

LP<sup>2</sup> A Lifelong Peer Learning Program at the Graduate Center, CUNY

**THE OBSERVER**  
**January 25, 2021**

**NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

Dear members,

Happy new year, and we look forward to welcoming you back next week for study groups. I hope you enjoyed the break while staying in touch. I was happy to drop into intersession activities this month and see so many involved.

The recently seated Advisory Board and Executive Committee have stayed active through January, and I've also been meeting with committees to prepare for the Spring semester. I want to thank again the former Advisory Board and Executive Committee members who made such a smooth transition possible, both with the LP<sup>2</sup> governance and with the transitions of the past year – to remote learning, and to The Graduate Center.

You should have received an email reminder on Friday about the add/drop period that opens today and concludes after the second meeting of study groups, on Friday, February 19, 2021. Please remember to communicate your add/drop requests to our office and not solely with coordinators. We are using a form in order to centralize communication and information, so please refer to the section below with details.

I will resume Director's Office Hours next week on Tuesday, February 2, from 11AM to 12PM, and these will continue biweekly throughout the term. I welcome you to drop in and introduce yourself – no need to bring questions, we can just spend time together! The Zoom link will be included in next week's issue of the Observer.

We have much to look forward to this spring as I have been working with members to re-engage volunteer activities including conversation partners at CUNY and on other CUNY connections for admissions recruitment, a library workshop (read on for details), and other new initiatives. Please

consult the calendar on the Zine for all meetings, workshops, and events – the information there is helpful for attendees and for those planning future program activities.

Be well!  
Mariel

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Guideline Amendments Are Approved**

The members of LP<sup>2</sup> have approved amendments to the organization’s “Guidelines.” The changes include the following: The Guidelines’ Statement of Purpose now promotes the recruitment and selection of a diverse membership; a Diversity Committee member will replace the Development Committee member as one of the unelected members of the Advisory Board. There is no longer a distinction in the election of Advisory Board members between those who recently coordinated a study group and “at large” members. Now all 12 elected members are “at large.” One member of the Board will be a member who has been in LP<sup>2</sup> for three years or less.

The Advisory Board will now meet every other week during each semester, and there will be a General Membership Meeting every semester. The maximum

term for a chair of the Advisory Board is now five years and, for a vice chair, four years. Board officers are elected annually.

The terms for committee members have been reduced to four years and, for committee chairs, to five years.

At the discretion of the director, new members from under-represented groups or new members who are not fully retired may take one study group a semester to encourage these new members to experience our offerings.

If you would like to review all of the “Guidelines,” go to “LP<sup>2</sup> Policies” on the Zine.

### **Add/Drop Starts Today**

The second Add/Drop period starts on **Monday, January 25**, and ends on **Friday, February 19** at 5PM. The submissions will be processed on a rolling basis “first come first served.”

If you would like to make a change to your current Study Group please complete the add/drop form here: [Lifelong Peer Learning Program](#). All available study groups to add are included on that page, and you can refer to the [Study Group Grid](#) with linked syllabi.

Questions can be directed to [engagement@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:engagement@gc.cuny.edu).

### **A Busy Break**

Over 30 groups offering interim activities, with a total attendance of approximately 700 members, have been meeting during the break. Thanks to all who volunteered to facilitate groups and to the Community Building Initiative committee for organizing this rich menu to keep members engaged. The other major activity of the committee has been the third round of outreach phone calls, which are almost complete.

### **A Shout-Out to All Who Led Break Activities**

The Community Building Initiative may be reaching out again during the spring semester seeking volunteers to lead activities during the next break(s) depending on the summer schedule. So put on your thinking caps!

### **New Members**

With the continuing pandemic, our new members are losing out on opportunities to meet the membership in person. To offset this handicap, we invited them to tell us about their interests, backgrounds and hopes in joining LP<sup>2</sup>. Over the next few weeks, we will be printing several of these self-portraits in hopes that members will reach out to these newcomers to introduce themselves or to connect on common interests.

## Howard Levi



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I attended Columbia for eight years (BA, MA in modern European history and JD). My 38-year legal career was in commercial litigation (business and finance disputes), for 25 of those years at a litigation boutique law firm that I co-founded in 1994.

I am interested in a broad array of subjects, comprising most areas of the humanities and several in the social sciences (although about many of those subjects I have only a thimbleful of knowledge!). LP<sup>2</sup> attracted me because of the breadth of its study group offerings; the chance to coordinate study groups; and, not least, the opportunity to become part of a welcoming community of like-minded people.

My hobbies and interests include: a *New York Review of Books* reading club, now 10 years old; writing creative nonfiction (essays); studying and speaking Spanish; membership in a group of supporters of Columbia's History Department; travel (including India and Africa); and a decades-long practice of cataloging (from my reading) interesting words contained in well-crafted sentences (essentially, a now very long vocabulary list).

Here are some of my inchoate study group ideas: great books about legal trials; the art of the essay; creative nonfiction books about loss, race, mental illness; landmarks in the American intellectual tradition; revisiting the trial of Adolf Eichmann and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

My wife, Alexandra Avlonitis, is a street photographer. We have two adult daughters, one a psychotherapist (LCSW), the other about to obtain her M.S. in nutrition. At the risk of sounding unadventurous: I have lived within an eight-block radius of Columbia ever since I entered the university in 1974. I very much welcome meeting LP<sup>2</sup> members, including those who live near me on the Upper West Side.

## Peggy Blumenthal



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I first learned of LP<sup>2</sup> while dining outdoors with Susie Herman last spring at a neighborhood bistro we hoped to sustain. Knowing my husband of 45 years had recently died from Covid, Susie suggested LP<sup>2</sup> as a way to meet new intellectually- engaged friends and explore new

areas of interest.

Six months later, I struggled to whittle down to 3.5 the number of fascinating spring 2021 study groups I could sign up for. Simplifying the process was my decision to spend this winter with my sister in Palo Alto CA, the three-hour difference making 9:30 a.m. study groups less attractive.

With advice from official and unofficial mentors, I chose three study groups plus a Theatre SIG, the latter encouraging me to browse Young Vic's web-archives. Since live theatre is one of NYC's pleasures I miss most, LP<sup>2</sup> has already proven a godsend. Other favorite NYC pastimes include dining out, visiting museums/galleries, reading (mysteries, histories, novels, poetry, whatever), and walking through Central Park. Relocating to CA offered quality time with my sister, but less chance to meet new friends. I hope to enjoy that aspect of LP<sup>2</sup> when I return to NYC's UES in mid-March, fully vaccinated and able to meet in person.

Meanwhile I continue to work via Zoom at one paid job and two volunteer ones. After 36 years at the Institute of International Education, I am now part-time Senior Counselor to its President, following developments in China and Japan affecting academic and professional exchanges. I also chair a small NGO (Japan Center on International Exchange-USA) and serve on the Executive Committee of Hunter College High School's Alumnae/i Association. A bit over-committed but better than bored. LP<sup>2</sup> offers great opportunities to fill the remaining time, studying and later perhaps leading a group on contemporary events in China/Japan or other topics.



**Charles Brecher (Chuck)**

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I am a former academic who spent 34 years as a tenured faculty member at NYU's Wagner School teaching graduate public administration students. My PhD is in political science. I retired from teaching in 2014, becoming Professor Emeritus, but continued a consulting relationship as Research Director, with a civic organization, the Citizens Budget Commission. Two years ago I reduced my CBC commitment and began working half-time; this month I will retire fully.

I have joined LP<sup>2</sup> as a way to meet interesting people and keep intellectually active. To start I plan to participate in courses, but might consider leading a group in the future perhaps on New York City's 20<sup>th</sup> century history and municipal fiscal issues. I enjoy history and public affairs, and also take advantage of memberships in MOMA and the Met.

My wife Madeline and I raised two daughters (now married and parents of our three grandchildren, living in Manhattan) in the Westchester suburb of Edgemont. We moved to Manhattan 15 years ago and enjoy our coop on East 52nd Street. I would welcome having coffee or walks with other LP<sup>2</sup> members in the neighborhood (Zip 10022).

**New Observer Editor**

Susan Rauch will be taking over from Leslie Davis as editor of the Observer, along with Ariana Durando of the CUNY GC office. Items for The Observer should be sent to Susan at srauch@gc.cuny.edu. by 5PM on Friday. Online Art Show entries and suggestions for virtual tours should go to Carol Millsom at cmillsom@gc.cuny.edu.

As we welcome Susan Rauch as our new Observer editor, we want to extend twelve years' of thanks to Leslie Davis. She has kept track of our events, governance issues, and achievements throughout that time and stayed on the job to prepare her successor. Leslie made The Observer into a vital resource that let members know what was going on in all of our programs and activities.

She has written all of the new member profiles that appeared in The Observer and are now available on the Zine. Under Leslie's guidance, and Eileen Sullivan's supervision, The Observer played a crucial role in keeping members up to date on the search for new space and a host institution and for maintaining our sense of community in these challenging times. Our heartfelt thanks and good wishes go out to Leslie as she "retires" from her editorship.

## **TECH NOTES**

### **Library Resources**

Check out the new tab on the Zine: Library Resources, for information about databases available from the GC Open Access and Open Education Resources and also from the New York Public Library and other libraries as well.

### **Reminders**

For email, please direct all IT inquiries to [engagement@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:engagement@gc.cuny.edu). Also note that the OIT (Office of Information Technology) at The Graduate Center does not provide assistance with personal computers or mobile devices. If you need assistance with a

personal computer, contact your PC manufacturer or your software vendor. For the Zine, the user ID to access protected areas of the Zine ([www.irpzine.org](http://www.irpzine.org)) is LPsquared; the password is Fall2020. The secured portions are Members, Faces, and Calendar.

## **ONLINE ART SHOW**

Peter Houts was a regular contributor to our art shows. He entered his own innovative work, which combined painting and photography, and he prepared the brochures and posters that accompanied the shows. Ever the teacher, Peter was always ready to help others with their photography. In his memory, we are reprinting *Almost Made It!*, a painting based on one of his photographs that he submitted to our Art Show in 2013.



Attention Water Colorists,  
Sculptors, Block Printers,  
Photographers, Painters,  
Collagists and Needleworkers!

Contact

carolmillsom35@gmail.com with a title and brief statement about how or where or why you made it, and your work will appear in the Online Art Show.

## EVENTS

### Where to Begin on Research

Thinking about doing research for planning a study group, or for your own interests, but not sure where to begin? You are all invited to attend the Curriculum Committee's first **Library Resources Workshop**.

When: **Tuesday, February 23, 3:45-5PM**

Led by Mason Brown, Advanced Science Research Center Librarian, CUNY Grad Center

Session will include:

- What information is available to access remotely
- How to access the information from NYPL and CUNY Open Access
- How to enhance your search tool skills and troubleshoot

- What is E-Book Detective Service?
- Please RSVP to Linda Anstendig (lanstendig@gmail.com) by February 22. You will receive a Zoom invitation on February 23. If you have questions for Mason that you would like addressed, please submit them in advance to Judith Siegel at jsiegel1@gc.cuny.edu.

### Other Sources on Research

In addition to the library workshop designed for LP<sup>2</sup> members, the Graduate Center Mina Rees Library has several other specialized workshops open for registration: <https://library.gc.cuny.edu/events/>

### Announcing GothamEd!

GothamEd presents online courses in New York City history, designed to serve a range of backgrounds and purposes — from those who are generally interested and looking for a compact introduction, to avid buffs in search of a much deeper dive. The program offers a mixture of private lectures with discussion and more intimate, traditional semiweekly classes, exploring topics large and small.

Explore the catalog of courses running March through May here: <https://www.gothamcenter.org/gothamed/adults>.

GothamEd is a project of the Gotham Center, which for more than 20 years has served as the leading academic institution of New York City history, dedicated to advancing both scholarly and public understanding of its rich and living past. The organization is sponsored by The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY).

### **A Weekly Update on All Things Covid**

Beginning on Friday, February 5 at 3PM, Barry Levine will be updating the LP<sup>2</sup> community weekly on the latest news on the virus, the vaccines and related topics. Barry and his wife, Shirley, are retired physicians and have been keeping close tabs on the Covid situation. Each session will include an opportunity to ask Barry specific questions in a forum to be moderated by Steve Kalinsky.

All sessions will be conducted via Zoom. If you would like to attend, please contact Steve at [skalinsky@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:skalinsky@gc.cuny.edu) for a Zoom invite.

If you would like to submit a question in advance, please send it to Steve. Sessions will be held on February 5, 12, 19 and 26 at 3PM and will continue thereafter as warranted.

### **Ongoing Events**

**Pour at Four** hosted by Susan Rubens meets from 4 to 5PM on Fridays in the 24-hour chat room <https://sites.google.com/view/irpte/chstuff>.

**The Women's Group** meets at 3:45PM on Thursdays. Email Arlyne LeSchack at [aleschack@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:aleschack@gc.cuny.edu). The Men's Group meets at 3:30PM on Wednesdays. Email Jay Fleishman at [efleishman@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:efleishman@gc.cuny.edu).

### **MEMBER FORUM**

From Harold Berkowitz: Here's a link to a recent article in The New Yorker, "Is It Really Too Late to Learn New Skills?" <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/01/18/is-it-really-too-late-to-learn-new-skills>

From Mel Oppenheim: Reflections on Xmas Eve



From Joan Rosenbaum: Civil War Memorial, Creche and Sunset in Sag Harbor, NY.



## CUNY EVENTS

The next virtual program with Music from Copland House featured Graduate Center professor and composer John Musto, **UNDERSCORED: Musto Cello & Piano Sonata**. [Register here](#) to receive the Zoom details and reminders via email for the Monday, February 22 concert and discussion, from 1-2PM.

See <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/All-GC-Events/Calendar> for more events this week including a philosophy colloquium, linguistics colloquium, immigration seminar series, and a lecture on *Argonautica* organized by the program in classics.

## NON-CUNY EVENTS AND RESOURCES

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

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

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

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