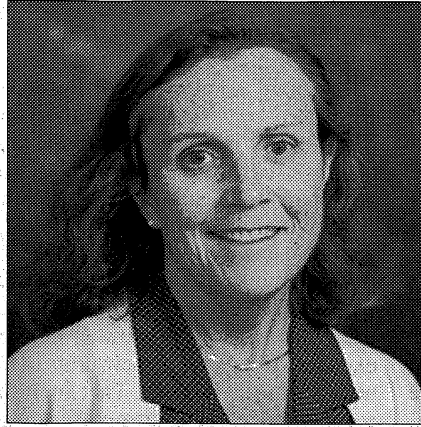


Mary Johanna Meehan



Mary Johanna Meehan died unexpectedly on January 8, a few weeks shy of her 68th birthday, after a short illness at Mercy Iowa City Hospital. She was born in 1956 in Winchester, Massachusetts, and parented by her mother, D. Ring Kelleher, a lawyer who fought discrimination against women in her own career and injustice for her clients; her father, James Francis Meehan, a renowned trial attorney; and her aunt

Josephine Kelleher, who nurtured her body and soul. She received her B.A. in philosophy from Brandeis University in 1977 and her Ph.D in Philosophy from Boston University in 1990.

For 33 years, Johanna taught students at Grinnell College introducing them to philosophy, ethics, political theory, neuro-psychoanalysis, and gender and race theory with extraordinary passion for ideas and love and compassion for not only her students, but her invaluable administrative assistants and her colleagues. She held the endowed McCay-Casady Professor of Humanities chair. Her writing wove together ideas and emotions in ways that affected people deeply, such as her Lilly Foundation talk about work and vocation, her eulogy for beloved colleague Tyler Roberts, and innumerable truly incredible and effective letters of recommendations for treasured students. She was so passionate about both ideas and people that together it balanced out the constant pain and debilitation she suffered from migraines, bronchiectasis, and osteoporosis of her spine. She fought her way back from many painful surgeries to rejoin life with her family and friends and her beloved and ever-growing library of books.

The loss of her older brother Jimmy to leukemia when she was three shaped her personal and intellectual life. She was deeply affected by the suffering of other people, but she ran toward rather than away from it. Deeply compassionate and interested, she invited people's confidences and people told her about their lives, whether they were her taxi drivers, her doctors, her students, her friends or her family. And she was fiercely driven to protect them, to try to relieve their suffering, and to help them move forward. Anyone who needed something she could give was family. Her own pain and suffering were always downplayed; her family had to press her to take it seriously. Trauma became her central philosophical focus, whether expressed through her unbounded reading, devoted teaching or emotionally wise writing about genocide, child development, race and gender, political theory, neuropsychology, psychoanalysis, and the complex and intersubjective nature of identity formation, which was the subject of her current book project.

In 1979, when she was 22, a graduate student in philosophy, she met Maura, the woman who would become the love of her life for the next 45 years. They talked constantly about books, ideas, people and relationships. They delighted in each other's lack of fear in speaking up and terrorizing "the boys" with their intellect. They lived openly and proudly and were seen by many to have the best relationship of any couple they knew. They supported each other's careers, psyches and health. They shared a love of shopping, even just buying groceries, reading dense historical information at museums, and watching international films and television series. They were civilly united in Vermont in 2000 and married in Massachusetts in 2008. They welcomed two daughters into their lives, Sierra and Anya, whom Johanna loved, treasured, fed, dressed up, joyfully taught and guided, and who inspired her intellectually.

Johanna entertained fabulously, making elaborate dinner parties, exciting birthday celebrations and Halloween parties, and special Thanksgiving and Passover celebrations. She loved decorating her house with flowers, candles, paintings, and interesting objects and made holidays special with Christmas stockings and Easter baskets. She delighted in extended family vacations to the ocean and Christmas with her beloved sisters. She always dressed to the nines and her dresses and jewelry were frequently admired by complete strangers. She was not intimidated by rules or authority figures and would regularly speak truth to power. She was a skillful and humorous story teller. She also had no sense of direction, but she was never lost in relationship to people.

Johanna is survived by her wife, Maura Irene Strassberg, her daughter Anya Jian Ring Strassberg Meehan, daughter Sierra (Henry Avila) Ring Meehan Strassberg and grandson Ronan James Strassberg Avila, sisters Margaret (Dan Starer) Mary Meehan and niece Katherine (Tristan Judice) Starer, Suzanne Mary Meehan and nephew Ange Itzhak Gavriel Meehan, Ana Michaela (Tom Michael) Meehan and nephews James (Anna) Michael and Matthew Eliot Michael, cousin Ellen (John) Driscoll, her father's second wife Carrollyn Meehan, and cousins from the Silva family and the Meehan family. She was preceded in death by her mother, father and aunt, and her brother James Francis Xavier Meehan.

Celebration of life gathering will be held on Saturday, January 13, 2024, from 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., at Smith Funeral Home, Grinnell, Iowa.

The Family invites friends to join them at their home, 1430 Broad Street, Grinnell, following the gathering for a buffet and refreshments.

If desired, memorial contributions may be directed to Grinnell MICA Food Pantry, and mailed in care of Smith Funeral Home, PO Box 368, Grinnell, IA 50112.

From: Duke, Charles (Charlie) DUKE@Grinnell.EDU
Subject: Fwd: Professor Johanna Meehan
Date: January 16, 2024 at 8:59 PM
To: dukeclml@icloud.com

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From: Grinnell College Office of the Dean <dean@grinnell.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, January 10, 2024 2:47:05 PM
To: Grinnell College Faculty <faculty@lyris.grinnell.edu>
Subject: Professor Johanna Meehan

Sad News — Johanna Meehan

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great sadness that I share news of the death of Professor Johanna Meehan on Monday, Jan. 8, in Iowa City, Iowa. Johanna, who was the McCay-Casady Professor of Humanities and Professor of Philosophy and served on the advisory board for the Center for Humanities, had transitioned to Senior Faculty Status last year.

She received her bachelor's from Brandeis University and master's and doctorate in philosophy from Boston University. During her career, Johanna worked with Juergen Habermas, and published work on critical theory, psychoanalysis, and Hannah Arendt. She taught at several colleges and universities on the East Coast before taking up her tenure track appointment at Grinnell in 1990.

A celebration of life gathering will be held from 3 to 6 p.m., on Saturday, Jan. 13, at Smith Funeral Home, Grinnell.

Grinnell College was greatly enriched by Johanna's many years of devoted service, and she will be missed. Through our memories she will remain a cherished member of our community. I ask that you keep Johanna and her family and friends in your thoughts.

Sincerely,
Beronda

Beronda Montgomery
Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of the College