

## ***FAQ: What Does it Mean to be “On Leave”?***

**What does “on leave” mean?** Once every few years, faculty members are afforded the opportunity to take time off from teaching and other college responsibilities in order to pursue their research. Research and writing are a big part of what we do and a vital component of our professional portfolio. If we can’t research, we can’t publish. And if we don’t publish, we won’t get promoted.

**But I thought Barnard Professors enjoyed their classes:** We do and I certainly enjoy discussing political science and international affairs, as well as advising students. That’s part of the problem – with so much chatting, not much research gets done during a normal semester!

**What will you be doing?** I have a fellowship with the Open Society Institute under its “Understanding Authoritarianism” initiative to study the politics of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. I will be traveling to Central Asia to conduct fieldwork and will present my findings to other researchers and policymakers in the US and Europe.

**When does the leave start?** For students, it will be effective on Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> 2009, Commencement Day.

**So what exactly does this mean for students?** Effectively, it means that I will not be an active member of the Department from Fall 2009 to Spring 2010. I will not be teaching any classes, nor will I attend college events. In short, I will not be available.

**What about advising?** No. That’s just as much part of my workload as teaching and academic matters. If you are an advisee, please see Nell Dillon-Ermers in the Political Science Department Office (Lehman 417-A) who will reassign you a new advisor for the academic year.

**But this will just take 5 or 10 minutes!** The problem is that once something is scheduled for ten minutes, I have to prepare and then restart whatever I was in the middle of doing before. Pretty soon, a few minutes might become an hour and sometimes even the better part of the day. Also, an absolute “no contact” policy does not discriminate in terms of favoring one student over another.

**Will you participate in campus functions or moderate events?** No.

**Will you respond to e-mails?** Not likely, unless some exceptional circumstance happens. Please see the procedures for requesting recommendations.

**What if I have an “Incomplete”?** No, I will not read it. You have had ample warning about my availability.

**When will you be reachable again?** At the earliest, the first week of July 2010, although I still might be traveling and might take a few days to respond.

**But what do I do if I need a recommendation?** Obviously, we need to find some fair procedure to balance your needs and mine. Here is the deal. **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS** carefully before contacting me. They are not negotiable:

- I WILL NOT write any recommendations for “study-abroad programs.”
- I WILL NOT write any recommendations for jobs or internships (for the academic year), whether they are paid or unpaid.
- Given my busy travel schedule, you should avoid listing me as an active reference for Fall 2009-Spring 2010 (although you may do so in the future).
- I WILL NOT write any kind of future recommendation, one that is not immediately needed this year and will be put on file.

I WILL write only one type of recommendation: for professional or graduate study (law school, graduate school, medical school etc.). I will do so provided that you meet following three criteria:

1. You have taken at least one class (preferably 2) and received at least an “A-”.
2. You have informed me by email (writing “PROFESSIONAL REC” in the subject heading on or before October 1, 2009.
3. You have dropped off ALL the necessary paperwork in my mailbox in a single folder (including your forms, CV, signed waiver, draft of personal statement, transcript copy) and included an addressed envelope for each rec.

I will send out all recommendations sometime during October 2009. If this is too late for you, then you must approach me by May 19th for a pre-summer recommendation. I will not write any other recs from June 2009 to July 2010 bar the October 2009 batch detailed above.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If I do not get your request by email before October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, I will not write recommendations for the rest of the semester. If you decide to apply to schools at the last minute, you must approach someone else for your letter!