Political Science & Finance Students reflect on POLITICAL CHANGE & ECONOMIC CHALLENGE
Dear Graduate Student,

Imagine an American who learns Japanese so that he can ask his girlfriend’s father for her hand in marriage in the only language the elder knows. The couple, who met in Korea and moved to Japan, are now living in Los Angeles. At UCLA, he is making use of his knowledge of Japanese to write about a collaboration between Mexican poet Octavio Paz and Japanese artist Toshihiro Katayama.

Here, in one graduate student by the name of Jordan Smith, we find an example of two beneficent forces at work on our academic community: globalization and interdisciplinary studies. Today’s scholars live in an environment which transcends national boundaries or disciplinary niches.

Major research universities like UCLA are huge global marketplaces of cultures and languages and ideas. They are also incubators for new research units, academic programs, and institutes that bring together scholars from different fields in fertile collaboration. Much research, indeed, is conducted by integrated units in different countries on different continents engaging different specialists, each contributing toward the solution of new problems.

This issue is full of examples of UCLA graduate students who represent this confluence of globalization—take the two Italians, two Indians, and one Portuguese student who are getting a firsthand look at the U.S. economic meltdown while they study finance at the Anderson School—and interdisciplinary work, like the political science students whose research on the recent presidential campaign draws from history, sociology, psychology, and statistics.

Moving across geographical boundaries, Vic Fusilero has taught German to American university students and English to German businessmen; John McCauley developed a lot of his educational philosophy and skills while he was teaching at a rural schoolhouse in Burkina Faso. Crossing disciplinary lines, Holley Replogle choreographed a dance for 19th-century poetry, and Naomi Tayback combines philosophy, literature, and film in her course, introducing students to Spinoza and Sarte, Ingmar Bergman and Woody Allen.

There are all sorts of benefits to be gained from the kind of propinquity and exchange our great university fosters between people of different cultures, customs, languages, philosophies, and world views. Our projects are enhanced by varied contributions, our minds are stimulated by new perspectives, and our hearts are enriched by the opportunity to recognize and celebrate our common humanity. The experience of living in this environment is one of the greatest gifts UCLA offers, so please seek out ways to actively participate in and enjoy it in all its wonderful diversity.

Claudia Mitchell-Kernan
Vice Chancellor Graduate Studies
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ON THE COVER: Political Science graduate student Sylvia Yu Friedel
POLITICAL CHANGE
ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

by Jacqueline Tasch

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

A nation often troubled by racial divisions and inequities stemming from its history of slavery elected Barack Obama, half African, half white, as president of the United States. The voters judged him not by the color of his skin but by the content of his character and by the cogency of his message and his agenda. His inauguration was a celebration for those who have yearned to see Martin Luther King's dream come true. They both wept and cheered.

It was the spring of hope.

Just as the long presidential campaign was coming to its climax, so, too, did a financial crisis that had been brewing in the home mortgage industry, bringing a staggering cascade of bad economic news: banks and corporations collapsing or facing bankruptcy, the stock market plummeting, joblessness reaching levels unseen for decades. Investments put aside to pay for college tuition or retirement income lost as much as half of their value in a few weeks time.

It was the winter of despair.

We had everything before us, we had nothing before us, as Charles Dickens said of other times that tried men’s souls.

To one degree or another, it was an uneasy time for all the members of the UCLA community, and most of us were preoccupied with stark questions: Would we be able to keep our homes and our jobs? Would we have enough money to finish our schooling? Would we be able to find jobs once our degrees were in hand?

For some, however, the events of the fall raised different kinds of questions: How was Obama able to outmaneuver the front-runner, Hillary Clinton? How did race affect the voters? What were the underlying factors in the real estate bust? How will the recession play out? How might another financial crisis be prevented?

Across the campus, graduate students in a wide range of academic disciplines—from history to statistics, public policy to sociology—found that events outside the campus were casting their studies in a whole new and far more relevant light. Dissertation proposals were framed or revised, coursework amended and enhanced.

In this issue of the Graduate Quarterly, we take a look at some of those students, focusing on graduate students in political science and on doctoral students in the UCLA Anderson School of Management. Learning about them and their research may provide you with some new insights on the events that galvanized your attention this fall.
TIDE OF EVENTS
Turns Political Science Students into Commentators on the News

For a half dozen or more graduate students in political science, the trends and polls and outcomes of the presidential election were the stuff dissertations can be made of—or at least an opportunity to exercise and expand their base of analytical skills.

The Department of Political Science has a number of experts in voter behavior, election politics, and the intersection of politics with race. David Sears, for example, developed the widely known Symbolic Racism Scale, which helps scholars get a handle on the racial attitudes of potential voters. Lynn Vavreck is the director (with Stanford’s Simon Jackman) of the Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project, which conducted the 2008 presidential campaign’s only Internet-based poll. Nearly 50,000 voters answered a broad range of questions about voters, issues, and political scenarios at six different times over the course of the primary and national election season.

Guided by these professors and others in this area of research, and using the tools and databases their elders had developed, several graduate students found the election season particularly riveting this year as they watched the campaign develop and reach its climax in the election of the first African American president, Barack Obama. Here are some of the questions they asked and the preliminary answers they have reached.
During the presidential primaries, what did Barack Obama and Mitt Romney have in common?

"Their spending patterns and strategy were very similar," says Emily Ekins, who was part of a team doing data analysis comparing the election results with information about spending from the Federal Election Commission. Obama and Romney put more effort into caucus states and spent more on media, Emily says, while Hillary Clinton and John McCain paid less attention to the caucuses and put their money into travel and events where they could meet people face to face.

So why didn’t we have an Obama-Romney race or a Clinton-McCain race? The answer is the “interplay between a campaign finance strategy and how it works within the institutional framework of party rules,” Emily says. The Republicans had more winner-take-all primaries, while the Democrats permitted a proportional representation of convention delegates. As a result, if Romney lost narrowly, he walked away with nothing, whereas Obama could lose in states like California, Texas, and New York and still accumulate a substantial cadre of delegates.

“It’s interesting how the rules really matter,” said Emily, who has an undergraduate degree in political science and economics from Brigham Young University and came to UCLA after a period as a full-time research assistant for a professor at the Harvard Business School—"sort of like an apprentice PhD." The beginning phases of the presidential race persuaded her that it was the right time to pursue her own degree.

Emily chose UCLA because the Department of Political Science has experts in a wide range of topics, allowing her to choose a research area after she arrived. Indeed, she started out thinking she might study the comparative politics and economics of Eastern Europe.

For now, the presidential election has provided interesting opportunities for the second-year graduate student. Besides the analysis of primary spending, Emily is doing a paper on the potential realignment among young Republican voters. While same-sex marriage, stem-cell research, and abortion have been key Republican issues for more than a decade, “young people don’t care about those issues so much,” she says. George W. Bush may have mobilized voters around those topics, but future candidates may have less success in this area.

The presidential campaign may not be the topic of her dissertation, but it’s providing valuable experience with different research methodologies. The same is true of Sara Butler, one of Emily’s partners in the study on primary spending. Working on the campaign project piqued her interest in a variety of methods, providing a range
of tools to use in her research on urban secession movements and split-ticket voting.

Sara traces her interest in political science to her mother. She grew up "watching the news, and that was the stuff we talked about around the kitchen table." After completing her undergraduate work at City University of New York in just three years, Sara is a second-year graduate student focusing on American politics.

**What was the impact of the Internet, compared to traditional media, on voters’ support of presidential candidates during the primaries?**

To answer that question, Sylvia Yu Friedel is looking at the effects of various media formats on voters during the primary elections. Working with registered Democrats who responded to the Vavreck-Jackman panel survey, she’s comparing respondents who used the Internet for news versus those who read newspapers. She is analyzing how those specific media formats affected candidate support during the 2008 presidential primaries. Her main research question is whether the Internet had a significant effect on Barack Obama’s support among registered Democrats. She hopes to reveal whether savvy Internet users were, for instance, equally likely to support Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. Based on preliminary results, Sylvia “doesn’t expect the Internet to have that much impact,” she says, because people who use the Internet self-select Web sites [select the Web sites they want to look at] and tend to already be interested in politics.

In a second study, Sylvia hopes to get a better picture of how the Internet may have influenced the election outcome. With two UCLA professors, she is developing a survey for UCLA undergraduates. Previous research has shown that “face-to-face interaction is the most convincing” in terms of voter persuasion, she says. What she wonders is whether the kind of online messaging that takes place on Facebook and MySpace “will foster the same type of community interaction.”

Out of these research topics will come one of the two field papers that political science graduate students write instead of taking comprehensive examinations. Although neither may contribute directly to her dissertation, Sylvia says the latter will no doubt “dance around the same foundational question: Why do people vote?” She is also working on the primary spending study with Emily and Sara.

Sylvia’s interest in politics and elections came about after her undergraduate years at the Wharton School, where she studied marketing and management. Watching current events—in particular “the activities of the presidency” after the 2004 election—“made me want to switch gears,” she says. Following a master’s degree in government administration at the University of Pennsylvania, she worked in political fund-raising for the Democratic Congressional Campaign

Political Science graduate students (from left to right) Sylvia Yu Friedel, Emily Ekins, Ryan Enos, Seth Hill, and Sara Butler.
Committee, then decided to pursue a doctoral degree. She came to UCLA because a number of faculty shared her interest in voting behavior, and Professor Vavreck is now her mentor.

During the time when she was working in fund-raising, Rahm Emanuel, President Obama’s chief of staff, was head of the Campaign Committee, and she often briefed him for meetings. Some sources may say he has an abrasive personality, but Sylvia thinks “that’s just part of his charm. It works for him.”

**How much does party affiliation count in whether and how people vote? Under what circumstances will they vote against their party, and why?**

During the November campaign, much was made about whether Barack Obama or John McCain was more appealing to independent voters. Yet, the campaign may have been more affected by how effective they were in “mobilizing their own partisan supporters,” says Seth Hill. If, for example, McCain turned out 93% of Republicans and conservatives and Obama turned out 95% of Democrats and progressives, “that narrow margin could turn the race,” Seth said, a month or so before the election.

“That is what seems to have happened,” he said after the votes were in. “Democrats were energized, especially in the battleground states,” he says, and Obama might have won simply because more Democratic voters went to the polls. On the other hand, it might have to do with Obama “persuading otherwise Republican voters that he was the better candidate.” It will be a while before data are available on voting by party, but Seth’s “hunch is that a lot of this is a turnout story.”

What he finds most interesting is “how broad-based the swing to Obama seems to have been,” Seth says. “He flipped a lot of states [from Republican in 2004 to Democrat in 2008], and he also did better than Kerry in almost every state . . This tells me that the election was about national issues,” rather than about Obama’s larger campaign war chest.

So far, Seth says, there’s nothing about the presidential race “that’s going to go directly into my dissertation,” which addresses broader issues of the degree to which party affiliation determines votes and focuses largely on the 2006 midterm election. His data includes actual ballots received from county election boards. “I wrote letters to hundreds of counties around the country and asked for ballots. Mostly they ignored me, but some cooperated.” It’s too soon to collect such materials on the presidential election. Seth also hopes to draw from the Vavreck-Jackman survey in his dissertation.

Besides providing potential dissertation material, the presidential election got Seth a job working for the Web site pollster.com, which collected polls from a wide variety of national and local sources and stored them in a central database. Seth’s job was to help turn the data into Web-ready tables and graphics. “The job definitely developed
some skills that will be valuable in my own research,” he says, and it was “cool to be involved in something that got a lot of coverage outside of the academy.”

A government major at Dartmouth College, Seth worked for two years in a Chicago law firm before applying for graduate work, and he came to UCLA because he “was impressed with how interested they were in graduate students” during an interview visit.

Does the number of voters in the precinct who voted for Barack Obama depend on who they live around? In other words, does residential segregation have an impact on whether people vote and who they support?

In last spring’s presidential primary, Barack Obama’s vote count went up as the racial segregation of the county went down.

Even after accounting for differences in income, education, and conservatism, racial segregation “still proved a very powerful indicator,” says Ryan Enos, a graduate student who is conducting the research.

From the perspective of political science researchers, the new president is “the gift that keeps on giving.”

Another interesting correlation appears between Obama’s primary support and the vote for George Wallace in 1968’s presidential election. Where Wallace, who often appealed to racial issues, won, Obama lost—and vice versa. “There’s certainly something going on that has to do with race,” says Ryan, who now plans to compare the November vote for Obama with Wallace’s numbers.

Ryan’s dissertation takes a broader look at the relationship between neighborhood segregation and voting behavior. In last June’s local primary in Los Angeles, for example, Ryan sent letters to both African American and Latino residents of South Los Angeles, Compton, and Lynwood. The letter urged people to vote and compared the voter turnout for a recent election in their block with another block—sometimes one that was demographically similar and sometimes the opposite. “The stimulus effect of that letter was larger among African Americans,” Ryan says, “and larger if voters were compared to a block that contained the other group.”

His hypothesis is that the heightened sense of competition in traditionally African American neighborhoods where Latinos are a growing presence has an impact on turnout. He tested it by sending voter-prompt letters before the presidential election, this time only to African Americans in stable African American neighborhood such as Baldwin Hills and Ladera Heights as well as those in the unstable area of South Los Angeles. He’s now awaiting Board of Elections results to complete his work.
An undergraduate political science and history major at UC Berkeley, Ryan took some time out after graduation to work with “Teach for America,” spending three years in public high schools in Chicago, “the most challenging thing I’ve done in my life,” he says. People have a pretty good idea about what makes a good teacher or a solid education, he says, but politics tends to hamper implementation. Returning to political science for graduate work, he changed his focus from government institutions to electoral politics as a result.

**How did race affect Barack Obama’s election?**

As Michael Tesler sees it, the fact that “Obama is moving racial attitudes is not surprising,” but whereas most pundits talked about whether or not white racial conservatives in the Democratic Party would vote for an African American candidate, Michael had his eye on the other end of the spectrum. The real story, he says, was that “he’s really moving attitudes among racial liberals. If you’re a racial liberal, you’re almost compelled to vote for Obama. No other candidate or racial policy has ever generated that kind of result.”

The largest impact of racial attitudes on the election, however, was among independents where, with all the other issues driving the campaign, the voter’s decision often “comes down to feelings about African Americans.” This situation worked against Hillary Clinton in the primary. As early as December 2007, racial conservatives had lined behind Clinton and racial liberals were equally drawn to the Obama camp.

While Michael was an undergraduate in political science and African American studies at UCLA, he did an independent study project with David Sears, a highly regarded expert on racial voting behavior who developed the Symbolic Racism Scale, which takes an indirect measure of racism, asking for responses on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree to such statements as:

- It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well-off as whites.
- Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

People tend to answer quite honestly, Michael says, and their responses tap into covert anti-African American hostility.

Michael sees a danger that the election of Obama will persuade the nation that racial discrimination no longer exists, at the same time that his family’s prominence works against old stereotypes. Whatever the outcome, his presidency will offer a unique opportunity for researchers on race, says Michael, who says that from the perspective of political science researchers, the new president is “the gift that keeps on giving.”
Shaun Davies was working for an institutional investment manager when some questions arose that brought him to the doctoral program at the UCLA Anderson School of Management seeking answers. In February 2007, non-agency mortgage-backed securities (mostly subprime loans) started to fluctuate in price, he says, and “things got really weird.” As it became clear that housing prices had become artificially inflated, he began wondering “what the ramifications would be if the housing bubble burst.” Meantime, mortgage securities became hard to trade “because no one knew what they were worth.”

As the markets moved closer to crisis, Shaun says, “nobody’s model could explain what was going on.” Prices that usually fell within a predictable range suddenly began to vary by five and six times the usual deviation. “How do you manage the risk if you don’t know the underlying distribution?” he asked himself. “My intellectual curiosity had been sparked by a lot of the unknowns or assumptions in the market.”

Shaun thought he might find the answers to those questions in graduate school, and advice from former finance professors at his workplace led him to the Anderson School, where he is now in his first year, doing coursework in finance and economics. His goal: “to study the credit markets and everything that’s unfolding right now.”

FINANCE STUDENTS
Rip Research Ideas From Headlines

Third-year finance doctoral student Priyank Gandhi on the terrace of the UCLA Anderson School of Management
Although Shaun may be relatively unusual in the direct linkage between the current financial chaos and his doctoral studies, his fellow students have also found themselves warming their researchers’ hands before the flames of this crisis. Students who have yet to begin dissertations are finding topics in various facets of the collapse, and those who are well into their research projects are envisioning new applications for their findings.

Take, for example, Shaun’s fellow first-year student, Konark Saxena, who came to UCLA after earning an MBA from the Indian School of Business, where he met visiting professors from UCLA Bhagwan Chowdry and Avanidhar Subrahmanyam. “The questions I tend to ask myself about what I want to research are often inspired by what I see happening and read in the newspapers every day,” Konark says. “Now the issues I’m interested in are really in my face.”

His goal is “to figure out how theoretical models explain the process.” A big puzzle is that although the experts perceived an expanding bubble in real estate, “the market didn’t act on it,” he says. He wonders: “Is there anything inherent in the market’s behavior or investor psychology that made them ignore these signals that were out there?” His research would involve theory but also have policy implications. “By redefining the factors which influence such market behavior, we may be able to create mechanisms that prevent them in the future.”

Priyank Gandhi is already in his third year, and for a required paper, he’s writing about the effect of taxes on the amount of debt firms take on, using the unique database provided by a century-old weekly financial newspaper. Theoretical finance models say that when taxes go up, companies should take on more debt because of the tax advantages of the interest deduction. Current research, however, “hasn’t found as clear a link.” His study aims “to establish beyond all reasonable doubt that this happens.”

For his dissertation, however, Priyank intends to return to his favorite subject, asset pricing. After earning his undergraduate degree and MBA in India, Priyank took a master’s degree in financial engineering from UC Berkeley. Finding himself “interested in the theoretical side of finance and in research,” he decided on graduate school and came to UCLA to work with Francis A. Longstaff, Professor and Allstate Chair in Insurance and Finance.

Looking at events of the last few months, Priyank points out “the problem with bubbles.” Actually two problems. First, “how do you know for sure it’s a bubble and not something driven by fundamental change?” Second, “if it’s a bubble, how do you burst it without harming the wider economy?” In the field of asset pricing, “there are five or six big research questions that people really haven’t found good answers to,” he says, “and the model that everybody thinks should work doesn’t work.” Of course, the current crisis offers some unique opportunities to explore this area.

Fourth-year students Alberto Plazzi, Bernardo Morais, and Cesare Fracassi, are too far along in their dissertation work to be influenced by current events, and yet they find new insights into the crisis as a result of their work. As Alberto says, while this may be an anxious time for many, “it’s a really interesting period from a researcher’s point of view.”

Alberto has been studying the real estate market in the period from 1993 to 2003, looking at how risk aversion on both an individual and aggregate level affect housing prices. “Your risk aversion will price the asset you’re looking to buy,” he says. Over the time period he’s studying, real estate values rose steeply, driven by the expectation of a good return. When there are no real values underlying those expectations, a bubble emerges—“and bubbles can bust,” he says.

Real estate was always “seen as a safe investment, but suddenly it wasn’t so,” he says. “For the first time in many years, there have been large drops in real estate investments, so it’s not as safe as the common wisdom suggests.” Personal aversion to risk might be influenced by job security, income, and the state of other investments. In today’s market, “as aversion to risk increases, prices go down” because people are willing to pay less.

Alberto, who began his doctoral work in Italy, then switched to UCLA, also looks at the impact of risk aversion, along with expectations about future growth, in people’s stock market investments. As he sees it, today’s crisis is “partly driven by irrational behavior, which...
is very difficult to model or capture. Over intervals of months, we can hope that prices will adjust in some rational way."

Bernardo Morais, who came to UCLA from Portugal, is researching how different sectors of the economy, and different countries, respond to business cycles. "Some sectors are much harder hit in recessions, for example, cars and computers," he says. Companies like Chrysler, Ford, and GM are "really hard-hit in a recession because people can postpone buying a new car," he says. Even if their long-term financial outlook is solid, companies can go under simply because they can’t pay current bills.

Traditionally, successful, long-lasting durable goods companies have been based in countries with excellent credit systems: A sound credit sector makes recessions less severe because companies can borrow to pay their bills—and customers can borrow to buy even when their current income is low. "Credit helps to smooth consumption," Bernardo says, and it has cushioned the United States during previous recessions, while the volatility of the economy has a greater impact in emerging markets like Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil.

"The funny thing," Bernardo says—although his sense of humor might be challenged—is that the United States now faces "a situation like an emerging market in a way" because credit isn’t available. "You’re living like the typical Argentinian or Brazilian," he says. With the U.S. credit system in disarray, the experience of emerging economies may offer a glimpse at the future for U.S. companies. Inability to get a loan "will change the landscape of the manufacturing sector in the United States," Bernardo believes.

Cesare’s dissertation topic is, at first glance, farthest from the current financial crisis. He looks at the role of social networks in about 2,000 medium-size and large U.S. corporations, examining the effect of interlocking directorships, past employment, educational history, and social connections between CEOs and boards of directors. On the bright side, "when CEOs and directors of one company are socially connected with directors and CEOs of other companies, the companies behave in a more similar way, and
they invest in a better way,” he says. Social connections mean “higher profit and better economic performance.”

On the dark side: when social networks are between CEOs and directors of the same company, those firms have “some trouble with governance,” Cesare says, because directors “should monitor the performance and behavior of the CEO” and may not be effective watchdogs over perceived “friends.” Where social ties are more evident, companies tend to overinvest—do too many mergers, for example, he says.

Cesare, who came to Anderson for an MBA and stayed for a PhD when he found himself enjoying research, wonders what his research might say about companies that are surviving—or not—in the recent troubles. Meantime, however, he’s looking for a job, and the crisis has made that more difficult. At private universities, endowments are down 20% to 30% as a result of the crisis, and “that’s impacting their decisions to hire professors,” Cesare says. State universities have budget problems. All in all, he says, “It’s a challenging year to be on the market.”
Since 1975, the UCLA Academic Senate Committee on Teaching and the Office of Instructional Development have honored five graduate students each year for their distinguished performance as teaching assistants. The criteria for selection are: impact on students; scholarly approach to teaching; size, number, and diversity of classes; involvement in community-linked projects, and teacher ratings. Recipients get an honorarium of $2,500, and the Graduate Division provides a Dissertation Year Fellowship ($18,000 stipend and full fees) to those eligible awardees.

This year’s winners represent Germanic languages, political science, musicology, history, and comparative literature. As their peers have done for two decades, these excellent teachers search for innovative ways to connect with their undergraduate students and to share with them their passion for each discipline. Here are their stories.
Vic Fusilero
Germanic Languages

"Öğrenci ve ya kilavuz?" Vic Fusilero asks the six puzzled graduate students standing with him at the front of the classroom, as he points to a picture of an airline pilot. By this time in his demonstration of the direct method of teaching a new language, his TA students have figured out that "őğrenci" means student and that "kilavuz" means pilot. That leaves "veya," however, and the six are stuck. "Öğrenci is younger than kilavuz? Öğrenci loves kilavuz?"

Seeing their confusion, Vic offers a hint: Coca Cola "veya" Pepsi? Bush "veya" Kerry? Tea "veya" coffee. Now they have it: "veya" meant "or." So the question is "student or pilot," and they know the answer. Their fellow teaching assistants, watching the demonstration from the safety of their desks, feel the relief, too.

This tough question came toward the end of a 15- to 20-minute demonstration "of a typical first day in the language classroom"—if the teacher avoids the students’ native language, Vic says. "After that, they were ready to be finished." Vic’s Turkish class was presented first for teaching assistants in the Department of Germanic Languages, where he is a graduate student. Then, he was asked to present it at a campuswide conference for language TAs—and it was so successful, it’s become an annual event.

The idea was to take a language no one was familiar with—one where not only the vocabulary but the grammatical rules would be strange—so that graduate students who are about to teach a new language to undergraduates would "know how it felt to be someone who was hearing a completely different language for the first time," Vic says. "It opened their eyes to how it is to be on the other side."

Direct language instruction is just one of the methods Vic has employed in teaching various kinds of students, from German engineers and businessmen learning English at a Berlitz school in Cologne, Germany, to American undergraduates learning German at universities in Buffalo and Los Angeles. In a general way, he says, Germans "want to know the mechanics of the language—why a sentence is correct or not correct" whereas Americans are more willing to begin by imitating what their teacher says.

Vic has also used games, such as der-die-das Bingo, exercises where pairs of students team up for listening and speaking exercises, and drills that allow students—the visual learners—to write out sentences before speaking them. He’s put together role-plays in which students visit a museum or solve a crime—in German. Outside the classroom, he maintains a web site and organizes weekend retreats for German language learners. "One of my strengths as a teacher is that I learn a lot from each class," he says, "and I adjust my teaching methods to suit the students."

"Context has always been a large part of my teaching," he says. "My business, engineering, and law students abroad needed to learn English within the framework of their profession," for example. He
applied the same idea in university teaching. “Knowledge of students’ majors, interests, and backgrounds gave me the opportunity to tailor vocabulary lists, speaking activities, and texts.”

Except for the German language, none of this has a great deal to do with Vic’s research, which involves the Enlightenment period in Germany, when people were developing a sense of self-control or self-governance, featuring concepts like virtue and prudence. “As the government steps away from governing others, it allows people to govern themselves,” he says.

He has used some of the ideas, however, in a class on “Hollywood and Germany,” inviting students to critically reflect on what the American movies say about Germans and Americans. “The American is always the good guy,” he says.

Naomi Taback
History

“If there’s one question college students think about,” Naomi Taback begins—and then she lists three: “It’s what gives my life purpose? What am I doing here? What’s the point?”

To help the freshmen in the interdisciplinary cluster, “History of Modern Thought,” figure out an answer, Naomi offers them the usual suspects—Spinoza, Voltaire, Kierkegaard, and Sartre (among others)—but she begins and ends the class with movies: Ingmar Bergman’s The Seventh Seal and Woody Allen’s Crimes and Misdemeanors. One of Allen’s quotes is the eye-catching title of the third-quarter seminar: “Eternal nothingness is fine if you happen to be dressed for it: Making Sense in a Senseless World, from Spinoza to Woody Allen.”

In their various ways, scholarly and artistic, both writers and filmmakers are addressing the philosophical questions that Naomi believes are on the minds of her students. “People think that intellectual history is stuffy and remote,” she says, “but actually, we’re grappling now with the same questions and ideas that people wrestled with long ago.”

Among those long-ago people who pondered the question of what it means to be a human being were the British people of the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the period of Naomi’s dissertation research. It was a time when the traditional structures of society were dissolving. People were moving toward “an acceptance of several different religions living side by side instead of having only one established church,” Naomi says. Divisions of noble versus peasant were also beginning to blur, and at the same time, science was offering a picture of human beings as “mechanical collections of atoms.”

As they sought “to give the world some kind of meaning,” writers placed “a new emphasis on manners, customs, and habits among people in the British Isles” in their letters and diaries and newspaper articles. These writings helped people identify the common interests and behaviors that defined “what makes you an English person versus someone from the New World,” Naomi says. Sharing these customs and habits was “a way to secure community,” to have a more pluralistic society that wouldn’t fall apart without the old cultural order.
This quest for a sense of social belonging also links the Enlightenment-era Britons of Naomi’s dissertation with the 21st-century undergraduates in her classroom. “Many of my students are freshmen and sophomores, and many of them have told me that adjusting to a community as large as UCLA can be difficult,” she says. “I make myself available during office hours to answer questions about a variety of topics such as what it’s like to be a history major, or what interesting things you can do in Los Angeles, or what my own experiences were like as an undergraduate at UCLA.”

But the key initiative is in her classroom, both the discussion groups for history courses and the seminars she has developed. “Students learn the most when they feel comfortable to constructively engage in dialogue with one another and to articulate for themselves what they formerly only read in a book or listened to during lecture,” Naomi says. To help, “I have tried to cultivate a warm and tolerant atmosphere.”

Naomi often breaks her discussion groups and seminars into smaller groups, “so that students have an opportunity to engage more closely with their peers,” she says. She finds it “a particularly effective way of having students review each other’s written work,” and it also lets her give students more personal attention. But an important goal is to help students make social connections. She judges the success of her teaching by “how much people feel that they are in a community by the end of the class.” When she sees classmates walking together on campus, having formed friendships, she knows she got the job done.

Jordan Smith
Comparative Literature

“The first week, they basically drown,” Jordan Smith said of the incoming undergraduate students in his Academic Advancement Program (AAP) English Composition class. For a few days, they’ve wrestled with “original writings from a bevy of leading scholars, critics, and theorists who employ rhetorical and terminological innovations that would make many graduate students blanch,” he says. “They’re kind of cross-eyed, and their hair is messed up, and the boys haven’t shaved, and they’re saying, ‘What are you doing to us?’”

This is just the pivotal moment Jordan was aiming for when he designed the course. “And then we have a moment where we all look at each other,” Jordan says, “and they realize that no one understands it, and they reach this point of comfort where they don’t have to try to look cool or smart, and then we roll up our sleeves and go to work.” Although they may have started out complaining, “by the end of the course, they’re bragging,” he says. The toughness of the curriculum is “a source of pride for me and the students, too.”

The key to the success of Jordan’s strategy is the kind of young people—first-generation college students, many of them minority or at-risk—who attend AAP summer classes. Whatever the resources and benefits they haven’t had, Jordan says, “what they do have is
incredible drive and motivation. They got into college by defying their neighborhoods, by defying their friends and even sometimes their parents, all of them saying ‘why do you want to do that?’” In other words, AAP students are not easily daunted; they respond to challenge. Teaching them—and he’s done so for four summers—is one of Jordan’s favorite teaching assignments, and he has plenty of points of comparison.

Since he entered his second year as a graduate student in Comparative Literature, Jordan has taught every quarter, and recently, he’s been teaching an average of five classes each term in various departments and other schools, most recently at UC Riverside. A piece of his motivation for working this hard comes from his two small children. But most of it comes from the work itself. “I love, love, love teaching,” he says. “In fact, sometimes I wish that was all I had to do.”

That time isn’t too far off. Beginning this spring, Jordan has a dissertation year fellowship for support while he writes. He’s examining travel and immigrant writing from around the Pacific, particularly from Japan, Peru, and Mexico. Writers who travel in other lands bring home “a head full of images of that country and often put those images in their writing,” he says, “and it becomes a way of mapping the other side of the Pacific for their readers back home.” His topics include a collaboration between Nobel Prize-winning writer Octavio Paz and the artist Toshihiro Katayama. A rare “book” in which poems are inscribed on turning disks, so that the poem evolves as you rotate them, became an exhibit for one of his classes.

Jordan’s work demands fluency in Spanish and Japanese. He picked up the first in high school and college, and the second as a result of an encounter in Korea. Working as a lecturer at Korea University, he met Kazuko Yamaji. When she returned to her native Japan, Jordan went along, and he learned Japanese, so that he could ask her father’s permission to marry in the traditional way.

Jordan came to UCLA in part because of Southern California’s large Japanese and Spanish-speaking communities. He will find it very hard to leave when the time comes to look for a tenure-track faculty position. “I am so in love with UCLA,” he says. “For the rest of my life, whenever there’s a job opening at UCLA, I will always apply for it even if I’m only remotely eligible.”
John McCauley
Political Science

Thanks in part to John McCauley, Tamar Naomi Zalk decided to teach English in Korea before applying to graduate school, and Allison Nash postponed law school for some work experience. With Lauren Behr, John reviewed the different internship opportunities in international development offered by the Political Science Department; with Alice Yooseon Ham, he discussed an invitation to join the UCLA Mortar Board Honor Society—she did and went on to be elected its president. When Benjamin Kurtz was selected for the Phi Beta Kappa honor society, John attended the initiation ceremony, taking “hours out of his day for nothing else but to cheer me on,” Benjamin wrote.

John McCauley, the teaching assistant for classes taken by these undergraduates, went beyond the weekly one-hour seminar to offer them the kind of support that defines good mentoring. “At a big university like UCLA, I feel our most important role as TAs is to interact with students and value them as individuals,” John says.

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As John sees it, among the few dozen undergraduates he meets each year, there are some who “have the potential to change the world.” Undergraduates are “at a point in their lives where they’re getting a glimmer of the possibilities and responsibility that they have ahead of them,” he says, and providing some guidance and moral support in this search is an “awesome responsibility.” He cautions that he is “very careful not to tell them that one path is right or one path is wrong. What I do say if you have doubts, don’t ignore them—explore them.”

John is a good role model for students who may be considering a break in their education following a bachelor’s degree. After leaving the College of William and Mary with a double major in economics and philosophy, he decided “to take the next few years and explore.” In sequence, he was a bartender in Ireland, a Peace Corps teacher at a rural schoolhouse in Burkina Faso, and a seminar instructor for a think tank in Washington, D.C. He also got a master’s degree in international relations at Yale University before arriving at UCLA. All the insights and experiences of those years have informed his doctoral studies. His dissertation returns him to West Africa, to “the zone where Islam and Christianity meet.” His question: “Why do we see inter-religious violence in some countries and not in others?”

Being a TA is a plus rather than a minus to his research, John says. “It keeps me productive and focused, and it helps me keep an eye on the bigger questions of how things relate to each other.” His research helps his teaching because he can provide pictures and stories related to his firsthand experience in the field. Young Africans often “come up and want to touch my hair because I’m different from them,” he says. In turn, he says, young Americans “don’t have a clear sense of what it is to work and to live in places like rural Africa.” A hallmark of good teaching, he says, is “finding a way to explore the material in a way that says this is something we should care about.”

Some additional “good teacher” traits are offered by Saqib Rahim, a student in John’s Political Communication course, who says he became a journalist in part “because I learned [in John’s class] that it was still possible to hold a reasoned dialogue about politics,” even in the polarized environment of Fall 2004. According to Saqib: “Whenever we meet, I remember what made John such an effective teacher: he’s curious, he enjoys wide-ranging discussions, he wears a smile, and he always asks what you think.”

Holley Replogle
Musicology

Her first week as a teaching assistant in musicology was going pretty well, Holley Replogle says. “And then came Friday—I had to teach my very first section,” she says, and although she was quite familiar with her topic, Mozart, “I was petrified.” Her mentor, Professor Raymond Knapp, supports her recollection; concerned about her characteristic shyness, he says, and “finding her very nervous, I coached her a bit before class.”

Stopping by afterward, Professor Knapp found her “positively radiant with the joy of having successfully taught her first section,” and Holley herself recalls being “ecstatic that it had gone so well.” But the change was more than the relief of a challenge well met. In the classroom, Holley’s previous shyness vanished for good. “I believe she truly found herself in that classroom,” Professor Knapp says, “awakening a calling she clearly feels on her intellect.”

Holley likes to take “a kinetic approach to teaching music history,” she says, “engaging the students’ personal experiences as well as their intellect.” In the first class of any course, Holley “asks people to talk about the kinds of music that matter to them” and then she has them “explain their likes and dislikes” to the rest of the class. With this background, she asks students to look at music that may be unfamiliar to them with empathy, “to be aware of the ways that music mattered to its listeners.”
In another aspect of the kinetic approach, students may well be invited to sing and dance as well as discuss. Singing along with REM’s “Losing My Religion” in a Music and Gender class, Holley says, they can “feel the limited vocal range, and then eloquently interpret the effect in terms of the introspective performance style the melody suggests.” Dancing along with the “Time Warp” music from The Rocky Horror Picture Show; “they can understand its parody of the dance craze.”

Holley has also extended the normal repertoire of TA assignments to include some work both on and off campus as a music director. For example, Professor Emeritus of English Frederick Burwick asked a colleague to write original music to accompany plays by 19th-century poet Thomas Beddoes—there’s evidence they were originally performed with music. Then he asked Holley to act as music director, “helping undergraduates interpret these really dense 19th-century texts,” she says, “and figure out how to present this music to an audience.”

Holley’s journey to doctoral studies in musicology began on her 10th birthday: “My mom took me to Phantom of the Opera at the Ahmanson Theater, and it just blew me away,” she says. “I knew from that moment that I wanted to be involved with theater in some way for the rest of my life.” Just how that could be accomplished was revealed during her freshman year at UCLA. Taking a music history course from Professor Knapp, she found that they shared a love of American musicals and, moreover, he was actually writing books about them. She had never realized that the genre “was a viable topic of study in academia.”

Today, Knapp is the chair of her dissertation committee. Her research links 19th- and 20th-century operettas with 21st-century megamusicals, like Phantom of the Opera, beginning with an analysis of two stars of those respective genres: Jeanette McDonald, who sang operetta in costume movies of the 1930s and 1940s, and Sarah Brightman, star of Phantom. Both McDonald and Brightman engaged in something of a crusade to bring more classical forms of music to a wider “middlebrow” audience.

“I am drawn to this topic in part because it resonates well with my mission as a teacher,” Holley says. Non-music majors often confide as a course begins that “they don’t know anything about music,” she says, when what they mean is that they don’t know the particular genre—opera, Gregorian chant, or Mozart sonatas. Like the crossover music she’s writing about, her job is “to transform unfamiliar musical styles into rewarding musical experiences for wider and more diverse audiences.”
The slums of Darb Al Ahmar in Islamic historic Cairo are separated from the nearby Coptic Christian community of garbage recyclers called Zurayib by the City of the Dead graveyard, but the two neighborhoods are united by their deep and pervasive poverty and lack of water, electricity, and other common urban resources. As he observed the problems, T. H. Culhane wondered “why there was so little evidence of the home-scale, renewable energy solutions being used in similar communities around the world.”
Putting his question to representatives of nonprofits working in Cairo, T. H. was told it was “because somebody with your interests and your enthusiasm isn’t here. If you want to come, you are welcome.” The rest flowed quite naturally. Six years later, most of them spent in Cairo, T. H. is hard at work trimming the 900-page first draft of his dissertation on how slum dwellers there are meeting their needs for hot water. It includes more than 500 pages of pictures and diagrams related to his personal efforts to help residents build solar-powered water heaters on the rooftops of their ramshackle homes.

While he’s writing, he’s also back in Cairo starting a second project in the same neighborhoods, this one to provide people with biogas digesters that will allow them to “cook today’s meals on yesterday’s garbage,” T. H. says. And both of those projects are part of a nonprofit he’s started called Solar C3Cities—Connecting Community Catalysts Integrating Technologies for Industrial Ecology Solutions.

All of the above efforts have earned him a $10,000 award as one of National Geographic’s 2009 Emerging Explorers. That money will help him complete work on making the nonprofit’s headquarters (and his home) in Essen, Germany, completely energy-independent—the third major project on his current agenda.

T. H. brings to all of these tasks a lifetime of experience in diverse places and knowledge-gathering of various kinds, beginning as a child in Chicago, when he divided his time between studying exhibits at the Museum of Science and Industry and accompanying his mother into the adjoining neighborhood, where she worked as a Head Start teacher and administrator. “There was this incredible museum landscape on the lake and the ghetto right next to it,” he says. “I had foot in both worlds for the first eight years of my life.”

T. H.’s mother was of Iraqi and Lebanese heritage, and his father was a news correspondent in the Middle East in the 1970s, so T. H. also began at an early age to ask questions like “How are the media representing people? How is development...
“the rainforest ecology had a lot to teach us about our societal dilemma and how we might design a better city”

affecting people? What are people really angry about,” he says.

At Harvard University, he studied biological anthropology, looking to understand “where we’d come from and where we were going,” then he took “a suitcase full of Utopian literature” on a two-year journey to the rainforests of Borneo and the urban environment in Baghdad. T. H. thought “the rainforest ecology had a lot to teach us about our societal dilemma and how we might design a better city” and got a receptive response when he shared his ideas with psychologist B. F. Skinner.

Rather than pursuing these ideas directly, however, T. H. decided “to go into the ghettos of Los Angeles to fashion a career trying to solve the dysfunction of society, which I blamed on faulty education.” Over the next decade at Crenshaw, Jefferson, and Hollywood High Schools, he developed innovative curricula that combined biology and science with multimedia technologies, leading students, among other things, to rap their biology vocabulary lessons. In the process, he was named one of seven NASA Challenger fellows, a program honoring outstanding educators.

With all this success, however, Utopian visions still danced in his head, and he looked to UCLA for “some theoretical grounding,” seeking out graduate adviser in Urban Planning Vanessa Dingley. Proposing what he thought might seem a “somewhat outlandish” combination of rainforest ecology, sociobiology, and urban design, he was pleasantly surprised when Dingley started listing all of the departmental faculty who were traveling down kindred roads.

One of those was Susanna Hecht, who was an adviser on his master’s thesis in her area of expertise, Central America. On trips to Guatemala and Mexico, T. H. built a sustainable development center and began to study agriforestry for urban purposes. He had formed a nongovernmental organization aimed at “bringing back the breadnut,” a staple in the Mayan diet, and was well on the path to a dissertation on this subject when September 11, 2001, changed his direction.

“I realized that I was working with every people but my own people at a time of great tragedy,” T. H. says. Instead of another summer in Central America, he got fellowships to study Arabic in Beirut and then Cairo, where he was working when Professor of Urban Planning Randall D. Crane decided to make Egypt the setting for a spring study abroad session for graduate students. He asked T. H. to make ground arrangements and accompany the class of two dozen or so graduate students.

After that pivotal moment in the Cairo slums, T. H. picked up the challenge he had been thrown and began to work out with Professor Crane what he would need to address the issue, planned a demand survey, and chose to focus on hot water. T. H. began by “building a solar hot water heater with my own hands,” he says, figuring that “if I can do it myself, maybe I can introduce it to the people in the ghettos and the slums.” A key hurdle was finances, as the necessary materials for a single heater cost about $500, often more than half a month’s income for typical residents of Darb Al Ahmar and the Zurayib. His wife, Sybille, provided money from her teaching income until U.S. AID came through with an important $25,000 small infrastructure materials grant.

That work is the core of his dissertation, co-chaired by Professors Crane, Lois Taka hashi, and Vinit Mukhi ja, which focuses on three key issues: economics, infrastructure, and perception. Gas and electric water heaters are often more attractive to community residents because of their association with upper-class people and the relatively low cost of buying fuel, given government subsidies, which are now shrinking. In some places, the building infrastructure will not support appliances, and people are wary because of bad experiences with electric and gas heaters, which can prove dangerous in this environment. Houses, for example, may explode when rats eat through gas pipes.

T. H.’s plans for the future go well beyond hot water heaters and Cairo to a much larger world that is beset by problems of poverty and diminishing fossil fuel resources. While his projects focus on meeting energy needs in urban environments, they also seem to have a social impact.

As a 13-year-old trial recruit in the Ringling Brothers clown college, T. H. had his first vision of this phenomenon, he says: “People of all different nations, cultures, and languages could work together somewhat harmoniously under the same tent to put on a show.” In Cairo, bringing together people from the Muslim quarter and the Coptic community toward a common goal has created “true lasting bonds of friendship,” he says. “I’m no longer sure which is the goal and which the side effect.”

Keeping a Research Blog

Professor of Urban Planning Randall D. Crane keeps a blog about his research and suggests that all his students do the same. For T. H. Culhane, listening to that advice paid off to the tune of $10,000 and a prestigious award as one of National Geographic’s 2009 Emerging Explorers. Hearing about T. H.’s work building solar water heaters in the Cairo slums on a National Public Radio show, the folks at National Geographic checked out his blog — and chose him for the honor. To see for yourself, go to solarcities.blogspot.com or http://thculhane.blogspot.com.

Winter 2009 GRADUATE QUARTERLY
AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES


ANTHROPOLOGY


APPLIED LINGUISTICS & TESL


ECOLOGY & EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY

Tina W. Wey: “Climate change and yellow-bellied marmot social networks” Hibernating animals, such as social yellow-bellied marmots (Marmota flaviventris), depend on environmental cues to adjust their yearly cycles. Marmots at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado emerge earlier now than in the past in conjunction with slightly higher spring temperatures, but since snow does not necessarily melt faster, they often deal with longer periods of snow cover with no food. Tina’s research suggests that these marmots have highly varied social networks and that individual marmots become more stable in their social structure as they get older over multiple years. Given that the period immediately following emergence is also the time of reproduction and highest social activity for these animals, the change in emergence behaviors caused by climate change will likely change marmot social networks. Presented at the Women & Philanthropy at UCLA Conference, Los Angeles, CA, November, 2008.

ARCHAEOLOGY


ART

ART HISTORY


Megan L. Debin: (First author) “Performing the Masculine: Violence in the Work of Einar and Jamey de la Torre - From Aztec Warriors to Luchadores.” Violence and Desire, Conference at Tulane University, November, 2008.


Asian Languages & Cultures


Biological Chemistry


Biomedical Engineering

Areum Han: (Co-author) “Sarm68 Regulates a Set of Alternatively Spliced Exons during Neurogenesis.” Published in Molecular and Cellular Biology, vol. 29, pp. 201-213, January, 2009.

Biomedical Physics


Civil Engineering


Earth & Space Sciences


ECOLOGY & EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY


EDUCATION


ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING


ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH


ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Alex D. Revchuk: (First author) “Evaluation of the quality assurance of ultrafiltration separation for humic substances by chemical probes.” Poster presented at The 14th Meeting of the International Humic Substances Society, Moscow - St. Petersburg, Russia, September, 2008.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

FILM, TELEVISION, & DIGITAL MEDIA

Alexandra M. Fisher: (Director) "Desert Wedding." Film Directors Guild of America - Honorable Mention: Best Student Film Directed by a Woman, October, 2008.


Ilanna Sosa: (Director) "Mojado." Boyle Heights Latina Independent Film Extravaganza, Los Angeles, CA, December, 2008.

Miranda O. Yousef: (Director) "Collectibles." Film Director’s Guild of America, Los Angeles, CA, October, 2008.

FRENCH & FRANCOPHONE STUDIES


GEOGRAPHY


GERMANIC LANGUAGES


HISTORY


HUMAN GENETICS

Christopher L. Plaisier: (First author) "Galanin preproprotein is associated with elevated plasma triglycerides." Published in Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology, vol. 29(1), pp. 147-52, January, 2009.

INDO-EUROPEAN STUDIES


INFORMATION STUDIES


ISLAMIC STUDIES


ITALIAN


Melina R. Madrigal: “Dante and the Semiotics of Comedy: The Devil Figure in Inferno XXI-XXIII.” Presented at the American Association of Italian Studies, New York, NY, May, 2009.


MANAGEMENT


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MATHEMATICS


MOLECULAR, CELL, & INTEGRATED PHYSIOLOGY


MOLECULAR BIOLOGY
Andrew S. Goldstein: (First author) “Trop2 identifies a subpopulation of murine and human prostate basal cells with stem cell characteristics.” Published in PNAS USA (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences), vol. 105, pp. 20882-20887, December, 2008.


Kristopher Steward: (Co-author) “Maleimide conjugation markedly enhances the immunogenicity of both human and murine idiootype-KLH vaccines.”

MUSIC

MUSICOLOGY

NURSING

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Saturday, April 4, 2009 - 10:00 a.m.

Doctoral Dissertation:
Thursday, April 2, 2009 - 11:00 a.m.
Friday, April 3, 2009 - 11:00 a.m.
Saturday, April 4, 2009 - 11:00 a.m.