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## Nancy Bonvillain

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## **Simon's Rock Oral History Project**

Interviewee: **Nancy Bonvillain**

Faculty in Anthropology and Linguistics 1996 - present;  
Director of the Tutoring and Writing Center

Interviewer: **Molly McGowan '13**

Audio Recorder: **Margaret Cherin, College Archivist**

Transcriber: **Molly McGowan '13**

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**Selected excerpts from the Oral History Project interview. The full transcript may be restricted. To request access please contact the [Simon's Rock College Archives](#).**

**Interview with Nancy Bonvillain**

**March 21, 2016**

**Alumni Library, Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, Massachusetts**

**Keywords:** tutoring, writing center, Fran Mascia-Lees, Diversity Day, Social Justice Teach-In, pedagogy, ADA

“It’s not just about teaching and the classes. It’s about thinking. When I’m not teaching...I’m always curious. Like, what on earth? It’s not just what are they doing, but what are they thinking about? To me, being an academic is thinking about things intellectually, things that are intellectually engaging.”

“People who struggle and don’t give up, those are the people I most admire. Whether they’re 52 year old social activists or whether they’re 16 year old college freshmen. That’s what really counts. Not just what you’re given or what you have easily, but what you struggle with. You know, and nobody struggles 100% of the time and nobody achieves what they wanted 100% of the time, but that’s a quality in people that I really admire.”

“Between 16 and 20 is a tremendous change. I see it from the thesis students. From the beginning of the fall to the spring, the ability to write and the way that they’re really able to explore the depth and complexity of a topic of their choosing, it’s really rewarding. When you see change in a person, growth in a person, it’s something to admire --to see a person, their way of thinking, grow emotionally and personally.”

“I refuse the horrible ballet. And I said this to the sem 3 faculty and I doubt mine was the only negative voice, but I said that I didn’t think it was good. And I said this, I’m no judge of whether-- what’s it called, Rites of Spring?-- is innovative music, but if you want to do dance and you want to do innovative dance in the 20th century and you don’t do Martha Graham, what are you doing? You’ve got to start with Martha Graham. So there’s that point. And the other point I made was that I’m kind of tired of young girls getting sacrificed. It’s not a topic I really want to spend time thinking about.”