

THE SENIOR COLLEGE MESSENGER

Issue 4: February, 2022

This is an organ for members of Senior College to submit short articles that share news, opinions, 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.

Please submit contributions to the editor, Ed Barbeau at barbeau@math.utoronto.ca

SCIENCE REPORTING AND COVID-19

Harold Atwood sent me a clip of a January 15 news report on premature scientific reports that contained misleading information about the side-effects and effectiveness of vaccines. One of these was a study by Andrew Crean *et al* that, during June and July of 2021, found 32 cases of myo/peri/carditis subsequent to injections of mRNA vaccine, providing a large estimate for the incidence of this side-effect. This was published on September 16 in the preprint service *medRxiv* and withdrawn on September 24, since, according to the CBC, it apparently was based on 32,000 rather than 800,000 injections. By searching *Andrew Crean mRNA*, you will be able to follow the discussion on this paper, beginning with the comments appearing below it in the *medRxiv*. The second paper mentioned in the CBC report is on the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines by Sarah A. Buck *et al*.

The credibility among the public of scientific research has been tested during the pandemic, partly because of the amount, with much of it disseminated before being peer-reviewed and published in respected research journals. In addition, trolls wait in the wings, eager to discredit information on ideological grounds. Timothy Caulfield *et al* in their paper *Let's do better: public representation of COVID-19 . . .*, available online, provide a good discussion of this. As the authors put it, the public is seeing science as it develops and does not appreciate the caution that is needed in evaluating it.

However, at this stage there is much to learn, and we should treat the advice we receive with due respect and prudence. As it happens, on Saturday, January 22, the Opinion section of *The Globe and Mail* published an excellent long comprehensive article entitled *Vaccines are a tool, but they are not a silver bullet* by Norman Doidge, who holds appointments at the University of Toronto and Columbia University in New York. He warns us that emphasizing one narrative in our struggle with the virus may blind us to legitimate concerns about its validity as well as to alternative approaches that may show promise. I was able to access the article on line, but, if you encounter a paywall, you can access the newspaper through Press-Reader, to which free access is available to those who possess a Toronto Public Library card. In the end, each of us is responsible for our own considered judgment in facing a significant threat.

RETHINKING NORTHROP FRYE

In 1962, Northrop Frye delivered the Massey lectures, which were later the subject of six episodes in the CBC radio series *Ideas* and developed in a book, *The educated imagination*. Recently, Deanne Bogdan, professor emerita of social justice education at OISE and a Frye scholar, entered into a collaboration with CBC producer, Sean Foley, “to address whether Frye’s theory of literary literacy still has a purchase on the literary imagination of the present day reader”. This culminated in a recent two-part *Ideas* series:

How Northrop Frye’s literary cosmos can help us reimagine life in 2020 aired on May 27, 2020

The case of the disappearing reader: a Northrop Frye mystery aired on June 25, 2020

The first broadcast focuses on Frye’s conception of literature and its role in shaping the social imagination, while the second looks at “readers as embodied persons” in their individual social and cultural environments. An account of the Bogdan-Foley collaboration entitled *The literary universe and embodied readers: revisiting Northrop Frye’s 1962 Massey lectures on public radio* is a chapter in a Brazilian volume on literary reading in school and university published last fall.

A search on the net for *Deanne Bogdan Frye Ideas* will lead you to links on the CBC lectures, an account of a classroom interaction that sparked a reconsideration of Frye’s work, and a crib for Frye’s book by Tom Willard of McMaster University.

The prospectus of her 1992 book, *Re-educating the Imagination: Toward a Poetics, Politics, and Pedagogy of Literary Engagement*, published by Boynton-Cook-Heinemann, states that “by participating in the tradition of poetic apologetics (the defense of literature), this book combines an analysis of the premises of Frye’s liberally educated literary imagination with that of a feminist critique of literature education, while exploring the possibility that literature can influence for ill as well as for good”.

REFLECTIONS ON SENIOR COLLEGE

Peter Hajnal, Information Studies, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy Some ten years ago, shortly before RALUT gave birth to Senior College, I had a conversation over lunch with Peter Russell who encouraged me to get involved in the new initiative. He reassured me that I might contribute and play some role, and I became one of the founding Fellows. During the past ten or so years, I have been impressed and inspired by the leadership of Peter Russell, Harold Atwood and Michael Hutcheon in steering the College in widening its scope of activities, outreach and intellectual heft, with the commitment and enthusiasm of chairs and members of chairs and members of the various committees and programs.

Over the years I served as a member of several committees: first, the Membership and Recruitment Committee (as it then was), for a time; the Program Committee (I

continue to be a member); the Colloquium Committee (of which I was interim chair for a term, taking over from Betty Roots); and the Excursion Subcommittee (as co-chair) for a while. I have also been active in our informal refugee support group (which under the name of *Scholars Giving Sanctuary* was mostly the brainchild of our late colleague Joe Whitney). That group kept up its work and pressure, overcame considerable bureaucratic obstacles and sponsored a Pakistani refugee family; as well, interested individual Fellows and their families have continued to help refugees in various ways.

I received two research grants from the College. These helped fund my research first of reforming the G7 and G20, then of the role of information technology in the functioning of these two informal institutions of global governance. The reform piece became a chapter in the second edition of my book *The G20: Evolution, Interrelationships, Documentation* (Routledge, 2019), and a spinoff article, “Whither the G7 and the G20?” is about to be published in *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*. A third result, an article on the role of technology in the two “Gs”, co-written with my research assistant Gillian Clinton, is being submitted to another journal.

Being a Fellow of Senior College has been a rewarding experience. Intellectual stimulation and collegiality have been constants. More recently, we met successfully the new challenges of finding an appropriate technological response to the Covid-19 pandemic: meetings on Zoom. May the College continue to flourish!

Robert Painter, Biochemistry, Provost Emeritus of Trinity College It is indeed surprising to realize that it is only a decade since the founding of Senior College. It has grown and developed so much, in ways that I certainly did not anticipate. For me, the most useful feature of ‘college’ life has been the Wednesday lectures. They foster the main benefit of being part of a university community – the sharing of knowledge both formally and informally through social interaction – and they have been especially valuable to those of us who no longer work on campus. The lectures, whatever the subject, the conversation and the collegiality they engender, provide a vehicle for contact and interaction with colleagues that is lost when one no longer works on campus. Unfortunately, I have not been able to participate in the surprising number of new activities that have grown up around the idea of the College – such as research and seminars – largely because of difficulties of the commute and parking but they are very appealing and the prospect that Zoom might make some of these activities accessible is very exciting. The pandemic has driven some interesting innovations that are particularly relevant to the less mobile population. I think that the continued contact and conversation and sense of community that the College engenders is perhaps its most important future and this is what I, when the College was founded, was hoping for.

Peter Russell is to be congratulated on having had this vision and the initiative to carry it through so successfully.

IN MEMORIAM

Robin L. Armstrong (May 14, 1935 - December 17, 2021)
Professor of Physics; Dean of Arts and Science

Bruce Darlington (August 28, 1942 - December 15, 2021)
Systems analyst, computer support, University of Toronto

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

Events marked with **F** are for fellows and external fellows. Registration a few days ahead is necessary for each event. This can be done in response to a weekly email from Senior College to its members that describes the events or by going on line at www.seniorcollege.utoronto.ca .

Weekly Talks: Wednesdays, 2-4 pm

February 2: **George Walker** (Xylographer, printmaker)
Written in wood: visual narratives with a Canadian cut

February 9: **Mary O'Connor** (English and Cultural Studies, McMaster) The
photography of Margaret Watkins

February 16: **Ronald F. Williamson** (Archaeological Services)
New understandings of Great Lakes indigenous history and archaeology

February 23: **Enid Slack** (Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy)
Financing city services: who should pay?

March 2: **Nicholas Gunz** (History)
Observations on analytic naval intelligence

March 9: **Mark Lautens** (Chemistry)
Advocating for science

March 16: **Lynn Hasher** (Psychology)
Aging and memory: some surprises

March 23: **Joel Faflak** (English)
Getting happy: learning to love musicals

Colloquia: Thursdays, 2-4 pm (F)

February 17: Chair - Maggie Redekop
Why have memoirs become prevalent and influential?
How can we judge authenticity? Does it matter?

March 17: Chair - Martin Klein
Should we reform the police in Canada?

April 28: Chairs - Daphne and Charles Maurer
Is a post-racial society possible?

May 19: Chairs - Phil Sullivan, John Yeomans
Are there threats to academic freedom from within the university?

Book Club: Mondays, 2-4 pm (F)

February 7 (Chair: Mary Jane Ashley)
Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (by Mary Shelley)

March 7 (Chair: Marty Klein)
Caste: The origins of our discontent (by Isabel Wilkerson)

April 4 (Chair: Meg Fox)
In Montmartre - Picasso, Matisse, and the birth of modern art (by Sue Roe)

May 2 (Chair: Sara Shettleworth)
Fundamentals - the key to reality (by Frank Wilczek)

June 6 (Chair: Maggie Redekop)
Who do you think you are? (by Alice Munro)

July 4 (Chair: Linda Hutcheon & David Milne)
Lampedusa (by Steve Price)

Coffee hours: Thursday, 2-3 pm

February 10; February 24; March 10; March 24

Summer 2022 Wednesday ZOOM Lecture Series: Wednesday at 2 pm.

May 4: **David Moffett**, Criminology, University of Ottawa
Immigration and criminalization in Canada.

May 11: **Tom Tieku**, Political Science, Western U, London
The African Union.

May 18: **Carl James**, Chair in Education, Community & Diaspora, York U.
How did we get to now? Systemic inequality, racism and the culture of exclusion in Canada.

May 25: **Barrington Walker**, History, Wilfrid Laurier University
Blackness, violence and modern Canada.

June 1: **Brendon Gurd**, Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University
Can exercise be bad for you? The facts about exercise non-responders.

June 8: **Keith Baar**, Molecular Biology, UC Davis
Molecular biology and living longer, healthier lives.