FEATURES

Learnlink  10–13
Emory’s virtual crossroads makes “online community” mean something

Talking about Race  14–17
Studying, thinking, talking about a complex topic

Reel Life  18–21
Mr. Dooley, we’re ready for your close-up.

DEPARTMENTS

4–7  Profiles
Isabel Wilkerson on teaching, writing, and high-wire journalism (also French onion soup); John Devlin’s multiple muses

8–9  Quadrangle Corners
Forests restore us. And sometimes we return the favor

24–25  Bookmarks
Cynthia Willett’s *Irony in the Age of Empire* examines laughter as power and liberation; more faculty books

26–28  Kudos
Bruce Knauft aims to help the world’s most unstable regions recover and rebuild; other faculty achievements

29–32  Impact
Meet Evan Bates, new president of the Alumni Board, plus other alumni and friends making a difference

2–3  Dean’s Letter

22–23  Eagle Eye
These are heady times for Emory College. In the past year alone Salman Rushdie joined the faculty as Distinguished Writer in Residence, His Holiness the Dalai Lama became Emory Presidential Distinguished Professor, and Natasha Trethewey, our Phillis Wheatley Distinguished Chair in Poetry, won the Pulitzer Prize for her book Native Guard.

All things to celebrate, and fine reasons to make the news. We couldn't be more pleased for Professor Trethewey—we're always gratified when our colleagues' hard work is recognized by national awards, election to scholarly societies, and the like—and we're excited at the continuing possibilities offered by the presence of Mr. Rushdie and His Holiness.

But the international prominence of such figures does, perhaps, raise the specter of the “celebrity academic.” It’s a ghost that I'd like to take this chance to lay to rest.

Those two words might seem, at first, an odd pair. Most academics, however influential as teachers and scholars, do their honorable work away from spotlights of any kind. Some achieve modest name recognition as experts,
consulted and quoted, especially if their discipline is in the realm of public affairs. And a very few, it’s true, seem to cultivate celebrity status, relying on PR agents to get their names into print, their views into controversy, their faces on television. Probably any of us could name one or two, a measure of the success of those extra-academic efforts.

Fame by itself doesn’t preempt the life of the mind, of course, any more than obscurity certifies it. What matters is how one chooses to live one’s life, by what principles. And as with people so with institutions: corporations and governments, colleges and universities.

Look behind the headlines at Mr. Rushdie or the Dalai Lama, or at President Jimmy Carter, who has served as University Distinguished Professor since 1982. You begin to see a pattern, one that I think says something about Emory.

We are proud, of course, that Salman Rushdie has placed his papers in the Emory archives, that he’ll teach classes and give public lectures while in residence. But in addition to his international fame as an author, Rushdie is a longtime champion of religious and political freedom, a past president of PEN America—the literary and human rights organization—and that makes us still more proud. In the same way we are delighted to have the Dalai Lama lead interfaith summits and symposia on religion and science during his time at Emory, but it is as Nobel Peace Prize winner and lifelong spiritual leader that he most honors us.

President Carter, another Nobel laureate, works with the energy of a man half his age to promote peace and democracy worldwide and solve problems of global health. Through the Carter Center and as a volunteer with organizations like Habitat for Humanity, he has monitored elections, negotiated truces, built houses for the poor and, in his spare time, written sixteen books and taught in all of Emory’s schools.

We welcome association with these people, and others like them, for a reason: their values coincide with ours. They seek justice by peaceful means, ask hard questions, take principled stances. This doesn’t of course mean that we always agree with them. But when their views have provoked strong argument, censure, or even death threats, they have defended them spiritedly and openly in the best scholarly tradition. Theirs is a life of the mind but also of the heart.

Emory aspires to be a forum for just this sort of ethical engagement and fair debate, and we are exceedingly proud of our faculty, not for their Q rating but for their dedication to turning their prodigious talents toward an improved world. Cor prudentis possidebit scientiam, says our motto. The wise heart seeks knowledge. Heady days, without question, but the heart of the matter is that both—head and heart—matter.∞

ROBERT A. PAUL, PhD
Dean of Emory College
It was late July, and one of the most famous women in
journalism was preparing to enter a reportorial chess
match with one of the most famous women in politics.

As Isabel Wilkerson sat in the ornate Victorian chair, waiting
for her subject—whose personality was reputedly as stiff as the
chair—to arrive, a medley of thoughts raced through her head.
Which of the 300 questions I’ve prepared do I ask? How do
I get her to talk about her marriage? How do I get her off her
talking points?

Wilkerson was prepared for everything except what hap-
pened next. Hillary Clinton strode into the room, shook her
hand—firm, but not too firm—and then asked Wilkerson about
the book she is working on.

Wilkerson was floored. Here was the senator and former first
lady, a potential leader of the free world embroiled in a brutal
campaign, taking the time to ask a reporter whom she’d never
met about a book that isn’t even listed on Amazon.com.

“I was obviously unprepared for it, but I was delighted, flatter-
ted, impressed,” Wilkerson said. “You’re thinking you’ll go in,
do a straightforward thing, make the most of what little time you
have, and here she starts off with that, which was incredible.”

When Wilkerson joined the Emory faculty as the James M. Cox
Jr. Chair in Journalism last year, she brought her groundbreaking
style of narrative journalism into the classroom. But she hasn’t
left behind her life as a working journalist.

Wilkerson, who won a Pulitzer Prize for feature writing in 1993,
captured the spotlight again with her article on Clinton, which
appeared in the November issue of Essence magazine. An inter-
view with Clinton is rare. Getting something valuable out of that
interview is perhaps even rarer. But as multiple news articles about
Wilkerson’s piece attest, she was able to do just that.

The question many of her peers have been asking for years
is: “How?” Wilkerson says it’s because she empathizes with her
subjects and treats every article she writes as a work of art. This
is all true. But the more telling answer may be found in, of all
things, French onion soup.

Wilkerson calls it a “complicated, time-consuming, detail-
oriented endeavor” but says French onion soup is “one thing
I’ve been told I do very well.” She then launches into a five-
minute soliloquy on what makes a good version, before declar-
ing “If I do something, I do it right.”

This attention to detail is a central facet of Wilkerson’s life.
Her house in Virginia Highlands, which wouldn’t be out of place
in an architecture magazine, was redesigned and remodeled
by (you guessed it) Wilkerson herself. The Pulitzer, inciden-
tially, rests in a simple black frame in her living room, next to
a photo of her with Denzel Washington. And the detailed
landscaping around the house — that too is all Wilkerson, who
says she spends hours toiling in her garden. “It’s a way to be
creative. You’re painting with living things.”
Many more hours are spent working on her book, tentatively titled *North by South*, which documents the migration of southern blacks to the North in the period between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. She has spent more than a decade on the project, interviewing more than 1,500 people. Wilkerson says she hopes to finish the book by March.

“There haven’t been large, non-fiction works about this generation of people,” she says. “They were silent actors in racial and social change in this country. They weren’t the ones out there leading the marches, they were the ones who were quietly forced to leave an arbitrary and arcane culture in the South. They decided they weren’t going to take it any more, being the serfs of the country, the landless untouchables…. It deserves to be written. They’re survivors of a brutal era who didn’t benefit from the Civil Rights movement.”

The subject strikes close to home for Wilkerson: her parents made this very migration, journeying from Georgia to Washington D.C. A few years ago “60 Minutes” did a story on the migration and brought in Wilkerson as an expert. When they found out her family had been involved, the focus of the feature shifted.

Her father was in poor health at the time and died shortly after the segment was filmed. So it was, of course, an emotional moment for Wilkerson when it aired. After the program’s closing line—“Even he would be speechless,” in reference to Wilkerson’s accomplishments—the “60 Minutes” clock ticked, and Wilkerson was moved to tears. “To hear those words was amazing,” she says. “‘60 Minutes’ is a broadcast institution. You’re on that and you’re part of history.”

A few minutes later, still emotional as she remembers the moment, she reflects on her own possible legacy. Flipping through Tom Wolfe’s book on new journalism, Wilkerson looks up and says: “I hope people say I brought artistry and empathy to the subjects I approach…. There’s potential for art in everything that involves one word in front of another.”

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When John Devlin was asked last year which three people from history he’d like to have dinner with, he replied “Jesus, Robin Williams, and Jessica Alba.” Reminded of this recently, he laughs and says he’d probably come up with a different list next time. But he adds, musing once again on that intriguing table, “It wouldn’t be boring, would it?”

Not likely where John is involved, even if Robin and Jessica don’t drop by for hors d’oeuvres. The College senior has made a habit of keeping his plate full and his options open. A double major in music and Latin, and the College’s only Honors Conducting candidate, he didn’t start out to be either. He’s not one of those people who knew when they were five they wanted to be a geologist or a piano tuner. “I came to Emory for the liberal arts,” he says. “I thought I’d study music and something else. Maybe pre-med or pre-law.”

But conducting grabbed his interest, and “Emory has turned out to be the best place I could’ve come,” says Devlin. Music was part of his background since he started playing clarinet at nine, but “it was just one of the things I liked to do—I didn’t fall in love with it until I was a junior in high school and joined an orchestra.” After studying at the Tanglewood Institute before his freshman year at Emory, though, and then at Hartwick College music camp in his home state of New York, all bets were off. “That really ignited my interest in conducting,” Devlin remembers. “I came back here and said ‘Teach me.’”

This, his professors unanimously report, has been a pleasure. Devlin works closely with both Scott Stewart, director of wind studies, and Richard Prior, director of orchestral studies. “I’ve known John since his senior year of high school,” Stewart says, “and I’ve watched him mature musically here. He’s a student with the golden touch: bright, dedicated, an award-winning scholar, a talented musician, an athlete, and a good friend to many. We’re proud to be sending this shining star into the professional music world.”

Devlin’s classics professors feel likewise. “John is really quite remarkable,” says Louise Pratt, associate professor and chair of the department. He left “a lasting impression,” she says, as not only a fine student but “a class leader” with outstanding interpersonal skills. “I think what really amazes me about John is, with such a range of abilities, his capacity for remaining sane and grounded.”

This is quite a feat considering his schedule, which would be impressive split between two people. In addition to his coursework Devlin is principal clarinetist for the Emory Symphony and the Emory Wind Ensemble, assistant conductor of the Emory Youth Symphony Orchestra, and a varsity track and cross-country runner. He is also a member of both Alpha Tau Omega (social) and Mu Phi Epsilon (music) fraternities and avidly describes service projects for both, including soccer with kids from the Atlanta Boys & Girls Club and recitals at local hospitals and retirement centers.

He does all this, somehow, without neglecting his studies. A Woodruff Scholar, last year Devlin was also awarded a prestigious Beinecke Scholarship and earned election to Phi Beta Kappa. “He’s always been a great effort guy,” says head track & field coach John Curtin. After his freshman year Devlin stayed on campus for a week to help teammate Rob Leventhal train for the 800-meter national championships. Typically multi-tasking, he also decided on a personal goal: breaking two minutes at the distance in an upcoming local meet. He describes the resultant 1:59.86 as his “most satisfying day in track.” “When John gets a goal,” Curtin says, “he goes for it.”
In track as in music, Devlin’s success comes partly from remaining open to possibility. “I’ve always loved sports,” Devlin says, “but in middle school it was baseball, soccer and football.” A knee injury in seventh grade put a stop to football, but baseball remained king until Devlin tried cross-country just to keep in shape. By his senior year he was competing in national relays and had run the fifth fastest two-mile in New York state. Baseball took a back seat.

Now, Devlin acknowledges, everything takes a back seat to conducting. Get him started on the topic and he becomes even more animated than usual. “It’s a full mind-body experience,” he says. Players look at a conductor only intermittently, “for a fraction of a beat, so you have to convey information very efficiently. The hands are only maybe 20 percent of it. A lot of it’s in the face. I actually have a list of expressions that I practice every day.”

Asked whether conducting is athletic, Devlin pauses. “It has a lot in common with mime, and maybe dance. You’re listening with the mind and speaking with the body. But small, precise movements are best. The stereotype of the conductor waving his arms and leaping around is mostly a cartoon.”

Another impression Devlin would correct if he could is of the conductor as a simple timekeeper, the baton a metronome. “Conductors need to think in three time frames, especially in rehearsal,” he says: “past (what was just played?), present (is it worth stopping to correct?) and future. A cue to play louder or brighter, given right at the moment it needs to be played, is worthless. That train’s left the station.”

Devlin aspires to a career as a collegiate orchestral director, and that goal is two-fold: “I want to inspire musical performances that are meaningful for audiences, and I want to teach kids in a way that inspires them to continue appreciating, attending, and supporting music.”

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It's barely a quarter-mile from campus, just yards from the Miller-Ward Alumni House. But a thoroughly unscientific survey of faculty, staff and students suggests that few people know this place exists. Hahn Woods, officially the T. Marshall Hahn, Jr. Commemorative Forest, is an undiscovered gem in Emory’s midst.

Head up Clifton Road toward the nursing school, swing down the roller coaster of Houston Mill Road, and just before it bottoms out at the bridge, turn left into a small parking lot. You’re there.

Quiet stands of trees surround a tiny meadow, with steps leading down to a shady ¼-mile trail. These woods are cooled by the south fork of Peachtree Creek, which enters roaring over a dam and exits whispering past boulders, talking the whole time. And it tells some good stories.

The park was created in 1993 as a green space and “teaching forest” by agreement between Emory and Georgia Power and named in honor of a longtime company CEO and Emory trustee. Just 4.7 acres, it seems larger, bordering Wesley Woods Forest—which in 1994 Chancellor Billy Frye called an “infinitely precious aesthetic and scientific resource.” A 1986 report designated the Wesley forest “near-pristine,” and in 1999 the Board of Trustees pledged to take “all practical measures” to preserve it.

Hahn’s particular beauty reveals a more complicated history. The surrounding Houston Mill area is named for Major Washington Jackson Houston, who built a water-powered grist mill here in 1863. The land was bought in the 1920s by businessman Harry J. Carr, who occupied what is now the Houston Mill House across the road and used the Hahn site as a horse paddock.

Andrea De Man, undergraduate program coordinator for the English department, grew up locally and remembers the site well. “When I was in elementary school it was a deep, deep ravine with a huge clearing. We used to go horseback riding there, through banks of rhododendron and mountain laurel along the creek. The mill wheel was still there, along with a log cabin that I think was the residence of the man who ran the mill. It was a lovely, scenic spot.”

Emory bought sixty acres from the Carr family in 1960 and used it as a landfill, covering a pasture and swimming pool with construction debris. With the 1993 Hahn project came another chapter. The area was gradually reclaimed, with dozens of native species replanted and invasive ones removed, so that the trails now delineate a classic clearing-to-forest succession: wildflowers followed by shrubs, sun-craving pines, and finally shade-tolerant hardwoods. It’s a tree lover’s paradise of flowering dogwood, river birch and sweetgum; beech, oak, and poplar; red cedar, hickory, and loblolly pine.

Paradise, but not Eden—artifacts of former lives steal into view everywhere. The corner of a vanished stone walkway subtly alters a hillside curve. Concrete posts, reminders of when this was pastureland, stand in odd trailside vigils. A platform with an iron railing extends over the water, older than the trail that leads to it. Hints of a bridge footing punctuate the creek downstream. And along the lower trail is all that remains of the county’s first hydroelectric project: an iron turbine cap emerging from the leaves, eerily like a four-foot Darth Vader helmet abandoned after some titanic battle.

Jimmy Powell, Emory’s director of engineering, is another lifelong resident and as familiar with the place as anyone. “I roamed this creek all the way from here to North DeKalb when I was a kid,” he says. Even Powell, though, has to guess at some of this palimpsest of woods and water. “When Mr. [Walter] Candler lived at Lullwater, just down this path, he was interested in harness racing,” he says. “Some of these old roads might have connected to the present site of the VA Hospital, where he had stables and a training track. Those stone pillars were the gate to his estate, and just up the stream is part of a bridge he built. There was supposedly a Civil War encampment here, too. The place is just full of history.”

Other Hahn fans include faculty who use the woods for teaching. Anne Hall and John Wegner, lecturers in Environmental Studies, bring students there, as do anthropology professor Peggy Barlett and senior lecturer in biology Ari Eisen as part of their Piedmont Project, which since 2001 has worked to expand Emory’s awareness of environmental issues.

Eisen calls Hahn “kind of a secret pocket of hope—it offers a quiet chance to reflect, and a lesson in restoration.” Barlett notes that one of these lessons is “how difficult it is to restore a forest.” When Piedmont Project faculty visited, she says, “We were struck by the contrast with the mature woods across the road. Hahn Woods has come a long way, but it’s still struggling to recover its diversity of plants.” She adds that Emory is “very
fortunate to have such a large creek flowing as one of our campus boundaries. I often urge guests staying at nearby hotels to take a moment to walk the woods, and they are uniformly delighted with what they find there.”

Friends of Emory Forest (FOEF), working with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation and other groups, has applied for a grant to restore an iron pedestrian bridge near the old dam sluiceway and expand Hahn’s trails to the other side of the Creek. Judith Robertson, retired from the anthropology department, is one the project’s leaders. “We’ve been out there chopping privet and wisteria, picking up trash and planting trees for two or three years now,” she says. “Friends, neighbors, students and alumni have joined to help us. It’s my passion.”

Bobbi Patterson, senior lecturer in religion, knows the feeling. She calls Hahn “a jewel—an incredible mixture of moving water and slopes and woodlands and human presences.” Patterson occasionally takes classes there “just to remember how place and people and creatures inter-live.”

On a recent visit, raccoon and deer were among the creatures mixing their tracks with human ones. A beaver dam announced a third. Like the restoration projects, these are signs that while much has changed at Hahn (and at Emory), some important things haven’t.∞
LEARNLINK

Emory's Beloved Online Community

by Hal Jacobs

Illustration by Stéphane Jorisch
If you graduated from Emory College in the last decade or so, you know the feeling. The separation anxiety. The sense of loss. The realization that you may never see another little red flag waving from your conference icon on LearnLink.

Bryan Mashioff ’07B, a former College Council president, felt it. When it came time for him to bid adieu, he e-mailed his friends:

“As sad as it is, the time has come to finally say goodbye to LearnLink. LearnLink has been more than just an e-mail system, but has become a beloved friend and obsession. My time count on LearnLink is currently 22 weeks, 1 day, 9 hours, and 36 minutes… It is difficult to say goodbye.”

With LearnLink, you felt a sense of community 24/7, all year round—not just on football game weekends like students at other schools. You knew a place where you could drop by any time and find a friend.

Pearl Young ’10C recalls a multivariable calculus exam during her first semester at Emory. “It was panic night before the exam. I didn’t know how to do a problem on the practice test, and I didn’t know anyone else in the class except the teacher, who didn’t answer e-mails at night.

“It was LearnLink to the rescue. I typed in a classmate’s name from my physics class—no need for the exact email address, just his name—and he e-mailed back in 30 minutes. Problem over. LearnLink saved the day and helped me make a new friend.”

You had the Emory community at your fingertips—and only the Emory community (no lurking high schoolers here). Your professor could dash off a note to everyone in your class about an upcoming assignment. You could add pickles to your roommates’ shopping list. You could exchange haikus, like Natalie Hunter ’08C and four friends who started a haiku conference two years ago (sun glimmers on glass / the colors run unhindered / parking lot beauty).

Your fraternity could find a community service project. Thanks to a LearnLink posting, Marcus Brodzki ’08C and twenty members of his Alpha Phi Omega chapter spent about 125 hours during the fall 2006 semester helping build a playground for the Clifton School.

Those days are still here. LearnLink, one of higher education’s first and largest online communities, is still thriving. Even in an era of popular social spaces such as FaceBook and MySpace, LearnLink continues to offer something no other communications package can: it brings在一起 Emory’s academic and social life in one user-friendly ecosystem.

The Creation Myth

Fall 1991. Just months after the World Wide Web’s public launch, LearnLink is born at Everybody’s pizza restaurant in Emory Village. This is an important piece of the creation myth; most communications platforms are conceived by information technology departments and high-ranking administrators. From the beginning, LearnLink was different. It saw the light of day amid pizza and beer, as a result of two Emory College professors and a young computer whiz.

Pat Marsteller, senior lecturer of biology and director of the Center for Science Education, remembers sitting at the table with Paul Lennard, director of the Neuroscience and Behavioral Biology Program, and her son, Sean Murphy, a recent Georgia Tech graduate in computer sciences.

“We were talking about how we really hated it that in undergraduate classes, especially in the sciences, kids would come in, sit down, maybe take notes, and run out at the end,” says Marsteller. “There was no conversation, no community. So we wanted to figure out ways to build that among students and really get them excited and discussing issues of science. And we were talking about how we could stay connected with teachers who had been in our research lab the previous summer.

“Sean was sitting there, and he said, ‘You guys need a bulletin board.”’ He told them about the technology he had been using since he was 11, when he ran a popular Dungeons and Dragons discussion group in South Carolina.

“We wanted students and teachers talking,” says Marsteller, “and we wanted them to have some control and some power over what’s being said, so the bulletin board technology sounded great.”

It was a big step. At the time, faculty in the biology department used simple, command-line e-mail systems to communicate with each other. Other departments handled their own e-mail needs separately, and many faculty outside the hard sciences didn’t use computers at all. Students were on their own.

After looking around at various commercial packages, Marsteller and Lennard chose the FirstClass system, It offered a simple graphic user interface over a text-based bulletin board system, and it seemed the most adaptable and user-friendly. Its quirky little icons reassured people, especially nonscientists, that the program, soon dubbed LearnLink at Emory, wasn’t something only a computer nerd could love or learn.
During the 1992 spring semester Marsteller and Lennard, with Murphy’s technical expertise, rolled out the glorified bulletin board package to students in their biology class. They saw the benefits from day one. “Instead of answering a question 30 times, you answered it only once, online,” says Lennard.

They also noticed that students who were reluctant to talk in class could have something to say on the bulletin board. “Women who never spoke in class were contributing really thoughtful comments and interesting points on-line,” says Marsteller. “Part of the way we sold it to faculty was that you can use this to build community and give people different kinds of opportunities to participate.”

According to Lennard, there was something else they hadn’t fully anticipated. “We suddenly began to see that students were posting to each other and realized that we were doing something beyond dissemination of information—we were building community.

“It wasn’t something I expected, but it made a lot of sense. This was a way that students could reach beyond the limitations of their dorm floor.”

“By the end of that semester, the kids in our class were going all across campus telling people they needed to use LearnLink,” says Marsteller.

LearnLink scaled up quickly. Thanks to a grant from Emory’s Information Technology Division and other funding sources pieced together by Marsteller, LearnLink went from one classroom to nearly forty after its first year of operation. From biology and the hard sciences it spread to the religion and English departments. Paul Courtright, professor of religion, and Gordon Newby, professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, were among the pioneers who developed materials for their LearnLink sites.

**The Great Migration**

In 1995, LearnLink made two leaps forward. The system migrated from a corner of the biology department to the University’s central IT Department as a special project, although Marsteller and Murphy would still be intimately involved with its day-to-day operations. After all, it was their baby—one that, a year later, would become the primary undergraduate e-mail account. The project team also hired Gary Falcon ‘91C, a biology teaching assistant and devoted LearnLink user, to become a full-time “proselytizer” to faculty about using the online teaching tool.

Falcon says there was a tremendous response from faculty once they saw how LearnLink opened up opportunities for teaching, particularly for larger classes. At the same time, he and Murphy were hearing from students who wanted to use LearnLink for their clubs, activities and interest groups. “We were very encouraging of that early on,” says Falcon. “One issue with online community is a chicken and egg problem. Nobody is going to log in unless people are there. And people aren’t going to log in unless there’s content.”

They didn’t have other models in higher education to follow. To Murphy’s knowledge, this was the first time anyone had tried an online community. The FirstClass architecture was designed for teachers in secondary school systems, not faculty and thousands of college students. The feedback that would help developers improve later versions of FirstClass poured in from Emory students: on some days Murphy and Falcon would get 250 to 300 messages, and they addressed most issues in under an hour. “We listened to what people wanted, and that made the system as successful as it was,” says Murphy. “And it was nice hearing people rant and rave about how great it was.” (Murphy now works for FirstClass in Toronto; Falcon is president of Aptiris, a company that supports communications technology throughout the U.S.)

So while faculty created an online equivalent of their classrooms, students were given just as much control over their own virtual campus. “Pat and Sean had the attitude ‘Let’s explore,’” says Falcon. “Let any student who wants to set up an area in the system, and if it doesn’t work, we can always clamp it down. But let’s see what happens.”

Alan Cattier, director of Emory’s Academic Technology Services, believes LearnLink became so powerful because of its breadth and expansiveness. He first used it in 1994 when he was teaching an English class as a graduate assistant. A few years later, he became part of
a team that helped move LearnLink from the College to the University.

“Students were able to articulate what they wanted their experience to be,” says Cattier. “It allowed full engagement in the process. All their interests, classes, student groups, staff friendships, faculty mentoring—all on their desktop, which they could customize.”

One of LearnLink’s greatest virtues is the ability to apply permissions and restrictions “with a great degree of granularity,” according to Cattier. By that he means that once an individual receives permission to become a demigod of a conference (LearnLink lingo for controller of an online group), she can include or exclude anyone she wants. In fact, she can give permission to another student to nest a private conference within her group, and so on and on like Russian nesting dolls. This ability to manage access is very powerful, and there’s nothing else like it on the Web. Currently there are 1,700 student demigods at Emory—about a third of the entire undergraduate student body.

Cattier believes this sense of engagement laid the foundation for such a flexible communications system. “There was a sense that you could dabble and play with something that wasn’t technologically overwhelming. The inviting nature helped it to evolve organically throughout the College.”

Michael Elliott, associate professor of English, arrived at Emory in 1998 and says it soon became apparent to him that LearnLink was a significant part of students’ conception of themselves as a community. He set up a conference for all his classes, using it as a repository for handouts and syllabi and as a bulletin board.

“The reason I knew that I could reach my whole class instantly with a note about how to read the sentences of Henry James is not because they were looking to hear from me,” says Elliott. “It’s because they were on LearnLink getting their emails and social groups and other information. So they’re there, see the red flag in my conference, and read my note.

“In some ways they have a much stronger identity with the virtual place of LearnLink than with any physical space on campus that I can tell.”

LearnLink in the Age of Facebook

In the summer of 2007 the College hired an independent firm to conduct a usability study, hoping to gain more insight into how LearnLink is used and how it compares with other popular social networking sites.

Their survey revealed that while 97 percent of Emory students use Facebook (47 percent prefer MySpace), 90 percent still want a closed, Emory-only community. Some 92 percent of students read LearnLink conferences daily and two-thirds post messages daily. And not just students: of the 35,000 conferences on LearnLink, personal groups are distributed almost equally among students, faculty and staff.

But the usability study also showed that LearnLink brings together the academic mission and the social life of the Emory community in a way that can’t be duplicated by any other communications platform.

“We learned that LearnLink’s conferences create community,” says Carole Meyers, senior director of IT and Facilities in the College. “Facebook is about representing yourself individually. But LearnLink’s conferences are more about doing things. There’s a real sense of action and purpose.”

Pat Marsteller, who is either the mother of LearnLink or its grandmother—if you concede it was really the brainchild of her son Sean—says she was talking to a group of students recently when one of them broached the subject of replacing LearnLink. “Careful buddy, you don’t know who you’re talking to,” she said, laughing with the other students, who knew better. She finds it hard to imagine Emory without LearnLink. “We need to think about ways to use and maintain it so that it can continue to bring people back to that connection with community that they feel so strongly about.”
Educational institutions are microcosms of larger society; where race is a social issue, it will be an issue in academia. Emory is no exception. Given its location in the South, a place familiar with racial drama—and in Atlanta, home to the civil rights movement as well as an increasingly cosmopolitan population—Emory is in an unusually strong position to study race and diversity in American culture.

In the past few years, Emory has taken steps to address these difficult topics, both as subjects of academic study and as elements of the Emory community and its relationship to surrounding ones. Emory's institutional strengths in scholarship, coupled with the rich history and resources of the Atlanta area, offer the College both an opportunity and a responsibility. More than simply as raw material for classroom discussions and publications, Emory is committed to addressing race and diversity in the Emory community and in society as a whole.
Emory by the Numbers
A commitment to the idea that difference enriches a community, enabling learning and understanding, has become a bit of a mantra in recent years, with corporations composing “diversity statements” and hiring “diversity consultants.” In higher education, though, diversity is more than a fad or phase; it is an increasingly visible reality in the demographics of students, faculty, staff and surrounding communities.

The U.S. Department of Education reports that in 2005, 33 percent of the U.S. consisted of racial or ethnic minorities, and the 2004 undergraduate minority enrollment nearly matched this at 32 percent. The coming years will undoubtedly bring an increase in the nation’s racial and ethnic diversity (the Department of Education predicts the minority population will top 39 percent by 2020), and in Emory’s as well. Institutions are often, by their nature, resistant to change, but they do and must reflect the environment in which they thrive.

Currently 65 percent of our undergraduates are white; according to US News & World Report this is similar to other top colleges. Yet the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education ranks Emory second in overall racial diversity among 26 elite schools, and first in black students as overall percentage of the student body. To some extent this may reflect the demographics of Atlanta, which according to the 2005 Census is 36.2 percent white compared to 74.7 percent for the U.S. The city of Atlanta is home to a much larger percentage of blacks (58.6 percent) than the nation as a whole (12.1 percent), though it has fewer Latin and Asian residents. Whatever the reasons, Emory College is drawn to the study of race and difference—particularly the study of African Americans and the African diaspora, the civil rights movement, and the complex meanings of black identity in the South and America today.

A Community of Students
Emory owes much of its distinctive culture to its undergraduate student body, which has become a community of increasingly varied races and ethnicities, religions, nationalities, and economic backgrounds. One place on campus has made the success of this student community its mission. The Office of Multicultural Programs and Services (OMPS) works to orient students to academic and student life at Emory, and to improve communication and respect for diversity among the student population. A program that has flourished recently is the Freshman Crossroads retreat, which brings together 70-90 incoming freshmen for five days in the week before orientation. Students spend time at a campsite, practice team-building exercises, complete a ropes course, and participate in activities that focus on sharing stories. Donna Wong, Assistant Dean for Campus Life and Director of OMPS, praises the program for “introducing students to a vocabulary about diversity. We want them to know more about where people come from, what attitudes parents might have passed on. A lot of cross-cultural learning goes on in those five days.”

Now in its fourth year, the program has seen steady increases in both participation and student variety since its implementation. “A lot of barriers and comfort zones are being crossed,” Wong says. “It’s working.”

The OMPS also conducts diversity training and manages other programs. One of the oldest and most successful is MORE (Multicultural Outreach and Resources at Emory), in which peer leaders set up “families” to provide a social support system and information source for students. Wong notes that over the past few years more white students have participated—a sign, she says, that students are recognizing “that diversity is for everyone, that ‘multicultural’ doesn’t just mean students of color.” In her nine years at Emory, Wong says she has witnessed increased diversity but also increased understanding. “I have seen a greater awareness of race, and a growing enthusiasm to talk about it. There are still obstacles, but we’ve realized that if there is a problem, it’s not just your burden. There is a group willing to look at issues, to come up with solutions, to be educated. You’re not on your own.”

Diversity and Higher Education
Questions of race are certainly relevant to Emory’s immediate community, but the University also recognizes the responsibilities attendant on education and privilege. During the recent strategic planning process, for example, Emory College reiterated its commitment to diversity as both an educational and a social good, stressing that diversity of ideas and diversity of community are very much interrelated. As Dean Robert A. Paul notes, “Emory, simply by virtue of being in Atlanta, has a special role to play: an obligation but also a position, both symbolic and real, from which to address these issues.” And since the core of a liberal arts education involves variety, diversity, breadth, and curiosity, College scholarship must engage with issues of race and difference if it hopes to remain true to its essential nature: recognizing diverse perspectives, challenging assumptions.

While increasing diversity presents complex challenges, it also presents opportunities. “We can’t avoid the fact that this work is always contentious,” says Ozzie Harris, Emory’s new Senior Vice Provost for Community and Diversity. “But we participate even though we know this requires risk.” The recent interdisciplinary College initiative “Race, Racism, and Society” (RRS) asserts too that Emory’s “traditional strengths in the health sciences, religion and southern studies have been … augmented by growing emphasis on internationalization and human rights.” RRS leaders Ralph DiClemente, of the School of Public Health, and Leslie Harris, of the departments of history and African American studies, conclude that “as a top-tier Carnegie research institution, we would be remiss in our responsibility and obligation to society if we did not explore this critical issue.”
Emory, with its rich resources of geography, history, faculty and students, is poised to become a national leader in the study of race. The relative youth of the field offers the College a unique chance to mold the future of research—not just to answer questions, but to decide which questions to ask.

**James Weldon Johnson Institute**

One of the newest additions to Emory College's offerings in the study of race is the James Weldon Johnson Institute for Advanced Interdisciplinary Study, founded by Dr. Rudolph Byrd of the Institute of Liberal Arts and the department of African American Studies. The Johnson Institute will engage in public scholarship through teaching, research, advocacy, and public dialogue about the history and legacy of the modern civil rights movement. The Institute is a joint venture of the departments of African American Studies, English, History and Music, the Institute of Liberal Arts, and the School of Law—an interdisciplinary collaboration that reflects the interests of Johnson himself, a distinguished scholar, novelist, composer and educator.

Given Johnson's broad interests, Dr. Byrd says, "I thought it would be useful to create a visiting scholars program with an interdisciplinary focus, allowing and encouraging scholars to approach the study of the civil rights movement from several disciplines." The core visiting scholars program, first of its kind in the nation, will welcome its first cohort of scholars during the 2008-09 academic year. Scholars will host colloquia, teach in the College, and participate in workshops on nonviolence and anti-discrimination intervention. The workshops, which will take place at the King Center and in local schools, are an important component, Byrd notes. "I think of the Institute as a place of reflection as well as a place of action. These workshops are a place where participants can acquire tools to be active in productive and peaceful ways."

The Institute will also host a faculty residency program, supported by a grant from the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), which will bring faculty from UNCF institutions to the Institute for one semester. And it will assume responsibility for awarding the Johnson medal, established in 1992 and awarded annually to three to six individuals whose achievements honor Johnson's life and work. Past recipients have included Amiri Baraka, Julian Bond, Harry Belafonte, and Wynton Marsalis.

**Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database**

When historian David Eltis arrived at Emory in 2002, he had already published a cd-rom database with the most comprehensive catalog of data then available on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Since its publication in 1999, Eltis and his colleagues have continued to fill gaps in the catalog (now more than 27,000 voyages), and the project has expanded to an internet database as part of the MetaScholar Initiative at Woodruff Library. Eltis has worked to make the database collaborative and interactive, with the capacity to be continually updated. "We want it to eventually have an organic structure," he explains, and "to take the form of a journal" with input from a variety of sources. "I have had marvelous support from the library," Eltis says. "I don't think I could have done this anywhere else."
Eltis plans to include audio pronunciation of the names listed in log books from slave ships and international courts. As the database becomes more complete and better known, he also hopes to solicit international participation in order to identify individuals and their homelands, clarifying migration patterns and genealogical data. Eltis admits that one reason for soliciting contributors in the attempt to “construct an entire image of the slave trade” is that “quite frankly, other people know more than we do” about many of the slaves’ home cultures—knowledge that may be widely dispersed, but that is imperative to the success of the project.

**Transforming Initiatives**

The recent Race and Difference Initiative (RDI) is further evidence of Emory’s commitment to promoting diversity and community. Bruce Knauft, executive director of Emory’s Institute for Comparative and International Studies, sits on the advisory committee. He says RDI has the potential to make “connections that bridge race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality on Emory’s campus, as well as in the Atlanta area and internationally.” RDI will facilitate the appointment of new Emory faculty in such areas as civil rights and conflict resolution, and thus can contribute, Knauft says, “not only to excellence in scholarship but to new ways of connecting academic understanding to lived experience.”

Perhaps the most talked-about initiative on campus recently has been the Transforming Community Project (TCP). Under the direction of Leslie Harris, TCP is a five-year program that brings together individuals from across campus—students, staff, faculty, administrators—for semester-long discussions of readings and films about race. A “gathering the tools” working group has also been collecting archival records about Emory’s own racial history. Starting from the belief that education and communication are the best ways to increase understanding, each TCP group completes a shared syllabus and meets to grapple with issues of diversity. The goal, says Harris, is “to get different groups in conversation with each other during a non-reactive moment—to have a conversation where we truly work toward compromise as opposed to just ‘fixing’ a problem.”

The program has received high marks. Donna Wong calls the TCP dialogues “incredibly successful at bringing a cross-section of the Emory community together,” and Ozzie Harris agrees that “our willingness to have these conversations suggests that we can move ourselves to a different, maybe better, spot in how we think about race in the academy.”

The history of race in the Americas, and even the racial spectrum of Emory’s student body, can be divisive and emotional subjects. As fields of study and as social issues, race and diversity elicit responses as varied as pride, confusion, silence and enlightenment. But choosing to engage with these combustive issues demonstrates strength, as well as a concern for truth and civility. As Dean Paul puts it, “We certainly can’t by ourselves eliminate racism, which is a national, a world problem—one that holds America back. But we can work toward that, and we should.”

**Rudolph Byrd**
Film buff, by any chance? Looking for a really obscure title? Chances are pretty good Emory has it. The video collection at Woodruff Library is “one of the best in the region,” says James Steffen, who should know. Steffen is a film and media librarian, and he can rattle off some impressive numbers: “Something like 8500 DVDs, more than 9000 in VHS, plus 2200 laser discs, 500 60mm films…. When I was a graduate student I didn’t know all the information that was available.

“This has really taught me a great deal about teaching,” he adds. “One of the real challenges is managing the sheer wealth of resources we have and making the most of it.”

Oh, and that ten-DVD Central Asian set just came in. “It includes some major works of Russian cinema,” Steffen notes. “Before now you had to travel to Moscow’s archives to see them. We have some things that are literally in no other US library holdings.”
Emory in the Frame

But sometimes Emory isn’t just the vault; sometimes it’s the star. Movies with scenes shot here include Bobby Jones: Stroke of Genius, a 2004 biopic of legendary golfer Jones (who attended Emory Law School); Road Trip (1999), in which the campus stood in for the “University of Austin”; and John Huston’s 1979 film of Flannery O’Connor’s Wise Blood, in which the museum where character Enoch Emory (no relation) steals a shrunken mummy is the old Carlos Hall.

Stroll a bit off the quad and you’ll pass Druid Hills High School, where Denzel Washington inspired football players in Remember the Titans (1999), and Jessica Tandy’s house in the Oscar-winning Driving Miss Daisy (1989). Widen the circle to Atlanta, and you can start lining your shelves with DVDs in which Emory’s neighborhood stars. A hitman falls from the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in the best-known scene from Sharky’s Machine (1981). (At 220 feet, the free-fall by legendary stuntman Dar Robinson is said to be the highest from a building in any commercially-released film.) The mental hospital in Manhunter (1986), film version of Silence of the Lambs prequel Red Dragon, looks dramatic for a reason: it’s actually the High Museum.

Television cameras too have turned Emory’s way over the years—including for the series The Dukes of Hazzard and In the Heat of the Night, both at the Oxford campus. Location manager Mike Riley also remembers shooting a Coca-Cola ad here in the 1990s, and he confirms that a remake of Revenge of the Nerds in late 2006 is one of many films that have approached Emory for possible location shoots. (The current Denzel Washington picture The Great Debaters is reportedly another.)

David McClurkin, brand manager for Emory’s division of communications and marketing, says he gets scouting requests regularly from filmmakers and is pleased to consider them, but he has to balance such interests as logistics, possible intrusions on students and faculty, and the film’s portrayal of Emory. “The requests we get are varied,” he says. “Network TV shows, documentaries, MTV…. Everything from feature films to tequila commercials.” Often these don’t “pan out” due to incompatible schedules, or occasionally perspectives. “We want something that is in line with the mission and strategic plan of the University,” McClurkin says.

One film project that did pan out in a big way was Into the Wild, directed by Sean Penn and starring Emile Hirsch as Emory College graduate Chris McCandless ’90. After graduating, McCandless donated his savings to charity, renamed himself Alexander Supertramp, and set out on a 22-month odyssey from Atlanta to Alaska. The story of his adventures in search of a self shorn of society or convention, and of his eventual death in the Denali wilderness, made the 1996 book by Jon Krakauer a bestseller and the movie one of last year’s most anticipated releases.

Penn did some filming during the 2007 Commencement, keeping as low a profile as possible. Very few knew he would be on campus, McClurkin says, because “We didn’t want there
to be any distraction from the ceremony. And throughout the experience Penn and River Road Entertainment were gracious, cooperative and sensible.” Despite dark glasses and a minimal eight-person crew, though, Penn inevitably attracted attention. “Over the course of the ceremony, more and more people began to recognize him,” says McClurkin. “But it became a positive experience. Penn was being so good about not taking away from the importance of the event.”

Later the actor-director dropped by a film studies department reception and chatted for a few minutes with faculty and new graduates. “He was friendly and completely unpretentious,” reports department chair Matthew Bernstein. Another tabloid reputation shot down in flames.

The Other Side of the Lens

The department’s own reputation at Emory belies its position as a relative newcomer on campus. Film Studies has existed as a program for just about twenty years, and as a department for barely five, but you wouldn’t know it from the popularity of its courses. “We have 400-500 students a year, and around fifty majors,” says Bernstein. There are also about a dozen candidates each for the MA and a PhD certificate. This spring the department offered a dozen courses, from Introduction to Film (“incredibly popular—we can’t meet demand”) to upper-level classes in the cinema of Germany and Korea.

Full-time faculty number just three: Bernstein, lecturer Eddy von Mueller, and associate professor Karla Oeler. If he had a wish list, Bernstein says, it would include a senior faculty member in feminist film criticism, another in international film to replace David Cook, who “created the program almost single-handedly” in the 1980s, and “someone full-time to teach film, television and new media.

“While I’m at it, we could use some devoted (rather than shared) studio space, and I’d love to see a screenwriting and filmmaking sequence as part of the major—or even as its own major.”

Karla Oeler agrees. “To build on our strengths, I’d like to see the department grow to six full-time faculty members.” Though her own specialty is classical film theory, Oeler says she’d be “very happy about” an expanded curriculum in screenwriting and film production. “I think it’s enormously helpful to students of film history, theory and criticism to have some firsthand experience of the formal choices and problems involved in making films.”

Oeler, whose current book project is tentatively titled A Grammar of Murder: Violent Scenes and Film Form, points out that “Many early film theorists and critics were also filmmakers. Knowing how to make a film can enrich the way one writes about it.”

Just as there seems to be no departmental warfare over the competing claims of theory and practice, there is no reflex preference for classical over contemporary forms. Two of Bernstein’s favorite recent movies are The Queen, which earned Helen Mirren an Academy Award, and the German film The Lives of Others, which took last year’s Oscar for Best Foreign Film. “I’m not a historian-snob,” Bernstein says. “I think people are making great films now.” He addresses both old and new forms as author (his fifth book, due next February, looks at the Leo Frank murder case) and as reviewer for Film Quarterly.

Eddy von Mueller fits right in. Over coffee recently he remarks, “Everything I know that’s worth knowing I learned watching cartoons as a kid,” and he’s at least half serious. Von Mueller has written a book called The Acme Aesthetic: The Impact of Animation on Contemporary Cinema and has worked as an animator and illustrator, as well as writing, directing and producing for television and film. (Ask him about his sock puppet play.) Whether it’s Road Runner, Road Warrior or Thunder Road, he’s likely to know it from the inside out.

Von Mueller shares his department’s interest in all aspects of film, and this spring is teaching both History of Film and Narrative Fiction Filmmaking. “The best directors, actors, and animators think about and understand the art,” he says, adding that academics need “a sense of the realpolitik of making movies.”

Studying film from the creator’s viewpoint also gives students a feel for some of the ways we can be manipulated, says Von Mueller. “Film and other visual media have such an impact on us all, but we’re largely unaware of how. Paradoxically, I think media awareness may be at an all-time high, but media literacy is in danger.

“We definitely have a strong program for providing students with historical and critical perspective. But it’s also good to understand the industry’s tools—to become bilingual.”

The Languages of Film

In the same spirit, a variety of academic dialects inflect film classes at Emory. Cross-disciplinarity is a vivid reality in some precincts of the modern American university, more a trendy catchphrase in others. But in film studies at Emory there’s no question which applies. Professors who teach as affiliated faculty hail from departmental homes as disparate as sociology, German literature, visual arts, and creative writing. A course in the business school, “The Art and the Possible: Technology and Film,” was offered a few years back.
Film studies invites this kind of border crossing, as does film itself. “It’s the nature of film to speak to a range of disciplines,” Oeler says. “We have students who are in the business school and the law school. I’ve been on honors committees for students whose projects brought film together with philosophy or anthropology. I think the promise that Emory holds for film studies is the ease with which faculty from various departments can work together.”

One of these collaborations, between Bernstein and Dana White of the Institute for Liberal Arts, is called “Segregated Cinema in a Southern City.” Their study examines film culture in Atlanta from the era of segregation onward, considering several brands of politics—local, national and industry—in gauging the effect of censorship and social attitudes on a film’s distribution and reception. Prominent topics are the Atlanta openings of Gone With the Wind in 1939 and Driving Miss Daisy half a century later. The project has yielded an upper-level film course and will eventually result in a book.

Even given all this productive cross-pollination, the physics department wouldn’t seem the likeliest place to list a film course. But this spring Von Mueller is teaching “Science in Film” with Sidney Perkowitz, Candler Professor of Physics. As both an upper-level elective and a freshman seminar, the course has attracted a mix of science and humanities students. Perkowitz thinks the “dual approach” works well. “Our teaching methods complement each other nicely—the non-science people learn some basic science, and the science people get to think about the policy implications of their subjects. Everybody learns something about film and how to think critically about the media.”

Students work from two texts, including Perkowitz’s book Hollywood Science, and watch a dozen films in their entirety plus excerpts from fifty others. By the end, they know something about contemporary issues such as global warming and genetic engineering, and a great deal about the ways scientists and their work are portrayed in popular culture. In the final class, the professors award “Golden Eagles and Turkeys” to examples of the best and worst onscreen science. “By then,” Perkowitz says, “the class knows pretty well where I stand on The Core.”

Film also enlivens many Emory classrooms unaffiliated with film studies. Patrick Allitt, professor of history and director of the Center for Teaching and Curriculum, has taught freshman seminars on the American west and Vietnam which added half a dozen films to the required reading and discussion. “In both cases,” he says, “one of our themes was to study the fictionalization of real episodes in American history.”

Anthropology professor Peter Brown has twice offered a one-credit class called “AIDS in Africa Through Film” with colleagues from history and public health. He calls the experience “wonderful.” Brown thinks films are “a good entry point” for learning about complicated issues, and he hopes in the future “to have a regular global health film series for undergraduates.”

Jim Grimsley, director of Emory’s creative writing program, has still another angle on the movie business. His 1995 novel Dream Boy has just been filmed, an experience that he too calls “wonderful,” though he admits to some trepidation about the result, which will premiere at the Berlin Film Festival. “There will be changes from my book that I won’t know about until I see them. Once I sold the rights I had nothing to do with what happened. “The movie process,” he offers, “loves fiction writers, but only at a distance.”

One way to maintain creative control, of course, is to direct your own work. John Ammerman, associate professor of theater studies, has incorporated cinematic elements, and at times actual film, into his plays Life Goes On and Slapping Bernard, both of which premiered at Theater Emory. With creative lighting, costumes, set design and direction, those productions worked to recreate the feel of 1920s black-and-white silent movies and 1940s film noir.

“I’ve always been a movie fan,” Ammerman says, “even when I was very young. There were only a few TV stations where I grew up near Detroit, but I remember one, out of Windsor, Ontario, that was always showing movies. Carole Lombard, Bette Davis, John Garfield, Humphrey Bogart… I used to love Errol Flynn.”

In the mid-1980s Ammerman started blending techniques from theater, mime and film. “I was always interested in the impression movies make,” he says, “and I’ve been intrigued with how to take stylistic elements from film and change them to suit the demands of a 3-D experience. We’re all familiar with certain moods or lighting from the movies. But suddenly you’re in the same room with it.”

Ammerman could be speaking for any number of Emory’s faculty, staff and students when he adds, “I’m not just trying to get people to come to the theater—though that’s always good too. I’m a movie fan myself. It’s really fun to have one foot in both worlds.”
Archway angles from Pitts Library and Carlos Hall offer a binocular view of the quadrangle.
Cynthia Willett, professor and chair of philosophy, studies political ethics, moral philosophy, and American social thought. Author or editor of three previous books, she sits on the executive board of the American Philosophical Society. She joined the Emory faculty in 1996.

Excerpt:

Humor is rarely innocent. It can draw much of its energizing force from fueling antagonisms and this can be a legitimate thing to do.

The question concerning ridicule is when and where to draw the line. With the growing inequities of globalization (not to mention our own rather compromising dependence on oil),

Recent Emory College Faculty Books

Edna Bay, coed. States of Violence: Politics, Youth and Memory in Contemporary Africa.
Peter Bing, coed. Brill’s Companion to Hellenistic Epigram, Down to Philip.
Cheryl Crowley, ed. Yosa Buson’s Imagined Landscapes.
Marshall Duke and Stephen Nowicki, Jr. Will I Ever Fit In?
Astrid Eckert, coed. The German Archival Profession and National Socialism.
Sander Gilman, Brenda Schildgen and Zhou Gang. Other Renaissances.
Anna Grimshaw, ed. A Majestic Innings: The Selected Cricket Writings of C.L.R. James.
refraining from mocking the Islamic world would seem to be more than a matter of mere taste. Ridicule derives some of its pleasure and power from waving a flag of superiority over another. This is not a very democratic move for a democratic culture to make…. Unfortunately[,] theorists and politicians often refuse to discuss any limits on ridicule at all. It seems that politically correct lefties who warn against insulting speech just can’t enjoy a good joke….

Such a rigid defense of ridicule colludes with an ignorance of the political and social power of laughter, a power that has much to do with timing and situation. Comedy can be a force for freedom. It can expose to ridicule the ignorance and arrogance of power. But comedy can also augment that same blind arrogance, allowing those with power to eliminate liberties for others. Consider the prevalence of jokes about welfare moms and their crack babies in the 1980s and ‘90s and the dismantling of the welfare state that followed. Laughter can disenfranchise the weak and prop up the powerful. On the other hand, the edgy black humor of stand-up comedians like Richard Pryor or Dave Chappelle, the playfully subversive laughter of queer camp, and, perhaps more surprisingly, even the standard fare of romantic Hollywood film comedy can offer a larger vision of freedom than liberalism’s rights talk typically allows….

The value of comedy for freedom is that its attention is focused on the social sphere…. In comedy the unfree character is not typically the one who refuses to give her life a coherent rational plan and succumbs to dependency upon others. The unfree character more likely suffers from such social vices as vanity, arrogance, self-absorption, or greed and learns of her self-deception through others. Indeed, what the philosopher might otherwise praise as the rational man may come across in comedy as the straight-man if not the blind fool while the Hollywood screwball may turn out to bear much of the comic insight…. Abstract discussions of liberal freedom focus too narrowly on the self-enclosed, rational individual. Paradox though it may be, freedom often finds its happy ending in our social bonds….

A comic ethics of subversion and re-engagement begins from the premise that we are enmeshed in economies, histories, and life-dramas not entirely of our own making. Webs of connection place demands upon us. These demands carry a distinct type of normative force that may extend beyond the narrow range of liberalism’s moral concerns. Liberal moral obligations are typically articulated in terms of an “ought,” while the libidinously charged obligations of the comic realm appear as those of a “should,” and are typically viewed as less a matter of morals than of manners. From the moral view of liberalism, the normative realm of manners may appear to be superficial and conventional and an unlikely source for a political ethics. In fact, the realm of social manners is essential for democracy…. In general, the social virtues may be more a matter of social manners than moral obligation (much depends upon the degree and nature of the harm) but they are not for that reason any less essential than economic or political elements of freedom. Freedom is just that complex….

Claire Nouvet, coed. Minima Memoria: In the Wake of Jean-François Lyotard.
Cynthia Patterson, ed. Antigone’s Answer.
Mark Risjord, coed. Handbook of Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology.
Mark Sanders, coed. Sterling A. Brown’s A Negro Looks at the South.
Allen Tullos, ed. The Southern Changes Digital Archive.
Equally powerful, however, was the resilience of the Liberians he met. “It brings tears to your eyes to talk to people who have been through so much, who have such will and spirit to put their lives back together—to go to school again, to start small businesses, to rebuild their houses.”

It was that hope for recovery in several world regions that inspired the States at Regional Risk (SARR) project, led by Knauft along with some faculty colleagues and graduate students. The Carnegie Foundation provided funding for the $483,276 project, which runs from January 2008 to August 2011. SARR aims to bring together scholars, practitioners, policy makers, and constituents in areas of instability or civil war in recent years, in hopes of cultivating networks of influence that bridge research and practical engagement to foster recovery. It focuses on West Africa, East-Central Africa, South and Central Asia, and parts of the Americas.

“A lot of the literature deals with the nation-state as a unit of analysis,” Knauft explains. “Some analysts have tried to look at various countries, gather quantitative data of various kinds, and aggregate these into an assessment of whether a state has become more or less stable (or stayed the same) during the past year. Those at the bottom of the list, the most unstable and uncivil, are said to have failed.

“We wanted to complicate that. These are obviously regional conflicts, and it's very hard to treat them only at the level of the nation-state. And the conflicts travel across regions, so the relationship between Sierra Leone and Liberia and Guinea and the Ivory Coast, for instance, is crucial.”

Key to the project will be workshops and conferences in the target areas involving academic specialists, political leaders, and on-the-ground practitioners from humanitarian organizations. Graduate students will also receive career training that combines scholarly understanding and practical engagement in states at risk.

In fact, Knauft credits two young scholars for charting new intellectual territory for SARR. Martha Carey, a student in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts, and Jean-Hervé Jezequel, a history department lecturer, both worked for Doctors Without Borders in Africa and have used their studies to make more intellectual sense of their experiences.

“I've become increasingly convinced in my own work that theory and practice need to be superseded,” Knauft says. “And I've been encouraged in that by my students who in their lives are putting together practical engagement and scholarship in very creative ways. We have a tremendous capacity at Emory to bring those things together.”

by Allison Adams
Notable Faculty Achievements

Eugene Agichtein, assistant professor of mathematics and computer science, received the Best Paper Award at the ACM International Conference on Management of Data.

Janice Akers, lecturer in theater studies, won the Atlanta Public Schools ArtsNOW Vessel Award.

Robert Bartlett, professor of political science, Gregg Orloff, senior lecturer in biology, Barbara Patterson, senior lecturer in religion, George Staib, lecturer in dance, and Matthew Weinschenk, senior lecturer in chemistry, received Phi Beta Kappa recognitions for Excellence in Teaching.

Kyle Beardsley, assistant professor of political science, won the Peggy Quon Dissertation Award at the University of California, San Diego.

Michele Benzi, professor of mathematics and computer science, won the Best Paper Award (with B. Ucar) at the International Markov Anniversary Meeting.

Simon Blakey, assistant professor of chemistry, won the Lilly New Faculty Award recognizing promising new faculty members.

David Bright, professor emeritus of classics and comparative literature, received the Doctorate of Canon Law (honoris causa) from St. John’s College, Winnipeg, Canada.

Martine Brownley, director of the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry, was named Hart Distinguished Visiting Professor of Humanities at Agnes Scott College.

Martin Buss, professor emeritus of religion, was honored by a symposium in his name on Hebrew Bible and Comparative Religion.

Robert Chirinko, professor of economics, was named a Visiting Fellow at the European University (Florence).

Frans De Waal, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Primate Behavior, was named “One of the World’s 100 Most Influential People” by Time magazine.

Mikhail Epstein, Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Cultural Theory and Russian Literature, was the subject of a special issue of the journal Studies in East European Thought.

Joyce Flueckiger, professor of religion, won the Georgia Writers’ Association Gaya Award for biography for her book In Amma’s Healing Room.

Eric Goldstein, associate professor of history, received the Theodore Saloutos Prize for his The Price of Whiteness, which was also a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award and the Weinberg Institute Book Award in American Jewish Studies.

Carole Hahn, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Comparative Education and Social Studies Education, received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Indiana University School of Education.

Craig Hill, Goodrich C. White Professor of Inorganic Chemistry, was named a Wilsmore Fellow of the University of Melbourne (Australia) and a member of Academia Europaea.

Stefan Krause, assistant professor of economics, received a Recognition for Excellent Teaching by the Emory Scholars Program.

Howard Kushner, Nat C. Robertson Distinguished Professor of Science and Society, was keynote speaker at the National Tourette Association Meeting, 2007.

John Lennon, professor of music, received a BMI grant, an annual award based on broadcasts and performances.

Michael McCormick, chemistry, received the Andrew Heiskell Award for Innovations in International Education.

Frank McDonald, senior lecturer in organic chemistry, was named Minister of Education and Science with a fellowship at the Institute of Chemical Research of Catalonia.

Walter Melion, Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Art History, has accepted an invitation to be Fellow-in-Residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) from September 2008 to June 2009.

Gary Motley, lecturer in music, was selected Composer-in-Residence at J.C. Young Middle School and named a State of the Arts Featured Artist by Georgia Public Television.

Laura Namy, associate professor of psychology, has been named editor of the Journal of Cognition and Development.
More Notable Faculty Achievements

Stephen Nowicki, Jr., Candler Professor of Psychology, was named Mentor of the Year by the Southeastern Psychological Association.

David Nugent, professor of anthropology, had his co-edited Companion to the Anthropology of Politics named an Outstanding Academic Title by Choice magazine.

Lynn Nygaard, associate professor of psychology, will serve as associate editor of the journal Perception and Psychophysics.

Michael Owens, assistant professor of political science, was named a Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Research on Poverty.

Albert Padwa, William Patterson Timmie Professor of Chemistry, has been elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Gyanendra Pandey, Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of History, was elected Visiting Professor at the Institute of Asian Studies, Amsterdam.

Bianca Premo, assistant professor of history, received the Thomas McGann Prize for the best book on Latin America, 2007.

Vernon Robbins, professor of religion, was appointed an Extraordinary Professor at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, School of Theology.

Paul Rubin, Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Economics, gave the Pitts Lecture at the University of South Carolina Medical School, September 2007.

Bradd Shore, Goodrich C. White Professor of Anthropology, was named a Distinguished Lecturer by the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania.

Susan Socolow, Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Latin American History, was elected to the Argentine Academy of History, the first American woman to earn this honor.

Recent Faculty Grants

Patricia Bauer, psychology—National Institutes of Health
Mark Bauerlein, English—Center for the American University, Center for Excellence in Higher Education
Bethany Blackstone, political science—National Science Foundation
Simon Blakey, chemistry—American Chemical Society
Joel Bowman, chemistry—U.S. Department of Energy
Patricia Brennan, psychology—National Institutes of Health
Victor Corces, biology—Hughes Medical Institute, Philip Morris, National Institutes of Health
Joseph Crespino, history—National Academy of Education
Kimberly David, chemistry—National Institutes of Health
Tim Dowd, sociology—National Science Foundation
Micheal Giles, political science—National Science Foundation
Lance Gunderson, environmental studies—UT Battelle, LLC
Eldad Haber, Mathematics & Computer Science—National Science Foundation
Craig Hadley, anthropology—National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health
Craig Hill, chemistry—U.S. Department of Energy
Michael Heaven, chemistry—U.S. Air Force
Heather Jamerson, sociology—National Science Foundation
John Kingston, anthropology—National Science Foundation
Bruce Knauf, ICIS—Carnegie Corporation of NY
Steven L’Hernault, biology—National Institutes of Health
Tianquan Lian, chemistry—U.S. Department of Energy, National Science Foundation
Lanny Liebeskind, chemistry—National Institutes of Health
Dennis Liotta, chemistry—National Institutes of Health
Stefan Lutz, chemistry—American Chemical Society, Georgia Institute of Technology
David Lynn, chemistry—U.S. Department of Energy
Joseph Manns, psychology—National Institutes of Health
Patricia Marsteller, Center for Science Education—National Institutes of Health
Djamaladdin Musaev, chemistry—U.S. Department of Energy
Michael Rich, political science—Annie E. Casey Foundation
Elaine Walker, psychology—National Institutes of Health
Cynthia Willett, philosophy—The Bill and Bernie Marcus Foundation
Evan S. Bates, 82C
President, Emory College Alumni Board

Just over twenty-five years ago, I graduated from Emory College and embarked on that journey to the land known to students then and now as “the real world.” One thing I’m sure I have in common with most Emory alumni is that I was well prepared. Emory taught us to think deeply, and sometimes skeptically, about ideas; we learned to appreciate rigorous inquiry and the importance of good communication. Many of us found that the Emory name opened doors for us. More importantly, many of us made lifelong friends while here.

These days I find myself returning to campus more often as president of the Emory College Alumni Board (ECAB), which was formed last year by a group of College alumni. These individuals (see page 30) have been working diligently to lay the foundation for our alumni community and to serve as advocates of the College and University by articulating the strategic plan and College initiatives. We hope to engage College alumni and connect them back to Emory.

One of our goals is to help new graduates feel connected to other alumni by providing them with information about Emory events in cities across the U.S. Local alumni chapter activities, visiting professor events, and competitions involving Emory teams are just a few of the ways alumni can stay involved in the larger Emory community. President James Wagner has visited many cities this year, bringing alumni together to hear about Emory’s culture and community as well as its vision of the future. Meeting with high school students who are considering Emory is another excellent opportunity for alumni to have a meaningful impact on Emory’s future. The re-designed EagleNet website (http://www.alumni.emory.edu/eaglenet) provides a portal for finding out about local Emory events, as well as a place to reconnect with old classmates and make career contacts.

This year we’re enthusiastically supporting the pilot program of the Emory Alumni Interview Project in Chicago, and there are plans to introduce it to other cities in the next few years. This will become a great way for alumni to actively reconnect with Emory. You’ll be hearing more about this project soon, and I encourage you to take part.

I hope you’ll take advantage of all that Emory has to offer its alumni. Through the Emory Career Network, offering resources in networking and career management, and through EagleNet, linking alumni and Emory events, you will hear more about Emory and its future than ever before.

If you have not been back to campus recently, I urge you to visit during Homecoming Weekend in the fall or Commencement Weekend (May 8–12) in the spring. The changes on campus are amazing, yet the campus “feel” remains as fine as ever. I look forward to talking with you about ways we can stay connected and develop an even stronger base of support. I have no doubt, given the caliber of alumni that Emory has produced over the years, that the ECAB has a very promising future.

Evan S. Bates

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Evan S. Bates
Emory College Alumni Board

Carole Ann Alvarez, Foster City, CA
David Alvarez 64C, Foster City, CA
Stephen Andrews 79C, Atlanta, GA
Shana Basnight 06C, Decatur, GA
Evan Bates 82C, Dallas, TX
Bruce Berg 78C 83M, Bryn Mawr, PA
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Ray McKinney 66C, Winston-Salem, NC
Keiffer Mitchell 90C, Baltimore, MD
Marjorie Nunn 61C, Atlanta, GA
Susan Stubbs Robert 67OX 69C, Atlanta, GA
Charles Rosenzweig 80C 80G, Warren, NJ
Jodi Sydell Rosenzweig 80C, Warren, NJ
Ann Walsh Shannon 70C, Seattle, WA
Chandra Stephens-Albright 85C, Atlanta, GA
Philip Strauss 90C, San Francisco, CA
Chris Tobin 94C, New Orleans, LA
Frans van der Lee 98C, Washington, DC
Beth Volin 76C, Oak Park, IL
Gary Wainer 75C, Oak Park, IL
Lark Will 81C, Jacksonville, FL
Kendall Wood 92C, Acworth, GA
Lark Will 81C

“Education is the silver bullet,” said Lark Will 81C when asked recently why she participates in the Adopt-a-Scholar Program, which makes scholarship money immediately available to a current Emory student. “Education of our youth is very important, and everyone deserves an education,” Will explained from her office at Fidelity Technology Solutions in Jacksonville, FL, where she is a senior vice president. In honor of her late sister, a teacher, Will created the Mary Lou Briska Scholarship. “My sister was one of those rare gifted individuals who could inspire students,” she said. “Mary Lou was a music major, and coincidentally the first scholarship recipient has a strong interest in dance.”

Will has also included Emory in her estate plan, bequeathing $100,000 to the University. “Emory is like my family,” she said. She also feels inspired to give, in part, because “President Wagner is not afraid to take risks. He brings up topical issues and is not afraid of controversy. I want to support that.”

Eighteen months ago Will was asked to join the Emory College Alumni Board. She accepted and enjoys identifying ways to bring others into the Emory alumni community. “Our goal is to get connected with alumni and stay that way,” she said. “We all need to give back. We don’t exist alone or live on an island. I feel a sense of obligation.”

by Tamela Yeargin

Paul McLarty 63C 66L

When the Emory chapter of the Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) fraternity was named “top chapter” among 124 others in the U.S. last fall, Paul McLarty 63C 66L had good reason to be proud. Since 1988, the Decatur-based lawyer and alumni chapter leader (who also received top ATO honors) has made it his personal mission to return the ATO house to its glory days when he was a member in the early 1960s.

In the process, he and his wife, Ruth, have come to represent “the best of our Emory ambassadors,” says Allison Dykes, vice president of alumni relations. They employ students in their businesses (his law firm and her title company), host gatherings for students, open their house to guests at the Highlands Weekend event, serve on the Emory Alumni Board—Paul will become president in September—and donate to the Miller-Ward Alumni House.”
Dr. Woody Cobbs knew the importance of using good tools when he worked with his hands. He was a respected and well-loved cardiologist and professor at the Emory Clinic for over 40 years. With his wife, Honor Cobbs, he collected hand-tooled furniture and carvings, especially work created by medieval artisans. They also enjoyed searching for rare native plants to incorporate into their large wooded yard in the Druid Hills neighborhood.

After her husband’s death in the fall of 2006, Mrs. Cobbs decided to make a gift that would honor his love of music and art. Last summer she created the Dr. B. Woodfin Cobbs, Jr. Music Endowment, which will generate funds to purchase fine musical instruments to be used by students in the music department.

Stephen Crist, the chair of the Department of Music, considers the gift “both a forward-looking and an exceedingly practical memorial. “The lifeblood of the music department’s burgeoning instrumental music program is the instruments themselves,” says Crist. “We purchase them on an ongoing basis because the department cannot rely solely on student musicians to furnish every instrument that is needed.”

“This extraordinarily creative gift is a most beautiful way to leave a permanent legacy of the Cobbs’ love of music and support for Music at Emory,” adds Will Ransom, Mary Emerson Professor of Piano. “Our students, faculty, and audiences will all benefit in perpetuity, and we are all incredibly moved and grateful for this wonderful bequest.”

If you would like to contribute to this endowment for purchasing fine musical instruments for students, please contact Jeff Prince, Senior Director of Development, Emory College, 404-727-4494, jprince@emory.edu.
Peace and Minds

From "Cartooning for Peace," a traveling exhibition sponsored at Emory by the Claus M. Halle Institute for Global Learning and running from Oct-Feb in the Schatten Gallery of Woodruff Library. Artists, (clockwise from top): Michael Kichka (Israel), Plantu (France), Norio (Japan), Ann Telnaes (U.S.)
Dooley

This arresting sculpture by Washington state artist Matthew Gray Palmer will be installed in mid-September on the plaza between the Cox Hall bridge and the Anthropology building. Palmer, winner of a design contest for the work, calls it “Dooley Goes on Forever.”