

Celebrating the Retirement of Dr. Arabella Lyon, Professor of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies



Dr. Arabella Lyon earned her doctorate from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Communication and Rhetoric in 1990. She has written two award-winning books published with Penn State University Press. First, *Intentions: Negotiated, Contested, and Ignored* (1998) won the Ross Winterowd Book Award. Her second book, *Deliberative Acts: Democracy, Rhetoric, and Rights* (2013), won the Rhetoric Society of America Book Award. In 2012, Dr. Lyon founded the Center for Excellence in Writing at UB, which has helped countless undergraduate and graduate students improve their writing. During her tenure at UB, Dr. Lyon has served in various administrative capacities bringing her strong sense of direction, mentorship, and professionalization to the departments in which she has served, namely, English and Global Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Retirement Tributes

Carrie Tirado Bramen, Professor of English, Director, UB Gender Institute

Whenever I walk down “Rue Baldy,” a name that senior auditors came up with many years ago for the space linking the dining area on the second-floor of Baldy to Lockwood Library, I pass the Center for Excellence in Writing (CEW). Regardless of whether it is early in the semester or the last week of classes, the Center is always full of students, eager to get feedback on their essays. It is easy to forget that there was a time when UB didn’t have such a Center, one of only a few AAU institutions that lacked such a resource for students. But when Arabella Lyon arrived at UB from Temple University in Philadelphia, she changed that. She founded the Center in 2012 and served as its first director. Besides her two award-winning books and extensive articles, Arabella’s most important legacy to UB and our students is the CEW. Arabella is also a generous colleague and good citizen: she is a regular attendee at Gender Institute events; she was part of our HumanitiesNY reading group on the history of women’s suffrage, and she introduced me to the scholarship of Lisa Tetrault, who we invited to UB for the Legacies of Suffrage event earlier this year. I have also become the fortunate recipient of several of Arabella’s books as she is cleaning out her office and preparing to move. We will definitely miss Arabella at our events, but wish her much happiness as she returns home to Boston.

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Carine Mardorossian, Professor of English

I will always remember Arabella Lyon as the colleague who, when other faculty may have had questions about how best to help a struggling graduate student, got the latter to write, finish, and defend a thoroughly researched and well-written dissertation in what felt like no time. I never quite knew how she did it, but I suspect that her no-nonsense, encouraging yet firm, step-by-step and erudite approach to scholarship and the profession have a lot to do with her remarkable mentoring skills. Arabella knows her field inside and out, but she also knows how to do research, how to teach, and how to get work done, and it is in teaching this how as much as the what that her mentoring has benefited students, graduate and undergraduate alike, whether they were in her exact fields or not. She has also always been as generous with her younger colleagues as she is with students, and I for one am someone who has benefited the most from her savoir faire, other-directedness, and commonsense. She always has a suggestion about what to read, when to take a break, how to write, what does or does not matter, and I am always the better for having had a friendly, open, and frank conversation with this one-of-a-kind intellectual. Arabella is a public humanist who values disagreement, democratic deliberation, and brainstorming as basic conditions of a healthy community, and community is always what she strives to facilitate and model. I am going to miss her as a colleague but will make sure to keep her as a mentor, and of course and most importantly, as the dear friend that she has truly become.

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Arabella Lyon: Fierce Feminist Truth Teller

Gwynn Thomas, Associate Professor and Chair of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies

I would like to start by wishing Arab well on her retirement. Arab has been a truly great colleague; someone I will miss both personally and professionally. Like many of us, I have benefitted from her wisdom, wry humor and clear-eyed assessments. For the past two years, Arab and I have worked closely together, building a new department, Global Gender and Sexuality Studies. She enthusiastically joined us, exchanging her comfortable routine in English for the work of prepping new classes, attending numerous meetings, and, most importantly, serving as our Director of Graduate Studies.

Even though Arab knew she was likely to retire in a few years, she willingly and with good humor took on the important work of helping us create a strong culture within the department—a culture that values teaching and mentoring. We have all benefitted from the opportunity to learn from her long-term commitment to teaching and research. For example, she worked tirelessly to help our graduate students navigate the UB system, to hone their skills in the classroom, and to embrace professionalization opportunities. She has also been a generous colleague, willing to read and comment on others' papers, and to talk through the tricky balancing of everyday demands with ongoing research.

About three years ago, Arab told me that her first career had been in nursing, and shared some eye-opening experiences in Alaska and emergency rooms. When she told me this, I suddenly understood the roots of Arab's qualities that I most admire: her clear-eyed analysis and willingness to tell (sometime) uncomfortable truths. I counted on Arab to help me navigate the many demands

of being a new chair, to see where we were doing well, and where more work was needed. Being a truth-teller can be difficult, but Arab's wry sense of humor and generosity make it easy to hear what she had to say.

Arab has a long history of charting new paths. I will miss her, but I know she will be embarking on new adventures and finding new ways to be a truth-teller. Keep speaking up, Arab!

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Hilary Vandembark, PhD Candidate in Global Gender and Sexuality Studies

I am incredibly grateful to have had Arabella Lyon as the Director of Graduate Studies for my department, Global Gender and Sexuality Studies, for the past two years. I only regret not getting to know Dr. Lyon sooner because of her great leadership skills and passion for mentoring graduate students and junior faculty through professionalization. Dr. Lyon holds students to high standards but she always gives us the tools to meet them and we are all the better for it. I have especially appreciated Dr. Lyon's leadership and passion during this sometimes painful transition to distance learning. While I was not teaching this semester, I know she took the charge in getting my fellow graduate students as prepared as possible with the proper resources and support as well as offering advice from her own adjustments to distance learning. Even though Dr. Lyon didn't know me very well, she took the time to edit two of my fellowship applications and my CV, demonstrating her commitment to graduate students and her role as an administrator. Dr. Lyon's teaching, research, and mentoring skills will be sorely missed but I'm certain she will have a lasting legacy.

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Margarita Vargas, Associate Professor of Spanish, Romance Languages and Literatures

Even though I have known Professor Arabella Lyon for many years, it was not until our mutual collaboration in the Department of Global Gender and Sexuality Studies that I had the opportunity to know her more profoundly. As Interim Chair of GGSS for one semester, I frequently met with Arab, who diligently served as Director of Graduate Studies, and was duly impressed by her dedication to the students and the department, her administrative skills, her sound judgments, and her camaraderie.

Within the University, Professor Lyon has served in numerous committees and was the Founding Director of the Center for Excellence in Writing. She spent the academic year 2004/2005 as Visiting Professor in Singapore as part of the UB/Singapore Institute of Management Cooperative Education Program. After almost twenty years in the English Department, she switched her line to the department of Global Gender Sexuality Studies. She is also an Affiliated Faculty in Asian Studies and in the Immigration and Refugee Research Institute.

Several professional organizations have recognized the merit of her scholarship. Three of the most prestigious accolades include the Theresa J. Enos 25th Anniversary Award, the Rhetoric Society of America Book Award, and the Ross Winterowd Award for Most Outstanding Book in

Composition Theory. She has also received research grants by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rhetoric Society of America, the Lilly Foundation, and the Fulbright Commission among others.

At the same time that all her friends and colleagues at UB lament her retirement, her friends and family in Boston are rejoicing. Best wishes and bon voyage.