

From: Margaret Morganroth Gullette <mgullette@msn.com>
Subject: **Margaret Gullette Student-Partner Application form Spring 2012**
Date: December 13, 2011 10:43:26 AM EST
To: Kristen Mullin <mullin@brandeis.edu>

STUDENT PARTNER INFORMATION

MARGARET MORGANROTH GULLETTE

Phone #1: **617-965-2164 I prefer phone for making appointments, especially if changes need to be made at the last minute.**

Brandeis Affiliation: **WSRC, Resident Scholar**

Living Address: [REDACTED]

E-mail: **mgullette@msn.com**

Are there dates during the semester when you will be traveling/unreachable? Please specify.

From January 6 to February 13 I will be in Nicaragua, monitoring a Free High School for Adults that I find funding for. Otherwise I should be in this country all spring.

Have you participated in the Student-Scholar Partnership in prior years?
Yes, for many years.

Will you be continuing with a student partner from a previous semester?
No.

Do you have a particular new student candidate or candidates with whom you would like to work? **No.**

What is the approximate time frame you anticipate for arranging and completing student applicant interview appointments? (Hiring deadline is rolling).

Immediately. I can be reached via email still in Nicargua, and can interview students on Skype.

What is your timeline for work to commence on your research project this semester? **Immediately.**

Scholars and faculty members participating in the SSP Program are required to meet with their student research assistants on a weekly basis for supervision. Please explain how you will fulfill this commitment. Where

do you plan to hold supervision meetings? **Usually we have coffee or lunch at Shapiro Café. I prefer Tuesdays or Thursdays. If the student has a car, sometimes we meet at my house in Newton Corner.**

Profile of a Suitable Student Candidate:
Required

Related coursework **Background in critical thinking/ reading. Background in social construction of self/society (courses in gender and sexuality, soc, anthro, history, media, can provide good background). Background in anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-ageism helpful. Being at least a junior, with two years of course work behind you, is useful.**

technical skills **Ability to read/edit carefully.**

Ability to construct a Website would be desirable but is not a prerequisite. See below, # 4.

past experience **editing, researching** _____

similar professional interest _____ **Useful but not necessary. As above: Background in critical thinking/ reading. Background in social construction of self/society (courses in gender and sexuality, soc, anthro, history, media, can provide good background). Background in anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-ageism helpful.**

other (please indicate). **Highly responsible person. Trained skepticism about media, scientific "information" useful. Since I will be away for several weeks, the Partner needs to be the kind of person who is able to work without much supervision at times. Since my editors sometimes have short deadlines, the Partner needs to be a quick study.**

Background: I am a writer and cultural critic who works on age issues. I am considered a pioneer in the emerging field called Age Studies. *Agewise: Fighting the New Ageism in America*, which was published in April, is my latest book. It has been well received. *Publishers Weekly* concluded its starred review, "Important social criticism from a prominent scholar." I have been interviewed many times, including in the *Globe's G Magazine*; had an oped published in the *NY Times Week in Review* in May; am continuing to publicize the ideas of the book and trying to foment anti-ageism in America.

Aged by Culture (2004, a "notable book of the year"—*Christian Science Monitor*) was my third book, following *Declining to Decline* (1997), which won a prize as the best feminist book on American popular culture, and *Safe at Last in the Middle Years* (1988).

Aside from writing books, I also write for mainstream, feminist, literary, and left publications (*Boston Globe*, *Ms.*, *Nation*, *American Prospect*, *Social Text*, many literary quarterlies (*PEN America Journal*, *American Scholar*) and online sites (*WomenseNews*, *Salon*, and the media-oriented blog, *WIMNOnline.org/ WIMNsVoicesBlog*).

Age Studies, the field introduced by *Aged by Culture*, goes beyond the objects of gerontology ("old age" or "old women") and beyond the other "slice-of-life" approaches (midlife- youth-, childhood-studies). It goes beyond ageism to study middle ageism and the kind of decline thinking that is targeting young adults. Age Studies foregrounds "age" across the life course, the way feminism (after women's studies, men's studies, and queer theory) now foregrounds gender and sexuality; the way critical race theory (after African-American studies, whiteness studies, and ethnic studies) foregrounds "race." Age Studies, feminist and critical, advances the social constructionist agenda that is implicit in so much of the excellent existing critical work on old age, gender, class, race, ability, and sexuality. *Agewise* was blurbed by

Katha Pollitt and Alix Kates Shulman, among others.

Lacking Age Studies, Americans are taught to desire "anti-aging" products rather than age-conscious ideas. It is important to refute their belief that their conceptions of aging and old age are ahistorical, universal truths. They need to understand the underlying economic conditions produced by capitalism and globalization as well as the ideologies behind "graying" societies and intergenerational warfare and the harmfulness of decline discourses. All those who found gender and race fruitful analytic concepts should find *age--and also ageism, middle-ageism, decline, life-course narratives--*becoming indispensable in the 21st century. Age Studies begins to fill a critical gap in cultural studies, feminist theory, political science, and anthropology, and eventually science studies and other disciplines.

PROJECTS AND STUDENTS' ROLE IN EACH: The Student Partner will be involved in cutting-edge work that is important historically, theoretically, practically, and politically.

(1) My major project is a 4000-word essay on "Gardening/ Farming: The Food Issue and the Life Course" for a British anthology in gerontology. The Partner will be doing research on the global food crises, urban gardening, small-hold farming, the food movements--looking for the role of older adults, especially women, in all of these phenomena. Dr. Linda Fried, dean of the School of Public Health at Columbia, addressing 100 U.N. officials gathered from around the world for a discussion on the threats to the health and sustainable development of nations, recently offered her assessment on how to achieve a healthier world future. She focused on four key trends: aging, urbanization, climate change, and food security. <http://www.mailman.columbia.edu/news/linda-p-fried-md-mph-dean-mailman-school-public-health-addresses-un-conference> Those are the issues I will be focusing on as well. But the essay will be belletristic, not just a social-science research paper. **Research involves Lexis-Nexis and academic data bases as well as books. No prior knowledge of farming or food is necessary.**

The Partner will be reading and editing the draft. I welcome ideas from the Partner on all aspects, content as well as style. I have found this very helpful (I welcome critiques).

Students benefit from discussions at our weekly meetings, learning the languages of contemporary ageism and figuring out with me how to resist them. I am also willing to discuss work-family issues, careers, etc.

(2) Over the course of the semester, I may be writing short articles developed from the themes of *Agewise* and asking the intern to do research on those topics: for example, midlife job discrimination, menopause discourse, the attack on Social Security, the terror of forgetfulness, the duty-to-die. From time to time I write a blog, WIMNOnline.com.

Writing for the mainstream/ blogs, etc. means that I write articles that are 800-1200 or 2000 words in length: in other words, condensing research into short forms, and then revising for an editor who has her/his own queries, editorial needs, etc. These processes of editing down and revising (and working with editors) should be interesting for any student who plans to write. I am very transparent about my process.

Aside from publicizing *Agewise* and writing short articles related to the book, I have another project, time permitting: (3) I have written a family political memoir called *There is a World Elsewhere: Geography of an American Family*, about becoming a Nicaraguan activist in midlife. I have been going to Newton's sister city, San Juan del Sur, since 1989; help find funding for a Free High School for Adults (see www.Newtonsanjuan.org/ Adult Education) and hosted at Brandeis my colleague and friend, Dr. Rosa Elena Bello, who was this year's Distinguished Visiting Practitioner for the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life (September 19 through 22).

For the book, *There is a World Elsewhere*, I am looking for an agent and editor and may want help from the Intern in researching editors with relevant interests. If I get a contract, I

will revise and ask the Intern to read the revised chapters and critique them.

(4) And finally: I would also like to have someone design a Web domain (which I have already registered) called AgewiseAmerica, which would gather together all relevant information about my Age Studies books and other people's writings about age studies as a field . I want a simple, clean, handsome design.

I respect the requirement that students not work more than five hours a week.

How will your Project Benefit from the Student's Participation?

In many ways, as noted. The critiques of essays and articles have helped me improve them. The Partner who helped with the keyword index for *Aged by Culture*, Sara Gruen, wound up being highly praised in the Acknowledgments to *Aged by Culture*; and many Partners were singled out for their help with *Agewise*. I can't design my own Website, partly for lack of time, partly for lack of skills.

Mutual benefits of the mentoring relationship? **I think it's useful for a serious student--whether she (or he) plans on having a writing or an academic career, or not--to see essays/articles through from writing to publication or delivery. Students learn to understand the role of editing and revision, which is helpful to them in their own writing and reading.**

Since the material is interdisciplinary, and some of it is cutting-edge or speculative or controversial, the questions to pose, and try to answer, are likely to be interesting.

I also like to talk about what I have learned about the publishing process as I've gone along, from working with editors and incorporating critiques to negotiating a contract.

Moreover, with some previous partners, on request I have offered advice about papers and theses, reading key sections, listening to the whole argument spoken aloud. Another theoretically-informed point of view can be helpful. In general, we cover a good deal of ground in our conversations, including personal concerns and professional issues.

I have been getting to know age culture not only with my own eyes but through the eyes of Brandeis' most capable undergraduates. I quoted from one of them in a chapter of *Aged by Culture* (anonymously) and made use of another's comments and her help with the index, and as noted before, have thanked her and other Partners in acknowledgments.

Sincerely,

Margaret

(Dr.) Margaret Morganroth Gullette

Resident Scholar, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis

617-965-2164 www.brandeis.edu/wsrc/scholars/profiles/Gullette.html

Aged by Culture named a "Noteworthy Book" of the year by the Christian Science Monitor.

Declining to Decline chosen as "best feminist book on American popular culture."

Winner of the Daniel Singer Millennium Prize (essay) 2008.

Agewise,

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/A/bo10385719.html>

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