

## THE SENIOR COLLEGE MESSENGER

Issue 39: January, 2025

*This is an organ for members of Senior College to submit short articles that share news, letters to the editor, reactions to the program and anything that they feel will be of general interest. Its regular appearance will allow for an exchange of opinion of topics of interest to the members. In particular, it would be interesting to record reactions to the talks, colloquium topics, books discussed and items appearing in the Messenger.*

*We also welcome brief notices of important books of general interest that are worth reading and views on what should be included in a modern school curriculum from the perspective of your discipline.*

*Please submit contributions to the co-editors, Ed Barbeau at [barbeau@math.utoronto.ca](mailto:barbeau@math.utoronto.ca) or Mary Finlay at [booksaplenty1949@gmail.com](mailto:booksaplenty1949@gmail.com).*

### U of T SUSTAINABILITY

The University of Toronto was named the most sustainable university in the world by the Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024), first of more than 1400 institutions in 95 countries. It was especially cited for environmental impact and social impact. More details are available in an article by Rahul Kalvapalle, published in the U of T News on December 5, 2023.

It again received this honour for 2025, according to a news item by Corey Allen from U of T on December 10, 2024, this time against 1744 universities from 100 countries. More details are available online.

### A REMINDER ABOUT CURAC

CURAC (College and University Retiree Associations of Canada) is a club to which you belong, because both Senior College and UTFA are adherent. CURAC offers weekly webinars on interesting topics and an annual conference, along with other activities. Unfortunately, the webinars occur at midday on Wednesdays, in conflict with our own Senior College events. The 2025 conference will be hosted by the McGill University Retiree Association from May 21 to 23 to celebrate that group's tenth anniversary.

A beneficial feature of our linkage to CURAC is access to their corporate affinity partners. These include BelairDirect, Collette, Johnson Travel Insurance, RTO/ERO and Trip Merchant. Both Collette and Trip Merchant offer professional trip planning, with discounts. Collette and Johnson Insurance offer trip cancellation insurance. Johnson Insurance includes emergency medical coverage with its travel offerings. If you have experienced difficulties finding travel cancellation insurance, or if you have marvelled at the stunning cost of coverage, it may be worthwhile to explore the options arranged through CURAC.

For more information on all things CURAC, visit <https://curac.ca/en/home>.

## WELCOME TO NEW FELLOWS OF THE COLLEGE

We are pleased to welcome to the Senior College roster of Fellows, **Ron Baecker**, **Jamie Cameron**, **Robert Josse** and **Eaton Lattman**.

**Ron Baecker** is Emeritus Professor of Computer Science at the University of Toronto, where he cofounded the *Dynamic Graphics Project* (DGP), and founded the *Knowledge Media Design Institute* (KMDI) and the *Technologies for Aging Gracefully Lab* (TAGlab). He now teaches Computer and Society each fall at Columbia University.

He had been named one of SIGGRAPH's 60 Pioneers of Computer Graphics, a member of the CHI Academy<sup>1</sup>, and an ACM Fellow. He has received a Canadian Digital Media Pioneer Award. He received the Social Impact Award at CHI2020 and was an ACM Distinguished Speaker for 2022-20225. He is also the founder of five software firms and the organizer of the resource hub computers-society.org.

His most recent books are *Ethical Tech Startup Guide* (Springer Nature, 2023) and *Digital dreams have become nightmares: what we must do* (ACM Press, 2nd edition, with Jonathan Grudin, 2024). He is working on his 2025 book – *Reinventing yourself: meaningful ventures in later life*. He looks forward to participating in and contributing to Senior College.

**Jamie Cameron** was a full-time member of faculty at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, from 1984 to 2020, and is now Professor Emerita. She had the privilege to serve as a law clerk to the Hon. Brian Dickson, of the Supreme Court of Canada (1979-1980), and to be involved in post-patriation initiatives in constitutional reform (Meech Lake Accord; Charlottetown Accord and referendum). Jamie's scholarship is diverse, but focuses on US Constitutional law, as well as on freedom of expression and the press, and more recently, freedom of peaceful assembly.

She was a longtime director of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and is on the Advisory Board of the Centre of Free Expression (Toronto Metropolitan University). Jamie has appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada and other courts on expressive freedom and free press issues. She was an appointed member of the Ontario Review Board (2013-2022), which deals with forensic mental health and mentally disordered criminal defendants, and is currently a member of the Nunavut Review Board (since 2018).

Jamie went back to school in 2022 and received an MA in Art History and Visual Culture from York University in 2024.

**Robert Josse** is a professor emeritus of medicine at the University of Toronto, and was cross-appointed to the department of nutritional sciences. He is also an adjunct scientist in the Li Ka Shing knowledge translation institute and director of the Metabolic Bone Disease and Osteoporosis Centre at St. Michael's Hospital. He has played important roles in both Canadian and international organizations and is a past president of the Canadian Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism (CSEM). He is the recipient of many honours, including the 2007 Distinguished Service Award of CSEM, the 2007 Distinction in Clinical Endocrinology Award of the American College of Endocrinology, the Lindsay Fraser founder award of Osteoporosis Canada, the 2012 Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee award medal, and in 2015, the clinical educator award of CSEM. In June 2023,

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<sup>1</sup>The SIGCHI Academy is a group of researchers honoured by the Special Interest Group in Computer Human Interaction of the Association for Computer Machinery (ACM). The Academy welcomed Ronald Baecker as a member in 2005

he was inducted into the Academy of Master Clinicians of the department of Medicine at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Josse graduated in medicine with honours from the University of London, UK, undertook postgraduate training there at various teaching hospitals, and completed his endocrine clinical training at the University of Toronto and Massachusetts General Hospital. He holds Fellowships in Medicine from the American College of Physicians, Royal College of Physicians of London, and Internal Medicine and Endocrinology Fellowships from the Royal College of Physicians in Canada. He is also a fellow of the American College of Endocrinology.

His major research interests include calcium metabolism and osteoporosis, diabetes, and various nutritional metabolic problems. He has published or co-authored over three hundred and thirty articles in peer reviewed journals and twenty-one book chapters. He lectures widely both nationally and internationally on various endocrine and metabolic topics.

**Eaton Lattman** was introduced to Senior College by his spouse Susan Pfeiffer, a longtime U of T professor. Eaton got his PhD in Biophysics from the Johns Hopkins University where he stayed on for the large majority of his professional life, rising to the rank of Dean of Research and Graduate Education. His research centered on protein structure and function; he studied protein crystallography, protein folding, methods development, and many related topics. In 2008, he left Hopkins to come to Buffalo, NY, where he served as CEO at the Hauptman-Woodward Institute, a boutique research establishment. Through a marvellous stroke of luck, he ended up becoming principal investigator on a large National Science Foundation grant to develop the use of X-ray lasers in biology. This project has led to hitherto unimaginable experiments such as making movies of protein molecules as they go through their functional cycle. In retirement, he has co-authored a book with Keith Mofft entitled *Dynamics and kinetics in structural biology* and has served on a number of advisory panels.

### CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

Events marked with **F** are for fellows and external fellows. Advanced registration is necessary for each event. This can be done in response to a weekly email from Senior College or the Faculty Club to its members that describes the events or through the Senior College website.

*Talks: Wednesdays 2-4 (Zoom and in person at the Faculty Club)*

January 8: Elizabeth Clare *A chance to measure life on earth: the potential of airborne eDNA*

January 15: Gerry Friesen *The honourable John Norquay: indigenous premier, Canadian statesman*

January 22: Anne Urbanic *Large double double: how Tim Horton's coffee ritualizes Canadian identity*

January 29: Sharon Vattay *Toronto Massey Music Hall: Conservation in practice*

February 5: Matthew Light *Ukraine: the stakes for Canada*

February 12: Liat Margolis *Call to action #66: a land-based indigenous youth program*

February 19: Patricia Brubaker *The basic science underlying the beneficial actions of Ozempic*

February 26: Netami Stuart *The Port Lands flood protection infrastructure project: how to build a river*

March 5: Ajay Heble *The determination to care: festivals, pedagogy, community*

March 12: Madeleine Zurowski *Dark matter*

March 19: James Campbell *Music inside out*

March 26: Mark McGowan 'Kindred spirits' in the North: indigenous peoples in British North America and their donations to Irish famine relief

*Colloquia: Thursdays 2-4 pm*  
*Senior College Centre, 256 McCaul Street*

January 16: *How do we deal with the crisis in aging?* (Organizer: Marty Klein)

February 20: *Poverty in Canada: causes, effects and solutions. Whose responsibility?* (Organizers: Bill Logan & Trevor Lloyd)

March 13: *Biological discoveries and their implication for sex and gender issues* (Organizer: Phil Sullivan)

*Book Club: Mondays 2-4 pm (Zoom only) (F)*

January 6: André Alexis, *Fifteen dogs* (2015) (Leader: Meg Fox)

February 3: Kenneth Miller, *The visionary scientists who unlocked the mysteries of sleep* (2023) (Leader: Daphne Maurer)

March 3: Timothy Garten Ash, *Homelands: a personal history of Europe* (2023) (Leader: David Milne)

April 7: Ursula K. Le Guin, *The dispossessed* (1974) (Leader: Molly Wills)

May 5: Emily Wilson, *The Odyssey, by Homer in the new poetic translation* (2017) (Leaders: Linda Hutcheon & Martin Revermann)

June 2: Andrew Stobo Sniderman & Douglas Sanderson (Amo Binashii), *The Valley of the Birdtail* (2022) (Leader: Janet Paterson)

July 7: Fei-Fei Li, *The worlds I see: curiosity, exploration and discovery at the dawn of AI* (2023) (Leader: Susan Pfeiffer)

### Quotation

You make a great, a very great mistake, if you think that psychology, being the science of the mind's laws, is something from which you can deduce definite programmes and schemes and methods of instruction for immediate classroom use. Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application, but using its originality.

The science of logic never made a man reason rightly, and the science of ethics (if there be such a thing) never made a man behave rightly. The most such sciences can do is to help us catch ourselves up and check ourselves, if we start to reason or behave wrongly; and to criticise ourselves more articulately after we have made mistakes. A science only lays down lines within which the rules of the art must fall, laws which the follower of the art must not transgress; but what particular thing he shall positively do within these lines is left exclusively to his own genius. One genius will do his work well and succeed in one way, while another succeeds as well quite differently; yet neither will transgress the lines.

William James, *Talks to teachers on psychology: and to students on some of life's ideals (1892)* <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16287/16287-h/16287-h.htm> (The text is also available on Squarespace.)

### Worth reading

Charlie Angus, *Dangerous memory: coming of age in the decade of greed* (Anansi, 2024) ISBN 9781487012885

Charlie Angus, NDP member of the federal parliament for Timmins-James Bay, came of age during the 1980s, a time of transition when the communal ideals of the earlier decades was being overtaken by the individualism espoused in the economics of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman and given political life by the likes of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

Influenced by the ideals of the sixties and seventies, as well as by the progressive wing of Catholicism, Angus and Andrew Cash formed a quite successful punk rock band, *Étranger*, as a vehicle for his political ideas. Wanting to do something more concrete, he and his wife acquired a home that they called *Angelus* that would serve as a community for those marginalized in an increasingly bleak society.

Angus uses his own experiences to recall and reflect on the political and social developments of the 1980s. It was a time of liberation theology, developments of the 1980s. It was a time of liberation theology, protests against nuclear weapons. He sees this as a critical period that planted the seeds for the inequities, polarization and incivility of the present.

### Aftermath

While everyone is familiar with the historical figure, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), it is not well known that he has a theorem named after him. This states that, if you take an arbitrary triangle and construct on each edge an equilateral triangle, all facing outwards or all facing inwards, then the centres of these equilateral triangles are the vertices of a fourth equilateral triangle. Although Napoleon took an active interest in science and was a student of Euclid's *Elements* in particular, the Wikipedia essay on Napoleon's theorem says that it is unlikely that he had anything to do with it. The result apparently first appeared in 1825 in the *Ladies' Diary* ("containing new improvements in arts and sciences, and many entertaining particulars: designed for use and diversion of the fair sex", published between 1704 and 1841) as a proposed problem.

This brought to mind the case of Henry VIII, credited with composing *Greensleeves*. While Henry was a competent musician and had a hand in composing, this particular myth has been debunked, as the folk tune did not wash up on Britain's shores until much later. However, folks looking for a comedic riff on the origins of *Greensleeves* and Henry's

role can search on the net of a tape of Flanders and Swann's account from their show *At the drop of a hat*.

Several other Frenchmen involved with mathematics served in the government, either as parliamentarians or ministers. They include Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), Gaspard Monge (1746-1818), Lazare Carnot (1753-1823), Charles Dupin (1784-1873), Paul Painlevé (1863-1935) and Emile Borel (1871-1956). As far as I know, there are no British equivalents, although Robin Wilson (b. 1943), a prominent English mathematician and expositor who wrote a study of the work of Lewis Carroll, is the son of the former prime minister, Harold Wilson.

However, the Napoleon story is not the only tale told about mathematics and world leaders. A Russian publication, *Anekdot* has a section entitled "Best stories of the past years" which "pretend to be real and avoid impossible details, but you can never exclude the possibility that they may be real".

The entry for June 26, 2002 reads: *Yesterday, V.V. Putin answering questions of journalists said, "the Belorussian economy equals 3% of the Russian, and the Russian is accordingly, 97% of the Belorussian". What a mathematician!* Since Mr. Putin seems to have a similar grasp of history, this episode is not hard to believe.