



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

*The College of Arts & Sciences is excited to present
the*

SUJACK AWARD CEREMONY

honoring our awardees of

2024

*Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching
Excellence and Master Teacher awards*

&

*Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence
and Master Researcher awards*



PROGRAM

Welcome:

*Peter J. Schraeder, PhD
Professor and Dean*

Opening comments:

Don Sujack

*Introduction of 2024
Teaching Awards:*

*Kelly Howe, PhD
2024 Teaching committee
Chairperson*

*Introduction of 2024
Research Awards:*

*Olegs Andrejevs, PhD
2024 Research committee
member*

Closing remarks:

*Mark C. Reed, EdD
President
Peter J. Schraeder, PhD
Professor and Dean*

Congratulations to all our 2024 Award winners



2024 SUJACK AWARD WINNERS

2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence

[Haysun Kang](#), Associate Professor, Fine and Performing Arts

[Michael Schumacher](#), Lecturer, Criminal Justice and Criminology

2024 Master Teachers

[Catherine Nichols](#), Senior Lecturer, Anthropology

[Jennifer Parks](#), Professor, Philosophy

[Polina Pine](#), Senior Lecturer, Chemistry and Biochemistry

[Sherrie Weller](#), Senior Lecturer, English

2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence

[Alexandru Grigorescu](#), Professor, Political Science

[Don Stemen](#), Professor, Criminal Justice and Criminology

2024 Master Researchers

[Emily Cain](#), Associate Professor, Theology

[Perla Gámez](#), Associate Professor, Psychology

[Nan Miles Xi](#), Assistant Professor, Mathematics and Statistics

[Weiming Yu](#), Associate Professor, Biology



Statements from our Teaching and Research Award committees about our 2024 SUJACK AWARD WINNERS

Haysun Kang - 2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence Top Award

Congratulations to **Dr. Haysun Kang**—Associate Professor in Music with a specialization in Piano—on the honor of being named one of this year’s top teaching award recipients. Dr. Kang has taught at Loyola since 2008 and she holds a Bachelor’s degree in Music with a Piano focus from Seoul National University, a certificate in Piano Performance from Academy of Mozarteum in Salzburg, a Master of Music in Piano Performance from DePaul University, and a Doctorate in Music from Northwestern University. Across the areas taken into consideration for this award, the committee was immensely impressed by the materials submitted by Dr. Kang and the insights shared by her student recommenders.

Dr. Kang has taught a wide range of courses during her time at Loyola, including Applied Piano, Advanced Piano, Class Piano for Beginners, Class Piano II, Asian Music: China, Korea, Japan, to name just a few. Her course evaluations are no less than fantastic, and both of her student nominators wrote about her with passion. As one of those nominators noted, “Being a pianist can be quite isolating when we spend so much time in practice rooms by ourselves, but I’ve always felt like I can find community with my fellow students thanks to Dr. K.” In addition to her course teaching, Dr. Kang also offers extracurricular classes of various kinds, mentors independent studies, works with many undergraduates on their senior projects and their preparation for graduate school applications, assists students with finding professional positions upon graduation, mentors alumni, and coordinates aspects of the Chamber Ensemble and the Instrumental Applied Music program.

The committee was especially moved by Dr. Kang’s effort to help music students understand how their work can contribute to the health and well-being of others, particularly people facing memory loss. Dr. Kang writes, “I constantly remind my students of the power of music and its effects on humanity. A project that I am particularly proud of is my students’ collaboration with Northwestern Memorial Hospital and LUMA’s rehabilitation program for early Alzheimer patients and their caregivers.” Dr. Kang is continuing this important work by coordinating students’ performances at a memory care facility this semester as well. She makes an extraordinary impact on her students before and after graduation, all while maintaining a formidable career as a professional pianist and engaging in a range of other kinds of university service alongside her colleagues.



For these reasons and many others, we are very proud to recognize Dr. Kang as one of the recipients of the 2024 Edwin T. and Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence.

Michael J. Schumacher - 2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence Top Award

Congratulations to **Dr. Michael J. Schumacher** for being named one of the 2024 winners of the Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence. The award committee was impressed by Dr. Schumacher's expansive portfolio of courses, his commitment to mentoring, and his involvement with student organizations. Dr. Schumacher holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Loyola University Chicago, an M.S. in Politics & Government from Illinois State University, and B.S. degrees in both Politics & Government and History from Illinois State. He has taught at Loyola since 2020, first as an Instructor in the Department of Political Science (2020-23), and currently as a Lecturer in the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology. He was designated a Sujack Master Teacher in 2023, received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools in 2021, and has been nominated for Loyola's "Ignatius Loyola Award for Excellence in Teaching" in each of the past four years.

Since the fall of 2021, Dr. Schumacher has taught ten different courses in Loyola's Political Science and Criminal Justice departments ranging from Introductory Political Theory to advanced topics like "Terrorism" and "International Criminal Justice." The Committee was impressed by Dr. Schumacher's student evaluations, which were uniformly high despite a substantial teaching load with three and sometimes four different courses each semester. Students praised his compact and accessible explanations of intricate concepts, his commitment to supporting diverse political opinions in the classroom, and a rapport that made it easy for students to share their own ideas and arguments.

Over the past three years, Dr. Schumacher has been an active mentor for undergraduates engaged in research and independent study. Since 2021 he has supervised nine different students working on projects at the intersection of politics and extremism. Their research addresses timely subjects like police involvement in political violence, the role played by social media and online forums in radicalization, and how historical anti-colonial rhetoric informs modern attempts to justify terrorism. These projects have all been presented by students at the local, regional, and national levels. One student-led project was recently published in a scholarly journal, while a second is currently in review.



Dr. Schumacher's commitment to *Cura Personalis* extends beyond teaching and mentorship, to involvement with undergraduate organizations and service to the university community. He is faculty advisor for the Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority and Beta Theta Pi fraternity, and serves as the Civil Academic Discourse Scholar through the Faculty Center for Ignation Pedagogy. The Sujack Teaching Award Committee is very happy to recognize Dr. Schumacher as one of the recipients of the 2024 Edwin T. and Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence.

Catherine Nichols - 2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence – Master Teacher

We extend warm congratulations to **Dr. Catherine Nichols** on her selection as a 2024 Master Teacher. Dr. Nichols holds a B.A. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin and an M.A. in Museum Anthropology and a Ph.D. in Sociocultural Anthropology from Arizona State University. She has taught at Loyola since 2014, and she is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Anthropology and Museum Studies in the Department of Anthropology. From her teaching to her outside-of-the-classroom mentorship, Dr. Nichols demonstrates compelling pedagogical passion and commitment. Dr. Nichols has helmed many classes at Loyola; some recent examples are Globalization and Local Cultures, Museum Cultures, Anthropology of Museums, Museum and Material Culture Research, a digital humanities capstone course, and the Museum Studies Internship course. She has also collaborated with undergraduate students on writing for publication, in addition to mentoring her students in miscellaneous other ways.

As evidenced by her scholarship on pedagogy, Dr. Nichols is committed to inquiry-driven learning. She writes, “I prioritize research and applied professional experiences for my students (majority undergraduates) and teach courses in museum object-based research methods, museum practice, museum ethnography, professionalism/career development, and globalization. I incorporate tools and methods from the digital humanities to provide active learning opportunities to my students.” The committee also especially valued Dr. Nichols’ attention to the varied ways that people learn and the educational barriers that many students face. She reflects, “Students have different abilities and are deserving of a learning environment that not only accommodates but values those differences. I embrace flexible deadlines, multiple assessment formats, and self-reflection. I am especially attentive to the concerns of students who have experienced marginalization within an educational system that places value on spoken contributions and formal writing. I actively seek to create a classroom that welcomes multiple ways-of-knowing, lived experiences, and forms of participation.”



It was clear to the committee that Dr. Nichols teaches with respect for the importance of *cura personalis*, care for the whole person. Dr. Nichols has achieved all of these pedagogical accomplishments alongside a highly active career as a researcher, for which was recognized with a Sujack Research Excellence Award as a Master Researcher in 2022. Dr. Nichols has distinguished herself as an immensely thoughtful and thorough educator, and we are proud to celebrate her work today with being honored as one of the recipients of the 2023 Sujack Master Teacher Awards.

Jennifer Parks - 2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeane F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence – Master Teacher

We are delighted to honor **Dr. Jennifer Parks** as a 2024 Sujack Master Teacher. Dr. Parks is a Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Minor in Bioethics, she has taught at Loyola since 1997. She holds a B.A. in English and Philosophy and a Master's Degree in Philosophy from Queen's University, as well as a Ph.D. in Philosophy from McMaster University. Dr. Parks struck our committee as an immensely dynamic and engaging teacher/mentor.

Some courses that Dr. Parks has taught (or occasionally co-taught) include Bioethics Capstone: Reproduction & Reproductive Technologies, Critical Approaches to Bioethics, Bioethics Capstone: Illness, Aging, Dying & Death, Health Care Ethics, the John Grant Seminar in Health Care Ethics, and Bioethics and Media. Dr. Parks' excellent course evaluations and the enthusiasm of her student nominator speak to her dedicated teaching. Dr. Parks' submitted materials also offered concrete examples of the admirable adaptability of her pedagogy. She writes of her Health Care Ethics course, "As new problems arise in bioethics (e.g. the Dobbs decision; changes to medical aid in dying laws) I have significantly changed the structure and content of my class. For example, during the Covid pandemic I completely altered my syllabus to address the serious clinical and public health issues that we were facing. I had experts in public health join my class by Zoom to share their experiences and concerns with students." Her student nominator adds: "[S]he has opened up her students' eyes to the realities of the world . . ."

Dr. Parks is also clearly a generous mentor outside the classroom. She has, for instance, been highly successful in assisting students in applying for internal and external fellowships, grants, and other awards, from the Provost Fellowship to the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) student diversity fellowship to the Hank Center for Catholic Intellectual Heritage Grant. She is also a faculty advisor for the Loyola Bioethics Bowl, the Loyola Ethics Bowl, the Femme International LUC Student Ambassadors organization, and the EmpowHER Health Sciences organization.



In addition, she has served on various committees with direct impact on the undergraduate experience. From her achievements in the classroom to the myriad ways that she engages students beyond it, Dr. Parks has distinguished herself as a fantastic educator while continuing her own prolific professional development in the area of bioethics. The Sujack Award Committee is proud to acknowledge Dr. Parks' excellent teaching and commitment to her students, by naming her a 2024 Sujack Master Teacher.

Polina Pine - 2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeanne F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence – Master Teacher

Dr. Polina Pine is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Molecular Biochemistry, a Master's in Chemistry, and a Ph.D. in Nanotechnology from Technion, Israel Institute of Technology. Dr. Pine joined Loyola's faculty in 2014 and has served the university through teaching and research mentorship.

Dr. Pine has a strong record of teaching excellence and student mentorship. She has received the St. Ignatius Loyola Award for Excellence in Teaching and has been nominated for the Ignatian Pedagogy Center Award for Excellence in Teaching Freshmen and the Ignatian Pedagogy Center Hayes Mentoring Award. Pine demonstrates great versatility in her teaching record, teaching on diverse topics for Chemistry and Biochemistry graduate students, majors, and non-majors. As a testament to her effectiveness, students have successfully petitioned the Department to have Dr. Pine assigned to courses including, General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, and Biochemistry. Dr. Pine also goes above and beyond through her mentorship of Loyola students. As non-tenure track faculty, she is not required to engage in research or advising, yet she engages in this work frequently. Dr. Pine has served as a research mentor for five undergraduate students, including two Mulcahy Fellowship students. She has also published and presented internationally with her students in the field of pedagogy and education.

In her statement, Dr. Pine recalls an example of her innovative teaching, "The use of relevant and contemporary examples, like the poisoning of Alexei Navalny by nerve agent Novichok, which happen to be a family of well-known irreversible inhibitors and the subsequent treatment by an antidote, brings the subject matter to life and encourages students to appreciate the broader societal impact of their scientific knowledge." Dr. Pine's teaching has inspired her students to further consider real-world applications of their scientific knowledge and to integrate Jesuit values into the coursework.



Dr. Pine demonstrates great skill in motivating her students to succeed, while promoting community and development of empathy for one another. An excerpt from Dr. Pine's nominations highlights the care that she demonstrates for her students, both in and outside the classroom:

"Her transformative style makes challenging subjects like Organic chemistry and Biochemistry accessible... She fosters an inquisitive and positive learning environment in class that not only allows students to ask questions freely and get their questions answered but also encourages them to participate and look forward to class every week... Perhaps the most unique and impactful method of her pedagogy is how she actively promotes interpersonal relationships among classmates. This allows students to recognize different methods of learning and ways of thinking about a particular topic, thereby transforming fellow classmates into valuable resources... Dr. Pine also creates genuine connection with students on a personal level and validates their struggles and provides encouragement especially when they may be discouraged with their performance. Her classes are challenging enough that they encourage students to work outside their comfort zone and yet the learning environment she fosters allows students to grow."

This final sentence highlights an accomplishment that many educators aspire to, that is to challenge our students, while fostering growth. This balance is difficult to attain and exemplifies why we are so proud to recognize Dr. Pine with a 2024 Sujack Master Teacher Award.

Sherrie Weller - 2024 Edwin T. & Vivijeane F. Sujack Award for Teaching Excellence – Master Teacher

The Sujack Teaching Award committee is excited to celebrate **Ms. Sherrie Weller** as a Master Teacher. Professor Weller has taught at Loyola since 2003, and she is now a Senior Lecturer in English. She served as Loyola's Writing Program Director from 2014 to 2022. Professor Weller holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Marquette University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Minnesota. Professor Weller's materials—including but not limited to her excellent course evaluations—tell the story of an intuitive and personally invested teacher and mentor whose impact on undergraduate students is characterized by both breadth and depth.

Some courses that Professor Weller has taught recently include Interpreting Literature, Creative Nonfiction, Advanced Creative Nonfiction, Writing Responsibly, Women in Literature, Advanced Writing: Feminist Rhetoric, etc. Her student nominator shares the following about her Women in Literature course:



“[E]ach semester, [Professor Weller] modifies the class in small ways to ensure that she is tailoring the course to her students’ needs.” The student added: “She constantly goes the extra mile to ensure that her students learn and feel comfortable.” Professor Weller reflects thoughtfully and rigorously on her teaching goals and achievements: “I want students to be inspired and challenged, to make strides, to take risks, to make mistakes, to develop practical and transferable critical thinking and writing skills, to grow in some way, to surprise themselves. I’m not always successful, but when I am, I see amazing transformations in students—in their work, in their widened curiosity, their deepened perspective on the world around them, in themselves.” She adds that she believes that some of her key contributions to the classroom include her “pedagogy of relationship, development of an inclusive community, and infectious enthusiasm for whatever [she is] teaching.”

While continuing her own impressive work as a writer, Professor Weller has also engaged undergraduates in inspiring ways outside the classroom, from serving as Dual-Degree English-Education Undergraduate Faculty Advisor to creating and moderating the Women’s Memoir Book Club that sprang from her Women in Literature course to acting as faculty advisor for the Invincible Comics Club. For the reasons that we have indicated here and many others, we are proud to recognize Professor Sherrie Weller as a 2024 Sujack Master Teacher.

Alexandru Grigorescu - 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence Top Award

Dr. Alexandru Grigorescu is a Professor in the department of Political Science. His specialty area is International Relations and he is recognized with a Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence.

We honor **Dr. Alexandru Grigorescu**, Professor of Political Science, for his work on international institutions. In particular we recognize his Oxford University Press book: “Restraining Power Through Institutions: A Unifying Theme for Domestic and International Politics.” The book builds on two of Professor Grigorescu’s previous books that consider the long-term evolution of international political institutions. Grigorescu draws compelling analogies between international and domestic institutions, offering the key insight that state and global institutions have developed along substantially different timelines. Thus, to understand the similarities between national and international politics, we have to compare relatively recent changes in global institutions to changes in national institutions that stretch back over centuries. The book has already been nominated for several awards. Impressively, while finishing this book, Professor Grigorescu completed *another* book manuscript, recently published by Cambridge, titled “Lockean



Liberalism in International Relations.” For these impressive accomplishments, we are thrilled to recognize Dr. Grigorescu with the 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence.

Don Stemen - 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence Top Award

Dr. Don Stemen is a Professor in the department of Criminal Justice and Criminology. He is also the Co-Director of the Center for Criminal Justice, and he is recognized with a Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence.

Dr. Don Stemen, Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology is honored for his work to bring data-driven decision making to the field of prosecution. Professor Stemen has published several professional and peer reviewed articles over the past year. However, his most notable impact has been to bring his research prowess “into the field” to improve the criminal justice system. Supported by a series of substantial grants from Microsoft and the MacArthur foundation, Professor Stemen worked with prosecutors’ offices to improve data access and analytic capacity, examine racial and ethnic disparities in prosecutorial outcomes, and bring about changes in how prosecutors use data to drive decision making. The project produced an array of data dashboards that allow the public and legal professionals to identify patterns in prosecutorial decisions. The impact of Professor Stemen’s efforts are reflected in the fact that he has been invited to speak to numerous high-profile legal organizations about his efforts, and about the importance of leveraging data to ensure that the criminal justice system operates in an evenhanded fashion. For these impressive successes, we are thrilled to recognize Dr. Stemen with the 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence.

Emily Cain- 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence– Master Researcher

We recognize **Dr. Emily Cain**, Associate Professor in the Department of Theology, for her research on the history of Christianity. First of all, we recognize her 2023 Oxford University Press book: “Mirrors of the Divine: Late Ancient Christianity and the Vision of God.” In this well-reviewed book, Dr. Cain studies a variety of ancient views on seeing God, situating them in a historical context and analyzing the authors’ theological and philosophical objectives. She relates her findings to contemporary interdisciplinary concerns such as the study of gender, body, and disability within late antiquity. As the reviewers have made it clear, this work marks a significant and original contribution to scholarly discourse. In addition to publishing this book, in 2023 Dr. Cain has mentored an Undergraduate Summer Research Experience Fellowship for two students. The fellowship project was titled: “Imagined Women in Christian Late Antiquity.” She also received a Joan and Bill Hank Center grant for a course proposal on “Lost Women of the Catholic Imagination.” For these contributions, we are delighted to name Dr. Cain a 2024 Sujack Master Researcher.



Perla Gámez - 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence– Master Researcher

We recognize **Dr. Perla Gámez**, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology, for her research on Spanish-speaking Latinos' Early Language Environments and Dual Language Development. To that end, Dr. Gámez was awarded a grant from the National Institute of Health that will provide \$436,088 to continue her research focused on improving the education of young bilingual children. This grant will enable Dr. Gámez to establish whether and how different language input sources and types contribute uniquely to bilingual children's language outcomes, illuminating the circumstances and the mechanisms by which Spanish-English bilingual experience affects language outcome. The NIH grant will also provide the opportunity for Dr. Gámez to engage undergraduate students in a high impact learning experience. In addition to qualifying for the NIH grant, in 2023 Dr. Gámez published two research articles in top-tier academic journals. For these contributions, we are delighted to name Dr. Gámez a 2024 Sujack Master Researcher.

Nan Miles Xi - 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence– Master Researcher

We recognize **Dr. Nan Miles Xi**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, for his research in the development and application of machine learning and statistical methods for various types of biological and medical data. Consistent with his highly collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, Dr. Xi has engaged in multiple research projects that span from basic to clinical science and relate to multiple disciplines including transcriptomics, lung disease and cancer biology. Dr. Xi had an incredibly productive year in 2023, serving as co-author on 4 publications. Several of these papers address important theoretical and statistical considerations in the analysis of data obtained from large-scale RNA sequencing experiments, which apply state-of-the-art technology to assess the gene expression landscape of thousands of individual cells from different tissues. In other published work, Dr. Xi applied machine learning tools that use clinical and demographic data to predict outcomes for tongue cancer patients, which can be used to inform treatment decisions. As further demonstration of his research contributions, Dr. Xi was named as co-PI on an NIH RO1 grant, which is one of the most prestigious grants awarded in the field of biomedical sciences. Through this award, Dr. Xi will work in collaboration with Dr. Hong-Long Ji at Loyola's Stritch School of Medicine to investigate stem cell repair of lung disorders. For these many contributions, we are delighted to name Dr. Xi a Sujack Master Researcher.

Weiming Yu - 2024 Sujack Family Award for Faculty Research Excellence– Master Researcher

Dr. Weiming Yu, Associate Professor of Biology, is honored for his work uncovering the molecular mechanisms governing the development of the auditory system.



Dr. Yu's research focuses on the role of the Eph and ephrin signaling molecules in the assembly of the neuronal circuits that allow for discrimination of different sound frequencies. In addition to establishing fundamental principles of developmental neuroscience, this work has important clinical implications for people with auditory dysfunctions. In 2023, Dr. Yu published an invited review article that draws extensively on his research findings and integrates these with other seminal findings in the field. This paper was published in *Developmental Dynamics*, a highly respected journal within the field of developmental biology. In addition, Dr. Yu was awarded a grant from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders that will provide \$436,500 over three years to continue his research on auditory system development. For these contributions, we honor Dr. Yu as a Sujack Master Researcher.





Acknowledgements

Thank you to the 2024 Sujack Teaching and Research Award selection committee members listed below for their efforts on helping to choose this year's winners:

2024 Sujack Teaching committee members

Kelly Howe, Fine and Performing Arts, Committee Chairperson

Margaret Guy, Psychology

Robert McNees, Physics

Joshua Jones, student member, Biology major

Valerie Smith, student member, Biology major

2024 Sujack Research committee members

Daniel Cavanaugh, Biology, Committee Chairperson

Olegs Andrejevs, Theology

David Doherty, Political Science

Additional thanks to Amanda Dennis in the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office for her work on compiling the videos submitted by our students who nominated our faculty teaching award winners.

Finally, we want to show our appreciation and gratitude to the Sujack family members Don and Peg Sujack, Steve and Reenie Sujack, Greg and Kate Sujack and Julie Sujack for their continued support of the annual Edwin T. and Vivijeanne F. Sujack awards. We are honored to have some of your family joining us this evening and look forward to celebrating again with you all again next year.

