

Final report: STINT Teaching Sabbatical at Amherst College, MA, Fall 2019  
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### **Preparation and planning**

Upon acceptance to the STINT Teaching Sabbatical program I was provided with two contact persons at my host institution Amherst College: one administrative contact, Janet Tobin, Associate Provost and the local coordinator for the STINT Teaching Sabbatical program, and one academic contact, Amrita Basu, Professor of Political Science, and Sexuality, Women's and Gender Studies and Chair of Sexuality, Women's and Gender Studies (SWAGS). SWAGS was my host department during my stay at Amherst. Immediately after my first contact with Janet and Amrita, I was also put in contact with the Department coordinator for SWAGS, Stephanie Orion, who became my main contact during preparation and planning for my stay at Amherst College. Stephanie was incredibly helpful with everything from practical things at the college to compiling a list of preschools in the area and giving me links to where I might look for housing. In contrast to previous STINT-fellows at Amherst College (judging from their reports), I had very little contact with Janet during my stay.

I was immediately informed by Janet that STINT-fellows at Amherst College teach one course and may participate fully in faculty activities. I discussed different course options with Amrita who expressed a preference from the department for a course on feminist philosophy. I then rather quickly had to come up with a brief course proposal for approval by the faculty. Initially we had planned for the course to be an upper level course but since SWAGS would be offering only very few introductory courses during the time of my visit, Amrita suggested that the course instead would be offered as a 200-level course, to which I had no objection. After the title and level of my course was settled I started preparing the content and reading list. I was happy and slightly surprised to learn that the library at Amherst College provides the service of securing copyright, scanning and uploading all readings for a course to the course management and learning platform Moodle. All I had to do was provide the course reserves associate at the library, Bridget Mientka, with the reading list for the course and she would make the readings available on Moodle. Bridget was also very helpful throughout the semester when I changed and added readings to the course syllabus.

My planning trip to Amherst took place already the first week of March and my itinerary for the week was absolutely flawlessly coordinated by Stephanie Orion, who also took me for a day trip to Northampton during the week. During the planning week I met with the Office of Human Resources to prepare for visa applications for me and my accompanying family members. I also met with SWAGS faculty members, both individually and for a joint dinner and they were all very welcoming and helpful. I audited several SWAGS classes in order to get an idea of teaching style and student participation and interaction. I also had the opportunity to discuss one of my publications with one group of students who had read it carefully and prepared questions. One of my main goals for the planning trip was to find a preschool for my child and after having visited three different schools we settled for Spring Street Preschool, located right next to the college campus, which turned out to be an excellent choice. During the planning trip we also found a house for our stay, located about a 15-minute walk from campus and the town center. Even though we found a place walking distance from the college, we decided to rent a car for the entire stay and this is something I would highly recommend, at least for STINT-fellows bringing their

families. It not only made everyday life much easier than it would have been without immediate access to a car, but also made it possible for us to easily take day and weekend trips to surrounding areas. Amherst is located in Western Massachusetts in the Pioneer Valley and the surroundings are absolutely gorgeous. Having been a graduate student at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, not very far from Amherst, I was already before my stay at Amherst College quite familiar with the area and I had visited Amherst a couple of times in the past. Prior to my stay as a STINT-fellow I was slightly worried that I would find the town very small (as it is very small!) but I found that it was a lovely place to live with lots of events and a rich cultural life also outside of Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

In terms of preparation and planning I also want to mention the importance of the full day STINT-seminar in Stockholm in February, which offered the opportunity to hear presentations from STINT-fellows who had just come back from their teaching sabbaticals. It was incredibly valuable for me to meet with the previous STINT-fellow at Amherst College, who shared his experience and also gave me some leads on possible housing in Amherst.

### **Tasks and responsibilities**

My main task and responsibility during my semester at Amherst College was to develop and teach the course “Introduction to Feminist Philosophy: Subjectivity, Embodiment, and Situatedness” (SWAG260, cross listed with Philosophy as PHIL260). This was in fact my only required task and for the rest it was really up to me what I wanted to do with my time at the college. (Full time faculty at Amherst normally teach two courses per semester.) The course I prepared brought together different strands of my previous work and I designed it so that it could form the basis for developing a book manuscript. This turned out to be a good decision as it gave me the opportunity to not only revisit a lot of material I had worked on in the past but also, and perhaps more importantly, to discuss this material with students with little or no background in feminist philosophy. They often gave me completely new perspectives on the course material and helped me think about the broader relevance of the philosophical questions we discussed.

The task of developing and teaching the course was carried out individually. Stephanie provided me with a selection of syllabi for previous SWAGS courses which were very helpful as I developed my own course and syllabus. Based on reports from previous STINT-fellows at Amherst, I had the understanding that forms of teaching and responsibilities differed, some fellows had developed and taught their own courses while others had participated in co-teaching. In my first email to Janet and Amrita, I expressed that I was open to their ideas and plans for what they wished for me to contribute. The immediate response from Janet was that STINT-fellows teach one course at Amherst College during their stay. While that suited me fine and certainly furthered my work on a book manuscript, I think in retrospect that in terms of teaching and pedagogical development, which is indeed the specific focus of the STINT Teaching Sabbatical Program, both I and my host institution as well as my home institution at Stockholm University might in fact have benefited more if I during my STINT-fellowship at Amherst had participated in actual collaboration on teaching practices and pedagogical issues. While co-teaching perhaps requires more work for the parties involved, it might also be incredibly rewarding. I did talk about teaching and pedagogy with colleagues at the college, mainly with other visiting faculty members and with new faculty whom I got to know during the start of semester orientation days, but not in any organized form. We shared our experiences of being *new* to the Amherst community and to the particular student population of Amherst College. During the semester there was one SWAGS department meeting when we discussed pedagogy and shared best practice, which was terrific. Also, before the beginning of the semester I participated

in a “Conversation on teaching” organized by the Center for Teaching and Learning, in the form of a lunch working session with a faculty panel on teaching at Amherst College, sharing of syllabi, experience and expectations. The Center for Teaching and Learning also organized the Provost’s Retreat on Teaching and Learning, a full day of talks and discussion on the theme of “Belonging in a Digital World” that took place in conjunction with the new faculty orientation days. All this was great. However, coming from a department at Stockholm University, the Division for Gender Studies, where we work very actively with pedagogical development and training for faculty, through for instance a half-day workshop on a specific topic related to teaching and two half-day meetings on ongoing courses each semester, monthly pedagogical lunches, and the pedagogical competence project “Critical Friends” where we work together in smaller groups with constructive feedback on colleagues’ teaching, I have to say that it was quite a change for me not to participate in regular work on pedagogical issues with colleagues at the same department and in the same discipline.

Like at many American colleges and universities, the semester at Amherst College begins with a two-week add-drop period, giving students the possibility of testing out different courses before making a final decision of their semester schedule. At Amherst this period is referred to as the “shopping period” and students are “shopping” for courses. While I in fact very much like the idea of the add-drop period, I think describing it in terms of shopping is actually rather disturbing in so far as it signals a consumerism and commodification of education that I believe goes completely against the grain of the liberal arts tradition and, indeed, what education and learning should be. I was told by several faculty members that I should not be surprised nor take it personally if students during the first two weeks would drop in late for class or leave class early without notification since they are shopping around and probably have a large number of courses they’re considering and deciding between. One thing that I learned from the experience of the shopping period is to have confidence in the idea of the course and not compromise it. I lost some students, I gained some and I ended up with a group that I was very happy with and who were all very enthusiastic about the course. At the end of the add-drop period I had seven students in my class which turned out to be a great number and allowed me to really engage with the individual work of each student. I got to know a few of them quite well and saw them also regularly during weekly office hours. One of my students came to see me every week outside of class to continue discussion on what we had covered in the classroom or to talk about related readings, and I worked closely with her on her application to graduate school.

Two of my students were enrolled at other institutions in the Five College Consortium that Amherst College is part of together with Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, all of them geographically located in close proximity to each other. The five colleges share use of educational resources so that students who are enrolled at one of the schools have access to courses offered also at the other five-college institutions.

### **Activities during the Teaching Sabbatical**

My activities at the college started the week before the beginning of classes with three days of orientation for all new faculty, including both new tenure track faculty and short-term visiting faculty/fellows. Orientation days were incredibly intense: apart from welcoming remarks by the president of the college Biddy Martin and provost Catherine Epstein, the program included a discussion about the first day of the semester, a panel with three tenure-track faculty sharing their experiences as once newcomers, information about Title IX, presentations by representatives from the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Center for Community Engagement, the library, the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, and a tour of the campus. Orientation days also included a

dinosaur-themed welcome event for new faculty and their families with dinner and a tour of the Beneski Museum of Natural History at the Amherst College campus. While orientation days definitely provided lots of useful information, their main benefit (at least for me) was the opportunity to meet other new faculty at the college. Some of the people I met during orientation days became good friends that I and my family socialized with during the course of the semester. One great advantage was also meeting people in other departments and disciplines than my own, as this provided me with perspectives on different practices at different departments.

Apart from the teaching of my course I tried to take advantage of the many opportunities offered at Amherst College in terms of events, lectures and seminars. For instance, I was incredibly happy and grateful to be able to attend a conversation between Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Amherst College President Biddy Martin. This was really a once in a lifetime opportunity that I will treasure for life. I also took part, though as a spectator, in *Convocation*, the formal opening of the school year.

I benefited greatly from participating in activities organized by the Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI), located in the Robert Frost library at Amherst College, for instance the weekly CHI Salons which took the form of panel discussions and talks on different topics, poetry readings and music performances by both Amherst faculty as well as invited guests. The CHI Salons were very well attended by both faculty and students and a terrific opportunity to meet people in the Amherst community.

The CHI also offered an informal drop-in writing space each week, where faculty could sit and write in the same space with others. The purpose of such write-on-site groups is to build in regular writing time and accountability for writing in otherwise busy schedules and it quite simply means you show up at a designated time and place, settle in and work for whatever time period you have committed to yourself. I already had positive previous experience with write-on-site groups from different academic environments – in graduate school we called them dissertation boot-camp – and have found that they are incredibly valuable in terms of protecting dedicated writing time and maintaining a regular writing practice, so I was very happy to have this opportunity also at Amherst College and I participated in the group at the CHI on a regular basis.

During my stay I was also part of an application to the CHI for establishing a working group on the theme of feminist thought, initiated and coordinated by Professors Amrita Basu and Jen Manion in SWAGS. The application was successful and I participated in one seminar with the group, when we had all read some current work on transgender/feminisms. The seminar only took place late in the fall and unfortunately, as my visit at Amherst came to an end, I was unable to participate in the continuation of the series. I highly enjoyed the discussion in the group, perhaps particularly since there was no regular higher research seminar in SWAGS. As my course was cross listed with Philosophy, I was also very generously invited to events organized by the Philosophy department and I participated in a seminar series with invited guests that ran throughout the semester. I further attended the Annual Amherst Lecture in Philosophy presented by Professor Daniel Dennett. During the semester I also took part in some of the events organized by the Five College Women's Studies Resource Center and engaged with some of the visiting scholars at the Center. Further, I was thrilled to be invited to participate in a meeting with the Eileen O'Neill Workshop for Women in Philosophy, a regular gathering of women in philosophy, from graduate students to senior scholars, in the area. The workshop offers "a place for women to think without fear or apology, and with pride in their work" (from the invitation). It took place at the home of Vanessa de Harven, Professor of Philosophy at UMass and included a presentation by one of the Ph.D.-candidates at the UMass Philosophy Department followed by dinner.

Another really magnificent resource at Amherst College is the Mead Art Museum that holds an extensive collection of art. In addition to the galleries which are open and free to the public, the Mead also has study rooms and hosts class visits. For one session of my course I worked together with Emily Potter-Ndiaye, Head of Education and Curator of Academic Programs at the Mead, to put together a class, bringing together philosophical work on normativity and processes of naturalization of bodies with some art work from the Mead together with the students own snapshots illustrating such processes in everyday life.

Outside of academic events, I was also glad for the opportunity to attend Amherst College Football games with my family. We went to the home games and really enjoyed the small intimate setting of the football field. We also travelled to Williamstown to see Amherst play their arch rival Williams College and spent a lovely evening with the STINT-fellow at Williams and his family. Even though the Amherst football team did quite poorly throughout the season, we thoroughly enjoyed watching them play and cheering them on.

### **Important lessons**

My time as a STINT-fellow at Amherst College has been valuable in many ways and has contributed to how I see myself as a teacher and researcher. Throughout the course of the semester I spent quite a lot of time thinking about questions concerning the teaching-research nexus. I find that discussions on the connection between teaching and research are often focused on how research can be brought into and inform teaching but rarely how teaching can be beneficial for research. During my semester at Amherst College I tried to consider the teaching-research nexus from the perspective of my teaching practice, thinking about how the ways in which I approach philosophical material in the classroom, introduce it and engage with it with students, come to inform and shape how I approach the material in research outside the classroom.

During my time at Amherst I also thought a great deal about the word excellence, the meaning(s) of that word and what it does to people and to an environment. Before my arrival I of course already knew that Amherst College is an elite institution, among the top institutions of higher education in the United States and ranked second among US liberal arts colleges (superseded only by Williams College), but I didn't have any real idea of how and to what extent the sense of exceptionality and excellence in different ways, for good and bad, infuse and form the environment of the college. Already during the (very informative and valuable) orientation days for new faculty before the beginning of the semester, I was struck by the strong presence of a sense of excellence and how this was conveyed throughout the presentations, which together seemed to form a string of different actors at the college talking about excellence – the excellence of Amherst College as an institution of teaching and learning, the excellence and exceptional potential of the students, and the excellence of the faculty. It is clear that Amherst College offers incredibly rich resources in terms of intellectual engagement and creativity and it was without a doubt a great privilege to teach there for a semester but it also raised many questions for me about the meaning of excellence, exceptionality and privilege that I continue thinking about. Students are well aware of how competitive Amherst is and they are also frequently reminded that they are excellent and of exceptional promise (and that this is unquestionably so since they are students at Amherst). It became very clear to me as I got to know the students in my class that students at Amherst College experienced a great amount of pressure and often imposter syndrome. This is of course not unique to Amherst students, but my sense was that the framing of their exceptional promise and excellence as self-evident, as unquestionable, as warranted by their acceptance to the school, in some sense reinforced their experience of insecurity and not

living up to unarticulated expectations. One of my students broke down in tears after getting a B for her mid-term grade and said she would literally do anything to get an A. After mid-term she came to see me every week outside of class and worked harder than I think I've ever seen a student work before. She improved enormously and grew more confident as we worked together but it was clear that she was under enormous stress.

I think perhaps one important lesson from my time as a STINT-fellow, or, rather, reminder is that one semester is a short period of time and even though I do think I did the most of my semester at Amherst, when it was time to leave I felt as if I had just got started. I agree with previous STINT-fellows who have said that it would have been fruitful to teach the same course a second time to be able to explore more fully the possibilities Amherst has to offer. Once I had arrived at Amherst and during the semester when I got a sense of available resources and when I had made connections with more people on campus, I thought of ideas that would have been valuable to try. While I did have much information about Amherst College, both from my contacts with SWAGS and from having read the reports from previous fellows, when I planned the course, the planning itself of course took place before I arrived at Amherst and in the setting of my home department at Stockholm University. The information I had about available resources and about the culture of teaching and learning at Amherst College before I arrived there, came to life and took on new meaning as I experienced the milieu throughout the semester. I think there's also a bit of an adjustment period in other respects, uprooting my child and coming to a new place for a semester was definitely a very exciting adventure but it was not always easy and took a lot of time and energy in itself.

### **Comparison between the host and the home institutions (in Sweden)**

Amherst College and Stockholm University are at first sight almost too different to compare. While Amherst College is a small private residential undergraduate liberal arts college with less than 2'000 students, Stockholm University is a large public university with both undergraduate and graduate education as well as several research institutions and with more than 30'000 students and 1'400 Ph.D.-students. At Amherst students are not only guaranteed housing for all four years of their college program but also required (with some exceptions) to live on campus. Students at Stockholm University are not guaranteed student housing (which is located off campus) and often struggle to find somewhere to live. The settings and conditions are very different but there are also similarities.

At Amherst College I experienced an enormous emphasis on faculty autonomy (though not always explicitly articulated as such). I was given full responsibility and freedom to develop and teach my course according to my own preferences, putting together my own syllabus and reading list, preparing lectures and classroom activities and coming up with suitable assignments and rubrics for assessment. Throughout the semester I also had the freedom to alter my syllabus and add or change required readings as we went along. This is quite different from practices at Stockholm University (and other Swedish institutions of higher education). While I do think faculty have a fair amount of autonomy at my home department at Stockholm University, in some respects there are definitely more regulations: reading lists must be approved by an Institutional board and made publicly available at least two months before the start of the course and course syllabi including course requirements and criteria for assessment (although excluding specific lecture plans) must be established and adopted by the faculty board, and constitute legally binding documents.

I experienced a major difference between SWAGS at Amherst College and the Division for Gender Studies at Stockholm University in terms of joint activities and daily work with colleagues

at the same department. There were SWAGS department meetings scheduled every other week but several of these were actually cancelled during the semester and there were also a couple of meetings I was advised not to attend as they would be dedicated to questions concerning hiring and personnel. Apart from at the few department meetings, I saw my colleagues in SWAGS rarely, only if we happened to run into each other at some event organized at the college or if we had made an appointment to meet. This was a huge difference from what I am used to at Stockholm University where in addition to department meetings we have a higher research seminar in gender studies meeting biweekly, pedagogical and theory lunches, workshops on teaching, and we meet for coffee and lunch together almost every day. At my home department we are also located in the same space with offices very close to each other so daily interaction is quite easy, whereas SWAGS faculty have their offices in different places around campus. (Many of them are also jointly appointed in SWAGS and an additional department or even appointed in a different department but teaching courses cross listed with SWAGS.) During my stay I was provided with an office in the library (located in what one of the staff members at the library referred to as the secret corridor!), which was great. I came to the office every day and really loved having the library close at hand. I also got the opportunity to talk quite a lot with some of the research fellows at the CHI, also located in the library.

Education at Amherst College is characterized by an open curriculum which means that students are free to define their own course of study, limited only to the requirements of their major. In some ways this is similar to the ways in which students at Stockholm University (and other Swedish universities) can put together their own degree combining free-standing courses, limited, again, only to the requirements of their major. One significant difference, however, is that students at Amherst have an assigned faculty advisor who guide them in putting together their curriculum, whereas students at Swedish universities are left to their own devices, with the possibility of seeing a university guidance counselor, and have to assume a greater responsibility for putting together their degree program. Students at Amherst typically take four semester long courses each semester, totaling 32 courses over the duration of the four-year college education leading up to a Bachelor of Arts degree. They must complete the requirements for at least one major field of study. The college offers 40 majors in the arts, sciences, social sciences and humanities and students also have the option of creating their own interdisciplinary major. Students have over 850 courses to choose from at Amherst College and several thousand at the Five College Consortium institutions combined.

One difference between the degree requirements for a B.A. in SWAGS at Amherst College and the equivalent in gender studies at Stockholm University that I found really interesting is that while students majoring in SWAGS are not required to write an undergraduate thesis, this constitutes a central part of a degree in gender studies at Stockholm University. Instead of writing a thesis, students majoring in SWAGS have the option of assembling a portfolio of three papers written in courses for the SWAGS major together with a reflective essay on these three papers and then discussing the portfolio and essay with members of the SWAGS department. I quite like the idea of having an option to an undergraduate thesis and would be curious to possibly explore what that might look like in a Swedish setting.

I found the students at Amherst College to be much more grade oriented than the students I teach at Stockholm University. My main contacts in SWAGS, Amrita Basu and Stephanie Orion, early on told me that students would most likely expect to get a letter grade for each individual assignment but also underlined that I did not have to meet this expectation. I decided not to, which I think was a good decision and it turned out the students also appreciated it. One student told me that not getting a grade for each assignment helped her focus on the content of the course. I scheduled office hours with my students at mid-semester and then towards the end of

the semester to check in, give them an assessment of how I thought they were doing and get some sense of how they experienced the course and their own work and contribution to the course. I also checked in with them throughout the semester and, as mentioned above, worked closely with them. After I had returned an assignment with comments I met with each student individually to talk about their work. Having these individual meetings with students throughout the semester had of course not been possible if there had been more students in my class. In retrospect I think I should have scheduled office hours with each student earlier in the semester as well to get a better sense of their expectations and give them a clearer sense of mine. The idea of actually scheduling office hours with students was entirely new to me but something I think is a good idea, and something I might try at my home department in courses with fewer students.

I did find the students at Amherst to be more catered to than students at Stockholm University, for good and bad. I do of course think students at any educational institution should expect some amount of service to help them through their education but I also think this can go too far and this is something we discuss quite a bit at my home institution. While the service of making all course readings available on Moodle is something that I greatly appreciated and that facilitated my work immensely, I am not so sure this service always serves the students' education in the best way. It is definitely convenient for the students to have all readings readily available only a click away but I found that they did not always check carefully enough that they read the right text. On one occasion, when by mistake a different reading than the one assigned for the class had been uploaded to Moodle, my students had read the text available on Moodle without even checking the syllabus (also on Moodle). Overall, I found that the students were really ambitious and hardworking but quite poorly equipped when it came to basic skills of searching for literature or making references, even in their third year of college, and this really came as a bit of a surprise to me. The acceptance rate at Amherst College is a little less than 13%, so it is extremely competitive, which came to form my expectations of what students would be like. I did expect them to be ambitious and the ones I met definitely were, but sometimes I had the sense that their ambition actually stood in the way for their ability to also engage in the slow work of reflection.

My class at Amherst met for 80-minute sessions twice a week for a total of 14 weeks and this differs from any course I've taught at Stockholm University (or anywhere else in Sweden). As already mentioned, a full-time course load for Amherst students consist of four courses per semester and these are full semester courses that run parallel to each other so that each course makes up 25% of the students' work load (provided they don't take more than four courses). Mid-term as well as final exam periods coincide for all courses and are very stressful times for the students. At my home institution at Stockholm University graduate courses often run parallel at a pace of 50% of full time, thus limited to two parallel courses, during half of the semester. Undergraduate courses rarely run parallel to each other and students are accustomed to a schedule where they finish one course before starting the next. We have gradually started to schedule overlap between some courses in order to allow for work that requires a longer stretch of time but we have found that students are not entirely happy about this change.

I didn't find the actual teaching and activities in the classroom very different from the teaching I do at my home department at Stockholm University, or indeed at other institutions where I have taught (in Sweden and abroad). The number of students were smaller, which is also what I expected knowing that the faculty to student ratio at Amherst College is 7:1. I would describe my teaching style as Socratic with a strong focus on dialogue and transformation; I rarely lecture but instead tend to conduct all my teaching in seminar style. I also have a strong appreciation for exegetical work and often do close readings of texts in class, having students read passages out loud with discussion, questions and clarification as we go along. I found that my students at Amherst were very receptive to the work of doing close readings in the classroom and several of



them expressed how the thorough reading of texts in class extended their understanding of the material and helped them improve their ability to read difficult texts. They also came to class prepared with questions and comments which of course made the close readings richer and more engaging. I did hold mini-lectures in class to give background to the material at hand but mostly we focused on close reading and discussion.

The students in my class at Amherst had very diverse academic interests and most of them had little or no background in SWAGS and/or philosophy. Several of them were science majors, two of them doing a double major in SWAGS, and only one of the students were considering majoring in philosophy. This was both challenging and rewarding and it prompted valuable discussion about the place of philosophy in relation to a broader social and political context.

### **Recommendations**

In retrospect, I think I should have set up a meeting with the Center for Teaching and Learning and perhaps especially the Writing Center prior to the start of the semester and worked more closely with them throughout the semester. I would recommend future STINT-fellows to familiarize themselves well with available resources already during the planning trip. I would also recommend arriving early in the fall. We arrived about two weeks before the start of the semester and I think in retrospect we should have made the decision to arrive a couple of weeks earlier than that in order to get settled before the beginning of the semester.

### **Action plan: Topics to address and, if possible, introduce in Sweden**

The experience I gained from my teaching as a STINT-fellow at Amherst will definitely contribute both to my own continued teaching practice and to discussions about teaching and learning as well as about course development and design at my home department at Stockholm University.

I think the most valuable experience for me from my stay at Amherst was the possibility to teach a semester long course that I was able to create from scratch. Both in preparing and teaching the course I aimed towards laying the groundwork for a book manuscript, which meant that I planned the course based on my own research and I let my research be informed by my conversations with students in class. This is something I rarely have the opportunity to do at my home department, unless teaching a Ph.D.-seminar. While the current structure of our curriculum limits the possibility for individual faculty to design their own courses, I think it would be beneficial for both our students and faculty if we based more of our teaching on our ongoing research. We already have conversations at my home department about the relation between teaching and research and I think my experience from Amherst will add to these in constructive ways. I think this is a question that also needs to be addressed more generally in Swedish higher education.

One thing I want to explore more fully in teaching at my home department is the use of art as a learning tool for approaching philosophical questions. The class I did at the Mead Art Museum with Emily Potter-Ndiaye was a source of inspiration for me and I was really struck by how the students engaged with the questions for the class in relation to the art work. This class and my conversation with Emily have motivated me to try to use museum collections more actively in teaching. Emily and I also talked about the possibility of co-authoring a journal article about the use of art as a learning tool in teaching philosophy, using our session as a case. At the time of my stay at Amherst College, the new exhibition space Accelerator opened at Stockholm University.

Thus far I have only started to look at what Accelerator has to offer in terms of collaboration in course work and teaching but I will definitely explore this further.

As far as in what ways my stay as a STINT Teaching Sabbatical Fellow was of value to Amherst College and my host department SWAGS, I have to admit I'm not entirely sure. Clearly, my course was of great value to my students, judging both from my interaction with them and from course evaluations (the final course evaluation as well as post-it evaluations throughout the course) and perhaps the teaching itself constitutes the extent of STINT-fellows' contributions at Amherst College. Preparing and teaching my course was the only responsibility placed on me by the host institution during my stay and this did surprise me slightly. I was free to participate in faculty activities, which I also did, but during my time at Amherst I never really got a sense of how the host institution sees its role as an institutional participant in the STINT Teaching Sabbatical Program, apart from providing fellows with the possibility of teaching and taking part in faculty activities. Towards the end of my stay I did have a meeting with Janet Tobin, the local coordinator for the STINT Program, who gave me a bit of history of the collaboration with STINT.

As for continued contact with the host institution, we did not make any concrete plans prior to me leaving Amherst but I did talk with Amrita Basu, head of SWAGS about possible faculty exchange and collaboration. I also plan to keep in touch with some faculty members in other departments.

### **Acknowledgements**

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to STINT for granting me the opportunity of participating in the Teaching Sabbatical Program and spend a semester in Amherst together with my family. I also thank the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies at Stockholm University and the President of Stockholm University for nominating me to the STINT-program and for making it possible for me to accept the fellowship and be away from my duties at my home institution for the semester.

I would like to thank the Amherst College Community for making me feel so welcome and for all their efforts to make my visit rewarding. I'm especially grateful to faculty and staff in the SWAGS and Philosophy departments – none mentioned, none forgotten. My students at Amherst also deserve special mention here and I am very grateful for our discussions in class and for their willingness to share their experiences of being students at an elite school such as Amherst College. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and getting to know each one of them.