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PI Irving Epstein and Professor of Russian Literature Robin Feuer Miller have obtained grants totaling \$1.3 million from Atlantic Philanthropies, a private foundation, to fund an interdisciplinary "Consilience Seminar" for Brandeis faculty members. Each year, about a dozen faculty meet once a week to discuss selected texts and their own research with an eye toward elucidating the overlaps and differences among the various disciplines. Faculty participants are chosen from all over the university - historians, anthropologists, painters, actors, physicists, philosophers... The group has visited Epstein's lab and carried out experiments involving oscillating chemical reactions (see photos at right). He has led sessions on how notions like chaos and pattern formation in nonlinear chemical dynamics may have relevance in fields ranging from literature to fine arts to sociology. For example, Shakespeare's insight that "For want of a shoe a horse was lost,..." bears a striking resemblance to the "butterfly phenomenon" in chaos theory, where a tiny perturbation can have major effects on the long-term behavior of a system. The seminar has spawned new cross-disciplinary research collaborations and has provided funding for new interdisciplinary and team-taught courses across the university.

