



## F. O. Matthiessen Visiting Professorship of Gender and Sexuality

*Members and supporters of the Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus (HGLC) have initiated a \$1.5 million fundraising campaign to establish the F. O. Matthiessen Visiting Professorship of Gender and Sexuality in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) at Harvard University. This endowment will enable Harvard to regularly invite eminent scholars studying issues related to sexual minorities—that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people—or to sexuality, to teach at the FAS for one semester.*

### Why is this professorship important?

This professorship will allow Harvard to tap into vibrant new scholarship that focuses on sex, sexuality, and sexual orientation. Other institutions, including Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and Brown, offer a variety of compelling programs in this field. The Matthiessen Visiting Professorship will augment Harvard's already committed resources in the field of LGBT studies and strengthen this growing area of academic inquiry.

### With what department will the professorship be affiliated?

The chair may be appointed in any FAS department, but will be affiliated with the Committee on Degrees in Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality (previously the Committee on Degrees in Women's Studies), which was established in 2003. The name change allowed for more diverse curricular offerings, as well as a focus on LGBT issues. Undergraduates are now able to concentrate in the field on one of two academic tracks offered by this degree-granting committee—either LGBT or women's studies.

### How did the professorship campaign arise?

The Harvard Gay and Lesbian Caucus wants to recognize and celebrate Harvard's decision to create a degree track in LGBT studies. The HGLC comprises more than 4,600 LGBT Harvard and Radcliffe alumni, faculty, staff, and students. The group works to build a sense of community and advocates for a nondiscriminatory and diverse environment at Harvard.



Realizing a two-decade dream, the HGLC launched the campaign to endow the visiting professorship. Harvard Overseer and co-chair of the campaign Mitchell Adams '66, MBA '69 made the announcement at the HGLC's annual Commencement dinner in June 2007.

### Why is the professorship named for F. O. Matthiessen?

F. O. Matthiessen (1902–1950), founder of the field of American Studies, was a distinguished gay Harvard professor. He is considered "the most eminent American literary critic of the first half of the twentieth century." For his time, Matthiessen was an unusual example of a gay man who lived with his sexuality as an "open secret." He and his partner, artist Russell Cheney, were together for 23 years until Cheney's death. Because of his unique position as a prominent Harvard scholar and his inspiring commitment to his life partner, he is a fitting choice for a named chair in this field.

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### Why will this be a visiting professorship?

Because LGBT studies is an emerging multidisciplinary field, a visiting professorship represents an ideal way to encourage cutting-edge ideas across a varied range of disciplines, showcase new talent and initiatives, and bring a continuing stream of exceptional academics to Harvard. The endowment will enable Harvard to invite a scholar for one semester every year or for the full academic period every other year. The professor will typically teach two courses each semester during the appointment, as well as advise students on senior theses and independent projects.

### Who will select the Matthiessen Professor?

The dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, in consultation with faculty members in related fields, will make appointment decisions. A committee will canvas the field and recommend a qualified candidate, considering both established, world-renowned academics and promising younger scholars who evince a commitment to teaching and mentoring as well as research and publications.

### What is the fundraising goal?

The campaign committee aims to raise \$1.5 million to endow the visiting professorship in time to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the HGLC in the 2008–2009 academic year. Leadership gifts are crucial to reaching this goal, but broad participation by all members and friends of the Harvard LGBT community is equally important.

### Will gifts to the professorship receive Harvard College Fund class credit?

Yes, all gifts to the Matthiessen Professorship from Harvard and Radcliffe College alumni will be credited to one's class or reunion gift.

### Can I fulfill my pledge over time?

For donors who are able to make leadership contributions, five-figure gifts are payable over three years and six-figure gifts are payable over five years.

### How can I make a gift?

Donors should make their gift payable to Harvard University, directed to the F. O. Matthiessen Visiting Professorship of Gender and Sexuality.

Credit card gifts can be made by phone at 1-800-VERITAS

Mail contributions to:

Recording Secretary's Office  
Harvard University  
124 Mount Auburn Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138-5795

### Can I give anonymously?

Yes. For those who wish to remain anonymous, gifts may be made to The Open Gate (an independent foundation that supports the LGBT community at Harvard), which in turn will pass them on to Harvard (<http://hglc.org/opengate>).

### For more information, visit:

<http://hglc.org/matthiessen.html> or contact **Tom Parry** ([president@hglc.org](mailto:president@hglc.org)) or **Josh Dieterich** ([joshua\\_dieterich@harvard.edu](mailto:joshua_dieterich@harvard.edu)).