

Human Interactions and Normative Innovation (HI-NORM):
Report of Activities 2012-2013
Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities
University of Washington

The HI-NORM Cluster

The Tri-Campus UW Research Cluster on “Human Interactions and Normative Innovation” (HI-NORM) is an ongoing program that includes faculty and graduate students from all three campuses of the University of Washington. Participants have included faculty and graduate students in interdisciplinary arts and sciences, political science, philosophy, Germanics, law, and the Jackson School within the UW. The HI-NORM cluster has also developed a research partnership with the Cluster of Excellence on the Formation of Normative Orders at the University of Frankfurt, which has resulted in a series of jointly-sponsored conferences over the past three years.

Activities in 2012-2013

In 2012-2013, the Simpson Center generously provided funding that enabled us to organize and participate in the following events:

- At a cluster lunch on November 14, 2012, Professor James Wellman in the Program in Comparative Religion in the Jackson School led a discussion on “The Post-Secular Society”.
- On March 1, 2013, a panel discussion on “Circumcision as a Human Rights Issue,” moderated by Professor Michael Rosenthal (a HI-NORM participant) and with invited panelists Professor Thomas Schmidt (University of Frankfurt), Professor Robin Judd (Ohio State University), and Professor Bettina Shell Duncan (University of Washington). Thomas Schmidt also led a separate colloquium on “Reflective Secularization: Religious Belief and Public Reason” and had meeting with interested faculty and graduate students.
- On April 12, 2013, a lecture by Professor Melissa Williams, Professor of Political Science and founding Director of the Center for Ethics, University of Toronto, on “‘Glocalizing’ Global Justice: Democratic Translations of Human Rights and Social Justice”. Professor Williams had a meeting with graduate students and lunch and dinner with interested faculty and graduate students.
- In May 2013, five cluster members participated in a conference on “Cosmopolitanism, Human Rights, and Religion in Post-Secular Societies” at the University of Frankfurt, which included researchers from South Africa and Nigeria, as well as researchers from the University of Frankfurt. Professor Jürgen Habermas, the most highly regarded political philosopher in the world, was an active participant in the conference.
- In 2012-2013, we had six regular meetings of the cluster.

(See photos on next page.)



The panel on “Circumcision as a Human Rights Issue” on March 1, 2013 drew a diverse audience of students and members of the larger community. Participants (from left to right) were: Professor Thomas Schmidt (University of Frankfurt), Professor Robin Judd (Ohio State University), Professor Bettina Shell Duncan (University of Washington), and Professor Michael Rosenthal (University of Washington), who introduced the speakers.



On April 12, 2013 Professor Christine DiStefano (left), University of Washington, introduced Professor Melissa Williams (right), University of Toronto, who spoke on “‘Glocalizing’ Global Justice: Democratic Translations of Human Rights and Social Justice”.



Frankfurt conference participants: Jon Bowman (St. Louis University), Gregg Miller (UW), José Casanova (Georgetown), Michael Rosenthal (UW), Amos Nascimento (UW), Jonathan Warren (UW), Jürgen Habermas (University of Frankfurt, *emeritus*), and Bill Talbott (UW).



Margaret Griesse (UW) and Nancy Fraser (New School) relax at the post-conference party.

The Simpson Center's support for HI-NORM activities has generated many offshoots, including:

- a longer-term collaboration with the University of Frankfurt, a model for international, interdisciplinary research relationships
- the first volume in a projected series of essays based on presentations at our joint conferences with the University of Frankfurt, *Human Rights, Human Dignity, and Cosmopolitan Ideals*, edited by Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Amos Nascimento, will be published this year by Ashgate.
- a new collaborative relationship with Northwestern University, as part of a three-way collaboration with the University of Frankfurt, with Northwestern planning to host a joint conference in the spring of 2014.
- a substantial increase in cluster participation by women faculty and graduate students, illustrated by the fact that three of the seven UW participants and two of the three session chairs at our May 2012 conference were women, our lead graduate student participant, Filiz Kahraman, is a woman, and Professor Christine DiStefano has taken the lead in organizing reading groups for the Melissa Williams lecture and for next year's Seyla Benhabib lecture.
- The successful invitation to Professor Seyla Benhabib (Yale University) to give the UW Walker-Ames Lecture on Thursday, Oct. 24, 2013. The topic of her lecture will be "Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: 50 Years Later*". The Jewish Studies Program and the Department of Germanics are co-sponsoring a screening of the new movie on Arendt, "Hannah Arendt," which focuses also on the Eichmann trial and Arendt's commentary on it, on the Tuesday before the lecture. For more information about the movie, here is a link:

<http://www.zeitgeistfilms.com/film.php?directoryname=hannaharendt&mode=synopsis>

For all these reasons, 2012-2013 was a very successful year for the HI-NORM cluster. We are looking forward to even better things in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,



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HI-NORM Liaison