



# **CAS Outstanding Teaching Fellow Awards Academic Year 2014/15**

**Friday, May 1, 2015  
3:30 p.m.**

**CAS 132**

## CAS Outstanding Teaching Fellows, Academic Year 2014-15

*Most of our PhD students are planning to enter the academy, and as such, the training, guidance, and experience we give them in developing their skills as teachers and academic mentors is a critical part of their graduate training. As teaching fellows, these teacher/scholars play very important roles in contributing to the high quality of undergraduate education at Boston University. Very often they are the instructors who get to know our undergraduates best in the earliest stages of their college careers. Each year we honor the best of our teaching fellows – those who stand out already in making a major difference in the teaching mission of Boston University. Please join me in admiring their dedication and work, and in wishing them well as they continue to grow as educators through their later careers.*

- Virginia Sapiro, Dean of the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

## American & New England Studies

### P.J. Carlino

Professor Brooke Blower writes: “I have worked with a large number of TFs since arriving at BU in 2006. Most of them have been excellent. Many of them have gone on to win teaching awards. But I don’t think I’ve ever worked with anyone more deserving of a CAS award for outstanding TFs than P.J. He is simply the most professional, helpful, engaged, and effective teaching assistant I’ve seen. I have had the pleasure of having P.J. as my Teaching Fellow twice during this academic year.

During Fall 2014 he was the fellow for HI300 American Popular Culture, a course of 73 students. In that course he mentored his co-TF, who was teaching for the first time, as well as inspired and informed the undergraduates under his wing. He brought primary sources and objects into his discussion sections to build on what we did in lecture in his own smart and original way, and he had a very light touch with students who needed extra help. The students recognized his outstanding performance and often praised him in their teaching evaluations.

P.J. in all honesty, is more like a co-teacher than a teaching assistant. I know that at least one other faculty member, Nina Silber, has found the same when he audited one of her seminars. He is extremely deserving of recognition.

## **Anthropology**

### **Alexander Claxton**

Alex Claxton has established a model for exceptional graduate student work ethic, collegiality, scholarship, and instruction. Alex is a deep thinker, quite interested in both the day-to-day aspect of scientific research, and in the broader nature of science itself. His passion for biological anthropology translates well in the classroom, where he has been a TF for our introductory course in biological anthropology (AN102) six times, the head TF supervising other graduate student four times, and has taught this introductory course during the summer semester. Student evaluations note his enthusiasm and his eagerness to explain difficult topics with patience and skill. Furthermore, Alex has refined and rewritten the lab activities to integrate smoothly with lecture topics. And, when in a pinch, we have called upon Alex to give the occasional lecture to the roughly 150 students in AN102 he always comes through. Alex is reliable, thoughtful, patient, and dedicated well deserving of a Teaching Fellowship Award.

## **Archaeology**

### **Natalie Susmann**

The Department of Archaeology nominates Natalie Susmann for the Outstanding TF award for her work in AR230 (Greek and Roman Archaeology; spring 2015) and AR307 (Archaeological Science; fall 2014). She has been a star performer in both courses. In both AR230 and AR307, Natalie has gone well beyond the standard duties of a course TF by taking student learning as her personal charge. She learned every student's name in both classes (AR230 has 42 students) so that she can keep track of their attendance, course work, and general comprehension. She uses her office hours to provide one-on-one help, and makes sure to keep us updated on what is working, and not, for various students. We had/have weekly discussions with Natalie on the approaches that we're using in class to get ideas across, with the happy result that we both feel as though we have a partner in thinking about the art of teaching. Natalie shows great promise as a teacher and mentor.

## **Astronomy**

### **Brandon Harrison**

In Fall 2014, Brandon Harrison was the sole teaching fellow for the first ever Massive Open Online Course to be offered by the Department of Astronomy: "Alien Worlds". In nominating Brandon for the Outstanding Teaching Fellow award, Professor Andrew West, the instructor of the course, says the following. "Brandon's teaching was exemplary and beyond the scope of most graduate students with whom I have worked. He vastly exceeded all expectations when what was asked of him was also beyond the typical load for a graduate TF. Brandon had over eight thousand students with whom to interact. He led the effort of maintaining an active discussion board, where he answered questions, posed ideas and challenged assumptions (a task that may be even harder to do electronically than it is to do in person). Brandon was also instrumental in the final design and implementation of the course, and he served as my sounding board, editor, and true partner for much of the course material. After consulting with me, Brandon wrote the first draft of the final examination, which after minor editing, received rave reviews from the students and was a wonderful example of Brandon's intellect, humor, and skills as an instructor. In my five and a half years at BU, I have supervised 19 graduate TFs. I have never had a student work harder or put more of themselves into a class than Brandon. I can safely say that the course would not have been a success (or even happened) without Brandon. I therefore feel that he is completely deserving of the outstanding teaching fellow award."

## **Biology**

### **Kristina Cohen**

Kristina was nominated by Professors Sean Mullen, Fred Wasserman and Karen Warkentin, for her outstanding contributions to all areas of teaching in the Department of Biology over the last five years. All of her letter writers were full of praise and admiration. Professor Mullen writes "To say that Kristina did an outstanding job is, frankly, an understatement - she was an absolutely critical component of what made the course successful". Professor Wasserman writes simply "She is as good a teacher as any of the Teaching Fellows I have had during my 38 years at Boston University". Kristina's dedication to and enthusiasm for teaching is clear, not only in the classroom but in all aspects of modern university teaching.

Outside of the classroom, Kristina has been instrumental in the inclusion of a Research Experience for Teachers (RET) component in one of Professor

Warkentin's funded NSF projects, and leveraging the RET for greater impact via collaborative development of resources for high school science teaching. She has also been superb in the mentoring of many undergraduates in Prof. Warkentin's lab at BU and in the field in Panama, helping them with UROP applications, research, conference presentations and their personal growth and development. Professor Warkentin writes "Her (Kristina's) skill, effort, dedication, and performance as a teacher, and her vision for improving pedagogy more broadly have been clear throughout her time at BU".

## **BU Marine Program (BUMP)**

### **Elizabeth Burmester**

Liz's performance in both "Coral Reef Dynamics" and "Tropical Marine Invertebrates" was exemplary. Both of the Marine Semester courses that Liz taught featured a 12-day excursion to Calabash Caye Field Station (CCFS), which is located on a mangrove island, 33 miles off the Belizean coast. This is a well-equipped marine field station, but its remote location puts a premium on logistical planning and safety. With respect to logistics, Liz played a substantially larger role than the faculty themselves. As she has for four consecutive years, Liz served as the de facto logistical coordinator for the BU Marine Program's Belizean course offerings. She oversaw the planning for student research projects, packing scientific and safety gear, and she took the lead in obtaining relevant collecting permits from the Belizean government.

Liz's dedication to student learning and safety was reflected in extremely high scores in the student evaluations. Liz's average score for "Overall Instructor Rating" on the course evaluation forms were 4.83 in BI539 and 4.88 in BI569. The sentiments expressed in the comments section were effusively complimentary of her as a person, as a scientist, and as an instructor. As one student put it, Liz exhibited the "perfect balance of professionalism and friendliness towards students." Another student stated, "Liz was exquisite [emphasis theirs] in her contributions to the class and her input was always positively constructive. She was always there to help explain concepts, statistics and field experiences. Her knowledge of not just corals, but the entire realm of biology was very evident and was exceptionally beneficial to the entire class. She was fantastic to have as a TF: there could be no better person for the job!"

## Chemistry

### Katie Summo

Professor John Snyder writes: "Katie was one of the discussion and lab TFs for CH 211/212 (Intensive Organic Chemistry) which I have taught this academic year. This class was designed with a highly coordinated teaching strategy blending lecture, discussion, lab, and office hours, of both teaching fellows and myself, which required a substantial amount of effort from Katie. All forms of contact, with the exception of the office hours, were exploited to introduce new material, and any of the contacts (lecture, lab/pre-lab, or discussions) could in turn be the follow-up for more in depth analysis. This is a somewhat different approach from the typical STEM-with-lab course which more traditionally relies on the lecture to present all new material, with lab relegated to demonstrations of the material, then discussions simply answering questions. Such a plan can only be implemented, and ultimately be successful if the TF is excellent, and Katie was!

Evaluations for both discussion and lab were excellent for Katie (overall evaluation ratings >4.7), and this despite the fact that she was a tough grader. The comments include the "best TF I've ever had" from many students, with the only comments in the "Weaknesses" section being "tough grader" or "strict grader". In fact, I had asked her to be strict, especially in grading the lab reports. Many commented on her exceptional ability to explain difficult concepts well. To Katie, the TF position was not just a mechanism of support, but something she really enjoyed, and something in which she took enormous pride."

## Classical Studies

### Colin Pang

The Department of Classical Studies is pleased to nominate Colin Pang, a fourth-year graduate student, for 2014-2015 teaching award. There were a number of worthy nominees this year but the selection committee has submitted Colin's name for this award in recognition of the excellence of his teaching this Fall in two discussion sessions for Professor Nikolaev's CL101, The World of Greece, and this Spring in a stand-alone fourth-semester Homeric Greek course, CL262. I have visited Colin's Iliad class twice this semester; in the last visit, just this past week, the class was humming with excitement as Colin lead his students through a close study of Homeric style, syntax, metrics, lexical choices, character development and theme. At all times, everyone was fully engaged, students bursting with questions and comments about Homeric grammar and poetics.

## **Computer Science**

### **Cody Joseph Doucette**

Professor Dave Sullivan writes: "Cody is in his first year as a PhD student. He TFed for me in the fall for CS111, and he is continuing in that role this spring. Cody has played an integral role in preparing for and implementing the new curriculum for CS111. He has been in charge of preparing all of the labs, and he has also assisted me with the preparation of the assignments. In course evaluations, Cody consistently receives glowing praise for his clarity and helpfulness in lab sessions and office hours. Moreover, he regularly goes above and beyond the call of duty—being available for help outside of his usual office hours, and answering more than his fair share of questions on our course discussion list—as he helps students to develop a solid foundation for success. As a former undergraduate course assistant (CA), Cody has also been a valuable mentor to the current CAs—leading by example and assisting them in their adjustment to the responsibilities of the position."

## **Earth & Environment**

### **Jesse Turiel**

Prof. Jamie Baldwin writes "Jesse raised the bar for TF performance in IR292 , which is a large and very demanding course for a TF, and he has continued to do so in GE304. Jesse has set a new standard and the direct student feedback about him has been off the charts. I suspect his TF evaluations are similarly spectacular. Jesse regularly exceeds the expectation of 20 hours of time investment for a TF and has gone above and beyond in organizing additional study and review sessions for students and by putting together additional course materials entirely on his own. All this was done with no expectation or request to do so and has made a substantial impact on the performance of students in the course.

The average exams scores in what is a very established course (IR292), increased by nearly significantly while he was a TF compared to the semester before and after his taking part. The level of enthusiasm that his student have for him is unmatched. Teaching between 7 and 10 courses a year over the past 7 years, and thus in that time having 20+ TFs with whom I have worked, has given me a tremendous sample with which to compare and Jesse is truly the best yet. As a scholar Jesse is what I would consider to be a top 10% graduate student, exceptionally motivated intelligent and professional. He is truly an Outstanding Teaching Fellow."

## **Economics**

### **Arthur Smith**

Arthur is a second year PhD student finishing his course work with specializations in international trade and macroeconomics. This summer he will start working on his dissertation related to risk diversification and the home bias puzzle under the supervision of Marianne Baxter.

In nominating Arthur, the Department is happy to recognize his excellent work, enthusiasm and dedication in carrying out his teaching duties. Arthur is an outstanding teacher, with great presentation skills. He was a very effective discussion leader, and students appreciated the time and effort he puts into his work as well as his enthusiasm.

## **English**

### **Laura Tallon**

The Department of English nominates Laura Tallon for an Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award. Laura is teaching for WR this year, but has achieved a sterling record in English Department courses over the years. Laura's teaching evaluations average 4.7 for courses in poetry, fiction, and Shakespeare.

Ms. Tallon has a special capacity for teaching poetry (the subject of her dissertation, under the direction of Prof. Winn). We have great confidence in her ability to teach across a range of genres, though – as the list above includes fiction and drama as well, all with spectacular ratings.

## **History**

### **David Shorten**

The History Department is very pleased to nominate David Shorten for the 2014-2015 Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award. Having just successfully passed his oral examination, Dave is now a PhD candidate in United States History, and he studies the intersection of business, politics, and economic ideas.

The faculty for whom he has served as Teaching Fellow rave about Dave's dedication to students and his ability to impart an understanding of what it means to be an historian. During discussion sections and workshops, he teaches



students how to use primary and secondary sources; he emphasizes context and change over time; and he helps students consider how to handle contradictory evidence. He avoids easy and facile moral judgments so that students encounter the past on its own terms and uncover more interesting questions. Most importantly, Dave demands active engagement from students and forces them to think about what kind of historians they are, if only for one semester.

## **History of Art & Architecture**

### **Ariel Green**

Ariel Green distinguished herself this year as an outstanding teaching fellow for our Introduction to Art History I and II courses through her commitment to her sections and her ability to empower students to reach beyond their own expectations. She not only generously supported her own students, but also was an invaluable sounding board for the courses as a whole, offering important feedback on the clarity of lectures and the fairness of exams, for example.

Ariel's own research area (Italian Renaissance art) is only one of the many topics covered by the courses, but she saw her teaching fellow assignment as an opportunity to hone her ability to frame questions, to synthesize complex concepts, and to think more deeply about the structure and validity of the art history survey. Her initiative to tackle these skills and issues will serve her well in both the future, when she embarks on an academic teaching career, and the nearer future, when she undertakes her dissertation on, most likely, Venetian Renaissance painting.

## **Mathematics & Statistics**

### **Eric Chang**

Eric has consistently demonstrated the highest level of excellence and commitment in his teaching role. His students routinely remark on his high level of enthusiasm, availability outside of class, approachability, and clear explanations, illustrated by many examples.

Here are some quotes from his teaching evaluations from MA 226 last semester:

"I wish Eric could be the TF for all of my courses"

"super communicator"

"Eric was an amazing TF. His explanations were succinct and clear, and he was always available outside of class".

Eric has also been instrumental in organizing the departmental teaching seminar for graduate students. In view of these and many other accomplishments, we recommend him for the Outstanding TF Award in the strongest possible terms.

## **Philosophy**

### **Anandita Mukherhi**

Professor Walter Hopp writes: "This is my tenth year at BU, and I can say with the utmost confidence that Anandita Mukherji is one of the most capable and dedicated Teaching Fellows with whom I have had the pleasure to work. She dedicates a great deal of time and energy to the education of her students. Students talk with her both before and after virtually every lecture, and it's a joy to watch the expressions of "Aha!" emerge as she explains difficult concepts and arguments by means of well-chosen examples.

I recently observed her lead one of her discussion sections. The topic was Hume's account of our justification -- or lack thereof -- for believing that causal relations hold among events, which is one of the most difficult topics we cover in the course. Her explanations of Hume's arguments were lucid and backed up by plenty of illustrations from ordinary life. Initially, some students thought that the view was so obvious that it hardly needed to be stated. Others thought it was among the least plausible positions they had ever encountered. Anandita, calling on each student by name, answered all of their questions concisely and accurately. After some time, the students who thought Hume's view platitudinous began to see just how radical it really is, while those who thought it absurd began to appreciate the strength of Hume's arguments. Which is to say: Anandita presented things in just the right way to help the class appreciate the depth of Hume's problem. And she did so while showing a deep respect for her students and what they had to say. I would say that at least 15 of 25 students spoke up during her session, which says a great deal about Anandita's ability to create a lively and welcoming intellectual atmosphere."

## **Physics**

### **Joseph Boales**

From the very beginning, Joe has been dependable and reliable. He has always done an excellent job, and generally exceeds expectations. We have our TFs take turns writing up homework solutions. This semester, for the second semester in a row, we asked Joe to do the first one, because we knew he would do an excellent job. As expected, he did, and now we can point to Joe's solution as a model of what the other TFs should strive for.

Joe is extremely conscientious. He does not just do the minimum necessary to get the job done. Just the opposite - with Joe, you just know that he is going to go above-and-beyond in his teaching responsibilities. We feel very fortunate that we have had Joe in the course for two years in a row, because he has had a very positive impact in all aspects of his role as a teaching fellow. He knows the material, he has a knack of explaining it to the students, and he takes his teaching responsibilities very seriously.

## **Political Science**

### **Fatima Mustafa**

Fatima has been an invaluable teaching fellow, mastering quickly an area well outside her prior expertise. When students were struggling with complex theoretical readings, she guided them through an application of theoretical concepts to substantive policy areas we studied. This helped students truly understand, rather than memorize difficult material.

She is approachable, patient, and congenial, all while maintaining the authority necessary to manage a large class. She also delivered an outstanding lecture on defense policy. It was clear from students' faces, as well as their enthusiastic participation, that she had them interested and engaged. Fatima will make a wonderful professor. Our loss will be her new university's gain!

## **Psychological & Brain Sciences**

### **Inderdeep Singh**

Professor Tracy Dunne writes: "The first day I met Inder, he came to the meeting with a syllabus for his discussion sections. He modeled the syllabus after the one I had made for class and he had planned out weekly lab assignments in Coglab, quizzes, and instructions for writing a lab report. This was all before the semester had even started. That day set the tone for the excellent performance Inder has delivered all semester.

He has gone above and beyond what any TF does for any class. He has created weekly detailed assignments with grading rubrics laying out exactly what students need to do to get good, better, and excellent grades on each assignment. His assignments are very creative and useful. For the first discussion assignment, he did "Myth busters" where students had to present

one fact thought to be true about the brain and use research to support or refute.

All the more impressive is that this is Inder's first time being a TF for Cognitive Psychology and his second time ever being a TF. I could not ask for a better TF than Inder. He is currently working with Marc Howard on aspects of visual memory. Working with Inder and getting to know him tells me that he will make a great professor and researcher in the future and is going to be a success in whatever branch of Cognitive Psychology he chooses to investigate.

## **Religion**

### **David Rohr**

David Rohr is a PhD candidate in Science and Religion, with interests in philosophy of biology, religious naturalism, and theological anthropology. He is working on an integrative theory that uses Charles Peirce's semiotic theory and pragmatic logic to illuminate the way biological information systems—including DNA, brains, and languages—evolve. He is also working on a pragmatic and semiotic account of religion, similar to that articulated by anthropologist Clifford Geertz. He has taught for the courses Death and Immortality, World Religions—East, and Introduction to Religion, and writes that his experience as a Teaching Fellow has been the most rewarding and enriching part of his PhD studies.

Professors who have worked with Dave have commented on his professionalism, strong commitment to teaching, rapport with students, and ability to convey complex ideas with precision and delightful humor. As graduate assistant for a colloquium on Science and Religion, he provided outstanding pedagogical leadership, shaping discussions with the finesse of a seasoned seminar leader. Professors are enthusiastic about his strong academic promise, adroitness in learning and teaching new subjects, highly integrative mind, and great future as a teacher.

## **Romance Studies**

### **Sandy Paola Calahorrano Gallardo**

Since joining the program in fall 2011, Paola has taught Spanish language classes at the beginner, intermediate and advanced level, always showing herself to be a passionate and creative teacher as well as a collegial member of her teaching teams. Her second year Course Heads attest to her superlative dedication to developing her teaching skills and to her high level of self-awareness and

understanding of the objectives of communicative language learning. They cite the warm, inclusive atmosphere that she creates for her students, and her ability to engage with them constantly with thought-provoking cultural and personal questions, promoting both a genuine interest in the culture and an increasingly advanced level of linguistic production. Paola has also excelled at the 300-level where she collaborated in the designing and teaching of a new film course. She was commended for her extensive knowledge of film and photography, which added to the success of her course.

Paola's teaching evaluations are very positive and attest to her ability to stimulate interest in class discussions, to her knowledge of the subject and to her friendly, and encouraging demeanor. To quote one of her students, "Profesora Calahorrano is one of the best Spanish teachers that I've had. She always made me feel confident in my knowledge of the language."

## **Sociology**

### **Emily Philipp**

Professor Julian Go writes, "On behalf of the Graduate Programs Committee of the Department of Sociology, I write to nominate Emily Philipp for the Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award for AY 14-15. Ms. Philipp has effectively demonstrated the skill, dedication and enthusiasm in teaching that this award recognizes.

Emily has been a Teaching Fellow for Sociology 100: Principles of Sociology. The course had a total of up to 120 students, which means Emily was responsible for 60 students in three different discussion sections. She led discussion sections and graded their exams and essays. Throughout, she has shown genuine care and concern for her students and has gone out of her way to ensure that they have gotten the most out of her sections.

Her students write that she is excellent at explaining difficult concepts (and yes, sociology does have some difficult concepts), she was consistently clear and thorough in her lessons, that she was always available when needed, that she was always "super friendly and wants you to do well." Others said she always provided "fun ice-breakers" for discussing sensitive topics, whether the topic was racism or sexual violence, and others described her as "engaging" and that she made class "enjoyable." One student put it quite simply: "she will make a great professor."

Having looked at her evaluations and observed her classroom, we agree, and are proud to see Emily receive this recognition."

## Writing Program

### Heather Barrett

Writing Program Director Chris Walsh writes: "It gives me great pleasure to nominate Heather Barrett for an Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award. Heather has taught in the Writing Program as a Teaching Fellow, as a Graduate Writing Fellow, and now this semester (and next) as a Senior Teaching Fellow. Over the course of these semesters, she has offered seminars on literature that both appeal to students and help them learn essential writing and critical thinking skills. Consistently strong course evaluation numbers show how much students appreciate her teaching.

One student noted, "I grew as a writer way more than I thought was possible." Another required nine intensifiers to express her full appreciation: "Ms. Barrett is very very very very very very very very very very good." And yet another summed up the sentiments of this memo (very) nicely: "Heather is a spectacular professor and deserves to be recognized for the efforts she puts into her work."