

Ramapo College of New Jersey

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as number one among public comprehensive colleges in the north, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes mistaken for a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of around 5,600 students, and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers three graduate programs as well as joint degree programs with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and New York Chiropractic College.

Undergraduate students choose to concentrate their studies in one of five schools with more than 700 course offerings and 40 academic programs. Ramapo boasts an average student/faculty ratio of 17:1 and average class size of 22, affording students the opportunity to develop close ties to Ramapo's exceptional faculty.

The College's mission is focused on the four "pillars" of a Ramapo education: international, intercultural, interdisciplinary and experiential, all of which are incorporated throughout the curriculum and extracurriculum. The international mission is further accomplished through an emphasis on global programs such as study abroad and faculty and student exchanges, as well as through international cooperative education. Additional experiential programs include internships, co-op, and service learning.

A construction boom during recent years has resulted in the completion of the Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center, the Overlook residence hall and the Village apartment complex, and the Angelica and Russ Berrie Center for Performing and Visual Arts, which houses performance theaters, art galleries, and specialized spaces devoted to fine arts, computer art, photography, theater, dance, and music.

First-Year Students Summer Reading Program

Ramapo College's First-Year Summer Reading Program requires students to read an assigned book over the summer, the content of which is later incorporated into the curriculum.

This year's summer reading selection was the *New York Times* bestseller, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* by Azar Nafisi. The selection process for the first-year summer reading involves a committee vote following input from faculty, staff, and students. In its selection of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, the committee noted that the book is challenging, involves recent international events, and uses fiction as a vehicle to convey personal ideas and experiences, thereby connecting academic learning with events having social and historical significance.

All first-year students are currently discussing the book in their First-Year Seminar (FYS) classes. The majority of the FYS instructors asked their students to prepare answers to the twelve questions that appear in the Reader's Guide of the Random House paperback edition. The students are being asked to share their responses with their classmates as part of an open discussion on the book. They will then have an opportunity to revise their responses and turn them in for a grade. FYS instructors will review the responses from two perspectives: quality of the answer and the writing skill of the student.

Critical reading, open discussion, and college-level writing are three skills the FYS program at Ramapo is focused on strengthening among first-year students. This reading and its subsequent discussion in class, plus assignments, contribute to this goal.

OPENING CONVOCATION

Azar Nafisi
Professor and Author of
Reading Lolita in Tehran

**Wednesday,
September 21, 2005
2 – 3:45 p.m.**



Azar Nafisi

Professor and Author of
Reading Lolita in Tehran

Azar Nafisi is best-known as the author of the national bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which electrified its readers with a compassionate and often harrowing portrait of the Islamic revolution in Iran and how it affected one university professor and her students.

Earning high acclaim and an enthusiastic readership, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is an insightful exploration of the persuasive and transformative powers of fiction in a world of tyranny. The book has spent over 70 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list to date. *Reading Lolita in Tehran* has been translated into 32 languages, and has won various literary awards, including the 2004 Non-fiction Book of the Year Award from Booksense, the Frederic W. Ness Book Award, the 2004 Latifeh Yarsheter Book Award, an achievement award from the American Immigration Law Foundation, as well as being a finalist for the 2004 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Memoir.

Dr. Nafisi has lectured and written extensively in English and Persian on the political implications of literature and culture, as well as the human rights of the Iranian women and girls and the important role they play in the process of change for pluralism and an open society in Iran. She is also involved in the promotion of not just literacy, but of reading books with universal literary value.

Azar Nafisi has written for *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Her cover story, "The Veiled Threat: The Iranian Revolution's Woman Problem," published in *The New Republic* in 1999, has been translated into several languages. She is currently working on two books, one tentatively titled *The Republic of the Imagination*, which is about the power of literature to liberate minds and people, and *The Pursuit of Happiness*, about culture, history and, loss.

OPENING CONVOCATION

September 21, 2005

President's Welcome Dr. Peter P. Mercer
President

National Anthem Adam Posluszny
Class of '09
Director, Mack Brandon
Assistant Professor of Music

Provost's Welcome Dr. W. Sanborn Pfeiffer
Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Greetings Lauren Mosko
President, Senior Class Council

Musical Interlude
The Garten Mother's Lullaby Ramapo Chorale
arranged by Neil Ginsburg
Director, Dr. Lisa Lutter

Introduction Dr. Kathleen Fowler
President, Faculty Assembly

"An Afternoon with Azar Nafisi"

Professor and Author of
Reading Lolita in Tehran

Question/Answer Session

Closing Remarks Dr. Mercer

Alma Mater Lisa Kretschman
Class of '07
Director, Mack Brandon

Book signing and reception to follow.

Please remain seated for the duration of the program.