

2012

Michael F. Bérubé, Paterno Family professor in literature, received the Arts and Humanities Medal. A member of the Penn State faculty since 2001, Dr. Bérubé is director of Penn State's Institute for the Arts and Humanities. He is renowned for his political commentary, literary and cultural criticism and scholarship in disability studies. One nominator said, "He is a powerful intellectual who writes incisively from a humanistic perspective about literature, about the humanities and about our society." He launched his career as a scholar of American literature with the 1992 book "Marginal Forces/Cultural Centers: Tolson, Pynchon and the Politics of the Canon." His most recent book – and his third in the last five years—is "The Left at War." His recent scholarship has focused on disability studies, examining the distortions brought about by the use of disabilities in literature as a metaphor for limits.

Venkatraman Gopalan, professor of materials science and engineering, received the Engineering Medal. He is recognized for his contributions in the area of electro-optic materials and devices. He has discovered a rotational-reversal symmetry that is present in all materials that are handed or have static rotations; including this symmetry significantly expands the classification of crystal structures within the traditional group theory. He has built a unique experimental nonlinear optical microscopy technique that has helped discover new local polar phases in well-known crystals. One nominator wrote, "Professor Gopalan has made a series of creative scholarly contributions to the fields of complex oxides and metamaterials during the last five years that will have longstanding impact in the field of materials." During that period alone, he has authored or co-authored close to 100 publications.

John D. McCarthy, professor of sociology, received the Social and Behavioral Sciences Medal both for his lifetime work and his achievements of the last five years. He is a preeminent scholar on social movements and collective action. His research involves the empirical study of groups that are not formal political parties but rather grassroots movements such as the Tea Party and Mothers Against Drunk Driving. During the past five years, McCarthy has published 12 peer-reviewed journal articles. "Professor McCarthy's research continues to be published in the top general journals in sociology because his ideas are original, he collects high-quality data and his methods are appropriate and sound," one nominator said.

Eric S. Post, professor of biology, received the Life and Health Sciences Medal. He is one of the world's leading authorities on the large-scale ecological effects of climate change. His work focuses on understanding and predicting the response of Arctic ecosystems to climate change. "Because Arctic ecosystems are the 'canary in the coal mine' of global climate change," one nominator said, "Eric's long-term experimental field studies, which occur in extreme and logistically challenging locations, are on the forefront of our understanding of the impacts of climate change on the web of interactions that determine population, community and ecosystem dynamics." Dr. Post's research currently is supported by four federal grants. A Penn State faculty member since 2000, he is serving a three-year appointment to the National Science Foundation Office of Polar Programs Advisory Committee.

Raymond E. Schaak, professor of chemistry received the Physical Sciences Medal. He is recognized for his contributions to the field of inorganic materials chemistry. Over the past five years, he has made several major discoveries and advances, including a new approach to synthesizing inorganic nanostructures and colloidal hybrid nanoparticles. "Professor Schaak is

investigating a truly unique area of science, one he has developed completely independently," one nominator said. "This is remarkable work, and it allows for study of solid state mechanisms in ways that could never before be considered." A Penn State faculty member since 2007, he has received a Camille Dreyfus Teacher Scholar Award and a Sloan Research Fellowship.