

M.A. in Liberal Studies Newsletter

Fall 2022

Old Westbury MALS students visit Green-Wood Cemetery, a National Historical Landmark



2022 Master's in Liberal Studies entering class visited Brooklyn's Green-Wood cemetery as part of a day-long New York City tour. Green-Wood Cemetery, a national historical landmark for its significance to architecture, art, landscaping, and history, is an early rural cemetery in the heart of Brooklyn.

From left to right: Kimberly Johnston, Jeremy Minsky, Tom Pennino, and George Cienfuegos.

Llana Barber: My teaching informs my scholarship

Prof. Llana Barber was raised near SUNY Old Westbury, in Huntington, but has pursued her passions for social justice and movement activism in California, Massachusetts, and now in the Caribbean. Barber's father was a mechanic, her mother worked at the Huntington YMCA, ultimately blossoming professionally, and moving up in the organization to become the Y's Executive Director. Barber, a self-described "nerd reader," always had her nose in a book, but enjoyed hanging out at the Y, where many kinds of people worked or worked out.

Loving knowledge is not the same as loving the institutions that provide it, and Barber was allowed to graduate early after an intensive period of reading overseen by Half Hollow Hills East High School. Determined to leave Long Island, but unclear where she wanted to go, at seventeen she got in her VW Golf, and travelled around the country. She briefly attended St. John's

Barber cont. on P. 2



Dr. Llana Barber

Barber cont. from P. 1

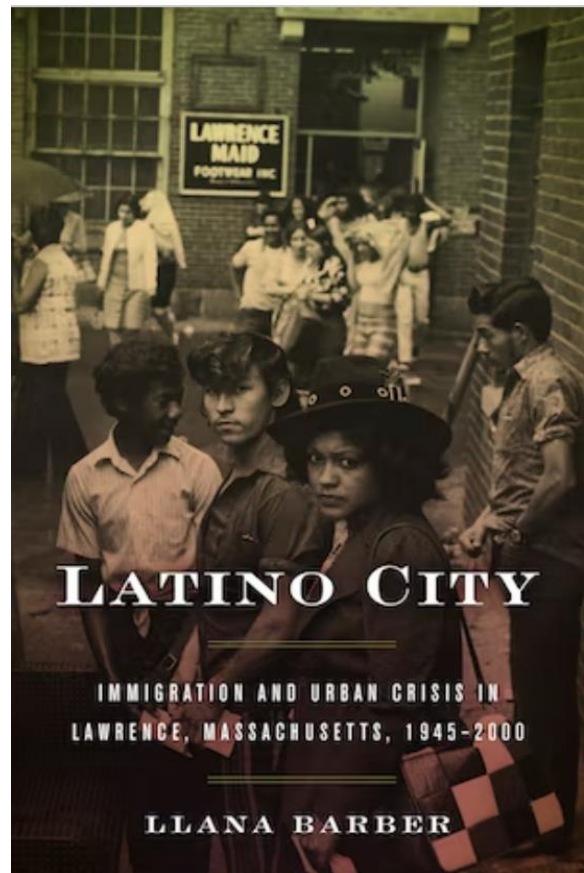
College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, but found its Great Books curricula stifling. Deciding that San Francisco would be an adventure, she moved there, and found at the University of California at Berkeley a hospitable scholarly environment in the Dance and Performance Studies program. She had loved Long Island’s punk music scene, and in Oakland was part of the 40th Street Warehouse space, an alternative venue for the arts that rejected the market-driven approach that often squeeze artists while profiting from their work.

Her undergraduate studies introduced her to archival research—she studied Greenwich Village’s Judson Dance Theater, and was thrilled to create a portrait of an earlier *avant-garde* movement. Judson Dance Theater, formed in the early 1960s, sought to break down conventional understanding of dance—and made of the everyday, “walking, running, stooping, standing” commentary on the dance tradition and the larger society. As one troupe member wrote, “It scared the living daylights out of me, a lot of that stuff. But wow—it sure made me think.” Looking at old flyers and manifestoes from that era moved Barber and committed her to exploring social justice themes as a historian.

Barber attended Boston College for her Ph.D. and loved that she could “be part of this conversation people were having through books—do research and add something to this amazing pursuit of knowledge about the American past.” She hit upon her subject—the Latinx community in Lawrence, Massachusetts after visiting there. In the pastoral fields of the Merrimack Valley, there was a vibrant community, over seventy percent Latinx residents, living amidst the remnants of monumental nineteenth-century textile mills. She wanted to understand how Lawrence happened. Why were Puerto Ricans and Dominicans coming to a city that was economically struggling? How did their presence and activism transform the city? She could find little written on this subject—and decided she could do this research.

The result was Barber’s dissertation, then award-winning book, *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945–2000*. At Boston College Barber was intellectually moved by

coursework on Black modernity. Putting the Black experience at the heart of analyses of U.S. life gave sense to the past. What historians call the “urban crisis,” resulted from the rise of the suburbs and the deindustrialization of the urban core in the decades after World War II. Historians had documented the origins of the urban crisis in anti-Black racism and the social movements that emerged in Black urban communities to challenge racialized disinvestment. Latinos, however, had not been included in this historical narrative, even though they were overwhelmingly concentrated in US cities during the crisis era, and their immigration transformed late twentieth century U.S. cities.



Published in 2017, Barber’s *Latino City* won the Urban History Association’s Kenneth Jackson Award for Best Book in North American Urban History.

Barber’s innovation in *Latino City* was weaving these two strands of scholarship together. She demonstrated how “resources were sucked out” of Lawrence to benefit

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Barber, Cont. from page 2 the surrounding communities, which were affluent and white. Barber also examined how Latino migrants revitalized Lawrence after white flight. Dominican and Puerto Rican residents of Lawrence fought individually and collectively to rebuild their city—by demanding voting rights, or more quotidian, individual struggles of standing up for oneself in the face of racist attacks. Barber cast her study in global terms, examining the role of U.S. empire in moving peoples from the African diaspora, through the Caribbean, to a corner of the nation’s seventh smallest state, Massachusetts. *Latino City*, published by University of North Carolina Press, won multiple awards, including the 2017 Kenneth Jackson Award from the Urban History Association, and the 2018 Lois P. Rudnick Book Prize, New England American Studies Association.

Barber emphasizes that “my teaching informs my scholarship.” She doesn’t assume that people care about highly academic concerns, but knows that all audiences, including Old Westbury students, need and want to understand the big picture context, what academics often call the “so what” question. Her scholarship foregrounds why the questions she studies matter, how the history she narrates has shaped the present. Her current project investigates the Haitian diaspora to the U.S., and how U.S. policies of

militarized exclusion of Haitians were interwoven with those in the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic. The U.S. decision to conduct naval blockades around Haiti and board ships in the Caribbean, interdicting and repatriating migrants before they could seek asylum, has radically altered U.S. immigration policy more generally. Barber focuses on the resistance of Haitian migrants, as they developed informal and formal forms of activism to respond to U.S. exclusionary practices and to insist on their rights.

For the MALS program Barber will teach *AS6380 Latinx Histories*. Students in her undergraduate courses are often shocked to realize the rich history of Latinos in the U.S. that they were never taught. Barber believes a common misconception about Latinos is that they are mainly recent immigrants, that they “just got here two minutes ago.” This belief is reinforced by the erasure or marginalization of Latino experiences in the teaching of U.S. history. As with her earlier scholarship, she’ll explore the centrality of racial formations and immigration policies to the U.S. past. Dr. Barber serves on the editorial advisory board of University of North Carolina Press’s *Latinx Histories* series and is delighted to share with students the amazing scholarship now being written.

MALS brings new opportunities: local news publisher, Kevin Horton, reflects on Old Westbury

Kevin Horton had a full career before entering Old Westbury’s Master’s in Liberal Studies (MALS) program in the Spring of 2021. He had been an editor, publisher, teacher, and author. With the help of SUNY Old Westbury’s MALS program, he has shifted directions, becoming an adjunct instructor of English at New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), where he shares his love of writing and editing with a next generation. Horton graduated from NYIT in 1991 with a B.A. in Communication Arts. Horton admits to “skating by” as an undergraduate; claiming to be not “much of a student,” he found his calling by working on the campus newspaper. He became a writer in his first year, and then Editor-in-Chief of NYIT’s *The Campus Slate* the following three years.

With the support of his mother, a writer and editor herself, and in the midst of a recession, he decided to found a local newspaper despite warnings from investors that the venture would fail. **Horton Cont. on P. 4**

Kevin Horton, 2022 MALS graduate



Kevin Horton with the subject of his book, *Cee Jay and Bugsy*

Gambling their own money, they succeeded. Under Horton the publication had a quarter-century run when he sold it in 2016.

The *Gold Coast Gazette* quickly became the official newspaper for local government announcements, given its swift rise in circulation. It covered local events, governance, children's sports, arts events, and the activities of local voluntary groups. One of the most popular parts of the paper was its "gossip columns," which Horton likened to sharing news over the back fence—it built community. When asked to recall the story that touched him the most, he recounted writing about a young girl killed in a car accident. Horton describes making the call to the young girl's parents as one of the hardest things he had to do. He sought to highlight the young girl and her life. Horton related that the girl's mother thought the story honored her daughter's memory and provided her great solace.

In addition to his work as a journalist, Horton also penned a children's book in 2017 called, *Cee Jay and Bugsy*. Based on a bedtime story he conjured for his children, *Cee Jay and Bugsy* is about a beat-up Volkswagen Bug and a Jeep stuck in a junkyard. The book shares Horton's love of classic cars as well as promotes the idea that children should "always believe;" even when things look grim, restoration is always possible. Horton also developed a book publishing company, "Tender Fire Books," which now serves as a full-service

print-on-demand publisher that has published over thirty books to date.

Seeking a master's degree thirty years after he earned his bachelor's gave Horton some worries; he thought, "I'm too old." The friendliness of Old Westbury's MALS faculty quickly convinced him that the program was welcoming to students of all ages. He said he enjoyed the diverse student body—students of all racial backgrounds and age groups. Academically, Horton said he was impressed with the research skills he learned adding, "the uniqueness of classes that was available was really incredible," including "a course on *Curating*, and another one entitled, *Monsters Below the Border*, about horror movies produced in Mexico."

For his MALS internship, Horton worked with Old Westbury's student newspaper, the *Catalyst*, where he returned to the journalistic world he loved—helping to generate story ideas and write about his experiences at Old Westbury. He penned a number of pieces for the publication, starting with [Hey, SUNY Old Westbury! Give Me a Sign](#) and ending with ["Old Guy" Graduation Swan Song](#).

Since 2013 Horton has been teaching in NYIT's Communication Arts program, drawing on his knowledge as a journalist and publisher. With his MALS degree, conferred **Cont. on next page**

Cont. from p. 4 with honors last spring, Horton has moved to the English Department, where he teaches Fundamentals of College Writing and mentors students in the college’s writing center. He said that the MALS program helped him academically and trained him to be a better teacher. He didn’t want to “ramble on,” and found that he learned from OW faculty how to make class pedagogies more interactive. Also, Old Westbury’s

small class size allowed for more student engagement—an added benefit of the MALS program, for Horton.

Horton ended his interview saying, the MALS degree “was a great program which went surprisingly quickly... I’d recommend it to anyone, no matter what stage of life they are in.”

Graduation 2022

The MALS program graduated five students in 2022; four received Honors, and two wrote the program’s first master’s theses.



2022 graduates, left to right, Melisa Wright, Serena Malhotra, MALS Grad Director, Prof. Carol Quirke, and Jennifer Argueta.

Serena Malhotra, 2022 MALS graduate, with family.





Jennifer Argueta, with Prof. Fernando Guerrero, who supervised her master's thesis, "'The Do-it-alls, the Sell-it-alls, the Eat-it-Alls:' the Satire of the Oppressed in Roque Dalton's Poetry."



Fatima Logan-Alston (center), with her master's thesis supervisor, Prof. Jermaine Archer (right), and Prof. Carol Quirke (left). Logan-Alston's thesis was entitled "Roots of Cultural Identity in African-American Concert Dance in Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* and Chuck Davis's *Memorial*."

The “Bad, **Rad**, and Boho Women of Greenwich Village” tour for Old Westbury students



Students in MALS course, *Ll6000, Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies*, which focuses on New York City, took a walking tour led by Kathleen Hulser, about Greenwich Village radical women. Joining them were students from *AS3462 History of US Women*, American Studies faculty Andrew Mattson, Annessa Babic, and Samara Smith, MALS Graduate Director Carol Quirke, and School of Arts and Sciences Dean, Cheryl Wilson, who sponsored the tour. Hulser has worked for the Museum of the City of New York and also the New York Transit Museum.

If you have taken fifteen credits, half-way through your thirty-credit degree, you can take an Independent Study with a faculty member who is willing to support your studies.

Are you an Old Westbury undergraduate?

Apply to the MALS program and we will waive the application fee.

Please contact MALS Graduate Director, Prof. Quirke, quirkec@oldwestbury.edu, or Andrea Klaff in Enrollment Services, klaffa@oldwestbury.edu.

MALS Classes -- Spring 2023

Monday, 8:00-10:15 a.m.

Career Development, CRN 33689, MH7510, Prof. Hughes (permission required)

Monday, 1:00-3:15

Diagnosis & Treatment of Addictive Disorders CRN 33688, MH 7500 Prof. Liese (permission required)

Monday, 4:45-7

Topics in World Literature CRN 33679, EL6540, Prof. Jani—REMOTE

Topics in European History CRN , HI, Prof. Shields-Mas

Tuesday, 4:45-7:00

Topics in Multicultural Literature, CRN 33678, EL6530, Prof. Lee REMOTE

Wednesday, 8:00-10:15 a.m.

Lifespan Development CRN 33862, MHC 6500, Prof. Cooper (permission required)

Wednesday, 4:45-7

Latinx Histories, CRN 34103, AS6380 Prof. Barber

US Constitutional and Political History, CRN 33680 HI 6520 Prof. Cocca

Thursday, 4:45-7

Cervantes and the Golden Age, CRN, ML6530, Prof. Lara

Online, Asynchronous

Points of Contact: U.S. and Latin America, CRN 33676, ML 6540, Prof. Gonzalez

Classes in yellow have been developed for the MALS program—they are a great opportunity to work closely with professors and fellow MALS students.