

Undergraduate Humanities Forum

COLOR

16TH annual
RESEARCH
CONFERENCE

MATTERS

PENN HUMANITIES FORUM • UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

MARCH 27

9:00 AM-3:30 PM

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KISLAK CENTER

6TH FL • VAN PELT LIBRARY
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At the inaugural ceremony of the Penn Humanities Forum in 1999, William Ferris, then Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, called the humanities “the intellectual air we breathe, the cultural sea we swim in. It is where humankind’s best insights into our values, traditions, and ideals can be found.”

The Penn Humanities Forum is charged with taking a fresh look at those insights that touch on the human experience. Our goals are to demonstrate how vital the humanities are to the life of the mind and the health of society, and how the humanities are connected with many areas of inquiry in medicine, law, business, and the social sciences.

Our annual theme-based public events and fellowship programs, together with other efforts such as the new Digital Humanities Forum and many university and cultural collaborations, invite people of all ages and places to join us in discovering our common stake in the “thinking arts.”

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The Penn Humanities Forum is deeply grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its generous support of programs to promote interdisciplinary research in the humanities for students and faculty.

UNDERGRADUATE HUMANITIES FORUM

16th Annual Research Conference

COLOR MATTERS

A program of the
2014-2015 Penn Humanities Forum on Color

27 March 2015
Kislak Center, Van Pelt Library
University of Pennsylvania

2014-2015 Penn Humanities Forum
Andrew W. Mellon Undergraduate Fellows in the Humanities

Anwar Akrouk	Abrina Hyatt	Jose Romero
Juan Cabrera	Danielle Kerker	Kimberly Schreiber
Antonios Cotzias	Abigail Koffler	Brendan Van Gorder
Leah Davidson	Kimberly Kolor	Melanie White

UHF Faculty Advisor
Timothy Rommen, Professor of Music and Africana Studies

Welcome

Welcome, colleagues and friends, to “Color Matters,” the sixteenth annual research conference of the Undergraduate Humanities Forum (UHF) at the University of Pennsylvania. We acknowledge our presence on occupied land and thank the Lenape nation. The 2014-2015 Mellon Research fellows have organized their projects around the topic of this year’s Penn Humanities Forum, “Color.” In addition to conducting independent research, they have explored the topic as a group through bimonthly meetings, community-building events, and excursions.

This year, we discussed and analyzed many ways that color comes to color. Among our many synaesthetic experiences, we discussed genealogy and reparation in the novel *White Teeth* over tea with the incredible Zadie Smith, explored colors of sound with the world-renowned Daedalus Quartet, and cooked up some colorful South Asian delicacies with the amazing NYU food studies scholar Krishnendu Ray.

Color cuts across our individual research projects as well as our personal lives. In seeing the color red, we can recall the bloody handprint borne by protesters in support of racial justice or feel the warmth of family or passions. Green can evoke the comforting cycle of natural regeneration, economic prosperity, and a return to peace after periods of civil unrest. We interpret colors differently depending on our background and frame of reference, and only in coming together do we start to comprehend the many facets and hues of the human experience.

Our research projects have emerged from our curiosity towards interpretations of color in different economic, cultural, and historical contexts – as sociopolitical phenomena, visual stimulus, and material object.

The fellows engage with color across a wide spectrum of locations, methodologies, and research questions. These eleven presentations have been loosely grouped into three categories that illustrate how light, darkness, and color interact with outside media and human cognition. You will first hear from “Transmissions,” a vibrant discussion exploring ways the arts communicate the sociopolitical, the transitory, and the psychological. Next, we have “Saturation” a group of papers unpacking how communities employ colorful technologies that contest and create ethnic identity amidst marginalization. Our final panel “Diffractions” subverts narrow understandings of color by exploring the (im)possibilities of political mobilization.

Over the year, the UHF Mellon Fellows have collaborated as a group and with a number of Penn’s talented faculty and staff. We thank all those involved with our individual research and with conference planning. This year’s UHF would not

have been possible without Associate Director Jennifer Conway's passion and Administrative Coordinator Sara Varney's invaluable assistance. We thank Dr. Chi-ming Yang for her leadership providing us with a dynamic and versatile topic. We are all greatly indebted to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its generosity and support, and for the incredible opportunity it has provided us. Words cannot express our genuine gratitude for Professor Timothy Rommen's warmth and wisdom as faculty advisor for our UHF. We thank all of you for coming out today and for your continued support. Join us today as we share with you the diverse ways in which color matters.

Leah Davidson

Andrew W. Mellon Research Fellow and Chair, UHF

Jose Romero

Kimberly Kolor

Andrew W. Mellon Research Fellows and Steering Committee, UHF

Acknowledgements

The Undergraduate Humanities Forum Mellon Fellows thank the following Penn faculty and other mentors for their generous guidance and support.

Herman Beavers

Justin McDaniel

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Amy Offner

Beth Wenger

John L. Jackson, Jr.

Grace Sanders Johnson

Bethany Wiggin

Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet

Teren Sevea

Ann Kuttner

Ramya Sreenivasan

COLOR MATTERS

16th Annual Undergraduate Humanities Forum Research Conference
Friday, March 27, 2015

9:00-9:30a | Registration and Breakfast

9:30-9:45a | Opening Remarks

Timothy Rommen, Faculty Advisor, UHF; Professor of Music and Africana Studies
Leah Davidson, Chair and Mellon Research Fellow, UHF

9:45-11:00a | TRANSMISSIONS

Moderator: Ann Kuttner, Associate Professor of History of Art

Juan Cabrera, CAS, 2017; Linguistics

(De)colonizing Representations: Influence of 20th Century Indigenous/
Indigenist Art in Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico

Leah Davidson, Wharton, 2016; Management and Global Innovation

The Colors of Environmental Art: A Study of Psychology and Activism

Abrina Hyatt, CAS, 2015; English

Finding God in Oneself & *For Colored Girls*: A Revolutionary Performance
of Language, Naming & Spacing

Kimberly Schreiber, CAS, 2015; Comparative Literature

Documenting Disremembrance: Histories of Loss in Contemporary
Chinese Representation

11:05a-12:20p | SATURATIONS

Moderator: Jim Sykes, Assistant Professor of Music

Anwar Akrouk, CAS, 2015; History

The Last Jihad: Arab Nationalism, the Fall of the Ottoman Empire,
and Minorities

Danielle Kerker, CAS, 2015; History

"The Implacable Surge of History": Investigating Jewish Activism in Atlanta
During the Civil Rights Movement

Abigail Koffler, CAS, 2015; History

'He too has a right to be educated': Inclusion and Identity in Ecuador's
Indigenous Movement, 1927-2009

Kimberly Kolor, CAS, 2015; Religious Studies, South Asia Studies

Color-coding the Margins: Personal & Public Beautification and
Community Identity in Eastern Sri Lanka

12:30-1:30p | Lunch

1:45-3:00p | DIFFRACTIONS

Moderator: **John L. Jackson, Jr.**, Dean, School of Social Policy & Practice; Richard Perry University Professor; Penn Integrates Knowledge (PIK) Professor

Jose Romero, CAS, 2015; Anthropology

Sensing Inhumanity: Brownness at the Limits of the Political in Washington

Brendan Van Gorder, CAS, 2015; Political Science, Sociology

How Sight Creates Prejudice: The Marketing and Protesting of Brazil's World Cup

Melanie White, CAS, 2015; Cultural Anthropology

As Long as You're a Black Wo/man You're an African: Creole Diasporic Politics in the Age of Mestizo Nationalism

3:00-3:30p | CLOSING REMARKS

Kimberly Kolor and Jose Romero, Steering Committee and Mellon Research Fellows, UHF

Anwar Akrouk

CAS, 2015; History

The Last Jihad: Arab Nationalism, the Fall of the Ottoman Empire, and Minorities

Color has been a unique way to distinguish different nations. When a nation emerges, its most prominent symbol is its flag, with each color meant to represent a different ideal. A group of people forms a nation to distinguish themselves from “others.” These “others” could be ethnically, linguistically, religiously, or culturally separate - they are distinguished as different. What is the relation between the nascent Arab nationalist movement and those not represented by the colors of the flag? In particular, how did this affect other ethnic minorities within Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire and others who were represented by the colors of the flag by virtue of their Arab ethnicity, but who came from religiously distinct backgrounds such as Christians, Druze, and Shi'ites?

Juan Cabrera

CAS, 2017; Linguistics

(De)colonizing Representations: Influence of 20th Century Indigenous/Indigenist Art in Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico

How has 20th century Indigenous/Indigenist art influenced the ways in which Indigenous peoples of Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico were viewed? By comparing painting's representative qualities and photography's manipulation of reality, we can begin to understand what the art evoked in the public sphere, and how it functioned to change the public's perceptions of Indigenous peoples in these areas. Shifting representations and the concept of (de)colonizing representations will illuminate the ways in which people have viewed varying degrees of indigeneity.

Antonios Cotzias*

CAS, 2014; Philosophy, Politics, and Economics

The Exile of Darkness

This phenomenological and experiential analysis of the work of darkness in Friedrich Schelling's monumental text *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* is read in conjunction with Ingeborg Bachmann's poetic opus. Both thinker and poet have verged deep into existence as their world has gone through the traumas of alienation, silence, and horror. The relation between darkness and the voice, the devastating dimension of beauty and life itself, as well as singing's mourning and relation to pain are examined. The calling of these two voices can shed light on the darkened truth of their night, and for them find the shade that allows for the “colors” that can guide us.

*graduated December 2014

Leah Davidson

Wharton, 2016; Management and Global Innovation

The Colors of Environmental Art: A Study of Psychology and Activism

Environmental art can reinterpret natural processes, generate awareness about environmental problems, restore damaged ecosystems, and convey the power and beauty of nature and wildlife. The purpose of this project is to investigate the symbolism of color in environmental art and photography and its relationship to human psychology.

To survey the field of environmental art, I visited galleries and interviewed artists in the field, with the purpose of analyzing 50 significant pieces of art that represent a variety of genres, colors, and cultural heritages. The final project will analyze the future potential of art as a tool for social change and lead to the creation of a digital platform at Penn to showcase interdisciplinary student projects.

Abrina Hyatt

CAS, 2015; English

Finding God in Oneself & For Colored Girls: A Revolutionary Performance of Language, Naming & Spacing

This project analyzes the powerful implications of Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf* in terms of the language of "choreopoetry," the identity politics present in the experiences of Black women, and the elements of spirituality that move Shange's work forward. I argue that *For Colored Girls* offers Black women a space to celebrate the fullness and diversity of themselves, regardless of where they fall within the spectrum of characters represented. Shange's work is groundbreaking in its usage of dance and poetry as joint storytelling language, and with Black women as the titular characters and target audience for this piece. *For Colored Girls* reshapes how we can continue to enjoy creative processes in theater, writing, poetry, dance, literature, and so much more. This piece has and continues to breathe life and beauty into stories that often go ignored.

Danielle Kerker

CAS, 2015; History

"The Implacable Surge of History": Investigating Jewish Activism in Atlanta During the Civil Rights Movement

Existing works on southern Jewry illustrate how most southern Jews were concerned with self-preservation during the Civil Rights Movement. Many historians have untangled perceptions of southern Jewish detachment from civil rights issues to explain how individuals and communities were torn between their sympathy towards the African-American plight and Jewish vulnerability during a period of heightened racial tension. This project draws connections among the American Civil Rights Movement, the southern Jewish experience, and Atlanta race relations in order to identify instances of southern Jewish involvement in the fight for racial equality. What were the forms of activism Jews chose, the circumstances that shaped those decisions, and the underlying goals behind them? Studying Atlanta's Jewish communities during the 1950s and 1960s helps broaden the conversation on Jewish activism, raise questions of southern Jewish identity, and uncover distinctive avenues for change. Analysis suggests that, although their story is less known, Jewish organizations and individuals in Atlanta found ways to contribute to the fight for civil rights equality within the context of the Jim Crow South.

Abigail Koffler

CAS, 2015; History

'He too has a right to be educated': Inclusion and Identity in Ecuador's Indigenous Movement, 1927-2009

In Ecuador, a nation with a large Indigenous population, the question of education is at once political and revolutionary. In the 1930s, Indigenous activists learned tactics from

communist and socialist unions and set up many schools in regional groups. A generation of activists, led by Dolores Cacuengo made tremendous strides. In 1988, the Ministry of Education officially assumed responsibility for Indigenous education under coalition pressure, but it has since failed to capture the nuances of the nation's Indigenous communities and their expectations for education. Meanwhile, the Indigenous groups have mobilized into a political party that hopes to redefine Ecuadorian nationality against centuries of structural oppression. They are waging vital fights for resources and respect.

Kimberly Kolor

CAS, 2015; Religious Studies, South Studies

Color-coding the Margins: Personal & Public Beautification and Community Identity in Eastern Sri Lanka

In post-conflict Sri Lanka, communal tensions continue to be negotiated, contested, and remade. Color codes virtually every aspect of daily life in salient local idioms. Scholars rarely focus on the lived visual semiotics of local, everyday exchanges from how women ornament their nails to how communities beautify their open—and sometimes contested—spaces. I draw on my ethnographic data from Eastern Sri Lanka and explore 'color' as negotiated through personal and public ornaments and notions of beauty with a material culture focus. I argue for a broad view of 'public,' which includes often marginalized and feminized public modalities. This view also explores how beauty and ornament are salient technologies of community and cultural authenticity that build on histories of ethnic imaginaries.

Jose Romero

CAS, 2015; Anthropology

Sensing Inhumanity: Brownness at the Limits of the Political in Washington

Growing demands for alternative diets are filtered from the perspective of nation-building and agro-food employees in Washington State. Refusing food as the antithesis of death, brownness emerges as a conceptual frame that foregrounds multiple bodies and actors (human animals, nonhuman animals, and matter) simultaneously as it holds onto ways of being-in-common within scarcity and disavowal. "Sensing Inhumanity" inhabits the limits of nationalist political mobilization for brown bodies by exploring labor embodiment (pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and the sun) and the criminalization of food and color itself (illegalized food trucks and police brutality). Multimedia (video, images, and geographic information systems) and ethnographic writing invite a collective witnessing to our own obligations to the violence constitutive of food production in the U.S. today. Ultimately, how would it feel to embrace a synaesthetic politics of brown alimentary obligation?

Kimberly Schreiber

CAS, 2015; Comparative Literature

Documenting Disremembrance: Histories of Loss in Contemporary Chinese Representation

In places like contemporary China, where legal adjudication for past wrongdoings is impossible, an aesthetic engagement with the experience of loss has become essential to activating these historical remains and undermining violent narratives of progress.

Tracing several generations' aesthetic responses to the Cultural Revolution, the Tiananmen Square Massacre, and the present day influx of global capital, I advocate for a specific type of aesthetic practice that elides the distinction between the documentary method and abstract practice. By deliberately conflating these categories I argue that these works are united in their quest to dismantle dominant ideologies, and undermine authoritative narratives by making visible their flaws and contradictions with everyday reality. Moreover, my research illuminates an evolving relationship to the documentary method - one that expands and challenges existing definitions of realism. Ultimately, my research is based on an ethical framework which demands a reorientation of our historical perspective, and a new understanding of history that is not couched in teleological notions of progress.

Brendan Van Gorder

CAS, 2015; Political Science, Sociology

How Sight Creates Prejudice: The Marketing and Protesting of Brazil's World Cup

How do images affect people? It turns out, much of our conscious thought is heavily shaped by the meanings our subconscious draws from images. Through simple exposure to images, we subconsciously form preferences and prejudices, which we then (often unknowingly) try to rationalize. Through the lenses of Psychology, Marketing, and Brendan's camera, I explore why, "what you think about Brazil's World Cup" is actually the images of partying you've seen (and the images of police brutality) that you haven't. An awareness of how images affect your thoughts may help you better think through your emotions and thoughts towards Ferguson, the Middle East, and the people in your daily life.

Melanie White

CAS, 2015; Cultural Anthropology

As Long as You're a Black Wo/man You're an African: Creole Diasporic Politics in the Age of Mestizo Nationalism

Nicaragua, along with most—if not all—Central American nations, is seldom considered to have a Black or Afro-Latino population. Despite the legacies of colonial Black erasure that bleed into the present day, however, Nicaragua's Southern Atlantic Coast in particular has been home to Afro-descendants since the early 17th century. Part of Nicaragua's historical narrative of Black erasure has to do with the white supremacist mestizo nationalism that has plagued the nation since before independence in 1821. Through an exploration of Atlantic Coast history, Creole ethno-genesis, and the racist mestizo nationalist practices of the Nicaraguan state, this project highlights the emerging social movement of Creole Black diasporic politics and argues that Creoles are not solely operating under Gramscian "common sense," as has been previously theorized. Instead, they are also imagining what a "larger freedom" might look like outside national, legal, and political boundaries.

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