2005

Distinguished Columbia Faculty Awardees

Janet Conrad, the LeCroy Associate Professor of Physics, is an award-winning particle physicist whose research has helped to clarify the way neutrinos can change identity from one type to another. Known as an outstanding teacher, Conrad teaches courses ranging from introductory physics for pre-med students to a major seminar for physics majors. She has achieved a reputation among students for her innovative courses, such as “From Quarks to the Cosmos.”

Jonathan Crary, the Meyer Schapiro Professor of Modern Art and Theory, has written widely on contemporary art and its connections to history and society. In his more than 18 years at Columbia, he has distinguished himself for the originality and breadth of his scholarship and teaching. His major writings include Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century, which transformed the art historical discipline; Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture, exploring the intersection of art history, commercial media and politics.

Jenny Davidson, an assistant professor of English and comparative literature, specializes in 18th century British culture and society. In the words of her department chair: “She is a brilliant teacher—demanding, imagi-native and caring—and already a major scholar, success-ful novelist and substan-tial intellectual presence inside and outside the acade-my.” Her first major work, Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen (Cambridge, 2004), will soon be followed by Breeding: Nature and Nurture Before Biology, for which she received a Guggenheim Fellowship and has also been named a visiting scholar to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Gil Eyal, an associate professor of sociol-ogy, is regarded by his department colleagues as a linchpin in their efforts to create a “history of science” program. Undergraduates appreciate his course “Contemporary Civilization” and “Literature and Science,” which engages Columbia College students in intensive study and discussion of some of the most important texts of Western culture. Williams’ own teaching efforts have already earned him numerous accolades, including two Mark Van Doren Teaching Awards (an award determined by stu-dents themselves), as well as last year’s Great Teacher’s Award, presented by the Society of Columbia Graduates.

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Eric Jean-Paul Urban, an associate professor of mathematics, is one of the finest number theorists of his generation. Among his many distinctions, he has carried out a proof of the p-adic analogue of the Birch Swinnerton-Dyer Conjecture, one of the seven $1 million-prize problems set by the Clay Mathematics Institute to celebrate mathe-matics in the new millennium. Urban has helped to raise the visibility of Columbia’s mathemat-ics department. In August he will be one of the featured speakers at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Spain. A committed teacher, he recently led a colloquium series that brought students in contact with mathematicians from around the world, and has also been organizing top-level conferences at Columbia.

From top: Janet Conrad, physics; Jonathan Crary, art history; Jenny Davidson, English and comparative literature; Gil Eyal, sociology; Pierre Force, French. From left: Matthew Jones, classics; Karen Dodge, classics; Doreen Matheson, classics; Doreen Matheson, classics; Doreen Matheson, classics; Doreen Matheson, classics. 

Gareth Williams, classics, Professor of Humanities and chair of the classics department at Columbia College, is a world authority on Latin liter-ature of the early empire. His publications include studies of Ovid’s exyle poetry and of Seneca’s philosophical writ-ings. Williams is reputed throughout the University for his commitment to under-graduate education, having played a leading role in devel-oping the core-curriculum course “Literature and Science.” Engages Columbia College students in inten-sive study and discussion of some of the most important texts of Western culture. Williams’ own teaching efforts have already earned him numerous accolades, including two Mark Van Doren Teaching Awards (an award determined by stu-dents themselves), as well as last year’s Great Teacher’s Award, presented by the Society of Columbia Graduates.

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Full bios of the awardees and more information.