

Five at UC Awarded for Distinguished Teaching

Awards committee cites Intellectual passion, 'electrifying' rapport with students.

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Mastery is a given. They've won prestigious fellowships, commanded high praise for their published works.

But the five faculty members who recieved the Distinguished Teaching Award for 2012 yesterday were honored not for their distinguished scholarship, but their ability to ignite joy and passion in their students.

In describing the recipients, the awards committee used words like engage, challenge, inspire. They spoke of "electrifying rapport" and "intellectual passion."

The award, instituted in 1959, is given annually by the Committee on Teaching, a standing committee of the Berkeley division of the Academic Senate.

The honored teachers include:

- Sally Goldman, lecturer of South and Southeast Asian Studies. An expert in Sanskrit – a language her department chair describes as “extraordinarily complex” -- Goldman told the committee how she challenges students to exceed their expectations: “I find that a dose of empathy and a bit of humor go a long way toward making what seems impenetrable manageable.”
- Edward Miguel, professor of economics. His former students told the awards committee that as undergrads, Miguel inspired them to pursue development economics in graduate school. The economics professor said he wants his students to feel connected to the people whose lives they are studying. “Without that connection, how can they understand which issues really matter?” he says. “And without that understanding as a compass, what will guide their research?”
- Joanna Picciotto, associate professor of English. Her department chair lauded Picciotto for her “inventive critical energy, her intellectual passion and her generosity of response.” A scholar of 17th and 18th century literature, Picciotto, revises her lectures every semester based on issues her students raise, “so that even when I’m lecturing I’m not really the only one speaking.”
- Debarati Sanyal, associate professor of French. The director of the summer Institute for French Studies in Avignon, France, wrote that Sanyal’s course on ethics in the modern novel, “despite its severe subject matter and its drab syllabus, elicited such unmitigated praise on the part of the students that I am now begging her to come back and participate in the program next year.” Sanyal says she thinks of herself “as a mediator who provides background, opens up lines of inquiry and activates the material if it seems remote.”
- David Sklansky, professor of law. Of this former federal prosecutor and specialist in criminal law, Berkeley Law Dean Chris Edley writes that Sklansky “communicates complex legal concepts to large classes of students and encourages their serious analysis of often politically and emotionally charged issues of criminal law, criminal procedure, and evidence.” He says his challenge is to keep classroom learning fresh for his students, “but that challenge is a big part of why I find teaching so joyful, so rejuvenating, and so deeply rewarding.”

Videos of past winners of the Distinguished Teaching Award in the classroom may be [viewed here](#).
