

ENGAGEMENT

FALL 2017

M | LSA AMERICAN CULTURE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Arab and Muslim American Studies | Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies
Digital Studies | Latina/o Studies | Native American Studies

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Photos and Art
Cover Photo: Taken by Austin Thomason (Michigan Photography) at the A/PIA Summit. Guests were asked to share significant moments in their lives to contribute to a historical timeline.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Alumni, Students, Faculty and Friends of the Department of American Culture:

I am thrilled to step into American Culture as the new Chair of the Department.

I have been a part of the AC community since I came to U-M in 2002. Several years ago my “dry” appointment in the department became permanent, making AC my home in LSA and U-M. It has been gratifying professionally and personally to become increasingly connected to this amazing network of colleagues. Like many of us in AC, my research and projects are interdisciplinary; in my case, focused on medicine and health in the Americas. More specifically, I have published on the histories of eugenics and genetics in the United States and Latin America, and currently direct the Sterilization and Social Justice Lab, based in AC, which explores qualitative and quantitative dimensions of eugenic sterilization in twentieth century California, including implications for contemporary issues of reproductive and genetic justice.

AC was fortunate that Professor June Howard served as chair for three and one half years, overseeing major accomplishments in hiring and programming, and managing the unit with grace and insight during times that were both sunny and cloudy. Thanks to the hard work of her and former Associate Chair Anthony Mora, and many other colleagues in American Culture, the department is undergoing an exciting movement of growth and consolidation.

Our newer minors, Arab and Muslim American Studies (AMAS) and Digital Studies, are expanding by leaps and bounds, and the Digital Studies Graduate Certificate starts accepting applications this fall. Our Ethnic Studies Programs, including Arab and Muslim American Studies, Latina/o Studies (LS), Native American Studies (NAS), and Asian Pacific Islander American Studies (A/PIA), are each engaged in innovative scholarly programming and community building. Highlighted in this newsletter is the A/PIA summit, held at the Michigan Union in March 2017, and attended by a diverse spectrum of more than 150 students, faculty, and staff, including President Schlissel. Spearheaded by outgoing A/PIA Director, Amy Stillman, this summit provided a vibrant forum for mapping out how the university’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives can support and enhance the multifaceted A/PIA community. These efforts represent the kind of university-level engagement and activism that has long characterized American Culture and our Ethnic Studies programs.

This newsletter includes profiles of our two new faculty hires. We are happy to welcome assistant professor Melissa Borja and Lecturer III Scott Larson, who have begun offering their new courses to our students. In addition, we welcome associate professor Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, who will be on campus in Fall 2018. We will profile her in a future issue.

Perhaps it is cliché to say that the critical analysis mobilized by faculty and students in American Culture is relevant in our particular moment, but it certainly is more salient than ever now, as communities near and dear to our scholarship face heightened discrimination, bigotry, and perhaps even deportation. I hope as Chair that I can help to cultivate an environment in which we can think creatively and collectively about contemporary dynamics of oppression and resistance in a broadly conceived America.



Students at Liberating Literacy Program.

Photograph by Garrett Felber

LIBERATING

LITERACY



Students at Liberating Literacy Program.
Photograph by Garrett Felber

By Garrett Felber

When I moved to Portland, Oregon, in the summer of 2014 to finish my dissertation, I had the modest ambition of teaching the Autobiography of Malcolm X inside prisons. Volunteer programming at most prisons is weighted heavily towards religious services, and most prison-sponsored programming focuses on addiction, parenting, and mental health. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 eliminated Pell Grants for prisoners, effectively dismantling many successful prison education programs around the country.

Aware of these limitations, my first class at Columbia River Correctional Institution (CRCI), a four-week class co-taught with Reiko Hillyer, a history professor at Lewis and Clark College and longtime Inside-Out instructor at the prison, quickly became something much more ambitious.

We needed books, and I collected donations from colleagues, mentors, and publishers, and established a Freedom Library. The library, whose name takes inspiration from 1960s activists who created alternative community schools to teach black history, is now home to more than 500 books on social justice. Those books are available



*Students at Liberating Literacy Program
Photo by Garrett Felber*

to anyone at the prison. Authors include Robin Kelley, Angela Davis, Manning Marable, Keeanga Taylor, Assata Shakur, Howard Zinn, Leonard Peltier, Ruth Gilmore, bell hooks, Antonio Gramsci, Franz Fanon, and others.

I continued to teach a small-but-dedicated group of students who consistently met for our black history reading group. In October 2016, drawing from the Inside-Out model of prison education which includes local college students, we launched the Racial Justice Community Reading Group in October, 2016. Because I had no students to bring inside, I invited people from the Portland community. Comprised of a dozen inside and outside students, we met weekly for three hours to discuss books on mass incarceration, policing, and social movements. Victor (named changed for confidentiality) described his initial expectations:

In September 2016, I arrived at CRCI with 106 days until my December 22, 2016 release for a parole violation. I am a career criminal and registered

sex offender. I've been in and out of institutions. So when I noticed in the CRCI newsletter of upcoming classes a class on "African American History and Mass Incarceration" – I thought – "Well, that's about me! Perhaps I can find some answers and, just perhaps, healing for all that ails me."

I jumped in with passion (or to most – "anger"). I'd hoped to contribute in some way and for a while I'd believed I'd found an outlet for years of frustration and misunderstanding.

Within two months, our group had taken the name Liberation Literacy, begun a monthly film screening series, and outlined plans to publish a quarterly newsletter. Some of the authors—Elizabeth Hinton, Scott Kurashige, and Dan Berger visited our group, and others—Khalil Muhammad, Stephen Ward, and Ibram Kendi—joined us via Skype.

As I leave the program this fall for a faculty fellowship in Boston, Liberation Literacy has now launched an outside reading group led by formerly-incarcerated students such as Victor. "I was the first 'graduate' of Liberation Literacy as I was released in December," he wrote. "Fast forward and it is June 2017 and we've just celebrated the first Lib Lit outside group meeting yesterday."

Our recently published first newsletter, supported by local nonprofit, the Independent Publishing Resource Center (IPRC), includes content from the inside group. We have capped the inside enrollment at twenty because we have a limited set of books, but we

*Right: Freedom Library
Below: Students at Liberating Literacy Program
Photos by Garrett Felber*

are launching a Racial Justice Film Series for this fall to raise money to purchase more.

None of the minutia about what we do each week, however, captures Liberation Literacy's spirit of love, family, and political commitment. We organize pick-ups for those who are being released without a ride; we help find housing and jobs; we give hugs each week despite pushback from the prison administration about "touching" and building relationships; we write letters even though we see each other every week. The name Liberation Literacy does not assume that anyone is "illiterate," but rather that we all need to forge new narratives and frameworks for understanding community and justice.

As another of our students wrote: "Education given in [Liberation Literacy] teaches us how to resist and organize. The books we read are banned in a lot of prisons.



And so, the only way to learn about the systemic injustices are through the stories told by older prisoners. We don't have a safe space for us to even have these conversations to view our situation critically. This class provides that space and opportunity. Politicizing someone's mind is a non-violent form of resistance."

Please consider supporting our work by contacting Liberation Literacy at: liberation.literacy@gmail.com or donating through our website: <http://liberationliteracy.weebly.com/>.



A/PIA SUMMIT

By Amy Stillman

The 2016-2017 academic year was a busy and productive one for A/PIA Studies. A national search approved by the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, concluded successfully with not one but two new faculty appointments. We welcome historians Dr. Melissa Borja in Fall 2017, and Dr. Ian Shin in Fall 2018. A/PIA Studies core faculty offered a total of 11 undergraduate courses. The program hosted 3 film screenings, and co-sponsored a number of talks and colloquia across campus. A/PIA Studies serves as the administrative home for the new organization Indigo: The LSA Asian & Asian-American Faculty Alliance, and organized its very first Town Hall in September 2016. The event drew 50 faculty across 20 units to an afternoon of conversation and brainstorming. A/PIA Studies also co-hosted the annual December “HolidA.P.A” event, which drew in over 100 students and faculty.

Our signature event for the year was undoubtedly the first-ever campuswide Asian/Pacific Islander American Summit, held in the Michigan Union on Tuesday, March 21, 2017. The idea for the Summit came about in the context of U-M President Schlissel’s initiative on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), the university’s much-ballyhooed year-long bicentennial celebrations, and continued frustrations over A/PIA invisibility. A collaboration developed between folks from A/PIA Studies, the Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs, the National Center for Institutional Diversity, and the A/PIA Heritage Month Planning Committee, to create the space and time for some much-needed conversation.

The event itself? An unqualified success. A total of 154 students, faculty and staff signed in representing over 30 units across the entire campus. The afternoon began with an information poster fair. Top administrators, including President Schlissel, Vice President Royster Harper, Vice Provost Rob Sellers, LSA Dean Andrew Martin and faculty

*Right: Attendees Participating in Summit Activity
Photographer: Austin Thomason*



senate chair Bill Schultz, mingled with attendees and representatives from student organizations and academic units, browsing an array of posters, infographics about the A/PIA community on campus, and interactive displays on A/PIA history. A featured display was a banner on the history of A/PIA presence at UM, created and designed by students in AMCULT 301.

Following welcoming remarks, we got down to the central task of the event—a series of facilitated discussion groups designed to generate ideas for connecting DE&I strategies and A/PIA community concerns. Some of the discussion highlights include the following:

•DE&I Strategy #1: Create an inclusive and equitable campus climate. Attendees were asked to envision ideas and activities for



President Schlissel talks with A/PIA student
Photograph by Ausitn Thomason

knowledge development that would increase understanding of A/PIA experiences on campus. Comments ranged across the need for institutional acknowledgment of anti-Asian racism, and addressing persistent perceptions of A/PIA invisibility in campus diversity events and programming.

•DE&I Strategy #2: Recruit, retain and develop a diverse community. Attendees were asked to consider how to better support the success of A/PIA students,



Interactive activity at A/PIA summit
Photograph by Ausitn Thomason

faculty and staff on campus. The dearth of access to mentorship programs and pipe lines was cited, as was the need for more structured opportunities to promote communication, interaction, and awareness about the A/PIA community.

•DE&I Strategy #3: Support innovative and inclusive scholarship and teaching. Attendees were asked to consider how scholarship and faculty expertise on A/PIA issues could be more effectively delivered. Comments ranged from thoughts on curricular marginalization of A/PIA studies, unconscious bias training, “onboarding” of new faculty and staff, and inclusion of A/PIA concerns in classroom climate.

The Summit touched a palpable nerve among attendees, so much so that many conversations continued informally long past the formal program, and even past the end of our reserved time in the Pendleton Room! The Summit accomplished what we had hoped for—bringing a broad spectrum of voices together to take ownership of our A/PIA community narratives of diversity and inclusion.

Funding for the Summit came primarily from President Schlissel, with contributions also from Vice President Royster Harper, Vice Provost Rob Sellers and Rackham Dean Carol Fierke.

Significant logistical support came from grad student Mika Kennedy, American Culture’s events coordinator Abbie Dykstra, and MESA program director Banen Al-Sheemary.

Stewarding A/PIA Studies over the past 3.5 years has been both challenging and rewarding. Maintaining curricular continuity, welcoming new faculty, strengthening ties with Faculty Associates and expanding collaborative relationships with A/PIA student organizations all played a part in the campus A/PIA community raising a unified voice at the Summit. Our activism has shifted to campus-based issues at a time when campus-wide engagement with diversity and inclusion mandated that A/PIA Studies take on a leadership role.

I step down with confidence and conviction that the future of this program has been brightened

“THE SUMMIT ACCOMPLISHED WHAT WE HAD HOPED FOR—BRINGING A BROAD SPECTRUM OF VOICES TOGETHER TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF OUR A/PIA COMMUNITY NARRATIVES OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.”

with renewed energy! My successor, Professor John Kuwada, is one of the most energetic architects of the faculty alliance Indigo, and I look forward with great pleasure to the new leadership he will bring to A/PIA Studies. Aloha nō.

A/PIA Director Amy Stillman with Robert Sellers, Vice Provost for Equity and Inclusion
Photograph by Ausitn Thomason





COMBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA

The Islamophobia Working Group Tackles How the Arabic Language is Taught Nationwide

By Evelyn Alsultany



The Islamophobia Working Group (IWG) was assembled in January 2016 to address the national crisis of Islamophobia and its impact on our campus community. The purpose of this group of faculty, staff, and students is to study the climate and its impact on Arab, Muslim, and MENA-identified students and the campus community at large and to strategize on how to create a safe and more inclusive campus environment for those who are impacted by anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments. We have become actively involved in the University's strategic plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and gained visibility across the university.

Members of our group have been working on a variety of issues, such as increasing the number of reflection spaces on campus in order to facilitate prayer for those Muslim students who pray five times per day and advocating for a Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) category on undergraduate applications so that we can know how many MENA students there are on campus and better serve their needs.

Members of our group have also been advocating changing the Arabic language textbook used at UM, al-Kitaab (The Book). This textbook is internationally recognized as the standard in Arabic language teaching. However, students at the University of Michigan, Stanford University, Tufts University and other campuses have noted that the textbook prepares students to work for the U.S. State Department and is thus taught differently from other languages. Students have reported that they learn terms like terrorism, army, and United Nations long before they learn colors. The textbook had been criticized for politicizing Arab culture and portraying it as exotic and violent. As a result a few undergraduate students have been working on raising awareness about the issues with the textbook with the goal of changing it. They have been active in researching complaints about the textbook across the country, getting a resolution passed with LSA Student Government in support of changing the textbook, and influencing the creation of a taskforce within the Department of Near Eastern Studies to investigate the problems with the textbook and potential alternatives.

The National Center for Institutional Diversity has awarded the Islamophobia Working Group a grant to support two students in attending the Middle East Studies Association conference to discuss their research and finding about al-Kitaab.

Ibtihal Makki, a student member of the group, has been among those spearheading this effort. She penned an op-ed in the Michigan Daily earlier in the year highlighting the various issues with learning the Arabic language through this textbook.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



*Ibtihal Makki and Ryan Gillcrist, members of the Islamophobia Working Group
Photo by Ibtihal Makki*

Earlier this year, Ibtihal Makki wrote an article for The Michigan Daily titled “Op-Ed: Depoliticize Arabic studies.” She speaks of her experience with the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts language requirement and the use of the textbook, “al-Kitaab fii Ta'allum al-Arabiyya.” Makki addresses key issues with the textbook itself, arguing that “if the University regards second language acquisition as providing ‘deep awareness of linguistic and cultural differences and a means to bridge them,’ as is stated on the LSA website, then it is the responsibility of our language departments to uphold that vision.” In conclusion, Makki suggests that “the Department of Near Eastern Studies to adopt a different textbook and create a separate, advanced class for students proficient in Arabic who wish to expand their political vocabulary.”

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

by Abigail Rose

With brimming excitement, over three hundred guests sat anxiously in the Michigan League Ballroom awaiting the much anticipated reading and musical performance by the 2017 Berkhofer Lecture guest, Joy Harjo.

The Native American Studies program was delighted to invite poet, musician, and writer, Joy Harjo, to be the guest speaker at this year's Berkhofer Lecture. Harjo, an engaging performer, captivated the audience with her ability to combine poetry and music in a powerful performance. The event drew together an eclectic group of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and the people of Ann Arbor, as well as surrounding areas, including several Michigan Indian communities. Native American Studies partnered with American Indian Health and Family Services to provide transportation to and from Detroit so more people had the opportunity to attend the event.





*U-M faculty with Joy Harjo.
Photograph by Austin Thomason*

Harjo's visit began with a large gathering the night before where our gracious host, Professor Emeritus Lincoln Faller, made authentic fry bread and green chili. This social gathering brought together people from all U-M departments, including a group of incoming graduate students. The following day, Harjo did a radio interview with T. Hetzel, the host of Living Writers radio program, before giving her lecture. The night ended on a celebratory note with a reception and booksigning, where guests had the opportunity to meet Joy and celebrate Native American heritage through writing and music.

Joy Harjo, of the Myskoke Creek Nation, is an internationally known poet, writer, performer, and saxophonist. She wowed the audience with her ability to effortlessly combine poetry with the soft notes of

“READING FROM HER MULTIPLE POETRY COLLECTIONS, HARJO CREATED A COMPELLING NARRATIVE ON COMPASSION, DIVERSITY, AND THE POWER OF STORYTELLING THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS OF ART.”

her saxophone. Reading from her multiple poetry collections, Harjo created a compelling narrative on empathy, diversity, and the power of storytelling through various forms of art.

Harjo has received many writing awards including the 2015 Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, the Rasmuson United States Artist Fellowship, and the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America. She has written eight books of poetry and her memoir, *Crazy Brave*, won the PEN USA Literary Award for Creative Non-Fiction and the American Book Award. She is currently working on her second memoir while also writing a musical play, *We Were There When Jazz Was Invented*. Harjo is a multi-faceted author who creates powerful work in many genres.

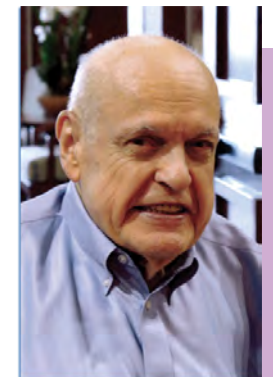


*Harjo signing her memoir Crazy Brave.
Photograph by Austin Thomason*

Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.

The Berkhofer Lecture is an annual event hosted by the Native American Studies program and made possible by a generous gift from the Carmen and Dan Brenner Family of Seattle, Washington.

The annual event celebrates Native American cultures and strives to illuminate the Native American community at U-M by highlighting



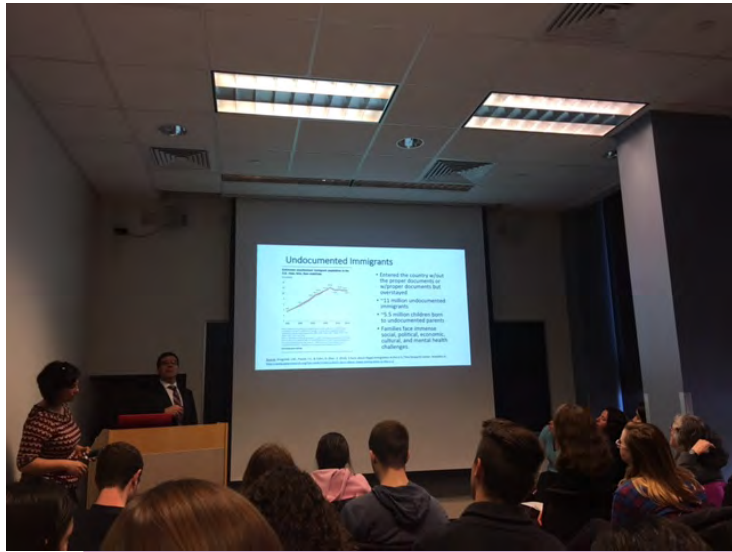
visibility, inclusion, and relevance. This annual event is named after Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., a leading historian and a founder in the field of Native American Studies. He taught at the University of Michigan from 1973-1991. This annual lecture honors his work and legacy.

Guests listening to Joy Harjo read from her poetry collection. Photographer: Austin Thomason



Latina/o Studies and Campus Spaces for Dialogue and Engagement

By Yeidy M. Rivero



*DACA Dreamers Event Presentation.
Photo by Yeidy Rivero*

The 2016-2017 academic year was full of intellectual and educational effervescence for the Latina/o Studies program. We organized events, collaborated closely with the graduate students' Latina/o Studies Workshop (LSW), and co-sponsored talks, workshops, and symposiums across campus.

Our signature event this past academic year was the Latina/o Studies Forum series. We envisioned "Forum" as an opportunity to create an open and safe communicative space wherein faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, as well as members of the Ann Arbor community, could engage in conversations about contemporary critical issues affecting Latinas/os locally and nationally. Panel participants included invited speakers from other institutions, University of Michigan faculty members, and graduate and undergraduate students.

Our first forum, "Pulse and Queer Latinidad," in September 2016, explored the media and general public's representation and discussion of the June 12, 2016 massacre at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

"WE ENVISIONED "FORUM" AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE AN OPEN AND SAFE COMMUNICATIVE SPACE"

Ramón Rivera-Servera, a leading scholar of performance and queer studies and an associate professor of performance studies at Northwestern University, led the panel in a discussion of the impact of the Orlando tragedy within the Latina/o and LGBT communities. University of Michigan participants included, Larry La Fountain-Stokes, associate professor of American Culture, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Women's Studies; Vicky Koski-Karell, doctoral student in Medicine and Anthropology; and Patrick Mullen-Coyoy, an honors undergraduate student majoring in Latina/o studies, Spanish, and History.

María Coterá, associate professor of American Culture and Women's Studies, moderated. The event was moving and emotional, during which participants and the public united to cope with the shock and pain of the Pulse tragedy.

On November 3, 2016, our second forum, "Latinas/os and the 2016 Election," considered Latinas/os' potential influence in the U.S. presidential election. We were fortunate to have three political science experts participating in this event.

Our former colleague, John Garcia, professor



Student presenting at DACA Dreamers Event. Photo by Yeidy Rivero

U-M faculty and graduate students. Photo by Yeidy Rivero



emeritus of Political Science and the Institute for Social Research, headlined the panel discussion. University of Michigan participants included, Mara Cecilia Ostfeld, assistant professor of Political Science, and Vanessa Cruz Nichols, doctoral candidate in Political Science. Silvia Pedraza, professor of Sociology and American Culture moderated. Our speakers highlighted the political trends across the ethnically diverse and regionally dispersed Latina/o communities.

Our third forum, "Immigration, DACA-Dreamers, and the University of Michigan," addressed the impact of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy at the national level and at the University of Michigan. This forum, from February 2, 2017, was connected to the University of Michigan's 2017 Bicentennial events. Karma R. Chávez, associate professor of Mexican American and Latina/o Studies



Latina/o Studies Faculty and Students
Photo by Yeidy Rivero

at the University of Texas-Austin led the panel. University of Michigan participants included Silvia Pedraza, professor of Sociology and American culture; Jorge Delva, Kristine A. Siefert Collegiate Professor of Social Work and director of the Community Engagement Program at the Institute for Clinical & Translational Research; and Dulce Rios, an undergraduate student majoring in Engineering. Lorraine M. Gutiérrez, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Psychology and Social Work moderated. The discussion was intellectually engaging and emotionally powerful. Hearing the struggles of a Michigan DACA-dreamer underscored the need for faculty, administrators, and students to recognize and respond to the challenges confronting some of our most vulnerable students in light of recent policy trends.

The Latina/o Studies Forum series was a huge success. Echoing the activism that has characterized Latina/o Studies at Michigan since its inception in 1984, the forums focused attention on contemporary and polarizing social and political topics. The high attendance at these events demonstrates the continuing need to create and maintain safe communicative spaces on campus and to cultivate conversations across multiple communities on campus and within the surrounding community.

In addition to the forums, Latina/o Studies participated in two other major events. In September 2016, the Latina/o Studies Workshop brought to campus Natalia Molina, professor of history and Latina/o studies at the University of

California, San Diego and a Michigan alum. Molina delivered her talk, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*, to a packed room of students and faculty. Latina/o Studies also participated in the President's Bicentennial Colloquium and discussed the work and impact of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who visited campus January 2017.



Latina/o Studies Faculty and Students Workshop
Photo by Yeidy Rivero

Presenter Karma Chavez.
Photo by Yeidy Rivero





ENGAGING THE DIGITAL WORLD

By John Cheney-Lippold

What does it mean to engage the digital world? This is the precise question we ask students enrolled in Digital Studies classes at the University of Michigan to think about. From a wide array of courses about video games, race and racism, the politics of code, histories of the World Wide Web, contemporary concerns about law and digital technology, questions of visual culture, and even the rhetoric of online dating, students in Digital Studies are asked to investigate how the digital changes us—and how we can participate in changing the digital.



*Guest Angela Washko Presenting.
Photo by Anna Fisher*

Adding to these lectures, we have kept developing a strong and vibrant community of digital researchers and teachers across nine different university departments. By engaging with the effects of digital technology from a wide variety of different academic and practical perspectives, students and faculty members in Digital Studies are able to uphold the University of Michigan as one of the foremost academic centers for digital scholarship in the world. We look forward to celebrating more years together, and are currently preparing many more exciting surprises and plans centered on digital research and teaching.

Part of these plans is continuing the work of The Precarity Lab, “an intergenerational network of scholars and activists at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor to interrogate how digital cultures produce, reproduce and intervene in precarity.” This interdisciplinary and collaborative research collective is composed of Digital Studies professors and graduates students Irina Aristarkhova, Iván Chaar-López, Anna Watkins Fisher, Tung-Hui Hu, Silvia Lindtner, and Lisa Nakamura.

In 2016, The Precarity Lab was awarded the inaugural University of Michigan Humanities Collaboratory grant. This competitive grant gives money to interdisciplinary research projects which are invested in modeling daring and collaborative humanities scholarship. In 2017, The Precarity Lab begins its second year of research around “the contradictions of a digital world in the making that perpetuates uneven access to work, education, and social capital even as it promises new possibilities for resistance and counterculture... from the placement of Palestinian Internet cables to the manufacture of electronics by Navajo women, from the production and deployment of drones on the U.S. Mexico border to maker-manufacturing cultures in urban China.”

And in April of 2017, we saw the second cohort of minors in Digital Studies graduate at our annual graduation ceremony. This year, an incredible group of 61 students were awarded the Digital Studies minor, and we look forward to even more graduates in the years to come.

While we say goodbye to these students as they move on to jobs in various technology companies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations, we welcome those incoming Digital Studies students who are committed to critically engaging questions of digital culture, digital life, and the digital future.

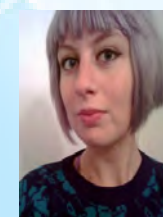
THIS YEAR'S DIGITAL STUDIES GUESTS INCLUDED:



Patrick Jagoda, from the University of Chicago, gave a talk on his work surrounding experimental games, political economy, and affect.



Seb Franklin, a Lecturer at King's College, traveled across the Atlantic Ocean to present on his new book project, *The Cybernetic Fantasy of Value*.



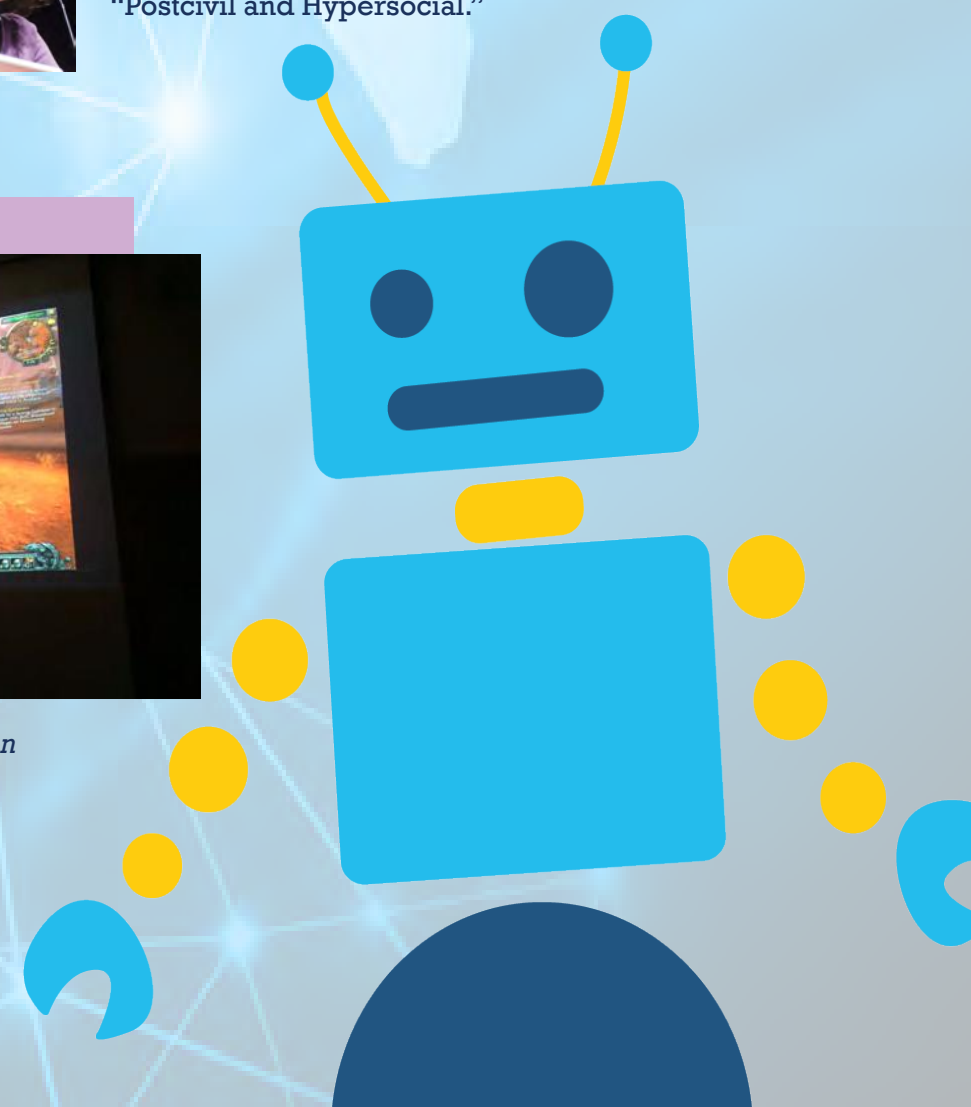
Angela Washko, the University of Michigan's Residential College's artist-in-residence, gave an artist talk on the possibilities for feminist public spheres in the digital world.



Tiziana Terranova, professor at the University of Naples L'Orientale, gave a lecture to a packed room on the history and future of social media, which she termed the “Postcivil and Hypersocial.”



*Guest Angela Washko Presentation
Photo by Anna Fisher*



Welcome to our new American Culture Faculty!

Melissa Borja



A specialist in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies, I research and teach about religion, migration, race and ethnicity, and political development. My work is animated by a deep fascination with religious pluralism and how Americans have understood and attempted to manage religious difference. I am especially interested in how religious difference has figured into constructions of racial and ethnic difference and how people have handled religious difference in the public square and also in their private interactions.

I explore these themes in my book project, *To Follow the New Way: Hmong Refugee Resettlement and American Religious Pluralism*, which is currently under contract with Harvard University Press. In this book, I show how refugee resettlement in the United States shaped the religious beliefs, practices, and identities of Hmong refugees from Laos. I argue that refugee resettlement changed Hmong religious life in two ways. On one level, American refugee policies disrupted the practice of indigenous Hmong religion. At the same time, in the American system of refugee resettlement, federal and local governments relied on religious agencies and churches to provide essential resettlement services. These public-private, church-state administrative

arrangements initiated close and influential relationships between animist Hmong refugees and Christian resettlement workers. In these two ways, the American refugee resettlement program helped to introduce new religious alternatives to Hmong refugees at the same time that they rendered traditional religious options unviable. Refugee resettlement produced these pressures for religious change despite sincere efforts on the part of governments and voluntary agencies to make refugee assistance a pluralistic and religiously neutral enterprise. Ultimately, my book reveals the religious repercussions of the entanglement of church and state, as well as the challenges of putting ideals of religious pluralism into practice.

My interest in migration and pluralism is a central part of my teaching mission. At U-M, I am teaching courses in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies—Introduction to A/PIA Studies in the fall and Asian American History in the winter term. In these courses, I introduce students to an important but often overlooked dimension of A/PIA life: the fact that the migration of diverse Asian people from the Pacific world is one reason why the United States is more religiously diverse than ever before. I look forward to using these courses as an opportunity not only to educate students about A/PIA life, but also to train students in the practices of doing archival and oral history research to document the changing ethno-racial and religious demographics of their community.

My journey to Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies and American Culture departs from the usual path one might expect. I have been at the UM since 1987 starting as an Assistant Professor of Biology and now as a Professor of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology. My teaching involves courses in Neuroscience and my laboratory seeks to understand how genes regulate the formation and function of brain neural circuits. I helped establish the popular Neuroscience Major in LSA and have trained nearly a hundred undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral researchers in my laboratory at the UM.

I did not study biology but rather majored in engineering as an undergraduate at Case Western Reserve University. For a variety of reasons, I worked with autistic children at a residential treatment center in Ohio after graduating. This was a life changing experience, which lead me to wonder how our brains make sense of our world, especially one so social, and what sort of differences in brain structure and function might lead to syndromes such as autism. This interest in the brain lead me to study how neural signaling generates behavior as a PhD student at Stanford University. Over time, I became convinced that studying model organisms with simpler brains, especially ones that can be manipulated genetically, would be a useful strategy to uncover the wonders of the brain. Thus I began my studies of the nervous system at the UM with zebrafish, which are

vertebrates that can be studied genetically to identify and analyze genes important for the development, activity and function of the nervous system. Early on our studies helped establish that in the vertebrate brain neurons make connections by forming extensions that are guided by cues within the brain to their target neurons. More recently, we discovered a gene important for the activity of muscles that when mutated in humans causes a hereditary muscle disease called Native American myopathy that can lead to death by age 18. The identification of the Native American myopathy gene allowed for genetic tests to determine whether an individual carries this gene. Hopefully future research will lead to the development of therapeutic agents and drugs for treatment of this disease.

So how did my interest in A/PIA issues develop? I was born in Japan and moved to the US when I was 7 years old. My family lived in Chicago because my grandparents moved there after being interned in camps in Arkansas during World War II. The schools I attended had few Asian students and I was often the only Asian kid in my class. College was both exciting and challenging since I was the first in my family to attend college. During that time I became aware of the two-sided nature of our country: the great opportunities that were open to talented and hardworking individuals and the discrimination faced by ethnic minorities including Asians and Asian-Americans.

Recently I became more interested in the issues and challenges faced by Asians and Asian/Pacific Islander Americans in the US, especially the paucity of A/PIA faculty in leadership positions at American colleges and universities including the UM. I grew up in the US at a time when my parents' generation was discovering and fighting against the glass ceiling that limited opportunities for minorities. I am dismayed by the extent and prevalence of the significant inequities that still exist even in our institutions of higher learning. I along with several colleagues, including Amy Stillman the past Director of A/PIA Studies, thus founded Indigo: The LSA Asian, Asian-American and Pacific Islander American Faculty Alliance to promote the interests of APIA faculty, staff and students at the UM. The administrative home of Indigo is A/PIA Studies and I am honored to be the new Director of A/PIA Studies. I look forward to interacting with American Culture faculty, students and staff to pursue the goals of A/PIA research and teaching at the UM.



John Kuwada

Our Welcome to New Faculty Continues!

Scott Larson



I study and teach American cultural history, and I focus on transgender history and gender and sexuality in early American culture. Often, studies of gender and sexuality focus on relatively recent time periods, and on contemporary culture. This is particularly true of transgender studies, which is an emerging field that employs relatively new and rapidly changing terminology and methods. So, in studying gender and sexuality in early America, I really grapple with some central questions of method: how should scholars understand sex, gender, and “transgender” in periods where those things often took very different form than they have in the twentieth-century west? How might scholars find sources in unexpected places or read sources in new ways? These are questions I grapple with in my research, and these are also questions I expect my students to engage as we read historical scholarship and dig into archival collections online and in the physical collections at the University of Michigan libraries.

In studying sex before “sexuality” and gender before “transgender,” I look at early American religious movements,

where religious difference and revival preaching was condemned and satirized as a threat to gender norms and sexual morality, and routinely linked to disability and to emerging ideas about racial difference. In the letters and diaries of religious seekers and in pamphlets and satires denouncing religious revivalism, I found that the excitements of early evangelical movements acted as “revival sexualities” that remade public sensations and individual subjects. Revivalists like George Whitefield demanded that hearers feel and be undone God’s power, and critics accused revivalists of inciting madness and spreading licentiousness. Intense felt religious experiences could also remake gender beyond worldly categories. For example, I study the controversies surrounding the Publick Universal Friend (1776-1819), who claimed in 1776 to have died and been resurrected as a genderless spirit. For the Friend and the Friend’s followers, this theological genderlessness offered new ways to engage gender beyond worldly categories of male and female.

I am particularly excited to be teaching courses in Transgender American Histories and Early American Cultural History this semester, and in Religion and Sexuality in US Cultures in future semesters. I am also acting as the departmental advisor to majors and minors in American culture, which offers me an opportunity to really get to know our students and our program, and to participate in the future work of American Culture, both within the department, and in the impressive work that our students and alumni do in the worlds beyond the Michigan campus.

In Memoriam

Richard Meisler

A Man of Gentle Strength

By Alan Wald

Dick Meisler was a man of gentle strength, comfortable in self-revelation and free of sharp elbows. I knew him as my teacher, when I was an undergraduate at Antioch College in the late 1960s; as a friend, when he and his partner, Miriam, moved to Ann Arbor in the late 1970s; and then as a colleague, when he started teaching in American Culture in 2000. Dick could be folksy, earnest, learned, empathetic, candid, and funny. He radiated an excitement about learning and enjoying culture that many people his age lost long ago. He really knew his Dharma---his path of life, his place in the universe. He also understood a tremendous amount about many subjects although he was never one to puff up his own achievements. Dick was excellent at his teaching/advising job, always in the vanguard of the new, right up to Massive Online Open Courses. He wrote a fine book in 1984, *Trying Freedom*, in a voice that was intelligent, evocative and fully alive. His politics were simple; when there is a catastrophe, as with the Hurricane Katrina in 2005, you go down there and help build houses. The effects of one life on another often take years to understand and appreciate. But I will be hearing a voice in my head that says: “Be more like Dick—with his guard-down posture that is open-hearted and open-minded, always regarding others as unique persons-- not objects.”



Tammy Zill

By Anthony Mora



Tammy Zill filled our department with a genuine warmth that touched all the members of our community. Few words seem appropriate enough to capture the collective sorrow we felt after her death last spring. Tammy started working for American Culture just as I took up a four-year stint heading the department’s undergraduate programs. She became my friend and collaborator as we faced problems both mundane and major. Tammy never shied from speaking up if she thought things could be improved or if she found somebody needing our help. Many mornings I started my day in the office with Tammy asking “Would you mind reaching out to . . .?” She might have been asking me to check in with a faculty member who had terrible news or to call an advisor if one of our students had hit a bureaucratic wall. Knowing that she was looking out for us all made American Culture simply a better place. Even with our great sadness, I know that Tammy would not want us grieving and somber. She enjoyed the sparkling side of things, which especially came through when her job engaged her creative side. Any one of us who had the good fortune to spend time with Tammy will never forget her humor, kindness, and style.

AWARDS

Joel S. Siegel Scholarship

Each year, American Culture recognizes outstanding merit among our undergraduate majors and minors through the Joel S. Siegel Scholarship in American Culture. This year, thanks to the ongoing generosity of the Siegel family, we were able to award two extraordinary individuals this honor.

Dayle Mass, a double major in our Latina/o Studies program and Communications, originally planned to focus on Spanish. Dayle, however, changed course entirely thanks to her experience in our classrooms early in her time at Michigan. "I took my first Latina/o Studies class with the intention it would count as cognate credit," she remembers, "but shortly after, I knew I wanted to sign up for more Latina/o Studies courses. I was amazed at how many different topics exist within the Latina/o Studies Program. I found what I wanted to do." Dayle realized that she could continue to master the Spanish language while also becoming better aware of the unique histories and cultural practices of Latino populations in the United States. She hopes to take that knowledge and new skills from her Latina/o Studies major into the business world. Ideally, she would like a career developing engaging and respectful advertising for the Latina/o market.



Taylor Bradburn, a Digital Studies minor, has a similar story as Dayle. She, too, found an undiscovered interest when she took one of our core classes in Digital Studies. "Learning about the change from analog to digital," she recalled, "and then going out into the real world and seeing it happening was unlike any educational process I had been a part of before." Taylor, a first-generation college student from Flint, plans a career in marketing where she can merge her training in Digital Studies and Communications into practical strategies.

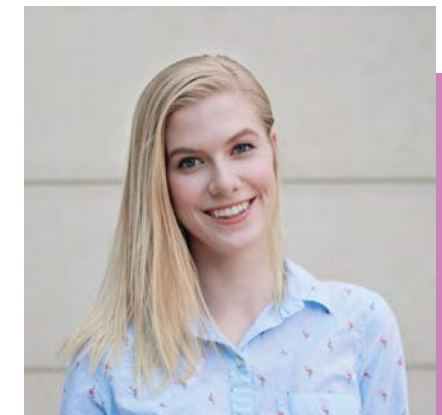
Richard Meisler Writing Award

Starting this year, American Culture has honored Prof. Meisler's memory with an annual writing award named for him. Open to all currently declared undergraduate majors and minors in American Culture, this award recognizes the best essays in American studies. Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Miriam Meisler, we are able to give two awards this year.

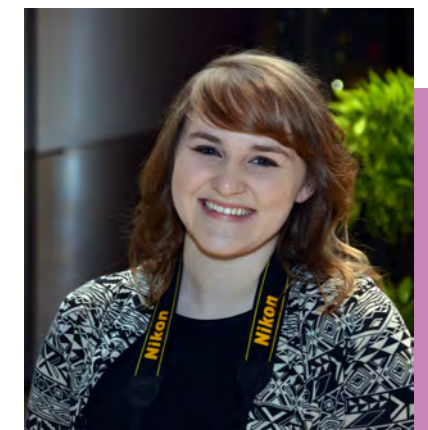
Ashley Bock submitted an essay entitled "Detroit Skylines." Ashley is an Art and Design major with a minor in American Culture. The selection committee had been impressed with the ways Ashley took an unexpected topic, Detroit's skyline, to make critical observations about the city's struggles. The skyline, Ashley reminds us, has been used in advertising, photography, and even handmade items to represent the entire city. Although seemingly a benign choice, Ashley offered a compelling critique about its use. The over emphasis on the city's business districts, she argued, fit a larger pattern that privileged certain types of capital and economic classes. The majority of the people who compose Detroit's labor and residents became erased as they had no connection to the skyscrapers so often celebrated as the "heart" of Detroit.



This year, American Culture also awarded one essay written by a student in an American Culture course who was not necessarily a major or minor in our department. Jocelyn Reinert's paper, "Selling Humanitarianism," won that competition. Jocelyn explored two sets of photo images that appeared in National Geographic magazine in 2015. Although the images evoked emotions from viewers through their subjects and composition, she argued that there had been a disconnect with the accompanying text. Readers viewed individuals in distress, but without a conclusive way in which they could provide aide. The danger, Jocelyn argued, becomes that the images of suffering became a spectacle rather than a call for action.



Charlene Franke's essay "Southwest Native American Artistry in the Twentieth Century" considered artists who trained at Dorothy Dunn's Studio School at the Santa Fe Indian School in New Mexico. Charlene argued that the Euro American teachers and collectors at the Dunn School proscribed the aesthetics and compositions of Native artists. Rather than embracing the talents and traditions that Native students brought with them, the school's teachers sought conformity based on their own assumptions about what qualified as truly artistic. Charlene then explored how Allan Houser, a Fort Still Apache, adopted and then challenged those practices in his own work. Houser managed to disrupt the status quo and develop an art style that he found more genuine to his own sense of identity. Charlene is a Business Administration major and a minor in our Native American Studies program.



CONGRATULATIONS AMERICAN CULTURE 2017 GRADUATES!



AC Ph.D Graduates: Photographer: Eric Bronson

This year American Culture had 127 Graduates! With Bachelor's in American Culutre and Latina/o Studies and Minors in American Culture, Latina/o Studies, Asian and Pacific Islander American Studies, Arab and Muslim American Studies and Digital Studeis, and Native American Studies.

Congratulations to all our new graduates!

Bachelor of American Culture

Khoury Nathanael Crenshaw
Andrew Daniel Dakich
Jared Micah Day
Wyatt Elliott Frank
Andrew Galler
Mariane F Gantino
Mollie Ann Gordier
Emily R Kearns
Jessica Anne Lakind
Kelsey Mannarino
John O'Korn

Alexandra Conner Ohman
Jae Hyoung Park
Max Pinson
Melissa Emily Schoenfeld
Patrick White
Joseph Mitchell Ziegelman
Michael James Zimmer

Backelor of Latina/o Studies

Ramiro Alvarez
Lizette Angelica Esquivel
Jose Luis Gomez Jr.
Patrick Daniel Mullen

Minor in American Culture

Stephanie Lauren Briffa
Jonathan Dan Chen
Gabrielle Lucia Cronick
Alice Danelia

Tyler Robert Dayton
Elizabeth Falter
Charein Radwan Faraj
Lauren Kelly Harris
Dylan James Henderson
Lesley Nicole Heyman
Scott Thomas Jaracz
Jenna Mae Jin
Sophie Alexandra Lev
Kim Nguyen
Michelle Renee Rabaut
Kavita Kaushik Raval
Kellie Amanda Rizzo
Joshua Robertarno Sherick
Samantha Singer
Gregory Kan Strasser
Marisa Tucci-Berube
Anna Catherine Varsam
Zachary Ryan Wall

Minor in Arab and Muslim American Studies

Samantha Abdallah
Tamer Nader Abuhlawah
Asma Ali
Gabrielle Olivia Borg
Omar Ismail Hasan
Mona Asma Iskandarani
Devin Boulos Jones
Nicole Miller
Danielle Rose Rabie

Minor in Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies

Brittney Joyce Elliott
Daniel Huy Huynh
Tina Yu

Minor in Digital Studies

Kate Rose Andriola
Georgia Grace Armstrong

Emily Hannah Baer
Jordan David Berman
Amalie Bodd
Lauren Jane Bryden
Stacy Popick Bubes
Kathleen Marie Casey
Laura Gratch Cohen
Katherine Eileen Donnelly
Molly Eisner
Madeline Rose Fasel
Jacob Aaron Ferguson
Christina Dorothea Flom
Elizabeth Therese Fox
Haley Marcil Fox
Tizarat Kaur Gill
Sarah Kathryn Gorcyca
Annaliese Gottschalk
Alison Lena Hacker
Alison Hahn
Savanah Jane Harvey



Photographer: Eric Bronson

Minor in Digital Studies Continued

Andrew Grady Hatton
Laura Leatha Hindes
Lawrence Stephen Jasinski III
Tabassom Kalami
Patrick John Lass
Erica Lee
Katherine Anne Lehman
Hali Reid Levandoski
Mia Christine Licciardi
Mary Maher
Leon Ma
Bryan James Matecun
Paige Charlotte McDonagh
Kristen Minerva
Madeline Marie Moog
Alexandra Lyn Nadel
Dara Morgan Portnoi
Mohammad Rashed Rabaa
Elliott Kyle Rains
William James Raynor
Rebecca Sarah Rothbart
Alissa Hanna Rowens
Abigail Marie Rozich
Tessa Erin Rubach
Daniel Seamusronayne Ryan
Sydney Lauren Sakwa
Sylvia Long Sankaran
Allison Schieber
Sabrina K Schnapp
Melissa Emily Schoenfeld
Christopher Seeman
Natalie Victoria Sherer
Alison Goodspeed Shuart
Eden Rebecca Shulruff
Dylan Silverstein
Zackary Tyler Vandommelen
Marley Frances Walker
Caroline Elizabeth Winograd
Katherine Mika Yamano

Minor in Latina/o Studies

Jose Eduardo Davila Jr
Yadah Vigil Ramirez

Minor in Native American Studies

Dylan Gregory Nelson

Ph.D. in American Culture

Yamil Avivi
Lloyd Barba
Jason Coranez Bolton
Elizabeth Harmon
Cavar Reid
Wendy Sung



*American Culture Graduate
Photo by Eric Bronson*



Former American Culture Chairs: Phil Deloria, Gregory Dowd, and June Howard with current American Culture Chair, Alex Stern.

**Thank you, American Culture community, for
your continued support!**