

# Terra Firma 2016



## **Dear Alums and Friends of Earth Science and Geography ~ Warm greetings from Ely Hall!**

As always it's been an eventful couple of years since our last Terra Firma newsletter, with new field trips and projects and events. We've also had visits from some of you, and we are always delighted to see you when you are coming through the area.

The department has been busy with numerous projects lately, from Olympic politics in Brazil (Brian) to microplastics in beach sands on Cape Cod (Jill) to climate change in New Mexico (Kirsten) and the social geography of Boston (Joe). Our majors have continued to keep up an active calendar for the department, with hiking and camping outings to the Gunks, the Catskills, Bash-Bish Falls, and other scenic destinations. As some of you will recall from past years, they are also leading the way in pumpkin carving, bringing baked goods to department Teas, hosting dances in the Aula with the famous Walker Family Band, and holding disaster movie nights (augmented by our new popcorn machine). This year we also added croquet and Italian ices on the lawn at the start of the semester. It was a great way to welcome everyone back for the start of a new semester.

We are delighted this year to have Evan Casper-Futterman (Geography '07) here to teach courses in political geography, and this past academic year Adam Jost (Earth Science '08) came back to teach courses in paleontology and stable isotopes. In addition, we are very happy to have David Moss, a paleoclimatologist who recently received his PhD from Syracuse University, teaching in the department this year. Brian McAdoo has spent the last four years at NTU Singapore, where he continues to advise and to lead the way in developing liberal arts education for Yale in Singapore. We miss his presence around Ely, but we know he's had an exciting time there. He has been leading field trips and conducting research in Indonesia and he will soon see his first class graduate. We enjoy vicariously his trips to Bali and Malaysia.

As always, field trips and fieldwork are an important part of how we go to the source in Earth Science and in Geography. This past Spring Break (2016), Yu Zhou and Fu Bing Su (Political Science) led an outstanding trip to China for the International Studies 101 course. Among trip destinations were Shanghai, Wuhan, the Three Gorges Dam, and Beijing. The course focus on China's environment, especially energy, water resources, air quality, and food, was extremely timely, and they made special efforts to include a good diversity of ages and backgrounds, including three military veterans in the Posse program. Jill Schneiderman's Sedimentology course studied beach processes at Cape Cod (spring 2015).

Kirsten Menking and Mark Schlessman (Biology) are preparing to lead a trip to Iceland for the Environmental Science in the Field course in spring 2017. There again, environmental themes are the focus—including energy and climate change, as well as volcanoes, glaciers, and related Earth processes. And in fall 2015 the Conservation of Natural Resources course took our October Break field week in the Adirondacks, where we did field studies of climate impacts, landcover change, water resources, and even organic cheesemaking in the northern forests. Shorter outings have also been great additions to classes, including trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to explore minerals in art, a group trip to the Northeast Geological Society of America meeting (led by Jill Schneiderman in spring 2016), and weekly outings in Jeff Walker's Field Geology class, and the annual Geography senior seminar outing to study urban processes and learn about grad school in Syracuse. We faculty always learn a lot from student projects on these trips.

Ely Hall will look mostly the same to most of you who visit, but we have some important new upgrades. We have recently become the first academic building to shift entirely to LED lighting, which should pay for itself in energy savings in 2-3 years. And we are the first academic department to have Green Office certification, a Sustainability initiative led by Geography major Brooke Robinson ('15). We hope these changes will contribute to carbon reduction goals outlined in Vassar's Climate Action Plan, completed (in its first edition) last summer!

Thanks to all our alums and friends who stop by and visit, including those who have come to speak with current students about where your careers have taken you. (Thanks especially to Nate Kimball '09, Libby Murphy Zemaitis '09, Mike Sandstrom '13, and Justin Minder '04, who visited this fall.) We love to hear from you about all the places you're going and the things you're doing.

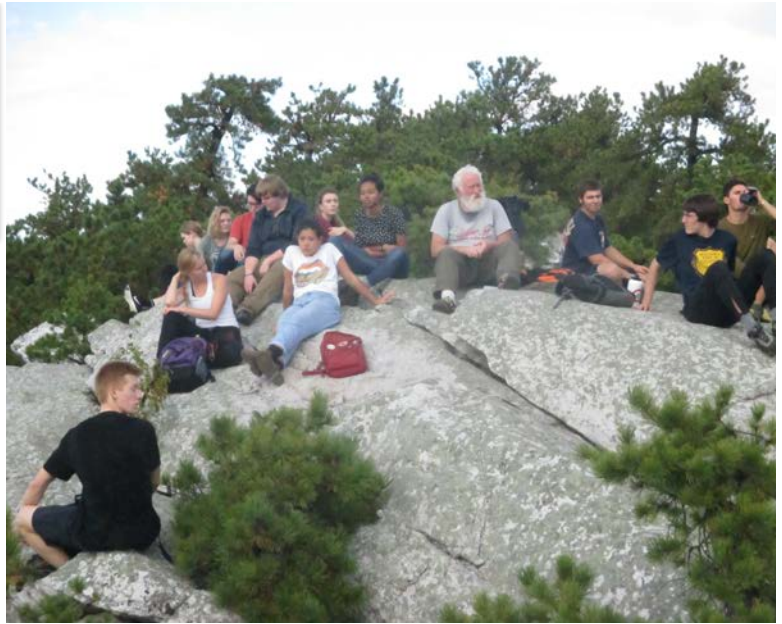
Mary Ann Cunningham





# Field Trips

We continue to appreciate the importance of getting out to experience the world firsthand. Yu Zhou's Economic Geography class explores the immigrant experience of the Hudson Valley by visiting spiritual and economic cultural centers. The Earth Science classes range all over New York exploring geomorphology, fossil life of the Devonian in Catskill, the impressive quartz knobs of Shawungunk Conglomerate. The Sedimentology class visited Cape Cod to explore the deposition of dune sediments, and the Geography Senior Seminar once again explored the complexities of environment, class and politics in Syracuse. 2017 promises to bring more fieldwork, from the eastern Sierra to the Adirondacks!





## 2015 Theses

**Danyelle Hamilton** – Sex Work in Cyberspace: Geographies of Desire in Digital Frontiers of the United States

**Zachary Lucero** – Speed as Signifier: McDonald's as a Contested Space

**Tyler Fultz** – Interrogating the Affinity Space: An Examination of the (De)Politization of a University LGBTQ Student Center

**Alina Rosenfeld** – Unequal and Unrepresented: The Federal Government and the Geography of Race in the Nation's Capital

**Kayla Abe** – Eating the Exotic: Constructions of the Indigenous Other on the American Superfood Scene

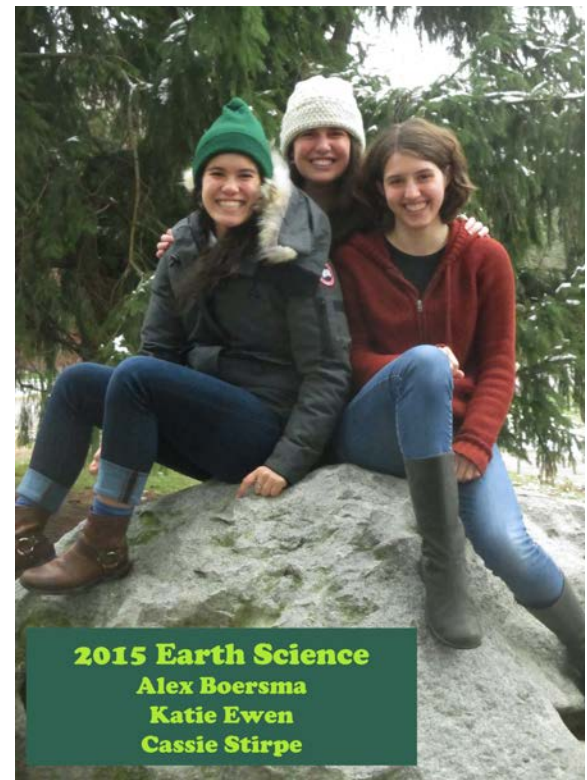
**Alicia Robinson-Welch** – Whose Nature is it in? The Navajo Generating Station and the Politics of Nature, Space and Colonialism in Northern Arizona

**Brooke Robinson** – The Apple May Fall Far from the Tree: The Effects of Agricultural Tourism on Sense of Place and Authenticity for Small Farmers in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia

**Alex Voynow** – The Trekker's Gaze: Representation, Imagination, and Place Making in the Trekking Regions of Nepal

**Cassie Stirpe** – Pleistocene Foraminifera Assemblages as a Proxy for Temperature in the Weddell Sea, ODP Site 693A

**Alex Boersma** – *Ochyrodon Oxymycterus*: Re-description of a Basal Physeteroid (Mammalia, Cetacea) from the Miocene of California, and the Evolution of Body Size in Sperm Whales





## GEOGRAPHY SENIORS 2016

at the Maxwell School, University of Syracuse

## 2016 Theses

**Taylor Crowl** - This Land is Your Land: The Socionatural Construction of the Socialist Party of Oklahoma, 1907-1922

**Carlos E. Mandeville** - Downtown Voices: Urban Development, Cultural Production, and territoriality in Downtown Phoenix

**Thomas Marrinan** - 'Winning' the World Cup: The Geopolitics Behind the Production of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa

**Kathryn Marshall** - Silenced Frequencies: Dance Music and the Transformation of Entertainment Spaces in SoMa, San Francisco

**Katherine C. Rosemond** - Sowing Seeds of Resistance: An Exploration of Heirloom Seed Saving and Networks of Exchange at the Hudson Valley Seed Library

**Alessandra Seiter** - Veganism of a Different Nature: How Food Not Bombs Challenged Capitalism, Militarism, and Speciesism in Cambridge, MA

**Olivia J. Hoch** - Longshore Variation of Grain Size Distribution on the Southern Coast of Long Island, New York: A Test of a Sediment Transport Model



Emily Webb

Cathy Zhuang

Dzifa Binka

Alessandra Seiter

Carlos Mandeville

Joe Nevins

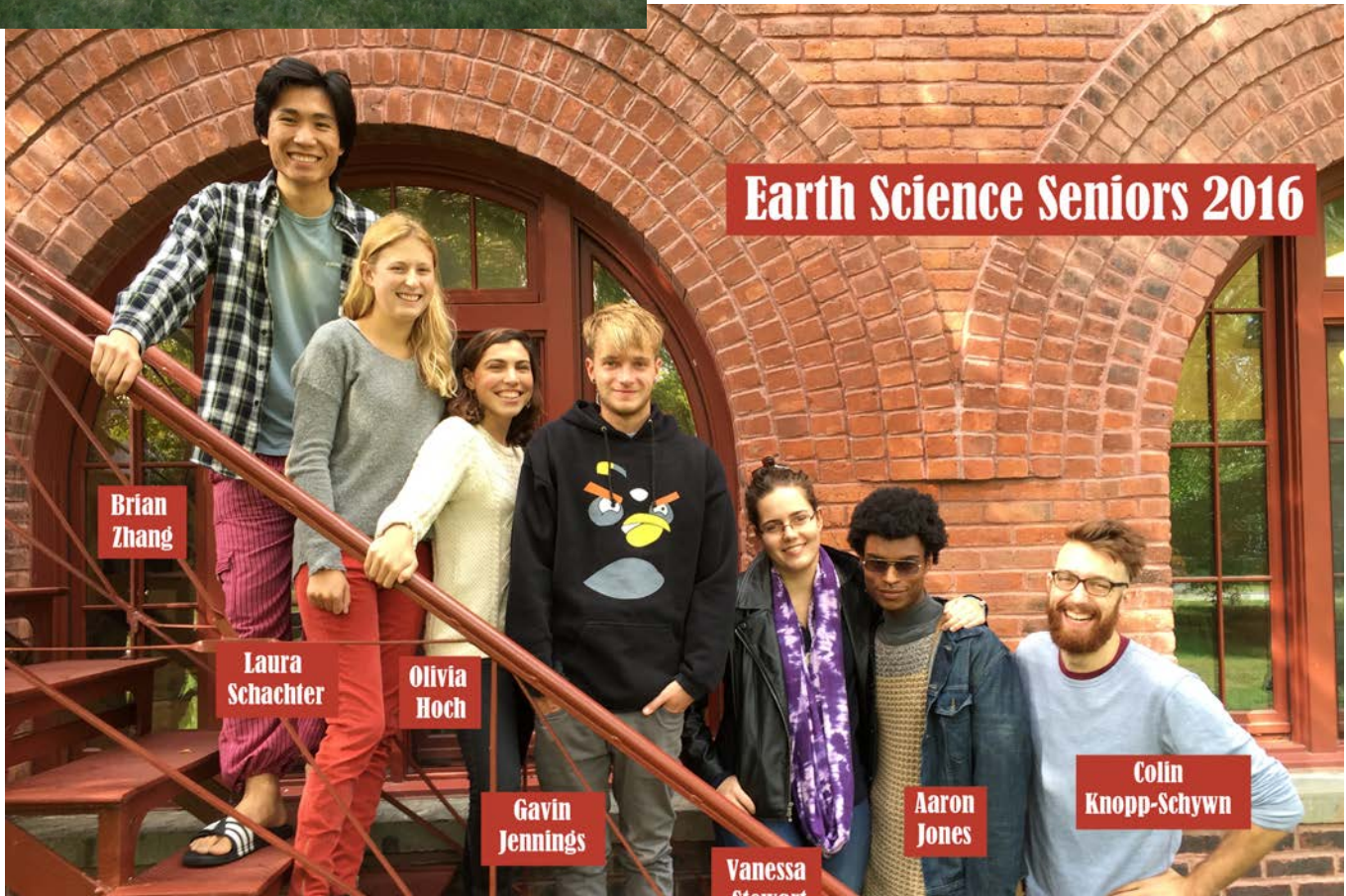
Kat Rosemond

Kathryn Marshall

Taylor Crowl

Ted Marrinan

## Earth Science Seniors 2016



Brian Zhang

Laura Schachter

Olivia Hoch

Gavin Jennings

Vanessa Stewart

Aaron Jones

Colin Knopp-Schywn



# FACULTY NEWS

**Evan Casper-Futterman** After nearly 5 years in New Orleans after graduating from Vassar (**Geography '07**), since 2012 I've been living in New York City getting a PhD in urban planning and public policy at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In December 2014 I successfully passed my qualifying exams and in July 2015 I defended my dissertation proposal, a case study of some exciting community and economic development work in the Bronx happening currently. Since January 2016 I have been extremely lucky to be an adjunct in the Geography Department at Vassar, teaching in Ely Hall where I once took so many of my own GEOG courses. I taught two courses in the Spring of 2016 and one currently this fall semester. It's been a real mind trip to return here at the other end of the classroom but an amazing experience!



## **Mary Ann Cunningham**

Teaching GIS and Cartography, Food and Farming, Conservation of Natural Resources, and various courses about sustainability have continued to keep me enthralled and entrenched in Ely Hall. We really do have some of the most interesting and fun students in our classes, and that makes it a pleasure to come to school every day. In addition, the College Committee on Sustainability and the Master Planning Committee have kept me very busy lately. We've been working hard on climate action, on strategies for carbon reduction, and approaches to energy efficiency. A first pass [Climate Action Plan](#) is our most recent achievement. The CAP received a presidential endorsement from Cappy just before her departure this summer, and we hope it will spur lots of innovative and exciting change. You can see some of the work we've done in [this online map](#), made in collaboration with Sophie Bedecarre Ernst ('17), Zoe Kurtz ('17), James Falino ('17), and Elise Chessman ('19). I've also been collaborating with the Environmental Cooperative at the Vassar Barns, a new public outreach and environmental education initiative, where we recently got a planning grant to explore green stormwater infrastructure (porous paving, maybe??) around the newly renovated barns. And the Casperkill group and the Barns recently helped the college win a Hudson River Estuary Program award for our work on local environmental issues and education. In terms of research, I'm still working on some remaining (and still engaging) papers on bird habitat and distribution. Here's [a link](#) to one that has recently come out. And we have another paper on road salt in the Casperkill almost complete, led by Cassie Stirpe ('15). Lots to do, as always!



**Neil Curri, GIS Consultant** My partner and soon-to-be spouse Samantha and I moved into our first home together in Highland, just across the Hudson River from Poughkeepsie. The house was built in 1911 and needs quite a bit of updating, but it has been well maintained and we feel very fortunate to have found such a wonderful home to share. We adopted a cuddly and loyal hound mix ("Amelia") who also seems grateful to have found a home, and we have begun putting some roots down in the community. As some of you know, I work at Vassar both as a part-time instructor and as consultant to Vassar College, providing GIS assistance to Geography & Earth Science and other departments. After a break from teaching for a few semesters I will be teaching GIS (GEOG/ESCI 224) in Spring 2017, and am looking forward to working with a new group of students.

In the meantime, I've been enjoying assisting Prof. Cunningham and her teaching assistants (Djifa Binka and Penelope Duus) in the GIS and Cartography labs, occasionally assisting with labs in other Earth Science and Geography classes, and working with other Vassar faculty, students, and staff on a number of projects. These include creating maps for publications by Prof. Nevins and Prof. Walker, mapping historic features in the Hudson Valley towns of Kent and Olive with Prof. Beisaw (Anthropology) and her students, mapping historic features related to the paintings of Thomas Cole for Prof. Peck (English), and mapping campus plantings with the college's gardener Jay Scism. You can read about some of these projects and others at the Vassar GIS blog (<http://pages.vassar.edu/gis>). I'd love to hear about any GIS related work you are doing in your post-Vassar careers or GIS-related jobs and projects in which you're interested.





**Harvey Flad, Emeritus** I published an essay on the paintings of the Hudson River School artists that were done in the Shawangunks, many of them never having been published before. Most art historians had incorrectly placed their locations in the Catskills, so it seemed useful to have a more accurate geographic context. My urban work resulted in another essay on how to use historic photos of a city's downtown (Poughkeepsie's Main Street) to reflect on aspects of American culture and changing values from 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> C. My previous published work on the history of Poughkeepsie and IBM led to numerous book signings, lectures, panel presentations and leading fieldtrips. The history of immigration to the city has resulted in the 40-minute documentary film "Crossing Waters" by filmmaker Jane Watson (2015). It focuses on Poughkeepsie's First Ward and chronicles the arrival of the Irish and Italian immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, their economic struggles, and discrimination by anti-immigrant Nativists within the context of the 2016 election. This has also led to several lectures and panel discussions. Meanwhile, the issue of refugee resettlement in the Poughkeepsie area is underway and I assisted by working with the president's office and Vassar College Refugee Resettlement Project to arrange the visit by the President of American University of Nigeria to present what AUN is doing to feed and house hundreds of thousands of refugees from Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria. On another note, the year's summer geographic exploration was to Acadia National Park in honor of NPS's Centennial.



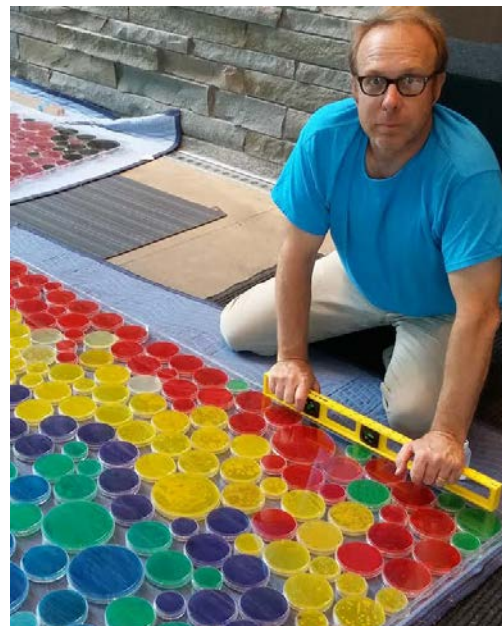
**Brian Godfrey** enjoyed a year's sabbatical in the 2015 calendar year, after completing four years as Urban Studies director. During his leave, he focused on several projects related to the urban and regional geography of the Americas. Recent and forthcoming publications include "New Ethnic Landscapes: Place Making in Urban America" in *Contemporary Ethnic Geographies in America*, "Cities of South America" in *Cities of the World: Regional Patterns and Urban Environments*, "Remembering Rio: From the Imperial Palace to the African Heritage Circuit" in *Urban Space, Place, and National Identity*, and "Brazil and Latin America" in a textbook on *Global Regions*. He is currently engaged in a book project on *Rio de Janeiro: Memory, Place, and Identity*. Since returning to teaching, he has offered such courses as "Cities of the Global South" (GEOG/URBS/INTL 252), "Urban Geography: Space, Place, and Environment" (GEOG/URBS 250), and seminars on "Global Ghetto: Ethnic Geography in Divided Cities" (URBS 303), and "Senior Seminar: Issues in Geographic Thought and Method" (GEOG 304). A consistent high point has been working with students on their senior thesis projects – inevitably an enjoyable challenge!

**Lois Horst** The fall of 2014, my husband, Jeff, and I had a long weekend trip to Block Island. What a beautiful, unspoiled place! The ferry ride over was delayed for a day by storms at sea and the eventual trip was one of the roughest we'd been on since we lived in Alaska. Ugh! Though, the island was worth every discomfort. Right now Block Island is in the news for their wind farm out in the ocean. For a small and very rural place, they have proven to be quite progressive.

Last fall we planned a long weekend of camping at Hammonasset Beach State Park in CT. Once again, nature intervened and sent a hurricane up the coast. We set up our tent in a downpour that first night and woke to find ourselves the only tent onsite. A handful of RVs had shown up in the dark. We had the whole beach to ourselves! The next two days were windy, but sunny, and the campground was quite lovely. We enjoyed watching the sea pound the rocky shore and the wind tossing the beach grasses. In other news, we now have 6 beautiful grandchildren who keep us busy running from the east coast to the west to spend time with them all.

**Rick Jones** The last two years have been a whirlwind, as my twins graduated high school. Both have moved on to college, Jasper to Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa, and Max at the University of Portland in Oregon. This means a lot of adjustment for everyone, but for me, lots more time for artwork, and home improvement projects.

Aside from the awesome job of working in the department in Ely, I've had the pleasure of working alongside Kate Susman in Biology on the Vassar College Artifacts Project (VCAP) which seeks to preserve and display historical items from Vassar's history, as well as curating a show on Creativity in Science at the Palmer Gallery, and assisting two visiting artists in residence on campus, Mark Dion and Barbara Beisinghoff. This last fall, the Class of 2020 was given the book *The Wild Life of Our Bodies*, by Rob Dunn, as the freshman reading selection. The Dean of Freshmen, Susan Zlotnick wished to make the book more personal, so I collaborated with a group of faculty and staff to create 20/20 Biome. We swabbed about 85% of the incoming class, and cultured their skin bacteria on colored agar. These were then displayed in a glorious 6 foot by twelve foot stained glass window, which lasted two full weeks before succumbing to its natural life span.







**Adam Jost (VC '08!)** After defending my Ph.D. at Stanford University in May 2015, I moved back to the East Coast and joined the Earth Science Department for the fall of 2015 to teach *Paleontology and the Fossil Record* and *Stable Isotopes in the Earth and Environmental Sciences*. I enjoyed working with my students on several class projects, which included measuring stable isotopes in local soils, lakes, and limestone outcrops, as well as determining the size of fossil corals through time. I had a great time working with everyone at Vassar, and I appreciated experiencing life on the other side of the classroom.

In January 2016, I moved to Cambridge, MA to live with **Anna Payne-Tobin Jost (VC Biology '08)** and begin a post-doc at MIT sponsored by the Agouron Geobiology Institute. I'm currently finishing up research related to ocean acidification and anoxia during the end-Triassic mass extinction, and I am transitioning to a new series of projects on the evolution of ocean temperature and oxygen isotope composition in the pre-Cambrian.

**Mary Kosloski** I am living and working in Iowa at the University of Iowa and got married in the summer of 2015 to a fellow geologist. I spent a few weeks at the end of this summer doing a mini-volcanoes tour in Oregon and Washington, where most notably it was so foggy that it took four days to catch a glimpse of Mount Saint Helens (I hiked to the top of it one of those days and couldn't see a thing.) I'm enjoying teaching Marine Ecosystems and Conservation (among other things) and hoping for cold weather soon. Hello to all of you in the Hudson Valley and beyond!



**Kirsten Menking** has kept busy over the last couple of years with a mix of fun teaching and research activities. In addition to our introductory Earth, Environment, and Humanity course, she taught Structural Geology (with attendant fieldtrip to Pennsylvania's coal country, including an underground mine tour and visit to the eternally smoking town of Centralia, site of a mine fire that has been burning out of control since the 1960s), Paleoclimatology (for which students cored a lake on the Rensselaer Plateau and spent the semester reconstructing climate history of the area through pollen and plant macrofossils), and Modeling the Earth (senior seminar in numerical modeling of various Earth and Environmental science processes and phenomena).

On the scholarship front, she published a paper on high frequency climate oscillations in the Estancia Basin of New Mexico during last glacial maximum time that appear to be related to solar cycles. She also worked on an educational project with colleagues at Penn State and Macalester College to create an on-line numerical modeling course for the NSF-funded InTeGrate (Interdisciplinary Teaching about Earth) project based at the Science Education Resource Center at Carleton College. The course focuses on climate science and human impacts on the climate system and will be published to the web for anyone to use in the fall of 2016.

Kirsten looks forward to teaching an Environmental Sciences in the Field course to Iceland in spring of 2017. She and biology colleague Mark Schlessman scouted out fieldtrip locations in June of 2016 and are looking forward to an exciting trip to study volcanic features, glaciers, outburst floods, geothermal energy, and the local flora and fauna!



**Joseph Nevins** In the summer of 2014, Joe (along with his co-author, Suren Moodliar) began working on a new book project. *A People's Guide to Greater Boston* will be a combination historical geography and an alternative guidebook to sites throughout the City of Boston and nearby municipalities such as Concord, Lawrence, Lowell, and Salem. The University of California Press is scheduled to publish it in 2019. (Yes, these things take a long time!) Among other endeavors, Joe co-authored an article with Kenneth Wolkin (Geography, '12) that was published in *Territory, Politics, Governance*. Entitled, "No Sovereign Nation, No Reservation": Producing the New Colonialism in Cayuga Count(r)y," the article is based on Ken's senior thesis. He has also been greatly enjoying his one-year sabbatical (all of 2016), allowing him to spend more quality time with his daughters, Amina (9) and Sayako (13).



**Jill Schneiderman** I've been busy in the last two years thinking and writing about the Anthropocene. I published one paper on the subject in a feminist philosophy journal and another one is in press in a book on Anthropocene feminism. The paper arose from a few presentations I gave on the subject. Right now I am examining microplastics in dune sands of the Provincelands portion of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Not a bad field area but sad results...microplastics abound and I'm beginning to think we should call the new epoch the Plasticene.

For those who have graduated since I began teaching at Vassar 25 (!) years ago and who know my family...Caleb graduated from high school and is on a gap year before he enters college in Fall 2016. Tillie is a junior in high school and doing a semester of language immersion in Spain. So, Meg and I are premature empty nesters! Meg retooled by getting a master's degree in teaching earth science at the American Museum of Natural History and is currently teaching earth science at a high school in the Bronx. We went on an AAVC trip to Iceland in February 2016 and saw some great northern lights, glaciers, volcanoes and other remarkable geological features. I always love hearing from former students so stay in touch!

**Jeff Walker** My students and I have been working on an occurrence of the smectite to corrensite transition in hydrothermally-altered basalts from the Snake River Plain in southern Idaho. The samples were obtained from drill core collected by "Project Hotspot" Continental Scientific Drilling Project, an international consortium focusing on the effects of the passage of the Yellowstone Hotspot under southern Idaho. Although the majority of the scientists in the consortium are igneous petrologists and structural geologists, those of us who study hydrothermal alteration of basalts are having a field day because the cores are extensively altered by circulating hydrothermal fluids. This is, of course, no surprise since southern Idaho is one of the great untapped geothermal resources in the country, but the range of alteration and the minerals present warrants careful study since it can help to understand the dynamics of these

systems. Our study began with the senior thesis research of Joe Wheeler (VC '13), and has resulted in poster presentation at national and regional GSA meetings with several other student co-authors (Alex Boersma, '15, Katie Ewen, '15, Sarah Perry, '17). During the summer of 2015, Sarah Perry and I traveled to Edinburgh, Scotland to present a paper on the alterations with our collaborator, Anthony Walton (U Kansas). In September, 2016, Joe Wheeler and I published a paper in the European clay journal *Clay Minerals*, culminating the first phase of the study. We are now looking for colleagues at other institutions with analytical capacities we don't have at Vassar to continue the study.

I was honored to be the first to teach in the Earth and Environmental Science classroom in the new Bridge for Laboratory Sciences building, which opened in January, 2016. The room was excellent for the Soils course although it kept Rick and me jumping trying to figure out what needed to be moved to the new building for the class, and when. Since the building was being landscaped at the time, one of the modules in the class was a field trip to the landscaping with representatives of the landscape architect, and the engineers who designed the runoff control systems. I was also happy to teach the Field Geology course Spring 2016. When our last field trip (to the Catskills) got rained out, we substituted a trip to the Loeb Art Center where Rick gave us a tour of paintings by Hudson River School artists, some of which included views from places that we would have visited on our hike.







**Yu Zhou** Funded partly by the Exploratory Stage grant of Luce Initiative on Asia and Environment, Yu Zhou co-led a group of 27 students and 11 faculty and administrators from Vassar College visiting Shanghai, Wuhan, Yichang, Enshi in Hubei province and Beijing to study various environmental issues in China from urban water problem to agricultural changes in March 2016. The trip brought several environmental science scholars to China for the first time and promised to establish long-term relationship with Chinese universities on Environmental Studies.

Yu Zhou also co-edited the book, *China as an Innovation Nation*, 2016 with William Lazonick, and Yifei Sun, published by Oxford University Press. She co-authored the introduction of the book, and one chapter on the evolution of state policy on innovation. The book tracks technological development in 10 major technological sectors in China, written by leading experts in these sectors. Collectively, it represents the most in-depth knowledge and academic analysis about the past and potential for Chinese technological innovation in recent decades. She also published the following articles:

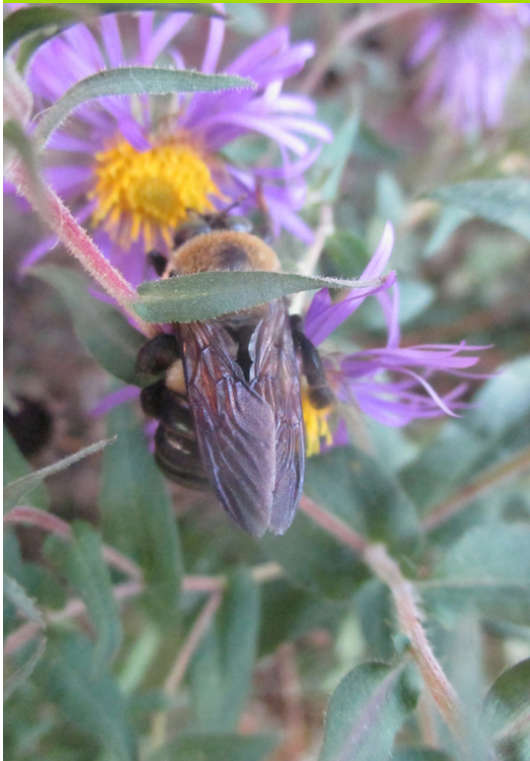
**Zhou, Yu** 2015 "Mixed Market and crisis mitigation: lessons from the performance of China's ICT hardware industry before and after the 2008 crisis. *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 56:2: 193-219

**Zhou, Yu** (2015) State Power and environmental initiatives in China: analyzing China's green building program through an ecological modernization perspective. *Geoforum* 61: 1-12.

**Zhou, Yu, Yifan Cai** (2014), 打造中国绿色建筑推广的合力 (Creating "crowd-sourcing" for China's Green Building promotion program) *现代城市研究 (Modern Urban Research)*. Vol. 6: 89-96 (in Chinese)

## We Love Pollinators!

After years of construction, and one planting of expensive annuals, we decided to use the space at the bottom of the Ely tower for good. With help from Alistair Hall of the Vassar Office of Sustainability and Elise Heffernan, who collected the seeds for us at the Vassar Farm, we have created a sustainable garden for pollinators, who have shown up enthusiastically.



Now in its second year of growth, the Earth Science and Geography Wildflower Garden contains Bee Balm/ Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*,) annual and perennial Black Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* sp.,) Blue Aster (either *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*, or *S. novi-belgii*, we don't know which, but the bees are bonkers for them late in the season when the pickings are slim!) and at least one species of milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.)

We are looking forward to see how this experiment can be carried out in other areas of campus, increasing the health of our small ecosystem.







## WARTHIN MUSEUM OF GEOLOGY & NATURAL HISTORY

Beaver, in Sunset Lake, 2016, photo by Stephen Kovari. While only a visitor to Sunset Lake, the population on the Vassar Farm is growing, and having quite an impact on the ecosystem there.

Over the past couple of years the museum has been the recipient of surplus, but old and beautiful, cabinetry from the buildings on campus that have been renovated (or removed) during the Science Bridge Building project. These cabinets are being filled with specimens from our collection as we expand the museum's presence into the foyer outside the department office and down the hall to the faculty wing. This is valuable real estate, and we are thrilled to be able to showcase more of our impressive collection. We have a new student assistant museum curator, India Futterman, '19, who brings her wonderfully effusive personality to her work. India's first project for us was a display of the paintings and photographs of an early professor, Thomas Hills, which he created while on field trips out west with students in the 1930s. He was also the one who built the clever geyser exhibit that still resides in the museum.

While we enjoy exhibiting items from our long and illustrious past as a department and museum, we also want to focus on the here and now; a recent addition is a virtual reality sandbox, using a camera and projector to project topographic lines on white sand. Since we added the ending "and Natural History" to the title of the museum, we have been endeavouring to include items of zoological interest. The Great Auk was perhaps the first to join us. There is also a preserved swordfish head, and cast models of a mastodon, a titanothere, and a hellbender (type of salamander, not yet extinct), among others. Most recently we have created a display of student work, that of Stephen Kovari, '19, who has been photographing the fauna on the Vassar farm and the campus. His main interest is owls, of which he has some great shots, but he has also caught bobcats, beaver and bats with his camera lens. We plan to follow this exhibit with more students' and local community members' artwork that focuses on the science world.

### Darwin Days at Vassar

The Museum and Department continued sponsorship of annual events such as Darwin Days, celebrating collaborations between the sciences and humanities. This last spring we sponsored bird walks (21 species seen in one hour!) on the Vassar Farm and campus, and kept a bird count for the entire month of February with lots of daily notes about bird sightings all over campus. In 2015, we celebrated Earth Day in collaboration with the Vassar Farm by showing Green Fire, a movie about Aldo Leopold, the prominent philosopher-conservationist, and building Leopold Benches for use around the Nature Preserve.

Right: An Art Bird Tree was created by children at Wimpfheimer Nursery School for Darwin Days!





# Vassar College Artifacts Project

As an extension of the Warthin Museum of Natural History, we have been involved with the Vassar College Artifacts Project, an effort to preserve, curate and display or utilize Vassar's historical teaching artifacts. We have managed to save a large number of priceless/interesting/unusual physical objects from the landfill, and begin researching their provenance and uses. Where possible, we have tried to discover which faculty might have used them, too.

This last Spring, our efforts came to fruition, as newly renovated science buildings and the brand new Bridge for Laboratory Sciences opened, with a series of displays called 'Vassar Sources.' Linking text, artifacts and photos, these Sources displays tell some of the stories of the sciences at Vassar College, some of the marvelous biographies of faculty of the past, and thought provoking stories of current Alumnae doing amazing work in the world.

<https://vq.vassar.edu/issues/2016/01/features/artifacts.html>



Above: Maria Mitchell's Astroglobe, c. 1871, now restored and on display in the Bridge Building.

Below: The Universal Collection at the FLLAC



In addition, VCAP was also a large part of a project sponsored by the Creative Arts Across Disciplines (CAAD). **The Universal Collection**, created by Mark Dion, was on display in the Lehman Loeb Art Center through December 11. Dion was commissioned to create a 'cabinet' for the Art Center to celebrate the sciences at Vassar, and at 23 feet tall by 9 feet wide, it was an impressive installation, featuring a large amount of Earth Science materials, as well as artifacts from all over campus.

<http://info.vassar.edu/news/2015-2016/160526-dion-universal-collection.html>

