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Advancing global learning



Phyllis Strauss, who researches DNA repair in mice, is the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship. Photo by Craig Bailey

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Phyllis Strauss, who is researching DNA repair in mice, and Nicole Rafter, an author, researcher and instructor in biological theories of crime, and crime films and society, have received highly competitive Fulbright Scholarships for 2009–2010, according to the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, which administers the program.

Currently fulfilling her four-month Fulbright grant in India at the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in Varanasi, Strauss is researching DNA repair of the cell's genetic material during the earliest stages of embryo development in mice.

She applied for the Fulbright at BHU because its research emphasis in DNA repair relates closely to her work at Northeastern, she said.

Strauss uses zebra fish to analyze the role of a cell protein, called AP endonuclease, in the early stages of an embryo. At BHU, she hopes to discover whether her findings with the fish hold true with

mice.

"It's the first step in asking if this (finding) is important to human development," she said.

One eventual outcome of her research, she says, would be to make it more possible for doctors to predict which embryos would be successful before they are implanted in humans during in vitro fertilization.

"If people could predict which embryos would be successful, we wouldn't need to implant so many embryos," cutting down on the likelihood of hazardous multiple pregnancies and births, she said.

Rafter, who recently won a lifetime achievement award from the American Society of Criminology, leaves in several months for her Fulbright project at the Johannes Kepler University, in Linz, Austria. She will teach two graduate courses, which are also offered at Northeastern—crime films and society and biological theories of crime—and will finish research on a new book, "Criminology Goes to the Movies."

A colleague at the Austrian university, another criminology historian, asked Rafter to apply for the scholarship so she could teach there, she said. "I am very pleased," said Rafter, "because it gives me an opportunity to work with an important scholar who has similar interests."

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