

**SIMPSON CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES**  
**Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students 2006**

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENTS

2006 Fellows

**Deborah Bassett** (Communication)

Deborah Bassett is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication where she is studying cultural aspects of communication and the ethnography of speaking. Additionally, she is a research assistant at the UW Center for Workforce Development where she is conducting qualitative research as part of a multi-institution project funded by the National Science Foundation to address social and ethical issues posed by the emergent science and technology of nanoscience and nanotechnology. Grounded in a perspective that considers discourse as socially constructed and embodying particular cultural worlds, her research is concerned with interpreting scientific culture for the non-scientist through an analysis of the language scientists use to describe their research to the public, particularly issues of social consequence and ethical concern. She is explicitly concerned with identifying ways to improve dialogue between scientists and the public by addressing how the language (and culture) reflected by scientific discourse addresses, or fails to address, public concerns. One of her professional goals is to find ways to integrate her scholarly work into public scholarship in order to contribute in a relevant and meaningful way to the community outside the academic environment.

**Tami Blumenfield** (Anthropology)

I am currently completing my third year of work in the Sociocultural Anthropology subfield of the Anthropology Department. In March, I returned from a seven-month research period in southwest China's Yunnan Province. I find action-oriented research, which involves community members in scholarly research projects, most meaningful. Therefore, I collaborated with the curators of the Moso Folk Museum to hold a participatory video training course, and to organize the first village-based film festival in China. Combined with ethnographic engagement with visiting filmmakers, this project offered a multi-layered view of processes of representation in an ethnic minority community. It also began discussions in that community about ethical filmmaking practices, which will inform future collaborations with outside filmmakers.

I also serve as the secretary of a locally based non-profit organization. The Cool Mountain Education Fund, which I helped found in 2005, links an academic research project in China with a broader community effort to support students from the Cool Mountain (Liangshan) region there. I look forward to learning about other ways to connect my research interests with non-academic audiences and participants in the 2006 Institute.

**Anne Bonds** (Geography)

I am a PhD Candidate in the Department of Geography and plan to conduct my dissertation field research this summer and fall. My broad research interests include feminist political economy, critical development studies, and critical theories of difference. My dissertation examines rural prison growth in the American Northwest as it has been framed as a strategy for economic development in communities experiencing deep poverty. The project questions how it is that prison expansion into rural communities is framed almost exclusively in the terms of economic development, generally void of any discussion concerning the rapid expansion of the US penal system, of the prisoners on which this form of community development depends, or – even if narrowly economic - of the incredible financial burden that punishment expenditures place upon states and communities in increasing fiscal crisis. My research explores the ways in which the rural prison geography of the Northwest is linked to the material and discursive constructions of those in poverty and of those deemed worthy of being 'locked up' and how these narratives are sustained through the relations of race, ethnicity, gender, and class and other axes of difference within my four case studies. I look forward to the opportunity of thinking in more detail with others about public scholarship, particularly as my project necessitates close collaboration and commitment to the communities in which I will work.

**Calla Chancellor** (Women Studies)

My research interests are varied and include the intersections of queer and feminist theories, anti-racist organizing and pedagogy, visual cultural studies, and youth culture. Examining the social construction of adolescence and the experiences of adolescents themselves, my doctoral research focuses on the articulations of identity by and for LGBT/Queer young people in various discourse domains, specifically the media, education and academic research.

**Emily Clark** (English)

As a graduate student in the English department who works in both Textual Studies and Women Studies I have a strong interest in interdisciplinary work, and am committed to finding ways to connect my academic work and interests with concerns beyond the academy. I am currently involved in community projects at the neighborhood level, and have previously brought my experience working in the Australian book publishing industry to bear on my work with a community-based feminist lending library and resource center in Sydney.

**Rose Ernst** (Political Science)

Rose Ernst is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science. She received her B.A. from Cornell University. Her research interests include the politics of race and gender, American politics and public law with an emphasis on social movements and critical race theory. Rose's dissertation project examines the mechanisms at work in the decisions of social movement groups to respond to stereotyped frames that disproportionately impact the most vulnerable among their members. She explores whether the contemporary responses of welfare rights movement groups to the public identity of members stem from the historical realities of race, gender and class intersections of framing "work", responsibility and independence of women. Involvement with welfare rights activism in Seattle for the past six years have continued to expand and challenge the direction of her research and teaching interests. These experiences along with teaching race politics raise questions about how to facilitate (service) learning between those working for social change and students at the university in a way that respects the needs of both groups.

**Rachel T. Goldberg** (English)

As PhD student in the English Department's Language and Rhetoric program, I spend much of my time examining how power and knowledge are created by and circulate through discourses, particularly in contentious discourses such as the religious and academic, and I am especially interested in the relationship between these discourses and public policy. More recently, I have begun to study the history of public sphere theory and the role of public intellectuals to more fully understand the reasons why humanities scholars in particular have appeared to disengage from the public sphere, and it seems to me to be related to the liberal notion that issues of ethics should be confined to the private sphere, to the detriment of both the academy and the public. I am interested as a scholar, teacher, and world citizen, to carve out public discursive space in order to engage in ethical action in and with the wider community, but have not yet found productive ways to do so – I still feel as though my academic pursuits and my political activism are quite separate. I am eager to join a community of like-minded scholars to collaborate on a project invested in these goals of moving academic scholarship into engagement with public and civic communities in the interest of social justice.

**Heyang Julie Kae** (English)

Entering my fourth year of graduate study with the Department of English, I specialize in late 19th and 20th century American Literature as well as Asian American literature and culture. My research in these literary areas are guided by questions concerning immigration, racial formations and the production of urban space in the U.S. Subsidiary to these historical and theoretical interests, I have developed a more specific interest in literary figurations of the child as they emerge in 20th century American and Asian American literature. Before I could even articulate these academic interests, I was involved to varying degrees in public education. My experiences with public education under gird my interest in the institute, which I hope will begin to address the tensions between my deepening immersion in literary study and my concerns about the limits of academic labor in producing broader social change. As I try to negotiate the limits and possibilities of

addressing this issue through my own research and life practices, I look forward to the collaborative intellectual exchange with all of you this summer.

### **Teresa Mares** (Anthropology)

As a graduate student in Sociocultural Anthropology, Teresa Mares pursues research and teaching interests in urban gardening, Latino/a immigration, transnationalism and citizenship, environmental and social justice, and the politics and processes of race, class, and gender. With a commitment to critical and contemporary ethnographic practice, Teresa is currently engaged in preliminary research at an urban farm in Seattle and looks forward to beginning intensive fieldwork in the summer of 2007. Her project explores how Latino/a gardeners are actively shaping the ethnocultural landscape in Seattle Washington - reflecting dynamic processes of migration, identity formation, and placemaking. Through the Institute for the Public Humanities, Teresa hopes to engage other participants in discussions on the ethics and responsibilities of public scholarship, avenues to building effective community-university partnerships, and the potential of producing antithetical knowledge that is relevant to both the academy and to the larger community. Moreover, she hopes to develop new strategies to draw upon these forms of scholarship in teaching efforts. Teresa brings to the Institute her experiences in not-for-profit management, community organizing, and actions for social justice along with a true passion for collaborative learning.

### **Kara McKinney** (English)

My scholarly interests involve tracing visual epistemologies, or ways of knowing, as they relate to ideological and political formations of the U.S. (situated in a global context). This includes examining how peoples' subject positions and engagement with the world are determined by observational practices; equally important is how literary and visual works also challenge and re-invent these practices. Such texts are often collaborative, provide a model for actively engaging with archival materials, and illuminate the stakes of representational practices for various communities. Using visual and interdisciplinary materials in the classroom has also really enriched my teaching and helped me to bridge the gap between 'literature' and the contexts of its production, as well as students' engagement with various texts in their everyday lives.

When I joined the English graduate program here at the UW, I was very excited to discover cultural studies, because its scholarship presented the opportunity to combine my interests in literary texts and the visual arts, as well as the possibility to produce critical work that could challenge the boundaries of academia and be relevant outside the university. Such ideas often feel idealistic in an otherwise insular environment where training for extra-academic engagement is lacking, so I look forward to exploring these possibilities during the Institute.

### **A. Tyler Perry** (Social Work)

A. Tyler Perry brings a background in languages and creative writing to his work in the social sciences. He is a Coro Fellow in Public Affairs, and holds an Master's degree in Social Work (MSW). Professionally, Tyler has concentrated the majority of his work in HIV and AIDS, most recently as a licensed social worker at Harborview Medical Center, providing intensive bilingual case management for those affected by this pandemic and intersecting oppressions.

Currently, Tyler's doctoral work centers on the precarious cultural phenomena that parallel and contribute to the epidemiologic trends of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He is concerned about how dominant ideologies and practices controlling the HIV/AIDS industry and pandemic, as manifested through mediatized communication, substantiate and promulgate discourse. This is a neglected area of the pandemic, one that needs be excavated to better comprehend how this discourse has contributed -- and continues to contribute - - to infecting populations, rather than arresting this pandemic.

Given these concerns, Tyler looks to position his work as an overdue critical interrogation of 'HIV/AIDS', redirecting our gaze from the over-pathologized subject(s) back toward an unquestioned industry and ontology. Part of this work involves re-energizing and mobilizing community action, as well as creating new

discursive spaces for counter narratives, histories, and critiques. Another part is strategizing effective and transformative inter-disciplinary scholarship and action.

**Kevin Ramsey** (Geography)

I am an urban/cultural/political geographer interested in how citizens understand and engage in urban and environmental political struggles. Currently I am examining two different efforts to expand and enhance "public participation" through the development and deployment of Internet-based mapping technologies: one in response to water conflicts in southern rural Idaho, and another in response to major transportation investment needs in Seattle. One theme of my research is exploring the implications of a Foucauldian reading of the map not as merely a representation of an objective external reality but rather as a politicized construction that works to shape and produce our sense of reality. For example I'm interested in how implicit assumptions about community and political identity are normalized through these maps, and how this affects notions of citizenship and practices of political engagement. Soon I hope to work with community and activist organizations to construct new and alternative practices of participatory mapping as a form of political engagement—ones which may enable a more radical and plural politics. I hope that my participation in the Institute on the Public Humanities will help me to think through the intellectual and practical problems characteristic of this form of research.

**Theresa Ronquillo** (Social Work)

I am a second-generation Filipina, born and raised in the Detroit area. I received my BA from the University of Michigan in 1996 and my MSW from the University of Chicago in 1999. Currently I am a Doctoral student in Social Welfare at the UW School of Social Work. Prior to returning to graduate school, I worked in non-profit management, programming, and research in a variety of community-based settings in Chicago and the Detroit area.

I am currently a Research Associate with the Two-Spirit Honor Project, an NIMH funded (1 R01 MH6587101, PI: Dr. Karina Walters), Native-run health and mental health study of urban American Indian and Alaska Native gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and two-spirit persons (LGBT-TS). My activities include community outreach, quantitative data collection, qualitative data analysis, conference presentations, and manuscript writing.

My research interests concentrate mainly on how legacies of colonialism and the reproduction of colonial structures among indigenous and other minority groups—with a focus on Filipino Americans—shape identity development and negotiation in various contexts throughout people's lives, and how processes of conscientization on individual, community, and institutional levels are linked to decolonization, empowered life courses, and social change.

**Vince Schleitwiler** (English)

I was born and raised in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, and lived in south London and Brooklyn before moving to Seattle to pursue a doctorate in English. I'm currently writing a dissertation on the literatures of African American, Japanese American, and Filipino migrations across U.S. imperial domains in the 20th century. As an undergraduate at Oberlin College, I was active in Asian American, biracial/multiracial, and student-of-color organizations, working on issues related to curricular change, faculty diversity, and campus climate. At UW, I've served as a member of the GO-MAP Student Advisory Board, and helped to found the Graduate Diversity Recruiters initiative and the Minority Graduate Student Association. Prior to coming to Seattle, I worked in independent film, as a script reader for Miramax and as story editor and head of development for Open City Films/Blow Up Pictures, and in journalism, writing for FILMMAKER, Women.com, the Village Voice, the Voice Literary Supplement, and the Chicago Tribune. I am interested in the "public humanities" as a means of rethinking the social objectives and institutional forms of higher education, and its relation to other sites of cultural production and political practice.

**Amanda C. Soto** (Music)

My name is Amanda C. Soto and I am currently a Ph.D. student in Music Education. I have completed a Masters in Ethnomusicology at the University of Washington and a B.A. in Music Education at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. In addition to my educational experience, I have taught middle-school band, private lessons, and summer music camps. My research interests and projects pivot around how people use music in their lives and how it is meaningful to them. Through creating centers and programs that allow people to learn and listen to music from other cultures and educating teachers to expand their multicultural curriculum, I am trying to build a bridge between the academic world and the community at large. I have also been appointed to serve as coordinator for the “Music Alive! In the Yakima Valley” project for the next school year where I will facilitate the performance and teaching sessions of School of Music students at several schools in the Yakima Valley and where I will work on site to aid the integration of music into the curriculum of schools in Yakima.

**Paul Robert-John Teske** (Education)

I am in the Human Development & Cognition Program within the Educational Psychology Department in the College of Education, studying youth literacy and technology. My work tends to fall between the cognitive aspects of learning and the socio-cultural elements in which learning (or no learning) happens. With regard to the humanities, I am interested in looking at how Youth Media Organizations (YMOs) provide youth with technological skills and give them the tools to potentially create counter stories that act in opposition to societal power structures. YMOs provide informal, non-school opportunities in which youth engage in meaningful literacy practices.

I have worn many hats in education as a high school and college teacher, advisor, conference coordinator, and educational software researcher and developer. Currently, I serve on the advisory board for the Technology Access Foundation, assisting in the development of several small schools in the Seattle area. At the Institute, I hope to come closer to understanding: What broad literacy practices are central to the public humanities? How might schools forge greater connections with the public humanities? In what ways can we “read” the public humanities through the lens of cognition and socio-cultural theory?

**Matthew James Vechinski** (English)

I am a PhD student in the Department of English. My areas of interest include British Modernism, the avant-garde, metafiction and the novel, Textual Studies, digital texts, poststructuralist theory, and identity politics. I applied to this year’s Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students in preparation for my role next year as an organizer of “Creating Community Through Blogging,” a crossdisciplinary research cluster sponsored by the Simpson Center. This research cluster will consider weblogs as a textual medium with their own techniques, audiences and methods that enable conversations across disciplines. I also hope that the institute will provide me with the tools to make the public humanities a viable priority in my future scholarly and pedagogical work. Some of my current research focuses on experiences of digital texts. I am interested in current studies of interface design and interactivity that directly consider the public’s involvement in shared and collaborative textual experiences. Finally, my activities as an instructor of a composition course with a service learning requirement have already touched upon possibilities for public humanities. I would like to explore options other than service learning that would enable exchanges between the university and the community to occur in the classroom.

**Matthew J Walton** (Political Science)

Matthew Walton is a PhD student in the Political Science department at the University of Washington, studying democratic theory, Buddhism and Southeast Asia. He holds an M.A. in Political Science and a B.Mus with Honors in Music Composition, both from Syracuse University. Matt was involved in labor rights and environmental justice activism with several community groups in Syracuse and continues to look for ways in which the resources of the academic community can be mobilized for social change. He is on the editorial board of “Green Theory and Praxis: A Journal of Ecological Politics” and the advisory board of the Center on Animal Liberation Affairs and is also co-author (with Jessica Widay) of a chapter in *Igniting a Revolution: Voices in Defense of Mother Earth* (2006). Matt remains an active composer, and his music has been performed in

London, New York and Boston. His newest opera, *Sundance*, is based on the trial and incarceration of Leonard Peltier and was premiered by the Syracuse Society for New Music in the summer of 2005.

#### Co- Directors

**Miriam Bartha** is Assistant Director of the Simpson Center for the Humanities at the University of Washington, where she helps support and develop collaborative projects with faculty, graduate students, local educators, and community/cultural organizations. She received her Ph.D. in American Literature from Rutgers University in 2002 and has taught twentieth-century literary, cultural, and feminist studies at Rutgers and San Francisco State Universities. She previously worked as an administrator at the P.E.N. American Center, an international nonprofit writers' advocacy organization based in New York, as coordinator of the *Poetry and the Public Sphere* series at Rutgers, and as project manager for the electronic archiving of *HOW(ever)*, a historic journal of feminist experimental writing.

**Bruce Burgett** is Professor of American and Interdisciplinary Studies in the Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences Program at the University of Washington-Bothell (UWB), and graduate faculty in the English Department at the University of Washington-Seattle. He co-directed the "Placing the Humanities: New Locales, New Meanings" tri-campus faculty development workshop series in 2004-2005, currently co-directs the follow-up activities of the "Cultural Studies Praxis Collective" and is involved in developing a community-based M.A. in Cultural Studies at UWB (planned to begin in 2007). He is the author of *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Citizenship in the Early Republic* (Princeton, 1998), and is working on two books: *American Sex: Cultures of Sexual Reform in and Beyond the Antebellum U.S.* (Chicago) and *Keywords of American Cultural Studies* (NYU, co-edited with Glenn Hendler). He has taught, researched, and published widely in the fields of American Studies, Cultural Studies, and Queer Studies. He serves on the editorial boards of *American Quarterly* and *American Literary History*.

#### Graduate Mentor Fellows

##### **Dipika Nath** (Women Studies)

I am a graduate student in women's studies and I work in the emergent field of animal studies. I use "transnational" feminist and queer-of-colour interrogations of the logics by which heterogeneous and interimplicated relations of power are organised and regulated to examine the material and ideational discourses that determine as well as reflect the status and treatment of nonhuman animals in human ethical, social, psychic, and political worlds.

I am also involved in queer of colour organising in Seattle through Trikone Northwest, a South Asian queer network.

##### **Lisa Thornhill** (English)

Lisa attended last year's *Institute* with hopes that it would help connect her dissertation with her community interests. The *Institute's* workshops helped Lisa to realize her previously unacknowledged skills. From starting a non-profit school for at-risk youth to reshaping teacher training, Lisa's recognition of such tangible skills helped her to conceive of a project that connects UW bilingual students with area bilingual students.

Lisa's participation also caused her to rethink her dissertation project as that which places 20<sup>th</sup> century language/immigration policies in dialogue with the everyday writings of the ethnic minorities they treat as policy objects—in particular, Chicanos/as. The project uses this counter-public discourse to interrogate the ways in which such policies are more than simple demands to assimilate immigrants, preserve language integrity or enable children to seize linguistic capital—and instead are quite insidious in their use of benevolent rhetoric to supposedly offer national belonging to everyone.

Through the *Institute's* network, she also promoted the public humanities with others: as PAGE fellow at the 2005 *Imagining America Conference*; as participant in meetings that investigated graduate mentoring practices and

ways of re-envisioning the PhD; as co-organizer for the Public/Counter-Public Scholarship event that brought grad students together with faculty who model community-based and socially-invested scholarship.

As a returning fellow from last year's *Institute*, Lisa hopes to serve as a mentor while also pushing her engagement with public scholarship by learning from this year's fellows.

### Community Partners and Resource People

**Teri Hein** is Executive Director of 826 Seattle, a youth writing center located in the Greenwood district. She is a native Washingtonian, veteran classroom teacher, and published author. She has traveled extensively and taught in Latin America: in addition to other awards for her teaching and writing, Hein received a Fulbright Scholarship to research Ecuador's varied cultural influences on the learning styles of its children. Hein started 826 Seattle (originally incorporated as Studio 26) with a group of community-minded Seattleites in 2004. In early 2005, Studio 26 was invited to become a chapter of 826 National, which was founded by acclaimed author and philanthropist Dave Eggers (*A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*).

**Jared Leising** is a founding faculty member at Cascadia Community College, and in addition to teaching English courses at the college, Jared serves as an advisor to the Creative Arts Club, which publishes the Wetlands Review, the college's literary/arts magazine. Jared received a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from the University of Houston, and before becoming a volunteer for 826 Seattle, he served as writer-in-residence for Ballard and Nathan Hale High Schools through the Seattle Arts & Lectures' program "Writers in the Schools."

**gita mehrotra**, MSW, has worked in the field of domestic violence for over 10 years and is currently a doctoral student in Social Welfare at the University of Washington. Most recently she was the Community Projects Coordinator at Asian Women's Shelter in San Francisco where she was involved with program development, inter-organizational coalition-building, language access advocacy and programming, and anti-oppression training/education. She has also specifically developed and implemented anti-homophobia and queer domestic violence training with several South Asian anti-violence programs around the country. Gita's particular interests include domestic violence in queer Asian and Pacific Islander (API) women's and transgender communities and the relationships between gender, sexuality, culture, migration, and South Asian diaspora in the United States. She is also interested in Social Work education. gita is a former board member of Trikone, a South Asian queer organization in San Francisco, and is currently a member of Qolors, a queers of color coalition affiliated with the Q Center at the UW. She is also on the Advisory Board of the Queer Network Project, a program of the Asian and Pacific Islander Safety Center in Seattle.

**Shannon Thomas** has worked in the nonprofit/philanthropic field for over 15 years and is currently the Executive Director of Queen City Community Development and The Seattle LGBT community Center. Having grown The Center's programs, funding and supporter base to new levels in the past two years, The Center is now focusing on its LGBT Coalition, Senior Housing Initiative, and other program expansion (including a Capital Campaign for a new Center) that supports the LGBTQ communities of Seattle. Previously Development Director at Country Doctor Community Health Centers and the International District Housing Alliance in Seattle, as well as a nonprofit consultant to many social justice groups, she brings experience in non-profit law; management and leadership; strategic planning; fund development; board and organizational development; and collaborative & joint venture endeavors. As recent Chair of Verbena, she led the organization through their merger of Seattle Lesbian Cancer Project and Sappho's Health Services. She received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Puget Sound, and her master's in Not-For-Profit Management & Leadership from Seattle University.