

## Helping Students Explore the Big Questions of Life and Self: The Philosophy Outreach Program

The Philosophy Outreach Program is an after-school project designed to engage high school students in philosophical discourse. A collaboration between the Philosophy and Education Program at TC and the Department of Philosophy at Columbia University, the Program involves eight neighboring high schools and forty high school students. The Outreach Program's teachers visit the schools in pairs, one student each from TC and Columbia University, in order to engage high school students in philosophical discourse. **Guillermo Marini**, a Philosophy and Education Ph.D. student and one of the Program's founding members, says that the collaboration between programs has proved to be an exceptional opportunity for benefiting the community.

Guillermo explains that most high school students throughout Latin America and Europe study philosophy. These experiences have inspired many international students in TC's Program of Philosophy and Education to pursue the field as a career. He wonders if this opportunity "happened to American students, what might it lead them to?"

The Philosophy Outreach Program believes that high school students are in a wonderful place to begin studying philosophy, as the decisions many of them make at that age about college, careers, self are closely related to universal questions addressed by philosophy. **Tim Ignaffo**, a Philosophy and Education Ph.D. student and coordinator of the Outreach Program, says that everyone asks themselves the same questions. Giving students the vocabulary to discuss these questions can be very empowering. He also notes that at a certain point in these discussions a realization dawns

that "the questions that are popping up in my head have been engaged by every generation." Tim and Guillermo stress that high school students seek out such discourse. As a result, the students' testimonials about their enjoyment of philosophy have increased participation in the Program at every school. The Outreach Program's teachers have also been invited to be guest lecturers in some of the high school classrooms, speaking, for example, to science and English classes.

The Program has received both acclaim and financial support from TC over the last year. Guillermo and Tim appreciate the "great leadership" of Philosophy and Education faculty members, **David Hansen** and **Megan Laverty**. The Squire Foundation gave a generous grant to the Program, which was matched by the Teaching Center at Columbia and the Arts and Humanities Department.

The Squire Foundation's long-term goal is for U.S. schools to follow the European and Latin American example, making philosophy part of the core curriculum in all high schools. Though Guillermo admits this goal is "extremely ambitious," a similar outreach program at the University of Toronto recently led to all Ontario public schools adopting philosophy as a required course. The Columbia University Secondary School has recently added philosophy to its curriculum. David Hansen notes that for millennia philosophy has played a distinctive role in human culture in posing "deep, rich, challenging questions" as well as articulating embodied ways of responding to them. As such, he says, philosophy itself becomes a mode of education.

**Please welcome two more new Arts & Humanities faculty members!**  
Full profiles on each of our faculty are available on the TC site at  
<http://www.tc.edu/a&h/>



**Marc Lamont Hill**  
Associate Professor of English Education

Teaching: Popular Texts: English Classroom and Special Issues: Sociocultural Approaches to Reading/Writing

"I am preoccupied with understanding the intersections with literacy, identity, and schooling. This type of work takes me in a range of interdisciplinary directions. The TC community provides me with the type of first-rate colleagues and students that make this work more rich and productive."

### **Kirby Grabowski** Lecturer in Language and Education

Teaching: Pedagogical English Grammar and Second Language Assessment

"I am passionate about linking theory and research to practice, particularly with respect to the teaching and assessment of English as a second language. All too often findings from empirical research do not find their way to the classroom. Making research accessible to our students at TC is a fantastic way to keep this knowledge flowing."

