

# M.A. in Liberal Studies *Newsletter*

SUNY Old Westbury, Spring 2026

## “I consider myself a global citizen.”

### Professor Hyewon Yi on the Art of Curating as Community Expression

Visual Arts professor Hyewon Yi believes in the art of Curating, and this fall will be teaching a MALS class in the subject. Dr. Yi had just finished curating an exhibit at a gallery at Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, when she first landed a job teaching art history at Old Westbury. The exhibit taught her “to understand who the audience



*Visual Arts Professor Hyewon Yi*

Dr. Yi came to Old Westbury with a BFA in painting from Duksung Women’s University in Seoul, South Korea, followed by a year of post-graduate studies in the history of art at the Sook-Myung Women’s University. She earned a master’s degree in art history from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she studied modern and European Renaissance art.

She completed her studies with a PhD at CUNY’s Graduate School and University Center, focusing on the history of photography. “Realism interested me,” Dr. Yi explains. Specializing in contemporary art, and the history of photography, she studied under interdisciplinary scholars, including Geoffrey Batchen, specialist in the history and theory of photography, and feminist art historian, Anna Chave. Along the way, Dr. Yi also developed an “understanding and knowledge” of Asian and Asian-American art, through classes at national art

museum in Korea, and work with the AHL Foundation supporting Korean and Korean-American artists.

At Old Westbury, Dr. Yi has curated a wide range of exhibits that showcase artistic and creative expression. As a process, curating is “about 20 per cent imagination and flair,” she says: “the rest is really practicality – how you can deliver the work.” She grounds her exhibitions in communication, and access.

“Deep down, the way I approach my job is to understand who the audience is,” she says. “I take my job seriously, because this is one space or area where I can make a difference in peoples’ lives, and introduce culture and art from other regions, to help people understand others, and particularly those who are not from their own ethnicity or region.”

*See Hyewon Yi on Curating, continued on p. 2*

## START A MASTER’S DEGREE BEFORE YOU GRADUATE!

Qualified OW juniors and seniors now have more opportunities to accelerate their studies and make progress toward a graduate degree. Eight combined bachelor / master’s degrees are now available, in the following majors:

- ◇ **American Studies BA/MALS**
- ◇ **Black Studies BA/MALS**
- ◇ **Criminology BS/MALS**
- ◇ **English BA/MALS**
- ◇ **History BA/MALS**
- ◇ **Media & Communications BA/MALS**
- ◇ **Politics, Economics & Law BA/MALS**
- ◇ **Sociology BA/MALS**

To learn more about the curriculum, and how to apply, email Graduate Director, Dr. Amanda Frisken ([friskena@oldwestbury.edu](mailto:friskena@oldwestbury.edu)).

Hyewon Yi on Curating, continued from page 1

As Director of the *Wallace Gallery*, Dr. Yi has put this goal into practice many times, exposing students and the campus community to a diversity of perspectives and media. The *Wallace Gallery*, despite funding challenges, enjoys many advantages, particularly the venue itself. “It is really big, and allows an experimental space for artists,” she says. Seeking out new work, and new perspectives, is an ongoing quest, she says: “my radar is open all the time looking for artists.”

Over several years, Dr. Yi has transformed *Wallace Gallery* into a social and cultural hub for the campus and the local community. “The role of the Gallery is really serving the community, and allows people to learn about the kind of art that they may have never seen.” She sees this as particularly true on Long Island, where the art community is less concentrated than in New York City. For the beauty of curated spaces and exhibitions, for Dr. Yi, is the way they “start conversations, and inspire dialog among people.”

Apart from her work directing the Gallery, Dr. Yi is an active, collaborative scholar. She is a member of SOUP, an art collective of Korean women art professionals and artists in NYC. In 2025, with a Queens Art Fund from the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), they presented an exhibition, “Sarang-bang” by Eun Young Choi at the Voelker Orth Museum in Murray Hill, Queens, during which “people from the community came and we shared stories about the experience of being an immigrant.” Dr. Yi also contributes to a SUNY-funded project focusing on “human-centered AI,” led by colleagues at the Fashion Institute of Technology. The goal is “to try to understand what AI is,” harnessing its educational value while being aware of its shortcomings.

Recently, she completed a chapter about the Gallery exhibit called “Pandemic Diaries.” “During the pandemic everybody felt lost,” she says, “especially artists cooped up in their homes and studios.” The chapter explores how the exhibit focused on topics ranging from isolation, to wearing masks, to anti-Asian hate. She is currently writing about Godzilla, an Asian American art collective in the 1990s that sought greater representation within the art world.



Dr. Hyewon Yi opening the “Still We Rise” Exhibition in 2025

### Teaching Curating in Fall 2026

Dr. Yi’s fall course, **VA6330 Curating**, offers MALS students from every discipline the chance to create an exhibition of their own, based on their own interests. After reading theory and examining a range of curated exhibitions, students will “create their own exhibition proposal,” within their own small space (which could be a refrigerator, for example, or a car). She cites a very well-known curator who “began by curating his closet.”

*VA6330 Curating* is designed to be accessible to all MALS students. While some readings may be specific to art, the course is interdisciplinary, and students will apply their knowledge to their own area of interest. The class “becomes a very tight community” through frequent presentations. “I think the *Curating* MALS grad course is a great class for students to see the world a little bit differently,” Dr. Yi says. “I hope students will gain critical eye and learn how to assess and evaluate how exhibitions work.”

## MALS Student Brendan Lipford Wins Graduate Fellowship



*MA in Liberal Studies Student, Brendan Lipford*

MA in Liberal Studies student Brendan Lipford recently won one of Old Westbury's 2026 **Graduate Diversity Fellowships**. Now in his last semester, Brendan joined the MA in Liberal Studies program after completing a BA in American Studies at Old Westbury. He has a passion for interdisciplinary study, he says, for approaching a problem from all angles, but "I also just love learning about history."

During his semesters in the MALS program, Brendan has taken courses in several disciplines: American Studies, English, History, Sociology, and Visual Arts. He speaks fondly of Visual Arts Professor Catherine Bernard's "very inspirational" course, *VA6320 African Visual Traditions in the Americas*; as he explains, "she was a tough cookie but it was a great class!" Given his love of history he also mentions Professors Shields-Mas and Frisken – as he puts it, "I think anything with history is appealing!" But Brendan says he's been impressed by every faculty member he's worked with at Old Westbury. "There are so many professors here that impacted my life," he says. "Their classes were inspiring. They have so much passion!"

For his capstone, Brendan is completing an internship at Old Westbury's **Sojourner Truth Black Studies Center** (BSC), under the supervision of Director Dr. Jermaine Archer. While at first Brendan wondered what he and his fellow interns might achieve on a limited budget, he has since discovered a network of programs, centers, students, and faculty on campus engaging in mutual support. When he can, he also attends Dr. Archer's undergraduate class, *AS4218 The Civil War & Reconstruction*, contributing to discussions and in-class activities.

Brendan leans into his work at the BSC, developing his leadership skills in the process. "I like that I'm allowed to come up with ideas about what the Center can do," he says. Currently he is engaged in a range of projects: working with other interns to find art work and furniture to enhance the Center, developing an outreach plan over email and social media, visiting classrooms to promote the new Black Studies major and upcoming events, and soliciting ideas from students and the campus community. His goal is "to get more people involved" in the BSC, and spread the word about the new major.

Most recently, Brendan and a group of other MALS students and Black Studies undergraduates launched a new podcast, **The Black Roundtable**. The podcast's official goal is to create "a student-led intellectual forum that extends Black Studies conversations beyond the classroom and creates an accessible archive of contemporary dialogue on campus." A second, no less important, goal is to bring people together "to discuss topics related to Black history, identity, leadership, gender, culture, and community life." The team recorded the podcast's inaugural episode in March. Additional episodes are planned for April and May.

Looking ahead, Brendan sees many possible futures: therapist, teacher, cook – or "taking over the world," he jokes. One thing is certain: he will continue to read, explore, and grow; he believes in the value of reflection and critical thought. "We are in an age of illiteracy," he says, particularly now that the humanistic tradition once central to college life has fallen out of fashion for some, temporarily, he hopes. Programs like the MALS degree, Brendan says — grounded in art, history, literature, social science, and critical analysis — are the key to rekindling our sense of shared humanity.

## Dr. Carol Quirke Returns from Sabbatical

A warm welcome back to Professor Carol Quirke, who is resuming her post as **Graduate Director of the MA in Liberal Studies program** in Fall 2026. She'll be advising MALS students, and teaching the core seminar, *LI6000 Introduction to Interdisciplinary Study*.

Dr. Quirke is a historian of film, photography, women's history, and US history. She has written about labor's anti-racism efforts, police violence against activists, fashion photography and the garment industry, and contemporary photography focused on labor. Her publications include *Eyes on Labor: News Photography and America's Working Class* (2012) and *Dorothea Lange, Documentary Photography and Twentieth Century America* (2019). During her sabbatical this past year, Dr. Quirke has been conducting research at Duke University and Harvard's Schlesinger Libraries, for a book project about photographer Bettye Lane, the "official photographer" of the women's movement.



### JOIN US *for the* MA In Liberal Studies MEET & GREET PARTY!

- ◇ Meet faculty, current students & alumni
- ◇ Hear all about the MALS program, and our new, accelerated pathways

**Wed., May 6, 5:30—7:30 pm, NAB 2034**

*Refreshments will be served*

### Is it Time to Choose Your Capstone Experience?

If you've completed at least 15 credits by the end of the Spring semester, it's time to begin planning your Capstone Experience. There are two options: a 2-course Thesis or a 1-course Internship placement.

To begin, email the MALS Graduate Director, Prof. Amanda Frisken ([friskena@oldwestbury.edu](mailto:friskena@oldwestbury.edu)), for an appointment to talk about the best capstone experience to fulfill your interests and goals!

## COURSES FOR FALL 2026

Designed for MALS Students:

- ◇ LI6000 Introduction to Interdisciplinary Study (CRN 92260), Thursdays, 4:30 – 7 pm, Carol Quirke
- ◇ VA6330 Curating (CRN 92225) Mondays, 4:30 – 7 pm, Hyewon Yi
- ◇ LI6300\* Internship (*by permission only*)
- ◇ LI7500\* Thesis Research (*by permission only*)
- ◇ LI7510\* Thesis Workshop (*by permission only*)

Additional MALS Electives

- ◇ EL6510 Foundations of US Literature (CRN 91016), Mon., 4:30 – 7 pm, STAFF
- ◇ EL6530 Topics in Multicultural Literature (CRN 92162), Thurs., 4:30 – 7 pm, Emery
- ◇ HI6320 Topics in Asian History (CRN 91605), Mon., 4:30 – 7 pm, Painter
- ◇ HI6510 Topics: Struggles for Justice in US History (CRN 90944), Tues., 4:30 – 7 pm, Archer
- ◇ HI6530 Economics: Theories, Tools, & Debates (CRN 91029), Thurs., 4:30 – 7 pm, Delgiudice
- ◇ HI7500 Questioning Global History (CRN 91028), Wed., 4:30 – 7 pm, Bever
- ◇ MH6120\* Psychopathology (CRN 91035), Mon., 8 – 10:30 am, Leone (*for students with suitable background in Psychology; permission of MALS Graduate Director required*)
- ◇ ML6510 Structure of Spanish (CRN 92240), Mon., 4:30 – 7 pm, O'Connor-Bater (*taught in Spanish*)
- ◇ ML6510 Structure of Spanish (CRN 92235), ONLINE, Assa (*taught in Spanish*)
- ◇ ML6520 Masterpieces of Hispanic Literature (CRN 90929), ONLINE, Gonzalez (*taught in Spanish*)
- ◇ ML6810 Topics: Spanish Civil War (CRN 90965), Tues., 4:30 – 7 pm, Guerrero (*taught in Spanish*)

\* Consult with MALS Graduate Director for permission for these elective options.