

# University Professors 2007-2011

*In recognition of their sustained excellence in teaching effectiveness, professional activity and service.*

**Meryl B. Altman**, Professor of English and Women's Studies  
**Cynthia O'Dell**, Associate Professor of Art and Chair of the Department of Art  
**Daniel E. Shannon**, Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Department of Philosophy

## **Meryl B. Altman, Professor of English and Women's Studies**

Meryl B. Altman earned her B.A. in 1979 from Swarthmore College and her M.A. in 1980, M.Phil. in 1982, and Ph.D. in 1988 from Columbia University. She joined the faculty at DePauw in 1990 as Assistant Professor of English and Coordinator of Women's Studies. She was promoted to Associate Professor in 1996 and to Professor in 2006.

As a teacher, she has been a pioneer in constructing the formal program as well as a consciousness for Women's Studies at DePauw. She has nurtured the development of major and minor programs for Women's Studies, recruited and built sustained faculty and student interest in the program offerings, and developed both the Introduction to Women's Studies course and appropriate first year seminars. Her students recognize her as a particularly effective teacher -reflective, stimulating, challenging, encouraging, and disciplined. She is notable, in the words of one who wrote positively about her teaching, "for her seemingly endless intellectual curiosity and her refusal to accept lazy thinking or conventional wisdom." Comments from this and other students attest to her profound influence on their lives. One wrote: "She says things which lead me to rethink much of what I have taken for granted, in literature and in my life. Dr. Altman is successful in several areas that most other teachers only approach. Her teaching gifts are highly unusual, and her classes are worth taking not only for the material taught but for learning about good teaching." Another wrote, "Meryl's courses carefully blend instructor guidance and student led self-discovery."

As one of her colleagues offers in description, she also has become an effective administrator, "facilitating the intellectual and cultural work of the Women's Studies Program. She seems to be one of the significant public faces for feminism at DePauw and ranges effectively between the work of detail and conceptualization that such administrative engagements necessitate." Yet another observes that in the GLCA Women's Studies Committee meetings it is clear that "Meryl is the person to whom others on the committee look for ideas and answers. She is quiet, she is helpful, she is ferocious, she is contentious - you never quite know which it will be. But she is taken seriously. And she's helped make other colleges take DePauw seriously, in turn."

In her service to the University, she served for 16 years as Coordinator/Director of the Women's Studies Program until her appointment as Faculty Development Coordinator began in 2006-07. She has served on the Committee on Academic Policy and Planning (CAPP) which she also chaired, the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education which she also chaired which developed its report in association with the North Central Association self-study a decade ago, and the first-year experience planning taskforce. She has served on the Committee on Faculty, the GLCA Women's Studies Committee and conference planning committees and the First-Year Seminar Committee. She has served on the Committee on Administration, and the Resource Allocation Subcommittee of CAPP. She served as Catalyst for the Mellon-funded Faculty Career Enhancement Program and has been a leader and inspiration for organizing the faculty research colloquium series.

Her scholarly work includes numerous articles and over a dozen book reviews. She continues to progress on a book manuscript which explores Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, May Sarton and Mary McCarthy. Her colleagues note that "she has been successful in clearly defining and proposing solutions to large theoretical problems: such as the impasse in feminist theory over subjectivity and the problem for feminism of connecting the personal and the political. ... While taking on big issues, her work also shows a meticulous attention to detail." Another writes that her work "deserves to be more widely read, [because it] reclaims Beauvoir for feminism." Colleagues outside of DePauw write: "Professor Altman is a remarkable and uniquely talented scholar." About her recent new essay on Simon de Beauvoir a colleague writes: "I was so impressed by the essay that I immediately decided to use it in my graduate course." Colleagues describe Meryl as "unusually thoughtful" and as a "truly exceptional scholar." Her work is referred to as having "startling originality."

### **Cynthia O'Dell, Associate Professor of Art and Chair of the Department of Art**

Cynthia O'Dell earned her B.A. and B.F.A. in 1994 from University of Iowa and her M.F.A. in 1998 from University of Colorado, Boulder. She was appointed to the faculty at DePauw as an Assistant Professor in 1998, and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2004.

Her students are enthusiastic about how much her teaching inspires them to learn, create, and achieve. They refer to her classes as filled with "innovative and thought-provoking readings and projects. Immediately, students are intellectually engaged ..." Students mention the challenge of her critiques and the inspiration they draw from her insistence that they look even more deeply to find the creative origins of their work. She is widely credited with inspiring many students to pursue artistic careers.

External reviewers of her professional and artistic accomplishments note: "[she] is a tremendously productive artist. She has created a new body of work, often in a new medium, virtually every two years..." "[Her] work has been exhibited in more than a dozen states and a wide variety of venues ... [and] has been nationally recognized for its level of accomplishment."

In 1996, she began documenting the lives of women in Colorado who were living with cancer. After two years of interviewing and photographing these women, the work evolved into *Common Threads*, an exhibit of photographic quilts, first exhibited in 1998. *Common Threads* has been exhibited in Colorado, Ohio, Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. Of *Common Threads*, Mary Voelz Chandler of *On Art*, Rocky Mountain News, said, "...O'Dell hits the target: Often Art that tries to make a statement on illness becomes more self-indulgence than self-expression, but O'Dell's *Common Threads* carries a real impact on the topic of breast cancer: Her huge embroidered velvet "frames" have a strong emotional center. No bathos, just connection." According to Alfredo De La Rosa of the *Colorado Daily*, *Common Threads*, "is an arduous and conceptually well aimed shot from a double-barreled sensibility. It concludes in work to which she brings several skills, keen intelligence and flawless competence."

In May 2003, her film *Residue of Memory*, was awarded Best Experimental Documentary at the New York International Independent Film & Video Festival. The work is described as "exploring the metaphorical relationship between family loss and the abandoned rock quarry that chronicles the journeys of five women."

She has twice been awarded Faculty Fellowships, first in 2002-2005 for her project entitled, "[un]natural," a body of photographic work consisting of 30 large scale color and digital photographs addressing philosophical issues behind the concept of human relationship to the land and the defining or mythical line between what is considered natural and [un]natural; and now for 2007-2010 for her project entitled, "Migrations," which she describes as "a new body of photographic work which explores ideas of transience, dislocation and migration due to the Irish Diaspora. This work uses the photographic transparency as a metaphorical device to explore dislocation by layering images from my family archive, which are transferred to black and white/color transparencies, with the Irish landscape."

In her service to the department, she currently serves as department chair. She provided extensive leadership in research and design of the new digital and analog photography labs and digital video lab in the Peeler Art Center. In her service to the University she has served on the First-Year Seminar Committee, the Women's Studies Program Steering Committee, the Film Studies Program Steering Committee the Nature Park Faculty Advisory Group, the Planning committee for the Mellon Faculty Career Enhancement grant, the Exhibitions Committee, the Digital Video Standards Committee, the Computer Labs Committee, and the Media Fellows Program Steering Committee. She has also served as an Art Advisor for the *Midwestern Review*, as the New York Arts Campus Representative.

### **Daniel E. Shannon, Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Department of Philosophy**

Daniel E. Shannon earned his B.A. in 1980 from Loyola University of the South, and his M.A. in 1982, and Ph.D. in 1989, from University of Toronto. He was first appointed at DePauw as Assistant Professor in 1990, was promoted to Associate Professor in 1996 and to Professor in 2004.

In his teaching, he has presented a wide range of topics at all levels of the philosophy department's offerings. He has taught Introduction to Philosophy, courses ranging over Medieval Philosophy, Contemporary Moral Problems, Nineteenth Century Philosophy, Faith-Will-Unconsciousness, Ethics and Business, Ethical Theory, Philosophy of Art, Socrates to Augustine, and Existentialism, and upper level topics courses including Hegel to Marx; Kant; Phenomenology; Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche; Contemporary Continental Philosophy; Reason, Reality and Revolt; and Idealism; among others. His students describe him as demanding and stimulating, a clear and effective presenter of material and a thoughtful discussion leader, drawing some of their best work from them, often better than they thought possible.

He received a Distinguished Professor Award for 2005-2007 for his sustained excellence in teaching and service. His work also has been recognized by an Aspen Foundation Fellowship in 1993, two Faculty Fellowships (2000-2003, 2004-2007), and the Jens Jacobsen Research Award in 2002-2003.

In his service, in addition to serving his second term as department chair, he serves as a leave replacement on the Committee on Faculty. He has previously completed four years as a member of this Committee, which he also chaired for a year. He served for three years as a member of the Student Affairs Committee and chaired that committee for two years, helping to develop a number of policies. He has also served on the Student Conduct Board and worked on committees revising the judicial procedures for student conduct violations. He served for several years on the Public Occasions Committee and the Teacher Education Committee, as an officer of Division II and as the DePauw faculty representative to the GLCA Academic Council. He served in fall 2001 as Assistant to the Director of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest Central European Studies Program in the Czech Republic. He served for several years on the special task force to revise the Academic Handbook. His professional service includes reviewing manuscripts for publishers and professional journals, moderating the list serve and reviewing papers for the Hegel Society of America, chairing several professional sessions, and serving as a member of the Executive Board of the International Society for Universal Dialogue (ISUD) and as chair of its Review Committee for the 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference.

He is also noted as a scholar of Hegel and as a specialist of German philosophy of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, having published a widely acclaimed translation (with notes, introduction and commentary) of Hegel's *Spirit*, Chapter Six of the "Phenomenology of Spirit." In 2004, he contributed "Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology: The Value of Myth to Philosophy," to the book *Mythos and Logos: How to Regain the Love of Wisdom* and his article, "Religion and Its Relation to the State: An Analysis of Hegel's Position," appeared in *Skepsis: A Journal for Philosophy and Inter-Disciplinary Research*. In 2006, he contributed a chapter entitled, "The Riddle of Cohesion: Hegel's Answer to Lotze" to the new book, *Humanity at the Turning Point: Rethinking Nature, Culture and Freedom*, edited by Sonja Servomaa and published by University of Helsinki Press. He has published numerous articles in refereed journals, several reports and reviews, and he has given several presentations at state, regional, national, and international conferences. He served as conference organizer for the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Society of International Dialogue at University of Helsinki. With the theme, "Humanity at the Turning Point, Rethinking Nature, Culture, and Freedom," the conference took place July 15-20, 2005 in Finland.