

INSTITUTE FOR RETIRED PROFESSIONALS
The Observer, August 17, 2020

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear members,

Here we are in the final week of summer sessions! It has been a memorable, and unusual (to say the least) summer. Despite the challenges of overlapping crises and day-to-day challenges, the IRP has expanded offerings over two summer sessions and maintained your social connections while learning new skills in the remote format. We applaud your agility and look forward to the fall term, with the opportunity to develop and realize events and projects for IRP members to actively participate in the Graduate Center community and reinforce this new relationship on several levels. The Transition Board meets again this week to continue discussions about governance, guidelines, and a new program name. Our office is proud to have this program at the GC and looking forward to the community engagement powered by IRP members.

In accordance with [CUNY policy and guidance](#), all Graduate Center classroom instruction will be remote for the fall due to the continued public health risks, while developing its plan to safely reactivate campus operations. With the goal to reduce the potential for transmission of COVID-19 on campus facilities, The Graduate Center's plan is structured in phases of reactivation to eventual reopening, and has been submitted to CUNY for review. Only through a cooperative effort will we be able to work together to safeguard our own health and the health of our families, colleagues, and those with whom we interact. See more on the GC's reactivation planning here: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/News/COVID-19-and-Reactivation-Planning>.

Brian Peterson and I co-chair the GC's reactivation committee and will continue work with the Executive Committee and members to communicate the plans for CUNY and The Graduate Center as we move through the fall and in preparation for the spring. Onward!

As you we approach fall session, please review the information [here](#) about library resources. Librarian Mason Brown is our point person who can work with members to navigate Open Educational Resources/Open Access Materials. You can reach out to Mason at mbrown3@gc.cuny.edu.

I have included other reminders in the list below for your reference.

All best for the week,
Mariel

Reminders:

- Office Hours are tomorrow, August 18th, at noon. Please join me, Ariana, and Olena in my virtual office to introduce yourself! Here is the [zoom link](#)
- If you have not yet, please complete the member survey found [here](#):. Your answers are important for The Graduate Center IT department and University program reporting.
- **Please note that summer fees are due August 28.** If you have not yet, please submit payment with your credit card [here](#). If you took one study group this summer, you should pay a total of \$125. If you took two or more study groups this summer, you should pay a total of \$200. **Fall fees are not yet due.**
- As noted in past Observers, all official correspondence from The Graduate Center (and CUNY) will be directed to your Graduate Center email address. If you have not yet, please [become familiar with your GC email account](#).
- Please look out for email messages from “Engagement” in your inbox, these are from our office address: engagement@gc.cuny.edu.
- If you would like to **add or drop a study group** for Fall, please email all requests to engagement@gc.cuny.edu. so that we can keep rosters up to date and notify study group coordinators accordingly.

For any other requests or questions, please direct your emails to our office address, engagement@gc.cuny.edu, rather than personal addresses for Ariana, Olena, and Mariel. This helps us manage communications with members.

OBSERVER SCHEDULE

Please submit your items to Leslie Davis at ldavis1@gc.cuny.edu by the end of the day on Friday for inclusion in Monday’s issue. Items submitted after Friday will be saved for the following week.

TECH TALK

Getting Friendly with Your Mac or PC

If you aren’t fully confident about how to use your computer, keyboard, mouse, touchpad, it can be hard to organize and find your files and folders, use the internet, and learn more. The only way to get comfortable and confident is to practice and learn. You won’t break it!

We recommend a website, GCFLearnFree.org, that offers Computer Basics, Mac OS Basics and Windows Basics lessons containing simple instructions, images, and videos.

Who We Are

For almost 20 years, the GCFLearnFree.org program has helped millions around the world learn the essential skills they need to live and work in the 21st century. From Microsoft Office and email, to reading, math, and more—GCFLearnFree.org offers more than 200 topics, including more than 2,000 lessons, more than 1,000 videos, and more than 50 interactives and games, completely free.



Their goal is “to deliver lessons with clarity and have them be approachable to everyone.” They use conversational language and put a lot of thought into the pacing and order of things. We think they do a pretty good job.

So between now and the start of the fall semester consider becoming better friends with your computer.

If you are ready to delve deeper, the site also offers lessons in Email, Chrome, Firefox, Internet Basics, Safari, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Office, Gmail, Search, Dropbox and More!

NEED TECH HELP?

From IRP: Direct your browser to the IRP tech stuff webpage -- <https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff> -- for advice on setting up emails and Zoom accounts, among other things. If you want additional help, send an email to tech@iernyc.org. From GC: Send email to engagement@gc.cuny.edu. Accessing GC Email: Direct your browser to <https://wa.gc.cuny.edu/owa>.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WANTED: Six volunteers to help make phone calls during the second IRP community outreach.

In June a group of 40 volunteers called all IRP members to check in on how they were doing during the corona virus pandemic. Now that we are five months into lockdown; having completed a successfully expanded summer school and approaching a break before the start of the fall semester, the Community Building Initiative is planning to make another round of calls. We need about six more volunteers to work on the project. Each volunteer calls about 10 members. Calls take approximately 10 minutes.

If you are able to volunteer, email Aileen Gitelson at agitelson@gc.cuny.edu.

Reflections on Virtual Life with Jan Adler, Thursday, August 27, 2:00PM

We've just completed months of Zooming and other new experiences and would like to offer all members an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about how it has affected our communal and private lives. Let's share experiences and also strategies to survive and even thrive. If you are interested, contact Jan Adler at jadler@gc.cuny.edu, and he will send you an invitation.

FROM THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROJECT

Get Out The Vote (From Home)

- Want to Help Get Out the Vote for the Fall Election?
- Don't Want to Leave Your Home?
- Might Enjoy Doing This with Others?

The Voter Registration Project is planning weekly IRP **Get Out The Vote** Zoom Socials for interested IRP members who are sending letters or postcards to help Get Out The Vote. We thought it might be more fun to do this while visiting with other members who are doing the same. We plan to start on Thursday, September 3, from 4:00 to 5:00PM and continue weekly on Thursdays for as long as there is interest. To participate you just need to sign up with one of the many Get Out the Vote Initiatives that are organizing Postcard or Letter-writing campaigns to voters nationwide These organizations make it easy to get started: They provide instructions, names and addresses, and some sell supplies.

We are suggesting one of the following as good choices for IRP members, but you are free to choose another:

- [Reclaim Our Vote](#) sends you postcards (if you choose) to which you add handwritten content as per instructions. You supply stamps and mail them immediately. Their focus is to increase turnout among rural voters of color in North Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia. (See video below for more details)
- [Vote Forward](#) sends you personalized letters to print, to which you add handwritten content as per instructions. You supply envelopes that you address and stamp and hold them for a nation-wide mailing day. You can focus on one of 16 states.
- [Turn PA Blue](#) sends you postcards to which you add handwritten content and address as per instructions. You supply stamps and mail them immediately. Their goal is to flip the PA General Assembly and deliver PA to Joe Biden.

Each of the groups works a bit differently from the others, but for each there is some expense involved in participating (e.g. buying postcards and stamps). Check them all out before deciding which is right for you. But act soon as it can take some time to register and get set up with supplies.

Watch this [Reclaim Our Vote video](#) to get a general idea about this type of initiative.



If you want to join our IRP Get Out The Vote Zoom Socials to work together and stay charged up, [sign up here](#). We will send you invites and reminders for Zoom sessions where you can work on your own voter list while visiting with others who are doing the same. We can ask each other questions, offer answers, show our handiwork, have a glass of wine, break up into smaller groups and inspire each other to keep on going.

We will be in touch!

Ettie, Lisa, Rita and Denise

GET YOUR ABSENTEE BALLOT NOW!

A huge number of absentee ballots in New York State and elsewhere were rejected in the recent NY primary. Please find details [here](#). The problem was caused by a number of factors, including the increase in absentee voting due to the pandemic, unprepared and underfunded election staffing, and antiquated laws in NY. These problems will continue for the fall election. They will be exacerbated by the enforced slowdown at the post office. If you intend to vote by mail, here is what you need to do: Ensure NOW that you have requested an absentee ballot.

You can get an application for an absentee ballot either by contacting your local Board of Elections or by using www.vote.org [vote.org].

Mail in your application as well as your ballot as soon as you receive them. By doing so, you will have a better chance that your vote will be included in election night results. An overwhelming win by either of the candidates will moot any effort to challenge close races. And remember to make sure your signature on the voting forms matches your signature in the poll book, do not use tape to seal the envelope, sign the outside of the envelope and follow all the instructions as closely as possible. Small infractions like these may disqualify your vote.

ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE: SPREAD THE WORD

The Admissions Committee is gearing up to identify the new members who will become part of the IRP in the Spring of 2021. The first step in the process is the Information Session, which provides basic facts about the IRP and our application procedures. Recruitment is particularly challenging in our remote environment. So if you know of people who would be good candidates for the IRP, please refer them to: <http://gc.cuny.edu/IRP> where they can click "Join Us" and find the calendar of information sessions and application deadlines.

Prospective members can enter their contact information to register and receive details about the sessions. The upcoming Information sessions are:

- Wednesday, September, 16 from 4:00 to 5:30PM
- Wednesday, October 28, from 4:00 to 5:30PM.

ONLINE ART SHOW

Mary Padilla, *Choices*



Mary says: "I make Western abstraction using the Eastern line and materials, which draws on the strengths of both genres. This piece was done using sumi ink with a bamboo pen on rice paper."

BETWEEN-TERM EVENTS (August 24-September 4)

Special IRP Author Interview with Lucy Kirk and Susanne Yellin

Monday, August 24, 1:00PM. Susanne will interview former CIA professional Lucy Kirk about her new suspense spy thriller, *The Poison Factory—Operation Kamera*. Q&A will follow. To sign up, email Lucy Kirk at llk214@aol.com or lkirk@gc.cuny.edu.

Reflections on Virtual Life with Jan Adler, Thursday, August 27th,

2:00PM. Contact Jan Adler at jadler@gc.cuny.edu for an invitation.

Book Discussion: *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* Monday, August 31,

1:00PM. Join a lively discussion of the national bestseller. Email Jane Case Einbender at jeinbender@gc.cuny.edu; limited to the first 25 who sign up.

Encore: China & the U.S. with Tom Hardy Thursday, September 3,

1:00PM. Discuss the challenge the U.S. faces in "getting its act together"—both domestically and internationally. If new to the group, email Tom Hardy at thardy@gc.cuny.edu.

Discussion/ Q&A: *Waiting for the Vaccine: Until Then?* Thursday, September 10, 4:00PM Barry Levine and Steve Kalinsky will lead this discussion, addressing some of their questions and as many of yours as possible. Please send your questions to Steve Kalinsky at skalinsky@gc.cuny.edu by August 20 to Steve and ask for a Zoom invitation.

ONGOING EVENTS

POUR AT 4 TAKING A BREAK!

The summer season will conclude on Friday, August 21, at 4:00PM, hosted by Susan Rubens in the 24-hour chat room at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff>

Please reach out if you would like to be a host in the fall. Please send all inquiries to Susan Rubens, srubens@gc.cuny.edu

Men's Group, Wednesdays, at 12:15PM, email Jay Fleishman at efleishman@gc.cuny.edu.

Women's Group, Thursdays, at 3:00PM, email Arlyne LeSchack at aleschack@gc.cuny.edu.

Short Stories Aloud: With Sharon Girard and Helene Schiffman Tuesdays, 4:00PM. No preparation, no homework, no books to buy; leaders will email the stories to you, email Sharon Girard at sgirard@gc.cuny.edu.

UPCOMING CUNY EVENTS

Mina Rees Finding Open Sources Thursday, August 20th, 2:00pm

If you're having trouble finding free, open resources that you can integrate into an online course – this workshop is for you! They will cover the basics on where to search, and provide individualized, hands-on assistance in locating electronic materials for your subject area. To register click [here](#).

Mina Rees Conversation Series Thursday, August 20th, 4:00pm

Alison Macrina will be in conversation with **Emily Drabinski** about her technological privacy-related work with the [Library Freedom Project](#) and anti-surveillance strategies. [Sign up here for the Zoom link!](#)

PICTURE A SCIENTIST Virtual Film Screening August 28 - August 30

Join the CUNY ASRC and CUNY Office of Research for a virtual screening of [PICTURE A SCIENTIST](#), a film that chronicles the groundswell of researchers who are writing a new chapter for women scientists. Biologist Nancy Hopkins, chemist Raychelle Burks, and geologist Jane Willenbring lead viewers on a journey deep into their own experiences in the sciences, ranging from brutal harassment to years of subtle slights. Along the way, from cramped laboratories to spectacular field stations, we encounter scientific luminaries - including social scientists, neuroscientists, and psychologists - who provide new perspectives on how to make science itself more diverse, equitable, and open to all. [REGISTER HERE](#)

ONGOING CUNY EVENTS AND RESOURCES

See the [GC CUNY Calendar](#) for the most centralized GC events calendar.

**NON-CUNY ONLINE RESOURCES
AND EVENTS:**

El Museo del Barrio has published numerous [exhibition catalogues and brochures](#) to enjoy from home

Jazz at Lincoln Center is offering [free weekly online programs](#).

The Jewish Museum has made their [audio tours](#) available online.

MoMA is offering free online [courses and specializations](#).

The Whitney Museum of American Art is offering from artist talks to art history courses, webinars and creative projects for everyone, see what's coming up [here](#). Explore exhibitions online [here](#).

BRIC Rotunda Gallery is offering free Media Education Courses. More information [here](#)