991 and a member of the Board of Overseers of the School of Arts and Sciences since 1982. He has served as overseer chair since 1999. Browne has spent his entire career at Tweedy, Browne Company, LLC, a registered investment advisor with offices in New York and London, and is president of the Tweedy, Browne Mutual Funds.

From left, James Riepe, Board of Trustees Chair, SAS Dean Rebecca Bushnell, Christopher Browne, Penn President Amy Gutmann, and former SAS Dean Sam Preston
Partnerships

In April, after serving more than 10 years as chair of the School’s Board of Overseers, Christopher Browne, C’69, stepped down. His successor, David Silfen, graduated from the College in 1966, but he has never really left Penn.

David has been a generous donor and an equally committed volunteer. His gifts include two Penn Integrates Knowledge Professorships, the David and Lyn Silfen University Forum, a Student Study Center and support for the College’s Pilot Curriculum, an experiment in learning that helped shape the School’s general curriculum. He is also a proud Penn parent: his two children, Adam, C’98, WG’03, and Jane, C’07, are also Arts and Sciences alumni.

Two years after graduating from Penn, the same year he earned an MBA at Columbia, David joined Goldman Sachs. Within 10 years, he was a partner. He subsequently rose to become co-head of the firm’s Global Equities Division and a member of its Executive Committee. He retired in 1997 from Goldman Sachs and holds the honorary title of Senior Director. He now oversees his family’s office of investments.

In addition to serving on the School’s Board of Overseers, David is a longtime Penn Trustee. He has served as chair of the Trustee’s Development Committee and as a member of the Executive, Budget and Finance, Investment Board and Nominating committees. He was also deeply involved in planning for Penn’s Making History campaign.

We spoke recently with David by phone about his long association with the School of Arts and Sciences.
Q: How did you first become involved with the School?
Silfen: I’ve been a supporter since my graduation—40 years ago. I felt indebted to Penn because of the impact that my experience there had on me. I was a Russian history major, and I believe strongly that my liberal arts education served me well. So I view Penn, and especially SAS, as one of the institutions in my life that really helped shape who I am. But my volunteer involvement intensified when I joined the School’s board in the ’80s. I’ve had the pleasure of working with four of the School’s distinguished deans, most recently Rebecca Bushnell.

Q: What motivated you?
Silfen: I’ve always felt that it’s important to give back to the community and to organizations that I feel close to. It’s a view that my wife Lyn shares. For many years after graduation, I was immersed in my professional career. Although I didn’t have much time, I wanted to make a meaningful contribution to a relatively small number of organizations that were important to me. Penn is at the top of the list.

Q: What advice would you give to alumni interested in becoming more involved with Penn?
Silfen: They should try it. Philanthropic and volunteer involvement is like anything else in this world—if you like it, you’ll do more of it. From my own involvement in the Making History campaign, I’ve had many opportunities to see the excitement of our donors and volunteers and the gratification that they’ve gotten from the good things that have happened at Penn because of their support. There’s a lot for all of us to be proud of.

Q: You’ve been associated with SAS for decades. Can you comment on the changes that you’ve seen?
Silfen: There is a lot of positive momentum. I feel extraordinarily pleased with the direction that both Amy Gutmann and Rebecca Bushnell have taken. The School has great success in attracting the most diverse and academically capable students year in and year out. And the caliber of professors that we’ve been able to attract from around the world is truly impressive. The Penn Integrates Knowledge initiative is bringing world-class scholars with a multidimensional perspective to Penn. Lyn and I have endowed two—both joint appointments to the School of Arts and Sciences and Medicine. I’m very excited about the people that we have recruited to these chairs. Jonathan Moreno in Medical Ethics, and History and Sociology of Science is a leading bioethics expert and has been heading up the Obama transition team’s Council on Bioethics Review. And Sarah Tishkoff in Genetics and Biology just had a great write-up in the New York Times about her work in Africa.

Q: What impact do you see the global economic crisis having on the Making History campaign?
Silfen: Obviously we are very aware of the strain that the downturn in the global economy is placing on people’s philanthropy. While we’re still looking to raise funds for our critical priorities, we’re also emphasizing stewardship and cultivation, and making people aware of all the terrific things that are happening at SAS and the entire University. In the last six months Rebecca [Bushnell] has met with alumni and supporters in India, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and England, as well as New York and California. We’re using the Making History campaign as an opportunity to make people aware of the progress and exciting initiatives at Penn—there’s an important story to be told.

Even with the difficult economic climate, the University is doing very well against the $3.5-billion goal. With three years still to go we’re already at $2.4 billion, so I feel cautiously optimistic that we’ll hit our target. But the real success of the campaign will be based on funding specific priorities, which include student aid, support for faculty, and important facilities projects like the Neural and Behavioral Sciences Building, and on assuring that SAS achieves its campaign goal of $500 million. This will be challenging, but we’re committed to getting it done.

Q: As the new chair of the Board of Overseers, what are your goals for the School?
Silfen: First of all, I would be remiss if I didn’t give credit to Chris Browne for his outstanding leadership over the last decade. The School enjoyed great upward momentum under his tenure as the board’s chair, and one of my main goals is to continue that momentum and take it to the next level. I’m especially eager to engage younger alumni on our board and to expand our geographical and professional representation. And I want to be sure that the Overseers are actively involved in the campaign. We still have to compete with peer institutions for our world-class students and faculty, and the campaign will help assure that we have the resources to compete effectively. As well as we’ve done at SAS, and at Penn, we can’t be complacent. I’m not opposed to taking victory laps. But I do think that great organizations don’t sit still.
Dow Chemical Company’s Advanced Materials Division (formerly Rohm and Haas), a leader in creating innovative technologies and solutions for the specialty-materials industry, has made a significant gift to the School of Arts and Sciences. The gift will fund three years of course creation for a sustainable development concentration within the Organizational Dynamics master’s programs, as well as a companion certificate program. It is the first-ever gift from a corporate sponsor to an academic institution to create a program for working professionals on the study and implementation of sustainability principles across an organization.

In 2007, Penn President Amy Gutmann signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. As part of that commitment, the University is developing a plan to achieve climate neutrality by reducing campus greenhouse gas emissions; purchasing at least 15 percent of its electrical power from renewable sources; adopting an energy-efficient appliance program; providing access to public transit for students, faculty and staff; and committing to a policy that new construction must conform to U.S. Green Building Council LEED Silver standards.

Pierre Brondeau, President and CEO of Dow Advanced Materials, said that Penn “personifies in its president, its faculty and its students alike a serious and steadfast commitment to sustainability, bringing with it a leadership position in interdisciplinary approaches to critical issues facing the world today. We are proud to partner with Penn.” Dow and Rohm and Haas have a long history of dedication to environmental and social responsibility—meeting, exceeding and even pioneering industry and societal standards.

In addition to the sustainability curriculum, the Dow gift will fund a marketing campaign to attract a diverse body of students, whose varying points of view and experiences will enrich debate around the topic. The Dow Chemical Company/University of Pennsylvania partnership in sustainable development will also sponsor symposia and other programming where academics and professionals will share knowledge and best practices. The new partnership will give industry leaders tools to effect change within their organizations, and it will provide a forum for scholars and managers to come together and create innovative solutions for a sustainable future.

“Dow is honored to provide the support needed for this program not only focused on understanding sustainability but what it takes to drive sustainability in organizations of all kinds,” said Neil C. Hawkins, Vice President of Sustainability at Dow. “It is this kind of pragmatic approach to sustainability education that working professionals need.”

Larry Starr, the director of Penn’s Organizational Dynamics program, said, “This gift offers a mutually beneficial educational partnership. It will further scholarship and practice for the students in our academic community of working professionals from the U.S. and abroad, and it will support the Dow community in their goal of developing a global culture of sustainable development.”
In the spring, senior theatre arts major Shane Valenzi directed Camelot for his honors thesis. Stage direction is equal parts creativity, organization and psychology, he explains. The director’s grounded level-headedness and soaring imagination holds together the artful illusion that we call theatre.

Photo by Jon Perlmutter
The great American novelist William Faulkner said, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” History as an academic discipline is alive too. Past understandings mature and change as historians gain new insights, discover new sources and develop new research tools. The stories they tell are never settled. They’re not even past.

Watch streaming videos of Penn history faculty talking about their newest books. Peruse book reviews, interviews and other resources. Join online discussion groups that explore American history as illuminated by faculty authors.

**RICHARD BEEMAN**  
Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution

**STEVEN HAHN**  
The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom

**THOMAS SUGRUE**  
Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North

**KATHLEEN BROWN**  
Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in America

**THOMAS CHILDERS**  
Soldier from the War Returning: The Greatest Generation’s Troubled Homecoming from World War II

For more information and to register, visit [www.sas.upenn.edu/notevenpast](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/notevenpast)