



In this special edition of the Dietrich School Bulletin we're pleased to introduce you to the newest additions to our faculty.

In the not-too-distant past, we would have been able to celebrate these colleagues in person, perhaps over a celebratory adult beverage and lively conversation. While our community isn't able to gather in person, I invite you to read more about the academic and personal interests of these outstanding scholars and teachers. The short bios below were provided by the chairs and directors whose departments and programs are welcoming new colleagues.

### **Anthropology**

Claire Ebert is an archaeologist whose research focuses on the complex dynamics between people and their environments throughout the Holocene in Mesoamerica. She is particularly interested in the emergence of complexity among the earliest Maya agricultural communities within fluctuating environmental and climatic contexts.

### **Biological Sciences**

Young Ahn received her PhD from University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. She likes employing active and collaborative learning methodologies to engage our students in performing actual research on biochemistry and microbiology in class, contributing in a real way to advancing scientific knowledge.

Ping An was a molecular biologist and a biochemist before she started teaching Foundations in Biology lab courses a little over a year ago. She finds teaching authentic research exciting and looks forward to sparking that curiosity for research in undergraduates.

Laty Cahoon is a microbiologist who studies Gram-positive bacterial secretion. Her current research focuses on the characterization of secretion chaperones that modulate the activity of virulence factors to promote Gram-positive bacterial pathogenesis in mammalian hosts.

Deborah Jacobs-Sera continues in her role as Coordinator of the Phage Hunters Integrating Research and Education (PHIRE) and Science Education Alliance – Phage Hunters Advancing Genomics and Evolutionary Science (SEA-PHAGES). She is dedicated to providing authentic research opportunities to undergraduates in research and classroom settings.

Tera Levin studies the molecular co-evolution between bacterial pathogens and their eukaryotic hosts. She focuses on how bacterial adaptation in the environment can lead these microbes to become human pathogens.

Anna Newman-Griffis is a Plant Cell Biologist by training, and an educator by nature. She is passionate about getting the next generation

of scientists excited about Biology, improving equity in science, and addressing plant blindness wherever she finds it.

Dan Russell began his career at TIGR where he learned the ins and outs of DNA sequencing, before becoming a high school science teacher. He has a deep interest in improving public education and will combine that with his DNA sequencing background to help administer the HHMI SEA-PHAGES program at Pitt and around the world.

Katie Wagner earned her PhD in molecular and developmental biology and loves teaching and interacting with undergraduate students. She is very excited to join the Biological Sciences department at Pitt and looks forward to developing the next generation of scientists through authentic research-based lab courses.

### **Economics**

Claire Duquenois received her PhD from University of California, Berkeley and is an Assistant Professor in our Department of Economics. Claire's research is in the fields of development, labor, and behavioral economics. Some of her research is on the psychology of poverty, showing that framing standardized test questions in terms of money has a deleterious impact on test performance among low income children.

Svetlana Kosterina received her PhD from Princeton University and is an Assistant Professor in our Department of Economics. Svetlana's research is in microeconomic theory. Current projects include modeling persuasion when the receiver of persuasion has unknown beliefs, with applications to understanding optimal structure of clinical trials for the FDA.

Mahrad Sharifvaghefi received his PhD from University of Southern California and is an Assistant Professor in our Department of Economics. Mahrad's research is in econometrics. Some of his current research develops a new statistical technique for dealing with high dimensional data with highly correlated covariates, with applications to understanding asset pricing in financial markets.

Yiru Wang received her PhD from Universitat Pompeu Fabra and is an Assistant Professor in our Department of Economics. Yiru's research is in econometrics. Some of her current research involves developing new statistical techniques related to forecasting densities, with applications such as predictive densities for GDP growth or the performance of the S&P 500.

### **English**

Jennifer Keating is a Senior Lecturer in the Composition Program in the Department of English and the Writing in the Disciplines Specialist in the William S. Dietrich II Institute for Writing Excellence. Her teaching and writing focuses on writing and artistic practice in locations in conflict and/or emerging from strife, the influence of advancing technology on society and the politics of language.

Moriah L. Kirdy, MFA, PhD is the Associate Director of the new William S. Dietrich II Institute for Writing Excellence. She has been teaching composition and working in writing program administration since 2008 and holds a PhD in Composition from the University of Pittsburgh. Her research involves notebook-based information and productivity systems.

Dan Kubis, a new senior lecturer in English, researches, writes, and teaches classes on the public value of the humanities. He also works on public-facing programming in humanities fields. Since 2015, he has hosted the Being Human podcast, which features monthly interviews with artists and scholars in the humanities.

Poet and multimedia artist, Diana Khoi Nguyen, is an Assistant Professor in the Writing Program. She is the author of *Ghost Of*, a poetry collection that traces personal grief in the aftermath of her younger brother's suicide through familial traumas and silences dating back to her former refugee parents' childhoods in Vietnam during the War. Her research and teaching interests include documentary poetics, literary arts at the intersection of multiple media (text, sound, video, and image), and poetics in Asian America and the diaspora.

Caro Pirri is a specialist in the English Renaissance and the early English literatures of the Americas. Her first book, *Settlement Aesthetics: Theatricality, Form, and Failure in Early Modern England*, shows how English drama's development as a popular form was deeply imprinted by the textual legacy of England's New World conquests. Her research and teaching interests include Renaissance literature and culture, art and aesthetics, critical race studies, early theater history, and performance theory.

Shannon Reed is thrilled to join the English department as a Lecturer in Creative Writing, with an emphasis on teaching fiction and humor writing. An MFA graduate from Pitt in 2015, Shannon is the author of *Why Did I Get a B? And Other Mysteries We're Discussing in the Faculty Lounge*, and a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker* and *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*.

Xiqiao Wang researches the changing forms and functions of literacy in the broader context of global migration, digital technology, and multilingual and multimodal writing. She joins the Department of English's Composition program after six years at Michigan State University. Her current book project draws on mobile interviews, digital and written artifacts, and participant observations to explore multilingual writers' literacy practices across formal, informal, and digital learning spaces. Insights from such empirical research informs ongoing work to develop asset-based pedagogy, which centers diverse learners' languages and cultures as valuable resources for writing our experiences and life worlds into meaning.

### **Geology and Environmental Science**

John Gardner studies how rivers, lakes, and their landscapes move, store, and transform water, sediment, and elements across continents. He aims to understand links between physical and ecological processes as well as the impacts of human activities on inland waters. He draws from disciplines such as hydrology, ecosystem ecology, and geomorphology, with particular interest in data-driven spatial approaches that combine in-situ sensors, satellite remote sensing, and data synthesis. Current research activities focus on human impacts on sediment delivery from continents to coasts, deciphering ecosystem

processes from spatial patterns in water quality, and developing databases of inland water quality using satellite remote sensing.

### **Hispanic Languages and Literatures**

Serena J. Rivera, Assistant Professor of Portuguese and Spanish  
Serena Rivera, Assistant Professor of Portuguese and Spanish in the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures, teaches courses on Portuguese language acquisition as well as Lusophone and Latin American literary and cultural studies. Her research focuses on the (in)digestible elements of nation-building as portrayed in Lusophone literary and filmic narratives.

### **History**

Elizabeth Archibald is a historian of medieval Europe whose research focuses on the history of education and literacy in the early Middle Ages. She is also interested in the history of information and historical theories and techniques of knowledge transmission and pedagogy.  
Keila Grinberg is a historian who studies the interconnected histories of Latin America and the African Diaspora, with a focus on the lives of enslaved peoples and their descendants in Brazil. She also has interests in memory and the public history of slavery in the Atlantic World, Jewish history, and the teaching of history.

Laura Lovett specializes in twentieth century US Gender, Sexuality and Women's History, and the History of Children and Youth. Her scholarship ranges from the history of eugenics and pronatalism in the United States to the history of non-sexist education to public-facing history. Her biography of Dorothy Pittman Hughes, a renowned Black feminist activist, will appear in January 2021. Her next project is a collection of essays on the African American feminists who helped organize and lead the First National Women's Conference in 1977.

Alaina E. Roberts is a historian whose research focuses on the intersection of African American and Native American history from the nineteenth century to the modern day with particular attention to identity, settler colonialism, and anti-Blackness.

### **History of Art and Architecture**

Jessica Landau holds a joint position as Lecturer in Curatorial Studies in HAA and Assistant Curator at Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Her research interests include 19th- and 20th-century depictions of North American animals, wilderness, and hunting, and the history of natural history and collecting, with an emphasis on decolonial methodologies. She earned her PhD in Art History with a minor in American Indian and Indigenous Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

### **Linguistics**

Kristen Henry is an ASL instructor. She has taught at several local colleges, including Westmoreland County Community College and St. Vincent's College, as well as at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. She is a graduate of Seton Hill University.

Amanda Huensch is an applied linguist whose research examines second language speech development in and outside of the classroom with a focus on pronunciation and fluency development. She is currently exploring the relationship among intelligibility, accentedness, and comprehensibility in L2 Spanish.

Wendy Payne-Craig is an ASL instructor. She also serves as the Director of Supported Employment Services at DeafStone Services, Inc. She is a former language arts teacher at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf and received her bachelor's degree from Gallaudet University and her MEd in the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing from the University of Pittsburgh.

Virginia Robson has an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Pittsburgh and has worked as an English language instructor in China, the US, and the United Arab Emirates. Her interests include CLIL (content and language integrated learning), student reflections on learning, and experiential learning.

Dan Villarreal's research takes a computational approach to investigate how speakers and listeners make use of the tremendous phonetic variability that characterizes everyday speech. This focus includes research on the social meanings listeners attach to phonetic variation, computational methods for automating coding of sociophonetic variables, and the phonetic implementation of rhoticity in different speech communities.

### **Mathematics**

Anne Yust, with a PhD from Carnegie Mellon University based on research in data-driven modeling motivated by medical applications, most recently served as faculty and Director of Quantitative Reasoning at the New School. Dr. Yust has significant experience with teaching, course design, and supervision of undergraduate research and her interests include biomathematics, financial literacy, social sciences applications of mathematics, and pedagogy.

### **Neuroscience**

Yomna Badawi's research is focused on the structure and function of the neuromuscular junction in healthy and diseased states, including the development of novel therapeutic approaches for neuromuscular diseases. She has extensive experience in the aged neuromuscular junction and in the disease ALS. She is also experienced in using super-resolution light microscopy to study the distribution of nerve terminal proteins.

Lisa Macilvried has a PhD in Neuroscience during which she studied the effects of stress and sex on pain in migraine headaches. She is now applying her training to motivate and teach undergraduates in several neuroscience courses each term, including both major and non-major courses.

Millie Rincón-Cortés' research focuses on stress-induced plasticity within the mesolimbic dopamine system in animal models relevant for the study of psychiatric disorders. She is particularly interested in how stress effects differ between the sexes and vary across developmental and reproductive conditions in females.

### **Philosophy**

Kevin Dorst joins the Department of Philosophy having received his PhD from MIT. His research centers on the theories of knowledge, probability, linguistic meaning, and their interactions. An important branch of Kevin's research explores what these theories can teach us about how to interpret the work of psychologists and cognitive scientists, in particular by introducing nuance and qualification into findings about putative biases of reasoning.

Sara Magrin joins the Philosophy Department from the Department of Classics at Berkeley where she held an Associate Professorship. She brings a rare combination of historical, philological, and philosophical expertise to ancient epistemology and psychology, with special attention to the figure of Plotinus.

Thomas Pendlebury joins the Department of Philosophy having received his PhD from Harvard University. His research centers around the interpretation of the late-modern philosopher Immanuel Kant, with further interests in post-Kantian German Idealism and Scholastic philosophy.

### **Physics and Astronomy**

Andrew Mugler joins us from Purdue University where he served as Assistant Professor for five years. He is a theoretical biophysicist who makes physics-based models describing how biological cells do the computations necessary to survive in their environments. Andrew was hired last year through a multi-department search focused on the intersection of biology with physical sciences and mathematics.

Evan Schneider was a Hubble Fellow at Princeton University after receiving her PhD in astrophysics from the University of Arizona. She is the creator of the first astrophysical hydrodynamics code designed to run on GPU-based supercomputers. Evan has applied this code to modeling the dynamics of gas during galaxy formation and evolution.

### **Political Science**

Max Goplerud's research focuses on political methodology with applications to the comparative study of legislative behavior. He leverages Bayesian statistics and machine learning to overcome limits in existing methods in modeling heterogeneity, latent groups, and ideal point estimation. He also applies text-as-data approaches to study parliamentary behavior in Europe, the United States, and Japan.

### **Psychology**

Josefina Bañales earned her PhD in 2020 from the University of Michigan. Her research program broadly examines how adolescents and young adults develop critical race consciousness or beliefs, feelings, and actions that challenge racism. Her teaching interests include courses in developmental psychology, research methods, and the psychology of racism.

Shannon Donofry is a clinical health psychologist whose research focuses on the interrelationships of brain health and health behaviors such as dietary intake and physical activity, with a particular interest in how these interrelationships influence risk for and maintenance of obesity.

Emily Lindsay's program of research focuses on psychological and biological pathways that explain how mindfulness interventions impact stress, emotion, social, and health outcomes.

Chelsea Stillman is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology. She is a cognitive neuroscientist specialized in aging. Her research interests include promoting healthy cognitive aging through behavioral lifestyle modification and promoting accessibility of health behaviors in high risk groups.

### **Religious Studies**

Daniel Heifetz (PhD, Syracuse University) studies religious traditions in modern India, especially their entanglement with science. He explores these issues in his forthcoming book, *The Science of Satyug* (SUNY, 2021), which argues that disillusionment with the privatization of STEM work in neoliberal India has driven some to look to religious organizations like the All World Gayatri Pariwar to restore moral legitimacy to their profession.

### **Slavic Languages and Literatures**

Bella Grigoryan received her PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Columbia University. She writes about and teaches 18th- and 19th-century Russian literature and culture.

Kathleen Manukyan received her PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from The Ohio State University. Her fields of expertise are Russian opera and vocal literature, Russian phonetics, and the author Nikolai Gogol.

### **Statistics**

Sherwin Cedeno came to the University of Pittsburgh from the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. His background encompasses Astrophysics, Mathematics, Physics, Statistics, and Genetics. He's an advocate for a liberal arts education. Sherwin is passionately interested in teaching Statistics to students across academic disciplines. Currently his research focuses on Multiple Hypothesis Testing and improving false discovery rates in high-dimensional data.

Linxi Liu is generally interested in studying the emerging problems that arise in the analysis of high-dimensional and complex data sets. Her current research aims at developing novel statistical methods, theory, and software for controlled variable selection. She also enjoys collaborating with researchers in genetics and neuroscience, and her collaborative work has focused on whole genome association studies.

Kiran Nihlani earned her PhD in Statistics from NC State University with a dissertation on non-parametric techniques for financial risk estimation. Her interests include teaching statistics for a 'growth mindset', making a data-driven activity-based curriculum to cater to diverse learning styles, and promoting statistical thinking and communication using examples from media and inter-disciplinary case studies.

Tingting Zhang is interested in developing new statistical methods to analyze brain data and understand normal and abnormal brain network mechanisms. She enjoys collaborating with psychologists, neurologists, and neuroscientists and using statistical methods to advance scientific understanding of the human brain and to improve the treatment of neurological disorders.

### **Theatre Arts**

Becki Toth a professional singer, actor, director, and teacher will be the Theatre Arts Department's Musical Director and teach in the areas of music theatre and performance. A familiar face to Pittsburgh's theater audiences, Becki has performed with City Theater, Pittsburgh CLO, Front Porch Theatricals, and many other local and regional companies. She is the co-lyricist of the new musical *Abduction!*, which won an honorable mention at the 2019 New York Musical Theater Festival.

Becki was voted Pittsburgh's Favorite Actress twice by the readers of Pittsburgh's City Paper. Becki is a founding member of the chamber choir *Voces Solis*, and has also performed with the Mendelssohn Choir and the Bach Choir. Becki has performed with such varied acts as Ben Folds, The Chieftains, The Skivvies, and odc/dance. She's sought after as a soloist, ensemblist, and educator.

### **Urban Studies**

Roberta Mendonça De Carvalho is an urban geographer who specializes in the environmental and economic impacts of urbanization, with a focus on the Amazon basin. She merges her professional, academic and personal experiences in the classroom to deliver a holistic approach that reveals the complexity and wonders of the urban world to her students.