

Faculty View

A Publication of the ECCFA Faculty Association

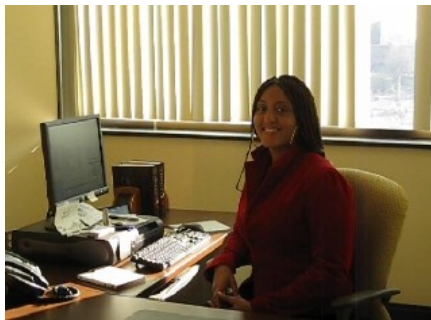


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Faculty Spotlight: Margaret Stevens by Eileen DeFreece

Riding hard on the heels of the old guard comes another bright new star, and she, along with all the most recent faculty hires, represents the future of Essex County College, a future that promises a new level of success.



Professor Stevens teaches history and runs the Urban Issues Institute.

In a relatively short period of time, Margaret Stevens, Associate Professor of History who recently graduated from Brown University with a doctorate in American Studies, is already making an impact on the college community. She currently teaches world history, both the ancient and modern periods. Her own academic scholarship focuses on the history of the Caribbean and the African Diaspora.

In fact, she has published several articles on the subject and has presented papers in Kingston, Jamaica and Cape Town, South Africa.

Professor Stevens is also the Director of the Urban Issues Institute (UII) at ECC. At the UII's most recent event, "State of Our City Town Hall" held on January 28th, there was standing room only, as students, professors, and many

guests from the Newark community crowded into the 4th Floor Multipurpose Room to participate in the program

In her welcome address, Dr. Stevens spoke briefly about the goals of UII and emphasized the desire to build leadership among young people. "We're dedicated to issues like homelessness, sub-prime lending, and teen pregnancy," she said, adding, "We want to look at these issues as endemic to a larger causality. We are about systemic analysis of these issues." The Town Hall

Continued on Pg. 3

Creating a Community of Learners through Bio Seminars by Frank Duroy

Each semester, Biology Division faculty coordinate and host a series of academic seminars on issues in the hard sciences. Topics range from theoretical concepts such as evolution to more learner-focused lessons such as the use of mnemonics.

The Biology Seminar series has its origins in the early 1990s. Initially, it grew out of a federally funded program involving ECC and Rutgers-Newark.

The grant program was designed to increase the numbers of qualified minority students in the biomedical field.

Since the program was relatively new, there was a degree of freedom that enabled program coordinators and faculty to discuss and explore novel ideas that could help participants achieve academic success. One of the ideas that emerged from this program was



the biology seminar, which was initially based on the graduate school model. The graduate school model, generally, requires students to attend departmental seminars on a regular basis and enables

Continued on Pg. 5

Inside this issue:

Book Review: <i>A Mercy</i>	2
Blogging 101	2-3
Fire in a Crowded Boardroom	3
Faculty Spotlight continued	3
Counselor's Corner: Aiding Students with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	4
Bio Seminars continued	5
In Memoriam: Dr. Maria Ragland	5

Book Reviews by
Dr. Lee



2009 Book Club Review: Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*

A good mystery story takes time to unfold, slowly revealing characters and plot and stringing the reader along page-by-page until, often at the very end of the story, the plot comes to a climax and the story is concluded. These stories are among the most difficult to write and the most enjoyable to read. And, while Toni Morrison is not classified as a "mystery writer," her short work *A Mercy* has all the traits of a great mystery novel.

trader/farmer, must reluctantly accept a slave to cover a debt. His wife Rebekka is a bride he purchased from her family in northern Europe. Their three "servants," Lina, Sorrow and Florens, all come to the small Vaark farm through different paths involving the trading of human flesh.

very little direct verbal interaction between characters in the text. As a result, their stories progress slowly with clues to their histories spread among the pages. I kept notes on the inside back cover and often reread sections to be sure I could follow the clues being left in the story; all the way to the last page, which I reread three times!

The story takes place in Mary's Land (later to become "Maryland") in the late 1600s, a time between the initial colonization of the Chesapeake Bay area and the stirrings of colonial independence. It was also a time when many people in the area, of all shades of skin color, were in some form of bondage, from peonage to indentured servitude to slavery. Fittingly, all of the main characters reflect this. Jacob Vaark, the

As the story progresses, you slowly learn about the past and present of each character, but as in a good mystery, never too much. Eventually Jacob fades into the background – figuratively and literally – and the bulk of the story centers on the four women – all women of different levels of bondage who are at times as close as sisters and at others, as distant as foes. The story is mostly told through changing narrative perspectives with

At one hundred and sixty seven pages, the book, at first observation, seems to be a quick read. However, it is a rich read, with all five senses used in the narrative and subsequently stimulated in the reader's mind. And it is this richness of text and character development that makes *A Mercy* such a good book. It is like an enjoyable walk through a thick fog, where objects fade and appear with each step and all is not as it seems.

The Faculty Book Club Will Discuss *A Mercy* on March 31 at 2:30 (room tbd). Contact Milena Rubinstein: rubinstein@essex.edu

Blogging 101 by Jennifer Wager

Some call it a communications revolution, others the death of journalism. Love it or hate it, however, blogging is here to stay. Blogs -- in the right hands -- are important media tools which can provide educators with an organized means of communicating with their students and tracking their development over the duration of a given course. In fact, Blogs are even giving traditional educational content management systems, such as Blackboard, a run for their money, as Jeffery R. Young discusses in a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

So, just what is a blog? Well, the term itself is actually a contraction of the more archaic term *web log*, which Dictionary.com defines as "a website that displays in chrono-

logical order the postings by one or more individuals and usually has links to comments on specific postings."

Entries, or *posts*, are usually displayed in reverse-chronological order, that is with the more recent entries first. Blogs are usually identified with a particular theme or author. Many blogs, while beginning primarily as text-based sites, now incorporate video, photographs, and audio, as embedding rich media into blogs has become easier. As Web 2.0 has evolved into the Social Web, 'micro-blogging' – a shorter type of blogging limited to 140 characters or less - has also become quite popular. The most popular micro-blogging service is Twitter.

So, if the whole world's blogging, why not you? Below is a step-by-step guide to setting up a blog. But before

you begin, you need to choose a common *blog provider* such as Wordpress.com, blogger.com, typepad.com, livejournal.com, twitter.com, tumblr.com or posterous.com.

STEP 1 Come up with an idea for the blog. This is actually the most difficult part, believe it or not. You need to find a topic which endures over time and remain lively and fresh -- both for you and your audience.

STEP 2 Sign up for the blog. You will need to have access to your email when you do this, as you will most likely be sent a confirmation email. By signing up for a blog, you may also comment on many other blogs on that provider.

STEP 3 You are then ready to set up your blog. Customize it as you wish by selecting a template and setting up pages. I use Wordpress.com because it allows you to create static pages in addition to

Continued on Next Page

Faculty Spotlight – continued **Blogging 101 - Continued**

event included a short film, speakers from the community, and open audience participation, which was lively and very effective.

The UII's Mission states: "The UII bridges boundaries between academia and the surrounding community. Our mission is to objectively explore urban issues and help provide solutions. We support this mission by encouraging and facilitating open dialogue between diverse political, ethnic, religious, cultural and academic communities in the Newark area, across the state, within the country and around the world." The UII also seeks "to serve as the premier community college institute for cutting-edge interdisciplinary approaches to urban issues." As such, Professor Stevens hopes the UII will serve as a model for other community colleges.

Margaret Stevens comes from a family steeped in academic scholarship and community activism. Her mother is a renowned literature professor at Rutgers University, and her father serves as President of the Ivy Hill Neighborhood Association.

Fire in a Crowded Boardroom by Mike Pekarofski, Inc.

A little more than a week after the New York Jets were ousted from the playoffs, their iconoclastic head coach Rex Ryan found himself in a tit-for-tat with some (rival) Miami Dolphins fans. At a loss for words, he resorted to some unsavory body language. The result? A \$50,000 fine, imposed by the NFL. Who said freedom of speech was free?

But, Rex was not the only one chastised that week for expressing a controversial opinion. A few days later in New Hampshire, President Obama remarked that people should not risk losing their children's college money in Las Vegas. This drew an immediate reaction from Nevada senator Harry Reid and eventually resulted in yet another apology from the Commander in Chief.

posts. Pages are great places to store vital information that is not likely to change much, like the syllabus and course outline. Others find that Blogger.com is an easier learning curve if you are new to blogging.

STEP 4 You are ready for your first post! Usually it's a welcome post, explaining what the blog is about and your plans for the future.

STEP 5 You can stick with text-only posts, but what really makes blogging amazing is the ability to add rich media, such as audio, photos, and video. To host your sound and video on sites such as Wordpress, you generally have to pay, or you can host the media on another site, such as Blip.tv, Youtube.com, Vimeo.com, and posterous.com, among others. You can also embed photos from your Flickr account. For more help, go to: <http://en.support.wordpress.com/>

Finally, once you have your blog up and running, you may want to focus on promotion via various social media outlets.

Reid, who obviously represents the famed gambling mecca among his other constituencies, took Obama's remark as anti-Vegas. As the slogan says, "Whatever happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." But, innocuous comments made anywhere else become fodder for controversy, especially if posing a threat to the coffers of big business. If only I could fit this on a t-shirt...

Speaking of tit-for-tats, Reid had barely finished apologizing to the President for his 2008 comments quoted in the best seller *Game Change*. The Whitehouse downplayed the remarks. Still, right wing pundits and the head of the GOP, Michael Steele, called for Reid's head.

More Blogging Resources:

Here are some blogs maintained by academics who focus on using social media tools in the classroom:

<http://www.bloggingbasics101.com/>
<http://www.bu.edu/mfeldman/blog/blogging101.html>
<http://technorati.com/blogs/top100>
<http://weblogtoolscollection.com/archives/2009/04/29/9-ways-to-make-your-wordpress-blog-smart/>

<http://www.profhacker.com/>
<http://www.samplereality.com/2009/08/14/pedagogy-and-the-class-blog/>

"But, we must not overlook the rich irony that in the same week that Rex gave the bird to some fish fans and Obama dis'd the gambling industry, the Supreme Court came out in defense of the First Amendment – sort of"

Cooler ones – including the President's – seemed to prevail, however.

In our highly sensitive culture of 24-hour gossip that passes for news and name calling which passes for political debate, none of this seems worth a casual mention. But, we must not overlook the rich irony that in the same week that Rex gave the bird to some fish fans and Obama dis'd the gambling industry, the Supreme Court came out in defense of the First Amendment – sort of.

In an historic 5-4 decision, the court stood up for the rights of corporations to

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Counselor's Corner:

Aiding Students with Post Traumatic Distress Disorder

by **Luz M. Class**

In 1980, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD as it is most commonly known, was recognized as a psychiatric condition by the American Psychiatric Association. PTSD may follow any harrowing, catastrophic personal experience an individual might have had, or that a loved one may have experienced. A person may develop impaired functioning and a myriad of psychological symptoms as a direct consequence of this horrific event.

In the United States recent tragedies such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina have caused many survivors and rescue and response team members to develop this painful and incapacitating disorder. Likewise, many students directly and indirectly impacted by the recent earthquake in Haiti may also suffer from PTSD.

To begin with, PTSD can appear anywhere from a few weeks to several years following a catastrophic event. War veterans, survivors of natural disasters, victims of terrorism and/or violent personal assaults, and even those who have received life-threatening diagnoses are prone to developing symptoms of PTSD.

PTSD symptoms vary among individuals and may fluctuate in severity from mild to disabling. These symptoms can include one or more of the following which can persist for one month or longer:

- "flashbacks"
- anger
- anxiety
- changes in eating habits
- difficulties and discord within the family nucleus
- disinterest in activities
- emotional numbness
- insomnia
- irritability
- lack of focus
- memory disturbances
- nightmares
- persistent re-experience of traumatic event
- sadness
- impairment in vital areas of functioning: social, academic, etc.

PTSD manifestation varies; it may increase in intensity and occurrence, with symptom-free intervals taking place between episodes. Common triggers for episodes are anniversaries of the event and other occurrences which may cause the disorder to worsen. This psychiatric disorder affects people in all age groups and in all walks of life. In fact, 3.6% of all adults living in the United States are estimated as having experienced PTSD in a given year.

If not treated, PTSD may lead to serious complications such as suicide. Consequently, in order to ensure a prompt and appropriate response, ECC Counselors and EOF Advisors are available to provide counseling and support to students directly or indirectly impacted by the Haitian disaster. If you know students who need assistance, refer them to Dr. Phil Linfante at ext. 4415 or Dr. Susan Mulligan at ext. 3070. They will evaluate the situation and refer students to the counselors, EOF advisors or other areas as needed. Please bear in mind that referrals to outside sources might be pivotal as well.

The ECCFA congratulates all faculty who were promoted or granted tenure at the December 2009 Board Meeting:

Promoted to Associate: [Mila M. Bruan](#)

Tenured:

[Lynn Wilson](#)—Biology
[Akil Khalfani](#)—Sociology
[Chengwen Wang](#)—Math
[Majuvy Sulse](#)—Nursing
[Jessica Vanderhoff](#)—Librarian

Bio Seminars—Continued

them to become familiar with the vocabulary and theories dominating their field of study. After much discussion, it was decided that students selected for the new program at Essex should be encouraged to attend these newly created seminars to discuss their experiences and learn the “language” of science.

Initially, the seminars included only program participants, but they were soon opened to all students, as well as to faculty members and the ECC community at large. Consequently, when the grant ended, the seminar became embedded in the Biology/Chemistry Division. Over the years, the seminar has flourished, and we have had speakers from our own department, Rutgers, Montclair State, Seton Hall, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry. The students and faculty who attend the seminars have become a “community of learners” who share data, ideas and experiences in an academically nurturing environment.

Last semester we learned about stem cells, the history of evolution, quantum mechanics, summer research programs, the Scientific Method and H1N1. There are many factors that have contributed to the success of the biology seminars. These include support from the students, faculty, and the administration.

I am convinced that seminars sponsored by academic departments can endure and succeed in establishing learning communities that are dedicated to increasing knowledge in their respective fields. The biology seminars will continue this semester on the second floor in the “blue area.” All are invited to attend.

In Memoriam: Dr. Maria Ragland by Jeff Lee

The Saturday of President’s Day weekend, our family was having breakfast when a headline in the paper caught my eye: “Ala. College Shooter was Reportedly Denied Tenure.” I immediately thought about my department at ECC and how one of our faculty members was just denied tenure though, thankfully, without this result. Before reading the article, I handed the paper to my wife, Kathy, and continued with another section of the paper. Then Kathy screamed. Not the “What a surprise” scream or the “Wow!” scream. After over 27 years of marriage, I knew the scream well; it was the “Somebody Died” scream. When I got the article back, I read that six professors were shot in an incident in the Biology Department at the University of Alabama – Huntsville; three were killed. One of the murdered professors was Dr. Maria Ragland Davis, a friend from our graduate school days.



Students are engrossed in Dr. Duroy’s Seminar on Mnemonics.

Remaining Bio Seminar Schedule:

Thursdays @ 2:30 pm

2/18 ‘Biology Stuff: Disequilibrium behind the Celestial Debris that is Life’ - Dr. Jeffery Lee

2/25 ‘Introduction to Evolution’ - Dr. Frank Duroy

3/4 ‘Career opportunities in Earth and Environmental Sciences’ & Drinking Water Resources in Newark - Dr. Alexander Gates, Rutgers

3/9 ‘Robotics’ - Prof. Theo Acquaye (Tues.)

Maria and Kathy both started graduate programs in chemical engineering at North Carolina State University in 1982. At a time when there were not a lot of Black Women seeking advanced degrees in Chem. Eng., N.C. State had four seeking M.S. degrees, including Kathy and Maria. They both finished their M.S. degrees in 1984, with Maria moving two buildings over to work on a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Kathy moving three buildings over to start a Ph.D. program in Chemistry. (I was further down ‘Science Row’ working on a Ph.D. in Microbiology.) We remained friends with Maria until 1990 or 1991 when we went our separate ways. Kathy and I headed to New Jersey and Maria headed elsewhere.

After hearing the news, Kathy and I did what we could. I contacted a former micro. professor at N.C. State who was now a dean in the College of Agriculture and Life Science.

Fire in a Crowded Boardroom

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In an historic 5-4 decision, the court stood up for the rights of corporations to fund political ads and publicly endorse political candidates. So, corporations are now protected by the Constitution. They can add this new protection to their huge monetary resources and their already tight stranglehold over the political process.

Not only does this make the final step from a republic to a plutocracy imminent, but it leads us to one more dark and uncomfortable conclusion: free speech is alive and well, so long as you can hide behind the shield of “corporate personhood.”

In the meantime, ordinary (and extraordinary) citizens are best advised to measure their every word... and gesture.

Me? I am off to my lawyer’s office to see about making myself a corporation.



(I had no direct contacts in the Biochemistry Department.) Kathy contacted one of the professors in Chemical Engineering who was there in the ‘80s who would remember Maria and her thesis advisor. I drafted a letter to send to the President of U.A.-Huntsville offering our condolences and requesting funeral/memorial arrangements. And we prayed for the families and the school that Sunday. From 900 miles away, there is only so much that you can do in a circumstance like this.



Perhaps one of the saddest things connected to all of this is that Maria was a survivor. She survived growing up in Detroit in the ‘60s and ‘70s. She survived her Doctoral program. She survived breast cancer. All to have her life ended way too soon by a deranged person with a grudge. It is just all so wrong.