Examining ideas of a life worth living

Karin Dienst

As they embark on their Princeton careers, 15 freshmen are grappling with a question that will be central to their lives: What is the meaning of a good life?

The question is just one of many raised in the freshman seminar “Individuality as an Ideal,” which is being taught this fall by Kwame Anthony Appiah, the Laurence S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy and the University Center for Human Values. Appiah is a world-renowned moral and political philosopher who has taught at Princeton since 2002.

“Individuality is a great example of a topic that is both intellectually challenging and profoundly relevant to thinking about how one lives one’s own life,” Appiah said. “It’s a perfect introduction to a liberal education — which is an education that prepares you for a life as a free individual, in charge of interpreting your situation and marshaling the resources that you’ve gotten from your genome, your family, your school, your society, to manage the one life you have.”

Ankit Buddhiraju said he was drawn to the seminar because he wanted to discuss how individuality might be defined, and how it “has been associated with a gamut of personal qualities, both positive and negative, such as creativity, originality, nonconformity and selfishness.”

For Gabriella Ravida, the class is allowing her to do something new. “I chose the seminar because I never took any philosophy classes in high school, and I wanted to start my college experience on a new note,” she said.

“To engage with such a thought-provoking subject, the course, which is designated as the Kurt and Beatrice Gutmann Freshman Seminar for Gabriella Ravida, the class is allowing her to do something new. “I chose the seminar because I never took any philosophy classes in high school, and I wanted to start my college experience on a new note,” she said.

“To engage with such a thought-provoking subject, the course, which is designated as the Kurt and Beatrice Gutmann Freshman Seminar for Medicine, Ethics and Public Policy, allows students to explore issues related to medicine, ethics, and public policy in a seminar setting. The seminar is designed to provide students with a foundation in the ethical and legal issues that arise in the practice of medicine, and to enable them to critically analyze and evaluate the impact of health policy on individual and population health. The seminar covers topics such as medical ethics, health care delivery, health care financing, and the role of the government in health care. The seminar is open to all students and does not require any prerequisites.

In the freshman seminar “Individuality as an Ideal,” Professor Kwame Anthony Appiah (rear, center) assigns students readings of fiction and philosophy to help them explore ideas about how to create a life worth living.

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At Princeton and in fiction, Eugenides dives into classroom

Jennifer Greenstein Altman

In his new novel “The Marriage Plot,” Princeton creative writing professor Jeffrey Eugenides takes the reader into a college classroom where English major Madeleine Hanna is trying to carve out a life for herself in which literature is a guiding force. Eugenides, who himself was once a student with similar aspirations, hopes to help Princeton undergraduates also engage deeply with writing in his own classroom at Princeton. Teaching, for him, “is mainly in a way the most difficult thing I do,” Eugenides said. “I have a much easier time standing up in front of 500 people and giving a lecture or reading my work than meeting the 10 faces around a seminar table and trying to say something that’s useful to them. It’s a hard task, and one I certainly haven’t mastered.”

Eugenides is, however, a master of the modern novel, having written the critically acclaimed “The Virgin Suicides” and “Middlesex,” winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.

His new novel, “The Marriage Plot,” opens on graduation day at Brown University — Eugenides’ alma mater — and tells the story of three students on the cusp of graduation and the love triangle in which they become entangled. Set in the early 1980s, the novel is a coming-of-age tale that follows the characters — the lovely, bookish Madeleine; her boyfriend, depressed genius Leonard Bankhead; and the lovesick, spiritual seeker Mitchell Grammaticus — as they navigate college semiotics, clinical depression, a post-collegiate trip to Calcutta and the pain that often accompanies love. The title makes reference to the narrative structure of the 19th-century novels Madeleine is studying, in which the central concern of the plot is a woman’s marriage prospects.

Eugenides, a professor of creative writing in the Lewis Center for the Arts, arrived at Princeton in 2007 to assume his first full-time faculty position. He briefly taught at Princeton from 1999 to 2000 before moving to Berlin, where he wrote full time.

“Teaching, for him, “is mainly remembering what it was like when I was sitting in the chair across from my creative writing teacher,” said Eugenides, who earned a master’s degree in English and creative writing from Stanford University. “I try to have my students realize that all the mistakes they’re making are mistakes that I’ve made and sometimes continue to make.”

Megan Hogan, who is working with Eugenides on her senior thesis, said, “He encourages you to take risks, to approach subjects and styles and themes you always wanted to write about but didn’t think you could.”

Hogan described him as “unfailingly enthusiastic” and “incredibly honest about your work.”

“Taking Eugenides’ class sophomore year “definitely changed how I write,” Hogan said. “My prose is much more descriptive and confident now, and I venture further into my characters’ heads. Even after stories of

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Holiday outreach initiatives planned

Throughout the holiday season the University community will have the opportunity to share the holiday spirit through a series of community service initiatives and special events planned for December and January. A “Heroes for Heroes” campaign will enable campus community members to send special greetings to soldiers who will be away from home this holiday season. Holiday cards or letters can be sent individually or by a team. The team or individual who delivers the most cards and letters to the Frist Campus Center by 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 2, will receive lunch from Hoagie Haven (up to $100 in value). Cards and stationery will be available at the 100 level of Frist between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, Nov. 30-Dec. 2. Each card and letter collected will be included in a care package that will be sent to soldiers overseas by the nonprofit organization Operation Gratitude.

A holiday “Cappella Jam and Toy Drive” performance featuring several student a cappella groups will be held at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 9, on the Palmer Square Green. The event is free and open to the public, and attendees are encouraged to bring a new, unwrapped toy to be donated to theYWCA Princeton St. Nicholas Project. For more information, go to www.princeton.edu/ody.

Organizers of a “Holiday Hoops” food drive will be on hand to pick up the items off of a game-day ticket with the donation of a nonperishable food item when the Princeton men’s basketball team takes on Lafayette at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30, at Jadwin Gym. In addition, free admission is available to those who bring two nonperishable food items to the Princeton women’s basketball game vs. Delaware at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 1, at Jadwin Gym. All donations go to support the Friends of Mercer Street Food Bank. Through Friday, Dec. 16, donations of nonperishable food items and personal hygiene products will be collected at several campus sites: New South, C230 Engineering Quadrangle; Jadwin Gym; Helm Building; MacMillan Building; Robertson Hall; West College; Lewis and Thomas Labs; Nassau Hall; 200 Elmir St.; 185 Nassau St.; 22 Chambers St.; Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory; 700 Carnegie Center; Lewis Library; 2 locations at 171 Broadmead (University Now Nursery School and Office of Information Technology); McCosh Health Center; 26 College Road; 180, 202, 294 and 306 Alexander Road and the 100 level of Frist. The following items are especially needed: canned protein (tuna, sardines, salmon and chicken); canned fruit (in light syrup or juice); canned vegetables; rice; pasta; pasta sauce; Parmalat or other shelf-stable milk; cereals, oatmeal and pancake mix (nonsugar); peanut butter; jelly; dish and laundry detergent; soap and body wash; deodorant; shampoo; conditioner and feminine products.

University community members also may support the Send Hunger Packing Program, which provides school-aged children in need with nutritionally sound, easy-to-open meals to get them through the weekend. Items needed include shelf-stable items like reduced-fat milk in an eight-ounce, single-serving size; cereal (individual bowls or boxes); ready-to-eat tuna with or without crackers; microwaveable entrees or bowls; peanut butter in jars or individual cups; soup in plastic containers; yogurt; smoothie drinks in shelf-stable brick packs; granola bars; and shelf-stable pudding cups. Additionally, campus and local nonprofit groups are participating in initiatives to collect donations including books, games, gift certificates, food, personal care items, toys, winter jackets and sleeping bags. Participating organizations are Anchor House/Angel’s Wings, the Crisis Ministry of Princeton and Trenton, Community House/Young Achievers, Health Care Ministry of Princeton, HomeFront, Princeton Nursery School, the YWCA Princeton St. Nicholas Project and Woman-space. For more information about these organizations and donations needed, visit the Community and Regional Affairs website at www.princeton.edu/community or contact Erin Metto at 609-258-3144 or emetto@princeton.edu.

In addition, community members can start saving men’s and women’s business attire for the annual gendredoffdrive planned for January. Details will be announced at a later date.

The outreach initiatives are sponsored by the Office of Community and Regional Affairs, the Graduate School, the Department of Economics, the Department of Facilities, the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students, and Hoagie Haven.

Memorial service to be held for Schwartz

A memorial service for Stuart Schwartz, a professor of electrical engineering emeritus who died Aug. 27, will be held at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 17, at the Fields Center at 58 Prospect Ave. The service is open to members of the campus community.


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 next issue, which covers Dec. 12-Jan. 16, is Friday, Dec. 2. A complete publication schedule can be found at www.princeton.edu/bulletin.

Call 609-258-5601 with questions.

To submit events for consideration for “Nassau notes,” go to www.princeton.edu/main/news/share/submitevents.

Name: Evangeline Kub

Position: Manager of communications and outreach for the Office of Career Services. Creating branding and public relations initiatives to raise the visibility of the office. Executing strategies to engage internal and external audiences, including students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni, employers and media. Managing the office’s social media presence, and its print and online publications.

Quote: “What I enjoy most is using a blend of high-tech and ‘high-touch’ communications efforts to tell the story of Career Services in a way that can be understood, remembered and valued by all of our constituents. I especially love myth-busting and sharing information about the work we do. People are often surprised to learn that we offer more than 250 career education programs, and that we begin meeting with students as early as freshman year to help them to discover, explore and pursue their career interests throughout their four years at Princeton.”

Other interests: Spending time with her husband Jim, 19-year-old daughter Stephanie and 15-year-old son Anthony, Volunteering and managing publicity for St. Anna Greek Orthodox Church in Flemington and its “Big, Fat Greek Festival,” which draws 5,000 to 7,000 visitors. Recently completed a mini-MBA certificate program in social media marketing at Rutgers University.
President Barack Obama announced his intention to nominate Princeton molecular biologist Bonnie Bassler to serve as a member of the National Science Board, which oversees the National Science Foundation (NSF), the major source of federal funding for scientific research.

Bassler, who is Princeton’s Squibb Professor in Molecular Biology, has been a faculty member at the University since 1994. Her appointment to the National Science Board will require U.S. Senate confirmation.

The board consists of 24 members, including eminent scientists and engineers from industry and academia who represent a variety of fields. Board members identify issues that are critical to the future of the NSF, approve strategic budget directions, and approve major new programs and awards. The NSF is the funding source for approximately 20 percent of all federally supported basic research conducted by America’s colleges and universities.

Bassler also serves as director of Princeton’s Program on Science and Technology, is best known for her efforts to understand quorum sensing, the process by which bacteria communicate.

Steve Runk, the former executive director of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, has been named director of communications for Princeton’s Lewis Center for the Arts. Runk spent 20 years on the staff of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, which provided financial support to artists, arts organizations and projects throughout the state. He served the last three years as the council’s executive director. Before joining the council, he served as Princeton’s director of the summer session at Rutgers University and manager of marketing communications for an architectural design firm.

“The researchers created the first model to take into account Earth’s elliptical shape, surface features and ocean depths in simulations of how seismic waves generated by a meteorite collision would spread across and within the planet,” said Michael Cadden, the acting chair of the Lewis Center. “We are pleased to welcome him to the Lewis Center and look forward to working with him on promoting the dissemination of arts and culture.”

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The following figures, provided by the Office of the Registrar, reflect the makeup of Princeton’s undergraduate Class of 2011. More detailed information, including readmitted students, University enrollment statistics and other data can be found online at registrar.princeton.edu.

The Princeton Class of 2015
Number of students: 1,303
Percent men: 51
Percent women: 49
Number of states represented: 48
Number of countries represented: 62
Percent American students of color: 38
Percent international students: 31
Percent sons/daughters of alumni: 12.3
Total undergraduate enrollment: 5,173
Total graduate enrollment: 2,160

Seven new faculty appointed

The Board of Trustees has approved the appointment of 26 new faculty members, including three full professors and four assistant professors.

Professor

In history, David Cameron was named the Dodge Professor of History, effective Sept. 1, 2011, after serving for three years as a senior research scholar in Princeton’s Council’s Center for Interdisciplinary Research and a lecturer in the history department. His interests include the economic, social, political, and cultural history of modern Britain and its empire, as well as capitalism, collectivism, and philanthropy in 19th- and 20th-century America, and the history of history. He is the author of 12 books, including "The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy." "Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire," and "Mellon: An American Life."

Cannadine, who received a knighthood from the British government in 2009, came to Princeton after 30 years at the University of London. He also previously served on the faculty of Columbia University and the University of Cambridge. He earned his bachelor's and master's degree from Cambridge and his Ph.D. from University of Oxford.

In chemistry, Garnet Chan will be appointed to the A. Barton Hepburn Professor of Chemistry, effective Jan. 1, 2012. Chan’s research is focused on developing new techniques for electronic structure theory using ideas that bring quantum chemistry, condensed matter and quantum information.

Chan earned his bachelor’s degree and Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge. He will join the Princeton faculty after seven years at Cornell University. He previously served as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California-Berkeley and as a research fellow at Cambridge.

In mathematics and the Program in Applied and Computational Mathematics, Peter Constantin joined the faculty, effective Nov. 1, 2011, as the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Mathematics and Applied Computational Mathematics. The author of 140 papers and two books, he conducts research on nonlinear partial differential equations with applications to turbulence, the motion of exploding stars and other topics related to fluid dynamics.

Constantin arrived at Princeton from the University of Chicago, where he had been a faculty member since 1985. He holds the university’s highest academic degrees from the University of Bucharest and a Ph.D. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Assistant professors

In economics, Myrto Kalouptsidi has been appointed to a term of three and a half years, effective Feb. 1, 2012. A specialist in industrial organization, she is currently an associate research scholar at Princeton. A graduate of the University of Athens, she holds a master’s degree from Athens University of Economics and Business and a Ph.D. from Yale University.

In English, American literature scholar Joshua Vogl began a three-year term July 1, 2011. He has been appointed to a term of three and a half years, effective Feb. 1, 2012. A specialist in industrial organization, he is currently an associate research scholar at Princeton. A graduate of the University of Athens, she holds a master’s degree from Athens University of Economics and Business and a Ph.D. from Yale University.

In economics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Tom Vogl began a three-year term July 1, 2011. Vogl’s research focuses on development economics and health policy. A 2005 graduate of Princeton, he holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

In French and Italian, Christy Wampole began a three-year term Sept. 1, 2011. A specialist in 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century French and Italian literature, Wampole earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of North Texas and a Ph.D. from Stanford University.

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:

- University administrators have begun implementing the new “open-access” policy approved this fall by Princeton faculty members to expand the public’s access to their research. The policy gives the University and faculty members rights to republish scholarly articles, making it possible for individuals without journal subscriptions to access them. “The policy is intended to make the faculty’s scholarly articles, published in journals and conference proceedings, ‘more accessible to a wider audience,’ than ever before,” said Jill D. Tiles, the University’s executive director of communications.

- A gift from William Clay Ford Jr., a member of Princeton’s Class of 1979, and Lisa Vanderhoer Ford, of the Class of 1982, will create the Bill and Lisa Ford Family Directorship of Athletics at Princeton. In addition to endowing the directorship, the gift will provide funding for Princeton’s athletic director to invest in programs to enhance the student-athlete experience. The Ford gift is part of the University’s current $1.75 billion fundraising campaign, which includes a commitment to athletics as an important element of the Princeton experience. Alumni and friends have provided significant support for a range of varsity and recreational athletic programs as part of the Aspire campaign.

- Five new postdoctoral scholars — Hannah Freed-Thall, Douglas Jones Jr., Joel Lande, Ellen Lockhart and Tey Meadow — have joined Princeton’s Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts for the 2011-12 academic year. The society is an interdisciplinary community that seeks to bring innovative approaches to scholarship and teaching at the University. The new fellows were selected from 890 applicants; they teach half-time in their academic department and pursue their own research.

- Climate change, land use and other human-driven factors could pit savannas and forests against each other by altering the elements found by Princeton researchers to stabilize the two. Without this harmony, the habitats, or biomes, could increasingly encroach on one another to the detriment of the people and animals that rely on them. The changeover from one biome to the other – which can happen within several decades – can be extremely difficult to reverse once it has happened, according to lead author Carla Staver, a doctoral student in the lab of co-author Simon Lewis, a professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

- Actor and comedian Steve Carell will deliver the keynote address at the University’s Class Day ceremony on Monday, June 4. Leaders of the senior class selected Carell, known for his portrayal of Michael Scott in the NBC comedy “The Office,” from numerous nominees suggested by their classmates.

- Princeton researchers led by Blair Professor of Geology Jeron Trouw have developed a new model that can not only more accurately simulate the seismic field from a large meteorite striking the Earth, but also help reveal new information about the surface and interior of planets based on past collisions. The researchers created the first model to take into account Earth’s elliptical shape, surface features and ocean depths in simulations of how seismic waves generated by a meteorite collision would spread across and within the planet.
Princeton reports continued progress on sustainability goals, enters new phase of plan

Princeton’s greenhouse gas emissions have declined below 2008 levels for three years, and campus water usage and landfill waste each have declined by 15 percent since 2006. These key achievements are noted in the University’s third annual Sustainability Report, which is available at www.princeton.edu/reports/2011/sustainability. According to the report, the University continued to make significant progress on sustainability measures in the past year and is seeking to accelerate efforts to bridge the areas of operations and academics in sustainability problem-solving.

The report measures progress in three broad categories: greenhouse gas emissions reduction; resource conservation; and research, education and civic engagement. Improvement is determined both by specific benchmarks and volume by assessing efforts to influence behavior change. The University provides an ideal environment for this work, said Executive Vice President Mark Burstein. “One feature that sets apart the Sustainability Plan that Princeton adopted in 2008 is our decision to mitigate our environmental impact solely with campus-based investments in efficiency and culture change,” Burstein said. “We have a tremendous opportunity to use the physical campus as a testing ground for the benefit of students and researchers as we seek to reach the Sustainability Plan goals.”

The Sustainability Plan has been a campuswide effort since the beginning of its development in 2007. Working groups of the Princeton Sustainability Committee — which is composed of faculty, staff and students — proposed the plan and new benchmark sustainability performance across University operations, teaching, research and student activities. Their reports are incorporated into the online publication.

In the next phase, the Office of Sustainability, which coordinates the plan’s implementation, will be collaborating with the working groups and the campus community to integrate the plan more fully and swiftly into the life of the University, according to Shanna Winnett, manager of the office and co-chair of the committee.

“We’ve been in implementation mode since 2008 and have a fairly solid grasp of the direction we need to go on the operational end of things,” she said. “We’ve had very productive collaborations with faculty members and students, but we want to try to reach out and develop more relationships across operations and academics so that we can accelerate this process as a community.”

The new Boathouse Walk provides a pedestrian/bicycle link between Faculty Road and South Drive. Three acres of adjacent woodlands were restored by removing invasive species, adding new topsoil and planting 34 trees.

The progress in sustainability extends into the classroom. In 2011, 192 undergraduates representing 19 academic disciplines participated in the Program in Environmental Studies, up from 162 undergraduates in 2010. A total of 37 undergraduates received environmental studies certificates in 2011, up from 45 in 2010 and quadrupled the number in 2002. About 20 percent of graduating seniors in 2011 participated in the 2009 Princeton Environmental Institute’s undergraduate program during their fourth year. The Princeton Environmental Institute offers 3 credits, coursework, internships and independent research.

Ruth Paine, a 2011 alumna who majored in ecology and evolutionary biology, earned a certificate in Environmental Studies and was the undergraduate chair of Princeton Students United for a Responsible Environment (PSURE). She offers this account of his Princeton experience on the Sustainability Report website. “PEI [the Princeton Environmental Institute] and the environmental studies program took me from the fundamentals of climate effectiveness on the first day to in-depth understanding of the fundamentals of climate change for the first time, and then to a full grasp of the direction we need to go after 33 years; in University academic buildings, 30 years; and in Frick Chemistry Laboratory, 10 years.”

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Effective Nov. 1: in Dining Services, residential assistant manager Amawoode Doobraj, after 39 years; in geosciences, associate professional specialist Robert J. Wika, after 35 years; in the library, senior bibliographic specialist Lilia Riba, after 33 years; in University Health Services, senior staff psychologist Robert Schiraldi, after 10 years.

From 2010 to 2011, there was a 98 percent increase in the number of campus community members participating in Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs implemented to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles coming to campus. A majority of the 700 now involved, including graduate students — who may participate in the mass transit subsidy program as of July 2011 — are benefitting from TDM program incentives.

The total volume of cleaning chemicals decreased by approximately 30 percent between fiscal year 2010 and 2011. More than 43 percent by volume (66 percent by weight) of water-based cleaning chemicals and soaps purchased in 2011 were Green Seal certified. This represented nearly 30 percent in volume and an 11 percent increase in spending over the previous year.

According to the report, the University established an Energy Master Plan in 2008, the University is investing $45 million between 2009 and 2017 in other energy-savings projects in order to achieve 55.5 million annual megawatt-hours of energy savings. In 2010-11, the University spent $477,500, resulting in savings of about 1,000 metric tons of CO2 and $495,000 in energy costs. Since the Energy Master Plan was established, the University has invested $3.5 million in energy-savings projects, resulting in annual savings of about $1.7 million in energy costs and 10,000 metric tons of CO2. The report lists several other key milestones:

• Overall campus water usage was down by about 5 percent, or nearly 2 million gallons from fiscal year 2010 to 2011. Overall campus water usage, however, increased by about 21 percent during the same time period, likely due to a rise in demand at the central plant, which uses water in direct proportion to the amount of energy provided for heating and cooling. Again, the severe weather and having two chemistry laboratories open played a role. Overall campus water usage was 13 percent lower in fiscal year 2011 than in fiscal year 2006.

• University sustainable food purchases increased from 61 percent of total food purchases in 2010 to 66 percent in 2011, and local food purchases (within 250 miles) were 27 percent of total food purchases.

• In summer 2011, a “tray-free” dining policy was successfully implemented in all six residential dining halls. Tray-free dining (providing larger plates and glasses and eliminating trays) has the potential to reduce water usage and energy costs by $4,000 per year, save up to 1.2 percent of total food purchases, reduce food waste by up to 30 percent, and avoid more than 23 metric tons of CO2 emissions.

• University sustainably produced energy-savings projects in order to achieve 55.5 million annual megawatt-hours of energy savings. In 2010-11, the University spent $477,500, resulting in savings of about 1,000 metric tons of CO2 and $495,000 in energy costs. Since the Energy Master Plan was established, the University has invested $3.5 million in energy-savings projects, resulting in annual savings of about $1.7 million in energy costs and 10,000 metric tons of CO2.

• In the past year, more than five acres of woodlands were restored along Washington Road and the Boathouse Walk near the south edge of campus, and roughly four acres of green space were restructured in other areas along campus walks and greens. In total, 215 new bushes and 197 new shrubs were planted.

• University sustainably produced skateboards were introduced to cover nearly three acres one foot thick.

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Wilzent to present President’s Lecture on political partisanship

Princeton historian Sean Wilzent will speak on “The Long and Tragic History of Post-Partisanship” at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 1, in the Friend Center, Room 101. The talk is the second installment of the 2011-12 President’s Lecture Series. Wilzent, Princeton’s George Henry Davis 1886 Professor of American History, has been a faculty member at the University since 1979. His lecture will trace the history of “the American dream of politics without conflict,” which is as old as the United States itself, according to Wilzent. From George Washington’s presidency and the eras of the Federalist and Whig parties, to the Confederacy and the present day, Wilzent will examine the longstanding “illusion of post-partisanship” that has marked the American political scene.

Wilzent is an authority on U.S. social and political history. His books include “The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln” and “The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008.” The lecture by Wilzent will be webcast; viewing information will be available at www.princeton.edu/webmedia.

Susan Stewart, Princeton’s Avalon Foundation University Professor in the Humanities, will deliver the final talk in this year’s President’s Lecture Series at a future date. For more information, visit www.princeton.edu/president/presidents_lecture_series.

CALENDAR links
For broader listings of campus public events:
PUBLIC EVENTS CALENDAR
www.princeton.edu/events
Information on tickets is available at the website below:

UNIVERSITY TICKETING
www.princeton.edu/tickets
609-258-9220

For listings by selected University sponsors:
Art Museum
www.princeton.edu/events/museum
609-258-3766

Athletics
www.goprincetontigers.com
609-258-3758

Center for African American Studies
www.princeton.edu/africanamericanstudies/events
609-258-6270

Center of the Humanities
www.princeton.edu/events/centerofthehumanities/calendar
609-258-7105

Council of the Humanities
www.princeton.edu/hr/council
609-258-7105

Frist Campus Center
www.princeton.edu/frist
609-258-1775

Library
www.princeton.edu/ldr/exhibitions
609-258-3181

McCarter Theatre
www.mccarter.org
609-258-2787

Music Department
www.princeton.edu/music
609-258-4241

Office of Information Technology
www.princeton.edu/its/events/calendar
609-258-2040

Public Lecture Series
lectures.princeton.edu
609-258-6109

Princeton Lecture Series
www.princeton.edu/princeton/lectureseries
609-258-4951

Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies
www.princeton.edu/piris/news-events/events
609-258-4981

Princeton University Concerts
www.princeton.edu/puc/concerts
609-258-2800

Richardson Auditorium
www.princeton.edu/richaud
609-258-5000

School of Architecture
www.princeton.edu/school
609-258-3741

School of Engineering and Applied Science
www.princeton.edu/engineering/events
609-258-4555

Weinberg Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
www.princeton.edu/events
609-258-2943

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

For audiences needing assistance:
Office of Disability Services
609-258-8840

To offer submissions for “Nassau notes,” use the online form:
www.princeton.edu/realty/news/submit/events

For further information, visit www.princeton.edu/arts.
Princeton’s newest undergraduates are setting out on a path of inquiry and discovery this fall through the University’s freshman seminar program. Freshman seminars enable students to build strong relationships with faculty members and classmates in a close-knit intellectual setting. Many students cite the freshman seminar as one of the highlights of their time at Princeton.

Among other subjects, freshmen this fall are exploring forces that shape facial perception, issues related to global environmental change, experiences with sound and music, and notions of individuality. A total of 480 freshmen are enrolled this semester in 35 seminars, each of which is hosted by a residential college. Class discussions often continue in informal settings both on and off campus, through meals, guest lectures, field trips and other activities.

This issue of the Bulletin includes features on three freshman seminars offered at Princeton this semester. In addition, to watch a video about the freshman seminar “Silence, Noise, Sound and Music: Everyday Experience and/as Art” led by Professor of Music Barbara White (pictured at far right), visit www.princeton.edu/main/news_featured.

Tackling tough questions about global environmental change

Nick D’Ulio

Climbing up at a projected map displaying the changing dietary habits of people from countries around the world, Princeton Environmental Institute associate professor Eric Wood and research scholar Justin Sheffield’s freshman seminar faced a difficult question.

“Why do you think we’re seeing a global transition to a meat-based diet?” Sheffield asked the 14 freshmen gathered for the session of “Global Environmental Change: Science, Technology and Policy.” The seminar, which is being offered for the first time this fall, addresses the issue of climate and sustainability through the lens of many disciplines.

One student posited that the shift in diet may indicate that consumption of meat connotes high social status in some cultures. Another student suggested that the increasingly globalized economy could be a factor in the transition — or, perhaps, that more and more people simply like the taste of meat.

With each question posed during the three-hour session, Wood and Sheffield extend the initial query into a further exploration of complex issues.

“OK, well, this creates an interesting dilemma,” said Wood, the Susan Dod Brown Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Princeton and director of the Program in Environmental Engineering and Water Resources. “If the world switches to a U.S.-style, meat-based diet, is that going to be sustainable?”

It had been less than 30 minutes since class began and already the room hummed with discussion that would continue until everyone was dismissed. Focusing primarily on global food crises, Wood and Sheffield provided several reading material that includes contemporary literature concerning causes and effects of global environmental change and sustainability.

In late September, they assigned reading material on the impact of China’s “one-child policy” and showed the students how to calculate the eventual age distribution that will result.

When Chinese government officials “started calculating the data, they realized that age distribution will be heavily weighted toward older people, and that could create economic disasters,” Sheffield said. “In the next 10 years, the number of Chinese people between the ages of 18 and 26 will fall by close to 50 percent, a statistic that is woven into the fabric of global environmental issues.”

Freshman Olivia Howard said she was drawn to the seminar not only because of her deep concern for the Earth’s future, but also because she was looking for a course that would integrate many disciplines into the topic of global warming and sustainability.

“In my interest in interdisciplinary and conversational approaches to global problems, and I think that’s a really important aspect of studying this issue,” said Howard, who is leaning toward a major in sociology with a certification in environmental studies. “This seminar looks at these problems from a wide array of perspectives, rather than just the hard science,” said Howard. Students also are required to compose biweekly essays addressing myriad environmental and policy quandaries. At the close of the global food unit, the essay question asked: “How do we feed the world’s population in the future in a sustainable, equitable manner, and what are the challenges in trying to do so?”

While he admitted they are often very challenging, freshman Ray Chao likes these essays.

“We’re encouraged to create our own solutions and ideas,” Chao said. “It requires a lot of creativity, and it’s exciting to take what we’re learning and come up with something new.”

When he was a senior in high school, Chao made a short documentary exploring the intersection of environmental awareness and public policy. Now considering a major in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Chao said the seminar offers him a fusion of those two interests.

“Every week it’s something completely different but also similar,” Chao said. “There are so many issues, but they are all connected into one huge issue of climate change. It’s so interconnected, and the connections run so deep.”

Wood and Sheffield said they hope to continue teaching the seminar, which is designated as the Donald P. Wilson ’33 and Edna M. Wilson Freshman Seminar, for a number of years to come. Not only is the topic important but, as Wood said, “Complicated environmental problems are inherently intellectually interesting.”

“There’s an intellectual satisfaction in thinking about these issues, discussing them and understanding how they all come together,” Wood said.

“For instance, vast parts of Africa are being bought up to use for biofuels. What does that mean for food security and water allocation? These are really interesting questions. They don’t have easy answers, but that’s what makes them so great to think about.”
Exploring the science and nuance of facial perception

Umaha Patel

Freshman Miriam Pearss had enjoyed her psychology class in high school and was drawn immediately to the seminar topic. If we are attracted to the fact that face perception has such great relevance in understanding society and the world, why then love that this seminar freshman allows me to voluntarily delve in the topic. Then I can discuss what I’ve learned with people who are just as interested in the topic as I am.

Appiah began the course, which is designated as the Shelly and Michael Kassen ’76 Seminar in the Life Sciences, by explaining how the brain develops facial representations. Students learned about unique ways the brain processes faces and other objects almost from birth; that the fact it takes less than 30 milliseconds of glimpsing a face to extract information about its familiarity, age, sex, race and attractiveness; and parts of the brain such as the fusiform face area dedicated to face processing.

The class also visited the functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) lab in Green Hall on campus where Appiah, with the help of a graduate student, demonstrated how brain scans are done, and students received a primer on analyzing the scans.

For Sarah Cuneo, the trip to the fMRI lab has been the highlight of the class up to this point. “It was so cool to be able to see for ourselves all the techniques and results that we had been reading about for weeks,” said Cuneo. “It really helped us understand the difference between understanding something in theory and seeing it in practice.”

The classroom discussions have also shed light on and enlightened some of the more technical material. “The small size of our freshman seminar gives the class an incredibly immersive experience,” said Cuneo. “A lot of what we do in class is discussion of scientific journal articles, and it’s great to have an active debate about the results.”

In the same class as the discussion in Edwards, the seminar picked up Michael Jordan, Bill Clinton and Jay Leno in a slide of blurry faces. Yet earlier, students had performed poorly on a hypothetical lineup. When they were asked to match the photo of a suspect to one of 10 mug shots, the students came to a consensus on one man and were surprised when Appiah told them that none of the 10 was the suspect.

“It makes sense that we would be less able to identify unfamiliar faces, but I didn’t think we would be as bad as we were,” Cuneo said. “I was really, really surprised.”

Students suggested many factors and biases that could lead to a misidentification — witnesses may be biased, for example.

“Friendships, being moral, being a decent person, not causing unnecessary harm to others, that’s the essence of empathy,” Appiah said.

Appiah explained that the 20th-century British philosopher Bernard Williams used the example of Gauguin to ask the central question about which he claimed: “We perceive this person to be a bad person.”

“The point is not that changed its lineup procedures to innocents of New Jersey are one of the states to tell them what to do,” Appiah said. “And each time I teach about this topic, I learn new things from them as I hope they learn new things from me.”

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Exploring the science and nuance of facial perception

Continued from page 1

and his concept of eudaemonia, which is the idea of a life well lived. “It is hard stuff,” cautioned Appiah, before asking the evening’s presenter, Andrew Barnett, and the class to “gravitate into it.” He encouraged the freshmen to “keep an eye on the big picture” as they gained a general sense of the ancient Greek philosopher’s intellectual approach.

In his presentation, Barnett emphasized the critical role ethics play in order to live the best life, and that “a critical role in life, all other roles are impossible.” He also stressed the importance of self-examination and the utilitarian understanding that living well, one must take action for the good of others.

The discussion expanded to the students seated around the long table, as they explored a variety of terms — happiness, pleasure, excellence, virtue, morality — with Appiah providing guiding principles and examples.

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Eugenides
Continued from page 1
mine had been workshopped in class, Professor Eugenides would invite me to his office hours to discuss them some more.

Wrestling with semiotics and storytelling
Writing “The Marriage Plot,” which Eugenides started a few years before coming to Princeton, was a character to try not to, “Writing auto-biographically is difficult for me and it causes a lot of trouble, so I try not to stay too close to my life, even though people will always think I’m writing about my life.”

Eugenides said. “But I was glad I opened up to Ed, because when he said it, it started me thinking.”

While wrestling with a literary debut in 1993 with “The Virgin Suicides,” which tells the story of five sisters who commit suicide, narrated by the teenage boys who are mesmerized by them. Much of the book was written while Eugenides worked as an executive secretary at the Academy of American Poets, which eventually fired him for his extracurricular writing. The novel was soon bought by a publisher, and when it came out, Eugenides became a literary celebrity, according to The New York Times. “The Virgin Suicides” was later made into a film by director Sofia Coppola.

His next novel, “Middlesex,” published in 2002, is the story of Cal Stephenside, whose genetic abnormality is conveyed in an unforgettable first line: “I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless day in January of 1950; and then again, as a teenage boy, on the hottest day in history near Potezko, Michigan, in August of 1974.” “Middlesex,” about the life of a hermaphrodite, earned Eugenides his first Pulitzer Prize and the New York Times best-seller list. Eugenides is currently on a ten-city book tour, but is still teaching “Introductory Fiction” this semester.

“My classes are full of really smart students who are good writers,” he said. “Workshops depend so much on the teacher as the students. If the students like to talk about the work and are perceptive readers, then everyone benefits from the experience. I try to tell them stories about how it causes a lot of trouble, so I try not to stay too close to my life, even though people will always think I’m writing about my life.”

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