

M.A. IN LIBERAL STUDIES *News*

SUNY College at Old Westbury, Fall 2018

Cuba Reimagined, 47 Years Later

Returning to her native Cuba for the first time in 47 years, professor **Zenaida Madurka** (Modern Languages) turned to painting in oils as a way to understand the profound changes she witnessed. “I used this mechanism as a survival tactic to deal with a reality I no longer recognized,” Madurka explains.

I experimented with oils on canvasses and started a painting diary of my return to Cuba. I drew from nature but used the window frame and the speed of the bus driving through cities and countryside as mediators. The series is called *Liquid Landscapes*. On these canvases I work on a personal search for a renewed relationship with my native landscape. Not a single painting is finished.

Madurka’s research and creative work explores intersections between Caribbean (and particularly Cuban) literatures and fine art. She has always been fascinated by recurrent themes in both media – “how discourses are debated and/or constructed via literature and painting.” She is particularly concerned with the different ways that societies deploy metaphor in art, literature, and film. “Of particular

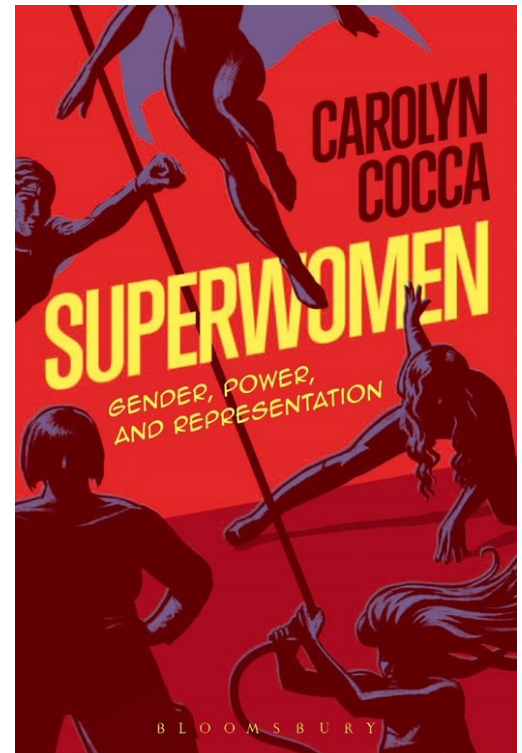
(Cuba Reimagined, continued on page 3)

ASIAN AMERICAN MIGRATION AND IDENTITIES

In her first book, *Shaping & Reshaping Chinese American Identity: New York's Chinese during the Depression and World War II*, professor **Jingyi Song** (History and Philosophy) explored questions of belonging, nation, and identity. Her research uncovered a wealth of English and Chinese-language documents “from courts, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, archives of church, municipality, museums and foundations as well newsletters and reports of local Chinese organizations.” Song was determined to read these documents with care, understanding that they “were created in a language of immigration laws and within the context of government regulations with the anti-Chinese bias.”

While *Shaping & Reshaping Chinese American Identity* focused on New York’s Chinatown in the 20th century, Song’s new book project, *Denver’s Chinatown* (in progress), examines Chinese migrants living and working in the mining communities of the Rocky Mountains in the nineteenth century. “Unlike New York’s Chinatown which survived the Exclusion era, Denver’s Chinatown disappeared in 1940,” Song explains. Her research focuses on how Chinese migrants shaped their lives and experiences within a

(Asian American Identities, continued on page 4)



Decoding the Female Superhero

Professor **Carolyn Cocca** (Politics, Economics, and Law) will be the first speaker in the new MA in Liberal Studies *Public Lecture Series*, open to the campus community and the general public, featuring prominent Old Westbury scholars. Prof. Cocca’s lecture, “Superheroes, Superpowers, and Social Change: How and Why Representation Matters for Gender Equity and Equality,” will take place on Thursday, November 15, 5:30—7pm, in NAB1100.

After two decades of writing and teaching about female power and sexuality, Cocca found herself fascinated by superheroes, which she calls “transmedia figures and billion-dollar commodities that are recognized all over the world.” But she also felt dissatisfied by the range of characters. “I felt that there had to be a lot of other people besides me who held superheroes close to their hearts for the ways in which they

(Female Superheroes, continued on page 2)

Female Superheroes (continued from page 1)

embody our hopes for justice and inspire us to be our best selves, but who rarely saw themselves represented as heroes and didn't know why but had just resigned themselves to it." Her new book *Superwomen: Gender, Power, and Representation* (2016), focuses specifically on the iconography and significance of female superheroes.

Professor Cocca studies ephemeral, popular media – such as comic books and TV shows – “not as separate from or lesser in importance than the ‘real world,’ but as an institution that’s part of the real world, that impacts people’s lives and their perceptions of themselves and their communities, and that is subject to change by people who are aware, concerned, and organized.”

Trained at NYU as a political scientist, Cocca employs an inter-disciplinary method of analysis: “I don’t think political science—or any single discipline—has all the answers.” Instead, her work engages “insights from feminist and queer theories, socio-legal studies, cultural and media studies, critical race theory, disability studies, and political economy together with political science in all of my work.” Similar interdisciplinary methods shaped her first book, *Jailbait: the politics of statutory rape laws in the United States* (2004) and her edited volume *Adolescent Sexuality*.

Cocca’s research for *Superwomen* revealed a gender gap – “that women are a disproportionately small percentage of the characters, and they are usually side characters whose role is to support men and be rescued, that they are mostly interested in their own looks and in romance with men, that they are emotional and irrational and fearful, or that they are not even present at all when important things happen.” These depictions (and



Professor Carolyn Cocca, Politics, Economics & Law Department, receiving the 2017 Eisner Award for best Academic/Scholarly Work at Comic-Con International Festival. She will present her talk – *Superheroes, Superpowers, and Social Change* – on Thursday, November 15 at 5:30 to 7:00 pm, in NAB 1100

absences) tend to “reinforce or even foster a worldview in which it seems natural and normal that women and girls are presumed less credible and less competent, are subject to various forms of discrimination, and are only rarely in positions of power in various institutions in our communities.” Cocca’s book has received significant public attention. She has been invited to contribute to blogs, podcasts, and public lectures. In 2017, she won the Eisner Award for Best Academic/Scholarly Work from Comic-Con International.

In Spring 2019, Cocca will be teaching her graduate seminar, *HI6520: U.S. Constitutional and Political History*, a course for the MAT program that is available for MALS students on a space-available basis. The course offers a four hundred year history in documents – “from government figures, from leaders of social and cultural movements, and from regular folks that get at what we say our ideals are in this country, particularly in terms of liberty and equality and popular sovereignty, and whether and how and how much we have lived up to those ideals.”

Lecture on Frederick Douglass, Feb. 14, 2019



On February 14, 2019, 5:30 pm, Professor **Jermaine Archer**, chair of the American Studies Department, will present “Frederick Douglass –Legacies.” This lecture, based on Archer’s research for his book, *Antebellum Slave Narratives*, will be the second in the MALS Public Lecture Series .

For location info, contact MALS Graduate Director, Prof. Frisken (friskena@oldwestbury.edu).



Zenaida Madurka, *Liquid Landscapes* series. Oil on canvas

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interest to me are Cuban paintings and written artistic expressions of the 1930s and 40s. The role bestowed upon the female figure as myth and nation-state during this time. I study specific artists' methods for coming to terms with/or challenging previously constructed attitudes of nationalism."

In her oil paintings, Madurka returns to her earlier passion for creative projects, which have included etchings, wood and linoleum cuts, which she explored as an undergraduate student of visual arts. In graduate school, the etchings "became interpretations of the texts I had to read for my classes, such that I would put to practice a feminist or a psychoanalytical study of a specific reading through my working on a print or etching. It worked for me: it helped me focus on the piece of literature at hand and on a specific literary criticism I needed to understand."

In the spring 2019 semester, Madurka will teach her MALS class, *ML6310 Latin American Cinema in Context*, concurrent with the Havana Film Festival in New York City – the

festival's 20th season. "The festival showcases new released Cuban and Latin American films while it also pays tribute to master film makers of past decades," Madurka explains,

My hope is that Old Westbury students experience firsthand new Latin American releases, panel discussions by the actors and films' directors; and become exposed to exciting film histories and techniques. It is stimulating to be part of a viewing public that shares an interest in these films, raise questions, and is motivated by the variety of themes presented in these festivals. Students will be expected to attend, write about the films they see, and to love the experience!

As one of the founders of the *Hispanic and Latino Cultural Center (HLCC)* at Old Westbury in 2003. Madurka believes in the power of culture to create dialogue and bridge divides. Over many years, the *HLCC* has brought to Old Westbury "a rich

variety of Latin American and Spanish cultures and histories," Madurka explains. These include "workshops and symposiums in education, the arts; political concerns by Latinos in the US, and much more. Noteworthy musicians, film makers, visual artists, Latino activists, have presented on the diversity of Hispanism to the campus and the greater NY community." As an artist, scholar, and educator, Madurka embodies the *HLCC*'s – and Old Westbury's – larger mission.



Professor Zenaida Madurka,
Modern Languages Department



Professor Jingyi Song, History & Philosophy Department

Asian American Migration and Identities (continued from page 1)

hostile climate of anti-Chinese agitation. “It has been encouraging and inspiring,” Song says, “to see how the Chinese miners, railroad constructors, logging workers as well as small businesses survived the rough frontier environments in the last quarter of the 19th century especially after the enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion laws.”

In spring 2019, Song will teach a new course, available for both MALS and MAT Social Studies students, *HI 6320: Transnationalism & Migration: Asian American History*. The course will focus primarily on East Asian migration – from China, Japan and Korea. The course examines “trans-national migration patterns, immigration policies, and the life of East Asians in the United States. It will discuss the historical context on both shores of the Pacific.” In the class, students will explore Asian Americans’ role in American and global economic, political, and cultural exchange.

Song has designed the course to illuminate how “changing patterns of transmigration ... have been strongly impacted by the immigration policies of the United States. The Page Law and the Chinese Exclusion laws, and other following laws established the government control of migration based on race and nationality.” Immigration policies have impacts public opinion about race, ethnicity, culture, gender and class. As Song puts it, “Although Exclusion was repealed, the legacy of the restrictions is still alive.”

SHAPING AND RESHAPING CHINESE AMERICAN IDENTITY

JINGYI SONG

NEW YORK'S CHINESE DURING THE
DEPRESSION AND WORLD WAR II

Courses for MALS Students – Spring 2019

EL6530 TOPICS IN MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE (8733),
T 4:45 PM-7:00 PM,
CAMARASANA

EL6540, TOPICS IN WORLD LITERATURE (8734),
W 4:45 PM-7:00 PM, JANI

**HI6320, TRANSNATIONALISM & MIGRATION: ASIAN AMERICAN HISTORY (8970),
W 4:45 PM-7:00 PM, SONG**

HI6520, U.S. CONSTITUTIONAL & POLITICAL HISTORY (8735),
W 4:45 PM-7:00 PM, COCCA

HI6540, TOPICS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY (8736),
M 4:45 PM-7:00 PM,
SHIELDS-MAS

LI6300, INTERNSHIP / FIELD PLACEMENT (BY ARRANGEMENT IN ADVANCE WITH GRADUATE DIRECTOR)

LI7990, INDEPENDENT STUDY (BY ARRANGEMENT WITH GRADUATE DIRECTOR AND FACULTY MENTOR)

**ML6310, LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA (8968),
R* 4:45 PM- 7:00 PM,
MADURKA**

ML6530, CERVANTES AND THE GOLDEN AGE (8730),
M 4:45 PM-7:00 PM,
GUERRERO (TAUGHT IN SPANISH)

ML6540, POINTS OF CONTACT: U.S. & LATIN AMERICA, NET COURSE (8731) (NET COURSE—ONLINE), GONZALEZ (TAUGHT IN SPANISH)

Note: COURSES IN BOLD, above, were developed for students in the MALS program.

The remaining courses are open to MALS students on a space-available basis. Some require pre-requisites and/or instructor permission.

**R designates Thursday classes*

To learn more about Old Westbury's MA in Liberal Studies degree, contact the Graduate Director, Professor Amanda Frisken, by phone at 516.876.4853, or by email at friskena@oldwestbury.edu.