

# Calgary Institute for the Humanities NEWSLETTER

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SPRING EDITION



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY



The Calgary Institute for the Humanities  
39th Annual Community Forum  
May 3, 2019

# THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF DNA

The Annual Community Forum was established “to bring together scholars and community participants for the discussion of problems important to society.” Each year the Calgary Institute for the Humanities (CIH) at the University of Calgary identifies a theme of pressing concern to our city, and invites three distinguished researchers to offer their perspectives on it.

Last fall, Senator Elizabeth Warren took a DNA test to ward off criticism that she fabricated a Native American heritage; the release of the test was subsequently criticized by the Cherokee Nation. Cherokee Nation Secretary of State Chuck Hoskin said in a statement that “Using a DNA test to lay claim to any connection to the Cherokee Nation or any tribal nation, even vaguely, is inappropriate and wrong.”

Meanwhile, DNA databases such as GEDMatch

are increasingly being used to solve cold cases and to prove or disprove paternity, often by accessing information that was stored for different purposes. The *New York Times* reports that “60 percent of Americans of Northern European descent—the primary group using these sites—can be identified through such databases whether or not they’ve joined one themselves, according to a study published today in the journal *Science*.”

Podcasts, true crime shows, family history documentaries and police procedurals all attest to a cultural obsession with, and a faith in, the potential of DNA to reveal some kind of truth. This seminar will explore the cultural politics of DNA. What is behind the current fascination with DNA testing, and more generally, what does it say about truth, race and identity in the current era?



## Invited Guest Speakers

**Kim TallBear, PhD, “American Progress Redux: Elizabeth Warren’s DNA and Settler Mythology.”** Associate Professor in the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta and Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples, Technoscience & Environment. She is author of *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (2013). Follow her research group at [www.IndigenousSTS.com](http://www.IndigenousSTS.com) and @indigenous\_sts. TallBear recently turned to research-creation work on decolonial and Indigenous sexualities. TallBear is working on a book that interrogates settler-colonial commitments to settlement in place, disciplines, monogamy, and marriage. She is a citizen of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate in South Dakota. She tweets @KimTallBear.

**Jackie Stacey, PhD, “The Sexual Politics of Cloning Films.”** Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at The University of Manchester, she is author of *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (2010) and co-editor of the journals *Screen* and *Feminist Theory*. Her research covers subjects as diverse as the transnational modes of spectatorship in Hollywood cinema, queer film and video, the visualising technologies of medical science, and the new genetic constructions of sexualised and racialised bodies in popular culture.

**M. Susan Lindee, PhD, “The DNA Experience: Consuming Identity in the Twenty-First Century.”** Janice and Julian Bers Professor of the History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania, she is author of *Moments of Truth in Genetic Medicine* (2005) and *The DNA Mystique: The Gene as Cultural Icon* (1995). A distinguished historian of science, Dr. Lindee has special interests in the history of genetics, gender and science, science and popular culture, and science and war.

Moderator: **Jim Brown**, radio personality and filmmaker, was the host of the *Calgary Eyeopener* on CBC Radio in Calgary from 2003 until 2011, and the national public affairs program *The 180* on CBC Radio One from 2013 to 2017. His first film, the feature film *Radiant City*, co-directed with Gary Burns, was presented in September 2006 at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film won a Genie Award for Best Documentary in 2007.

Image credits (from top-left): Tree texture (pxhere.com), Bird feather (pxhere.com), DNA sequencing (Paul Griggs, Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0), Red flower (Xuan Nguyen on Unsplash), Crystals of a DNA repair protein from *Serratia marcescens* bound to DNA (Bernard O'Hara & Renos Savva, Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0), The Crick papers, the Triplet code, 1961 (Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0), Fragile X metaphase spread + nucleus (Wessex Reg Genetics Centre, Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0)



Jim Ellis introduces Professor Gillian Rose, seen through a Livestream video production display

It's been an exciting few months at the CIH, with a series of terrific talks and some big changes announced. One highlight was the inaugural Naomi Lacey Memorial Lecture, given by our first Naomi Lacey Fellow, Dr. Hendrik Kraay, on Tuesday, March 5. Shrove Tuesday was a fortuitous day on which to hold a talk about the precursors to carnival in Brazil, the raucous celebrations known as *entrudo*. Over 80 people attended this lively event, including Dr. John Lacey and other members of Naomi Lacey's family. Dr. Lacey introduced the event by announcing he would immediately be increasing funding for the fellowship in order to ensure the continuation of the fellowship in perpetuity. We're extremely grateful to Dr. Lacey for his generosity, and to the other donors who have allowed us to continue to expand the reach of the CIH.

The Lacey lecture was just one of a number of well-attended lectures given

# Director's Message

Jim Ellis

by our fellows and by visiting speakers. Other highlights of the last term include presentations by astronaut and former chancellor Robert Thirsk on the benefits to society of space exploration; eminent feminist geographer Gillian Rose of Oxford University on the marketing of smart cities; and Dr. Lindsey Freeman, on the experience of growing up in a nuclear city, which she explores in her new book, *This Atom Bomb in Me* (Stanford UP, 2019).

We're looking forward to welcoming next year's fellows to the CIH, who you can read about in this newsletter. We're especially happy to announce that we're able this year to increase the amount of course release we are providing for our fellows, and we've been able to double the amount of funding going to our graduate fellow. This will allow our fellows more time to devote to their research, and exploring the opportunities that the intellectual community of the CIH offers.

The increased number of public events, the new fellowships, and the increases in funding to our fellows are all the very direct and tangible results of the generosity of the CIH community. We'll have more exciting announcements in the coming months, but I hope in the meantime you'll consider joining us at the CIH's 39th Annual Community Seminar, or at one of our other events.

A generous donation from the Naomi and John Lacey Foundation for the Arts created a new fellowship at the CIH in 2018. Dr. Hendrik Kraay (Professor, Department of History), recipient of this fellowship for the 2018-19 academic year, gave the inaugural Naomi Lacey Memorial Lecture: "From *Entrudo* to *Carnaval* in Nineteenth-Century Brazil." Castigated as a "barbarous game" after independence (1822), *entrudo* was nevertheless practiced by people of all



## Naomi Lacey Memorial Lecture



classes; it involved banquets, practical jokes, and water fights with syringes and waxen balls filled with perfumed water or other less savory liquids. The conflicts over *entrudo* constituted a struggle about Brazil's very nature at a time when new notions of citizenship and nationhood, challenges to slavery, and openings to outside cultural influences provoked numerous social anxieties involving questions of race, class, and gender.

**Congratulations to Dr. John Lacey, who will be receiving an honorary degree from the University of Calgary at the June 5 convocation. This degree celebrates Dr. Lacey's many contributions to the arts in Calgary.**







Dr. Adamek's research interests include medieval Chinese Buddhism, Buddhist archeology, and living systems theory. Her forthcoming book *Practicescape: The Buddhists of Baoshan* centers on a community in Henan, China. Previous publications include *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and its Contexts* (which won the American Academy of Religion Award for Excellence in Textual Studies in 2008) and *The Teachings of Master Wuzhu* (2011). Born in Hawai'i, she earned her degrees at Stanford University and has held research fellowships at Kyoto University (BDK, Fulbright), Peking University (NEH, Fulbright), the Stanford Humanities Center, and the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

# Representing Nirvāṇa through Inversion

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**Wendi L. Adamek**  
 ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,  
 DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS  
 AND RELIGION AND  
 NUMATA CHAIR IN  
 BUDDHIST STUDIES

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This year at the Calgary Institute for the Humanities, Dr. Wendi Adamek is working on a chapter for a new book project (*AntiEntropics*) on the dynamics of inversion, chiasmus (x-structure reversals), and ambiguity, in propositions about ethical and spiritual practice. For her current chapter on representations of inversion in the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, she brings together her background in medieval Chinese Buddhism and work on theories of agency in networks.

The question of agency becomes particularly acute in Buddhist contexts, as one of the basic teachings is that what we think of as an agentive “self” is actually an aggregation of processes that have no independent core or essence. This is the famous *anātman* or “nonself” doctrine, claiming that suffering arises when we mistakenly attribute a metaphysical self to our experience of confluences of form, sensory feedback, reactions, cognitive constructions, and consciousness of these processes. Buddhist practice was aimed toward breaking down attachment to the flow of processes, which would end in an effable freedom called *nirvāṇa*.

However, in the early centuries of the Common Era, new Buddhist theories



Śākyamuni's Parinirvāṇa. Dunhuang, Mogao Cave 85, Ceiling, south side, mural depicting scene from the Lotus Sūtra. 800 CE - 899 CE.

Surviving devotional spaces (cave-temples) attest that devotees on all levels were interested in assembling texts and images in complex configurations with multiple meanings.

developed that posited radical transformation of persons into buddhas (awakened ones). The goal of practice turned toward becoming a buddha, one who realizes the lack of reality of projected independent entities yet is able to work with illusions in order to help others end the cycles of suffering.

One of the new theories was called *tathāgatagarbha* (buddha-matrix), the doctrine of innate potential for buddhahood in every person. Yet it could be interpreted as positing a kind of essence, so it appeared to contradict the central Buddhist teaching of nonself. The need to forestall accusations of heterodoxy probably stimulated the development and proliferation of *tathāgatagarbha* theories. In this evolutionary process, the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* is now considered likely



to incorporate some of the earliest and most provocative forms of the doctrine. When the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* was translated into Chinese in the fifth century, it quickly attracted attention and interest.

Dr. Adamek's chapter is primarily about sixth-century Chinese examples of *tathāgata-garbha*-influenced soteriology (theories of liberation). She focusses on the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*'s characterization of buddhahood as permanence, joy, self, and purity (Chinese *chang le wo jing*). These are known as the "four inversions," which are claimed to correct the previous "inverted" teachings of impermanence, suffering, nonself, and impurity. The claim that buddhahood is the "true self" is the most controversial aspect of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*.

In the first part of the chapter, Adamek discusses three aspects of the background of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*. She introduces one scholar's arguments that the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* includes some of the earliest extant *tathāgata-garbha* material, and summarizes current scholarship on the relationship among *tathāgata-garbha* texts. She then discusses another scholar's theories about connections between the early Buddhist practice of relic-worship and the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*. Finally, she summarizes some of the controversial claims in the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, focussing on issues that were of particular concern for Chinese Buddhists.

In the second part she turns to Chinese use of the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* in a selected "local" network in North China. She discusses texts and images that highlight "inversion" as the key relation between impermanent dependent self and the eternal true self, an alluring potential that was given various names. The classic Buddhist doctrine of nonself, though it would seem to be disjunctive, was actively

assimilated into these interpretations and representations.

Chinese Buddhist exegetes were making great efforts to theorize a "unified field" that could reconcile canonical early Buddhist fundamental teachings and subsequent complex theorizations of consciousness, buddha-nature, and cosmic buddha-bodies. The challenge of organizing these elements into a path of practice is attested by the voluminous commentaries produced in this period. At the same time, surviving devotional spaces (cave-temples) attest that devotees on all levels were interested in assembling texts and images in complex configurations with multiple meanings.

To illustrate these processes, the bulk of the chapter involves detailed analyses of sixth-century textual and visual works that allude to the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*'s rubric of the four inversions of "permanence, joy, self, and purity." Tracking the theme of "inversion" also sheds light on the culturally diverse world of the Northern dynasties. Buddhist adaptations were carried out through the design of devotional spaces and images of ideal practice as much as by proselytization and doctrinal argumentation. We are still able to discern the interaction of material culture and interpretive media in the dissemination of this "paradigm shift" for Buddhist practice.

The paradigm shift that the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* helped to stimulate was part of Chinese theorization of "buddha-nature." This became a key feature of later Chan (Japanese: Zen) Buddhism. Subsequent chapters in Adamek's book trace the dynamics of inversion, chiasmus, and ambiguity in dialogue with Chan and Zen texts.

# Calgary Institute for the Humanities



**LINDSAY  
DRIEDIGER-MURPHY**  
NAOMI LACEY MEMORIAL FELLOW  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
DEPT. OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION

## **Roman Religious Anxieties**

This project demonstrates that many Romans experienced fear and anxiety when interacting with their gods, and considers why anxiety-inducing ways of characterizing the gods rise to prominence in certain contexts in Roman history. To date there has been no systematic study of what Romans believed about the character of their gods. Most scholars hold that Romans saw their gods as benevolent by default. My project seeks to recover a different strand of Roman theology. I identify three key contexts in which Roman sources express concern about the reliability and loyalty of the gods: the Roman conquest of Italy, the Second Punic War, and the collapse of the Late Republic. In each of these periods, I argue, we can see Romans confronting the possibility that the gods might give or transfer their support to Rome's enemies. This conclusion encourages us to re-evaluate our reconstructions of Roman conceptions of divine-human relationships.



**DERRITT  
MASON**  
WAYNE O. MCCREADY FELLOW  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

## **The Virtual Child: Children's Literature and Digital Culture**

The Virtual Child explores the pre-digital history of "the virtual" in order to think through young people's digital virtualities with greater nuance. This history illuminates how digital virtual space is a site for contemporary iterations of longstanding anxieties and desires surrounding the child's own virtual qualities. Drawing on the etymology of "virtual," The Virtual Child argues that we can characterize children's literature—including its digital texts—as a genre that typically attempts to manage the child's virtuality. More specifically, children's literature aims to instill virtue (purity and moral goodness) in the child, while delimiting and subsequently regulating their Virtue (openness and creativity). By considering pre-digital virtualities in key works of children's and young adult literature including J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911) and Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* (1942), I maintain that we can better theorize how digital texts for young people endeavour to construct and secure their audiences.



**TIMOTHY J.  
STAPLETON**  
CIH ANNUAL FELLOW  
PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

## **Military Culture in British Colonial West Africa (c.1860-1960)**

This project will produce a scholarly history of Britain's colonial military in West Africa from the late nineteenth century conquest to decolonization in the 1950s. Located in Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) was Britain's largest army in colonial Africa yet it has not received much academic attention. This racially hierarchical institution was central in maintaining British rule, it served as a manpower reservoir for Britain's global conflicts, and it was the catalyst for important social and political change in West Africa. Utilizing documents from British and African archives and with a focus on the ordinary African serviceman and his family, this study will attempt to better understand the military in British West Africa by employing the concepts of "military culture" which looks at basic assumptions that inform how the military works, and "combat motivation" which explores reasons why soldiers fight.



# Annual Fellows 2019-20



**MORGAN  
VANEK**

**CIH ANNUAL FELLOW  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

## **Forms of Trade: Significant Omissions in the Records of Empire, 1694-1785**

To date, Anthony Henday appears only around the edges of histories of Alberta, where he's briefly celebrated as the first Englishman to see the Rocky Mountains – but he's also the first Hudson's Bay Company explorer to use the empirical forms of record-keeping that the Royal Society would later recommend to all agents of the British empire. As the four extant versions of his journal demonstrate, however, even small changes introduced to regularize the form of these observations have significant consequences for the journal's argument about the people and places observed. During the period of the proposed fellowship, I aim both to examine the implications of these formal changes for Henday's theory of environment, and to explore how these changes in the forms of empirical record-keeping might be correlated to changes in both Company and Cree land management practices in western Canada in the second half of the eighteenth century.



**DAVID  
BARRIOS GIRALDO**  
**SPRATT GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP  
PHD CANDIDATE  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

## **Commemorative Practices and Rituals of Memory in Colombia, 1872-1919**

How was modernization experienced and understood in the province of Antioquia (Colombia), from 1872 to 1919? Specifically, I examine how regional elites used commemorations during this period to celebrate historical change and the emerging of new modernizing social classes, and claim a larger national significance for themselves and their region. So far, I have written two chapters explaining how the funeral of the novelist Jorge Isaacs in 1906 and the centennial celebrations in 1910 created specific links between the local elites, the public, and national memory. I am particularly interested also in uncovering the underlying silence of mestizos, women and working class sectors in these celebrations and how did those communities inhabited and possibly transformed Medellín's mnemonic landscapes. This project challenges traditional historiography by showing that Colombia between 1870 and 1938 was marked by a deep sense of faith in peace and progress.

We are excited to announce the Fellows for the 2019-20 academic year. We welcome the breadth of fascinating research topics: the reliability and loyalty of the Roman gods; pre-digital virtual texts for children; military culture as a catalyst for social change in West Africa; records of empire and the journals of Anthony Henday; and ritual and modernization in turn-of-the-century Colombia. The Wayne O. McCready Resident Fellowship for an Emerging Scholar recognises a scholar on the verge of a significant scholarly breakthrough. We are also happy to introduce the Naomi Lacey Memorial Fellowship, sponsored by the Naomi and John Lacey Foundation for the Arts. The Frances Spratt Graduate Student Fellowship continues the tradition of supporting a Ph.D candidate whose research contributes to the public good by promoting the core values of the humanities and building bridges of learning to the broader community. Congratulations to all and we look forward to supporting you in your research.



# The Ethics and Politics of Social Media opens up a conversation with a student essay contest

The Ethics and Politics of Social Media Interdisciplinary Working Group organized a student essay contest this year, a first for the institute. The contest, entitled “Social Media: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” provided a window into the thinking and experiences of a young generation whose lives are impacted by social media in ways that are often underappreciated by previous generations, who were not immersed in this new technological landscape from such a young age. We received more than two dozen submissions to this contest, from students representing a wide range of majors — political science, psychology, sociology, education, communications, business, computer science, economics, and health sciences.

Many of the submissions exhibited exceptional insight, quality, eloquence and creativity. For this reason, it was excruciatingly difficult to choose the award winners. In the end, given the quality of submissions, we decided to expand the prize pool, and allow a tie for first place in addition to the second and third place

“The contest, entitled “Social Media: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” provided us with a window into the thinking and experiences of a young generation whose lives are impacted by social media in ways that are often underappreciated by previous generations...”

winners. Furthermore, we have a list of “honourable mention” essays that did not make the top four but were close. Even among the remaining essays not in that list, there is a wealth of information, acumen, and perspective, and we wish to highlight many of these essays for audiences around campus and beyond.

Lorianne Reuser (education) and Daniel Huss (communications) are together our first-prize winners. In her essay titled “Giving up the microphone: Whose voices are heard on Bookstagram,” Reuser delves into the book club community on Instagram to draw our attention to the ethical responsibility

of ‘bookstagrammer’ influencers—who often enjoy a high rank in the intersections of race and economic standing—to recognize the work of authors of colour whose writing, literary merit, and lived experiences are often not given the attention they deserve. She builds on an eye-opening recent controversy around the ethics of reading (or not reading) material that is uncomfortable to read because it depicts the pains of

marginalized others. Reuser invites us to check our privileges and consciously use social media in a way that makes it a more egalitarian space for everyone.

In his essay titled “Old Wisdom, New Media,” our other first prize winner, Daniel Huss, focuses on the responsibility of social media users in learning, and our educational system in teaching how to be critical thinkers and form opinions of our own. In a day and age when credible news sources have to compete with YouTube channels to attract the attention of the public, when the voices of critical thinkers and philosopher are muffled by public speakers with excellent oratory skills, it is upon us—the users, and the educational institutions—to understand the imperative of critical thinking skills. He warns us that without knowing how to be critical thinkers our senses and our intellects can be tricked in the media space. Huss makes a strong case for the idea that humanity, now more than ever, is in need of mass, high quality training in critical thinking skills to combat the potential manipulations enabled by social media technologies.

In her essay titled “My Place on the Platform (As Determined by Cropped Cotton Trousers)” and chosen as our second place winner, Bryn Waidson (education) employs creative writing to open a window into the mind of a social media user whose sense of self worth is influenced by the lives she witnesses being lived in the social media space. Through the powerful images she creates, and the internal dialogue she describes, we are exposed wonderfully to the angst of a modern young woman in the face of consumer culture shaped by social media. Waidson warns of the

(continued on page 14)



The Calgary Institute for the Humanities Interdisciplinary Working Groups aim to bring together faculty and graduate students from different disciplines to explore common research interests and to encourage collaborative research projects.

KIAS-CIH Alberta Humanities Research Grant

# PRAIRIE INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY PROJECT UPDATE

**Daniel Voth**

CIH 2018-19  
ANNUAL FELLOW  
ASSISTANT  
PROFESSOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE

Last fall, a team of mainly Indigenous researchers from the Universities of Calgary and Alberta met in Calgary to begin work on the Prairie Indigenous Philosophy Project (PIPP). This project aims to address an acute problem within Indigenous thought: despite sustained intellectual production over many decades, the philosophical writings of many of the most esteemed Indigenous thinkers are not easily accessible, thereby hindering access to, and appreciation of the breadth of their intellectual output. The challenge this dearth of attention and lack of accessibility creates is that the philosophy of these important intellectuals is not readily available to community members, activists, graduate students or scholars. The lack of an accessible collection of these thinkers' contributions to knowledge hinders our efforts to advance understandings of Indigenous thought grounded in

the diverse intellectual traditions of Indigenous peoples. PIPP has approached Métis Elder and writer Maria Campbell, and Blackfoot scholar Leroy Littlebear and they have both expressed interest in being our initial partner scholars.

Our research objective is to work with Campbell and Littlebear to publish their writings in a single source along with additional commentary and analysis from Indigenous intellectuals.

The meeting achieved several goals. In keeping with developing an ethic of engagement that is informed and animated by Indigenous intellectual traditions, the research team developed terms of reference to advance the project, and to engage in a good way with our partner thinkers. We also developed a governance framework that brought Daniel Voth (Métis) from the UofC, Matthew Wildcat (Plains Cree) at the UofA, and Mary Butterfield





(non-Indigenous ally) at UBC-Okanagan into leadership roles with clear lines of accountability to the research team and our partner scholars. The meeting also allowed the research team to engage in an energizing discussion about the key themes within the work of prairie Indigenous scholars generally, and our partner scholars in particular, that would be helpful to make accessible to our communities. The meeting affirmed the resolve of the research team to continue the project, and Wildcat and Voth have been tasked with deepening the collaborative relationship between the PIPP project, and our two partner thinkers. A special thanks to CIH and the Kule Institute for Advanced Study for their generous support in getting this unique UofA-UofC collaboration up off the ground. The gathering was an exciting start to refocusing attention on Indigenous philosophy informed by life on the prairies.

## Social Media (continued)

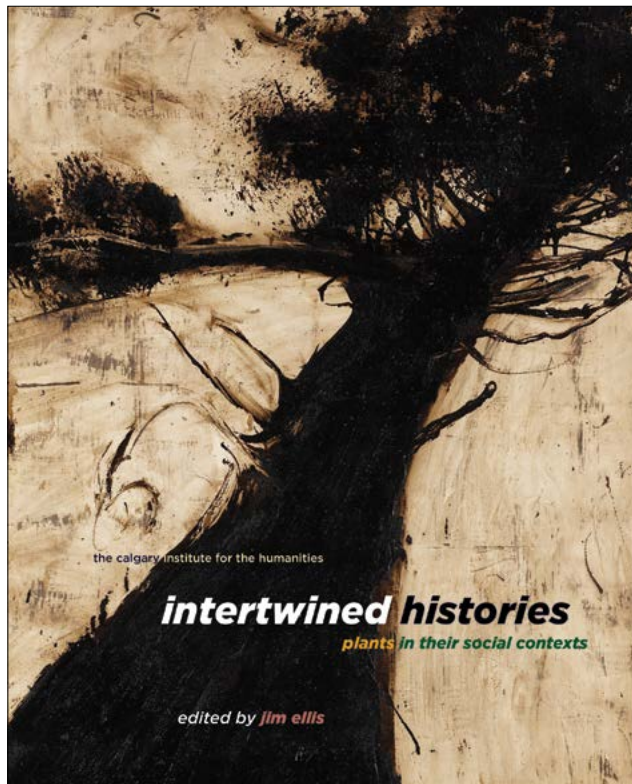
environmental and human rights implications of a consumerist culture exacerbated by social media, but also shines light on positive influences helping her find clarity and inspiration from others on social media.

In his third-place winning essay titled “Return to Social Media? I’d rather Start Smoking!” Max Kurapov (computer science), uses wit, intellect, statistics and his experience of quitting social media to show us the physical and mental implications of excessive social media use. Drawing on analogies with smoking, he makes a strong case for “warning labels” on social media apps similar to those now printed on cigarette packages through enforced regulation.

We are greatly indebted to all the participants in the essay contest for enriching our understanding of social media. Additional funding to support this contest was provided by the Faculty of Arts, Department of Communication, Media and Film, the School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures, and the Haskayne School of Business. We are also grateful to everyone at the University of Calgary and beyond who helped spread the word about the essay contest, including the University’s social media team, *UToday*, CJSW Radio, and Global News Calgary, for covering news related to the contest and the award ceremony.

**Mohammad Keyhani** (Haskayne School of Business), **Maria Bakardjieva** (Dept. of Communication, Media and Film), **Safaneh Neyshabouri** (School of Languages, Linguistics, Literatures and Cultures), and **Andrea Whitely** (Dept. of Communication, Media and Film)

**Links to all of the essays mentioned in this article as well as the honourable mentions can be accessed through [arts.ucalgary.ca/cih/socialessay](https://arts.ucalgary.ca/cih/socialessay).**



# *Intertwined Histories: Plants in Their Social Contexts*

**Available May 3**

*Intertwined Histories: Plants in Their Social Contexts* had its origins in the Calgary Institute for the Humanities 38th Annual Community Seminar, which took place in May 2018. The book features incredible artwork by Attila Richard Lukacs, Hutch Hutchinson, and Jennifer Wanner, alongside critical essays on the artwork of Canadian artists Leila Sujir and Eric & Mia. It is also an interdisciplinary exploration of the relationship—past, present, and future—between people and plants: Andrew Mathews, a cultural anthropologist, writes about his research on the historical ecology, natural history, and climate politics of Italian forests; Patricia Vieira examines ethics in the relations between human beings and plants; James Cahill discusses current studies in his experimental plant ecology lab and explores the relationship between the philosophical and scientific understandings of plants. These essays, and many others, remind us plants are the foundation of life on Earth, the source of energy for human and non-human animals and the air that we breathe. In habitually overlooking plants, we miss the myriad benefits they offer to us and, perhaps, the keys to our continued co-existence.

Plants were the first to colonize the planet, and they created the soil and atmosphere that made life possible for animals. They are the largest and oldest life forms on Earth. In spite of their primacy, western cultures have traditionally regarded plants as the lowest of life forms, lacking mobility, sensation and communication. Recent research argues that plants move and respond to their environment, communicate with each other, and form partnerships with other species.

Can these new studies shift our view of plants? Are plants inert beings? How do we understand the borders or boundaries of individual creatures? What are the systems of interdependency that bind all living things together?

Art, poetry, and essays by cultural anthropologists, experimental plant biologists, philosophers, botanists, and foresters expose the complex interactions of the vibrant living world around us and give us a lens for exploring our intertwined histories.



## The Trials of Psychedelic Therapy



Dr. Matthew Oram, CIH Postdoctoral Fellow from 2016-17 just released his new book: *The Trials of Psychedelic Therapy - LSD Psychotherapy in America*. Congratulations to Dr. Oram. We're happy to hear your time at the CIH was valuable for you and contributed to the completion of this work.

Dr. Oram began his fellowship at CIH in April 2016, after relocating from New Zealand to take up an Associated Medical Services Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History of Medicine and Health Care, supervised by Dr. Frank W. Stahnisch in the Department of Community Health Sciences, Cumming School of Medicine. This book is based on Oram's PhD thesis, completed at the University of Sydney in 2014. In *The Trials of Psychedelic Therapy*, Oram traces the early promise and eventual demise of LSD psychotherapy in the United States. The work considers the rise and fall of clinical research exploring the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs. This topic has typically been approached through the cultural history of the 1960s, particularly the drug's association with the counterculture movement, and the federal government's efforts to curb its increasing non-medical use—intentionally or unintentionally, the backlash against LSD's recreational use ended legitimate research. However, Oram's research shows that the federal government never banned research, and in fact actively supported it for much longer than has been acknowledged. Oram contextualizes the history of LSD psychotherapy research within the changing regulatory and scientific contexts for pharmaceutical research, revealing scientific challenges that frustrated research and lead to its demise.



# Featured Guest Speakers

## Dr. Gillian Rose, Visualizing Bodies in the Digitally Mediated City

The Social Justice and the Smart City Interdisciplinary Working Group invited Dr. Gillian Rose, Professor of Human Geography at Oxford University to present a lecture on representation of the body in digitally mediated urban spaces. Dr. Rose cited many visualizations of the "Smart City" made by corporations selling hardware or software that will be used in these spaces. There are many claims about the potential of the smart city: environmental sustainability and better use of resources, economic efficiency and provision of services in times of austerity, and more participation in civic government. How do these claims align with how smart cities are represented on screen?



Dr. Gillian Rose, Professor of Human Geography, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

## Dr. Robert Gehl, Diving into the Dark Web

The Ethics and Politics of Social Media Interdisciplinary Working Group invited Dr. Robert Gehl to speak at the social media essay contest award event. His paper, "A Deep Dive into the Marianas Web: Surveillance, Information, and Mythologies of the Dark Web," confronted the myths of the dark web; Gehl's analysis shows that the majority of 'dark websites' are just like any other website; the use of such networks favours privacy, but doesn't necessarily deserve the fear and moral judgement that accompanies the popular understanding of these spaces. Dr. Gehl is author of *Weaving the Dark Web* (2018) and is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Utah.



Dr. Robert Gehl, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at The University of Utah, speaking at the undergraduate essay contest awards event hosted by The Ethics and Politics of Social Media Interdisciplinary Working Group

## Dr. Robert Thirsk, Exploring the Cultural and Scientific Impact of Space Travel



Dr. Robert Thirsk, OC, OBC, former Chancellor of the University of Calgary

On March 19, in partnership with The Arts and Science Honours Academy, we hosted a lecture by Dr. Robert Thirsk, former Chancellor of the University of Calgary. In his talk, “What has Space Brought Us?” Dr. Thirsk highlighted some of the scientific, technological and medical benefits generated by space exploration. He has flown on two space missions as a member of the Canadian Space Agency’s astronaut corps; he reflected on his personal experiences of the international cooperation required to accomplish his missions, the effects of space travel on his health, and the impact that images and discoveries generated through space exploration have on our society. Dr. Thirsk concluded the talk by pointing to some of the innovations private companies are now making in their contributions to space flight and the design of space stations.

## Dr. Lindsey Freeman, Rememering Childhood in an Atomic City

Reading from her forthcoming memoir, *This Atom Bomb in Me*, Dr. Lindsey Freeman reflected on her childhood experiences in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. A secret city during the Manhattan Project, Oak Ridge enriched the uranium that powered Little Boy, the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima; it was a major nuclear production site throughout the Cold War. Professor Freeman is an Associate Member of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies at Simon Fraser University. Her lecture and workshop were hosted by the Energy *In* Society Interdisciplinary Working Group.



The conveners of the Energy *In* Society Interdisciplinary Working Group with Dr. Freeman (from left to right): Dr. Sabrina Perić, Dr. Roberta Rice, Dr. Jim Ellis (CIH Director), Dr. Lindsey Freeman, and Dr. Petra Dolata



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