

THE SELF MONITOR

The Official Alumni Newsletter of the
Psychology Department,
State University of New York at New Paltz
Volume 18: 2025

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*Dr. Grossi representing
two of her favorite things,
music and books*

Message from the Department Chair, Dr. Giordana Grossi

Greetings from SUNY New Paltz! I hope this message finds you well, wherever you are. It was an intense year for the Psychology Department. Psychology faculty and students were as busy as ever; several changes also took place, especially in terms of personnel. Here are some of the highlights:

- Prof. Carol Vazquez retired last summer after 47 years at SUNY New Paltz. She has seen the department changing dramatically throughout her remarkable career. Since I was hired in 2001, I have known Prof. Vazquez for her unwavering commitment to excellence in educational standards. The range of courses that she taught reveals an impressive breadth of knowledge, historical perspective, and commitment to foster students' critical thinking skills. She taught a variety of classes and seminars aimed to critically evaluate popular claims and concepts in psychology. The misuse of

research on intelligence was central to her thinking and work as a teacher. I take the opportunity here to thank her again for her dedication to our students and the department throughout the years.

- Hilary Chalmers, our new administrative assistant, joined us last September. From the beginning, Hilary distinguished herself as very enthusiastic, organized, and efficient, always eager to contribute to the department in every possible way with creative ideas and good humor. You can learn more about her in a later section of this issue of the newsletter.
- Sabi Khan, from the Advising Office, joined the department as an affiliated major advisor last fall. Sabi provides much needed support to navigate the intricate and ever-changing policies tied to advising. To help with additional advising needs, the department also welcomed back Professor Emeritus Alison Nash, who retired in 2018. It was delightful to run into Dr. Nash at work again.
- Dr. Stephanie Kohn joined us as a lecturer for the year. She covered a range of courses, including those in I/O and a seminar on human resources, her field of expertise.
- We are excited to welcome two new colleagues in the fall, Dr. Michelle Meyer and Dr. Lucy Cui. You can learn about them in this issue of the newsletter.
- We hosted two intellectually stimulating lectures for the Cognitive Science Colloquium Series. Dr. Chad Rogers (Union College) discussed how the ability to make inferences during speech perception changes with age. Dr. Joanna Rączaszek-Leonardi (University of Warsaw) discussed her dynamic systems approach to language, seen not simply as a set of symbols in our heads but as a collection of meanings emerging from the interactions between people. I am glad our students had the chance to engage with these remarkable scholars and their work.
- Professor Emeritus James Halpern, founder of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health at SUNY New Paltz, had the honor of delivering the Commencement Address at the Liberal Arts and Science Saturday Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony and receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree, the highest form of recognition offered by the State University of New York. More on this later.

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Chair's letter continued

- Prof. Doug Maynard was awarded the Mentor of the Year award at the 2025 Student Research Symposium (more on this award can be found later in the newsletter], and Prof. Damian Kelty-Stephen and Prof. Matt Wice earned tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. Congratulations to all for these so well-deserved achievements!

A note about classes. As you know, we offer a range of selected topic courses and seminars that reflect the research interests and expertise of our faculty (e.g., morality, generation disaster, human emotion, cultural psychology, positive evolutionary psychology, happiness). This past year, the list expanded to include new ones that generated much enthusiasm among our students: psychology of criminal behavior, sleep and dreams, environmental psychology, executive functioning, human resources, drug epidemiology, leadership (taught by Dr. Stew Friedman, an alum of our graduate program, and his colleague Michelle Rajotte based on the work he developed at the Wharton School of Business). I am glad our students can choose from a curriculum that includes such a rich and diverse set of topics, theoretical perspectives, and methods.

A final personal highlight. For the first time, department chairs and graduate program directors were on stage at the 2025 Commencement Ceremonies. Prof. Hirshorn had the honor of hooding the graduate students earning their MS in Psychological Science; I handed our psychology majors their diploma cases. It was a thrilling experience, and a very special way for us to celebrate our students' accomplishments.

The next academic year is about to start. Please stop by the department if you happen to visit New Paltz or contact us. We would love to see you again or hear from you.

All the best,
Dr. Giordana Grossi
Professor and Chair of Psychology

**Welcome New Department Administrative Assistant,
Hilary Chalmers!**

Glenn Geher's Q&A with Hilary:

GG: Your official title in our department and date of hire?

HC: My name is Hilary Chalmers and on September 12, 2024, I stepped into the role of the Department of Psychology's Administrative Assistant, following in the long shadow of the wonderful and marvelous Kanji Rodriguez.

GG: Hilary—I think that I speak for all members of our departmental community when I say that we are thrilled to have you working with us—your diligence, motivation, and brightness have helped to make the New Paltz Psychology Department an even-better place!

HC: Well, it's easy to be motivated and happy when working with such a lovely group of people, not only the faculty of the PSY Dept but also the welcoming and supportive SUNY New Paltz community.



*Hilary and her favorite
companion and action-
adventure figure,
Mrs. Emma Peel**

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Interview with Hilary Chalmers, cont'd:

GG: I would love to know more about your background. Where do you come from? What is the nature of your education and past work experience?

HC: I consider myself a proud native New York Stater, meaning that I was born in Manhattan, worked there as a just graduated professional and returned as a professional; spent my elementary and junior high school years in Long Island and my senior high school years in upstate New York. I've lived in many places; I now live in Kingston, NY and like to see the changing seasons.

I graduated from The University of Chicago with an A.B. in Modern European History so I could study *everything* in a historical perspective.

However, my background is primarily in public relations and marketing communications spanning a variety of industries from Scholastic Books to food commodities to e-commerce, LED lighting, and even Google in the early days. When asked why public relations, I often say that I liked to study good stories, now I can tell good stories.

Before joining SUNY New Paltz, I worked at Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County 4-H program. There, I worked with in collaboration with many others to support students ages 4-19, follow the 4-H mission of head, heart, hands and health – to decision-making, planning, and problem-solving.

GG: I know that, like me, you take great pride and joy in gardening. What are some gardening highlights for you this season (bragging encouraged here!)?

HC: I inherited my British mother's English garden, which is filled with lots of roses and rhododendrons, peonies and hydrangeas, herbs and tomatoes, seasoned with some annuals for bright colors and different places to sit and look up at the sky with friends and my pal Emma*. I consider myself more of a caretaker than a curator.

GG: You seem to have a natural way of making students and faculty feel supported. What is your secret! What are some of the values that you bring to the job that you believe help make you come across as so helpful, welcoming, and supportive?

HC: You say the nicest things. I like to think of myself as a problem-solver. I'm not afraid to say, I don't know, to get to the answers needed. I'm curious. I'm pragmatic. I strive to be a better listener. I thrive on collaborating with others and sharing the glory when we succeed in making someone's day.

GG: You meet with a lot of our students regularly—and, of course, students are the lifeblood of any institution of higher education. If you were going to give three pieces of advice to our students based on your experience, what would you say?

HC: I could probably boil the three pieces of advice to a mantra of three words my mother once wrote on a small post-it: Courage, Grace and Humor. Be brave and ask questions, lots of questions!, because you never know what you may find out. Aspire to elegance and empathy with others because what comes around goes around. Lastly, look for the humor in almost any situation and laugh.

***Note from the Editors:**

We're terribly sorry to report that after this interview was conducted, Hilary's beloved Emma passed away peacefully in early August after 14 years of loving companionship. Our condolences to Hilary, who wanted to feature Emma's picture in honor of their bond.

Introducing Our New Faculty Members

After highly competitive national searches last year, we're delighted that we'll be joined in Fall 2025 by two new faculty members who bring diverse areas of expertise and dedication to innovative pedagogical practices to the department. We're so excited to welcome them, and know our students will love learning from them! Please meet Dr. Lucy Cui and Dr. Michelle Meyer, who were interviewed by Prof. Glenn Geher.

Welcome to the Faculty, Dr. Lucy Cui!

GG: Welcome Dr. Cui! We are excited to have you join our faculty and broader departmental community as an Assistant Professor! Please tell us about your general area of expertise and how this all will shape your research and teaching in our department?

LC: My general area of expertise is cognitive psychology and my research interests span multiple levels of cognition, such as perception, learning, memory, problem solving and decision making. More specifically, I am interested in how people interact with visual and numerical information within technological spaces. Domains of interest include educational technology, data visualization, user experience (mobile apps), consumer decision making, and game cognition.

I ask questions such as: "What misconceptions do students have about data visualizations and how do we address them? How do we get unbiased feedback from usability testing? How does prolonged gameplay change how we think? And how does artificial intelligence change how we process information and make decisions?" Student involvement in these research projects would prepare them for jobs in user experience design/research, data science, game development, and the education sector.

There is a natural alignment between my research and my teaching. Budding technologies (e.g., AR/VR, AI, ed tech) are changing the education space, supporting student engagement yet discouraging effortful learning. I have integrated gameplay and data literacy exercises into my lesson plans in the past to address some of these issues. I plan to continue to have my research and teaching inform one another, such as bringing insights from my research into the classroom.

GG: During your job talk, you made mention of working with students on several occasions. In broad strokes, what are some of your plans to work with students at New Paltz? And what general outcomes do you strive for in your collaborations with students?

LC: I'm looking forward to mentoring students on research, club activities, and career planning. I'm very excited to start my own lab! I believe there's more to research mentorship than just the research craft. There is also the community. I plan to develop lab traditions, such as board game nights and annual celebrations, to cultivate these important relationships. I plan on recruiting research assistants from my classes and guiding them through the stages of my research projects. I also look forward to advising independent studies and undergraduate/master's thesis projects.

I would also be interested in advising students on creative projects, such as developing a card or board game or other interactive activities for classes, creating short-form content about psychology topics, etc.

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For club activities, I'd be interested in providing mentorship on club affairs, events, and career preparation. I'm planning on developing partnerships or networking for the sake of my students and my research, so maybe we can find some aligned interests there too. I also welcome invites to serve on panels on diversity issues.

GG: What is your back story? Please tell us a bit about your educational/work experiences, places you've lived and worked, and maybe some fun fact about yourself!



*New Assistant
Professor Lucy Cui*

LC: I grew up in the northeast, spent most of my life living in California, and now I've come full circle and made the northeast my home again. It's been refreshing! It's great to have seasons again and fall foliage to look forward to.

I started college as a neuroscience major and on the premed track. Then I realized the only subfield of neuroscience that interested me was behavioral neuroscience and switched to a psychology major and statistics minor. I enjoyed my time at UCLA so much, I decided to stay for my PhD in cognitive psychology.

My work experiences throughout college and graduate school influenced my research interests and career choice. I was introduced to the field of data visualizations from a summer internship on bioinformatics at Sandia National Laboratories. That summer, I was also introduced to programming, which led me to pursue more computational and statistical coursework. I was faced with the dilemma of completing an internship at Amazon or teaching an online course for UCLA the summer before I graduated my PhD. I decided to do both and I am glad I did. The simultaneous comparison between industry and academia was what I needed to realize my preference for teaching and fully commit to academia.

I'm a sentimental person and value keepsakes, especially with teaching. I have kept or been given to keep class projects (e.g., Lego flowers, jigsaw puzzles), individual student projects or crafts (e.g., pipe cleaner neurons), etc. Outside of teaching, I collect stuffed animals, travel magnets and board games.

GG: If you have three pieces of advice for any college student to help them succeed, please share!

LC:

1. Build relationships with others. College isn't just about grades and degrees. It's also about building relationships with others, e.g., lifelong friends, significant others, job referrals/references, co-founders for startups, mentors. You never know what opportunities people can open up for you.

2. Get a head start on getting involved in research. It will look good on a resume regardless of whether you pursue a career in research and it will get you a strong letter of recommendation for any professional or graduate school, even outside of your field. It looks better than being involved in a club or being leadership in a club, because it shows that you have been vetted by a professional and work well under management.

3. Go to career advising early. Some students do not think about career options early enough in their college years and scramble to figure out what jobs to apply to in their senior year. Starting this conversation early allows students to switch majors and save both time and money on not needing additional schooling. It also allows students to observe what they are good at, what they like doing or dislike doing, and what kind of environment they would like to be in.



New Lecturer Michelle Meyer

Welcome to the Faculty, Dr. Michelle Meyer!

GG: Welcome Dr. Meyer! We are excited to have you join our faculty and broader developmental community as a Lecturer! Please tell us about your general area of expertise and how this all will shape your research and teaching in our department.

MM: Thank you! Quite literally every interaction I've had in preparation for joining New Paltz has been wonderful, from getting tours with students to seeing campus announcements to talking to staff and meeting fellow faculty. I'm already in the process of moving, and looking forward to finally being there.

My expertise is a bit broad.... If you mean the paper degrees I have, my doctorate is in Educational Psychology and Methodology, preceded by a master's in Psychology with a counseling specialization. But along with those, my scholarly interest lies in the social psychology of obedience to authority of higher education systems, and I've had teaching experience in ed psych, social psych, human development, psychopathology, counseling theories, and quantitative analysis. One of the things that initially drew me to SUNY New Paltz was the opportunity to teach a wide variety of classes. I consider myself an educator more than a scholar, having studied how human cognition and learning best receive information and the environments that foster growth so that I can bolster the next level of students. I do have backburner research projects, mostly arising out of my own interest and desire to spread awareness about the importance of teaching practices and the reduction of hierarchical authority in academia. But really, I consider these hobbies that I do because they're interesting and might spread good practice. I'm coming to New Paltz as an instructor because classroom work is by far the most important to me.

GG: During your job talk, you used some very outside-of-the-box techniques to explicate the concepts that you were presenting (and I mean this in a good way!). How would you describe what is unique about your teaching style? And what would you say about your expectations teaching at New Paltz starting in Fall?

MM: Well, I'm enough of a scholar to say that my teaching style isn't unique! I know that my approach is uncommon and may seem out there at first, but my background is pretty strongly rooted in existing pedagogies – Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory and Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed being the two most well-known ones. Ultimately this style comes down to making the classroom environment an experiential and experimental one that will spur curiosity outside of the classroom. As an educator, I can cultivate an environment to think about psychology in a rigorous, scientific way, and provide construct definitions for course content. However, I can't decide what to do with that information or what career someone will take it to. I emphasize weekly case studies, or vignettes, or samples of current research measures, or small-group discussions, and modern news stories using the content to focus on skill-building that can be used down the line. Sometimes, the classroom can become our own live-in experiment. I'll provide a baseline and guide them toward options, but then it's up to the students figure out the ways it exists in their lives, in their careers, and right in front of them.

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GG: What is your back story? Please tell us a bit about your educational / work experience, places you've lived and worked, and maybe some fun fact about yourself!

MM: Kind of like with my area of expertise, I'm a bit all over the place! I actually dropped out of high school to start college when I was 16, to go to a small liberal arts school in Massachusetts designed around doing so. I was a triple major in psychology, mathematics, and creative writing – a great way to stay educated in multiple fields, although I don't know if I could recommend it to others given how stressful it was!

On the recommendation of one of my mindfulness mentors, I went to Seattle for an experimental master's program in psychology with a counseling focus. I stayed there for a few years, working both in the Seattle Public School system and interning as a case worker in a community mental health center. My specialties – a precursor to my methodological background – were in diagnostics and psychoeducation, which really cemented my desire to return to a higher ed setting. Since my content knowledge was already pretty broad, I opted to pursue educational psychology so that I could “practice what I preach.” This is how I ended up in New York for my doctorate, where most of my time was spent as a teaching assistant taking overloads of classes (pretty sure the department secretary still has my number...) and assisting a research lab based on learning and intelligence. Most recently, I'm coming from Ohio, where I've been a teaching-focused visiting professor for the past few years. While it was a neat coincidence to return to where I'd grown up, I couldn't ever shake the desire to return to a more east-coast region.

A fun fact, huh? I've never been good at those...well, over the last few years, I've found that I've grown quite fond of visual novels. It's like reading a multimedia book, and was a great way to get back into recreational reading after years of just looking at journal publications. A growing love of VNs is how I met my current partner, too.

GG: If you have three pieces of advice for any college student to help them succeed, please share!

MM: Only three, huh? I'll try and condense as much as I can.... My first piece of advice is to echo words you've probably heard multiple times: consider a routine! You don't need your life timed down to the minute, but having blocks of time that are dedicated to completing assignments, work hours, self-care practices, decompressing, and whatever other obligations you have can ensure that nothing gets forgotten.

Secondly, pursue your college degree with a strong long-term goal and sense of intention. I don't mean this to say that you need to have everything figured out yet – especially if you're under 20, it's very normal to be unsure about the rest of your life! But whether you're taking time to figure out your future prospects or you know what they are and strive for them, be intentional about it. Not sure what you want your major to be? Actively pick a variety of classes and pay attention to how engaged you are in them. Coming to college to be an athlete and want a backup? Look at major requirements and class schedule that fit with your practices so that you don't burn out. Have your ten-year plan for your career goals and income? Ask professionals what steps they took to get there, so that you can follow that path. It's okay to change your trajectory, but knowing what your long-term goal is will help you see when you aren't currently heading that direction, and gives you something to be motivated toward.

Thirdly, and possibly the most important: please communicate with your faculty. It is literally our job, and in many cases our passion, to help you reach the success you've set for yourself. Due dates, classroom policies, grading feedback, and tough assignments are a negotiation between what is practical to do in the time we have available to us and holding you to a standard we believe you can achieve. These things can be adapted in a dialogue; if you come in assuming that we're trying to scaffold the best opportunity for you, we'll assume that you're putting everything you can into succeeding.

Professor Emeritus James Halpern Delivered May 2025 Undergraduate Commencement Address



James Halpern receiving his honorary degree and speaking at 2025 Commencement

On May 17, 2025, graduating Liberal Arts and Sciences students were inspired by the commencement address delivered by Professor Emeritus James Halpern, who retired from the Psychology Department in 2016 after 43 years at SUNY New Paltz from 1973 to 2016. During that time, after his experience overseeing the missing persons helpline for the American Red Cross after 9/11 and many other disaster mental health response experiences, Dr. Halpern founded the Institute for Disaster Mental Health (IDMH) at SUNY New Paltz. IDMH is now an internationally recognized center for training, research, and education in the much-needed field of psychological support for disaster survivors and responders. In addition to these external activities, IDMH houses an Advanced Certificate in Trauma and Disaster Mental Health, and he created the interdisciplinary undergraduate Minor in Disaster Studies that is now located within the Psychology Department,

In his address, Dr. Halpern spoke about bringing SUNY New Paltz students from the undergraduate minor to the 9/11 anniversary ceremonies at Ground Zero in New York City for many years to provide support for survivors. Over winter break in 2005, in connection with the American Red Cross, he took a group of students to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. At the time, he said:

“Some professionals were concerned that the students could not cope with the demands of disaster response or the sights and sounds of what looked like the apocalypse. Our students, in fact, were up to the task. They were up at dawn, worked 12 hours a day bringing food and supplies to devastated neighborhoods and did not want to come home after their 10-day deployment. Their ability, motivation, idealism, energy and common sense was inspiring, and their lives were changed by working to help people in need and making a difference. They remind us that young adults like you can make very significant contributions.”

That last point was the core message of his address: ***To be of use***. In Dr. Halpern’s words, “There are many ways to serve and be of use to others, even when our world feels disrupted. Your education and experience here at New Paltz will allow each of you to discover your own unique way to make small but powerful changes in our community and the world.”

Read his full address [here](#). During the ceremony Dr. Halpern also received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree, the highest form of recognition offered by the State University of New York. Inspired himself by this honor, he reports that “I am currently working on facilitating an even more productive relationship between SUNY New Paltz and several response agencies so our undergraduate and graduate students can participate in disaster preparedness and response and receive college credit for their work.” Cheers to Dr. Halpern for his long service to the department, for his significant contributions to the development of the disaster mental health field, and for continuing to inspire colleagues and students during his retirement!

Dr. Doug Maynard Awarded the 2025 Mentor of the Year Award



Prof. Maynard with Prof. Nystrom (Director of Undergraduate Research) and Prof. Grossi (credit, Robin Weinstein '14)

The Mentor of the Year Award honors the extraordinary efforts that faculty make to mentor students in their research or creative work and is awarded at the annual Student Research Symposium. Prof. Maynard was commended for the exceptional quality and dedication of his mentorship. Most impressive, he intentionally designs his research program to optimize students' development. For example, he scaffolds activities, gradually increasing the students' responsibility to match their growing skills and supporting them throughout. He engages the students on his team in all phases of a research project, and thus treats them as true collaborators. The students who nominated Prof. Maynard spoke highly of his mentorship. They share how they felt safe under his guidance, grew quickly, and developed strong identities as researchers. Nearly all his students stay on his team for at least one year, often much longer. Some have taken their love for research to doctoral programs or pursuing careers in industry or government, where they apply the quantitative and qualitative research skills learned in his lab.

You can learn more about Dr. Maynard's award [here](#).

More Faculty News

Prof. Damian Kelty-Stephen was invited on Paul Middlebrooks' "Brain Inspired" podcast to discuss the intersections between neuroscience and artificial intelligence, and scientific metaphors for mind and brain beyond the classic computer metaphor. Check it out [here](#).

Prof. Karla Vermeulen co-organized the 12th Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood's (SSEA) 12th conference on emerging adulthood, which took place in Charleston, SC, on June 4-6, 2025, where Profs. Holmes and Wice also presented research with members of their student teams. More on this later on page 10.

Prof. Glenn Geher was featured in an article in *Nature* magazine on "[How to keep research afloat during an administrative stint.](#)" Prof. Geher also helped organize the annual "Darwin Day" celebration on campus in February, where he and several student members of his research team, the New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Lab, presented their research.

2025 Commencement Ceremony

*Top: Prof. Glenn Geher leading the student processional
Bottom: Psychology faculty (right to left) Profs. Liz Hirshorn, Karla Vermeulen, Damian Kelty-Stephen and Matt Wice*



Faculty-Student Collaborations

- Prof. Matt Wice published a new article in the journal *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* with the title "[Depictions of prosocial behavior in U.S. and Japanese children's picture books](#)." The study was conducted in collaboration with students Kamil Hankour (BA '21; MS, '22), now a doctoral student in the educational psychology program at Virginia Commonwealth University, and Aaron John (BA '21; MS '23), along with developmental psychologist Dr. Yoko Takagi (SUNY Oneonta).
- Prof. Corwin Senko and one of our former students, Ryan Meurlin (BA, '21), now in the School Psychology Psy.D. program at Adelphi University, published the paper "[Whom are you trying to impress? Pursuing performance goals for parents, teachers, or classmates](#)" in the *Journal of Educational Psychology*.
- Prof. Glenn Geher and his students published the following papers:
 - "[Political polarization, ingroup bias, and helping behavior: Do we help others who are "on the other political team?"](#)", which appeared in *Psychological Issues*. It was co-authored with Brianna Fitapelli (first author, now a doctoral student in clinical psychology at Adelphi University), Samantha Hewett, Briana McQuade, Emma Berg, Dalia Thaler, Lauren Gay, Tiana Rodriguez, Dayna T. Thomas, and Ferdaus Akhmadi. The paper was the outcome of a class project conducted in Prof. Geher's Honors Seminar, The Human Condition.
 - "[Stakeholders' roles in evolutionizing education: An evolutionary-based toolkit surrounding elementary education](#)", which appeared in *Behavioral Sciences*. It was co-authored with Kathyne Gruskin (first author), Mariah Griffin, Sonakshi Bansal, Stephanie Dickinson-Frevola, S., Ashlee Dykeman, Desiree Groce-Volinski, Keydy Henriquez, Maya Kardas, Aileen McCarthy, Aman Shetty, Brandon Staccio, and Ethan Eisenberg.

Developmental Faculty and Students Present at Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood Conference in Charleston

All three department members who focus on developmental psychology presented work at the 12th biannual Conference on Emerging Adulthood, operated by the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood (SSEA) in Charleston, SC, in early June. Five New Paltz students accompanied them, including some who had graduated just weeks earlier.

Along with students Paige Kessler and Adrianna Eddy, Prof. Tabitha Holmes presented a paper called "'Everyone does it and professors don't care!' – How emerging adults make sense of academic dishonesty." They presented theoretical models of why students engage in academic dishonesty and led a discussion on

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L-R: Students Adrianna Eddy, Paige Kessler, Natalia Turkiewicz, Keydy Henriquez, and EmmaJean Taylor, with Prof. Matt Wice in the back and Profs. Tabitha Holmes and Karla Vermeulen on the right.

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how the cultural norms of cheating have changed with students' access to technology such as ChatGPT. Prof. Holmes also chaired the paper session, which focused on grey areas of morality.

Prof. Wice presented a poster featuring data from the quantitative portion of the same research project, supported by students Natalia Turkiewicz and Keydy Henriquez. "Ethical values and academic dishonesty among emerging adults: A cross-cultural investigation" examined the relationship between the ethical values of autonomy, community, and divinity and academic cheating among emerging adults, and how that relationship was shaped by cultural contexts. Keydy also presented some of the study data in a pre-conference workshop where emerging scholars received feedback on ongoing projects from SSEA leaders.

Emmajean Taylor, a recent graduate from our Psychological Science Graduate Program (May 2025), presented work from her thesis "I wanted to be an Olsen Twin": Exploring sister-sister relationships. This was a qualitative study that explored how women navigate identity development and family expectations in the context of their sibling relationships.

Prof. Vermeulen gave an invited talk on "Climate change, eco-anxiety, and activism among emerging adults" which included a combination of her research from her book, *Generation Disaster: Coming of Age Post-9/11* (2021, Oxford University Press) and more recent findings on the mental health implications of climate change – both the increasing disasters it's already causing and more general dread about what the future may bring – for young adults. Prof. Vermeulen also served as Conference Co-Chair, which involved spending more than a year working with SSEA Leadership on every aspect of the event, including overseeing the call for proposals and review process, organizing sessions, and generally sweating the details. Now that the conference is over, she'll transition to an elected role on the organization's Governing Council. Anyone interested in research on emerging adulthood can learn more about the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood at ssea.org.

The New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Lab Represents at the 19th NEEPS Conference in Atlantic City

Over 10 current students, alumni, and a visiting researcher with the Psychology Department played a major role in the 19th meeting of the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society Conference. The conference took place at the Atlantic City campus of Stockton University of New Jersey (hosted by their faculty member, Dr. Joshua Duntley).

This conference, which regularly includes participants from five continents, started on our own campus in 2007. It is now one of the largest societies on the topic of the evolution/human behavior interface on a global scale.

The New Paltz contingent presented several poster presentations and gave multiple oral presentations on such topics as the nature of breaking contracts as a function of societal size, the evolutionary underpinnings of emotional intelligence, evolutionary concepts related to public education, the evolutionary psychology of resilience and success in life, life history as it relates to child abuse, and the evolutionary psychology of allocating resources to others as a function of life history strategy.

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New Paltz Contingent at NEEPS 2025 lined up outside the Poster Session at Stockton University's Atlantic City campus.

Top row to bottom (l-r): Ethan Eisenberg, Kathryne Gruskin, Nadia Tamayo

Second row: Aman Shetty, Emma Jerabek, Aileen McCarthy, Pedro Marques

Third Row: Anthony Caserta, Maya Kardas, Shayla Thach, Glenn Geher

Fourth Row: Julia Collodny

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Two members of our team won highly competitive presentation awards, including visiting researcher, Kathryne Gruskin, whose talk (full reference below) won the best Applied Evolutionary Psychology Society Oral Presentation Award. This talk included multiple New Paltz psychology students and alumni as co-authors.

Gruskin, K., Bansal, S., Dickinson-Frevola, S., Eisenberg, E., Dykeman, A., Geher, G., Griffin, M., Groce-Volinski, D., Henriquez, K., Kardas, M., McCarthy, A., Shetty, A., & Staccio, B. (2025, June 9-11). Stakeholders' roles in evolutionizing education: An evolutionary-based toolkit surrounding elementary education [Oral Presentation]. Annual meeting of the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society (NEEPS). Stockton University; Atlantic City, NJ.

And recent MS Program alum, Ethan Eisenberg, won the award for the Best Data Blitz for his presentation on the evolutionary underpinnings of emotional intelligence (full reference below).

Eisenberg, E., Geher, G., Lombard, J., McCarthy, A., Picciocchi, G., & Thach, S. (2025, June 9-11). Assessing the construct validity of emotional intelligence using evolutionary psychology [Conference presentation]. NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychological Society Conference, Stockton University Atlantic City, NJ, United States.

Students who attended this conference were generously funded by a grant from the Office of Research, Creative, and Scholarly Activities.

The 20th NEEPS conference will take place in 2026 in Pittsburgh, PA. If you are interested in participating, please contact Psychology Department faculty member, Glenn Geher (geherg@newpaltz.edu).

New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Lab out at the Tropicana in Atlantic City!

(l-r): Ethan Eisenberg, Kathryne Gruskin, Maya Kardas



Psychology Alumni Profiles

We always love to hear what our former students accomplish after they leave SUNY New Paltz! Here are updates from several – and next we want to hear from you. Please send your news to geherg@newpaltz.edu, vermeulk@newpaltz.edu, or grossig@newpaltz.edu to be included in next year's newsletter and in our online news blog: <https://hawksites.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>, which is updated frequently.



Name: Brian Healy, LMHC-D, LBA, BCBA, NCC, CCMHC

New Paltz Degree: MS in Mental Health Counseling, 2011

Email: bph.aba@gmail.com

Current Position: Director of Behavioral Health at the Arc Mid-Hudson, Treasurer of the New York State Association for Behavior Analysis (NYSABA), Organizational Consultant

It's amazing to think it's been 14 years since I graduated from SUNY New Paltz. Time really does fly by. Currently, I'm the Director of Behavioral Health at The Arc Mid-Hudson, where I've worked ever since graduation.

I started as a counselor in the clinic there, before seeking out additional education in Behavior Analysis, eventually stepping into my current role. These days, I provide clinical supervision to a fantastic team of Counselors and Behavior Analysts who provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities and their support networks. In this role, I also train teams that are providing high-needs support to dually diagnosed folks.

Outside of The Arc, I've spent nearly a decade with the New York State Association for Behavior Analysis (NYSABA) and I'm currently serving as Treasurer (who said counselors didn't need those statistics courses...). Beyond the finances, I collaborate with Behavior Analysts statewide to create continuing education opportunities. I am particularly interested in sharing insights on topics related to behavior analysis and mental health intervention, employee wellness, behavioral selectionism, and the sometimes adaptive side of mental health symptomology.

In my downtime, I've started working as an organizational consultant, partnering with employers to improve workplaces through mental health support and wellness training. Most recently, I've been interested in conflict resolution and how we support supervisors to navigate conflict effectively. We're all complicated people trying to connect, communicate, and do our jobs well – so I appreciate the opportunity to do this work and I've learned a lot through the process.

My time at SUNY New Paltz has really shaped so much of what I do today. Even when I'm functioning outside of a traditional counseling role, the lessons in empathy from my early courses remain at the core of how I build relationships (and how I support my supervisees to connect with those they work with). I can think of qualities modeled for me by my professors that I aimed to develop in myself and that I hope I have retained. The relationships I made as a student continue to be ones that I depend on, too. In fact, my first job at The Arc resulted from a fellow alum connecting me. Whether I'm facing a new challenge or looking for a collaborator, I often reach out to fellow alumni. I always love hearing from other graduates or students, whether you share my interests or just want to catch up. Feel free to reach out anytime.



Name: Stephanie Dickinson-Frevola
New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, 2025
Email: stephdf9103@gmail.com
Current position: Graduate student at Marist University

After graduating in May 2025 from SUNY New Paltz, I committed to Marist University for an MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Until the start of my first semester at Marist I will continue my job as a server at Charlie's Bar and Grill in my hometown, Lake George (come visit!). I am beyond excited to start my journey at Marist and I am confident that it will set me up for success as a future counselor.

I fell in love with New Paltz the moment I first toured it, even though it was during COVID and I couldn't even step foot in any buildings. The town, the students, the professors, and the classes truly made my undergraduate experience worthwhile. I want to specifically shout out Glenn Geher, who brought me into the EvoS community, which opened so many doors for me. New Paltz provided me with not only opportunities, such as an amazing internship at the New Paltz Youth Program, a research assistant position on the Evolutionary Psychology Research Team, and a position as the Evolutionary Studies Program Assistant, but also gave me strong connections that will last a lifetime. I look forward to being across the river from this wonderful university.



Name: Kaelyn Smith
New Paltz Degree: M.S. in Psychological Science, 2021
Email: kmarks4@pride.hofstra.edu
Current position: Graduate student, adjunct instructor, research assistant, psychology extern, ABA instructor

I graduated with an M.S. in Psychological Science from SUNY New Paltz in December 2021. I will now be entering into my fourth year of a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Hofstra University. My experience at SUNY New Paltz really helped me to discern the career path I wanted to take in the field of psychology. Prior to starting my degree, I was not certain about what exactly I wanted to do. The program taught me so much and exposed me to great research and job opportunities. Ultimately, I realized clinical psychology was my dream and pursued it after receiving my degree.

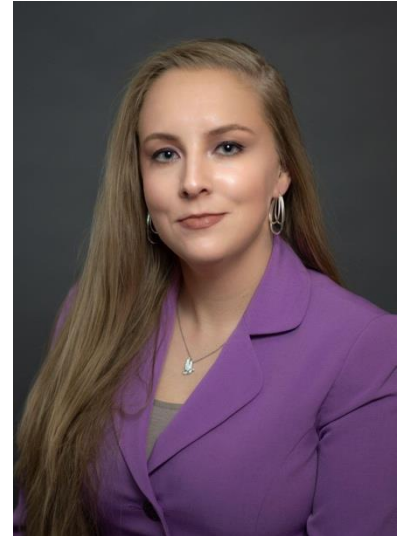
The Ph.D. journey has been very rewarding. I have been able to expand upon the research interests that I developed while at SUNY New Paltz. I have also gained teaching experience as an adjunct instructor for courses on psychopathology and research methods. Next semester I will be teaching child development, which I am very excited for! As a clinical trainee as well, I receive training in various therapeutic modalities. I recently completed my first externship in a residential program for substance use disorders at Northport VA and will be starting a new externship at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center for adults with serious and persistent mental illness.

Name: Rachael Purtell

New Paltz Degree: BA in Public Relations and Psychology, 2019
(also hold an MA and PhD in Communication Studies from West Virginia University)

Email: rachael@modernfamilyinstitute.org

Current position: Research and Development Lead, Modern Family Institute; Research Associate, National Communication Association



Here we go Hawks! I was fortunate enough to go straight to graduate school after graduating from New Paltz, due in large part to my participation in Dr. Glenn Geher's Evolutionary Psychology Lab. Since completing my doctorate in 2023, I am in the exciting and early stages of a career in community-engaged social scientific research.

I believe that my critical reflection of my positionality as a white, cisgender woman—who benefits from whiteness both inside and outside the academy—has helped me to use my privilege to challenge the pervasive dominant ideologies and discursive forms of violence within academia and in organizational culture—a mindset that I proudly credit to my time at New Paltz.

As a researcher, I specialize in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and use them to primarily study communication experiences tied to power, prejudice, and discrimination within organizational contexts such as Fortune 500 companies' responses to the BLM movement, dissent strategies used in response to sexual harassment, and ombuds' experiences handling sexual harassment cases in the workplace. I believe research is at its best when diverse scholars can collaborate to create translational research that serves communities in need and have brought my expertise onto a large multidisciplinary grant-funded research project studying HPV vaccine hesitancy and health disparities among rural communities of color. I was also recruited a year and a half ago to serve as the Research and Development Lead at the [Modern Family Institute](#), a non-profit and interdisciplinary team dedicated to research, education, and awareness of communities of care that exist outside of socially prescribed family structures headed by monogamous, heterosexual married couples. Since joining the Modern Family Institute, our notable accomplishments include designing and passing [laws in Oakland and Berkeley, CA](#) prohibiting discrimination on the basis of family structure, [advancing workplace protections](#) and belonging for diverse families at organizations like JP Morgan, Dell, AirBnb through our partnerships with [Out & Equal](#), crafting and passing the Gay & Lesbian Medical Association's position statement on family and relationship structure diversity, and launching a [legislative advocacy toolkit](#) in conjunction with [OPEN](#), [Polyamory Legal Advocacy Coalition](#), [Harvard Law School LGBTQ+ Advocacy Clinic](#), and [The Chosen Family Law Center](#). We also engage in storytelling to illuminate stories of family diversity and work with industry and policy experts to design infrastructure that better supports community-centered care.

By day, I hold a similar role at the [National Communication Association](#), a not-for-profit, membership-based, scholarly society which seeks to advance communication scholarship, teaching, and practice. There, I administer our national grant programs, project manage our virtual event series and public programs, design and analyze data for member and event surveys, and translate academic research findings into accessible resources for public pedagogy. I am eternally grateful for my time at New Paltz. My time as a Hawk made me not only a highly motivated professional, but a person that I'm proud to be. Thank you New Paltz!



Name: Lindsay Ruckel, Ph.D.

New Paltz Degree: M.A. in Psychology, December 2012

Email: lindsay.ruckel@oswego.edu

Current position: Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychological Sciences at SUNY Oswego.

In my role as an Assistant Professor of Psychology, I currently teach a variety of psychology courses including Social Psychology, Research Methods, Social Cognition, and Psychology of Social Media. I also run the Interpersonal Dynamics and Social Perception (IDSP) lab. We are currently conducting a project on individual differences and contextual factors related to people's perceptions of others' sexual interest.

The teaching and research experiences I had during my graduate studies at SUNY New Paltz provided me with the academic skills needed to get into a doctoral program and to eventually complete my Ph.D. and to meet my goal of becoming a professor. The mentorship I received during my time at SUNY New Paltz was crucial to my development as a scholar, mentor, and person and I look forward to the next time I visit!



Come back to New Paltz for Alumni Weekend, 2025 – October 17-19! The foliage will be at total peak. Come join the alumni hike in the Gunks led by Psychology Professor Glenn Geher.

Full information on the weekend schedule can be found here:

<https://www.newpaltz.edu/reunion-2025>

What are YOU up to? Please send your news to geherg@newpaltz.edu, vermeulk@newpaltz.edu, or grossig@newpaltz.edu to be included on the department website and in next year's newsletter.

And you can follow department news at any time in our online blog:

<https://hawksites.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>