

Some Student Testimonials  
Spring 2025

1. "Being taught by Professor Yaverbaum is life changing. I went from flunking Physics the previous semester with another professor to getting a Masters degree in Physics and teaching Physics myself! He's taught me that while Physics can use complex methods like calculus, Physics is actually simple... but simple doesn't mean easy."

Susan Lu, Class of 2014, John Jay Adjunct Faculty since 2015

2. "I never felt like my identity had a place in classrooms until I took Professor Yaverbaum's course, MHC 225, in Fall 2024. From the beginning, Professor Yaverbaum welcomed my identity into the classroom and created a space where I felt comfortable connecting my religious identity to science—something I never thought was possible. I had always believed that religion and science contradicted one another, so I avoided discussing the topic. However, Professor Yaverbaum encouraged me to think beyond this contradiction. At the beginning of the semester, we had spoken about sunrise and sundown, and I felt comfortable contributing my thoughts by sharing the prayer times I followed. Professor Yaverbaum welcomed my perspective with excitement and even shared his own religious identity. He spoke about Judaism, and I could talk about Islam we were able to genuinely resonate with one another. Professor Yaverbaum challenged me to think critically and helped me learn that religion and science are not always at odds but can work together. His openness, curiosity, and support throughout the course were among my college career's most meaningful learning experiences."

Halla Albukhaiti, Macaulay Honors College, Class of 2027

3. "Dr. Yaverbaum has been an instrumental part of my academic journey at John Jay College. From being a sophomore student in his Physics 203 class to attending graduate school in the Fall, he has always been supportive, inspiring, and motivating. I am truly so grateful that I was a part of the wonderful students that were able to cross paths with Dr. Yaverbaum. He always saw the good in his students and aimed to support his students inside and outside the classroom-- whether it was writing letters of recommendation, being a reference for internships/jobs, and for advice. As a graduating senior, I am proud to say that Dr. Yaverbaum has been one of the best professors I've had and I'm so grateful for everything!"

Aliesha Hetnarine, Class of 2025, President, Forensic Science Society

4. "Professor Yaverbaum is one of the most humble, supportive, and overall dedicated professors I have had the opportunity to be a student of. Not only has he been an outstanding professor, teaching us the difficult subject of physics, he has become and continues to be a mentor. His advice and guidance both inside and outside the classroom have been vital in my pursuit and subsequent acceptance into the new accelerated master's program for forensic science in addition to the pursuit of becoming a law enforcement officer."

- Abdelrahman Khalifa, Class of 2025, FOS BS/MS

5. "Daniel Martens Yaverbaum was a teacher and mentor to me for all of my last three years of high-school. He taught me a great deal of physics, made me love the subject, introduced me to multi-variable calculus. He also became— and still is— the person I most wanted to speak to when faced with any decision or dilemma. It was not that he gave me answers. He did just what he always did so wonderfully in class, for every student: he took my process seriously. Whatever I was struggling with, he affirmed that the struggle was valid, that the difficulty of the decision was real. He did not just say that this was so, he lived it. Yaverbaum's genius— his gift, as miraculous as clairvoyance or telekinesis— is that nothing is ever old to him: whatever thought a student has, about physics or anything else, is original and wonderful to him, even revelatory. This is electrifying, life-giving. It makes you want to speak, to think, to live up to the interest he takes in you. I've seen this response in hundreds of his students.

When I came to Yaverbaum for counsel as a teenager, that interest in what I had to say and to think made me take my own thought process and my own dilemma's seriously, allowed me to think my way through problems, rather than either ignoring them or succumbing to them: giving a careless answers or abdicating and avoiding. This responsiveness, this impressionability also became the basic model for how I try to interact with people in my adult life and particularly with students. I never live up to it, of course, but it is an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

Many years later, when I was teaching under him at John Jay College, I asked him once how he did this: how was it possible that the most familiar sorts of misconceptions, the kind that we as physics teachers encounter semester after semester, seemed always new and fascinating to him. Hadn't he heard those thoughts a zillion times before? He answered me, "but I've never heard that person have that thought before." Like the man in the Borges story who invents a private language in which there is a different word for every instance of every object, for Yaverbaum every thought had by every child is distinct and original."

Max Bean, John Jay adjunct faculty from 2015 – 2019

6. "I had the pleasure of attending PHY 203 and 204, taught by Professor Yaverbaum in 2022-2023. The class was conducted online via Zoom, and Professor Yaverbaum always made sure to address any concerns, problems, or questions we had from previous topics. Although the class was not in person, he ensured that it felt like an in-person lecture through his engaging interactions with students. Professor Yaverbaum was dedicated to making sure we understood every physics topic to the best of our abilities. He often over explained concepts to ensure clarity and comprehension. Outside of class, during office hours, he welcomed his students, including myself, with open arms, offering guidance, help, and advice as I continued my undergraduate studies at John Jay. Professor Yaverbaum is by far one of the best professors I have had at John Jay."

Steven Bermejo, Class of 2025, FOS BS/MS

7. "Dr. Yaverbaum is a highly dedicated professor and invested in his students' success, teaching courses while balancing his health condition. He is super engaging both in and out of the classroom--I've never had an instructor who managed to make a synchronous course so interesting (especially given the topic is physics...) and comprehensible. Most importantly for me, he has reminded me why I enjoy science!"

Raymond Chen, Class of 2027, FOS Major

8. "I had the honor of having Professor Yaverbaum for two classes in the Fall 2024 semester, PHY 204 (Physics II) and MHC 225, the science-centered seminar required for students in the Macaulay Honors program. Professor Yaverbaum brought a unique enthusiasm about science to the class; most science professors I've had, especially at the entry level, are tasked with ensuring students know the basics, leaving little room for excitement. But Yaverbaum's enthusiasm for science shined through in every class, and it was contagious. His commitment to both of these classes was unparalleled, and his student-centered approach to the class fostered collaboration rather than competition, a rare occurrence in the traditionally cutthroat STEM and honors worlds. He was one of the best professors I've had at John Jay, and I can honestly say I'm a better scientist because of him."

Laila Mansour, Macaulay Honors College, FOS Major, Class of 2027

9. "Dr. Yaverbaum has been such an influential professor in the course of my life. Before college, I was timid about taking a physics course; fearing that the mathematics and concepts would be too difficult for me so I avoided them at all costs. When I had to take calculus based physics for my major, Dr. Yaverbaum saw something in me and helped inspire me. He always gave me positive feedback and motivation to continue; praising my effort and who I was as a human being. I ended up pursuing undergraduate research in physics pedagogy with Dr. Yaverbaum, and was eventually asked to become an adjunct laboratory instructor for those same physics courses I once feared, changing the course of my life. I am now at a world renowned institution studying mineral physics for my graduate degree, which would never have been a possibility to me without Dr. Yaverbaum's belief and support."

Justin Colón, Class of 2023, Adjunct John Jay Faculty since 2023,  
NASA's Guest at Artemis Launch  
([Link to WABC story re Colon & Yaverbaum](#))

10. "There's very few people that when upon meeting them you are instantly filled with enthusiasm and curiosity. Dr Yaverbaum is one of these incredible humans. I found a passion for physics and robotics through his teaching - which has led to various projects and adventures - I shall be forever grateful for his support and wisdom (still convinced he has unlocked infinite knowledge)."

Antigone Alexander, Class of 2025, CMB Major

11. "I am really honored to share my experience with professor Yaverbaum and why I believe he truly deserves this award. He is not only an incredible educator but also a role model who has really impacted my academic and personal growth. His sense of humor makes learning fun and not that hard, with support. Beyond that, he is one of the kindest and most supportive professors I have ever met. He genuinely cares about his students, always taking the time to encourage our ideas and projects. He has helped me grow, not just in school but as a person, by showing me what really matters and I will always be grateful for that. No matter what challenges come his way, he keeps going with resilience and stays dedicated to his students. He truly cares about us, and his kindness and support make a big difference. I feel lucky to have known him, and I know many others feel the same way. He doesn't just teach—he inspires. His kindness, support, and unwavering passion for education make him more than deserving of this recognition."

Astrid Castro, Class of 2027, Macaulay Honors College

12. "Professor Yaverbaum is the ideal professor. He possesses the perfect quantity of quirkiness, subject matter expertise, teacher expectation, communication skills, empathy, and passion.

He saw potential in me when I could not."

Hema Walters, Class of 2015, John Jay Adjunct Faculty 2017 - present