



**THE OBSERVER
AUGUST 9, 2021**

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hi all,

I recently attended a virtual panel hosted by the Chronicle of Higher Education, in which the preferred term for our contemporary moment was “the *now* normal,” capturing the evolution of this pandemic and our relations to each other and our environments. The past few weeks have felt especially...confusing... as guidance shifts and shifts back. I hope you are staying safe and steady.

Onwards! We have a lot of good news this week – we have heard from an overwhelming majority of coordinators who will participate in the diversity, equity, and inclusion roundtable discussions organized to support coordinators, and later all members, through difficult conversations in study groups and to ensure a respectful and rigorous learning environment for all.

On-Campus Classrooms for LP² Hybrid (Hyflex) Study Groups

The Registrar has been able to secure Graduate Center classrooms for **all** study groups that were slated for hyflex learning in the Fall. In partnership with IT technicians at the GC, I am scheduling those coordinators and members of the LP² tech committee for trainings on the equipment being installed in the hyflex classrooms.

If you are registered for one of the hybrid study groups, you will hear from the coordinator in the coming week or two about what to expect of in-person learning with a survey if you would like to attend in-person for the term, or remotely via Zoom. *To clarify, all study groups in the hyflex modality will be available for participation fully on Zoom for the 12-week term. Coming to class in-person is completely optional.* With the tech committee, we will establish tech assists to support the remote learners in

each class and arrange for an orientation to align Zoom settings and etiquette prior to the start of study groups to ensure the best blended learning experience for all.

Covid Protection Protocols

Nuts and bolts: all students taking classes on campus within the CUNY system will need to show proof of vaccination. We are encouraging *everyone* to get vaccinated. If without proof of vaccination, employees and students not enrolled in an in-person or hybrid class will need to show proof of a negative COVID test from within the seven days prior to their campus visit. At the Graduate Center, we have set the classrooms to accommodate the full capacity and do not currently plan to physically distance in class. Following the latest guidance from the CDC, masks or face coverings will be mandated for all, regardless of vaccination status, in shared and public spaces. The GC Fall 2021 Reopening Plan has been revised and submitted to the Chancellor for approval. Once approved, it will be posted on the Graduate Center's website and I will distribute a link for your reference.

There is always a lot of excitement and anticipation in the “back-to-school” season, and this year is no exception, but it is exceptional in this “now normal.” Our first priority is maintaining the health and safety of all members of the Graduate Center community, LP² members included, of course. Our plan is to proceed with an in-person component of these select study groups and if the conditions change in New York City, we will pivot operations accordingly.

Enjoy these last weeks of summer, especially given the unseasonably pleasant weather.

See you soon!
Mariel

Our office contact information:
engagement@gc.cuny.edu
212-817-2474

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

ASK ME ANYTHING*

This is the first appearance of a new Observer section called “Ask Me Anything,” where questions that are applicable to many members of LP² can be asked and answered by the appropriate persons. You can send your question to the office (engagement@gc.cuny.edu) or you can send it to The Observer (srauch@gc.cuny.edu) to be directed to the Engagement office for answering. Here is this week’s question.

Question: How can I demonstrate my affiliation with the Graduate Center to obtain student prices, for example?

Answer: Your email address is a primary way to demonstrate that you are a member in a Graduate Center program. Now that we are planning an incremental return to campus, we are able to plan for ID distribution to members. Working with security with continued limited building access, IDs will be created for those members coming in-person for the hyflex study groups. Throughout the fall term, we will be in touch with small groups of members to distribute photo IDs to all others. Please reach out to engagement@gc.cuny.edu with any additional questions or special circumstances.

*Surely, you all understand that “anything” in this context refers only to matters concerning the LP² community-at-large.

Observer Summer Schedule

During the Summer months, The Observer has a curtailed publication schedule. The last issue before Labor Day will be Monday, August 23.

If you have information to be published in the August issue of The Observer, e-mail Susan Rauch at srauch@gc.cuny.edu by Friday, August 20.

Pour at 4 Outdoors

Date: Tuesday, August 17th

Wednesday, August 18th (rain date)

Location: Madison Square Park (Madison Avenue, 23rd - 26th Streets)

Time: 4 PM

Meeting location: The fountain (south end of the park)

Host: Susan Rubens

Transportation:

*Train: N, W, R, 6, 1.

*Bus: M1, M2, M3

Questions or concerns:

Contact Susan at srubens@gc.cuny.edu

201-220-0555

Call for Break Activities between Summer and Fall Semesters

The Community Building Initiative seeks volunteers to lead activities during the break from now to September 3rd. Just like our earlier break activities, yours can meet once, twice or multiple times. Whether it's a book or movie discussion, a current events discussion, a travel adventure or art presentation or something else, your colleagues will appreciate your efforts. We also invite all current and past coordinators to offer a one session encore presentation selected from a prior study group. Tech help is available to set up and assist you run the Zoom session. You'll receive a Zoom link to send to participants. Contact Jane Case Einbender of the Community Building Initiative to propose your activity at jeinbender@gc.cuny.edu.

MORE ZOOM BREAK ACTIVITIES

Mondays at 3PM: Aug (9th, 16th)

More Stories Aloud with Sharon Girard and Helene Schiffman Sharon Girard and Helene Schiffman invite you to More Stories Aloud during the second summer break.

E-mail Sharon at sgirard@gc.cuny.edu for the Zoom link. Please indicate if you would like to read aloud.

Wednesday, August 11th, 1PM
Book Discussion with Jane Case Einbender
***Eight Perfect Murders* by Peter Swanson**

A Kirkus Best Fiction Book of the year
“A devious whodunit” — *New York Times Book Review*
Join us on a nostalgic, clever journey referencing the greatest murder mysteries in crime fiction — from Agatha Christie’s *The A.B.C. Murders* to Patricia Highsmith’s *Strangers on a Train*.
(You must obtain the book and read it on your own.)
To participate, email Jane Case Einbender at jeinbender@gc.cuny.edu.
You’ll receive a Zoom invite the week before.

THE GREAT LP² READ
***Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell**
Wednesday, August 25th, 1PM

Join with us for our third Great LP² Read. Revisit the book about which *The New York Times* declared “Why ‘1984’ Is a 2017 Must-Read.” It shot to No. 1 on Amazon’s best seller list in early 2017. We’ll explore why the book has found a large readership in this “post-truth” era, how the dystopia Orwell described suddenly feels all too familiar and consider how we react to it today compared to when we originally read it.

Update: Even if you didn’t have time to re-read it this summer, you’re welcome to participate in our discussion. To sign up, email Jane Case Einbender at jeinbender@gc.cuny.edu. You’ll receive a Zoom invite before the session.

Thursday, August 26th, 2PM
Report Card on the Biden Economy: How’s Joe doing?
with Maury Harris and Dan Hertzberg

The economy has been booming ever since President Biden took office at the start of the year. While the sharp recovery in jobs and GDP has been most welcome, there are worries that the economy is booming too much as inflation also has heated up.

Maury and Dan will send out a few articles and some questions ahead of time to frame our session. If you’d like to attend, please respond to Maury Harris at mharris1@gc.cuny.edu and feel free to raise some subjects for consideration. You’ll receive a Zoom invite before the session.

NEW Tuesday, Aug. 31st, 2PM
Is the US becoming a failed democracy?
with Bill Siegel

The past five years have been a particularly difficult time for American democracy. Institutions that rank democracies, such as Freedom House, have downgraded the United States. Commentators have questioned whether the US is a *flawed* or, even worse, a *failed* democracy.

We will explore and discuss flaws in our Constitution that hinder democracy and promote minority control of our government and also discuss voter suppression and recent efforts to distort the counting and certification of election results.

If you'd like to attend, please respond to Bill Siegel at bsiegel@gc.cuny.edu. You'll receive a Zoom invite before the session.

MEMBER FORUM

Mariel Villeré found this article on LP²-alumni Lynne and Harvey Schmelter-Davis, who are bringing peer learning to their new home community.

Lifelong learners share knowledge at Seabrook: New Jersey couple encourages ongoing education for themselves and others

When it came time to retire, Harvey Schmelter-Davis and his wife, Lynne, weren't necessarily interested in slowing down. With backgrounds in higher education, they're committed to lifelong learning, which they're able to be able to pursue at Seabrook, an Erickson Senior Living-managed community in Tinton Falls, N.J. Harvey worked as the director of career services at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, N.J., where Lynne was a professor of psychology. Harvey also later worked for Rutgers University and provided training and course development throughout the United States as well as in Japan and Israel. Both Harvey and Lynne were members of the Institute for Retired Professionals [now LP² Lifelong Peer Learning Program] at The City University of New York Graduate Center, in which members take courses from each other. When they came to Seabrook in 2019, the institute served as a model of a way for them to share their love of learning with the community.

Love of learning

"When we got here, we saw that there were a number of disparate learning activities, but nothing organized in a cohesive and ongoing way," says Harvey. "Our goal was to survey the existing Seabrook residents and find out if there was interest in ongoing learning activities."

More than 170 people expressed interest, and with the help of the resident life department, the Seabrook Active Learners Steering Committee was established to find residents to offer courses in a variety of subjects.

Growing course list

Last fall, Seabrook Active Learners offered 15 courses for between two and six sessions. In the spring, an additional 15 courses were offered. The group's mission statement is "to engage the Seabrook community in learning opportunities to enhance our quality of life."

All of the courses are led by Seabrook residents, giving them the opportunity to both teach and learn. The offerings span everything from science to the performing arts to travel.

"Here It Is in Black and White" explored the meanings and uses of black and white and monochrome photography. Participants could use a cell phone, camera, or any image-capturing device. The "Page to Stage" course offered residents the opportunity to learn the basics of stories and plays, including character development, creating distinctive dialogue, and plot structure. A resident who grew up in Alsace prior to and during World War II discussed grape-growing for wine in France with a focus on the Alsace region in the "Wine Tasting" course. Participants tasted several different wines and discussed their properties.

"The Seabrook Active Learners has been a great success," says Community Resources Manager Natalie Battifora. "The residents really appreciate the opportunity to learn from one another."

To read the entire article [click here](#).

ONGOING LP² EVENTS

*The Women's Group meets at 3:45PM on Thursdays. **NOTE: The group resumed meeting on Thursday, August 5.** Contact Arlyne LeSchack at aleschack@gc.cuny.edu.*

The Men's Group meets at 3:45PM on Wednesdays. Contact Jay Fleishman at efleishman@gc.cuny.edu.

Stitch Away Stress meets at 4PM Tuesdays. Members share skills and enjoy the meditative benefits of handwork. Contact Michelle Harris at mharris@qc.cuny.edu

Observer Submissions Send items for the next week's Observer to Susan Rauch at srauch@qc.cuny.edu by 5PM on Friday. Send Online Art Show entries and suggestions for virtual tours to Carol Millsom at cmillsom@qc.cuny.edu.

Member Forum If you have something to share with the LP² community, e.g., a photo, an article, a book or a web site that you've discovered that you think would be interesting to members, send it to Susan at srauch@qc.cuny.edu for inclusion in the Member Forum.

