



2011 - 2012 FOUNDING FACULTY

HUMANITIES:

Dr. Kate Kokontis (*Social Studies*) earned a B.A. in Theatre Studies and Art at Yale University (2004) and a Ph.D. in Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (2011). Performance Studies combines the social sciences and art in an interdisciplinary approach to the humanities. Her research interest is in using ethnography and cultural geography to study ways in which U.S. history is represented, particularly through the lens of critical race theory. Kate did much of her dissertation research in New Orleans, and fell in love with the city's rich cultural heritage. She is committed to helping high school students "find ways in which their own experiences are situated in larger historical contexts."

Dr. Thomas "Spree" MacDonald (*English*) earned a B.S. in Secondary English Education at Northern Michigan University (2001), an M.A. in International Affairs (2006) and a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Arts (2010), both from Ohio University. He served in the Peace Corps in South Africa from 2002-2004 and also taught in the national Upward Bound Program. His research interests are focused on African and African American literature and cultural history. Tom has worked in the *America Reads* program and has taught both remedial and Advanced Placement English students. He has a "passion for developing students' abilities to think and communicate critically and cross-culturally." Tom's family (wife Tsibishi and two young daughters) are looking forward to moving to New Orleans.

Dr. Aaron Nitzkin (*World Languages*) earned a B.A. in Russian Language and Literature from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (1991) and a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Linguistics from Tulane University (2008). He is conversant in Russian, Swedish, Mandarin Chinese, Kiswahili, French, Old English and two Mayan languages (Yucatec and Kaqchikel). Aaron is interested in the nature and function of meanings in linguistics, as well as cognitive science, anthropology, philosophy and physics. He has been an adjunct and visiting professor at Tulane University for five years and has also taught at UNO and California Polytechnic University. He has studied classical sitar in India and is a semi-professional jazz sitar player, sitting in with numerous well-known groups around town over the past twenty years.

SCIENCES:

Ms. Jennie Guidry (*Mathematics*) graduated from the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts in Natchitoches, LA. She earned a B.S. in Secondary Mathematics Education (2001) and an M.A. in Gifted and Talented Education (2006), both from Louisiana State University. She was the math department chair at St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge. While at LSU, she ran a summer program for at-risk incoming freshmen and tutored students with learning disabilities. Jennie brings to NOCCA a strong background in one-to-one laptop teaching, curriculum differentiation, and school certification. She states that "students who are already so passionate about their artistic endeavors deserve a teacher who brings commensurate energy to their math curriculum." Jennie's husband, John, is a New Orleans native.

Dr. Dan Webre (*Science*) earned a B.S. in Biochemistry at Duke University (1994) and a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Princeton University (2005). In addition, he has pursued an interest in writing through both an M.A. in English Literature (2008) and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing (2010) from McNeese State University. He has developed several courses in both introductory sciences and introduction to academic writing at area institutions, including Xavier University, McNeese State University, Baton Rouge Community College and River Parishes Community College. Dan is an avid environmentalist and hopes to use this passion to help students become scientifically empowered. He states that his personal journeys studying both science and creative writing have led him to "predicate science teaching upon the idea that art is vital to our souls."