Princeton's Center for African American Studies poised to lead at critical time

Cass Cluett

Princeton’s Center for African American Studies, led by chair Eddie Glaude (left), brings pioneers in the field together with rising scholars such as Wendy Belcher (center) and Imani Perry (right) in an effort to become the pre-eminent resource for the public’s understanding of race in America.

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Dickerson to retire from vice presidency after nearly 40 years mentoring students

Ruth Stevens

Janet Smith Dickerson, Princeton’s first vice president for campus life, has announced plans to retire at the end of the academic year on June 30.

Dickerson, who joined the Prince- ton administration in 2000, has devoted a career of nearly 40 years to students at four U.S. colleges and universities. She intends to remain active in the Princeton community, but will spend more time with her family, including three daughters who live on the West Coast.

Executive Vice President Mark Burstein, to whom Dickerson reports, said that a search committee has been formed to seek a successor. He hopes to have a new vice president selected by the spring semester so that there are a few months of overlap.

“Janet’s legacy is on every under- graduate and graduate student life at Princeton are immeasurable,” he said. “She has significantly enhanced our community and culture, and has worked tirelessly to make sure that all students are able to take full advantage of the Princeton experience. Finding her successor will be a very difficult task. Fortunately, we have time to conduct a thorough search, and her contributions to this institution will provide a superb platform for the next vice president for campus life.”

Dickerson said, “I hope my succes- sor will view this as a great job. It’s been a wonderful job for me. I enjoy facing the opportunities and chal- lenges each day brings.”

Before Dickerson was hired, the title for the position was changed from dean of student life to reflect the broad administrative responsibilities of the position. She oversees the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students, the Department of Athletics, Uni- versity Health Services, the Office of Religious Life and the Peace Center. She also had responsibilities for the Frist Campus Center when it opened in 2000, In addition, she has sought ways, in collaboration with the Gradu- ate School, to enhance the quality of graduate student life.

“Janet Dickerson leaves a lasting mark on this university,” said President Tilghman. “Not only has she champi- oned many wonderful improvements to the experiences of students outside the classroom, most significantly the implementation of the four-year college system, she has personally touched the lives of so many students along the way. She has been a constant presence at student events, from football games in the stadium to prayer meetings in the chapel, and her door is always open for students in need of a friendly face and an understanding heart.”

Princeton senior Connor Diemand- Yauman, president of the Undergradu- ate Student Government, added, “Vice President Dickerson is one of the most compassionate, dedicated and approachable administrators I’ve had the opportunity to work with. She has a rare ability to relate to students in a wide array of contexts and enthusias- tically support them in their unique endeavors. She understands students, and fights fiercely for their right to have a fun, meaningful, unique and customized Princeton experience. She will be sorely missed, and I am person- ally very thankful for the profound influence that she has had on my time here at Princeton.”

Dickerson came to Princeton from Duke University, where she had been vice president for student affairs for nine years. She spent 15 years at Swarthmore College, including the last 10 as dean of the college. She began her career in student life administra- tion at Earlham College, where she was also an associate dean of students and assistant professor of education from 1971 to 1976. She earned her B.A. from West- ern College for Women (later merged with Miami University of Ohio) and her M.Ed. from Xavier University. She has done advanced graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania and at Harvard University.

At Princeton, Dickerson was part of the leadership team, along with Burstein and Dean of the College Nancy Malkiel, that planned for the transition from the two-year to the four-year residential college program. The final pieces of that program, for which planning began in 2000, are in place this fall with the opening of the last new Butler College dormitories.

“I’m proud of the fact that we have six directors of student life who are...”
additional and very important members of the team of deans and directors that create a support structure for the students in each college," Dickerson said. She is pleased that she was a resident of Mathey College and was a Princeton student.

Dickerson also co-chaired with Burstein the Diversity Working Group, which recommended that the University could take to increase the diversity of its staff and outlined efforts to ensure a long-term commitment to supporting a staff that reflects a broad range of talents and perspectives. As a result, the University increased its administrative capacity and leadership in areas related to staff diversity in 2006. Among Dickerson's other responsibilities during her tenure was co-chairing the Task Force on Health and Well-Being, in which role the Health and Physical Education Committee, Princeton Advisory Board, with Vice President and Secretary Robert Durkee. In 2004, the task force made many recommendations, including increasing the staff in University Health Services and improving Campus Recreation facilities, that have been implemented.

Dickerson said she has been successful in seeking funds for improvements in those areas and through the Priorities Committee process. "I'm really proud to say that we received Priorities Committee support every year that I've been here," she said. "I'm so grateful that our staff has put together excellent proposals, but also that we've been able to capitalize by having students on the staff and our leaders who understand how much we need the additional support in health services, the dean's office and Campus Recreation." She is particularly pleased with the progress University Health Services has made. "It's still an integrated service with medical and psychological services under unified leadership, but it's at a place closer to the center of the University," she said. "It's become in many ways a national model. We have a great staff."

One outgrowth of the two health programs she co-chaired was the Asian American Coalition Committee. Made up of mostly students but also including faculty and staff, the committee is working to address high-risk drinking among undergraduates. Dickerson is the group's executive sponsor.

"This group has a wonderful structure that gives students the responsibility for taking up these issues," she said. "It has recognized that we can't change campus culture unless students have a leadership role."

Expanding opportunities for students

In reflecting on areas where she felt Dickerson felt she has contributed the most at Princeton, Dickerson sometimes lists five or more. She said that she has been here, "I'm so proud of the fact that we have helped her in her endeavors."

"I certainly don't want to take credit for anything personally," she said. "Together, we've really worked to expand opportunities for students."

Some of the other areas where Dickerson felt she and others have made significant progress include:

- the diversity committee of the Princeton Campus Center, which some administrators feared might be a "white elephant" but became "vital to our efforts," she said;
- the expansion of facilities and the building of a community of friends groups in the residential college program;
- the expansion of the mission of the Office of Religious Life to include support of all students from the major religions backgrounds, in addition to the addition of coordinators for Muslim and Hindu;
- the establishment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Center in the academic year and we're very happy about it;
- the cultural centers, the flourishing of the Pace Center, the building of the umbrella for the University's civic engagement efforts;
- the growth of opportunities for graduate students, including "Mini-Meander Nights" and opportunities for them to serve as resident graduate students in the residential colleges;
- the work of the Undergraduate Life Committee, which she co-chairs with a student and has helped deal with a number of issues including substance-free sections and smoking in the dorms, alcohol, health services, career services, transportation and parking, public safety, race relations, independent student issues, students with disabilities, and economic equity.

- the efforts — such as Sustained Dialogue, which has been instrumental in supporting — to increase understanding between divisons in society including race, gender, religion and social class.

- the success of efforts to enhance the presence and voice of students at University trustees' and other leadership meetings, and to make the Princeton community more inclusive and diverse.

Dickerson acknowledged that her role as University liaison to the ROJC and to the trustees has been particularly valuable in that she has been personally as well as professionally rewarding, as has her service as a trustee of McCarter Theatre. She also has enjoyed representing Princeton on the Policy Committee of the Ivy League.

As for her fondest memories, Dickerson brings up a sad time, but one she felt demonstrated the very best of her among her staff that she had been seeking to achieve. A student had died in an accident, but the community had gathered for a memorial service.

"One of the things I was working on was to help us feel like we have a mission in common even though we are actually very different groups from one another," Dickerson said. "But we are all focused on the student and the student experience. We have a lot of connections with those most impacted by the tragedy." After the retirement of Dickerson said that she first plans to take "a little sabbatical.” Then she intends to continue her work as an active member of community organizations. She also hopes to travel and to write.

By the numbers

Kalamazoo

Kalamazoo is survived by her father John, a 1973 Princeton graduate, and her mother Cecilia, a 1974 graduate; and her siblings Hilary, a 2004 graduate, and Whitney, a 2005 graduate. Contributions may be made to the Kalamazoo Institute Science Museum, Devel- opment Office, 222 N. 20th St., Philadelphia, PA 19103; or the Philmont Scout Ranch, 27300 Run Road, Cimar- ron, NM 87714.

The Office of Career Services annually surveys Princeton seniors to gather information about their post-graduation plans. The class of 2009 survey, conducted in May and June, showed that:

- Sixty-seven percent of graduating seniors were pursuing full-time employment or graduate school, while 25 percent were planning further education. About 6 percent were planning to join the military, play professional sports or pursue other opportunities. About 2 percent of students did not respond to the survey.
- Of those employed full time, the most popular career choices were in investment banking and other financial services (33 percent); consulting and other service industries (26 percent); education and other nonprofit work (24 percent); government (6 percent); and manufacturing (6 percent).
- Six percent of the graduates accepted yearlong internships, typically in nonprofits, public service and international organizations.
- Among those pursuing further education, 42 percent were in sciences and mathematics (18 percent); law (17 percent); medicine (17 percent); humanities (16 percent); engineering (16 percent); and social sciences (16 percent).
- Six percent of students will be working outside the United States, while the others will work in the Northeast (43 percent); the Midwest (34 percent); and the West (26 percent).

Deadline

In general, the copy deadline for each issue is the Friday 10 days in advance of the Monday cover date. The deadline for the Bulletin covering Oct. 26-Nov. 8 is Friday, Oct. 16. A complete publication schedule can be found at <www.princeton.edu/main/news/submitevents>.
Benefits update

Open enrollment enables employees to evaluate coverage

The annual benefits open enrollment period for the University’s health and welfare plans will run from Monday, Oct. 12, through Friday, Oct. 30. Open enrollment offers faculty and staff an opportunity to review their current benefits and consider changes to their coverage that will become effective Jan. 1, 2010. In order for changes to be covered as of Jan. 1, 2010, employees must bring dependent eligibility documentation to the Office of Human Resources no later than Dec. 4. After that date, dependents for whom verification is not supplied will be removed from the health care plans effective Dec. 31.

Effective Jan. 1, the contribution rates for all medical plans, the Aetna DMO Dental plan and the vision care plan will increase from $15 to $20.

The University medical plan.

For 2010. Elections in the expense account plans do not carry forward from the previous year. Faculty and staff will have one last opportunity to increase supplemental life insurance and child voluntary life insurance by the value of the employee’s base salary without providing evidence of insurability (EOI), unless that increase raises the amount of life insurance above $300,000 or three times annual base salary, at which point EOI will be required. Beginning next year, during the open enrollment period, all increases in supplemental life insurance will require EOI.

• Spousal voluntary life insurance

• New spousal voluntary life insurance and child voluntary life insurance will be offered to faculty and staff enrolled in the supplemental life insurance plan.

• Open enrollment also is the time when employees can enroll or re-enroll in the expense account plans (Health Benefit Expense Account and/or Dependent Care Expense Account) for 2010. Elections in the expense account plans do not carry forward from the previous year. Faculty and staff will have one last opportunity to increase supplemental life insurance and child voluntary life insurance by the value of the employee’s base salary without providing evidence of insurability (EOI), unless that increase raises the amount of life insurance above $300,000 or three times annual base salary, at which point EOI will be required. Beginning next year, during the open enrollment period, all increases in supplemental life insurance will require EOI.

Mammography screening program offered

The University will conduct a mammography screening program for faculty and female staff members who are 35 years of age or older Monday through Friday, Oct. 19-23. Screening will be done at the University Medical Center’s Princeton facility, 253 Witherspoon Street, and at its Breast Health Center, 308 Princeton-Hightstown Road in East Windsor. Both facilities are equipped with digital mammography equipment. The Breast Health Center will provide same-day results when the screening mammogram is completed by 3 p.m.

To pre-register, contact the Princeton facility at 497-4310 or the East Windsor facility at 688-2700. Callers should identify themselves as a member of the University faculty or staff calling to schedule for the Princeton University screening program.

On the day of the appointment, participants will be given a University faculty/staff ID card, medical plan ID card, physician’s name and address, and appropriate copay, if applicable.

A referral from a primary physician is not required for those covered under a University medical plan.

Contact the benefits team at 258-3302 or <benefits@princeton.edu> with questions.

Visiting fellows bring range of perspectives

From philosopher Judith Jarvis Thomson to Israeli novelist and essayist David Grossman to Academy Award-winning cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, the distinguished fellows who follow brought campus to this year’s Council of the Humanities will represent a wide range of fields and interests.

The council, which was founded in 1953 to foster teaching, research and intellectual exchange, will bring 28 writers, artists and scholars to Princeton during 2009-10. Nine of the visitors will spend a semester or more at the University, while the others will come for intensive shorter periods of lectures, seminars and colloquia.

The full roster of long- and short-term visiting fellows, the Belknap Visitor in the Humanities (see story on Angela Bennett on page 5) and visiting professors of journalism is available on the council’s website at <humanities.princeton.edu/calendar>.

More news on the Web

Visit the News at Princeton Web page at <www.princeton.edu/main/news> for other recent stories, including the following:

• While the University’s fiscal outlook has benefited from better than expected returns on its endowment and the implementation of cost-savings measures, Princeton will need to continue with its two-year plan of budget reductions to protect its core programs, according to President Tilghman. We still face significant challenges, but we have made excellent progress this past year and we are doing everything we can to emerge from this period with renewed strength and vitality,” she wrote in a letter e-mailed to the University community Sept. 29. “The University is weathering this economic storm with its commitment to excellence in teaching and research intact, thanks to the dedication and hard work of the entire campus and alumni community. For that I am deeply grateful.”

• Eighteen members have been appointed to the task force that recently was established to review relationships between the University and the the university sponsors. The full roster of long- and short-term visiting fellows, the Belknap Visitor in the Humanities (see story on Angela Bennett on page 5) and visiting professors of journalism is available on the council’s website at <humanities.princeton.edu/calendar>.

• Princeton scientists have shown that, in ancient times, the Earth’s magnetic field was structured like the two-pole model of today, suggesting that the laws governing the planet’s magnetic field have changed little over the past 170 million years. The University’s Vittorio Storaro, the distinguished fellow in film studies, is the only Italian to win both an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award. Storaro, who is known for his work on films such as “Apocalypse Now” and “The Godfather,” will be the subject of a special screening and conversation at the University’s Film Studies Center on Oct. 22.

• Readings on civil society, diplomacy in the Middle East and ancient Rome are on the schedule for the Princeton University Visiting Scholars Program, which was established in 1953 to foster teaching, research and intellectual exchange, will bring 28 writers, artists and scholars to Princeton during 2009-10. Nine of the visitors will spend a semester or more at the University, while the others will come for intensive shorter periods of lectures, seminars and colloquia.

• The full roster of long- and short-term visiting fellows, the Belknap Visitor in the Humanities (see story on Angela Bennett on page 5) and visiting professors of journalism is available on the council’s website at <humanities.princeton.edu/calendar>.
Uniqueness of the brain is topic of talk by neuroscientist Ramachandran

Ramachandran's lecture will address two phenomena as keys to understanding brain function. The first concerns his work with phantom limbs, which reveals the plasticity of the brain. The second involves synesthesia, an inherited condition in which sounds and printed numbers are seen as colored, which explains the neural basis for high-level functions — including metaphor and abstraction — that make the human brain unique.

The talk is designated as a Louis Clark Vanuxem Lecture sponsored by the University Public Lecture Series.

Lectures explore international relations

Renowned international relations scholar Stanley Hoffmann will deliver three talks in a new lecture series in honor of retired Princeton scholar Richard Ullman at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, Oct. 13-15, in Robertson Hall. Hoffmann, the Buttenwieser University Professor at Harvard University, will present the following lectures: “Understanding the Global System” on Oct. 13 in Dodds Auditorium; “Ethics and Global Policy” on Oct. 14 in Dodds Auditorium and “U.S. Foreign Policy, Past and Future” on Oct. 15 in Robertson Hall.

The lecture series, sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Princeton University Press, is designed to feature outstanding scholars of international affairs addressing topics of pressing concern to the world community, such as national security, globalization, the international economy, human rights and environmental challenges. Each lecture series will be compiled into book form and published by Princeton University Press.

Panel addresses future of conservatism

““The Future of Conservatism” is the subject of a panel discussion featuring commentators Ross Douhat, David Frum, Daniel Larison and Virginia Postel at 4:30 p.m. Monday, Oct. 12, in McCosh 50.

The panelists are well known for their commentary on the direction of American politics and society. Their philosophical perspectives differ somewhat, but all are interested in making conservatism appeal to a broader audience, including immigrants, working-class Americans and younger citizens.

Princeton history professors Kevin Kruse and Julian Zelizer will moderate the discussion, which is designated as a Stafford Little Lecture sponsored by the University Public Lecture Series.

Kahn to speak on leadership during health crises

Laura H. Kahn, a health policy researcher at Princeton, will discuss her new book, “Who’s in Charge: Leadership During Epidemics, Bioterror Attacks and Other Public Health Crises,” at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15, in 120 Lewis Library. Kahn is a physician and a research health policy scholar with the Program in Science and Global Security in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. In the book, she argues for the necessity of a clear chain of command during public health emergencies, and explores five crises and how leadership broke down during each: the 2001 anthrax attacks; the 1991 outbreak of the parasite cryptosporidium in the United States; the 2003 SARS outbreak in Toronto; the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease crisis; and the years-long battle against mad cow disease in the United Kingdom.

Kahn holds a degree in nursing from the University of California-Los Angeles, an M.D. from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, a master of public health from Columbia University and a master of public policy from the Wilson School. She is also a fellow of the American College of Physicians.

The talk is sponsored by the Lewis Library.
Leonard to give first talk in President’s Lecture Series

The graceful movements of bird flocks and fish schools inspire the research of engineer and mathematician Naomi Adler, who will deliver the first talk in this year’s President’s Lecture Series at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, in 101 Friend Center. Leonard, a 1985 Princeton graduate, is the Edwin S. Willey Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. Her talk, “Flocks and Fleets: Collective Motion in Nature and Robotics,” will describe efforts by her and others first to understand how these natural groups move in patterns that seem highly choreographed and then to apply these principles in designing robotic devices that work with unprecedented efficiency.

Fish and birds have evolved optimized ways to forage and feed by working in groups that act like a large-area sensor network. Leonard and colleagues are exploring how robots inspired by biology could work cooperatively to explore and monitor uncertain, dynamic environments in land, sea or space.

Leonard will describe her work in designing and testing an adaptive ocean observation system using a fleet of underwater robotic vehicles and an investigation of motion and decision-making in fish schools.

In 2004, Leonard was awarded a MacArthur Foundation “genius grant” for her work at the intersection of robotics and biology. She is an associated faculty member of the Program in Applied and Computational Mathematics and is a fellow of the Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineers.

Her talk is the first of three scheduled for this year’s President’s Lecture Series. Douglas Massey, the Henry G. Bryant Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, will deliver the second on Thursday, Dec. 10, followed by a lecture by Michael Oppenheimer, the Albert G. Milbank Professor of Geo-sciences and International Affairs, on Thursday, March 4. Both lectures also are at 4:30 p.m. in 101 Friend.

The lecture series was started by President Tilghman in 2001 to bring together faculty members from different disciplines to learn about the work others are doing in a variety of fields. The talks will be webcast; viewing information will be available online.

ONLINE: More information
www.princeton.edu/webmedia

Bennett to read and discuss work

Acclaimed British playwright, screenwriter, actor and essayist Alan Bennett will read from and talk about his work at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 20, in McCosh 50.

Called “England’s most enduring man of letters” by critic Richard Corliss, Bennett is a versatile artist who acts and writes for the page, stage, film and television. As a student at Oxford, Bennett planned to become a medieval historian, but his love of theater prevailed after his success in the 1960 comedy revue “Beyond the Fringe,” which he co-created along with Peter Cook, Dudley Moore and Jonathan Miller. Some of Bennett’s educational experiences are reflected in “The History Boys,” which won the 2006 Tony Award and was adapted by Bennett for the screen.

Bennett also adapted his play “The Madness of George III” into a film. His BBC television and radio monologues, “Talking Heads,” have been aired on PBS and performed in the United States. His newest play, “The Habit of Art,” about poet W.H. Auden and composer Benjamin Britten, opens in London next month, and will be filmed live and screened around the world.

Bennett is this fall’s Berkley Visitor in the Humanities in the Council of the Humanities. He joins a roster of eminent writers and artists, including Ian McEwan, Marilyn Strープ, Chuck Close, Don DeLillo, Arthur Miller and Maurice Sendak, who have come to Princeton through this program.

Conference looks at N.J. growth plans

A conference titled “Where Are We Growing? Planning for New Jersey’s Next 20 Years” is set for 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 16, in Dodds Auditorium, Robertson Hall.

Panels will evaluate the impact of the 1985 State Planning Act, which has guided efforts to preserve natural resources, revitalize urban centers, protect the environment and provide public services. They also will discuss what type of state planning system makes sense for the next 20 years.

ONLINE: More information
www.princeton.edu/prcs/events/conferences

CALENDAR

For broader listings of campus public events:
PUBLIC EVENTS CALENDAR
<calendar.princeton.edu>

Information about submitting events also is available at the website above.
Information on tickets is available at the website above.

UNIVERSITY TICKETING
<www.princeton.edu/tickets>
258-9220

For listings by selected University sponsors:
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<www.princeton.edu/artmuseum.org>
258-3788

Athletics
<www.princetonathletics.com>
258-5155

Center for African American Studies
<www.princeton.edu/africanamericastudies/news/events>
258-4270

Frist Campus Center
<www.princeton.edu/first>
258-1766

Lewis Center for the Arts
<www.princeton.edu/arts/events/calendar>
258-4500

Library
<www.princeton.edu/~lib/listings>
258-3581

McCarter Theatre
<www.mccarter.org>
258-3718

Music Department
<music.princeton.edu>
258-4241

Office of Information Technology
<www.princeton.edu/it>
258-2945

Public Lecture Series
<lectures.princeton.edu>
258-3680

President’s Lecture Series
<www.princeton.edu/president/preslecture_series>
258-6100

Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies
<www.princeton.edu/~ipris/calendar>
258-4805

Richardson Auditorium
<www.princeton.edu/~rcha>
258-5000

School of Architecture
<www.princeton.edu/school/architecture>
258-3160

School of Engineering and Applied Science
<www.princeton.edu/engineering/events>
258-6150

Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
<www.princeton.edu/sipas/events>
258-2943

For additional events sponsored by specific departments, programs and offices:
University “A to Z” search page
<www.princeton.edu/az>

For audience members needing assistance:
Office of Disability Services
<www.princeton.edu/ods>
258-2943

To offer submissions for “Nassau notes,” use the online form:
<www.princeton.edu/main/news/share/reportform>

For listings of alumni events:
www.alumni.princeton.edu/events

For listings of community events:
www.cruisingprinceton.org

October 12, 2009
Exploring race in America

Name: Eddie Glaude
Title: William S. Tod Professor of Religion and African American Studies and chair of the Center for African American Studies
Scholarly focus: American pragmatism and African American religious history and its place in American public life
Interview conducted by Cass Cliatt

What made you decide to focus your research and teaching on the lives of African Americans?

In my view, this is not simply about black folks. Rather, it’s about this precious experiment called American democracy. This becomes clear if you hold the view, as I do, that democracy is the best form by which everyday people can not only dream dreams, but also make those dreams a reality. When we tell the story of black people in this nation as a vision of democratic possibility, then we’re telling a story in particular about practices that frustrate democracy, which short-circuit it. There are many pernicious ideologies that are frustrating American democracy, but different from corporate greed, patriarchy, white supremacy, etc.

For me democracy is about more than just a bicameral system. It’s more than just elections. Democracy is an ethical ideal. And it’s an ethical ideal that’s not reducible: it’s reducible to just a philosophy. It’s really about a certain way of being in the world, and so, if your concern is democracy — small “d” — as mine is, and as it is the concern about how we’ve fallen short, black folk become one of the best places to turn.

Do you believe that the election of President Barack Obama was a moment that calls for a new and different advance in race relations and dialogue about race?

As a nation, we have to escape either/or thinking that must distort this situation. We have to celebrate this moment, this accomplishment in the history of the nation. We are not Jim Crow America anymore, if you think we’re not, you’ve never thought about your mind. But we know that the sound of racism is evident in the voice of the bacteria, in the voice of the virus. A minority of people in this nation will not grant legitimacy to Barack Obama’s presidency because he’s a black man, and if we don’t understand that, then we are all living an illusion.

Are conversations about race today different than they were before?

Part of the challenge of this moment is that every time racism rears its head, the clamor is going to be so loud because it’s going to call into question our current self conception: “Oh, we can’t be this. Look at the president is.” So the question becomes, are we really who we think we are? Now, when ever racism evidences itself, either we have to evade it or we have to engage in this really melodramatic hand-wringing, but one which leads to no analysis, and not really interesting conclusions.

African American studies can help us move beyond all of this.

What is the role of African American studies in education?

It’s important for us to think about how a liberal education takes shape, and the sorts of questions that are being asked about African American studies, and how they reveal the inherent politics in the production of knowledge. What we’re suggesting is that African American studies is not just about African Americans. It is within this field of inquiry, we can talk about the human condition and the various ways in which human beings — particularly in the United States — have made sense of their lives. You don’t deal with that in the abstract; you come at it from a particular vantage point.

For example, you read Turgenev or when you read (Fyodor) Dostoyevsky… we don’t simply say, “I recognize that oslash; gives thought and it’s only relevant to Russian people.” We’re saying that this literature gives us insight into the sorts of questions…

What we’re saying is that some folks who believe that African American studies is just a minor or peripheral, they bring to it a false notion that there is some way of thinking about human difference, even in the case of African American histories, particular places and particular peoples.

Continued on page 7

Center

Continued from page 1

What was missing for most people, according to Glaude, were the tools to help people think through these moments that reflect a “transition in discourse” about the nation in the United States.

“I see the center’s role as a place to generate languages to help us talk about race in light of the moment in which we find ourselves, when we have these occasions for brush fire,” Glaude said. “We can help people put it in a larger context, but that doesn’t need to sustain a necessary dialogue; so we want to do more than that.

“The center’s position is that we need enough that one spark can lead to a wholesale fire,” he added, “we want to have some folks talking together, but we need a form of work — who have paid attention to what we do — who can say, ‘Well, wait a minute, there’s a different way in which we can think about these issues,’ to get us out of this kind of simplistic and somewhat misleading dialogue.

A new era of leading scholars in the center have joined pioneers in the field to help the country has results-oriented discussions about race at what the scholars say is a critical time that is testing the nation’s commitment to democratic ideas.

“We can have the symbolism of the Obama presidency, but we need to understand it beyond the level of past-racial,” said Noliwe Rooks, the center’s associate director. She explained that some people think Obama’s election has moved America to a “post-racial” era that comes after the conclusion of an era of considerations of race.

“There are still too few places where someone is taking responsibility for sharing accurate information about America and race,” Rooks said. “Someone needs to tell people about the America that has gotten us to this point, so that we know enough to move forward. That’s what we’re doing here (at the center).”

Growth and initiatives

The center was established in September 2006, after existing as an academic certificate program at Princeton for 37 years. A task force appointed by President Tilghman recommended an expanded curriculum after determining that reflections on race and the experiences of black people should be diffused throughout a liberal arts education as an “indispensable element in a preparation for life in this country.”

Under the leadership of its director, Professor William Wilson Professor of Literature Valerie Smith, the center moved to Stanhope Hall in 2007, and built the number of its core faculty positions from two to today’s 17. Associated and affiliated faculty in other departments now contribute an additional 18 members.

The center has increased courses by more than 40 percent, offering 36 courses this year, compared to the estimated 25 courses typically offered a few years ago. Key institutions providing African American studies focus either on the specific experiences of black people in Africa or research of the African diaspora, Princeton encourages students of varying backgrounds to encounter and reflect on the history of race in the nation through a unique interdisciplinary approach and courses ranging from “Chinatown USA,” which examines American integration and nationalism, to “The Nation of Islam in America.”

“There is no other field that has a bibliography that has explored all the issues in the totality of what our country is facing,” Rooks said. “Some of the initiatives we’re putting into place are to give people in our community a road to talk about the race tools to do.”

The center is in the final stages of developing a dramatic tradition partnership program that will support research and data collection to confront issues of disparity in urban education, Rooks said. Readings of works by such well-known scholars as faculty member Cornel West (see page 4) will allow the public to share in intimate experiences of race, and a series of conferences hosting political leaders, scholars and artists will provide opportunities for local and national audiences to focus on issues of race and democracy. The center has also worked closely with the Kroc Institute for International Lec ture, named after the author and cultural critic, which will be delivered this year by Tilghman and broadcast through a radio partnership with WNYC.

The events provide a sustained forum for scholars and policymakers, and also raise awareness on campus among students who will become the next generation of national leaders.

According to the center’s leaders, the proof that it’s working is the growing numbers of students pursuing a certificate in African American studies. Last year, the center had its largest number of certificate students in the history of the program — 41 compared to the average of 20 in past years — and has become one of the five top of 42 established certificate programs chosen by students.

“Committed to fighting racial discrimination, the center does so partly by leading into a future where the center of African diasporic traditions dominates scholarly and popular discussions, not narrow ideas of color,” said the increasingly influential professor of comparative literature and African American studies. “There is such a space now that we need to talk about race to do the tools it.”

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What is the role of African American studies in education?

It’s important for us to think about how a liberal education takes shape, and the sorts of questions that are being asked about African American studies, and how they reveal the inherent politics in the production of knowledge. What we’re suggesting is that African American studies is not just about African Americans. It is within this field of inquiry, we can talk about the human condition and the various ways in which human beings — particularly in the United States — have made sense of their lives. You don’t deal with that in the abstract; you come at it from a particular vantage point.

For example, you read Turgenev or when you read (Fyodor) Dostoyevsky… we don’t simply say, “I recognize that fixation gives thought and it’s only relevant to Russian people.” We’re saying that this literature gives us insight into the sorts of questions…

What we’re saying is that some folks who believe that African American studies is just a minor or peripheral, they bring to it a false notion that there is some way of thinking about human difference, even in the case of African American histories, particular places and particular peoples.

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New approach for a new era

The center’s leaders asserted that a key element in realizing their goals is a change in the way they think about African American studies and how they reveal the inherent politics in the production of knowledge. What we’re suggesting is that African American studies is not just about African Americans. It is within this field of inquiry, we can talk about the human condition and the various ways in which human beings — particularly in the United States — have made sense of their lives. You don’t deal with that in the abstract; you come at it from a particular vantage point.

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The media are concerned about sensationalizing polarization in order to...
Readings celebrate 70 years of creative writing at Princeton

D istinguished writers affiliated with Princeton’s internationally renowned Program in Creative Writing will participate in a yearlong series celebrating the 70th anniversary of creative writing at the University this spring.

Maxine Kumin and Joyce Carol Oates will lead off the readings by current and former faculty, alumni fellows and students in the program at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21, in the Stewart Film Theater at the Lewis Center for the Arts, 185 Nassau St.

Kumin, who taught at Princeton in 1979 and 1982, has published 16 books of poetry, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning “Up Country; Poems of New England.” She also has published a memoir, a collection of essays and short stories, and some 20 children’s books.

Oates, the Roger S. Berlind ’52 Professor in the Humanities, has taught at Princeton since 1978. One of the most eminent and prolific American fiction writers, she is the author of more than 20 novels, short stories, literary criticism, essays, poetry volumes and plays, including the bestsellers “We Were the Mulvaneys” (1996), “Blonde” (2001), “The Falls” (2004) and “The Weavers’ Daughter” (2007). Among numerous accolades, Oates has received the National Book Award, the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction and the O. Henry Prize for continuing excellence in the short story.

Other participants in the yearlong reading series will include Russell Banks, John Edgar Wideman, C.K. Williams, Jeffery Eugenides, Sharon Olds, Amy Waldman and Amy Goodman. “For those who have tended to think that Princeton has only recently put such emphasis on the creative and performing arts, it’s good to be reminded that the creative writing program has made such a large impact on so very many.”

That year Professor of English Willard Thorp nominated poet and critic Ellen Tate as the first resident fellow in creative writing. Over the nearly 20 years that followed — under the leadership of Richard P. Blackmur — a succession of poets, writers and critics taught in the program, including John Berryman, Joseph N. Frank, Delmore Schwartz, William Meredith, Robert Fitzgerald, Sean O’Floskin, Richard Kellerson, Kingsley Amis and Philip Roth.

The program continued to evolve, most notably under the leadership of Edmund Keeley, who served as director from 1965 to 1981, as it changed its name to the Program in Creative Writing and finally to the Program in Creative Writing. Theodore Weiss joined the Princeton faculty in 1966 and they did much to expand the program, bringing in such writers as Elizabeth Bowen, Thomas Merton, Amy Hempel, Gaylway Kimell, Oates and Banks.

Keeley changed the format of creative writing courses from precepts to the current workshop format. "The creative writing program, as I initially understood it, was primarily to teach students how to read as a writer might read and to begin writing with knowledge of the creative process. For many students taking creative writing courses at Princeton was also how they first discovered literature, or at least a passion for literature,” said Keeley, the Charles Barrwelle Strait Class of 1923 Professor of English Emeritus and professor of creative writing emeritus.

It also was during Keeley’s leadership that the program moved to its current location, the former Nassau Street School at 185 Nassau St.

Keeley was succeeded by James Richardson (1981 to 1990), whose directorship saw the arrival of Toni Morrison and Muldoon. The latter program was directed by A. Walton Litz (1990 to 1992), Malcolm Miller (1992 to 2002), Edmund White (2002 to 2006) and Chang-rae Lee (2006 to present).

In 2008 the United States elected a nonwhite president for the first time, a landmark historical event, and yet in 2009, African Americans are hugely underrepresented in decision-making positions and ownership in corporate and new media. Perry said. “What explains all of these counterintuitive pairings of the realization of the American dream” and exclusions from America’s promise? Why is it that we aspire to a post-racial or coke-blind America, and yet continue to see that race has a significant impact on our lives and experiences?

“African American faces, voices and cultures are constantly on our airwaves and in our digital media, yet African Americans are underrepresented in decision-making positions and ownership in corporate and new media,” said Perry. “What explains all of these counterintuitive pairings of the realization of the American dream” and exclusions from America’s promise? Why is it that we aspire to a post-racial or coke-blind America, and yet continue to see that race has a significant impact on our lives and experiences?

“The field of African American studies allows us to investigate and provide potential answers to these courses at Princeton was also how they first discovered literature, or at least a passion for literature,” said Keeley, the Charles Barrwelle Strait Class of 1923 Professor of English Emeritus and professor of creative writing emeritus.

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In referring to Colbert, the satirist of contemporary politics, West said, “If we don’t have a quality of discussion, it’s going to spill over into violence,” West said, “and if that happens, then American democracy is in grave danger, to say the least.

So in that regard I would say that the discussion of race in America is critical — and yes, I use that word critical.”

African American studies is more important than ever because Obama’s election has led some people to think that continued talk of anything racial is no longer important. Perry said.

Debates are proliferating over the notion that America has “overcome,” in terms of fulfilling the goals of the civil rights era.

“At this moment more than at any time in this century, the overwhelming sentiment of President Obama as president cannot represent a job well done; there is too much work left to do,” Glade said.

“African American studies can help us understand the subtleties of race and racism, even in this moment. In fact, because of this moment, we need African American studies even more.”
A
rchitectural historian Beatriz Colomina pushes her students to "tackle such a task." The work was particularly suited to a team approach, said graduate student Craig Buckley. "Tackling the material required knowledge of eight or nine different languages ... and the publications themselves were literally scattered across the globe, not only in familiar scholarly terrain such as journals, volumes and archives, but quite often in personal collections, dusty attics and basements," said Buckley, who visited the French village of Théil-tuilerie and six European cities to interview editors of the magazines. "Only collaborative detective work by a large group could tackle such a task.

The students working on the project got a hands-on lesson in fundraising when they applied for grants to support the exhibition, and they learned about public relations when promoting the New York City opening. They even mounted the exhibition themselves, finding cheap plastic skylights on Canal Street in which to encase the rarest magazines and hanging wallpaper “in the style of Montparnasse bistro windows.”

Students get excited about the idea of examining it," said Kallipoliti, who is finishing her dissertation this year and teaching graduate student Lydia Kallipoliti, the research seminars are part of Colomina’s Ph.D. program and redesigns its annual research seminar so that first- and second-year Ph.D. students could work together on a two-year collaborative project. The seminars have yielded in-depth examinations of little-known or forgotten aspects of architecture while giving second-year students an opportunity to learn about collaboration and hands-on research. Each seminar has produced or is in the process of producing a final product — a book, a conference, a documentary film or an exhibition.

Students get excited about the idea of putting something together, and they learn to communicate to a wider audience than other academics, Colomina said, “They learn from each other.” The first project examined the myriad innovations during the Cold War period — from suburban sprawl to the ballpark pen — that transformed physical space and human experience. Student essays from the seminar were published by Princeton Architectural Press in 2004 as “Cold War Horizons.” The 2005 project, “Clip/Stamp/Fold; The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196X to 197X,” became an exhibition that has been shown in nine cities — including Barcelona, Montreal, New York and Oslo — since 2006 and is still touring. The project examines a series of short-lived architecture magazines from the early 1960s to the end of the 1970s that instigated a radical transformation in architectural culture. The study of Playboy magazine in this year’s project.

Graduate student Lydia Kallipoliti, who worked on the “Clip/Stamp/ Fold” project, called it “the single most significant educational experience for many of the students who participated in the project, including me.”

Interdisciplinary reach

The research seminars are part of Princeton’s unique Program in Media and Modernity, which promotes the interdisciplinary study of 20th-century culture by examining architecture, art, film, history, literature, music, philosophy, photography and all forms of electronic media. Under Colomina’s direction, the program organizes events and brings together professors from across the University to train-teach topics with interdisciplinary breadth to students from all fields. In the last few years, professors from architecture, art and architecture, English and German have paired up to teach courses on subjects as diverse as advertising, architecture, English and German literature, film and modernity, among others.

She approaches architecture as an expanding discourse that encompasses not only a number of canonical buildings and texts, but also architectural exhibitions, photographs, professional magazines and the popular press, saidSpyros Papapetrou, an assistant professor of architecture. “Throughout her work, Colomina emphasizes the role of techniques of visual representation — from architectural modeling to X-ray photography — in the general production of architecture, and stresses the unique ability of architecture to generate not only modes of inhabitation but also patterns of cultural behavior.”

Colomina’s 2007 book “Domesticity at War” looked at the intersection between modern architecture and World War II and described how strenuous domesticity was a hallmark of design in the postwar period. Her current book project, “X-Ray Architectures and the Cinema of X-Rays” looks at how the development of X-ray technology in the beginning of the 20th century influenced architecture. Those in the medical field were “seeing through the skin of the body — looking at parts of the body that were previously invisible — and architects wanted to do the same thing,” Colomina said.

Mies van der Rohe, the pioneering modern architect known for his steel and glass designs, was fascinated by X-rays and assembled a collection of them, Colomina pointed out. “Mies talked about his buildings as ‘skin and bone’ — that is, the way they get that metaphor from X-rays.” Colomina herself likes to look into the “quirky, off the beaten path,” research of others, as well as the work of her students, for inspiration.

“Why think about questions just from the architect’s point of view?” she asked. “Bringing people together from different disciplines makes the view clearer.”

The exhibition “Clip/Stamp/Fold; The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196X to 197X” has been shown in cities worldwide. Here, Colomina (second from left) and her graduate students (from left) Lydia Kallipoliti, Craig Buckley, Irene Sowse and Anthony Fontanot stand at the opening of the exhibition’s showing at Montreal’s Canadian Centre for Architecture in April 2007.