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Meera, meet Carleton. Carleton, meet Meera Sehgal.

By Amy Trieu

Last winter Meera Sehgal visited Carleton as a prospective candidate in a search by the Women and Gender Studies Department for a professor whose time would be split between WGST and his or her disciplinary department. Lucky for us, Meera’s disciplinary department is SOAN. I met her at the student interview and was totally psyched when Pamela told me months later that they chose Meera and asked her to come join the likes of Jim Fisher and Annette Nierobisz. Meera joins us from the University of Cincinnati where she taught for two years. As suggested by her dissertation on women in the Hindu Right Movement, her academic interests include gender and social movements.

We always wonder why people are attracted to Carleton, our weird little school, so why, Meera? Why did you come?

Her reasons sounded a lot like ours. She wanted a small liberal arts college, knew that she wanted to stay in the Midwest after stints in Cincinnati and Madison, and of course that prestigious #5 ranking doesn’t hurt either. She heard good things about Carleton students (aw), and she also really liked the faculty when she visited last winter. After meeting them, she knew that she would never be bored with these colleagues who she found so interesting. (Go Jay)

Remember your first term here and how it took a while to understand how Carleton worked? Imagine if you had no NSW group, no RA, no MPL, no one to help you out. And what if you had to make lesson plans and actually teach? Pretty scary. Well for the past eight weeks, Meera has been doing all those things, transitioning and slowly getting a feel for Carleton. No wonder she’s been crazy busy.

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Senior Comps Topics

We asked senior SOAN majors to send us a short description of their comps projects. We hope to fulfill two functions by publishing the responses that we received. First, we would like to recognize the hard work and stress that our seniors are going through while working on comps. Second, if someone happens to come across an article or book that relates to your comps, they’ll remember you and drop you a note.

P.S. If you’re working on comps and your name doesn’t appear below, send a short description to: emic_online@hotmail.com and we’ll get the word out for you.

Phil Chan - I'm writing about the construction of the masculine identity for male ballet dancers, and examining the stereotypes of gender when looking at the male body as erotic spectacle as a result.

Leslie Cofie - I'm looking at the trends in obesity in the United States, and explaining it from an ecosocial theory perspective.

Walker Depuy - For SOAN comps I'm taking the theory test. My topical area of interest for the fourth essay concerns the intersections between ecology, economy, and social values.

Lauren Flexon - A case study of hurricane Katrina focusing on New Orleans as a closed system. The purpose of this paper is to explore why and how social norms disintegrated and the ways in which individuals reacted to the stress of the disaster.

Meghan Flynn - My comps is about sexualized citizenship in Ireland for members of the lgbtq community. Using a feminist perspective, I'll look at what aspects of Irish culture contribute to its historically repressive stance on this issue, and how it has changed so much so recently.

Tommy Helgen - I'm looking at Mormon polygamy and seeing if it falls in line with functionalism. Can the same factors that are used to explain polygamy in African and Asian cultures be found in the birth of Mormon polygamy? If not, then it will potentially add to functionalist criticism, or help explain why the practice died after a hundred or so years.

Ben Pacht - I am going to look at social action and social movement theories, and look at a local non-profit organization called HealthFinders Collaborative to see how those theories play out on the local level in the context of Northfield.

Jake Stroup - The construction and performance of gender roles in prisons. I'll be looking at how certain male prisoners are feminized, how it is decided who is feminized, and who has the power to make those decisions.

Betsy Sylvester - Using a set of wrongful dismissal cases from Canada in 1985-2001, I will be examining how judges think about sexual harassment in the context of wrongful decision trials and looking at how judges' rhetoric about sexual harassment changed as sexual harassment became a social problem increasingly present in public discourse.

Amy Trieu - I'm applying a unified analysis approach towards gender and figure skating.
The good news is that she likes us! She says that we students are smart, hardworking, committed, and dedicated. Props to the students in her classes this term for giving her a good first impression.

Because she’s been spending most of her time working, she hasn’t had very much time to explore the campus.

Amy: What do you want to know? What are you curious about?
Meera: I’m curious about the arb that President Oden keeps talking about during the faculty meetings. What’s in the arb that everyone keeps talking about? I’m also curious about the windmill…

It turns out that she’s pretty curious about the students too.

Meera wants to know “What are your living conditions? Do you live in houses, dorms? What do you eat? What are your lives like when classes are over? Is this a college of jocks? I don’t think so, but I’m not sure. Is everyone going to the gym all the time?”

Remember the Sodexho picnic on the Bald Spot during the Activities Fair? Meera had no idea what was going on. She didn’t know if we were having some sort of festival.

She also wants to know which issues we’re passionate about and how we lean politically. Too bad she wasn’t here last year to see so many Kerry/Edwards window signs and Nalgene stickers and then feel the (almost) campus-wide three-day bout of depression after the elections.

Because she’s in SOAN, she wonders about issues such as race and class divisions at Carleton. “Where are all the minority students? Who takes care of them? What about the international students?”

One thing Meera does know well about Carleton is its pace. Oy, she misses the semester system. She feels that just when her students are getting into the topics, it’s time to move on.

Although Meera can’t change the pace, she does have a vision for what she wants to contribute to Carleton. She wants to bring a transnational presence, a feminist perspective. She wants to help with a support network for students of color and international students, particularly women. Someday she hopes to teach courses in transnational feminist theory, race/class/gender issues in U.S. immigration, issues in South Asia, and women in right-wing movements.

When Meera’s not busy (ha), she enjoys sailing, biking, walking in the woods, and swimming. She says that she feels she ought to start learning winter activities such as cross-country skiing, skating, and sledding.

In all aspects, she’s a typical Carleton prof.-she asks challenging questions, she has long lines during office hours, and she really does care about her students. But Meera’s new, and there’s a lot she doesn’t know so go find her in Leighton 202 and tell her about Musser, traying on Bell Field, the MPL program, and running in the arb.
Dear Karl –

I'm not sure whether to stay with my boyfriend or not. I work hard to support us both financially, but he is lazy and doesn't work at all. I bring in the income to our relationship but since he owns the car I use to get to and from work, I have to pay him to use it. I really love him, but don't know how much longer I can go on like this! Help!

- P. Tariat

Dear Karl –

I'm having a problem with a friend of mine. I'm a freshman and she's a senior. We work together at the library and lately she's been making me do all of her work for her while she eats Godiva chocolate and listens to her iPod nano. I've talked to other friends of ours and she's been doing the same thing to them. What can we do?

- Manny Festo

Dear Manny –

It's obvious you are experiencing class struggle here. Fight your friend's exploitative power. The only way to make a change is to unite with the members of your class to fight the oppressive power your friend holds over you. Good luck.

Do you have a question for Karl? Get advice from the greatest Marxist of his generation. Email emic_online@hotmail.com and put “Ask Karl” in the subject line.
Remember the Lilliputians? How about the Munchkins, or the Oompa Loompas? And who can forget the Hobbits? Write a short treatise on your favorite fictional society and submit it to: emic_online@hotmail.com. All submissions will be posted online and our favorite will be published in a future paper version of the Emic.

SOAN DEPARTMENT SCAVENGER HUNT

1) Pencil Sharpener
2) String of cowry shells
3) 3 photos of Jim Fisher pre 2000
4) Plaque in memory of John Phelan
5) Careers in Anthropology
6) Wall of Injustice
7) 2005 World Population Data Sheet
8) Jay Levi

~ Do You Know The SOAN Website? ~

Which prof is pictured on the website as a child? Who maintains the SOAN webpage? Who is pictured on the Major Requirements page?

Were you almost a Studio Art major? If so, the Emic needs your help. Our banner is lame. Submit designs for a wicked cool new banner to: emic_online@hotmail.com and put “banner” in the subject line.
The Majerus Report

The Emic’s Special Agent Rich Majerus went undercover to gather intelligence on the Soan majors of Carleton College. He reports two conversations that he overheard while on assignment. The first consists of three juniors talking about why they chose the Soan major. The second is between two seniors who were discussing what advise they would give to members of the junior class. Though the quoted conversations seem disjointed, they provide valuable information about the furtive department and its illusive members.

Conversation 1:

Sarah Graham:
“I came to Carleton thinking that would be my major even though I had never taken any classes in that area. I started taking classes sophomore year and really liked it. I have always loved learning about different cultures and trying to figure out why society is the way it is.”

Elijah Hall:
“I picked SOAN because it encompasses every major here at Carleton...(well maybe not the sciences...) If you think about it though, Music, history, art, and economics are very integral parts of SOAN....This major allows freedom and experiential growth, not all can be said about some of the other more specific and traditional basic forms of study.”

Adam Rossow:
“I chose sociology as a major because I am interested with Crime and criminal justice and I believe that crime is a product and a problem of society. After taking Criminology last spring, I made my decision and thus far I have not regretted it. Also, I am thinking about a possible career as a homicide detective or a federal investigator.”

Design a t-shirt for the SOAN department. Submit it to emic_online@hotmail.com. Win the contest. Order seven shirts. Wear one every day.

Conversation 2:

Ben Pacht:
“Take advantage of the summer months – find great opportunities to work with diverse populations, because being a SOAN major, you’re going to have to be a little more proactive in terms of post-graduation plans, because unless you’re going straight to grad school, a SOAN degree doesn't "directly" lead to much. Having some great experiences under your belt will just help you that much more in determining what you would like to do.”

Dan Jarashow:
"I recommend taking Law and Society, it's a great course for showing practical applications of sociological theory. I enjoyed it. Oh yeah, also make sure you take Methods of Social Research, because you need it to graduate."
Alum Highlight: Mario Luis Small Jr. ’96

“Mario Luis Small's ('96) book Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio, published in 2004 by the University of Chicago Press, has won the prestigious C. Wright Mills Award from the Society of the Study of Social Problems (2005), and the Robert E. Park Award (2005) from the Community and Urban Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association. The awards were presented at the meetings for both associations this August in Philadelphia. The C. Wright Mills Award is given to the book that most effectively addresses an issue of contemporary importance, brings a fresh theoretical perspective, evinces quality in writing, and advances scientific understanding of a question. The Park Award is given to the best book in community and urban sociology. The book is a sociological study of how the social networks and community participation of a group of Puerto Rican residents in Boston are affected by neighborhood poverty. Small, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Princeton, majored in Sociology/Anthropology at Carleton.”

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Book Summary:

For years, sociologists have thought of poor neighborhoods as institutions characterized by a bundle of negative, predictable traits that hardly vary from city to city. The idea that poor neighborhoods are inherently disadvantaged is pervasive and underlies many of the current policies toward the urban poor. In Villa Victoria, Small questions this assumption, relying on a case that is, in fact, a far cry from the stereotypical picture of housing complexes. Though clearly poor, Villa Victoria, has an active business community and many non-profit organizations. It has experienced times of high resident participation in community activities such as cleanup drives, and has some residents who are strongly connected to the middle class. Small shows that none of these traits, by itself, is as exceptional or unlikely as it seems. He identifies the pitfalls of believing that all poor neighborhoods are more or less equal—yet he questions the opposite conclusion that, since all neighborhoods are different, searching for universals is pointless. His work paves the way toward a perspective that helps us understand when to expect high disadvantage, high social isolation, a deprivation of businesses and resources—and when not to.