Notabilia

- Benjamin Woodring '06 is the first recipient of the annual $2,500 Eunice M. Lebowitz Cohen Scholarship in Classical Studies. Ben will be the Lebowitz Cohen Scholar for the academic year 2004/2005. Eunice M. Lebowitz Cohen, who developed the Brandeis Fine Arts Slide Library from 1961-1992, has generously funded not only this yearly scholarship, but also two $500 undergraduate prizes awarded at Commencement.

- Dr. Yumna Khan has joined the department faculty this spring 2005 semester as (Visiting) Lecturer in Classical Studies. She is teaching Latin 20B while Professor Patricia A. Johnston is on a semester’s sabbatical.

- At a joint session at the annual meetings of the American Philological Association and Archaeological Institute of America in Boston this January, Professor Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow ran a workshop on "Pompeii: Exploding into the Curriculum," which offered concrete examples for how projects on Pompeii can be added to a wide range of courses in the humanities, social sciences, creative arts, and sciences.

- Dr. Greg Nagy, Francis Jones Professor of Classical Greek Literature & Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University and Director, Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington, was the first speaker in our new annual lecture series, the Jennifer Eastman Lecture in Classical Studies. A world-renowned Homeric scholar, Professor Nagy spoke on The Three Songs of Demodokos in Odyssey viii: A Reassessment, on Wednesday, February 9 at 5:00 p.m. in Schiffman 219. Jennifer Eastman ‘68, an attorney, teacher, and writer (who fell in love with Greece during the summer between her junior and senior years at Brandeis) has generously endowed the lectureship.

- Professor Leonard Muellner was invited to speak at a colloquium at the Institut des Hautes Études en Amérique Latine on "Les Formes de la Parole" (Forms of Speech) in November. His lecture, "Faute tragique? Ou parole métonymique?," addressed the way in which a built-in cultural imperative to read the story of Achilles as that of a flawed tragic character causes us to mistranslate the text of Homer and to misread the thought process that leads Achilles to accede to his friend Patroklos’ request to wear his armor and fight in his place.


- Dr. Ada Cohen ’84, now Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Dartmouth College, returns to campus to deliver a spring 2005 Martin Weiner Lecture. Alexander’s Travels, from Home to Home Page. The event is open to the Brandeis community and the public at large and takes place at Pollack Auditorium, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 30. This event kicks off our spring Symposium on Alexander the Great.

- Professor Patricia A. Johnston edited and published the 50th annual volume of Vergilius (2004), the journal of the Vergilian Society. Included is the Annual Vergilian Bibliography, essays about Horace on Vergil, Augustus and Vergil, and a (new) poem in Latin.

- As part of our weeklong "Symposium on Alexander the Great," a panel discussion will be held on Thursday, March 31, 2005. "The Film Alexander: Great or Grating?" -- A Panel Discussion on the Historic Figure, the Film, and the Film's Message" will be considered by faculty experts from around the campus: Professors Pamela Allara (Film Studies); Paul Morrison (English Literature); Ibrahim Sundiata (African and Afro-American Studies); and Cheryl Walker (Classics). The Classical Studies Department’s co-sponsors for this event are the Departments of Fine
Current Faculty Projects

We asked each of our faculty to select one project or book on which they are currently working to discuss in brief. The results reveal a striking glimpse into the rich and varied work in progress at the Department of Classical Studies at Brandeis.

Ann Olga Kolosi-Ostrow

Ann Olga Kolosi-Ostrow is currently working on the final edit of her book, The Archaeology of Sanitation in Roman Italy: Water, Sewers, and Toilets. After her considerable research experience with Roman baths and with Roman urban water supplies, a more intimate look at sanitary systems seemed a logical next step. Public latrines became increasingly more visible as architectural entities in the Roman urban infrastructure as time moved on. They also became more lavish and more expensively designed, perhaps as a direct result of changing ideas about health and sanitation. If we free ourselves from the notion that the mere presence of sewers and public facilities demonstrates a sanitary ideal in the Roman city, the ruins take on a new meaning in the urban infrastructure. It is that "new meaning" that this book pursues.

Patricia A. Johnston

Patricia A. Johnston is currently completing a translation of the Aeneid. Unlike most translations of Vergil's great epic poem, which tend to be done in prose or in iambic pentameter, this translation is in dactylic hexameter, the meter in which Vergil wrote and indeed, in which all ancient epic poetry was written. At the same time, she continues her investigation of the ancient mystery cults, particularly as manifested in the Roman world, and their reflection in classical literature. Cultural Responses to the Volcanic Landscape, a collection of essays that she organized and co-edited, is scheduled to be published by June, and her article on "Vergili" will appear in the widely regarded Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition, by Mircea Eliade, edited by Lindsay Jones, due out from Macmillan in June.

Yumna Z.N. Khan

Yumna Khan is currently preparing for publication her doctoral research on Dionysius of Alexandria's Guide to the Inhabited World, a Greek didactic poem of the second century C.E. The poem was first dated to the reign of the emperor Hadrian (C.E. 117-138) by one of two acrostics which were discovered within the poem in the late 19th century. The first of these acrostics tells the reader the name and provenance of the author, and the second refers to Hadrian and also to the god Hermes. The mention of Hermes has proved puzzling. Since Hermes was the messenger-god, some see it as an indication of the didactic function of the poem. Others regard the reference as dating the poem to ca. A.D. 130, when, after the death of his protégé Antinous, Hadrian began to promote the cult of Hermes-Antinous. While acknowledging that both explanations may be valid, Yumna Khan has stressed the importance of recognizing the Graeco-Egyptian milieu in which the poem was composed, and in which the syncretic deity Hermes-Trismegistus was widely regarded as creator of the world.

Leonard C. Muellner

Leonard C. Muellner is working on the second edition of his monograph on a Greek word, eukhōmai, which means ‘to pray’, ‘to assert (accurately and proudly)’, and also ‘to make a legal assertion.’ The monograph was itself a revision and expansion of his doctoral dissertation. He calls this process "like going back in time. Trying to figure out what to update and what to leave alone is not easy." For a new book, he will combine two previous articles on Homeric metaphor with a new essay on metonymy, thus rounding out Studies in Homeric Metaphor and Metonymy. Another major preoccupation is a group translation of the Iliad. He is currently working on Book 4, the aristeia of Diomedes. Book 1, which is in its final form, will soon be available online.

Cheryl L. Walker

Cheryl Walker, who has long worked on Roman hostages, is writing an article on the legend of Cloelia, an escaped, recaptured, and freed hostage in early republican Rome. Legend or actual historical event? Nonetheless, the image of this courageous young Roman girl swimming or fording the Tiber by horseback, as Livy tells it, still captivates, especially when one considers she broke an oath in doing so. Cloelia certainly qualifies as one of history's outstanding early negotiators, says Walker, as her Etruscan captor, Porsenna, agreed not only to uphold the treaty under which she and other hostages had been sent to him, but also to free further hostages of Cloelia's choosing. In a sign of the times, she chose to free not girls, but all boys, who were widely deemed more vulnerable as captives. Given her age, gender, and oath-breaking, Cloelia's public fame is anomalous in stories of the time, and of particular interest to Walker, who also studies ancient women.
The Department of Classical Studies is truly fortunate to have the interest and support of donors who fund a scholarship, fellowships, awards, and a new lecture series in Classical Studies. We honor these friends of the department with this first in a series of profiles.

Eunice M. Lebowitz Cohen graduated from Boston University with a B.A. in Art (with a minor in Literature) and an M.A. in Art History. From 1961 to 1992, she virtually single-handedly designed and developed the Brandeis University Fine Arts Slide Library. While at Brandeis, she was a Community Lecturer in Opera, American Musical History, and Art History. She also served as Music Reference Librarian at WCRB-FM, the classical music station in Waltham, from 1994-1996.

When Eunice was the slide librarian at Brandeis, she knew everyone—from senior faculty down to the newest undergrad. If any faculty member was struggling with the mysteries of the slide library, Eunice was always willing to help out. And if you were looking for that one special view of the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, Eunice would regale you with news of the opera, local theater, or the latest best seller on the New York Times list as she directed you to the exact drawer and exact section marker where the slide resided. A visit to the slide library was like getting an injection of high classical culture—music, art, and literature all in one.

A world traveler and unabashed cosmopolite, Eunice is a life member and board member of the Brandeis University National Women’s Committee. Through this venue, she leads study groups, and lectures in Opera, Art History, and Classical Literature. She also participates in a Classical Reading Group and a Shakespeare reading and discussion group when at home in Florida.

Eunice has generously funded two awards and a scholarship for Brandeis undergraduates majoring in Classical Studies. She is working now with our Development office to develop an undergraduate fellowship for majors in Classical Studies.

The Jennifer Eastman Lecture, February 9, 2005: Greg Nagy on The Three Songs of Demodocus and the Styles of Epic Performance

The first annual Jennifer Eastman Lecture in Classical Studies took place on Wednesday, February 9th. A crowd of some 75 classicists and lovers of Classics packed Shifman 219 to hear famed Harvard Professor Greg Nagy speak on “The Three Songs of Demodokos in Odyssey viii: A Reassessment.” Attendees had already been armed with handouts of the relevant passages from Homer’s Odyssey and the Homeric Hymn to Apollo.

Using as an example the three songs sung by the bard Demodokos in Book viii of the Odyssey, Professor Nagy illustrated how the performance style of songs connected with the Trojan War experienced a number of changes over the centuries. An important concept, Professor Nagy explained, was that for hundreds of years before the Iliad and the Odyssey were written down, they were performed along with a series of other related stories. Originally, Homer was considered by the Greeks to be the author of all these stories, but after the 520s B.C.E., Homer’s name was linked only and exclusively with the Iliad and the Odyssey. The other works (the Iliou Persis, telling of the fall of Troy; the Aethiopis, telling of the death of Achilles; the Little Iliad, telling the story of the award of Achilles’ armor to Odysseus after his death and other stories; and several others) were credited to other authors with names like Arctinus of Miletus and Lesches of Lesbos. At the same time, Greek culture began to view the Homeric and non-Homeric poetic works differently. Professor Nagy explored the songs of Demodokos to explain and highlight this stylistic transformation and to provide an introduction to other types of epic poetry. In addition, he demonstrated, through the songs and their context within the Odyssey, the critical place that epic poetry held within the Greek festival and ritual culture. Demodokos’ manner of performance in the work illustrated the way these poems may have been delivered to an actual audience. These songs within a song gave an important picture of pre-520s B.C.E. epic poetry and its role in Greek life.

Professor Nagy’s lecture was engaging and easily accessible for both those with little experience with the epic and those with more extensive knowledge. He was able to demonstrate how scholars can use the Iliad, Odyssey, and other ancient texts to gain knowledge of how epic poetry evolved and functioned within the ancient Greek world. Because of Professor Nagy’s lecture, I know the next time I read one of the Homeric epics, I’ll be doing so with new eyes.

[See our "Photo Gallery," below, for scenes from the event and its aftermath.]

Our reporter, Catherine K. Baker’06, is majoring in Classical Art and Archaeology. One of three Undergraduate Department Representatives in Classics, she is pictured here in Capri, April 2004. She is one of the new Schiff Fellows for 2005/2006.
Upcoming Events

WEEK-LONG SYMPOSIUM ON ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Event I: Wednesday, March 30, 2005, 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
The Martin Weiner Lecture Series
co-sponsored by the Kraft-Hiatt Fund for Christian Studies
Ada Cohen '84, Associate Professor of Fine Arts at Dartmouth College
Alexander's Travels, from Home to Home Page
Location: Pollack Auditorium, Brandeis University

Event II: Thursday, March 31, 2005, 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Classical Studies Symposium Panel Discussion
Professors Pamela Allara (Film Studies), Paul Morrison (English), Ibrahim Sundiata (History), and Cheryl Walker (Classics)
The Film 'Alexander' -- Great or Grating?: A Panel Discussion on the Historic Figure, the Film, and the Film's Message
Location: Pollack Auditorium, Brandeis University

News from Around Campus: The Senior Thesis

Oh the life of a senior. Forget relaxed schedules, forget job searches and grad school, forget even senioritis. Senior year for me has been about one thing from the beginning (well, from the end of junior year really): my thesis. Toward the end of my junior year, I chose an advisor and then over the course of meeting after meeting (where she patiently let me brainstorm topic upon topic), I finally settled on a topic. Or so I thought. Here begins my advice for anyone considering a thesis: start early! Think about topics in your junior year, because over the summer, when you read that first book, it will be the beginning of a beautiful friendship with your new idea, or a horrible nightmare, and it is best to have time to change ideas your mind.

I began by thinking I could write chapters, volumes even, on equines in the Roman Empire. And then one day I went to the library. Something magical happened: I changed topics. I sent my advisor an excited email announcing that I had found the one thing I wanted to work on for the next (and last) 9 months of my undergraduate career. So, here is my second piece of advice: do some quick research right at the start, even over the summer.

My amazing discovery was that I could do work on classical veterinary medicine and method retention from ancient times through the classical period and down to the modern age. Having spent most of my non-thesis time last semester applying to veterinary school, this topic should have been obvious from the start, but sometimes it takes a patient advisor, a dusty classics dictionary, and a peaceful library to start you down the path to happy thesis work. Of all the things for which I am thankful, two top the list: first, my advisor (so choose wisely) and second, the senior thesis funding granted by DAS, which has allowed me to buy books and make photocopies to my heart's content. As for the one thing I wish I were doing better...well, I wish I were writing more. I have completed all my research, texts ranging from Xenophon to Cato to veterinary journals. I have an outline, and even some small chapters, but without the firm deadlines planned months in advance, I am afraid I would never get this work out of my head and down on paper where it belongs, which brings me to my third and last bit of wisdom: set personal goals and deadlines from the start.

As for my thesis itself, it still enchants me, and I understand now how people write whole books on subjects. I have expanded my original idea to include other species and refined the main focus so that I discuss a single technique at length. The practice, known by both the terms "blood-letting" and "phlebotomy," is recorded extensively in classic texts and persisted in practice by trained veterinarians until at least the 1940s. The presence of this sound, logical, and effective treatment proves that the profession I seek one day to join has its roots in the times and places I have loved studying at Brandeis. Proof once again that Classical Studies are vital and alive in so many aspects of our lives! And reassurance that no matter what I do and where I go from here, I will carry the classics with me.

Jessica R. Greenberg '05, who is double majoring in Biology and in Classical Art and Archaeology, is pictured here with with her Norwegian fjord horse Tianna. She will be attending the School of Veterinary Medicine at University of Glasgow next fall.
News from Abroad

Cambridge, England

I took the ancient registration fountain pen from the praelector and signed my name in the matriculation book of Pembroke College -- the same book once signed by Edmund Spenser. Such was my ceremonious initiation at Cambridge University. I was now free to explore the enchanting grounds. But it was also time to get to work and, in some ways, to demystify the famous institution. The Oxbridge system is built for the self-motivating student. Reading assignments often top 1,000 pages a week, coupled with an expectation to explore further sources on one's own. Of course, I only have one "class" to speak of, so the weekly work ends up being comparable to the typical five-course load at Brandeis. My focus for the Lent term is "17th Century Literature in its Historical and Political Context," under the supervision of Professor Erskine-Hill, a well-known authority on the subject. Professor Erskine-Hill has been kind enough to custom fit a course around my interests, including ancient Greek influences! He has found a way to include some extensions into ancient Greek in the curriculum. In the seventeenth century, writers like Chapman, Dryden, and Hobbes were all translating Homer. One of his assignments involves analysis of the men's different translations in relation to the various political persuasions of the time period. Professor Erskine-Hill has also suggested looking at the early modern English translation of Longinus’ "On the Sublime" in its historical context, with a peek at some of the original Greek passages as well.

Faculty and student interaction is at its peak in the more intimate setting of the one-on-one supervision, but there are also ongoing lectures delivered by Fellows from the University. For the Easter term, spanning from April through June, I plan to attend the following Classics lecture programs: "The Hellenistic World: Royal Power and Greek Identity," "Aristotle," and "Greek Metre." Lectures are once a week for the term, and usually do not encourage input from students. Additionally, I am officially becoming a member of "The Herodoteans," Cambridge University's Classical Society (I have joined the English Society as well). The society holds various Classics-related events, including talks, debates, and feasts.

Cambridge has been great thus far, but I still often miss the close and expert attention received from the Classics Department at Brandeis! I hope to make the most of my experience here and I recommend studying abroad to all students, as it is important to entertain multiple perspectives in any academic pursuit.

Benjamin Woodring ’06, who is majoring in Ancient Greek and English Literature, writes from Cambridge College, where he is studying spring term 2005. He is pictured here in "The Backs" of Cambridge University, with King's College Chapel in the background.

London, England

My year studying at University College London has been an invaluable experience for me. The British Museum is a mere five minutes away. The Petrie Museum is a part of the University's Institute of Archaeology; it was established to help train students of Egyptian archaeology, and any student at the Institute can make an appointment to study any of the objects outside of the museum's hours. These collections have enabled me to see in person the statues and artifacts of cultures I have been learning about for years. I try to visit both museums as often as I can.

As my background in the language and literature of the classical world is stronger than my grasp on the material culture, my archaeology courses here have done much to enrich my approach to antiquity. One of my courses, "Introduction to Archaeological Field Methods and Techniques," has been particularly eye-opening; it has made me realize how important excavations are to our understanding of the past, while at the same time made me aware of its imperfections and inability to be as objective and thorough as historians and classicists would like. The course ends this spring with a week-long session in which we will be doing actual field work at a real archaeological site: Barcombe Roman villa, in East Sussex. Digging amid the remains of a Roman villa in the English countryside was not what I pictured myself doing when I began learning Latin six years ago, but I know that once my week at the site is over, I will likely never look at a Latin text in quite the same way again.

Kathryn Harris ’06, who is majoring in Classical Art and Archaeology, writes from University College, London, where she is studying spring term 2005. She is pictured here in the British Museum, in front of one of the metopes on the south side of the Parthenon, which show the fight between the Centaurs and the Lapiths during the wedding feast of King Peirithoos.

Photo Gallery: Say Caseus

The Jennifer Eastman Lecture in February brought together about 75 classicists and lovers of Classical Studies. Figures of Greg Nagy lecturing are woven throughout the following series of photographs, with, from left to right: Row One: 1) Leonard Muellner and Eastman Lecturer Greg Nagy; 2) Leonard Muellner, flanked by Abby Porter ’04 and Sean Signore ’02; 3) Jennifer Eastman;
Call for Submissions

Nuntius has been designed not only to bring news to you, but also to serve as a vehicle through which to receive and pass on your input and ideas. Our intention is to reach and to reflect the entire Brandeis Classics community: faculty, students, alumni, donors, and lovers of Classical Studies. To that end, please let us know what you think about the publication and the kinds of news included in this, our first issue. We are most receptive to your ideas: cartoons, brief essays or discussion topics, classical anecdotes, department photos from way-back-when, etc. Please contact Janet Barry at jbarry@brandeis.edu with your news and ideas. Thank you!
Nota Bene

The title illustration on this e-newsletter was constructed from contiguous images of a detail from 'Peaches and Glass Jar,' a 50 C.E. fresco from Herculaneum, now housed at the Museo Nazionale Arcologico, Naples. Photographs: Eunice M. Lebowitz Cohen by Eunice M. Lebowitz Cohen; Catherine Baker '06 by Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow, in Capri, July 2004; Jessica Greenberg '05 by Anne Marie Casper; Kathryn Harris '06 by Chetan Hertzig, February 2005; Ben Woodring '06 by Dena Leeman '06, late February 2005. Photos from the Jennifer Eastman Lecture featured in our "Photo Gallery," were taken by Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Catherine Baker '06.

The quotation following our title is taken from Eunuchus, by 2nd century B.C.E. Roman playwright Publius Terentius Afer (Terence).

back to top

Department of Classical Studies, March 2005.