

**OBSERVER
MAY 4, 2020**

FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting with the GC

The negotiating team (EC and Carol Groneman) met last Wednesday, April 28, with Dean and Interim Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration Brian A. Peterson and Program Development Director Mariel Villeré, of the Graduate Center's Office of Academic Initiatives and Strategic Innovations. Here are the results.

As reported last time, our two summer sessions, the first starting May 26, will be held at our new home at the GC, using Zoom. In the event that fall classes at CUNY will be remote, we are preparing for the fall semester to also be held remotely.

The GC is working to obtain the credentials we will need to use Zoom and access the library.

The program will have a content-rich page on the GC website and the IRP tech team will build and maintain a separate website for our fund-raising arm, the IER.

The GC is very interested in continuing our public events like Fridays@One in the fall, even if online.

The GC leadership is interested in meeting, and exchanging views with, the Advisory Board and the membership; our Executive Committee is arranging these sessions.

Don't be a Victim of Email Scams

The AB and the Tech Committee advise that a large number of IRP members recently received one or more phishing emails that seemed to be

sent from another IRP member. The email had as the subject something along the lines of "Can I ask you a favor?" with no text. Anyone who replied to it was then asked to send a money card. Do not reply to phishing emails!

How to Recognize Phishing Emails:

- Sent from an unfamiliar address. It may look like a friend's email address, but the domain may be different (e.g. @hotmail.com instead of @aol.com).
- Sender doesn't call you by your name.
- Sender is asking for something unusual that is out of character, such as personal information or cash.
- Sender tells a story to try to trick you into responding.
- May ask you to click on a link.
- May ask you to open an unsolicited attachment.
- May contain bad grammar.

If you are suspicious of an email:

- If it is from a friend, and you think it may be valid, call your friend to confirm before replying, clicking on a link or opening an attachment.
- If it is from someone you don't know, delete it without opening or replying.

NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

Events between Spring and Summer Terms

[Click here](#) for the updated grid and descriptions of all activities, open and now closed. For your convenience, the updated grid is also on page 6

of this *Observer*. Check it out for the full complement of offerings from now through May. Jan Adler and Jane Case Einbender, who have put together this grid, want to give a shout out to all the IRP members who have stepped up to offer activities during this period.

And here are two additions since last week.

Reflections on Virtual Life

The next Reflections session with Jan Adler will be on Wednesday May 13 at 1PM. Let Jan know you want to attend at adlerjan@optonline.net and he will send you an invitation.

Who's the Worst President?

Please join the discussion on Thursday May 21 at 4PM when Steve Kalinsky and Sara Otey debate the merits, (whoops, demerits), of James Buchanan and Donald Trump, bad leaders in tough times. One president lobbied the Supreme Court to rule against Dred Scott and took no action when states began to secede, opining: it's illegal but there is nothing I can do about it. The other president separates families, puts children in cages, blackmails Ukraine, and then there is his ongoing response to COVID-19. To join the discussion, please email Steve at stephenkalinsky@gmail.com and he will send you an invitation.

REMINDERS

From the EC on the *Observer*

If you are interested in hosting activities for the IRP community (SIGs, discussion groups, workshops, social gatherings, etc.), please advertise these events ONLY in the *Observer*. In accordance with Advisory Board policy, we ask that you refrain from sending separate emails to the members, or to a large proportion of members, as the *Observer* is the proper vehicle for communicating opportunities to the membership.

Also please note that the *Observer* is available both as an attachment in the email you receive every Monday and on the Zine. Send any ideas for improvements in the content or distribution of our communications to Eileen Sullivan at

esullivan@rcn.com or Leslie Davis at ldavis7104@yahoo.com.

Summer School Schedule and Proposals

The summer program will be in two sessions; session 1: Tuesday May 26-Monday July 6 and session 2: Monday July 13-Friday August 21. Classes will be scheduled throughout the week. If you are willing to offer a 6-week summer study group in either or both sessions, email Jonathan Gaines at jegaines@att.net by Friday, May 8. The committee encourages first-time coordinators.

Expect a Check-in Call

The Community Committee is currently organizing phone calls to all IRP members to see how things are going for each of us during the COVID-19 plague. More than 40 members have volunteered to make the calls. Expect to hear from one of them, perhaps even a member you do not yet know. All callers will identify themselves as members of IRP.

Voices Special Edition

Creative activity is a wonderful way to understand the changes in our lives wrought by the current crisis. *Voices* encourages IRP members to memorialize some of their feelings, perceptions and experiences about the current crisis through writing and photography, and to share their work with others. The deadline for submission is May 31. For details, see the April 20 issue of the *Observer*.

Requests: Another MovieGroup

Sheila O'Connell's MovieGroup sold out very quickly. Members have expressed great interest in a second film group. If you are willing to lead one, email Jan Adler at adlerjan@optonline.net.

Continuing the Discussion

Several of our study groups are continuing past the 12 or 13 week mark as coordinators or class members hold additional sessions. Remember that study group participants seeking additional sessions can also simply continue to meet. If you are extending your study group, let Jan Adler know.

Arranging Your Own Zoom Sessions

If you are interested in hosting a Zoom session for a social get-together, you can proceed by sending an invitation to specific people by signing on to <https://newschool.zoom.us> and following the prompts. You can also use the 24/7 Chat Room via:

<https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff>.

If you need help with Zoom, send an email to tech@iernyc.org with your name and telephone number, describing your equipment and the problems. If you know the brand of your device, please include it.

MEMBER FORUM

We're looking for short items about experiences with virtual reality and physical distancing that you find funny or unexpected and also tips on how to negotiate these difficult weeks. Please keep them coming to Leslie Davis at: ldavis7104@yahoo.com.

Reflections

From Carolyn Setlow, False Alarm

From the get-go, my feeling about the coronavirus scare has been that you can never be too careful! My husband, Andy Shapiro (also an IRPer), and I are sheltering in place in our home in Washington, CT. One Saturday night in mid-March (early in this virus adventure), our security alarm system's siren awakened us at 3:00 am.

When the alarm company quickly called to determine whether it was a false alarm, Andy recited our alarm code and went back to sleep. The person on the other end must have misheard it because, about 15 minutes later, I heard a car pull into our driveway. Bleary-eyed and disheveled, I peered out the window to our front porch, only to find a state trooper in uniform firmly implanted on the step — wearing no mask and no gloves!

As I rapped on the window, he shouted, "State trooper." Already programmed not to expose

myself to strangers, I mouthed, "False alarm" through the window. Authoritatively, he yelled back again "State trooper" and gestured that he wanted to enter the house. I opened the door and jumped back six feet, gesturing that he was not to enter our home beyond the door sill. Apparently, this only raised his suspicions, and he pushed his way into the house and immediately asked me to produce identification. (Like I really looked like an intruder, barefoot and in my bathrobe!)

I commanded him not to move from the entry hall and ran into the bedroom to find my driver's license. Back in the foyer, he reached to grab it but I (still *en garde*) quickly pulled it away, informing him that I would hold it up for him to examine at a distance, but would not let him touch it, just in case he had virus on his fingers.

Fortunately, he either had good eyesight or had satisfied himself that this septuagenarian in her night clothes was not a thief, and he wished me a good night. I am certain that he still tells the story of the crazy old lady who wouldn't let the police in. I suspect that he is now wearing gloves and a mask - or simply not answering false alarms!

From Sara Petitt, Dialogue

Coronavirus conversation between couple:

"I want to go back to NYC!"

"Are you CRAZY? When you call the doormen to say hello, they tell you to stay away."

"I don't care what anybody tells me. I want you to drive me back for an hour. I left my check books, my sunglasses, I need to get the mail."

"You can learn to bank online like everybody else!"

"I'm not going to have all new passwords to remember. I like stamps. They're beautiful. I have a whole page of Gwen Ifill stamps I'm going to frame. Am I going to frame my email banking statement?"

“The doormen said almost the whole building is empty. Why are you so stubborn.”

“This isn’t my community out here. I always rented the place in summers. All the friends I had here sold their houses and relocated.”

“I DON’T want to go back, even for an hour.”

“Listen to me...I’m sick of trees, I’m sick of looking at waves, I’m sick of seeing all white rich people, even at a six-foot distance. I want to see Black people, Asian people, Hispanic people...I want to see if I can smell perspiration six feet away! I want to bang on pots at 7 p.m.”

“Be reasonable.”

“You can wait in the car, and I’ll go up to the apartment. If you won’t drive me, I’ll take the train.”

“Don’t you understand if I wait in the car and you go in the elevator and catch it, and I get it from you, we’re both sunk?”

“You ordered a laptop for yourself. Would you get me a laptop if I agree to stay for two more weeks?”

“Pick one out, and I’ll pay for it.”

And he did, and she stayed.

Accomplishments

From Mireya Perez

Mireya shares one of her recently published poems, <https://bit.ly/3b2OEDK>.

She is also celebrating the publication of her novel, *BACK to El DORADO* (Floricanto Press, 2020), which came out just prior to the coronavirus outbreak, and is available from Amazon and Barnes and Noble sites. Information about the novel is on Mireya’s website: <https://mireyaperezbustillo.com>.

From Mary Semel

After returning to her hometown, Baltimore, to wait out the coronavirus crisis, Mary submitted this photo and description in response to a *Baltimore Sun* request for information about what people are doing while sheltering in place. It was published on Sunday as part of a full-page report.

Mary wrote:

I am a 76-year-old woman who, prior to the COVID-19, found exercise on a tennis court. Now I take daily "trash walks" for exercise and a



sense of purpose. Equipped with a face mask, gloves, a large plastic bag and a grabber (a helpful device left over from knee surgery), I walk 3-4 miles grabbing debris from sidewalks and gutters. I am joined by one of my tennis partners, and

together we pick up 200-300 pieces of debris (our specialty is plastic) that otherwise would have ended up in storm drains and the Chesapeake Bay.

That’s Mary on the right with the Nordstrom bag, with her friend and neighbor Lynn Cripps, who originated the idea to do this.

Entertainment/Enlightenment

Gently Down the Stream

Just one streaming recommendation this week from our IRP community:

From Fran de Lott, **Project Runway All Stars** (Amazon Prime). Fran writes, "For the loyal fans of Project Runway, you will recognize contestants drawn from previous Project

Runway seasons, a colorful group of personalities and talents, recommended for bingeing."

Keep your streaming recommendations coming to Miriam Lawrence at miriamiar@aol.com.

Literary Podcast from 92nd St Y

From Judy Siegel. The **92nd Street Y** has a new literary podcast series with new episodes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8PM. Tonight, Elif Batuman reads from Greek philosopher Epictetus, and on Wednesday, it's Margaret Atwood reading from her own book, *The Tent*.

Production: The Diary of Anne Frank

From Lynn Brenner. This production was designed for Zoom and is streaming for the next two weeks. Here's a rave review:

<https://on.wsj.com/2SAcv7v>.

WQXR's Midday Masterpieces

From Sue Goldman. Julliard's Historical Performance Program, Wednesday, May 6, 2020, 1PM. Learn more here: <https://bit.ly/3c4DwHU>.

Tips

Food Delivery from Bob Sholiton. In making calls to people for the IRP survey, I encountered a member who said her greatest problem was finding food.

Here's a list of grocery delivery services: <https://bit.ly/2SPs0sD>. And here is the website of the prepared meal delivery service that I have been using for about 10 years. There is lots of choices and they are very reliable:

www.nutropia.com.

Science-Based Information from Mary Padilla. Here are two sites that provide reliable information on the coronavirus pandemic: <https://statnews.com>, put together in Boston by a group of respected science writers who have cultivated access to multiple sources in academia, government and business. And also see <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>, from the Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine and Public Health.

RESOURCES

IRP Zine

- For the fall and spring calendars, [click here](#).
- *Observer* Archive: <https://www.irpzine.org/irp-observer1-1>

CUNY Events

- Graduate Center Spring Public 2020 Events—To view the lineup, click here: www.gc.cuny.edu/publicprograms
- School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU) [public programming schedule](#), 2019-2020
- [Public programs in Midtown Manhattan](#)

IRP ACTIVITIES DURING BREAK BETWEEN SPRING AND SUMMER TERMS

MAY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 4PM: Pour At Four -Rubens	2 4PM: Reflections on Virtual Life -Adler	3
4 10AM: [closed], Book Discussion 1918 Flu -Belkin 4PM: [closed], MovieGroup -O'Connell	5 1PM: [closed], Story Hour -Girard, Schiffman 1PM [closed], Theater SIG -Smith	6 1PM: [closed], Story Hour -Girard, Schiffman 1PM: [closed], Theater SIG -Smith 4PM: Current Events -Kalinsky	7 3PM: Women's Group -LeSchack 4PM: Who's the Worst? -Otey, Kalinsky	8 4PM: Pour At Four -Rubens	9	10
11 4PM: [closed] MovieGroup -O'Connell	12 1PM: [closed], Story Hour -Girard, Schiffman 4PM: Virtual Tour Folk Art Museum -Millsom	13 1PM: [closed], Story Hour -Girard, Schiffman 1PM: Reflections on Virtual Life -Adler 4PM: Current Events -Kalinsky	14 3PM: Women's Group -LeSchack 4PM: Advances In Civilization -Opher, Kalinsky	15 4PM: Pour At Four -Rubens	16	17
18 4PM: The Giver Book Discussion -Kalinsky, Brody 4PM: [closed], MovieGroup -O'Connell	19 1PM: [closed], Story Hour -Girard, Schiffman 1PM [closed], Theater SIG -Smith	20 Noon: Great IRP Read -LeSchack 1PM: [closed], Story Hour -Girard, Schiffman 1PM [closed], Theater SIG -Smith 4PM: Current Events -Kalinsky	21 3PM: Women's Group -LeSchack 4PM: Who's the Worst? -Otey, Kalinsky	22 4PM: Pour At Four -Rubens	23	24
25	26	27	28 4PM: Advances In Civilization -Opher, Kalinsky	29	30	31

DESCRIPTIONS

Planned Events for the Break Between Spring and Summer Terms and Ongoing Events That Have Already Begun

MONDAY

May 18, 3PM, **Discussion: The Giver by Lois Lowry**

Join Steve Kalinsky and Arlynn Brody in a discussion of *The Giver*, which won the Newberry Medal in 1994. It was written for a young audience but contains riveting and powerful themes: Utopian Society, Memory, Individualism, and Euthanasia that should provoke a lively discussion. It is 200 pages long and can be obtained on Amazon for about \$3.99 (Kindle). To purchase on Amazon, [click here](#).

Email Arlynn Brody at olliebrody@gmail.com for an invitation.

TUESDAY

May 5, 1PM, ongoing weekly, **IRP Story Hour [closed]**

In days of yore, people used to read to each other. Sharon Girard and Helene Schiffman have discovered the simple joys of this fine old practice with *The Periodic Tables* by Primo Levi. We interrupt each other with questions, wise insights, dumb insights, clarifications and humor.

No preparation, no homework. We'll email most of the stories to you. They are from Flannery O'Connor, Grace Paley, Mark Twain, James Joyce, Woody Allen, Oscar Wilde and a few more, beginning with *A Good Man is Hard to Find* by O'Connor. A panel of six participants will do the reading out-loud (with interjections). After the reading, the plenum - a maximum of 20 - can join in for a brief Q&A. We'll see how this goes. If you would like to be placed on the waiting list in case space opens up, please email Sharon at proustmatters@gmail.com.

May 5, 1PM and May 19, 1PM, **Additional Theater SIG meetings**, if warranted. **[closed]**

May 12th, 4PM, **Virtual Tour of Folk Art Exhibit**

Join Carol Millsom on a virtual tour of "Memory Palaces: Inside the Collection of Audrey Heckler," an exhibit of outsider art recently on display at the American Folk Art Museum.

Email Carol Millsom at carolmillsom35@gmail.com for a Zoom invitation. Limited to the first 30 members who sign up.

WEDNESDAY

May 6, 1PM, ongoing weekly, **IRP Story Hour [closed]**

In days of yore, people used to read to each other. Sharon Girard and Helene Schiffman have discovered the simple joys of this fine old practice with *The Periodic Tables* by Primo Levi. We interrupt each other with questions, wise insights, dumb insights, clarifications and humor.

No preparation, no homework. We'll email most of the stories to you. They are from Flannery O'Connor, Grace Paley, Mark Twain, James Joyce, Woody Allen, Oscar Wilde and a few more, beginning with *A Good Man is Hard to Find* by O'Connor. A panel of six participants will do the reading out-loud (with interjections). After the reading, the plenum - a maximum of 20 - can join in for a brief Q&A. We'll see how this goes. If you would like to be placed on the waiting list in case space opens up, please email Sharon at proustmatters@gmail.com.

May 6, 1PM, AND May 20, 1PM, **Theater SIG [closed]**

Bruce Smith leads a Zoom Theater SIG meeting where participants will view selected productions available online and then discuss the play production.

May 20, 12 noon, **The Great IRP Read**

Join with us in our first Great IRP Read. Our book will be *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary last year. Read the book on your own and come together on May 20th to discuss it. Depending on how many people sign up, we will hold one or more discussion sections concurrently on May 20th.

Email Arlyne LeSchack at lesca683@newschool.edu, obtain the book (\$7.99 as a PB or Kindle download at Amazon, 288 pp.) and start reading. In early May you'll be advised of the days/times of the discussion groups and receive a Zoom invite shortly thereafter. Deadline to sign up is Monday, May 11.

May 13, 1PM, **Reflections on Virtual Life**

This is an opportunity to reflect and share thoughts and feelings about how this crisis has affected our communal and private lives. Let's share experiences and also strategies to survive and even thrive. Email Jan Adler at adlerjan@optonline.net, and he will send you a Zoom invite.

Ongoing, weekly, 4PM, **Current Events Group**

Join in a spirited discussion of weekly current events. Recent discussions included the many aspects of Covid-19. Email Steve Kalinsky at stephenkalinsky@gmail.com and he will send you a Zoom invite.

THURSDAY

May 7, 4PM, AND May 21, 4PM, **Discussion: Who's the Worst? Terrible U.S. Presidents**

America has produced some really outstanding leaders (George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln for example) who have stepped up in perilous times and led our nation to glorious heights. Instead, please join Sara Otey and Steve Kalinsky for a discussion of two other occupants of the White House, James Buchanan and Donald Trump: bad leaders in tough times. One president lobbied the Supreme Court to rule against Dred Scott and took no action when states began to secede, opining: it's illegal, but there is nothing I can do about it. The other president separates families and puts children in cages, blackmails Ukraine, and then there is his ongoing response to COVID-19.

Email Steve at stephenkalinsky@gmail.com and you will receive a Zoom invitation.

Ongoing, weekly, 3PM, **The Women's Group**

Join other women for discussions of current issues, both political and personal. Email Arlyne LeSchack at arlyneleschack@gmail.com and she will send you a Zoom invite.

FRIDAY

Ongoing, weekly, 4PM, **Pour at Four**

Set up your own "pour" and join your fellow IRPers to toast our continued social connection via Zoom. Email Susan Rubens at sfarubens@gmail.com. On the pour date just go onto the chat room website—IRP 24 hour Zoom Meeting Room: <https://NewSchool.zoom.us/j/381380077>. No Zoom invite needed.