

INSTITUTE FOR RETIRED PROFESSIONALS

The Observer, August 31, 2020

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear members,

The new academic year kicked off at CUNY last Wednesday. Across all 25 CUNY colleges and campuses, fewer than 2% of the nearly 50,000 course sections for the fall semester will be held fully in person. This term will certainly be different from others, but we are working across the university to make the community stronger through the challenges presented by widespread unease and unrest due to the pandemic, systemic racism, the economic recession, and climate change. Active reconvening this fall after the academic summer break makes me optimistic that we will be stronger together, even if physically apart.

Meanwhile, a bright spot. As the number of new cases stays relatively low in New York City, select museums and cultural institutions have cautiously started to reopen. I hope you are able to take advantage and spend more time with old favorites, maybe even as the only visitor in the gallery – an unexpected benefit to social distancing.

Unthinkably, we continue to see horrific police shootings and murders of Black people in the United States, most recently the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin. Racial injustice, while fundamental to the history of this country, is on full display this summer as we mourn the lives highlighted in the media and in protest: Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, David McAtee, Rayshard Brooks, and too many more. We need to make changes on personal and institutional levels to ultimately dismantle systemic injustice and inequity. I am eager to continue this urgent and necessary work with IRP members as well as with GC staff, faculty, and students to realize those changes and create opportunity for those who have not had access for far too long. As part of the Graduate Center and CUNY more largely, this community is a vehicle for driving equity now and into the future through critical discourse and collective action. I invite your ideas and look forward to hearing from you.

All best for the week,

Marisel

Reminders:

- **Fall fees are not yet due.**
- **You can find scholarship by Graduate Center faculty and students on social and racial justice topics [here](#).**
- Director's office hours are tomorrow, September, at noon. Please join me in my virtual office to introduce yourself! Here is the [zoom link](#).
- Please look out for email messages from "Engagement" in your inbox, these are from our office address: engagement@gc.cuny.edu
- Please direct your requests and questions to our office address, engagement@gc.cuny.edu, rather than personal addresses for Ariana, Olena, and Mariel. This helps us manage communications with members.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NO OBSERVER NEXT WEEK

We're taking a break for Labor Day. The fall study groups begin on Friday, September 11, and the next Observer will arrive on Monday, September 14. Please submit your items to Leslie Davis at ldavis1@gc.cuny.edu by the end of the day on Friday for inclusion in Monday's issue. Items submitted after Friday will be saved for the following week.

EXPECT A CALL FROM IRP

The Community Building Initiative will be reaching out to all IRP members. You may expect a call between August 26 and September 10. Your caller will be another IRP member checking in to see how you're doing. You may also receive an email asking for your preferred phone number.

FROM THE VOTER REGISTRATION PROJECT

Request Your Absentee Ballot Online. Don't Wait!

If you live in New York City, you can now request your absentee ballot online, thanks to legislation recently passed by our State Legislature. We all saw how hard it was to get ballots on time for our June primaries. Requesting your absentee ballot as early as possible is more important than ever. Ballots will begin to be mailed out in mid-September.

The online process is super-easy. Go to <https://nycabsentee.com/>

1. Enter your information **exactly** as it appears in your voter registration.
2. Select where you'd like to have your ballot delivered (at the address where you're registered to vote, at another mailing address, or in-person at your county board of elections).
3. Select a reason to vote absentee. (Select "temporary illness/disability" if you are affected by COVID-19 and/or fear the potential of contracting the virus.)

4. You may opt to enter contact information for your county board of elections to reach out to you if they have questions.
5. Hit submit and take note of your confirmation code.
6. Ballots will begin going out in mid-September.
7. Ballots must be postmarked by November 3, although ballots received by November 4 without a postmark will also be counted as timely.

As many of us have already filed requests for absentee ballots, we checked with the Board of Elections to make certain that we did not have to refile our requests. We have been assured that the earlier requests will be fulfilled.

Registered voters who live in the five boroughs can now [request](#) an absentee ballot if they are concerned about COVID; the State Board of Elections will soon be able to offer the same digital service to all New York voters.

Rather than waiting for the online version, we encourage members who have envelopes and stamps at home and can easily mail something, to go to <https://www.vote.org/> [[vote.org](#)] to obtain an absentee ballot request form to mail in now. When you do get your ballot, be sure to complete it and mail it ASAP.

GET OUT THE VOTE (FROM HOME)

- Want to Help Get Out the Vote for the Fall Election?
- Don't Want to Leave Your Home?
- Might Enjoy Doing This with Others?

The Voter Registration Project is planning weekly IRP **Get Out the Vote** Zoom Socials for IRP members who are sending letters or postcards to potential voters. We thought it might be more fun to do this while visiting with other members who are doing the same. We plan to start on Thursday, September 3, from 4:00 to 5:00PM and continue weekly on Thursdays for as long as there is interest.

To participate you just need to sign up with one of the many Get Out the Vote Initiatives that are organizing Postcard or Letter-writing campaigns to voters nationwide These organizations make it easy to get started: They provide instructions, names and addresses, and some sell supplies. We are suggesting one of the following as good choices for IRP members, but you are free to choose another:

- [Reclaim Our Vote](#) sends you postcards (if you choose) to which you add handwritten content as per instructions. You supply stamps and mail them immediately. Their focus is to increase turnout among rural voters of color in North Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia. (See video below for more details)

- [Vote Forward](#) sends you personalized letters to print, to which you add handwritten content as per instructions. You supply envelopes that you address and stamp and hold them for a nation-wide mailing day. You can focus on one of 16 states.
- [Turn PA Blue](#) sends you postcards to which you add handwritten content and address as per instructions. You supply stamps and mail them immediately. Their goal is to flip the PA General Assembly and deliver PA to Joe Biden.

Check them all out before deciding which is right for you. But act soon as it can take some time to register and get set up with supplies. Watch this [Reclaim Our Vote video](#) to get a general idea about this type of initiative. If you want to join our IRP Get Out the Vote Zoom Socials, [sign up here](#). We will send you invites and reminders for Zoom sessions.

Ettie, Lisa, Rita and Denise

NEED TECH HELP?

From IRP: Direct your browser to the IRP tech stuff webpage -- <https://sites.google.com/view/irptechstuff> -- for advice on setting up emails and Zoom accounts, among other things. If you want additional help, send an email to tech@iernyc.org.

From GC: Send email to engagement@gc.cuny.edu.

Accessing GC Email: Direct your browser to <https://wa.gc.cuny.edu/owa>.

ONLINE ART

Dick Kossoff: "Color Kaleidoscope"



Dick says: "My collage was inspired by the art course offered by Carol Borelli, Istar Schwager, and Carol Sterling."

BETWEEN-TERM EVENTS

Book Discussion: *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary*, Monday, August 31, 1:00PM. Join a lively discussion of the national bestseller. Email Jane Case Einbender at jeinbender@gc.cuny.edu; limited to the first 25 who sign up.

Special Lecture: A Walk Through the Met With Carolyn Grossner, Tuesday, September 1, 1:00PM. We spend just over an hour looking at important works from the Met's 17 curatorial departments. This tour is new; it will not repeat the summer session guided tour. The tour is now open to an unlimited audience, [Register Here](#)

Encore: China & the U.S. with Tom Hardy, Thursday, September 3, 1:00PM. Discuss the challenge the U.S. faces in “getting its act together”—both domestically and internationally. If new to the group, email Tom Hardy at thardy@gc.cuny.edu.

Book Discussion: *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo with Joy Schulman, Wednesday, September 9, 1:00PM. Join this timely discussion of the groundbreaking bestseller by a prominent antiracist educator, email Joy Schulman at jschulman1@gc.cuny.edu.

Discussion/Q&A: *Waiting for the Vaccine: Until Then?* Thursday, September 10, 4:00PM, Barry Levine and Steve Kalinsky will lead this discussion, addressing some of their questions and as many of yours as possible. Please send your questions to Steve Kalinsky at skalinsky@gc.cuny.edu and ask for a Zoom invitation.

ONGOING EVENTS

Men’s Group, Wednesdays, 12:15PM, email Jay Fleishman at efleishman@gc.cuny.edu.

Women’s Group, Thursdays, 3:00PM, email Arlyne LeSchack at aleschack@gc.cuny.edu.

Short Stories Aloud: With Sharon Girard and Helene Schiffman, Tuesdays, 4:00PM. No preparation, no homework, no books to buy; leaders will email the stories to you, email Sharon Girard at sgirard@gc.cuny.edu.

UPCOMING CUNY EVENTS

Trivia Night, Wednesday, September 2, 8:00 – 9:00PM

The Gotham Center is teaming up with the Museum of the City of New York for a night of virtual fun and learning. Put your knowledge of New York City history to the test in a night of competitive fun! You must register in order to participate; registrants will receive a zoom link to join in advance of the event. Scoring will be on the honor system. We encourage you to share your score via Zoom chat, but we will not be awarding prizes – this trivia night is just for fun! We will not be officially recognizing teams for this edition of trivia, but you are, of course, welcome to work with a team should you prefer to do so. Tickets for this event are donation based. If you are able, you are asked to contribute what you can. Your support of the Museum at this time is immensely helpful, and we thank you in advance for your support! [Register here.](#)

ONGOING CUNY EVENTS AND RESOURCES

The Graduate Center Presents Music from Copland House, September 21, 12:00 – 1:00PM. “Music from Copland House has become our paramount keeper of Copland’s flame.” *American Record Guide*. The internationally-acclaimed Music from Copland House ensemble plays this remarkable work, with a pre-performance discussion among the artists, and a live, post-performance Q&A between viewers and ensemble members.

Featured Music from Graduate Center and Copland House artists: Derek Bermel, clarinet; Magdalena Filipczak* and Pala Garcia*, violinists; Danielle Farina, violist; Alexis Pia Gerlach, cellist; Michael Boriskin, pianist.*
Member of the Graduate Center Doctoral program

Register for [here](#) to attend this free event.

See the [GC CUNY Calendar](#) for the most centralized GC events calendar.

NON-CUNY ONLINE RESOURCES AND EVENTS:

El Museo del Barrio has published numerous [exhibition catalogues and brochures](#) to enjoy from home.

Jazz at Lincoln Center is offering [free weekly online programs](#).

The Jewish Museum has made their [audio tours](#) available online.

MoMA is offering free online [courses and specializations](#).

The Whitney Museum of American Art is offering from artist talks to art history courses, webinars and creative projects for everyone, see what's coming up [here](#). Explore exhibitions online [here](#).

BRIC Rotunda Gallery is offering free Media Education Courses. More information [here](#).