

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS



Dear colleagues,

As we end another academic year, I want to take a moment to thank you for the incredible work you do every day for St. Joseph's University, New York. Your commitment to teaching, mentoring and inspiring our students lays the foundation for their academic and personal success. Whether in the classroom, in a lab, in your office, on field trips or at various events, your dedication ensures that our students receive an education that challenges their minds and broadens their horizons.

Beyond your teaching, the research and scholarship you undertake pushes the boundaries of knowledge and brings fresh perspectives to everyone's lives. Your scholarly contributions not only enrich your disciplines but also enhance the reputation of our University.

Equally important is the service you provide—to our institution, to your respective fields and to the wider community. From serving on committees, being a faculty advisor for a club or serving on community-based organizations, your leadership fosters a vibrant campus culture.

I am sincerely thankful to all of you. As we continue our work together to shape the future of St. Joseph's University, I encourage you to take pride in the transformative impact you have on our students and the community.

With gratitude,

Heather E. Barry, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
St. Joseph's University, New York



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Dr. Michael Burke Brings Philosophy Out of the ‘Ivory Tower’

BY BRIAN HARMON

Michael Burke, Ph.D., doesn't just teach philosophy — he makes it accessible, relevant and sometimes a little bit frightening.

Recently promoted to full professor at St. Joseph's University, New York, Dr. Burke has built his career on bridging academic philosophy with popular culture, and most recently through the lens of horror.

"Horror has its finger on the pulse of our psyche before we're often aware of it," Dr. Burke explained. "Horror films and literature can bring up topics that we might feel uncomfortable speaking plainly about. [Horror] often addresses a lot of anxieties and concerns that we otherwise tend to repress."

This intersection forms the core of Burke's recent research. His book, "The Ethics of Horror: Spectral Alterity in Twenty-First-Century Horror Film," was named one of Book Authority's 20 Best New Horror Film Books of 2024.

Dr. Burke is now writing about H.P. Lovecraft, connecting cosmic horror to what he considers the ultimate existential threat: climate change. The book's working title is "Weird Phenomenology: Lovecraft & Modern Philosophy." The manuscript will head to the publisher this summer.

"One of the things that is difficult with philosophy is it tends to get this reputation of being very esoteric and locked up in the university, or ivory tower," Dr. Burke says. "I'm really interested in finding bridges to explore philosophical themes in everyday — especially popular — culture."

Dr. Burke's academic journey follows a distinctly Jesuit path — from Fordham University (B.A.) to Boston College (M.A.) to Loyola University Chicago (Ph.D.).

Initially drawn to neurophilosophy and questions of consciousness, he ultimately focused his academic journey on 20th century

phenomenology, beginning with 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant before turning to 20th century French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas.

Since joining St. Joseph's in 2008, Dr. Burke has risen from lecturer to tenure-track professor and now to full professor. Additionally, he

directs the Brooklyn Campus honors program, where he has encouraged students to "pursue their passions beyond the classroom" through research opportunities, conference presentations and travel experiences to Japan, Taiwan, Greece and locations across the United States.

For Dr. Burke, philosophy's greatest value lies in its ability to help individuals understand perspectives different from their own.

"One of the most important things we can do in this world is evaluate and understand other people's positions and opinions, even if we don't always agree with them," he said. "Philosophy gives us better ways to ask the questions."

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— Michael Burke, Ph.D.

When asked what he values most about teaching, Dr. Burke said it's his conversations with students.

"Just getting the chance to really hear them and really engage in genuine dialogue with them," he said. "Every teacher is a student, and every student is a teacher.

"It's so hard to find places where people with fundamentally different views can still have genuine, meaningful conversations without them being turned into sound bites," he continued. "I like to tell my students: Consider the classroom like Vegas. Whatever happens in the classroom stays in the classroom — so that they know the classroom is a place where we can talk and explore ideas without feeling stigmatized or worried." 🍀



Michael Burke, Ph.D.



Dr. Susan Nakley's Lifelong Pursuit of Voice and Precision

BY BRIAN HARMON

Talk about earning the mic.

As the youngest of five children, Susan Nakley, Ph.D., quickly learned the art of finding her voice amidst the loud, often opinionated voices of four older brothers. Growing up in a bustling and spirited Youngstown, Ohio household, it wasn't enough to simply talk. As a young girl, Dr. Nakley said she needed to speak with precision and purpose, in order to carve out her own space.

"I needed to have a voice," Dr. Nakley recalled. "If I did not have my own voice and my own enthusiasm, I felt like I was definitely going to get lost and drowned out and overshadowed.

"My brothers gave me a lot to stand up for and to stand up to," she added.

This early need for individuality and to be heard has shaped the course of Dr. Nakley's career, one that has led her to become the associate chair of SJNY's English department.

Working these days as a scholar, educator and editor, Dr. Nakley helps her students hone the very skills she once relied upon to make herself heard — the power of precise thought and language.

Dr. Nakley's childhood wasn't just a battle for attention; it sparked her deep interest in history. Her brothers would reminisce about events that occurred before her arrival, creating a feeling that "all the really important things happened long before I was born," she said.

This sense of the past's weight planted the seeds of her academic focus on medieval studies.

After graduating from Ursuline High School in 1994, Dr. Nakley attended the University of Michigan, where she majored in English and Political Science. Initially set on becoming an attorney, she worked as a paralegal for "a couple of years." But literature's magnetic pull soon led her down a different path.

"I could not stop thinking about literature and the transformative experiences I had as an undergraduate," said Dr. Nakley, who earned a Ph.D. from Rutgers University in 2008, and then started her 17-year tenure at St. Joseph's.

In the past year alone, Dr. Nakley has co-edited two significant collections. Last July, she and her undergraduate mentor, recently retired Michigan professor Karla Taylor, guest-edited a special issue of "The Chaucer Review" titled "What We Think About When We Think About the Prioress's Tale." It explores antisemitism in Chaucer's work. In October, she and Craig Bertolet from Auburn University released the "Routledge Companion to Global Chaucer," featuring contributions from 39 international scholars.

The latter project was born during the pandemic, when Dr. Nakley and Dr. Bertolet recognized parallels between COVID-19's global impact and Chaucer's own experience with the bubonic plague of the late 1340s. She found resonance in how shared experiences can connect humanity across time.

For Dr. Nakley, the enduring power of English literature lies in its precision.

"The vocabulary that we have in English is so rich. You can say anything you want with precision," she said.

This appreciation for exactness influences her teaching philosophy, especially in an age where AI-generated content increasingly raises concerns.

"AI has no charm," Dr. Nakley said. "It's not thoughtful; it's not reflective."

Her worry isn't that AI will replace human creativity, but that it might discourage students from doing the specific, ethical and thoughtful work that defines independent thought and academic creativity. To address this, Dr. Nakley designs courses that emphasize the continued relevance of literature. Her new course, "Adapting the Canon" (or as she says, "Old Books Matter") pairs such classic works as "Beowulf" with contemporary retellings like Maria Dahvana Headley's "The Mere Wife."

"Great writers are not just great writers, they're innovative readers," she said. "There are a finite number of plots, but there are an infinite number of stories."

Through her work, Dr. Nakley remains steadfast in her mission, which she describes as: "Not just teaching old books, but using old books to help students use English — this amazing language that we have — in ways that are compelling, that are inspiring, that are precise and can make a difference in whatever they're doing." ♥



Susan Nakley, Ph.D.

From Saddle to Scholar: Dr. Kimberly Poppiti's Lifelong Pursuit of Communication

BY BRIAN HARMON

Before she was a published scholar, a professor or a curriculum designer, Kimberly Poppiti, Ph.D., was a rider — and not just any rider.

A nationally ranked equestrian in her youth, she spent countless hours mastering the subtle, often-silent dialogue between horse and human. That formative experience, she said, helped shape the communication studies professor's lifelong focus on communication.

"I was a competitive equestrian," Dr. Poppiti recalled. "It was really my primary extracurricular until I went to college." The discipline and communication the sport demanded became "a foundation" for her research and teaching, she added.

It is no coincidence that her most impactful academic work has centered around the horse — not only as an animal and athlete, but as an historical performer.

A tenured associate professor of communication studies at St. Joseph's University, New York, Dr. Poppiti has carved a unique academic path that intersects the stage, the saddle and the classroom. An adjunct at SJNY from 2016-2019, she officially joined SJNY's faculty at the Long Island Campus in 2019. Prior, Dr. Poppiti spent two decades at Dowling College, where she served as chair of the communication and performance arts department, as well as the director of student theatre.

Her 2018 book, "A History of Equestrian Drama in the United States," examines the popularity and significance of hippodrama, a form of 19th-century theater that incorporated live horses with innovative and elaborate stage effects.

She followed that publication with "Equestrian Drama: An Anthology of Plays" in 2023, which offers annotated editions of four major scripts, along with historical context.

Dr. Poppiti's books help to fill a void in theatre history and explore what the use of horses on stage can tell us about human-animal communication and theatrical spectacle.

"The idea was to create something accessible for students and scholars that could bring this genre more into the conversation," she said.

That commitment to exploring how people communicate — with animals, each other and via performance — also informs Dr. Poppiti's role as a program builder.

Recognizing the evolving needs of students in today's communication landscape, she helped launch three new minors in the Department of Communication Studies this academic year: Theatre & Communication Studies, Communication Studies & Media, and Organizational & Professional Communication.

"We really feel like that gives a nice opportunity for students from outside our major to take advantage of the skills that we teach," she said.



Kimberly Poppiti, Ph.D.

"We are trying to help our students focus their attention so they can really use this not only to improve their communication skills," Dr. Poppiti continued, "but also to use those skills to market themselves and succeed in the professional world."

This summer, with support from a St. Joseph's University Summer Faculty Grant, Dr. Poppiti will continue exploring communication in a new project on "learned horses" — animals trained to perform cognitive tasks, such as spelling or arithmetic, for live audiences.

"I'm looking at the way people have trained horses to communicate in these acts," she said. "I want to study the way humans used and developed non-verbal communication with these horses, and what that can tell us about how we interact across species."

In the classroom, Dr. Poppiti's passion for performance and communication comes through in her teaching.

"I really try to find the practical connections so that the students can apply what we're talking about and reading about and learning in the classroom to whatever aspects of their personal and professional lives are relevant," she said. "I'm really big on that idea of encouraging students to take the material outside the context of being 'just' coursework and encouraging them to consider how and where it fits into their lives." ♡

APPEARANCES AND PUBLICATIONS

Frank Antonawich, Ph.D., professor of biology, discussed his work on the oxidative stress associated with metabolic dysfunction and its role in neuropathy at the A4M (American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine) Annual Spring Congress in West Palm Beach this May; as well as participated in a panel group webinar. He has subsequently completed an invited manuscript entitled “LAMC: Mitigating the Oxidative Stress Associated with Diabetic and Chemotherapy-Induced Neuropathy” for submission in the conference annual.

Seth Armus, Ph.D., professor of history, published “Michel Houellebecq’s Reactionary Modernism: Populism, Rootedness, and Reflection” in a special double issue of the British journal *Romance Studies* that was devoted to the author. In his article, Dr. Armus examines the author’s ambivalent relationship with France and the contradictions between his novels and his political positions, arguing that Houellebecq’s work serves as a meditation on loss and the inaccessibility of national identity.

Yvonne Borkowski, Ed.D., assistant professor of child study, served as a panelist at the LIASCD leadership conference, where she shared key findings from her research on Latinx family engagement preferences in education. She also presented her work, “Mi Familia es Mi Fuerza: Latinx Perceptions of Family Engagement in Their Child’s School,” at the Region II Head Start conference in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. Her work highlights the role of family as a central source of strength in Latinx communities and its impact on educational engagement.



Yvonne Borkowski, Ed.D.

Tess Dussling, Ph.D., assistant professor of child study, delivered six conference presentations during the fall across three major conferences: the Literacy Research Association, the

American Reading Forum and the New York State Reading Association. She also had recent publications in three journals: the *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Education Sciences and Literacy*.

Maria Fletcher, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.E., associate dean for nursing and associate professor, has been named a top healthcare influencer by Long Island Business News. Dr. Fletcher has worked extensively in many areas of nursing, including public health and maternal and child health, and has been an instructor at St. Joseph’s University, New York since 1989, assuming increasing responsibility in the Department of Nursing, while serving on multiple committees and task forces at the University. Dr. Fletcher currently serves as associate dean for nursing for the Departments of Nursing on the Brooklyn and Long Island Campuses, overseeing all undergraduate and graduate programs.

Dr. Fletcher was also honored at the 2025 Herald Premier Business Women Awards Gala in March 2025 for her contributions to education. The annual award celebrates high-level female leaders making an impact on Long Island.

Thomas Grochowski, Ph.D., chair of the English department, published his auto-ethnographic essay, “What’s it

Like to Be a F***-up Teenager’: Violent Femmes: A Primal Scream for Generation X,” in the anthology *Essays on Music, Adolescence, and Identity: The Adoloescentia Project*. He also participated in a discussion of the work during an authors’ talk at the Free Library of Philadelphia last August.

Veronica Kaninska, M.S.Ed., CTRS, assistant teaching professor in the department of recreation and leisure studies, presented “The Use of Puppetry Modality in Recreation Therapy” at the Reunited in Recreation Conference, held at St. Joseph’s University, New York last spring. The talk included an exploration of the history of puppets in therapy and modern research, demonstrating their effectiveness in improving client behavior, social connections and self-reflective skills.

Peter Lin, Ph.D., professor of psychology, has been producing CAFE229 since the pandemic and now there are 49 episodes. The monthly webinar provides free public education and inspires others to be more insightful and altruistic. Dr. Lin interviewed many excellent guests such



Thomas Grochowski, Ph.D.



Veronica Kaninska, M.S.Ed., CTRS

APPEARANCES AND PUBLICATIONS

as New York Times bestselling authors, TED speakers, an Emmy award winner, an Olympic medalist, internationally renowned scholars and a world-renowned moral philosopher. He is very grateful to the Tzu Chi Center, which provided the resources to build the education series. In August 2024, Dr. Lin was featured as one of the artists in the High Line Nine Art Gallery exhibition, “Till Echoes can be Heard.” His photographs on international relief explored how community partnership can enhance social impact. In September 2024, he and psychology graduate Santhino Almeida orally presented “Mindful Living in the Digital Age” at the New York State Psychological Association Annual Conference.

Eunah Lee, Ph.D.,

assistant professor of philosophy, published “Narrative of Traumatic Memory in Spirits’ Homecoming (2016) and Tuning Fork (2014)” in the British journal



Eunah Lee, Ph.D.

of Asian Cinema. The article analyzes the sociocultural meanings of the films’ portrayal of the traumatic memories of “comfort women” and was supported by an SJNY faculty small grant.

Lorraine Lubicich, M.A., CTRS,

assistant professor in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies, received a summer faculty grant to analyze data from a nine-week pilot therapeutic recreation program conducted at the Casita Maria Center for Arts & Education in the Bronx. She presented the program’s results at the American Therapeutic Recreation Association’s annual conference, as well as at the New Jersey Therapeutic Recreation Conference.

Jason Ostrowe, Ph.D., assistant professor of criminal justice, published the original article “A Framework to Forestall Systemic Police Misconduct: Applying DOJ’s Pattern

or Practice Findings to Municipal Police” in *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. He also presented a book chapter on police reform at the ACJS annual meeting and contributed a book review to *ACJS Today*.

Amy Poland, Ph.D., the associate dean and director of online learning at SJNY and professor of criminal justice, co-authored a chapter on serial rape in the book “Serial Crime: A Criminological and Psychological Analysis.” The chapter examines the characteristics of serial rapists, their victims and the methods of attack used by such offenders, offering insights into the challenges of linking offenses due to underreporting.

Kimberly Poppiti, Ph.D., associate professor of communication studies, presented her research on equestrian drama at the international Cheiron: Horses in Our Heritage, Past and Future conference in September. She was later invited to submit her work for publication in the *Cheiron Journal*. Additionally, Dr. Poppiti chaired multiple panels at the Northeast Popular Culture Association’s conference and served as a reader for the Kennedy Center’s American College Theater Festival.

Stephen J. Rockwell, Ph.D., professor of political science, presented “The Cultural Histories of Election Years” at the American Political History Conference in Nashville, TN. Dr. Rockwell has also published book reviews this year in *Federal History and Congress & the Presidency*.

Konstantine Rountos, Ph.D., and **Kestrel Perez, Ph.D.**, associate professors of biology, presented their research at the 154th Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society in Honolulu, Hawaii. The presentations were part of a full-day symposium co-organized by Dr. Rountos titled “Coastal Systems in Flux: Fish and Fisheries in a Multi-Stressor World.”



Jason Ostrowe, Ph.D.

Dr. Rountos was recognized as a leader in education by Long Island Business News.

Elana Reiser, Ph.D., professor of mathematics and computer science, was a featured presenter at the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New York State annual conference in Albany, NY. Along with alumna Jenna Trusnovec, she demonstrated how digital escape rooms can serve as an engaging and motivational teaching tool for students.

Adriana Silva, LCSW, field director and teaching instructor for the St. Joseph’s Master of Social Work program, presented on trauma-informed self-care at the New York State Social Work Education Association Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY. She also developed an evidence-based training program, Trauma-Informed Supervision for Social Work Field Instructors, which she delivered to more than 30 social work professionals. She received a grant from the North American Network of Field Educators & Directors to attend a symposium at the Council on Social Work Education’s Annual Program Meeting in Kansas City, MO.

LaQuetta Solomon, DSW, LCSW, assistant teaching professor of social work, recently received the Council on the Role and Status of Women in Social Work Education’s Community Impact Award, recognizing community practice, which shapes the process of social work education by exemplifying the feminist leadership models. Dr. Solomon is a dynamic force in social work and mental health, driven by a profound commitment to illuminating pathways to empowerment and healing. Her educational background provides the foundation for her impactful work. In addition to her role at St. Joseph’s,



LaQuetta Solomon, DSW, LCSW



Dr. Solomon is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a private mental health practice that specializes in addressing mental health disorders and emotional issues that impede growth. Dr. Solomon's impactful work has garnered recognition from various organizations, including an Episcopal Proclamation and Monroe College's prestigious Dream Queens Award for Women Empowerment.

As a visiting fellow at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, **Lisa Tafuro, Ph.D.**, associate professor of communication studies, was immersed in the rich academic tradition of the renowned institution. She submitted papers and presentation proposals, participated in panel discussions and gave a talk to education faculty on her research intersecting linguistics, psychology, anthropology and cognitive science.

Wendy Turgeon, Ph.D., professor of philosophy, announced the publication of "The Philosophical Power of Fairy Tales from Around the World: An Ocean of Stories" by Palgrave MacMillan. She edited the book which contains a range of essays on fairy tales from many different cultures.

Harry Voulgarakis, Ph.D., BCBA-D, assistant professor of child study, was recognized with two prestigious honors by the New York State Psychological Association (NYSPA) for exceptional service, mentorship and leadership in the field of psychology. Dr. Voulgarakis was awarded the Sidney A. Orgel



Harry Voulgarakis, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Memorial Award, established in 2005 to recognize an early career psychologist who has shown exemplary leadership qualities and passion for the profession. Additionally, he was named a Distinguished Fellow of the NYSPA for his impact and contributions to psychology. Dr. Voulgarakis has been an assistant professor of child study since 2019.

Renee White, Ed.D., professor of child study and literacy and cognition, was honored at the 2025 Herald Premier Business Women Awards Gala in March 2025 for her work with Renee's Way, Inc. The annual award celebrates high-level female leaders making an impact on

Long Island. Dr. White was also honored at the Black Women of Long Island (BWLI) Power Awards, celebrating Black excellence and highlighting the contributions of powerful women from various industries in November.



Renee White, Ed.D.

Along with her role as professor of child study and literacy and cognition, Dr. White serves as director of the University's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Initiative. Specializing in the importance of multicultural diversity and parental involvement as the foundation of a child's education, Dr. White has written numerous articles, book chapters, papers for national and international conferences, and the book, "The Hard-to-Reach Parent: Old Challenges, New Insights," with Larry E. Decker. She is also a member of several societies, including the Association of Black Women in Higher Education and National Association for Multicultural Education. ♡

TENURE AND PROMOTIONS

President Donald R. Boomgaarden, Ph.D., announced that the following faculty members have been awarded either tenure and/or a promotion. Their new status becomes effective in September 2025.

PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR:

Michael Burke, Ph.D., Philosophy
Joseph Pascarella, Ph.D., Criminal Justice

TENURE AND PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR:

Basak Horowitz, Ph.D., Social Science
Corinne Donovan, Ph.D., Psychology

PROMOTION TO SENIOR TEACHING PROFESSOR:

Veronica Kaninska, M.S.Ed., CTRS, Recreation

PROMOTION TO ASSISTANT TEACHING PROFESSOR:

Andrew Manzo, M.A., Adolescence Education
Adriana Silva, LCSW, Social Work
Eleni Zamagias, M.S., Mathematics



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