



The Education Innovation Factory
presents

Faculty Newsletter

WELCOME TO THE EIF TEAM!



SHIVRISHVITH PALTHYAVATHU

Graduate Assistant & Co-Editor

Hello! I'm Shivrishvith, but just call me "Shiv", and I'm excited to join the Education Innovation Factory as its new Graduate Assistant and Co-Editor of the Faculty Newsletter.

I hold an M.S. in Computer Science from New Jersey Institute of Technology, and I am currently pursuing graduate studies in MS Management, Business Analytics at St. Francis College. I'm naturally curious and enjoy learning about technology, data and analytics, AI, digital innovation, and new ideas across disciplines.

I look forward to collaborating with faculty, staff, and students, learning more about the initiatives happening across SFC, and helping share the accomplishments, opportunities, and resources that strengthen our College community.

CONTACT : spalthyavathu@sfc.edu

Faculty Assembly: Welcome Back to Campus!



A New Year Together

On September 9th, all faculty gathered in St. Francis Hall for the beginning of the year Assembly.



A Moment of Inspiration

The program began with a convocation by Brother Greg.



A Vision for the Future

President Cecere delivered an inspiring address and presented the State of the College.



Updates on Our Academic Programs and Re-Accreditation Self-Study

Dr. Gale Gibson Gayle, SVPAA & Graduate Academic Dean & ALO, provided a comprehensive overview of our academic programs and the re-accreditation self-study, including key updates, opportunities, and next steps.

Dr. John Edwards, VPAA & Undergraduate Academic Dean, shared additional updates on undergraduate initiatives and future plans.



Reconnecting as a Community

After the Assembly, faculty gathered for a cozy lunch, where everyone had the chance to catch up, share summer experiences, and look ahead to a successful year together.

Here's to a *Great* New Academic Year, Faculty!

A blue silhouette of a campus skyline, including a bridge and a church with a cross, set against a dark blue background.

SEPTEMBER 14 • ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE

SFC's First Faculty Mass

We were delighted to see so many faculty gather at the start of the academic year. Prof. Jim Freeman and Dr. Alen Li offered beautiful readings, while President Cecere shared words of encouragement and wished everyone a meaningful and successful year ahead.

A special thank you to Father Russell and Brother Greg for making this beautiful celebration possible and for helping us begin the academic year with a spirit of faith, community, and gratitude.



A meaningful beginning to the year — together in community, reflection, and shared purpose!

Middle States News: MSCHE Annual Conference: December 9–12 / Philadelphia

Thank you, SFC Faculty Mentors, for working with your students and supporting their scholarly work.

St. Francis College will be proudly represented through the following student poster presentations:

Dr. Katsu Kita — Department of Biology

Perla Pineda; Ayah Fares; Jennyfer Mendoza; Jeremiah Mitchell

Dr. Alen Li — Department of Computer Science and Cybersecurity

Amalie Bastidas; Ekaterina Bremel

Dr. Erica Zhou — Department of Computer Science and Cybersecurity

Tristan Zgomic; Constantin Voit

Dr. Sunghun Kim — Department of Psychology

Gianna Fiordimondo

Poster Titles

Accessibility Focused Task Manager Software Application

Affordable research using cBioportal and AlphaFold3

ML-Based Return Prediction for Online Retail Businesses

Successful SEA-PHAGE program implementation in NYC

Understanding Romantic Attachment



ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE

Team Chair Preliminary Visit

MSCHE has appointed **Dr. Carlota Ocampo**, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Trinity Washington University, as Team Chair for St. Francis College's 2027 Self-Study and Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Dr. Ocampo has more than 30 years of experience in higher education leadership, assessment, accreditation, and student success.



Dr. Carlota Ocampo, MSCHE Self-Study Evaluation Team Chair, will conduct her Preliminary Visit to St. Francis College on **Thursday, November 12, 2026.**

We look forward to welcoming Dr. Ocampo to our campus!



Dr. Carlota Ocampo

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Trinity Washington University

MSCHE Self-Study Evaluation Team Chair

A Brighter World Through Excellence, Faith, and Community

FAITH
EDUCATION
SERVICE
COMMUNITY
A BRIGHTER
WORLD





“Opportunity Thursdays” – Empowering Students’ Journey From Campus to Career

“Leveraging Your Strengths, and Thriving in College and Career”

by Ms. Jessica Huang, Student Affairs and Accessibility Liaison

Please join us for our September “Opportunity Thursday” event:

Leveraging Your Strengths, and Thriving in College and Career

Event Details:

- Date: Thursday September 17th, 2026
- Time: 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm EST

Webinar Access:

- Zoom ID: 986 0434 8610
- Passcode: 306000

Our Early Careers Team will lead this engaging session designed help students understand how to identify their strengths,, ask thoughtful questions, and navigate academic, recruiting, internship, and early career environments with greater confidence.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Morgan Fowler

**JPMorganChase Early
Careers Team**



Anthony Cuellar

**JPMorganChase Early
Careers Team**

SEPTEMBER FEATURED SPEAKERS



Franciscan Corner

Celebrating Franciscan Month at SFC

Faculty, Please Join Us — and Bring Your Students!

SFC

Let's celebrate Franciscan Month together through moments of prayer, service, reflection, interfaith connection, and community.

-
- Animal Parade and Blessing
 - Creation Hour
 - Feast Day Mass
 - Bringing Assisi to Brooklyn!
 - Rosary Procession
 - Interfaith activities and more

[Franciscan-Month-2026-Calendar](#)

Let's celebrate our Franciscan spirit together as a community.

FACULTY WORKSHOP

September is Suicide Prevention Month

Faculty Conversation with Emma Wall, LMHC

Clinical Supervisor | Counseling & Wellness Center



SEPTEMBER 17
1:00–2:00 PM



ALL FACULTY
WELCOME

Would you recognize the signs if a student were struggling?

Sometimes the first sign that a student needs help appears in the classroom.

Join Emma Wall to learn what to notice, how to respond with care, and when to connect a student with counseling and support resources.



Notice
the signs.



Start the
conversation.



Help connect
a student to support.



Protein design moves from concept to classroom

Dr. Kita was Selected for the UC Davis Design2Data cohort, Dr. Katsuhiro Kita completed hands-on faculty training June 22–27 in Foldit and the D2D workflow.

The next step: a spring 2027 BIO-3320L lab connecting computational protein design with molecular biology, protein purification, enzyme kinetics, and data analysis.

SFC now joins the D2D network as its third New York school, expanding authentic research experiences and workforce-ready STEM skills.

<https://d2d.ucdavis.edu/d2d-network-map>

Congratulations, Dr. Kita, and thank you for all your work and dedication!



Master of Fine Arts Faculty Participate in the Battle of the Genres Brooklyn Book Festival Reading



SFC MFA BROOKLYN BOOK FESTIVAL

Battle of the Genres

*Celebrate stories, voices, and the SFC
MFA community.*

MONDAY

SEPTEMBER 21

TIME

12:50 PM

LOCATION

SCREENING ROOM 6116

Join us for the SFC MFA Brooklyn Book Festival
Battle of the Genres reading.

READERS

- Theo Gangi
- Astra Baker
- Caroline Hagood
- Mitchell Levenberg
- Jive Poetic



FACULTY INVITATION

Please bring or invite your classes to attend!



Freshman Academic Bootcamp: A Strong Start at SFC

Biology and Mathematics faculty come together to support incoming freshmen as they prepare for their first semester.



FACULTY & STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Faculty from the Departments of Biology (Dr. Allen Burdowski and Dean Noemi Rivera) and Mathematics (Dr. Lavinia Ciungu) conducted a three-day on-campus bootcamp for incoming freshmen from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

DAYS 1-2

Anatomy and Physiology

DAY 3

Mathematics

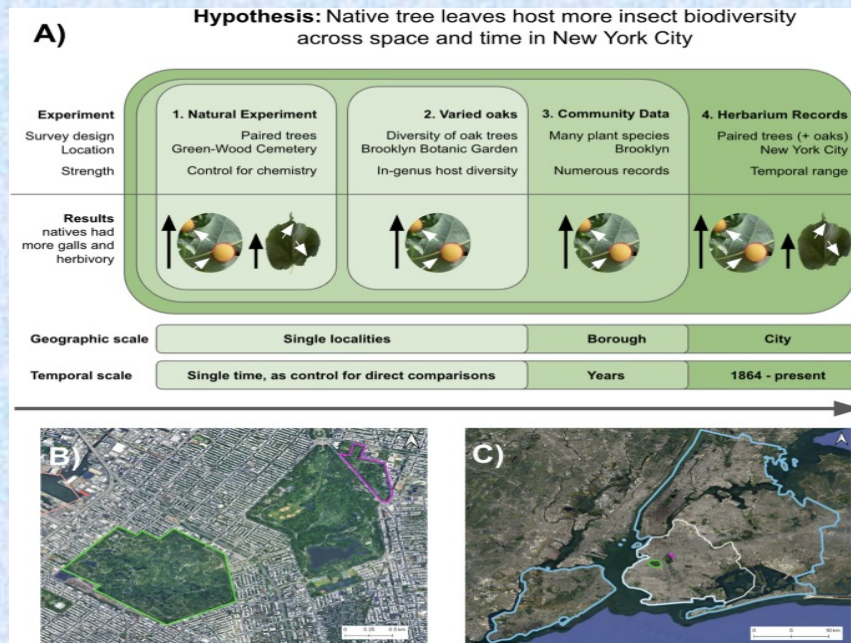
Approximately
100 STUDENTS
participated.
Full House!

Great
Turnout!
Bright Futures!



OECOLOGIA · PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 4, 2026

The impact of non-native trees on galling and herbivory in New York City across space and time



Study design and locations. Fig. 1, Engel et al. (2026)

Read the paper: doi.org/10.1007/s00442-026-05951-0

Native trees and urban biodiversity

Dr. Emily Herstoff and collaborators published an open-access study of native and non-native trees in New York City. Student co-authors include recent SFC graduates Irma Cardenas and Claudia C. Vasquez, senior Dunya Abdulkarem, and graduate student Liam D. Engel.

The team compared leaf-feeding damage and galls (growths made by insects and mites) using trees at Green-Wood Cemetery and Brooklyn Botanic Garden, community observations, and preserved leaves collected over more than a century.

Native trees hosted far more gall-forming insects and mites. Differences in leaf-feeding damage were smaller. The findings show how planting native trees can help support urban biodiversity.

Congratulations to the research team!

FACULTY ARTS EVENT

CARROLL STREET COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

YOUNG ETHEL'S

506 5TH AVE / BROOKLYN

WEDNESDAY / SEPTEMBER 16
6:00-7:15 PM

FILM
BRUCE CONNER ON 16MM / PROJECTED BY MARK STREET

READING
JASON DUBOW

MUSIC
PROFESSOR JAY ROSENSTEIN

~ FREE (ONE DRINK MINIMUM) ~

Prof. Jason Dubow and Carroll Street Collective Make Their Return!



The Carroll Street Collective is back at Young Ethel's! In his invitation, Jason Dubow welcomes familiar faces and newcomers to the monthly gathering, held on the third Wednesday at 6 p.m.

Call it a salon, a gathering, or a happening: come when you can for an evening of film, reading, and music.



Wednesday, September 16, 2026
6:00-7:15 p.m.

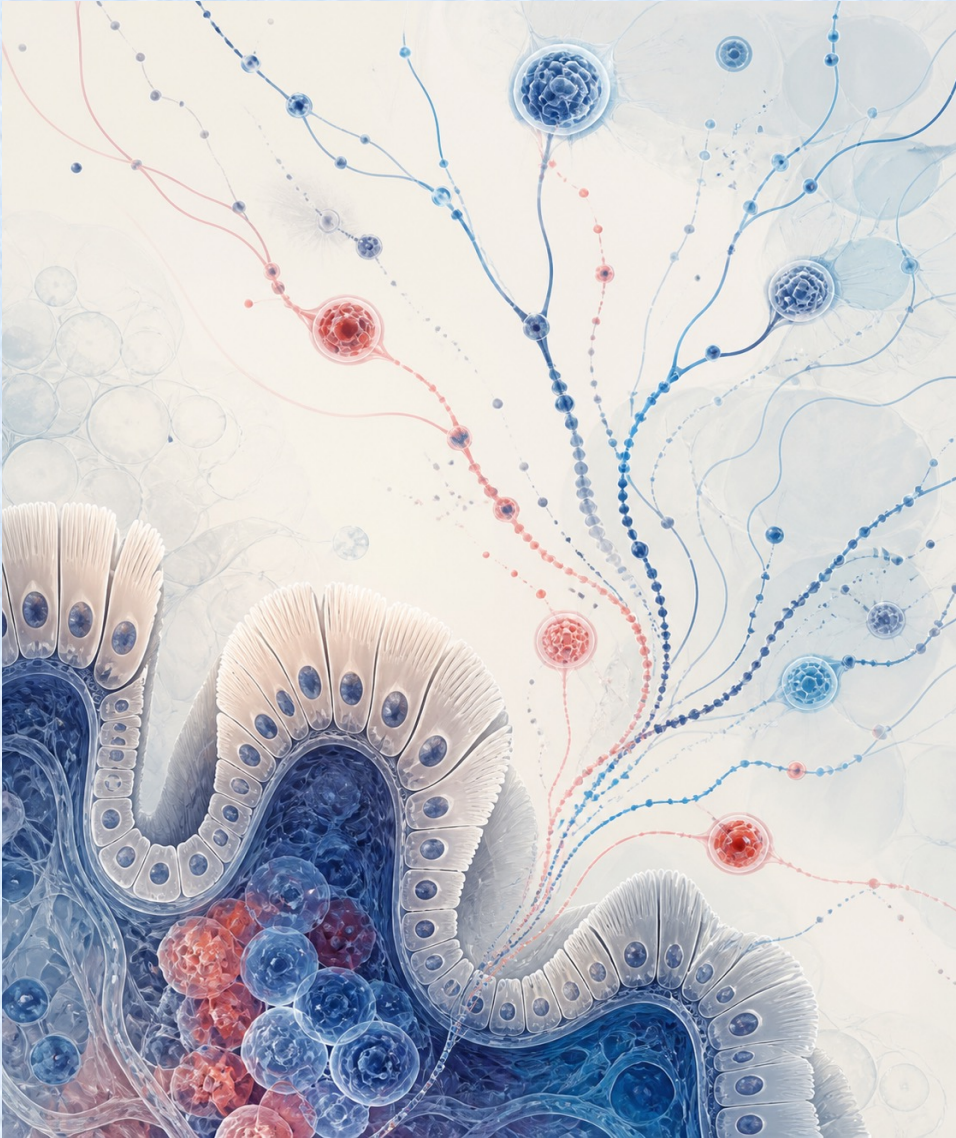


Young Ethel's, 506 5th Avenue, Brooklyn

This month brings together Bruce Conner films projected by Mark Street, a reading by Jason Dubow, and music by Professor Jay Rosenstein.

Free admission with a one-drink minimum.

*Film.
Reading.
Music.
Community.*



CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION • DOI.ORG/10.3390/CANCERS18162618

Faculty Research Spotlight:

Dr. Katsu Kita, Biology

New Publication: A Clearer Map of a Complex Cancer-Signaling Pathway

Published August 14 in *Cancers*, Dr. Kita's review examines why non-canonical Wnt signaling can appear tumor-promoting or tumor-suppressing across colorectal-cancer studies.

The article connects clinical data with competing findings, identifies understudied links and methodological gaps, and highlights emerging approaches that may clarify how receptor context, tumor stage, and the microenvironment shape outcomes.

Kita, K. (2026). *Cancers*, 18(16), 2618.

Research support: Alex Kustanovich, Multimedia Hub.

Four accessibility reminders for the new academic year

A NOTE FROM MS. JESSICA HUANG · STUDENT AFFAIRS AND ACCESSIBILITY LIAISON



Jessica will support accessibility initiatives across the College and help faculty and students connect with the right resources.

01 Share accessible materials

Check PDFs, PowerPoints, Word documents, and other digital materials before posting. Use the Canvas accessibility checker to help identify issues.

02 Describe visual content

Describe the information conveyed by images, charts, graphs, and other visuals for students who are visually impaired.

03 Caption videos and multimedia

Use accurate captions for videos and provide important audio information in an accessible format.

04 Connect with the Center for Accessibility and Success

Contact the Center for guidance on accessible course materials or support for a student with a disability.

★ Faculty, you are invited! ★

Presidential Lecture Series:

CONSTITUTION DAY

with
COUNCIL MEMBER RITA JOSEPH '04

THURS, SEPTEMBER 24 ★ 1 PM

ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE PROUDLY CELEBRATES CONSTITUTION DAY

with a special guest, Rita Joseph, Council Member of District 40 in Brooklyn, who will speak about the enduring importance of the U.S. Constitution in safeguarding rights, advancing justice, and guiding our democracy.



RSVP HERE



Faculty, *you are invited!*

2026 Brendan J. '68 & Barbara A. Dugan Memorial Golf Outing

Monday, September 28, 2026 • Rockaway Hunting Club • Lawrence, New York

Space is filling quickly!

- Golf, tennis, and sponsorship packages are available now.
- 50/50 tickets are available online: \$100 each or 5 for \$450.
- Half of the 50/50 proceeds go to the winner, and half directly benefit St. Francis College students.

Support St. Francis College, its mission, and its students.

REGISTER & SUPPORT

Golf • Tennis • Sponsorships
50/50 Tickets

[Event Website](#)

We look forward to seeing you in September!

Three first-week moves that strengthen belonging

UCLA TEACHING & LEARNING CENTER

A practical checklist for creating clarity, connection, and active participation from day one.



01

Know who's in the room

Use a short pre-course survey to learn students' goals, names and pronunciation, prior experience, and access needs. Let what you learn shape the first week.



02

Set norms together

Build community agreements with students, make course materials accessible, and use an inclusive icebreaker tied to the learning ahead.



03

Close the feedback loop

Try a low-stakes exit ticket, share deidentified themes, and model how drop-in hours work. Explore all 11 ideas at teaching.ucla.edu.



Developed by **Ms. Jessica Huang**,
Student Affairs and Accessibility Liaison

<https://teaching.ucla.edu/news/first-day-week-teaching-checklist/>



RELIGIOUS STUDIES & HONORS

President Tim Cecere in conversation
with Professor James Freeman.

CHAT WITH THE PRESIDENT

“An Open Mind”

Lessons from the classroom and beyond

“Confessions of a college professor”

“I don’t know their full stories, their situations, so I need to keep an open mind.”

ON LEARNING FROM STUDENTS

COMING UP IN THIS CONVERSATION

Teaching & Campus Life

Fun Hypotheticals

Pop Culture & Random

Deeper but Still Fun

Icebreakers & Personal Questions

Bonus Questions



Icebreakers & Personal Questions

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman

Q1

If you weren't a professor, what's the most random job you think you'd be doing right now?

"I'd be happy being a gardener – in fact, I worked at a plant nursery and as a garden consultant before I came to SFC – great people, and you're always around plants!"

Q2

What's the weirdest or funniest thing that's ever happened to you in a classroom?

"Weird, not at all funny: in 4th grade, right in the middle of a class, we heard a crash, and Mr. Hill, one of the custodians, fell through the ceiling and onto the floor (he'd been repairing the roof). A bunch of us ran to get help, and I'm happy to say that although he was hurt, he recovered completely."

Q3

If your academic career was made into a movie, what genre would it be and who would play you?

*"I would love to see it as a surreal fantasy where I get advice from angels and dead souls, I have to fight demons in my off hours, and I solve great supernatural mysteries – like Buffy the Vampire Slayer, college edition.
To play me, only someone like Christopher Lloyd could portray the depth of my absent-mindedness, but I'd settle for Brad Pitt (lol!)"*

Q4

What's one surprising thing you've learned from a student over the years?

"I am always surprised by my students: the things they've done and experienced, the ways they view the world. The most important lesson has been cumulative: avoid making assumptions about students, especially at first meeting. I don't know their full stories, their situations, so I need to keep an open mind."



Teaching & Campus Life

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman

Q5

What's the most creative (or ridiculous) excuse a student has ever given you for missing class or a deadline?

"The most ridiculous excuse has been the thankfully very few students who didn't even try to give an excuse, they just came in at the end of an exam period or emailed the next day and asked if they could still take it. Uh, no."

Q6

If you could design a completely useless but fun class, what would it be called?

"The culture, spirituality and morality of tabletop roleplaying games. Actually, maybe not useless?"

Q7

What's the best student presentation or project you've ever seen?

"Many of the senior honors theses and projects I've seen have been amazing. I remember one recent project on the Manson family that was really able to convey the senselessness of the crimes and the methods Manson used to lure people into his influence."

Q8

What's something students do that always makes you smile (or secretly annoys you)?

"We've all secretly scrolled or traded DMs during class. But the students that are clearly watching a video and don't think I'll notice? Totally annoying."



Fun Hypotheticals

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman

Q9

If you could teach any subject in the world (even completely outside your field), what would you teach?

“The appreciation of fragrance in plants and flowers, food and drinks.”

Q10

Which historical figure or famous person would you want as a guest lecturer in your class?

“Well, it’s religious studies, so a number of miraculous figures come to mind! But as a guest lecturer, I’d love to hear from William James, who was a pioneer in the fields of religious studies, psychology, and philosophy and one of my favorite thinkers.”

Q11

If your department had unlimited funding for one ridiculous project, what would you want to do?

“Researching the spiritual life and beliefs of cats. Maybe we’ll find they know all the secrets of life, but they just can’t be bothered with telling us.”

Q12

What superpower would be most useful for surviving faculty meetings?

“I look forward (not really!) to the near future when we can all send our fully functioning AI replicants of ourselves to meetings, where they will conduct all faculty business and report back to us.”



Pop Culture & Random

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman

Q13

What's a pop culture reference (meme, TikTok trend, movie, song) that your students use that you secretly love?

"I'm so far behind on pop culture that I miss most of their references, but I really like hearing students saying "brick" for really cold – it's local to NYC, it's based, and it works really well as a descriptor."

Q14

What's the most "main character energy" moment you've had in your career?

"See pop culture above: one day a student responded to a question with a long, rambling description of a very out there paranormal experience they'd had, and I was able to say, "weird flex, but ok.""

Q15

If you could have any fictional character as a TA, who would you pick and why?

"The Grim Reaper would be a big help keeping students in line and focused, and could also answer a lot of questions in my Death and the Afterlife class."

Q16

What's one thing about your field that you wish was in more movies or TV shows?

"It's nearly impossible to convey, but I would love to see them try to show the sheer fatigue of teaching a bunch of classes in one day: to bring the energy, keep people's focus and attention, attend to all the details of lesson plans and timing. It's a small stage, but it's still a performance."



Deeper but Still Fun

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman

Q17

What's a misconception about professors that always makes you laugh?

"Every professor gets the 'oh, you teach college, you get your summers off, right?' And yes, it's true, kind of, and it's a real privilege. But especially these days, it's taken up with research and writing, administrative work that never ends, teaching summer classes, retooling courses and learning new technology, so can we please drop the image of professors hanging out in their libraries drinking sherry?"

Q19

What's the most unexpected place you've ever had an academic breakthrough or idea?

"I can't claim any great breakthroughs, but my best thinking has often happened while traveling: watching the world flow by while on a bus or train really helps me get into a free-floating, creative state of mind. If I ever had to write a full length academic book, I'd probably have to buy an unlimited Amtrak ticket to cruise around the country while I brainstormed."

Q18

If you could give your younger self (as a new professor) one piece of ridiculous advice, what would it be?

"Do or say at least one inexplicable, absurd thing in each class. It'll give you a reputation of being really weird and eccentric (which is often equated with high intelligence in the world of academia) and hard to predict, which will keep the students on their toes, and it'll keep you from taking yourself too seriously."

Q20

Which three famous people (dead or alive) would have the ultimate dinner party with you and your colleagues?

"I would love to see Saint Francis, Zen Master Hakuin, and Henry David Thoreau at the same table! But I wonder if they would discuss high spiritual awakening or get into an argument about the food? And which would be more worthwhile?"



Bonus Questions

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman



What's your "origin story" — how did you actually end up becoming a professor?

"One day the sun on my home planet went nova, and we . . . wait, wrong story! I was job hunting for high school teaching jobs, and decided to answer an ad in the NY Times for tutors at SFC. Mitch Levenberg ran the tutoring program, and we got to be friends. When he found out I had a background in religious studies, he recommended that I try adjuncting. I owe my entire SFC career to Mitch."



If you could ban one thing from all syllabi forever, what would it be?

"It would be a wonderful world where we could dispense with attendance policies, because students would just show up. Showing up, being present, is so important in every part of our lives, and yet we too often find ways to blow it off."



If you could time travel to any era to teach a class, when and where would you go?

"Ancient Athens, Luoyang in Tang Dynasty China, Timbuktu in the 14th century, Teotihuacan in the pre-Aztec era, and other centers of learning all come to mind. But I'd go back way further, at least 10,000 years, to the late stone age. We know almost nothing about their religious beliefs and practices. I don't know how much I'd teach them, but I'd certainly learn a lot."



Bonus Questions

President Tim Cecere in conversation with Professor James Freeman



What's your favorite “nerdy” thing you're obsessed with that has nothing to do with your job?

“I put my nerdiness right out in the open! But one area I keep pretty close is I'm obsessed with the age of sail and naval warfare during the 18th and early 19th century, and fiction about that era. It's a fascinating foil to the world depicted by Fielding, Sterne, Austen and the Brontes, but with a lot of ropes and cannons.”



What's something you're currently excited about in your field that you wish more students knew about?

“The biggest change in patterns of religious belief in several thousand years is happening right now – the mass movement away from institutional religions to “spiritual but not religious” and other forms of “not religious.” But what it means is anyone's guess! A new religion or religions, a total redefinition of what we mean by religion, or something else? I'm waiting to see what happens!”



MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM

The Education Innovation Factory

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For ideas, suggestions, or a conversation about a faculty-news item, reach out to the Education Innovation Factory.

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