

Princeton University

HONORS FACULTY MEMBERS
RECEIVING EMERITUS STATUS



May 2020

The biographical sketches were written by staff and
colleagues in the departments of those honored.

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In the Nation's Service and the Service of Humanity

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DEBORAH EPSTEIN NORD



Deborah Epstein Nord, the Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature and professor of English, is a scholar of Victorian literature and culture. She is widely regarded for her contributions to interdisciplinary studies of gender and women's writing, literature of the city, autobiography, and the relation between the visual arts and literature.

After teaching at the University of Connecticut and Harvard University, Deborah came to Princeton as a visiting associate professor in 1989 and joined the faculty as an associate professor in 1990. She retires this spring, having also served as director of the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies for nine years (1996–2003), director of graduate studies in the English department (1991–92, 1994–95, and 2009–12), and as associated faculty for the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Deborah grew up in Chicago on the north side of the city and was educated at a Jewish day school, a progressive high school, and Barnard College. After graduating, she went on to spend two years in an M.A. program at the Victorian Studies Center of the University of Leicester and then on to earn a Ph.D. from Columbia University. Her important intellectual mentors were Steven Marcus, her dissertation adviser at Columbia University, and Ellen Moers, author of *Literary Women*, who taught her at Barnard.

Deborah is the author of *The Apprenticeship of Beatrice Webb* (1985); *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (1995); *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807–1930* (2006); and, with Maria DiBattista, *At Home in the World: Women Writers and Public Life, from Austen to the Present* (2017; winner of the 2018 PROSE Award in Literature, Association of American Publishers and shortlisted for the 2018 Christian Gauss Award, Phi Beta Kappa Society). She also was the editor of John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (2002). She is currently working on a project about the relationship between 19th-century fiction and the visual arts, the first part of which was published as "George Eliot and John Everett Millais: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Realism" in the Spring 2018 issue of *Victorian Studies*. She has received grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Humanities Center, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and Princeton University.

Throughout her career, Deborah's work has engaged with crucial questions about the relation between public and private life. Scholars admire the imagination and rigor of her historicist readings and ways she frames arguments to uncover the complexity of an array of peripatetic figures, the "others within" Victorian literature, ranging from the gypsy and the fallen woman to the female writer as political observer. Her scholarship, which questions even as it acknowledges limits set by domestic thresholds, explores the formation of female public authority in the 19th century and beyond.

Deborah's students and colleagues have the further privilege to know her as a brilliant teacher and unfailingly responsible and generous adviser, whose honesty is matched by her sense of humor. In 2013, Deborah was awarded the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching. At the time of winning the award, students commented that "whether Deborah is mentoring doctoral theses, patiently developing ideas in a seminar, or singing with students at a Dickens birthday party, her teaching addresses the whole person." One student expressed awe that "she has so many advisees that I am not sure how she does this, but she never talks about having too much on her plate, and she always makes me feel like a priority." Alumni have further commented that this investment continues after graduation, and that Deborah continues to foster not simply careers, but also individuals, as in this comment: "Through the vicissitudes of publishing, the job market, the tenure process, and family life too, Deborah has been a constant and a source of wisdom and good judgment." One alumna wrote, "It is Deborah's model of intellectual integrity, pedagogical insight, and professional kindness that I strive to follow in advising my own students now that I am a faculty member."

Colleagues and emerging scholars at other institutions have remarked that they have also been shaped by Deborah's support as a reader and as a scholar who extends herself to help others in the field flourish. At Princeton, her impact on the University's intellectual community has been immeasurable. Her retirement marks a seismic change in the community of Victorian studies at Princeton, where she has created and fostered an intellectually vibrant group of scholars who have thrived under her guidance and have been shaped vitally by her scholarship.