

UB Humanities Institute

University at Buffalo *The State University of New York*



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Scholars

at Hallwalls

September 21

Tamara Thornton, History
Nathaniel Bowditch and the Science of Business in Nineteenth-Century America

October 12

Justin Read, Romance Languages
Living with Death in Mexico City: Poetics and the Built Environment

November 9

John Jennings, Visual Studies
An Ethno-Gothic Graphic Narrative of the Great Migration

November 30

Krzysztof Ziarek, Comparative Literature
Language After Heidegger

January 25

Dalia Muller, History
Debating Cuban Independence in Mexico in the 1890s

February 22

Graham Hammill, English
Early Modern Rights Talk and the Fictions of the Body Politic

March 29

Carolyn Korsmeyer, Philosophy
Touching the Past: Genuineness and the "Real Thing"

April 19

Erin Hatton, Sociology
Nannies, Welfare Recipients, and Prisoners: The Struggle for Worker Rights

** All Scholars@Hallwalls events take place on Fridays at 4PM at the Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center (341 Delaware Avenue).

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

—ERIK R. SEEMAN

The economies of Spain and Greece hang in the balance, in part because of a transnational entity known as the euro zone. What is a humanist to do?

One answer is to interrogate the very concept of transnationalism. This is exactly what the Humanities Institute plans for this year, with much of our programming organized around the theme of "The Transnational Turn in the Humanities." A series of talks in the Fall and Spring semesters will culminate in a major conference of the same name on March 22-23, 2013.

This organizing theme is of great personal interest to me. Like many other humanists at UB, my scholarship has moved in a transnational direction over the last decade or so, influenced by broader trends in academia, by my UB colleagues in numerous disciplines, and by the increasingly globalized world in which we all live. When I was reading for my comprehensive Ph.D. examinations some twenty years ago, few historians did work that was explicitly transnational. Today, in my fields of early North American and Atlantic history, it's hard to conceptualize research projects that don't cross national boundaries.

In light of similar exciting developments across the humanities, UB's College of Arts and Sciences recently created North America's first Department of Transnational Studies. This new department brings together faculty from several interdisciplinary departments and programs that have pioneered investigations in transnational studies: African and African American Studies, Gender Studies, American Studies, Native American Studies, Latino Studies, and Caribbean Studies. Carl Nightingale and Keith Griffler from the new department are organizing the year-long speakers series and conference – see the article inside for more details.

You probably won't come away from the talks knowing whether to buy Spanish treasury bonds.



You will, however, have a better understanding of what it means to live in a world where national borders are increasingly porous. I look forward to exploring these issues with you in the year ahead.

HI Honors Philosopher Jorge Gracia

Each year, the Humanities Institute honors the most influential humanists at UB through a Scholar Session, an afternoon symposium dedicated to the impact of a featured scholar's work. This year, the Humanities Institute will honor **Jorge J. E. Gracia**, the Samuel P. Capen Chair and SUNY Distinguished Professor in the Departments of Philosophy and Comparative Literature. This year's Scholar Session, entitled "Interpreting Race, Art, and Literature: A Conversation between Appiah, Stavans and Gracia", will take place on Friday, September 28th at 4pm in the Special Collections Library, 420 Capen Hall.

The author of seventeen books, Professor Gracia is an internationally recognized specialist in multiple fields from medieval to contemporary Latin American philosophy, and from theories of popular culture to recent debates in race, ethnicity and identity. In 2011, Professor Gracia received the Aquinas Medal, which is the most prestigious award in the area of medieval philosophy or Catholic philosophy. He is also a highly successful curator, most recently of an exhibition called "Painting Borges," which continues to travel to several cities in the US and throughout the Americas. The exhibition includes contemporary Cuban and Argentinian artists interpreting twelve of Borges' short stories. Earlier this year, Gracia published his reflections on these individual pieces and their relation to

philosophy and art in *Painting Borges* (SUNY Press 2012). His new book, which he is co-writing with Ilan Stavans, will be published by Duke University Press.

Professor Gracia will be joined by two prominent scholars and public intellectuals: **Kwame Anthony Appiah** and **Ilan Stavans**. The most distinguished philosopher working on race today and described by some as a "postmodern Socrates," **Kwame Anthony Appiah** is the Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy at Princeton, and the author of seventeen books, including three novels. Appiah's most recent book is *Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, which looks at moral revolutions of the past such as Chinese foot binding and abolitionism as well as contemporary campaigns to end honor killing to argue that moral reform occurs not through reason but through honor and shame. The book has won numerous awards including the *New York Times Book Review's* 100 Notable Books of 2010. That same year, *Foreign Policy* magazine named Appiah to its list of top global thinkers. More recently, President Obama awarded Appiah the National Humanities Medal at a ceremony at the White House in February 2012.

Ilan Stavans is one of today's leading essayists, cultural critics and translators. He is the Lewis-Sebring Professor in Latin American and Latino Culture and Five College-

Fortieth Anniversary Professor at Amherst College. He is the author of nine books, and co-editor of several others. He and Jorge Gracia have just co-authored a book entitled *Thirteen Ways of Looking at Latino Art*. (SUNY Press 2012), a collection of conversations between the two on a range of topics from politics and religion to art, literature and philosophy. Stavans' story "Morirse está en hebreo" was made into the award-winning movie *My Mexican Shiva* (2007), produced by John Sayles. Stavans has received numerous awards and honors, among them a Guggenheim Fellowship, the National Jewish Book Award, the Southwest Children Book of the Year Award, an Emmy nomination, the Latino Book Award, Chile's Presidential Medal, the Rubén Darío Distinction, and the Cátedra Roberto Bolaño. He was the host of the syndicated PBS show *Conversations with Ilan Stavans* (2001-2006).

Structured as a conversation among these three prominent intellectuals, the UB Humanities Institute's Scholar Session promises to be a memorable event that pays tribute to a valued colleague, while also engaging in the topics of politics, philosophy and art. A reception will follow the discussion. As with all HI events, the Scholar Session is free and open to the public. To get a complimentary parking pass, please contact the Humanities Institute at 645-2591 or huminst@buffalo.edu.

Dr. Jorge Gracia
UB



Dr. K. Anthony Appiah
Princeton University



Dr. Ilan Stavans
Amherst College



2012-2013 HI FACULTY FELLOWS

The UB Humanities Institute offers fellowships for UB tenured and tenure-track faculty engaged in humanistic research. Following is the list of our 2012-2013 faculty fellows whose proposed research projects have shown exceptional quality and potential.



Graham Hammill, Professor of English, is a specialist in Renaissance literature and the author of two books, *The Mosaic Constitution: Political Theology and Imagination from Machiavelli to Milton* (Chicago 2012) and *Sexuality and Form: Caravaggio, Marlow and Bacon* (Chicago 2000). He received his doctorate from Duke University and spent many years teaching at Notre Dame before coming to UB in 2008, where he teaches courses on early modern literature, psychoanalysis and political theory.



Erin Hatton, Assistant Professor of Sociology, is the author of *Temp Economy: From Kelly Girls to Permatemps in Postwar America* (Temple 2011). She received her doctorate in 2007 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has published numerous articles on various aspects of the changing labor market, such as gender and the temp industry and unions in the hotel

industry. She is currently turning to domestic workers and prison labor for her second book project. In 2011, she was awarded a UB Civic Engagement research fellowship.



John Jennings, Associate professor of Visual Studies, has recently joined the UB faculty from the Graphic Design Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he received his MFA in Graphic Design. An artist, cultural critic and curator, he has co-authored four books, most recently *Black Comix: African American Independent Comics and Culture* with Damian Duffy (Random House 2010) and *Four Electric Ghosts Codex* with Mendi + Keith Obadike (2011). He has curated and co-curated six exhibitions from Los Angeles to Kyoto, Japan, and his work has been featured in three one-person exhibitions, and over twenty group exhibitions. He will be a visiting artist at the University of South Dakota in 2012.

Carolyn Korsmeyer, Professor of Philosophy, is the author of four books, most recently *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (Oxford 2011) as well as *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy* (Cornell 1999). She has co-edited six books, including *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (2005). She has served as President of the

American Society of Aesthetics and is the recipient of UB's Sustained Achievement Award (2003).



She was Visiting Professor at the University of Helsinki and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. In 2008, the UB Humanities Institute featured Carolyn Korsmeyer's contribution to the field of Aesthetics and Philosophy in a Scholar Session, an annual event that honors the work of a distinguished faculty member.

HI Facts (since 2005)

Research Workshops

16

Faculty Fellows

48

Publications by Former Fellows

74

2012-2013 HI FACULTY FELLOWS



Dalia Muller is Assistant Professor of History and Associate Director of UB's Caribbean Studies Program. In 2007, she received her Ph.D. in History from UC Berkeley and taught briefly at Loyola Marymount University becoming joining the History Department at UB in 2009. A specialist in the field of Caribbean history, she brings a transnational approach to the study of the Americas, one that goes beyond a national model to address the question of Cuban independence in the 1890s, for instance, from the perspective of intellectuals and political leaders in Mexico.



Justin Read, Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, is the author of *Modern Poetics and Hemispheric American Cultural Studies* (Palgrave 2009). A graduate of the Comparative Literature program at the University of Michigan, he has published several articles on a range of topics from urban poetics in modern Brazil to theories of space and globalization in the Americas. He is the co-founder with Debra Castillo at Cornell of the Lake Erie Latin

American Cultural Studies Workshop, a consortium of scholars from NY State. Last year, he was the co-organizer with Colleen Culleton of the Fluid Culture Series, a year-long lecture, arts and media series sponsored by the UB Humanities Institute.



Tamara Thornton, Professor of History, is the author of two books, *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (Yale 1996) and *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (Yale 1989). She has received fellowships from the NEH and the Massachusetts Historical Society, the latter of which honored her in 2009 by naming her a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Her article on rural debtors and the corporation in the early nineteenth century, which appeared in the *Journal of the Early Republic*, was awarded the Ralph D. Gray Article Prize by the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (2007). She is also the recipient of the Milton Plesur Excellence in Teaching Award from UB's Student Association.

Krzysztof Ziarek, Professor of Comparative Literature, is the author of three books, most recently *The Force of Art*. (Stanford 2004) and *Historicity of Experience* (Northwestern 2001), *Inflected Language: Toward a Hermeneutics of Nearness. Heidegger, Levinas, Stevens, Celan*. (SUNY 1994); and he has co-edited two books, including *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions with Iain*.

MacDonald (Stanford 2008). He has won NEH and ACLS fellowships.



He received his doctorate from Comparative Literature at UB and then taught for several years at Notre Dame before returning to UB in 2004. He has published extensively on continental philosophy, critical theory and aesthetics.

HI 2011-12 Facts

Events Organized

81

Attendance

2550

Events Co-sponsored

14

Attendance

6300

Scholars@Hallwalls Begins Its Second Season

Scholars at Hallwalls

Since 2007, HI Faculty Fellows have presented their most recent scholarship at an arts venue in the city of Buffalo. Originally at the Albright-Knox, the series moved last year to its new home at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center at Delaware and Tupper.

Scholars@Hallwalls represents an ideal collaboration between the UB Humanities Institute and one of the most innovative cultural and artistic institutions in WNY. Faculty fellows present their work on select Friday afternoons from September 2012 to April 2013 in a renovated church basement equipped with a state-of-the-art sound system with full digital media access. Combining the best of historic Buffalo with cutting-edge research on a range of topics, Scholars@Hallwalls features engaging lectures that result in lively conversations. There is one exciting new change for the upcoming season: the cash bar will be replaced with complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres. As always, all lectures are free and open to the public. Hope to see you downtown!

The series will kick off on Friday, September 21st at 4pm with historian **Tamara Thornton** lecturing on the self-made man and class mobility in early nineteenth-century Boston through a forgotten figure, Nathaniel Bowditch (1773-1838). Best known for *The New American Practical Navigator*, a how-to guide that enabled ordinary sailors to move up the maritime ranks, Bowditch represents an American type, the self-educated man whose professional credentials allowed him to enter elite Boston society. His life story raises larger questions about the intersections of class and scientific

knowledge in early capitalist culture.

Justin Read, a specialist in Brazilian culture, will speak on October 12th on Latin American poetry from 1930 to the present and how urban poetry provides a map for thinking about the unity of the nation-state in the twentieth-century and its new focus on the global metropolis today. Poetry provides a window through which to understand globalization as an abstract political and economic force as well as its everyday impact in urban life.

On Friday, November 9th, **John Jennings**, a renowned graphic artist and newcomer to the UB community, will share images of his most recent graphic novel, an ethno-gothic account of the black migration to Chicago in the 1930s. It combines historical details from the prohibition era and the rise of black 'entrepreneurs' with comic book devices to tell a pulp-noir-detective story fused with supernaturalism.

Krzysztof Ziarek will lecture on the topic of his fourth book, "Language After Heidegger," on Friday, November 30th. Most of what English speakers know about the German philosopher Martin Heidegger is through translations filtered through French post-structuralist theory. But what if we were to return to Heidegger's work of the 1930s and 1940s to understand the significance of the German language in the development of Heidegger's key concepts about language? The result is a theory of language that impacts multiple fields from linguistics to philosophy.

The historian **Dalia Muller** will speak on her most current project that looks at the way in which Cuban independence was debated in Mexico in the 1890s among Cuban exiles, Mexican journalists and members of the Spanish immigrant community. In doing so, she brings a fresh hemispheric framework to the question of the nation-state.

Literary scholar and political theorist **Graham Hammill** revisits Hobbes's state of nature as the moment when concepts like the 'human' and 'justice' were invented. In turning to seventeenth-century England, Hammill addresses still relevant debates on human personhood, political rights and social policy.

Philosopher **Carolyn Korsmeyer** will speak on the topic of her fourth book on what makes an object genuine and why is this value so highly prized. She argues that genuineness is not primarily visual, but is an encounter with touch that involves an awareness of the past.

Erin Hatton, the first sociologist to speak in the series, will discuss her research on workers' rights. Most policymakers and scholars on labor issues focus on expanding or strengthening employment laws. But what about those workers who fall outside the laws, "unemployed workers," such as domestic, workfare and incarcerated laborers? Hatton will share interviews and recent examples of labor activism to address this timely question.



Marion Werner (Geography) in discussion following a New Faculty Seminar

The Transnational Turn in the Humanities

Over the last few decades, scholars in all disciplines of the humanities have called upon their colleagues to interrogate, critique, and transcend frames of reference dominated by nation states. While this transnational turn has longstanding intellectual roots, these recent calls have resulted in an unprecedented outpouring of scholarly debate and research.

UB has recognized the increasing maturation of this body of scholarship by founding North America's first Department of Transnational Studies. This new department brings together faculty from several interdisciplinary departments and programs which have long pioneered investigations in transnational studies: African and African American Studies, Gender Studies, American Studies, Native American Studies, Latino Studies, and Caribbean Studies.

To mark this event, the Humanities Institute is sponsoring a conference on March 22-23, 2013. The goals of the conference are to assess the transnational turn on a broad interdisciplinary scale, to highlight ongoing research projects in transnational studies across the humanities, to re-interrogate the theoretical bases of transnational inquiry, to critically explore the intellectual history of transnational studies, and to provide insight and inspiration to scholars and students interested in pursuing new projects of transnational inquiry.

The organizers have invited eight prominent scholars (see right) from across the humanities and from fields that span the world to share their most recent work and their reflections on the state of transnational studies.

In addition there will be a series of events leading up to the conference that will highlight the extensive work of UB scholars in transnational

research. The format for these discussions is wide open: from pre-circulated papers to discussions of recently published works to very informal presentations of works-in-progress. Information will be updated on the Transnational Department website: <http://transnationalstudies.buffalo.edu/>



Paul Kramer, Associate Professor of History, **Vanderbilt University**

Author of *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (2006)

Martin Manalansan, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies, Anthropology, Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Global Studies, **University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**

Author of *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (2003)

Aims McGuiness, Associate Professor of History, **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**

Author of *Path to Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (2008)

Richa Nagar, Professor of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, **University of Minnesota**

Author, with Sangtin Writers Collective of Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh, India, of *Playing With Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism Through Seven Lives in India* (2006)

Ato Quayson, Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies, **University of Toronto**

Editor, most recently, with Antonela Arhin, of *Labour Migration, Human Trafficking and Multinational Corporations: The Commodification of Illicit Flows*. Author of *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (2003)

Daniel T. Rodgers, Henry Charles Lea Professor of History, **Princeton University**

Author of *Age of Fracture* (2011) and *Atlantic Crossings* (1998)

Audra Simpson, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, **Columbia University**

Author of *Mohawk Interruptus*: Duke University Press, forthcoming

Reynaldo Walcott, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology and Equity Studies, **University of Toronto**

Author of *Black Like Who: Writing Black Canada* (second revised edition, 2003)

NEW FACULTY SEMINARS

October 24, 3:30PM
830 Clemens Hall



Marion Werner
Geography

**“Reconstructing Haiti?
Security, Territory and
Decentralization”**

This paper explores development discourses and practices in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake. Washington-based donors and the Haitian government are directing funds to the construction of export trade zones based on principles of security and the decentralization of the state and the economy. In the Haitian context, the political demand for decentralization has long been mobilized by excluded sectors and regional elites to articulate a counter-hegemonic politics in the face of the centralized form of 20th century capitalism and the state, a pattern hastened by the US occupation (1915-1934) and consolidated under the Duvalier regime. Werner argues that the drivers of current policy are well aware of this history, and are drawing upon it to resignify reconstruction as an imperative to attract and secure foreign investment in areas outside the capital city.

October 30, 4:00PM
830 Clemens Hall



Walter Hakala
English/Asian Studies

**“A Sultan in the Realm of
Passion: Coffee, Punning, and
Lust in Eighteenth-Century
Delhi”**

The Urdu poet, Shah Hatim (1699-1783), enjoyed a long career, interacting with multiple generations of Urdu poets in Delhi and observing firsthand the massive economic and cultural upheavals that accompanied the Mughal empire’s rapid political decline. He is remembered today primarily for his claim, made some twenty years after he composed poems in praise of coffee and tobacco, to have purged his earlier collections of poetry of verses containing “unliterary” vocabulary and outdated puns. The survival of these poems within his revised divan helps to answer questions about broader efforts by the professional poets of Delhi to document certain modalities of urban connoisseurship for new audiences in sub-imperial centers.

March 5, 3:30PM
830 Clemens Hall



Victoria Wolcott
History

**“Living in the Future: Urban
Interracial Utopias in 1940s
America”**

Historians have long recognized that utopian communities in antebellum America played key roles in emerging abolitionist and women’s rights movements. A largely unrecognized parallel utopian movement occurred in the middle of the twentieth century, when white pacifists and black activists formed interracial communities in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Participants in these communities pioneered distinctly American forms of Gandhian nonviolence to further the cause of racial equality. Wolcott will examine a range of urban interracial communities during and after World War II that challenged spatial segregation and put forth a radical vision of equality and economic justice.



Jason Young (History) in discussion following a New Faculty Seminar

UB Humanities Institute Staff

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Executive Director: **Carrie Tirado Bramen**
Program Administrator: **Jinhee Song**



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Historian Receives Two National Fellowships

Since receiving an HI Faculty Fellowship in 2010, Hal Langfur, Associate Professor of History, has garnered two more fellowships. In Fall 2012 he will be an NEH Fellow at the Newberry Library in Chicago and in Spring 2013 he will be the Donald L. Saunders Research Fellow at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. A specialist in early modern Brazil and the Atlantic world, Langfur's first book, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford 2006), received two "honorable mentions" for prestigious prizes in Latin American history. His current book-length project turns to the Portuguese colonization of the South American interior and the Portuguese attempt to establish colonial authority deep into the Brazilian wilderness. Drawing on history, anthropology, and literary, legal, and science studies, the book examines a series of wilderness expeditions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By looking at the remote expanses of Portuguese rule, Langfur explores the limits, changes and ultimate dissolution of Portugal's colonial enterprise. In reflecting on the impact of the HI faculty fellowship on this current project, Hal appreciates the interdisciplinary pressure to speak beyond a narrow group of specialists and to address a more general audience. "Exchanges with colleagues trained in literary analysis," Hal recalls, "helped me to deepen my understanding of expedition accounts as complex narratives. I have no doubt that this broader perspective made a difference to the multidisciplinary committees that evaluated my fellowship proposals."

