Will’s Way

By Susan Erdos

One of BOLLI’s longest running courses, What’s Justice Got to Do with It? Justice and the Right Thing to Do, is based on Harvard Professor Michael Sandel’s popular course of the same name. A BOLLI favorite through multiple semesters under a number of Study Group Leaders (SGLs), the Justice course has been led for the past three semesters by Will Grogan, a Brandeis graduate student. He is a member of the BOLLI Lectureship Program established five years ago by Director Avi Bernstein to bring Brandeis graduate students to BOLLI as SGLs.

Will hails from Jacksonville, Florida and is a graduate of Southeastern University. He will receive his M.A. in philosophy from Brandeis this spring and, in the fall, will begin work on a second master’s at Harvard’s School of Divinity on a full scholarship.

Will’s family is both surprised by and proud of the path he has decided to take. He admits that he was not a good student in high school until his senior year when he “got serious.” At Southeastern, Will was introduced to philosophy, and there he found his passion. As a freshman, he discovered that he has an ability to take ideas from independent philosophers, even obscure French and German ones, and weave them into coherent thoughts. He sees relevance in philosophy since questions about human existence and the meaning of life span all disciplines and ages.

As the first in his family to attend college, Will is grateful for the many new avenues that have been presented to him. His SGL experience at BOLLI has reinforced his love of teaching and the realization that he can have a strong impact on the lives of his students. Justice has been his first experience teaching an entire course as well as his first time teaching adult learners. He was initially concerned about how he would be received at BOLLI. He soon found that everyone was rooting for him, took him seriously, and treated him with respect. Class members have each had a unique contribution to make, backed by life experience, and Will feels he has learned as much as they have. Participants are eager to have their ideas heard, but they also want to hear his perspectives. This sharing of ideas creates an exciting dynamic in the classroom.

Will has found a mentor at BOLLI in Avi Bernstein, who takes a great interest in (Continued on Page 8)
Editor’s Note

By Jack Curley

This year, why not plan to avoid the stress of traffic congestion and still beat the heat by making Waltham your summer getaway? While unenlightened souls might argue that the Gathering Space at 60 Turner Street lacks most of the features typically associated with a vacation resort, it is air-conditioned, and the locals are known to be quite friendly. Most importantly, while study groups are on summer hiatus, BOLLI cognoscenti know that the warmer months remain filled with programs and activities. Detailed information about this year’s summer lectures and seminars can be found elsewhere in this issue. But also keep in mind that many Special Interest Groups (SIGs) continue to meet throughout the season. As we go to press, we’ve learned that the New Yorker Fiction Salon, Poetry Group, Book Group, Photography Group, and Aging Group all fit into this category. Updated information on all summer happenings may be found in Friday’s weekly Bulletin and at the BOLLI website.

Speaking of the Bulletin, hats off to Naomi Schmidt who continues to do a remarkable job producing this essential weekly communication. For many of us, the Bulletin is the first place we turn for news and information. (Am I alone in having years of Bulletin issues stored in a special email folder for fast reference?) Thanks, Naomi!

(Comments are always welcome by emailing the editor at jjc1791@outlook.com.)

Play it (Again), Sam! “Summer on the Venetian Canals”

To see the archives of Banner cartoonist Sam Ansell, go to http://samansell204.blogspot.com/

The BOLLI Banner is published by the Banner Committee: Jack Curley, Managing Editor/Articles Co-Editor

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Contributing Writer: Susan Erdos

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When Brandeis Called
By Phil Radoff and Jack Curley

Dorothy Hodgson knew she wanted change and challenge in her career. To be sure, her 20 plus years at Rutgers University had been academically and personally rewarding. Over time, however, she came to realize that life at a large public university might never provide her sufficient opportunity to fulfill her goals of helping to build an institution and play a role in defining and framing its future. When Brandeis came calling in 2018, she knew it was the right point in her career to accept the invitation to interview for the role of Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

During the interview process, Hodgson found herself drawn to Brandeis’s people, history, and social justice mission. The selection committee, in turn, was drawn to Hodgson, and in August 2018, she became the first outside educator to be appointed dean in the history of the University.

Using a personal style she describes as “warm but frank,” Hodgson has thus far spent much of her time building trust and rapport with the Brandeis community, particularly members of the faculty, whom she has found to be both “brilliant and kind.” Despite academia’s recent advancement of a STEM education, Hodgson fully embraces Brandeis’s commitment to the liberal arts as consistent with her role of helping to reshape Brandeis for the future. In fact, one of her priorities is to oversee fall implementation of The Brandeis Core, the School’s new General Education Requirements, which seeks to provide all undergraduates with the skills, knowledge, and perspectives to succeed personally and professionally in a fluid and interconnected world. Hodgson has taken notice of the way BOLLI has built bridges between its members and Brandeis students through its Lectureship Program, and she looks forward to future consideration of ways to better connect BOLLI members to campus.

Despite her busy schedule, Hodgson remains active in her field of study, Anthropology. The author or editor of 10 books, she has devoted a large part of her career to studying the Maasai communities in Tanzania, where Hodgson lived and worked off and on for eight years. She admired the reverence shown for older people and the successful intergenerational experiences that she observed in African communities.

While her role as dean doesn’t allow much time for research, she retains memberships in scholarly organizations and continues to advise some of her former Rutgers graduate students. She is also editor-in-chief of The Oxford Research Encyclopedia on African Women’s History, although she admits that, these days, much of her work on the encyclopedia “takes place over several cups of tea on Sunday mornings.”

Hodgson and her husband have settled in Waltham, where they hope to develop relationships with members of the burgeoning Ugandan community. She finds the Boston area to be “human-scaled” with friendly people and hopes one day to have more free time to take better advantage of the area’s numerous cultural and recreational resources. As a former English major, Hodgson finds time to read every night, alternating high-end literature with her beloved mysteries. Although she lived in New Jersey for many years, and was a fan of the area’s sports teams (the Jets were a particular favorite), she insists that a visit to Fenway Park is high on her agenda.
Staying in the Know at BOLLI

By Sue Wurster

In the Gathering Space, five BOLLI members were engaged in an intense conversation. “Take a closer look at the peri-mortem injuries…” one directed. “True,” another responded. “You don’t see those on most skeletons,” yet another added. Hardly the sort of dialogue one expects to hear at 60 Turner Street!

These BOLLI members were participants in Diane Markowitz’s course, The Dead Don’t Lie: Forensic Anthropology for Amateurs, and they were using what they had learned about skeletal evidence to identify an unknown skeleton from four possible candidates. This exercise helped Diane to see just how much the group had gained over the course of ten weeks.

Diane isn’t the only BOLLI SGL who has been challenging participants with creative methods. A variety of those offering courses to our members have been exploring creative approaches to adult learning.

Jerry Baum believes that the best way to learn science is to do science. The BOLLI challenge, he says, is not having enough equipment or time for everybody to be able to do their own experiments. So, in his courses on light and motion, Jerry has students use everyday items to do simple experiments at home. This kind of “hands on” learning helps to emphasize Jerry’s idea that engaging in the scientific process is just as important, if not more important, than reading or viewing scientific material.

In Chutzpah! Is the Art on Your Wall Real? Quinn and Susan Rosefsky challenge participants to “find the fake” in their weekly slide-based exercises. They have also been using the Harkness method, a shared-group leadership discussion model which helps to promote active listening while reducing repetitive comments. Initially, not raising hands led to some dominating the conversation, but, eventually, participants began to understand and assume their responsibilities as members of a collaborative group. “It’s a process,” Quinn says, “and, as such, will take people a while to master.”

SGLs Susan and Quinn Rosefsky provide a humorous introduction to one of their weekly “Find the Fake” quizzes.

This term, veteran SGL Becky Meyers is taking a new approach to Scene-iors with her course, 21st Century Conundrums: Scene-iors Ask “What Was This Playwright Thinking?” Her BOLLI actors are collaborating with local playwright Jeff Loeb, examining his works as well as others written for the Actors Theatre of Louisville. The course will still culminate, as always, in a production for the BOLLI community at the end of the semester.

SGL Jerry Baum sets up an experiment for his motion course, “Let’s Get a Move On.” Jerry also provides simple experiments that can be successfully conducted at home. Photo by Wurster.

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Staying in the Know at BOLLI

Continued

This term, new SGL Bruce Parks uses an audio component in his *Ulysses* course. “There are about fifty Irish songs in the book,” he says, “as well as allusions to over four hundred others. At the beginning of each class, I play one as the group settles in. We also listen, each week, to a portion of a recording of the book being read aloud.” Another great mood setter.

In another new BOLLI course, *Fashion from Head to Toe: Why We Dress the Way We Do*, participants engage in weekly “Closet Archaeology” exercises. Homework finds become the basis of shared reflection and even runway modeling! Sue Benjamin, pointing to her summer camp patch, says, “I’ve never so looked forward to sharing homework in class!”

In the fall, Avi Bernstein provided potential SGLs with an inquiry-based model for learning in his course, *Sapiens*. This method starts with a leader posing questions and problems or creating scenarios to stimulate curiosity. With this approach, again, the SGL need not have expertise in the subject matter being explored—just interest and a desire to learn.

At the same time, Brandeis faculty members Lance Eaton and Laura Hibbler led a technology-oriented course called *Education without Borders*, introducing new tools and online learning environments to the participants. Some were initially concerned about their proficiency with technology, but Lance says “I don’t believe that BOLLI members are any less skilled or able to understand technology than students just entering higher education.” He was right. The group members all widened their range of knowledge and deepened their confidence and skill.

Last summer, Lance led a cohort of SGLs in a workshop designed to help them build course websites using templates provided, free of charge, by Google. On these very user-friendly sites, SGLs can post their syllabi, weekly assignments, readings, videos, and additional resources.

Avi refers to these sites as “one-stop shopping” for course members. “This kind of digital syllabus is dynamic,” he says. “Not only can you change it, but it is never lost.” Other participants agree. Carl Lazarus says that, while there was a learning curve, he soon became reasonably proficient. He noted, too, that he could post his in-class presentations to the site after class for those who were absent or simply wanted to review the material. Sandy Miller-Jacobs points out that being able to have all the readings available at the beginning of the course was like having printouts for participants—but without the cost!

In all, BOLLI continues to build upon its high standard of innovation when it comes to ways of learning that benefit class members and SGLs alike.
Summer Programs at BOLLI, 2019

By Phil Radoff and Jack Curley

Once again, BOLLI is offering a rich summer program of seminars (which are fee-bearing) and a lecture series (which is not). Perennial favorites Billy Flesch and Gil Harel will be back, and graduate student Will Grogan, SGL for the popular “Justice” course, will offer six lectures on existentialism.

To Kill a Mockingbird After Sixty Years
Billy Flesch, Professor of English at Brandeis

Section One: Tuesday, May 28- Friday, 31, 2019
9:30am - 12:30pm
Section Two: Tuesday, May 28- Friday, 31, 2019
1:30pm - 4:30pm

Last year, Flesch’s seminar on Shakespeare’s Measure for Measure drew so many would-be participants in such a short time that Billy agreed to lead a second installment of the seminar. Anticipating a similar outpouring of interest this summer, Billy is again offering two sessions of his seminar on the classic film, To Kill A Mockingbird, first released in 1962.

The film, an Academy Award winner starring Gregory Peck as defense attorney Atticus Finch, was based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Harper Lee, which appeared in 1961, and addresses racism in the American South. While the seminar will focus on the film, participants are advised to read the Lee novel before the first session.

If his past seminars are a guide, Billy can be expected to use the film as a jumping-off point for an exploration of other literary works and their philosophical implications. For example, what accounts for Harper Lee’s decision to change the character of Atticus Finch from the less admirable figure depicted in her recently released prequel, Go Set a Watchman, to the heroic figure familiar to us from the Mockingbird novel and film? To what extent should historical circumstances be taken into account when assessing the novel and the film? Is it fair to demand that the worth of these products of the early 1960s be measured by the attitudes and morality of our own time, which the novel’s author and the film’s director and leading actor could never have imagined? More generally, is it enough to measure literary and artistic works by the standards of the period in which they were created, or should we insist on a universal validity?

These questions, among others, will be explored by the seminar’s participants.

Mighty and Immeasurable Beethoven: The Man and his Music - Gil Harel, Ph.D.

Monday-Friday, August 5-9, 9:30 am-12 pm. (Seminar is full; to be placed on the waiting list, contact Lily Gardner, 781-736-2992, lgardner@brandeis.edu)

Gil Harel returns to lead a seminar considering the towering musical figure of the early 19th century, Ludwig van Beethoven, in anticipation of the 250th
anniversary of his birth in 2020. Gil will survey the great variety of Beethoven's compositions from the early works, which look back to the Classical era, to his mature works, which usher in Romanticism.

Seminar participants can expect Gil to present and analyze some of Beethoven's best-known piano sonatas (like the Appassionata and Hammerklavier), symphonies (like the Eroica), and selections from his string quartets, which many believe to be his most profound body of music. The seminar will be enriched by an exploration of Beethoven's life and times and the enormous impact of his devastating hearing loss on the man and his creativity. Gil's lectures will be supplemented by assigned readings from the highly acclaimed biography of the composer, Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph, by Jan Swafford.

Coffee will be available, and berets are welcome, though Gauloises Bleues and bottles of vin ordinaire must be checked at the door.

Will receives his M.A. in philosophy this spring and begins work on a second master’s this fall at Harvard’s School of Divinity (see his profile elsewhere in this issue). Those who have participated in one of the What’s Justice Got to Do With It? classes he has taught won’t want to miss this opportunity to gain his insights into this important post-war philosophic tradition and its key players, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir (pictured left). Time will also be spent considering Existentialism’s origins in the works of philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Suggested reading for the lecture series is At the Existentialist Café by Sarah Bakewell, chosen by the New York Times as one of its best books of 2016.
Will’s Way
Continued from page 1

BOLLI Lecturers, observing their classes and providing feedback. He says that Avi can be quite candid, which Will appreciates, and always provides positive, useful feedback.

Although he doesn’t plan to pursue the ministry as a vocation, Will sees the study of religion as important to the study of philosophy. The question of whether God exists directly impacts our answers to questions about the meaning of life, our values, and what it means to be a human being. He feels that studying existentialist philosophers such as Nietzsche and Sartre (the subject of his forthcoming BOLLI summer lecture series) will form a good basis for his quest for answers.

In summing up his surprise at all that has happened to him over the past few years, Will references Descartes’s claim that dreams and waking life can have the same content. There is sufficient similarity between the two for dreamers to be deceived into believing that they are having waking experiences while actually asleep. He sometimes has to pinch himself to be sure that all this has happened to him. Fortunately, he always finds that he is awake.

As Will’s time at Brandeis draws to a close, his friends and students at BOLLI wish him the best in his endeavors and say thank you for his contributions to our program.

Current and Upcoming Campus Events
Compiled by Ellen Moskowitz

Beginnings of Music at Brandeis
GOLDFARB LIBRARY (Goldfarb 2) Archives & Special Collections - through August 15.

This exhibit focuses on the early days of the Music Department at Brandeis. See the papers of luminaries such as Erwin Bodky and Leonard Bernstein as you learn how Brandeis developed its wonderful music program and its fabulous Leonard Bernstein Festival of the Arts!

Rose Art Gallery Curator Tour
Friday, May 18 at 2:00 p.m.

Join Assistant Curator Caitlin Rubin for a walk through the exhibition, Howardena Pindell: What Remains To Be Seen, which explores the intersection of art and activism in the artist’s five-decades-long career. The exhibition traces themes and visual experiments that run throughout Pindell’s work up to the present.

WHAT TO DO ON YOUR SUMMER VACATION!

The deadline for submissions to The BOLLI Journal is September 30, 2019, which is not actually as far away as it may seem. Our 2020 showcase of work by BOLLI writers, photographers, painters, potters, printmakers, carpenters, textile and mosaic artists as well as other crafts specialists wants your input.

This year, work received before the deadline will be critiqued, and suggestions may be made for improvement, so this is a good time to take a look at your work to select pieces for submission. You may provide as many as four items for consideration. Details about the submissions process can be found on the BOLLI website.