



AN INTERVIEW WITH ROMILA THAPAR

2004-2005 KATZ DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSOR IN THE HUMANITIES

In residence at the Simpson Center as Katz Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities this past spring, Romila Thapar conducted a graduate seminar on Early Indian History and contributed to many diverse campus conversations. Boreth Ly, 2004-2005 Rockefeller Resident Fellow in Critical Asian Studies and Assistant Professor of Asian Art and Visual Culture, University of Utah, and Miriam Bartha, the Simpson Center’s Assistant Director, spoke with Thapar about interdisciplinary and humanistic study.



Romila Thapar is one of the world’s most eminent historians of India, widely recognized for her long career of ground-breaking work. Thapar received her doctoral degree from London University in 1958 and returned to the new nation of independent India to pursue her teaching and scholarship. Her research on ancient India has evolved new ways of reading evidence from archeology, mythology, literature, philosophy, ritual texts, folklore, and other sources. The results have yielded illuminating perspectives on contemporary India as well as new comparative and conceptual insights for historical studies more broadly.

First published in 1966, Thapar’s *History of India* has been in print ever since. Her subsequent books—and there are many—have secured her reputation as one of the most distinguished and productive scholars in the field. Among the most recent, *Sakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories* (2002) traces the transformation of this figure of Indian womanhood across centuries of Indian and European literature. *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (2004) provides a new frame for understanding a pivotal and contested event. Thapar has twice refused the Padma Bhushan, one of the Indian government’s highest honors for lifetime achievement. (On principle Thapar does not accept state awards.) In 2004 the U.S. Library of Congress appointed her as the first holder of the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the South.

Boreth: You are considered by many to be one of the leading public intellectuals in India. In your mind, what constitutes a “public intellectual”? How do you define public intellectual in the Indian context?

Romila: I find the use of this term rather puzzling, as puzzling as when I am called an “activist.” What does it mean? I like to think of myself as an intellectual and I know that professionally I am an academic. As an intellectual I have an audience beyond the academy. But then one is also a part of that very same audience. Outside my field of expertise, I want to know how others more competent than I are thinking about the questions they are asking, because their answers impinge on my life as well.

Part of the reason I don’t see the “public intellectual” as a new phenomenon may be because in the years I was becoming a historian we were all well aware of the wider meaning of researching into the past, namely recognizing the presence of the past in the present and understanding that this would give us a better understanding of the present. History was a mix of intellectual curiosity about the past but also not without a concern for the present. Colonial administrators were dead right when they said that if you know the history of a subject then you can control it! Perhaps the most telling concerns have been questions relating to identities and traditions, where ideologues see them as permanent but historians argue that they are continually being redefined.

Boreth: We were speaking earlier about your work on King Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire. You suggested that the image you hold of this figure continues to evolve as a result of your ongoing dialogue with it. As a historian, what do you think of the relationship between history and memory?

Romila: I’ve only started thinking seriously about this since working on the book on Somanatha, which became a kind of Rashomon-type exercise. There are six different categories of sources speaking about what happened at Somanatha or referring to related themes during the eight hundred years after the raid on the temple by Mahmud of Ghazni. And each gives a different perspective on the event.

It struck me then that there are two questions fundamental to viewing an event. The first is, when does it become a part of social memory and how is this memory created. In this case it was a claim that the Hindus suffered a trauma as a result of the raid. But I found little evidence of a trauma until the British invented it in the nineteenth century. The second aspect is that in the recording of it, the event itself gets encrusted with the varied and later perceptions that are brought to bear on it. So when a historian looks at an event she also has to see the encrustations. This is why I suggested in the Katz Lecture that we are tapping into points of time which have already experienced their own pasts and have moved into their own futures, before we have reached out to them.

In *Sakuntala* I traced a well-known narrative through its many manifestations as epic, drama, popular tales, translations, cinema, and the commentaries on it by eminent literary persons. Here I was arguing that the narrative itself as a text becomes an event that keeps happening. Not that it is a historical event since it remains a piece of fiction, but that its changing forms and the consequent mutations in the narrative begin to reflect moments of history. This approach to narrative fascinates me as a historian since I think it is perhaps a historically creative way of analyzing creative literature. It is of course also a concession to the fact that my first undergraduate degree was in literature, after which I switched to history!

Miriam: Can you say more about what you see literature or a literary sensibility contributing to your work as a historian?

Romila: Marguerite Yourcenar’s book on Hadrian made a deep impression on me even though she is not a historian per se and her recreation of Hadrian is somewhat quizzical. For me it represents something else—a parallel problem that historians face in their struggle to understand the past. This may sometimes require a momentary dislocation from historicity in order to get an insight or glimpse into such an understanding. I am not suggesting that one should move away from the rigor of historical method or discard historicity. Not at all. But at the same time a momentary insight could be illuminating, even if eventually it has to be sieved through a method of analysis. It is sometimes necessary to break the boundaries of history and explore what lies beyond them, if only to return to history with a greater understanding.



From top to bottom: Romila Thapar’s Katz Lecture; question and answer session following the Katz Lecture; Romila Thapar teaching her graduate humanities seminar. More from the interview and from Romila Thapar’s Katz Lecture at www.simpsoncenter.org.

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ON INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES

KATHLEEN WOODWARD

DIRECTOR, SIMPSON CENTER

The terms “disciplinarity” and “interdisciplinarity” belong to the discourse of the university as a professional space, with interdisciplinarity generally understood as either a complement to disciplinarity or as a rebuke to it. My sense is that while there is a fairly stable notion of what disciplinarity is, the meanings of interdisciplinarity in the humanities and the qualitative social sciences have changed significantly over the last fifty years, carrying the values of specific academic generations. I know of no study of this, and I would very much like to see one.

Coming out of the sixties, for example, we saw the emergence of women’s studies and African-American studies, programs that responded to the feminist and civil rights movements. Recently we have seen the proliferation of problem-based inquiry, resulting in interdisciplinary work devoted to such large subjects as the environment or public health genetics.

My sense is that today in the humanities the term “interdisciplinarity” also refers to the desire of many of our faculty and graduate students not so much to learn with rigor the methodologies of other disciplines or, as we see in the sciences, to form project-based teams with academics from other disciplines. Interdisciplinarity refers to their desire to imagine their work as having meaning for a public that is wider than that of the professional debates and dictates of their departments or disciplines. Interdisciplinarity captures their wish that their work be responsive to a larger sphere, one beyond the academy. As the late Edward Said has noted, in the United States the separation between the academic realm and public domain is greater than anywhere else. This is profoundly unsatisfying—indeed unacceptable—to many of our faculty and, in particular, to many of our graduate students.

What I am suggesting is that in the humanities today interdisciplinarity may be code for public scholarship. At stake is the importance of publics beyond the university. At stake is the belief in the value of the general, as in Catherine Stimpson’s call for general education for graduate education. At stake is the urgent preciousness of common goods, as in the digital creative commons.

The brilliant historian Lorraine Daston gave a talk recently at the University of Washington on the epistemological virtues ascendant in certain periods in Western history, tracing a shift from a focus on “truth” to that of “objectivity,” which emerges in the mid-nineteenth century. What might be said to be among the emerging epistemological virtues today in the humanities? I would count among them theories of emergence itself as well as the new value being placed on creativity. I would also point to the new digital technologies and the ways in which scholars are using them in collaborative ways—I’m thinking of Jim Gregory’s inspiring website devoted to Seattle’s labor history and civil rights—to bring new knowledge to a larger public, to bring new knowledge to life.

“... the term ‘interdisciplinarity’ also refers to the desire of many of our faculty and graduate students ... to imagine their work as having meaning for a public that is wider than that of the professional debates and dictates of their departments and disciplines. Interdisciplinarity captures their wish that their work be responsive to a larger sphere. . .”

—Kathleen Woodward, Director, Simpson Center for the Humanities



Above: Simpson Center Director Kathleen Woodward.
Below: Stephanie Camp (History) at her Literary Lecture preview for speaker Edward P. Jones at Benaroya Hall.



WELCOME TO ELLEN KAISSE

We are delighted to welcome **Ellen Kaisse**, Professor of Linguistics, as our acting Divisional Dean of Arts & Humanities. In his announcement of Kaisse’s appointment, Dean **David Hodge** (College of Arts & Sciences) noted that she “will bring great experience and enthusiasm to the Dean’s Office.” We look forward to working with her over the course of this year.

TY IN THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES

The Simpson Center has been recognized nationally as a leader in the public humanities, building stronger ties and better understandings between university-based scholars and other communities valuing engaged and reflective work in all areas of culture. Last year's exhibition and symposium on *Children of War*, organized by **Anthony Geist** (Spanish Studies and Comparative Literature) offers one excellent model for thought and action in this domain. *The September Project's* networking of public libraries as places for democratic community dialogue provides yet another. So does the *Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project* website, which is integrating local histories and making available new research, new curricula, and rare archives. To articulate the work of the university and of scholars in the humanities to wider interests, questions, and publics is an undertaking potentially transformative for all involved.

These faculty-led projects demand great investments of imagination and work on the part of already busy professors. The Simpson Center has therefore created programs that offer faculty regular opportunities to connect with other publics without organizing more than a share of their thoughts and committing a measure of their time. These programs also enable the Center to cultivate closer and more productive relationships with Seattle's cultural institutions.

The deepest and most enduring of these local partnerships has involved programs the Simpson Center runs in association with Seattle Arts & Lectures (SAL): the *Teachers as Scholars* seminars for local schoolteachers, the *Wednesday University* public lecture classes for subscribers at large, and the *Preview Lectures* for the Literary Lecture Series organized by SAL.

"Our audiences are eager to engage in meaningful discussions about literature, culture, and society that are grounded by knowledge," says **Margit Rankin**, Executive Director of Seattle Arts &

Lectures. "The partnership with the Simpson Center allows us to tap the rich intellectual resources of the UW faculty and bring them to a broad public."

Wednesday University, now in its seventh year, presents a case in point. The program's courses, which meet every other Wednesday during the quarter, offer Puget Sound residents the stimulation and satisfaction of an on-going education in the humanities. Past courses have probed everything from ancient Egypt to human rights to filmcraft. This fall, **Richard Dunn** (English) illustrates how Dickens's novels characterize the sweeping changes overtaking the nineteenth century, changes that transform the private and public worlds of law, family, and work. In the winter, **Barry Witham** (Drama) will present "When Theater Mattered," examining theater as a vital instrument of social and political communication between the two world wars. And in spring **Claudio Mazzola** (Italian Studies) will explore the complex histories shaping the vibrant contemporary cultures of "Five Italian Cities."

Teachers as Scholars presents twelve mini-seminars for K-12 teachers each year on topics ranging from Shakespeare's history plays to hip hop aesthetics and youth culture. Led by UW faculty members, these seminars provide teachers with a unique experience of what is routinely called "professional development," one fed by intellectual inquiry and ongoing scholarship.

Teachers as Scholars links its seminars to cultural events hosted by other organizations. Most if not all seminars thus incorporate into their "curriculum" the additional dimension of an exhibition, lecture, or performance. This year, for instance, **Ron Krabill** (Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences) will teach "Apartheid, Then and Now" in conjunction with performances by the South African Boyzie Cekwana Dance Theater at On the Boards. **Gary Handwerk** (Comparative Literature)

will offer "Living in Place," a course on literature and the environment coordinated with the Burke Museum's photographic exhibit on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and a special Seattle Arts & Lectures program on "Wilderness and Imagination." And **Patricia Failing** (Art History) will use the Henry Art Gallery's retrospective exhibit of Roy Lichtenstein prints as a springboard into discussions about the relation of art and mass culture since World War II.

More recently the ongoing collaboration between the Simpson Center and Seattle Arts & Lectures has enabled university professors to contribute to SAL's annual Literary Lecture Series. Because writers give literary expression to all matters of life, the faculty who give these preview lectures don't simply come from the literary disciplines. *Preview Lectures* can survey a career, interrogate a style, or introduce the subjects and debates engaged by particular authors and their works. When **Stephanie Camp** (History) delivered a preview lecture before Edward P. Jones's appearance, she approached the subject of his novel *The Known World*—black slaveowners in the ante-bellum South—through the lens of current historical knowledge about this practice. Her talk gave a nuanced appreciation of Jones's work that explored the tensions between historical fiction and historical research.

"Having to present and explain one's ideas to people outside one's own small specialist community can be challenging in ways that are preeminently useful," says **Janelle Taylor** (Anthropology). "It can help me reconnect with and articulate my own 'big picture' sense of why the scholarly work I do is important and what it contributes to the world more broadly. For those of us who hope or wish to take part in a broader conversation, forums like the *Teachers as Scholars* seminars or the Frankenstein panel discussion I took part in at Seattle Public Library are welcome opportunities to make that happen."

"Particularly in the category of public engagement, The Simpson Center has made a distinctive mark."

Reinvigorating the Humanities: Enhancing Research and Education on Campus and Beyond, American Association of Universities (2004)

RECLAIMING CHILDHOOD: KATHARYNE MITCHELL SIMPSON PROFESSOR IN THE PUBLIC HUMANITIES

With the generous resources made available by the new, three-year Simpson Professorship in the Public Humanities, **Katharyne Mitchell** (Geography) launched *Reclaiming Childhood* this past year. Over the course of her Simpson Professorship, Mitchell plans to research and write a book for a general audience that examines how social, economic, and political pressures are reshaping the experience of contemporary childhood. These pressures include increasing privatization and competition, which find expression in everything from the current culture of testing in schools to the loss of open spaces and unstructured play time in children's lives.

In 2004-2005, the inaugural year of *Reclaiming Childhood*, Mitchell established a vibrant crossdisciplinary research cluster and a series of public forums. While different in emphasis, both the research cluster and the public forums galvanized participants, identified key issues, and opened up larger conversations. Both provided spaces of exchange and reflection, allowing participants to learn across divides of professional and personal experience.

Research cluster members—**Sharon Sutton** (Architecture), **Walter Parker** (Education), **Patricia Campbell** (Music), **Frances McCue** (Richard Hugo House), and Mitchell—share a common interest in the subject of childhood development but bring methods, approaches, and expertise from divergent fields. The public forums invited the perspectives of three key groups that work closely with and on behalf of children: teachers, parents and other caretakers, and school principals.

Coordinating a dialogue among those who study childhood development and those who participate in it as everyday practitioners served an important function, according to Mitchell. "The three symposia that we held validated the knowledge of those

living and working directly with children," she said. "The types of evidence that emerged from these meetings also yielded a much fuller picture than generally produced in the scientific literature which so often drives the debates." In addition to stimulating conversations between academic and non-academic communities, the concrete examples that came out of these public discussions will augment Mitchell's book project, *Stealing Childhood*.

If the first year's intention has been to open up the conversation locally, this year promises to deepen that conversation here in Seattle and extend it nationally. An editorial by Mitchell appeared in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* this past spring. Mitchell has plans to submit similar pieces to journals and papers with national circulation. The Richard Hugo House, the Seattle community writing center directed by McCue, has focused its Annual Inquiry for 2006 around the theme of *Reclaiming Childhood*. Together Mitchell and McCue will co-teach a *Teachers as Scholars* seminar on the topic. Members of the research cluster as well as other speakers will present the fruits of their individual and collaborative work in a monthly lecture series. The public forums will continue with a series of workshops for and by children, and will build towards a symposium in the summer of 2006. That symposium will bring together leaders from public and independent schools around the country to address the growing gap in public-private education resources and how it might be bridged.

Give Childhood Back To Children By Katharyne Mitchell, Guest Columnist Seattle Post-Intelligencer Opinion Editorial - June 2, 2005

The recent debates over school closings in Seattle refocused the city's attention on the overall quality of our educational system. Unfortunately, the focus has been based primarily on financial considerations and has obscured larger and more important questions relating to childhood and child development.

In the past two decades, there have been major changes in the economic, political, and social environments in which children are now being raised. As a society, we need to come together to discuss the multiple effects of these changes and to deliberate the best strategies for producing positive learning experiences for children inside and outside of school.

The first question to address concerns our primary goal in raising children. I have been disturbed in recent years to see an increasing emphasis on programming children for global competi-

tiveness. Even at the level of elementary schools, many "mission statements" proclaim the superiority of the school in leading to adult competitiveness in the global economy.

In this overweening emphasis on job training we see the current economic anxieties of parents and principals transferred to the younger generation. This anxiety is understandable. Contemporary research has shown that over the past 20 years, middle- and lower-income families have experienced increasing employment insecurity and declining wage power.

Simultaneously, health care costs have skyrocketed and many types of protective safety nets associated with a welfarist state have been removed. It is not surprising that economic competitiveness has become a central concern in schools. But is this really the core of our beliefs about childhood and the types of adults we want our children to become?

In a recent public symposium sponsored by the *Reclaiming Childhood* project at the University of Washington, many parents, grandparents, coaches, and mentors came together to talk about the changing relations between adults and children. Although the problems besetting different communities were varied, one theme emerged that crossed divides of geography, class, and ethnicity and that was the issue of pressure.

From overscheduling, parental hypervigilance, and supercompetitiveness, to high-stakes testing, zero-tolerance policies, and overmonitoring, a picture emerged of a new kind of childhood that is so highly pressured that it is being robbed of freedom and even of pleasure.

Although we must always be wary of seeing our own time period as exceptional, it is nevertheless increasingly evident that contemporary economic anxieties are pervading our society and are filtering down to schools and into the lives of our children. This is disturbing for many reasons, not the least of which is the chilling effect it has on the validation of the arts and the humanities in a child's education.

Perhaps even more important, however, is the declining sense of the importance of free play, of collaboration, of experimentation and even of failure. Yes, failure can be good, indeed some might argue necessary for a child's development. And collaboration is the first necessary step in the creation of a deliberative citizen willing to work with others.

Unfortunately, these are all things that are being swept away in the singular drive for economic competitiveness and success. We need to reclaim these processes and these moments. And we need to fund schools in a manner that encourages them. Childhood is too ephemeral and too precious to waste.



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A CONVERSATION WITH BELL HOOKS



bell hooks is author of more than twenty-four volumes of cultural criticism and Distinguished Professor of English at City College in New York. Well-known for her contributions to feminist scholarship, critical pedagogy, and media criticism, hooks recently left the academy to pursue a career writing and speaking for broader audiences full-time. She has begun to write books for children—books like *Homemade Love*, *Skin Again*, and *Happy to Be Nappy*—that likewise reflect her themes of progressive, multicultural education and affirmation.

On March 3, 2005, some twenty doctoral students selected from across the humanistic disciplines had the rare opportunity to sit down with writer **bell hooks**, visiting the University of Washington as a Danz Lecturer. The students were all *Connecting with the Community* alumni who had participated in the September 2004 *Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students*. The informal seminar-style discussion with bell hooks took place over lunch at the Simpson Center. Exhilarating for those who attended, the

occasion offered hooks an intimate breathing space between high-profile public performances—a morning radio interview on the local NPR affiliate and a filled-beyond-capacity Town Hall event that evening.

The students had been well-prepared for their conversation with hooks through the experience of the Institute. Now in its third year, the intensive week-long Institute encourages doctoral students to imagine how their scholarship and teaching might engage communities beyond the academy, and provides models for doing so. The interdisciplinary composition of the Institute, coupled with the students’ common interest in public scholarship, gave the discussion focus and variety.

“I’ve been reading the work of bell hooks for several years now,” said English doctoral student **Georgia Roberts**. “Her work has cheered me onward, encouraging me both to learn and to do something. For graduate students especially, sometimes the latter impulse can get lost, but her visit reminded me of something very simple: the kind of professor and scholar I want to be.”

Hooks is a prolific author whose writing and teaching bespeak commitments to a broad readership and multiple, often marginalized publics. One of her most recent collections, *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (2004), addresses central, organizing themes of the *Connecting with the Community Institute*.

Keith Feldman (English) also participated in the 2004 *Institute for the Public Humanities* and the conversation with bell hooks. “One of the things we talked about at the Institute was the need to meet others where they are, and to build from there,” he remembered. “I learned so much by the way hooks put this idea into practice. She spoke truthfully and honestly about struggles personal and political. And she listened, listened hard, to what the twenty of us brought to the table.”

The Danz Lectureships are coordinated through The Graduate School at the University of Washington. The Graduate School also co-sponsors *Connecting with the Community: An Institute on the Public Humanities for Doctoral Students*, organized for the third year now by the Simpson Center.

CHILDREN OF WAR 2005

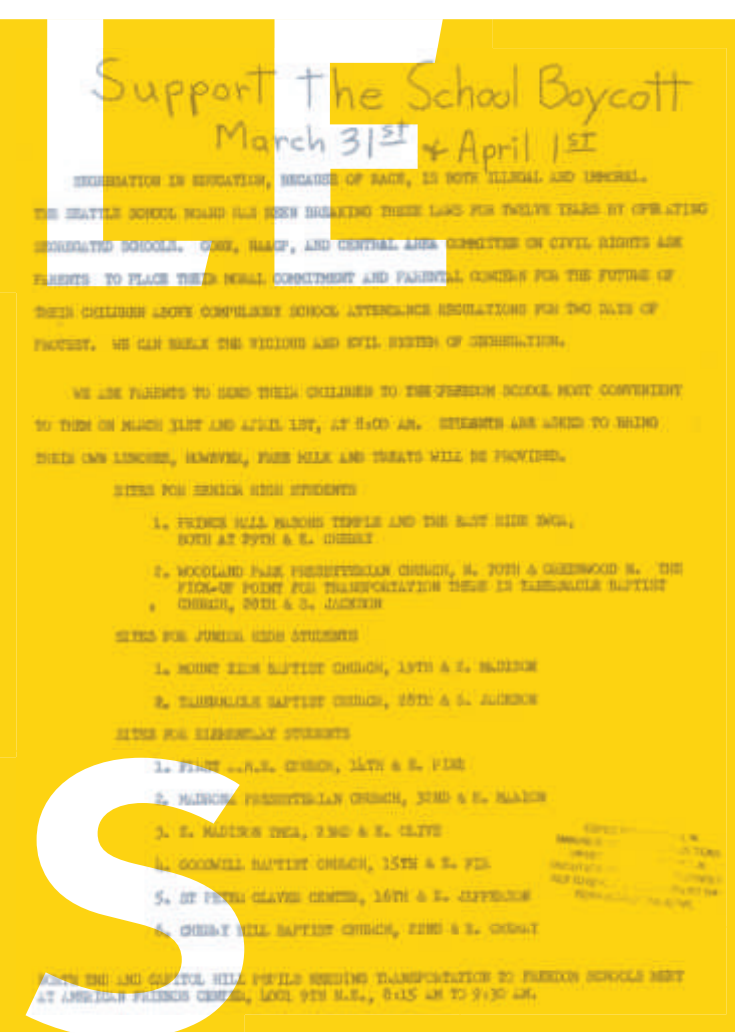


“I was very moved by the exhibition of children’s art and literature during wartime that your group put together for the UW Gala at Hec Edmundson Pavilion in October. The line from the Neruda poem: ‘one dead child is worth a thousand rifles with eyes’, sticks in my mind and my heart ever since.” —A viewer’s response to the *Children of War* exhibition, *They Still Draw Pictures: Children’s Art in Wartime from the Spanish Civil War to Kosovo*

Organized by **Anthony Geist** (Spanish Studies and Comparative Literature), *Children of War* was a series of related events on the effects of war on children. The centerpiece was an exhibit of children’s drawings made in the twentieth-century’s many war zones. The exhibit was accompanied by a course, a film series, and a public symposium.

“Self-motivated undergraduates relish the opportunity to create rather than consume history, and follow up on their formal coursework with independent studies that they increasingly direct themselves.” —Trevor Griffey, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project Coordinator

SEATTLE CIVIL RIGHTS AND LABOR HISTORY PROJECT



AND LABOR HISTORY PROJECT

In the popular imagination, the “civil rights movement” frames a story told in terms of black and white, North and South, and bounded by the brief decade that begins with Rosa Parks in Montgomery and culminates with Martin Luther King’s March on Washington and Lyndon Johnson’s signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Yet the *Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project* reveals how Seattle’s local history, as researched by University of Washington undergraduates in association with community members, recasts this national story in various and complex ways. Furthermore, the project’s easily accessible website means that the history of these struggles for racial and economic justice has been opened to new uses and new audiences.

The *Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project* is the most recent in a series of websites on Pacific Northwest labor history developed by **James Gregory** (History). The project began as a teaching experiment: hoping to motivate his senior history majors, Gregory promised to publish the best of his students’ research on the web. But the experiment did more than transform Gregory’s students into practicing historians. The website offered a vital connection to multiple publics as former activists, current union members, teachers, and students found stakes in the histories and resources posted there.

“Seattle has a unique civil rights history, more multi-racial and labor-based than in the South or most of the North,” Gregory says. “From the 1930s on, African Americans were joined by other communities of color and by other elements of the labor movement in the fight against segregation. And Seattle was the site of several struggles that assumed national importance, especially the building trades confrontation of 1969-1972.”

The site presents this history in overlapping layers. It collects and presents documents such as rare photographs from personal collections, activist publications and flyers, and video excerpts of oral history interviews with movement actors. These materials are anchored by historical timelines and narrative overviews, detailing the work of Seattle organizations, including the United Construction Workers Association. Led by Tyree Scott in the 1970s, this black vanguard group pioneered a grassroots approach to enforcing affirmative action law as it endeavored to open the building trades to people of color and women. All in all, the site contains information about more than fifty organizations, and currently includes interviews with African American, Chinese American, Filipino American, Japanese American, and Latino activists. Plans for the project over the next year include working with area teachers to build lesson plans around the materials that the site indexes, as well as expanding the site’s resources.

While jobs represent one front of struggle, the site also addresses discrimination in other walks of life. The “Segregated Seattle” section, for instance, will soon feature an interactive map that lets users track racial restrictions in housing city- and county-wide. Already the research done on local covenants has contributed to a June 3, 2005 *Seattle Times* story on the legacy of these now illegal neighborhood restrictions on non-white homeownership.

The site’s ability to offer these histories and these documents attests to the project’s on-going work to build trust and collaboration with and among the many people and communities involved. For Gregory and for Project Coordinator **Trevor Griffey**, a UW history graduate student, the website itself has enabled these collaborations by shaping the project as one of sharing university and community resources.

Those seeking a better understanding of ongoing struggles for racial and social justice have used the site to raise consciousness locally in their unions and their schools. The website challenges complacency and amnesia about Seattle’s conflicted past and its self-image of liberal tolerance. The site also offers remarkable, inspiring stories of ordinary, everyday courage in the face of adversity. In this way, Seattle’s unique history reveals both the fearsome resistance as well as the tremendous creativity encountered in the name of change.

For more on the project, see the website at www.civilrights.washington.edu.

www.civilrights.washington.edu

OUT OF THE ARCHIVE: COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY

Trevor Griffey, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project Coordinator

Developing a hands-on community history project requires a flexible and relatively democratic model for the production of knowledge. Working with local civil rights movement veterans has pushed the organizers of the *Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project*, including myself, to cultivate community building skills that few historians expect or encourage graduate students to develop.

To build productive relationships between the academy and local communities of color, we have had to share authority with those whose stories we publish. We don’t write much of the history we put online. Instead we enlist undergraduates to interview longtime activists and provide space online for both groups to create their own complementary historical narratives.

The collaborations that generate these stories require explicitly anti-racist practices. Though our partners don’t have total editorial control, they must be consulted about which interview clips go online, how their photographs and historical documents are presented, and may in some cases take primary leadership in developing their own histories with our financial or logistical support. So far we’ve begun to cultivate semi-formal collaborations with former Black Panthers, United Farm Workers (UFW), revolutionary Filipino activists, and black construction workers. The antagonism that these groups have toward class and racial paternalism—which they understandably see as synonymous with academic elitism—is such that they never would have collaborated with us without being guaranteed some power in the process.

Academics need to challenge their often unexamined desire for absolute authority over their subject matter. By cultivating unconventional, power-sharing community partnerships, and offering their partners even the most modest resources, they can set in motion unexpected new directions for their research. The details of specific partnerships can vary greatly. But building trust with one group inspires others to spontaneously come forward. Self-motivated undergraduates relish the opportunity to create rather than consume history, and follow up on their formal coursework with independent studies that they increasingly direct themselves. Quite quickly, by abandoning the role of expert for that of facilitator, scholars can side-step professional elitism and generate valuable academic inquiries through history projects that build community.

2005-2006

SOCIETY OF SCHOLARS

The Society of Scholars is an intellectual community, newly created each year, in which UW faculty and dissertators from diverse generations, academic ranks, and departments contribute to and learn from one another's work. Members are selected competitively and are awarded research fellowships from the Simpson Center in order to pursue individual projects. They meet biweekly throughout the year to discuss research in progress.

Robert Abrams (Associate Professor, English)
Bad Housekeeping: American Domesticity and the Grotesque

Richard Block (Assistant Professor, Germanics)
From Classical Weimar to Zion: Remapping a Literary History through Textual Configurations of Homosexuality

Nicole Calian (Dissertator, Germanics)
Re-Inventing the Human Being: Kant and the Discourse of Anthropology

Catherine Connors (Associate Professor, Classics)
Roman Geographies

Nicholas Halmi (Assistant Professor, English)
The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol

Jennifer Ladino (Dissertator, English)
Back to Nature: American Nostalgia from the Closed Frontier to the End of Nature

Brian Reed (Assistant Professor, English)
Cross-Media Exchange in the New York Schools of Poetry and Painting

Kara Reilly (Dissertator, Drama)
Automata and Mechanical Theatres: A Spectacular History of Machine-Based Mimesis

David Shields (Professor, English)
Positions: The Arc of a Body

Nikhil Pal Singh (Associate Professor, History)
Exceptional Empire: A Short History of U.S. Imperialism

Benjamin Stenberg (Alvord Graduate Fellow in the Humanities, Philosophy)
Toward a Linguistic Conception of Thought

SIMPSON CENTER SCHOLARS

With funds from the Robert Bolles and Yasuko Endo Endowed Fund and from the College of Arts & Sciences' pledge-match program for graduate student support, the Simpson Center granted awards to incoming doctoral students in the humanities who have demonstrated interest and promise in crossdisciplinary scholarship. The purpose of the award is to support their research.

Rania Mahmoud (English)
Ileana Marin (Comparative Literature)
Krislyn McWilliams (Asian Languages & Literature)
Brook Rosini (Germanics)
Ritobaan Roy (South Asian Studies)
Jamie Volker (Classics)

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR INITIATIVE

This program is designated for associate professors, who undertake a large share of teaching and committee work but rarely have resources for research committed specifically to them. Faculty involved in this initiative devote a quarter of the academic year to a research project that will benefit from expertise in another area. Each chooses a faculty counterpart—in any department, discipline, or school other than the applicant's own—with whom she or he would value regular conversation and guidance. Faculty receiving the Associate Professor Initiative Grant in 2005-2006 are:

Gordana Crnković (Slavic Languages & Literatures and Comparative Literature) with **Anthony Geist** (Spanish Studies and Comparative Literature)
"Something Strange and Valuable": The Spanish Civil War, Yugoslav Literature, and Visions of Socialism and Anti-Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia

Steven Herbert (Geography) with **Gail Stygall** (English)
Protest, Space, Law: The Territorial Containment of Speech

Lucy Jarosz (Geography) with **Sandra Silberstein** (English)
Defining Food Security in a Time of Insecurity

OPENING

DANZ COURSES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SUMMER INSTITUTE 2005

NEW BOOKS IN PRINT



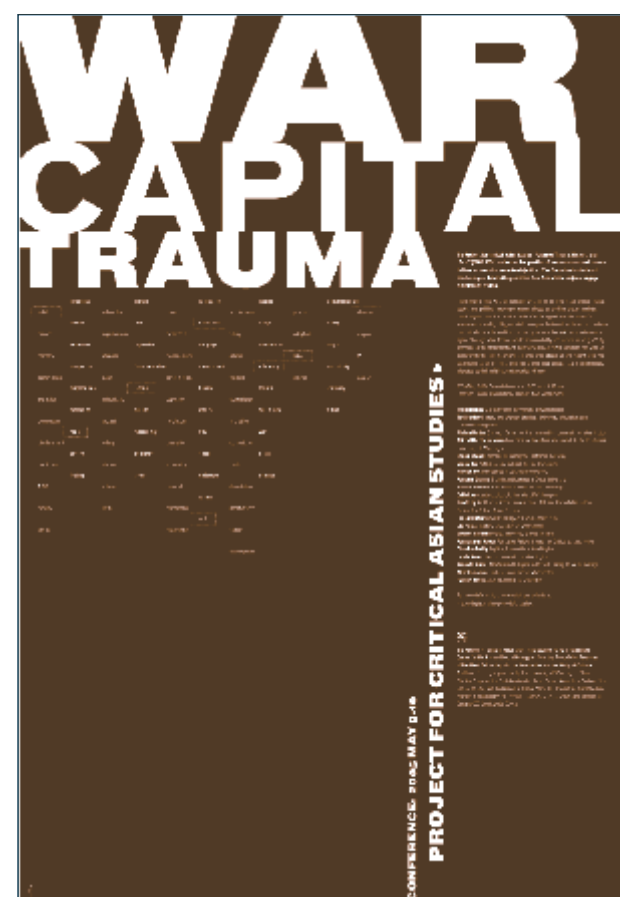
The Simpson Center's *New Books in Print* series provides an opportunity for UW faculty to discuss their recently published books. Books selected for 2005-2006 include:

Marshall Brown (Comparative Literature and English)
The Gothic Text
Stanford University Press, 2005

John Christopher Hamm (Asian Languages & Literature)
Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel
University of Hawaii Press, 2004

Matthew Sparke (Geography)
In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State
University of Minnesota Press, 2005

William Talbot (Philosophy)
Which Rights Should Be Universal?
Oxford University Press, 2005



OPEN UP THE WORLD

A liberal arts education should open up the world to students, and students to the world. This year the Simpson Center's undergraduate courses—the *Summer Institute in the Arts & Humanities* and the *Danz Courses in the Humanities*—do so by crossing geographical, disciplinary, and cultural boundaries to explore global issues and encounters. These courses provide opportunities not only to explore the varied conditions and expressions of culture across different times and places, but a chance to reflect on the process of encountering the unknown and learning from it.

Team-taught by engaging and risk-taking faculty from diverse disciplines, the Simpson Center's undergraduate courses create forums to engage with challenging and thought-provoking topics with a degree of focus not usually available for undergraduate students—especially those in their first and second year. This early focus not only encourages and enables students to become active, creative learners throughout their academic careers, but also prepares them for professional life, continued academic study, and thoughtful citizenship. Students appreciate the intellectual stimulation. Speaking of a Danz Course, one student said, “My mind was stretched and my thoughts and ideas challenged every day. I loved being granted the opportunity to think and explore.”

“Becoming Strangers: Travel, Trust, and Collaboration” framed the thematic focus of the 2005 *Summer Institute in the Arts & Humanities*. **Ellen Garvens** (Art), a photographer, **Brian Reed** (English), a scholar in poetics and literary criticism, and **Phillip Thurtle** (Comparative History of Ideas), a historian of science and technology, this year's Institute faculty, provided a fresh, interdisciplinary approach to understanding the importance of strangeness and estrangement in encounters that are aesthetic, conceptual, historical, or intercultural.

This fall, Reed and Thurtle are offering a new Danz Course that springs from the Summer Institute's theme. Other Danz Courses for 2005-2006 also promise an innovative exploration of issues on the forefront of the humanities.

Laurie Sears (History) and **Francisco Benítez** (Comparative Literature) will teach “Violence, Myth, and Memory: Southeast Asia as a Crossroads of Modernity” in Winter Quarter 2006. Using popular films such as *Apocalypse Now* and *The Year of Living Dangerously* as a starting point, the course will examine how founding myths of Southeast Asia have been adapted to comment on violence and global modernity in United States relations with Viet Nam, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

In the spring, **Yomi Braester** (Comparative Literature) and **Vikram Prakash** (Architecture) will offer “Architectural and Cinematic Spaces,” exploring the ways in which architecture and cinema complement each other in producing meaning and in structuring the experience of being in time and place. Specific sites range from the Forbidden City in Beijing and the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to the Forum Romanum in Rome and the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto.

The fourth annual *Summer Institute in the Arts & Humanities* was sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Education, the Mary Gates Endowment for Students, the Office of Research, the Simpson Center for the Humanities, the College of Arts & Sciences, the Office of Educational Outreach, the University Libraries, and the Undergraduate Research Program. The *Danz Courses in the Humanities*, now in their fourth year, are made possible by the generous financial support of Fredric Danz, who attended the University of Washington and is a longtime benefactor of the arts and humanities.



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“It has never been as important as it is now to provide our undergraduates with a broad-based education that is global in scope. Understanding the fundamental interdependence that characterizes our changing world today is crucial.” — Kathleen Woodward, Director Simpson Center for the Humanities

THE PROJECT FOR CRITICAL ASIAN STUDIES WELCOMES 2005-2006 ROCKEFELLER RESIDENT FELLOWS

A generous grant from the Rockefeller Foundation is supporting four visiting scholars in residence at the Simpson Center during 2005-2006 as part of the *Forum on Trauma, History, and 'Asia'* organized by the *Project for Critical Asian Studies*, directed by **Madeleine Dong** (History and Jackson School of International Studies) and **Tani Barlow** (History and Women Studies). Central to the research of the Forum is the investigation of local and global conditions that have underwritten mass social suffering, violence, and injustice in modern Asian history even as contemporary forces are remaking “Asia” as a region and Asian area studies as a topic of study. In Autumn Quarter, this year's Project Director, Madeleine Dong, will organize a series of roundtable discussions on “gendered violence”.

Chie Ikeya (Ph.D., History, Cornell University) and **Hwa Shin Lee** (Ph.D., Philosophy, Interpretation, and Culture, SUNY, Binghamton) will be in residence for the 2005-2006 academic year. **Tanika Sarkar** (Professor, Modern History, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University) will be in residence Autumn Quarter, and **Sun Ge** (Researcher and Associate Director, Comparative Literature Research Group, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) will be in residence Spring Quarter. Representing different regions and different disciplines, these four fellows promise multi-faceted perspectives and approaches to Asia's traumatic legacies as well as all-important dialogue across geographical boundaries. Conversations between fellows and UW faculty will be encouraged through a roundtable series and a year-long study group.

We invite you to learn more about their work by visiting the Critical Asian Studies website at <http://depts.washington.edu/critasia/fellows.htm>.

<http://depts.washington.edu/critasia>

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Left: Santiago Calatrava, Architect, Katz Lecturer. Right: Lorraine Daston (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin) *Science Studies Speaker Series*.

2005 SYMPOSIA + CONFERENCES 2006

The following are just a few of the many projects that received support from the Simpson Center for 2005-2006. Many of the interdisciplinary projects that receive funding combine research and teaching with events open to the public in order to share humanistic learning broadly and extend the mission of the university outside the campus to the community. For more information on these and other events, please visit www.simpsoncenter.org.

The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities is dedicated to fostering innovative crossdisciplinary research and teaching in the humanities and to stimulating exchange and debate on cultural and intellectual issues among University of Washington scholars and the citizens of the greater Seattle community. The Simpson Center is committed to a broad conception of the humanities that includes the humanistic social sciences and the arts, as well as the sciences and the professions.

The Simpson Center sponsors a diverse and expansive range of programs and research projects designed to inspire the cross-pollination of ideas, to encourage emerging knowledge and ways of knowing, and to spark meaningful campus-community engagement. These include public lectures and forums, scholarly conferences, collaborative research groups, interdisciplinary courses at all levels of higher education, public humanities programs, publications, and a fellowship program for University of Washington faculty and doctoral students.

APPLY FOR SUPPORT

AUTUMN DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 9, 2005
SPRING DEADLINE: APRIL 19, 2006

If you are a faculty member or a graduate student with an interest in crossdisciplinary research, teaching, programs, or the public humanities, the Simpson Center offers a number of opportunities for support.

Each year there are two deadlines for proposals for funding in the following academic year (July 1 to June 30). Proposals for Research Fellowships (Society of Scholars), the Associate Professor Initiative, and Graduate Seminars must be submitted in Autumn. Please visit our website at www.simpsoncenter.org for more information on funding categories and for detailed proposal guidelines.

KATZ LECTURES IN THE HUMANITIES

November 17, 2005

Alexander Nehamas

Philosophy and Comparative Literature
Princeton University

January 26, 2006

Richard Salomon

Asian Languages & Literature
University of Washington

February 23, 2006

Alain Badiou

Philosophy
École Normale Supérieure, Paris

April 11, 2006

Jonathan Lear

Philosophy
University of Chicago

April 18, 2006

Sir Christopher Frayling

Cultural History
Royal College of Art, London

SPEAKERS FOR 2005-06 INCLUDE:

Stephen Best, English, University of California, Berkeley
Lorraine Brown, Cultural Studies, George Mason University
Frederick Cooper, History, New York University
Rod Ferguson, American Studies, University of Minnesota
Rena Fraden, Associate Dean and English, Pomona College
Doris Garraway, French, Northwestern University
Brian Gollnick, Spanish & Portuguese, University of Iowa
Gayatri Gopinath, Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis
Saidiya Hartman, English, University of California, Berkeley
Suheir Hammad, Poet
Mette Hjort, English and Intercultural Studies, Aalborg University, Denmark
Marsha Kinder, Cinema Studies, University of Southern California
Herbert Lindenberger, English, Stanford University
W.J.T. Mitchell, English and Art History, University of Chicago
Gregg Mitman, Medical History and Bioethics, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Wang Ning, Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, Tsinghua University, Beijing
Jasbir Puar, Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University
Nicholas Sims-Williams, Languages & Cultures of Near and Middle East, University of London
Catharine Stimpson, Dean, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, New York University
Michael Tratner, English, Bryn Mawr
Eugene Wang, History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University
Robyn Wiegman, Literature and Women's Studies, Duke University
Joanna Williams, Art History, University of California, Berkeley

SPEAKERS FOR 2004-05 INCLUDED:

Charles Altieri, English, University of California, Berkeley
Arturo Arias, Latin American Studies, University of Redlands
Christopher Balme, Theatre Studies, University of Amsterdam
Brenda Brueggemann, English, Ohio State University
Partha Chatterjee, Political Science, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta and Anthropology, Columbia University
David Damrosch, English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University
Vaginal Davis, Performer
Carl Elliott, Center for Bioethics, University of Minnesota
David Halperin, English, University of Michigan
Gillian Hart, Geography, University of California, Berkeley
Sara Horowitz, Humanities and Jewish Studies, York University
Mark Juergensmeyer, Global & International Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara
David Kazanjian, English, Queens College, City University of New York
Walton Look Lai, History, University of the West Indies
Robert Lopez, a.k.a. *El Vez*, Performer
J. Lorand Matory, Anthropology and African American Studies, Harvard University
Annemarie Mol, Political Philosophy, University of Twente, The Netherlands
Sally Munt, Media and Cultural Studies, University of Sussex
Theodore Porter, History, University of California, Los Angeles
Christopher Queen, Religion, Harvard University
Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., Music, University of Pennsylvania
Rayna Rapp, Anthropology, New York University
Sherene Razack, Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, University of Toronto
Carrie Tarr, Arts and Social Sciences, Kingston University, London
Keyan Tomaselli, Communication, Culture and Media Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Deborah Vargas, Chicano/Latino Studies, University of California, Irvine
Jace Weaver, Institute of Native American Studies, University of Georgia
Arnold Weinstein, Comparative Literature, Brown University

Feminist Dialogues on Social Justice: Forging Articulations across U.S.-Based Anti-Racist and Transnational Feminisms

October 28-29, 2005

Organized by **Judith Howard** (Divisional Dean of the Social Sciences)

The Living Art of Miguel de Cervantes: A Public Commemoration of the *Quijote*

December 1-3, 2005

Organized by **Donald Gilbert-Santamaría** (Spanish & Portuguese Studies)

Is a History of the Cultural Revolution Possible?

February 23-25, 2006

Organized by **Tani Barlow** (History and Women Studies)

Literary Vocations, Legal Fictions: A Conversation Across Law and Humanities

April 7, 2006

Organized by **Gillian Harkins** (English), **Vicente Rafael** (History), and **Naomi Murakawa** (Political Science)

Cinema at City's Edge: Film and Urban Space in East Asia

April 28-30, 2006

Organized by **Yomi Braester** (Comparative Literature) and **James Tweedie** (Comparative Literature)

WPA: Public Arts in a Time of Crisis

May 6-7, 2006

Organized by Drama faculty and graduate students **Barry Witham**, **Kara Reilly**, **Elizabeth Bonjean**, **Amy Boyce**, and **Sydney Cheek O'Donnell**, and **Sonnet Retman** (American Ethnic Studies)

HASTAC Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory

In the spring of 2005, the Simpson Center joined HASTAC ("Haystack"), which was founded by Cathy Davidson (Duke University) and David Theo Goldberg (University of California, Irvine). HASTAC promotes new forms of collaboration across varied institutions, disciplines, and communities to develop the most creative uses of technology for the humanities.

HASTAC is sponsoring *InFormation 2006-2007*, a national awareness year dedicated to promoting the human and humane dimensions of technology and to forming new creative networks. *InFormation 2006-2007* will offer intensive and innovative seminars and events for faculty, students, and the general public. One goal of *InFormation 2006-2007* is to provide models for successful cross-institutional collaboration in the digital humanities that others might follow.

In preparation for this launch, twenty-five people from across the country associated with HASTAC met at the Simpson Center in September 2005. For more information please visit www.hastac.org.

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