

2019–2020

Annual Report



IHGC

Institute of the Humanities
& Global Cultures

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IHGC | Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures

 UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA | COLLEGE and GRADUATE SCHOOL of ARTS & SCIENCES

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

Front cover

Clockwise from top

Maiya Quansah-Breed, performing in *Six* in London's West End, spoke during Humanities Week (pp. 20–21)

Njelle Hamilton, Mellon Fellow 2019–20 (pp. 6–7)

Madeleine Zehnder, Samuel Lemley, and Neal Curtis curated the Rotunda Planetarium (pp. 12, 34, 35)

Jack Chen, co-director, Humanities Informatics Lab (pp. 28–33)

Fotini Kondyli, Mellon Fellow 2019–20 (p. 7)

From the Director

Half a century ago, James Baldwin wrote a letter from Harlem with the subject line, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown.” The police officer, in Baldwin’s words, moves through the streets of the inner city

“...like an occupying soldier in a bitterly hostile country.... He can retreat from his uneasiness in only one direction: into a callousness which very shortly becomes second nature. He becomes more callous, the population becomes more hostile, the situation grows more tense, and the police force is increased. One day, to everyone’s astonishment, someone drops a match in the powder keg and *everything blows up.*”



Debjani Ganguly
IHGC Director and
Professor of English,
University of Virginia

Everything blew up—again—on May 25, 2020 when a Minnesota police officer put his knee on George Floyd’s neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds, and watched him die. Floyd uttered “I can’t breathe” more than twenty times, and was asked to stop yelling because it took a heck of a lot of oxygen to cry out for one’s life. The “universal right to breathe” in the words of the philosopher, Achille Mbembe, has been brutally extinguished all too often for Black people. America has been forced to confront yet again the tortuous and bloodied traces of its unresolved past; the twisted sinews of a history ranging from plantation slavery, the Civil War, and Jim Crow to the mass incarceration and death of Black populations in the post-War era.

The protest of millions against racial injustice that spilled out on the streets of this nation is deeply connected to the raging pandemic that already killed over one hundred thousand Americans by May 25, the day George Floyd was murdered. Racial violence is a contagion that rips a body politic apart. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed America’s—and the world’s—festering racial divides even as it has laid bare the fragility of our nation’s social contract, with a broken health care system tilted heavily against the Blacks, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, the working poor, the elderly, and the infirm.

“Viral figures of speech have collided with and mingled with the actual virus,” noted the novelist Siri Husvedt

recently, when the coronavirus ran rampant around her Brooklyn home. Some may be tempted to see both the coronavirus crisis and the recent racial ferment as states of exception, as catastrophes in the face of which our current knowledge worlds, our political institutions, social and economic bulwarks, technological wizardry, and our moral principles appear all too inadequate. Such a perspective tempts some to think that everything is fine during ‘normal’ times; that the world makes sense to us, and is reasonably just most of the time. The viral pandemic may have ruptured a misplaced sense of normalcy, but racial injustice is an indelible part of the everyday normal.

The Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures strongly condemns this endemic violence against the Black community, and unequivocally affirms that Black Lives Matter. We mourn the recent deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor. We affirm that our core commitment to promoting humanistic knowledge on a global scale is first and foremost a commitment to fostering a repertoire of knowledges that is inclusive of diverse racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, and gendered lifeworlds. We reiterate that the emergence of modern disciplines—the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences—is inextricable from global histories of mercantile capitalism, plantation slavery, and colonialism that linked Europe and the West with the rest of the world. We recognize that the non-European world has been and continues to be an active partner in the production of these knowledges. We recommit to parsing the meaning of freedom, democracy, property, rights, individuality, polity, government, culture, and aesthetics, with the full knowledge that the ‘human’ informing these concepts has historically excluded vast populations of the world. We support projects that revitalize our histories by paying attention to and contextualizing historical wrongs, not monumentalizing them.

Even as we regenerate our disciplines and reflect on our ethical choices at the IHGC, we acknowledge that there is no seamless path from inclusive knowledge worlds to the urgency of action in ending police brutality against African Americans and the systemic dehumanization of Blacks and Indigenous peoples. The path from knowledge to social justice is jagged, painful, and unpredictable. It is also interminably long. This realization is humbling. It is also illuminating. For it tells us that our work is never done.

The IHGC pledges to work with the University community to advance the cause of racial justice by acknowledging our institution’s history of slavery and white supremacy, by participating in projects that actively reckon with and contextualize this past, by promoting a respectful culture of equitable exchange among diverse student and faculty groups, and by cultivating an inclusive ethics of knowledge-building and community engagement.

— Debjani Ganguly, *IHGC Director*



Associate Director

Camilla Fojas, Professor and Chair of Media Studies and Professor of American Studies, joined the IHGC as Associate Director in January 2019. Prior to assuming this position, she was actively engaged with the work of the IHGC as a member of the board, co-director of the Global South Lab, and through her work in the Humanities Informatics Lab co-directing the Surveillance and Infrastructure research area. She brings a wealth of programming ideas to the IHGC from her various interrelated research areas on race, empire, and borders in the Americas and the Pacific.

Camilla Fojas has published widely in humanities related areas of study, particularly in comparative border studies and questions of empire in the Americas and the Pacific. Her books include *Cosmopolitanism in the Americas* (Purdue UP, 2005); *Border Bandits: Hollywood on the Southern Frontier* (University of Texas Press, 2008); *Islands of Empire: Pop Culture and U.S. Power* (University of Texas Press, 2014); *Zombies, Migrants, and Queers: Race and Crisis Capitalism in Pop Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2017); and, *Migrant Labor and Border Securities in Pop Culture* (Routledge, 2017). She is currently working on a book project about the mediations and infrastructure of border surveillance along the US-Mexico border tentatively titled *Borderveillance: Border Securities and Migrant Risk*.

Prior to arriving at the University of Virginia in 2016, Professor Fojas was Vincent de Paul Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at DePaul University and the founding director of the graduate program in Critical Ethnic Studies. ■

2020-21 Incoming Interim Director

Bruce Holsinger is Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English, and Editor of *New Literary History*. He specializes in the literature and culture of the medieval world, with additional interests in historical fiction, modern and contemporary theory, the history of the book, and premodern religious cultures. He is currently completing a book called *Archive of the Animal: The Parchment Inheritance and the Common Era*, which explores the parchment record of the Western tradition from a number of different angles: environmental history, theology, historical genetics, and so on. His research for this project has involved extensive collaboration with an international team of bioarchaeologists, conservators, and other scholars in the emerging field of “biocodology”: the biomolecular analysis of written objects, particularly parchment. His previous books, including *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* as well as *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror*, have explored the shaping role of the medieval in the making of modern critical thought and political discourse. His first book, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer*, won the Modern Language Association Prize for a First Book, the John Nicholas Brown Prize from the Medieval Academy of America, and the Philip Brett Award from the American Musicological Society.

Holsinger is also a fiction writer, the author of two historical novels set in Ricardian England. *A Burnable Book* (HarperCollins/William Morrow 2014) won the John Hurt Fisher Prize, was selected as an Editor’s Choice by the *New York Times Book Review*, and was named one of the top crime novels of 2014 by the American Library Association. *The Invention of Fire* (HarperCollins/William Morrow 2015) explores the beginnings of gun violence in the Western world. Both novels have been widely reviewed in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Sunday Times* of London, and his fiction writing has been featured several times on National Public Radio. His third novel, *The Gifted School*, was published by Penguin Random House in the Riverhead imprint in 2019. ■



About the IHGC

Located on the historic grounds of the University of Virginia, the **Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures** (IHGC) fosters a community of scholars attuned to the global calling of the humanities in the 21st century. The humanities today are oriented toward generating new universals of human belonging as they negotiate vast terrains of cultural difference. The “human” in the humanities is indelibly colored by the *ethnos* of the global others, even as it strives to articulate its provenance through a language of the commons in the name of our planetary fragility and a post-human consciousness. This shift offers unprecedented opportunities to rethink the very fundamentals of our humanistic disciplines, a task that the IHGC undertakes in all earnest.

The Institute’s mission gives new meaning to Thomas Jefferson’s founding vision for the University of Virginia as “the future bulwark of the human mind in this hemisphere.” In partnership with Centers from around the world, the Institute assembles leading scholars to discuss the present state and future prospects of the humanities: methods of research and circumstances of teaching, institutional openings and constraints, self-assessments, and proposals for new engagements.

Supported by the Buckner W. Clay Endowment and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the IHGC promotes research and experimental pedagogy on the Global South, Climate Change and the Environment, Human Rights and the Post-Human Turn, Media Ecologies and Technology, War, Violence and Humanitarianism, Comparative Religions, Pre-modern and Early Modern Global Cultures, and Oceanic Connections. The Institute hosts laboratories that advance scholarship in these areas. Led by senior researchers, these labs foster vertical integration of undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, librarians, curators, and technologists around teaching and research initiatives, while at the same time developing horizontal links across multiple disciplines, both cognate and distant. They engage with institutions, both nationally and internationally, and serve as critical sites for training undergraduate and graduate students to embrace the new exigencies of a complex and rapidly changing 21st-century world, both *productively* (with complex collaborative intellectual and practical skills) and *humanely* (with nuanced intercultural knowledge and imagination).

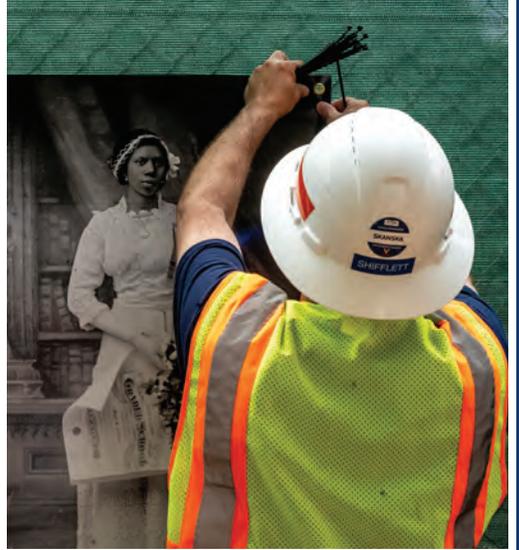
The humanities serve to define our world in myriad ways: through its intellectual and cultural aspirations, its aesthetic values, its comprehension of the past that formed it, and its political, ethical, and theological dilemmas. With an enduring commitment to the humanities as both a domain of research innovation and an idiom of institutional self-scrutiny, the IHGC seeks to play a meaningful role in shaping humanities scholarship on the global stage, and in fostering democratic cultures of learning locally and nationally. ■



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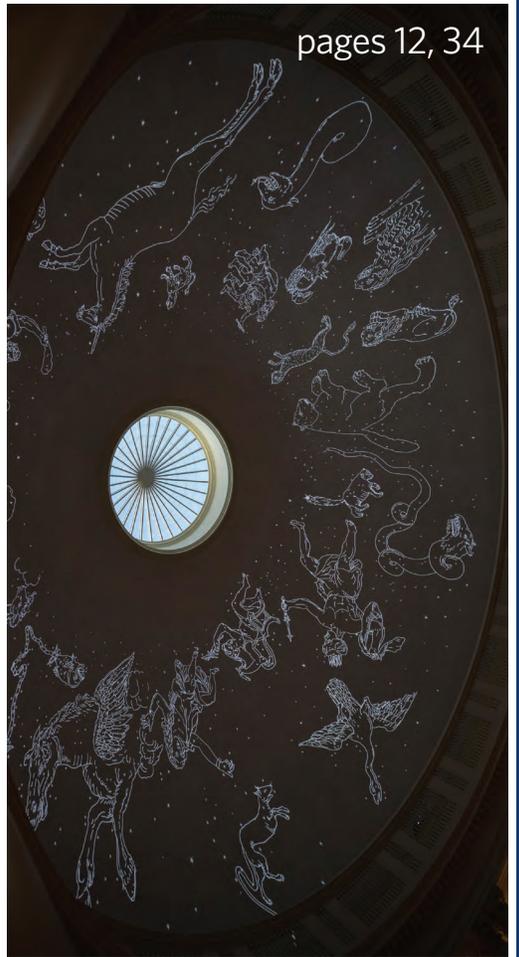
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Deven Patel
 Spring Diversions: Revisiting
 a Unique Scroll-Manuscript
 from 15th century Western
 India

Wednesday, February 12
 3 PM
 Nau 441

Professor Patel is in the Faculty of Religious Studies, as well as the Faculty of South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He specializes in the premodern and modern cultural and material production and reception of literature in both Sanskrit and number of regional languages in South Asia, as well as the way that regional language production and creation of works in Sanskrit and/or Prakrit have historically interacted.

**EXTINCTION
 IN THE ARCHIVE**

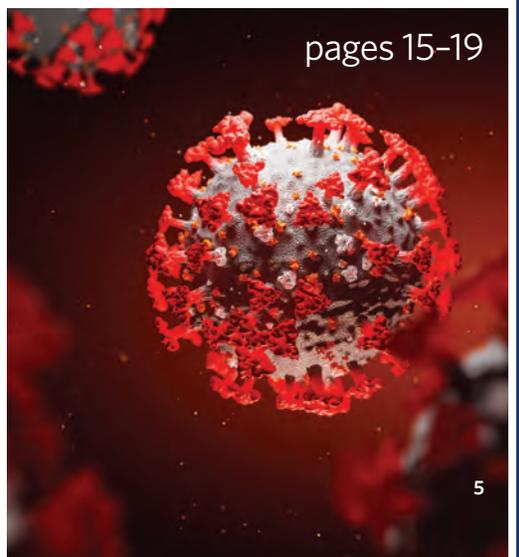
We are living in the midst of Earth's sixth mass extinction event. The ongoing loss of biodiversity is hard to see in our daily lives. This exhibition documents extinction's emergence in unexpected places and reveals how the signs of extinction surround us—from menus to fashion, botanical prints to children's books.

On view from September 23, 2019–January 18, 2020, First Floor Gallery of Harrison/Smith

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Mellon Humanities Fellows Program

The Mellon Humanities Fellows Program is part of a broad multi-year initiative on

The Global South: An Agenda for Advanced Research and Curricular Innovation in the Humanities (2015–2020), funded in partnership by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. The funding supports a faculty Fellowship program, Humanities Labs, new faculty hires, new courses, and research focused on the connected histories and cultures of the Global South, an idea that refers both to a post-Cold War cartographic conception embracing Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Central Asia, South East Asia, and the Pacific Islands, as well as spaces shaped by global histories of capitalism, empire, race, and diaspora.

2019-20 Fellows

Ahmed H. Al-Rahim

Associate Professor and Director of Islamic Studies, Department of Religious Studies

Mobility and Knowledge in the Mongol Empire

This project investigates patterns of migration, transmission of knowledge, and interreligious history after the Mongol conquests of the Middle East and East Asia in the late Middle Ages (1206–1405). This Mellon Humanities Fellowship funds research into the history of Islamic learning under the aegis of the Mongol Empire and, specifically, the founding of “mobile schools,” or *madrasas*, which accompanied the nomadic (transhumant) Mongolian institution of the *ordo*, or the peripatetic court. Described by Marco Polo and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa as a traveling city, this royal court played a crucial role in projecting Mongol political power into the world, in transmitting knowledge of science (particularly astronomy) and philosophy globally, from China to the Middle East and to Eastern Europe, and in creating a lively history of religious polemics among Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Buddhists. ■

Njelle Hamilton

Associate Professor, Department of English; and, Woodson Institute for African and African-American Studies

Caribbean Chronotropes

The Politics, Physics, and Poetics of Time in Contemporary Fiction

“Caribbean Chronotropes” is a book-length investigation of the depiction of time technologies and time travel in speculative Caribbean novels written between 2008 and 2018. Its central concern is the ways in which Caribbean writers have grappled with concepts from theoretical physics to conceptualize a regional temporality that is out of sync with linear time, and to consider its implications for narrative and consciousness. Each of the four chapters develops a literary analysis of the narration of time in

a pair of novels, read through the lens of key time-concepts in physics. But even as “Chronotropes” tracks the intersections between Caribbean trauma and the general theory of relativity, Caribbean music and string theory, natural disasters and fractals, and between ancestral memory and black hole singularities, it illuminates how contemporary authors center decidedly Caribbean modes of time-keeping to render the disjunctures and discontinuities of the Caribbean past and present, and to speculate on alternate futures. Attention to the time-markers or *chronotropes* (Hamilton’s own neologism) in novels by Erna Brodber, Marcia Douglas, Nalo Hopkinson, Rita Indiana, Anthony Joseph, Karen Lord, Ernest Pépin, and Luis Othoniel Rosa reveals that time travel and nonlinear timelines are not merely science fiction but are fundamentally mimetic of Caribbean space-time. These Anglophone, Hispanophone, and Francophone texts depict a region marked by competing notions of time: linear models introduced by colonization, and anterior or creolized temporal practices drawn from Indigenous, South Asian, and African cultures. Building on the regional cosmologies posited by Caribbean theorists like Kamau Brathwaite, Wilson Harris and Sylvia Wynter, Hamilton not only rethinks phenomenology and Afrofuturism from a Caribbean perspective, but also offers a Caribbean version of what Kodwo Eshun calls “chronopolitics,” the reengineering of time to subvert the trajectories set in motion by colonization, and as a means of reclaiming and contesting power. Ultimately, she argues, close attention to the Caribbean reveals avant-garde conceptions of time that speak to pressing global issues including Black trauma, postcolonial development, and anthropogenic climate change. ■

Fotini Kondyli

Assistant Professor of Byzantine Art and Archaeology, Department of Art

Citizen Participation and Urban Planning in Byzantine Athens

This project on Byzantine urbanism and Athens in particular, seeks to reconstruct the topography and spatial layout of Byzantine Athens (4th–15th c.), and better understand contemporary living conditions and socio-economic activities in the city. Emphasis is placed on city-making processes and particularly the role of non-elite, ordinary people in them. Similar to modern cities, Byzantine ones were stages of key political events ranging from rituals that celebrated imperial power to riots and acts of resistance. Kondyli thus approaches Byzantine cities as highly political environments and explore city-making activities as political actions, paying attention equally to monumental public spaces such as churches, fora, and hippodromes, as well as streets, open areas, and common areas out and around houses. She also examines changes in the urban environment that point to ordinary people's involvement and consider the impact of such activities in enhancing their social capital and political influence. This project provides new approaches to the reconstruction of Byzantine cities by attempting to rewrite Athens' history from the perspective of ordinary people's individual and collective experiences. It also contributed to a diachronic study of urban phenomena placing emphasis on the relation between different civic groups, urban planning, and political action. ■

Erik Linstrum

Associate Professor, Corcoran Department of History

Age of Emergency

Living with Violence at the End of Empire

How did British society respond—or fail to respond—to the use of torture, summary executions, and other atrocities in its overseas empire after 1945? Although the absence of sustained outrage at the time has often been attributed to the absence of information, awareness of brutal violence was in fact widespread. Many different communities or “circles of knowing”—soldiers, missionaries, activists, aid workers, journalists, playwrights, filmmakers, novelists—bridged the gap between the conflict zones of empire and everyday life in Britain. But the same ways of knowing which eroded secrecy about violence also undermined action to stop it. *Age of Emergency* chronicles the tactics of accommodation which surfaced repeatedly in post-1945 Britain: insisting on the unknowability of definitive truth about violence; distinguishing between knowledge of violence and the duty to act on it; valorizing the acceptance of “hard truths” as a virtue in itself; and, dissolving specific acts of harm into universal morality tales. ■



Clockwise

Fotini Kondyli, Erik Linstrum, Ahmed H. Al-Rahim, and Njelle Hamilton



Giulia Paoletti

Assistant Professor of African Art and Photography, Department of Art

Reinventing Photography

Technology and Visuality in Senegal (1860–1960)

Paoletti’s current book project reframes narratives of photography’s origin and originality by zooming into the first one hundred years of photography in Senegal (1860–1960). Senegal has received significant attention as one of the epicenters of modernism in the Black Atlantic, and yet, the advent of photography in the country in the 1840s has hardly been considered in shaping the local experience of modernity. Rather than approaching photography as either a “local” or a “foreign” technology, this project builds on Ariella Azoulay’s idea that photography is not “susceptible to monopolization.” Not only couldn’t the colonizers hold this technology hostage, but no one could. Photography—as analogic image, reproducible copy, movable object, portable technology, and itinerant authorship—travels unbound to time and space and cannot be contained. Based on nearly ten years of field and archival research in Senegal, this book will foreground four case studies, each considering different materialities, genres, aesthetics and authors that will at once undermine the linearity of photography’s history and show how the photographic image, in its analogic relation to the world, is constantly being re-invented and in the process, it has the power to disrupt imperial expectations. ■

Katelyn Wood

Assistant Professor of Theatre History, Department of Drama

Cracking Up

Black Feminist Stand-Up Comedy in 20th and 21st Century USA

Cracking Up archives and analyzes how Black feminist comedians assert freedom and citizenship in the United States through joke-telling. Wood argues that Black feminist comedic performance and the laughter it ignites are vital components of feminist, queer, and anti-racist protest. Through archival research and performance analysis, she studies Black women stand-up comedians from the United States, including Jackie Mabley, Wanda Sykes, Mo’Nique, Sasheer Zamata, Sam Jay, Amanda Seales, and Michelle Buteau. These comics centralize the joke as a pathway towards social critique, and embody unapologetic Black feminist expression. From the comedy routines popular on Black vaudeville circuits to the present, this book excavates an overlooked history of Black women who made the art of joke-telling a mode of radical performance and political engagement. Wood interprets these artists not as tokens in their white/male dominated fields, but as part of a continuous history of Black feminist affirmations of presence and power in myriad United States cultural contexts. ■



Distinguished Speakers

Our Distinguished Speakers Series brings a remarkably diverse and accomplished set of humanities scholars from around the world to benefit the intellectual community across the University. While most visitors present a public lecture, many of these scholars also give generously of their time, participating in interdisciplinary colloquia, offering graduate workshops, and meeting with faculty and students.

Amy Olberding

President's Associates Presidential Professor,
University of Oklahoma

"Manners and Civility in Practice"
September 23, 2019

Jane Taylor

Andrew W. Mellon Chair of Aesthetic Theory and
Material Performance, University of the Western Cape

"Newes from the Dead"
October 4, 2019

Maria R. Heim

Professor of Religion, Amherst College

"The Contextual:
A Rethinking of the Universal"
October 14, 2019

Lucy Neave

Senior Lecturer of Creative Writing, Australian National
University

"Environment Crisis, De-colonization and
Signification in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*"
November 7, 2019

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Mellon Fellows

- Katelyn Wood
- Giulia Paoletti

Distinguished Speakers

- Katherine Bode
- Aswin Punathambekar
- Caroline Elkins
- David Nemer
- Joan Wallach Scott

Daniel Asen

Associate Professor of History, Rutgers University

"Crime, Security, and Citizenship:
The Politics of Fingerprinting in China,
1920s-1940s"
November 15, 2019

David Nemer

Assistant Professor of Media Studies,
University of Virginia

"From Misinformation to Extremism:
How WhatsApp is Affording
Radicalization in Brazil"
November 22, 2019

Katherine Bode

Professor, Australian National University

"What's the Matter with Digital Literary Studies"
January 22, 2020

Joan Wallach Scott

Professor Emerita of Social Science, Institute for
Advanced Study, Princeton University

"Accounting for History:
The Movements for Reparations for
Slavery in the U.S."
January 30, 2020

Caroline Elkins

Professor of History and African and
African-American Studies, Harvard University

The 'Moral Effect' of Legalized Lawlessness
in the British Empire
February 27, 2020

Aswin Punathambekar

Associate Professor of Media Studies,
University of Virginia

"Sound Art and Escape Routes to
New Public Spheres"
February 28, 2020



Postponed Distinguished Speakers due to the
COVID-19 pandemic, but to be rescheduled in
the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years.

Sarah Nuttall

Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies &
Director of WISER, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg

"Pluvial Time and the Novel Form"
March 16, 2020

Amitav Ghosh

IHGC Distinguished Writer-in-Residence

Seminar and Workshop Series
"The Indian Ocean and Climate Change"
March-April 2020

Deborah Baker

IHGC Distinguished Writer-in-Residence

Seminar and Workshop Series
"Narrative in the Age of Political Extremism"
March-April 2020

Cristiana Facchini

Associate Professor of History, University of Bologna

"Questioning God:
Jewish and Christian Theologies
after Auschwitz"
April 1, 2020

Patricia Hayes

Professor, NRF SARCHI Chair in Visual History &
Theory, University of the Western Cape

Public Lecture and Workshop
"African Visual Cultures"
April 14-21, 2020

Symposia | Workshops | Conferences

Fall 2019

Coasts in Crisis Art & Conversation after Recent Hurricanes

September 19

CONVENED BY: Charlotte Rogers, IHGC Coastal Conservatory Lab

Why do the arts matter after a hurricane? In a time of rising sea levels and global climate change, the answer to this question has never been more important. This kick-off event for the Coastal Conservatory Festival offered creative ways of addressing environmental disaster by bringing together live music, poetry, photography, painting, and installation art about recent hurricanes from the U.S. South and the Caribbean. The participating artists performed, displayed, and discussed their work forged out of the experiences common to hurricane survivors: homelessness, forced migration, family separation, food insecurity, and living without electricity or running water. Artists from the U.S. South and Greater Caribbean included: David Berg, Sally Binard, Jo Cosme, Nicole Delgado, Alfonso Fuentes, and Sarabel Santos-Negrón. ■

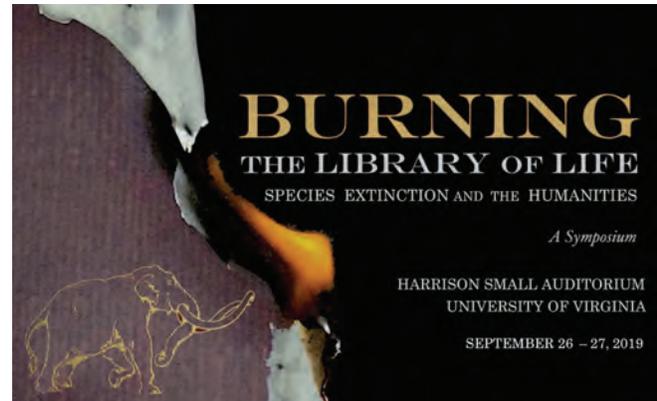


EXTINCTION IN THE ARCHIVE



We are living in the midst of Earth's sixth mass extinction event. The ongoing loss of biodiversity is hard to see in our daily lives. This exhibition documents extinction's emergence in unexpected places and reveals how the signs of extinction surround us—from menus to fashion, botanical prints to children's books.

On View from September 23, 2019–January 18, 2020. First Floor Gallery of Harrison/Small



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	4	5

- 1 Poster from the Harrison Small Collections exhibition paired with IHGC's symposium, *Burning the Library of Life*
- 2 New Arctic Symposium attendees surround a Gabrielle Russomagno artwork exploring climate change.
- 3 Amanda Armstrong, right, Research Associate in Environmental Science, discusses Arctic Ecosystems with a student.
- 4 New Arctic Symposium first-day sessions in the Colonnade Club's Solarium, Pavilion VII.
- 5 Poster for the IHGC's symposium, *Burning the Library of Life*

Coastal Futures Conservatory Fall Festival

September 19–25

CONVENED BY. Willis Jenkins and Matthew Burtner, *IHGC Coastal Conservatory Lab*; Karen McGlathery, *Environmental Resilience Institute*

The Coastal Futures Festival is an environmental arts festival created by UVA's Coastal Futures Conservatory (coastalconservatory.org), a collaboration between artists, humanities scholars, and scientists with the Virginia Coastal Reserve, a long-term ecological research site supported by the National Science Foundation. Through a series of performances, talks, installations, and collaborative work sessions, the Festival brings together art, film, and multimedia music that represents global issues such as coastal erosion, sea level rise, and melting ice, along with the attendant impacts on human and non-human habitats. This Festival was presented in collaboration with UVA's Environmental Resilience Institute, the Virginia Coast Reserve long-term ecological research station, the Department of Music, and the IHGC. It opened with an arts exhibit responding to Caribbean coasts in crisis, moved to Virginia's Eastern Shore for the opening of a sound art exhibition at the Barrier Islands Center, and returned to UVA for talks and performances, culminating in a concert featuring Grammy and MacArthur Award-winning ensemble Eighth Blackbird, and a keynote address by eco-acoustic sound artist Leah Barclay. In addition to these distinguished guests, the festival showcased work by UVA faculty, students, and alumni whose interdisciplinary research focuses on sound and coastal environments. ■

Bridging Science, Art, and Community in the New Arctic A Multi-Day Symposium

September 23–25

CONVENED BY. Howie Epstein, *Environmental Science*; Matthew Burtner, *Music*; and, Leena Cho and Matthew Jull, *Architecture*

The Bridging Science, Art, and Community in the New Arctic brought together researchers, students, community representatives, and policymakers from Alaska to facilitate knowledge exchange and catalyze a common interest in the future of the Arctic, in a setting that emphasizes creative collaborations and co-production of knowledge among scientists, designers, artists, and residents. This three-day event started with a Symposium on September 23 with invited speakers presenting their recent Arctic research, thematically organized into three sessions: "Land, Coasts, and Ocean," "Infrastructure," and "Community." ■

Burning the Library of Life Species Extinction and the Humanities

September 26–27

CONVENED BY. Adrienne Ghaly, *Post-Doctoral Fellow in Environmental Humanities and English*

Many scientists conclude the current precipitous decline in global biodiversity and the 1000-fold increase in the rate of species extinction needs to be understood as marking the planet's sixth era of mass extinction, but the first such event in which humans have played the primary role. This urgent, global and contemporary crisis is often described not only as the destruction of animals and plants but also the destruction of knowledge, as "burning the library of life." This two-day symposium on Species Extinction and the Humanities featured interdisciplinary humanities scholarship and public-facing research addressing this emerging issue from the perspectives of environmental humanities, literary and cultural studies, the history of science, native studies, conservation, sound ecology, archival studies, and the visual arts and media. The theme was the challenge manmade extinction poses to knowledge: what we do and don't know about the biodiversity crisis, the forms, genres and media that produce knowledge and their potential limits to document the biological violence wrought by imperialisms, globalization and development, as well as questions of the preservation of knowledge about the forms of life we are losing—the technological and material formats that preserve and record biodiversity, and their fragility. A paired exhibition of artwork, children's books, botanical prints, and fashion from the Harrison Small Collections was also on display from September 23, 2019 to January 18, 2020. The keynote speaker was Ursula K. Heise, English Department and Institute of the Environment and Sustainability, UCLA. ■

The Spanish Pacific A Symposium

September 27

CONVENED BY. Ricard Padrón, *Spanish*

The Spanish Pacific Workshop brought together a group of North American scholars to discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by studying the political, cultural, economic, and biological interactions between Asia and America facilitated by the Spanish presence in the Philippines. Visiting scholars included:

John Blanco, *University of California, San Diego*

Christina Lee, *Princeton University*

Dana Leibsohn, *Smith College*

Paula Park, *Wesleyan University*

Vicente Rafael, *University of Washington*

Art and Confrontation in the Americas An International Symposium

September 29–October 2

CONVENED BY. Herbert (Tico) Braun, *History*; Mathilda Shepard, *Spanish*; and, Miguel Valladares-Llata, *UVA Library*

This event provided Charlottesville and UVA with a space to reflect on how art can be at once a mode of confrontation and a vehicle of reconciliation. What aesthetic practices have artists, activists and intellectuals used to critique violence and prefigure better futures?

When and where does confrontation art fuel societal change or, conversely, question its own utility? Defining “art” broadly to include film, literature, music, visual culture and performance, the UVA Symposium on Art and Confrontation in the Americas/ Las Américas provided a forum for discussing the intersections between art, civic life and activism throughout the hemisphere. Keynote speakers Juan Manuel Echavarría, Fernando Grisalez, and Gabriel Ossa opened the symposium with a discussion of their artistic work and activism in Colombia. Echavarría, an artist committed to confronting the difficult realities of a country that has experienced decades of civil war, uses visual art to recover memory and make visible experiences that have been rendered invisible by the normalization of violence. Politically, his art intervenes in the contradictory space between official peace narratives and the violent realities still affecting many parts of Colombia, seeking ultimately to reconstruct a social body dismembered by war. Through his non-profit foundation Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, Echavarría produces collective projects in which he steps aside as an individual creative agent to let others tell their stories and shape how the Colombian conflict is perceived in broader society. ■

Cinema, Architecture, Art Festival of Documentaries from India @ UVA

October 2

CONVENED BY. Geeta Patel, *Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages, Literature & Cultures*

These films from India are about painting (a woman painter who paints Kashmir as a way of addressing local violence), as well as architecture and history, nationalism, domesticity, citizenship, urban “renewal,” vertical slums, and suburbs. Envisioning aesthetics, politics, citizenship, and personal stories, Geeta Patel (UVA) moderated a panel with filmmakers Avijit Mukul Kishore and Bilal Qureshi and each film was followed by a cast of speakers who

discussed the issues raised by the films, such as the specter of urban renewal and how one feels, imagines, creates in the face of violence. The films spoke to many of the issues that transpired in Charlottesville after August 11-12, 2017, and as the filmmakers are queer, issues of the gaze and sexuality were discussed. ■

Rotunda Planetarium Science & Learning in the University of Virginia's First Library

November 1

CONVENED BY. Neal Curtis, Sam Lemley, and Madeleine Zehnder, *English PhD students*

The Rotunda Planetarium Project revisited Thomas Jefferson's inaugural vision for the UVA Rotunda, the architectural centerpiece of the University, as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. IHGC PhD students from the Department of English – Neal Curtis, Samuel Lemley, and Madeline Zehnder – conceived of, secured funding for, curated, and produced the project. On November 1, 2019, an afternoon and evening symposium culminated in the unveiling of the 70-foot celestial map projected on the ceiling of the Dome Room through an array of digital projectors. This vast enlightenment planetarium was on display during Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, as was a paired exhibition displaying books, instruments, specimens, and artifacts from the Rotunda's early history. Dean and University Librarian John Unsworth delivered opening remarks at the symposium, which were followed by these amazing noted scholars on Jefferson, the University, and the period:

Keynote Speaker

Sara J. Schechner, *David P. Wheatland Curator of Historical Scientific Instruments, Harvard University*

Additional Speakers

Allison Bigelow, Max Edelson, Ervin Jordan, Louis Nelson, Jalane Schmidt, Kirt von Daacke, and Richard Guy Wilson, *University of Virginia*

Reed Gochberg, *Harvard University*

Environmental Crisis, De-colonization and Signification in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*

November 7

CONVENED BY. IHGC and UVA Environmental Humanities

Lucy Neave, Senior Lecturer of Creative Writing, Australian National University, spoke about her work on Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*, which focuses on an Australian Aboriginal woman character named Oblivia, who emerges after a ten-year period of a trauma-induced ‘sleep’ in the ‘deep underground bowel of a giant eucalyptus tree’

where she writes 'stanzas in ancient symbols' (7). The setting of the novel is an imagined future of cataclysmic climate change, as well as an unresolved and ongoing settler past and present, in which First Nations people experience pervasive mental and affective colonization. Oblivia and other occupants of the polluted Northern Australian swamp where she lives, desire survival and connection with their ancestral lands. The novel's narrative is inextricably bound up with images and texts pertaining to colonial pasts and also Indigenous forms of storytelling. The swans who come to the swamp as refugees of climate change, exist as intertextual entities. This talk examined questions around the ravages of settler colonialism and environmental crisis. Lucy Neave is also a writer of fiction, and is currently working on a book on Climate Fiction. ■

Spring 2020

Pluralizing Political Thought Introducing the Oxford Handbook of Comparative Political Theory

January 16

CONVENED BY: IHGC's Asian Cosmopolitanisms Lab

The IHGC's Asian Cosmopolitanisms Lab hosted "Pluralizing Political Thought: Introducing *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Political Theory*: Murad Idris, Leigh K. Jenco, and Megan C. Thomas in conversation with Ian Baucom, Roxanne L. Euben, and Lawrie Balfour" in the Harrison Small Auditorium. ■



All scheduled symposia, workshops, and conferences in March and April were cancelled due to COVID-19.

Art & Film

Truthtellers Art Exhibit

Maine artist Robert Shetterly's nationally exhibited *Americans Who Tell the Truth* portrait series highlights citizens who courageously address issues of social, environmental, and economic fairness. The IHGC's undergraduate student team working on **Humanities Week 2020: HistoREMIX** (February 23–28, 2020), selected four of these portraits to display at an interactive art exhibition in Wilson Hall. Working collaboratively with Charlottesville High School, the exhibit also included high school student portraits of people who were their truthtellers. ■

Middle Eastern and East Asian Film Series October 2020, Virginia Film Festival

IHGC Global South Lab member Samhita Sunya (MESALC) was an official Guest Programmer with the Virginia Film Festival (VAFF) and for the third year in a row made selections for six films in two clusters: "Love Stories: Of Cities & Cinema" & "Family Trees: Roots & Routes." She sought accessible, contemporary

films that emphasized the linguistic, geographic, and thematic diversity of filmmaking practices connected to the regions of the Middle East & South Asia. Highlights included: four films by women filmmakers, three romantic comedies, debuts of two lyrical documentaries by Arab-American filmmakers, and one director in attendance (Shelly Chopra Dhar).

This series marked the third year of continuing to bring to the University and Charlottesville communities thought-provoking films from/about a region that has been highly underrepresented (or, misrepresented with a narrow selection of films that play into problematic stereotypes of poverty, violence, and Islamophobia) at VAFF. This year's films emphasized themes of diaspora and migration (two films by Arab-American filmmakers); urban space (Tehran, Kabul/Calcutta); and sexuality (in both urban and small-town settings).

Filmmaker Alia Yunis, also a practicing writer, artist, and academic, authored *The Night Counter: A Novel* and showed her first documentary, *The Golden Harvest*, which explored her own family history and a complicated relationship between the people of the Mediterranean and their olive oil and olive trees. She conducted workshops during her visit on writing a documentary pitch, differences between writing novels and screenplays, and film and visual media in the Persian Gulf. These films were tie-ins to Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, and Persian language programs at UVA. ■

Co-Sponsored Events

Poetry, Poesía & Poetics @ UVA

CONVENED BY. Fernando Operé, *Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese*, and Fernando Valverde, *Visiting Professor*

For a second year, the IHGC co-sponsored this innovative course in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 in bilingual poetry. Almost every week, Professor Valverde, a leading Spanish poet, used his graduate “class” as a “center for poetry” by having renowned poets from Spain, Latin America, and the United States share their work, thoughts, and experience with poetry with the students and the University community. ■

Jeremy Paden, *Italy-United States*

September 17, 2019

Federico Díaz-Granados, *Colombia*

October 10, 2019

Adriana Moragues, *Spain*

October 24, 2019

Raquel Lanseros, *Spain*

November 21, 2019

Fernando Valverde, *Spain*

November 21, 2019

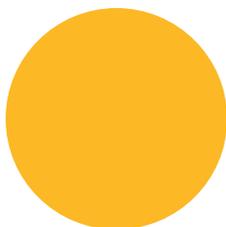
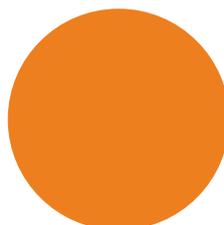
Natasha Trethewey, *Former US Poet Laureate, Pulitzer Prize Winner*

December 3, 2019

Robert Pinsky, *Former US Poet Laureate*

January 30, 2020*

*Postponed due to last-minute conflict.



Race & Media 2019

“Charlottesville, Media, & Anti-Racist Activism”

September 27-28, 2019

CONVENED BY. Camilla Fojas, *Department of Media Studies*

...

“Cinema, Architecture, Art: Envisioning Aesthetics, Politics, Citizenship and Personal Stories—A Festival of Documentaries from India”

October 2-4, 2019

CONVENED BY. Geeta Patel, *MESALC*;

CO-SPONSORED WITH. MESALC, The Fralin Museum of Art, and School of Architecture

...

SPICMACAY's

“Ustad Shahid Parvez Khan Sitar Concert”

November 2, 2019

CONVENED BY. Neha Kulkarni, *undergraduate student with SPICMACAY*

...

“The Geometries of Polity: Exploring Cosmological Orders over the History of China and the South Pacific”

January 8-11, 2020

CONVENED BY. Fred Damon, *Department of Anthropology & East and Southeast Asian Programs*

...

Egger Lecture by Joan Wallach Scott

January 30 & 31, 2020

CONVENED BY. Murad Idris, *Department of Politics*

...

Lecture by Deven Patel

“Spring Diversions: Revisiting a Unique Scroll-Manuscript from 15th-century Western India”

February 12, 2020

CONVENED BY. Samuel Grimes, *Department of Religious Studies*

...

Fourth Biennial Disability Studies Symposium

February 28, 2020

CONVENED BY. Christopher Krentz, *Disability Studies Initiative*

...



Ten more remaining co-sponsored events scheduled during the Spring 2020 semester were cancelled due to COVID-19.

Top

Jeremy Paden, Federico Díaz-Granados

Bottom

Raquel Lanseros, Fernando Valverde, Natasha Trethewey

Amitav Ghosh & Deborah Baker

Distinguished Writers-in-Residence



Amitav Ghosh and Deborah Baker were scheduled to lead a series of four seminars each in March & April 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic they have rescheduled their seminars below to an online platform in October & November 2020.

The IHGC is delighted and very appreciative that both Ghosh and Baker graciously agreed to write a special piece for this annual report on their thoughts about the COVID-10 global pandemic. See pages 16-17 and pages 18-19, respectively.

Seminars



"The Indian Ocean in the Anthropocene" with Amitav Ghosh

Distinguished Writer-in-Residence

NEW DATE. Spring 2020 seminar rescheduled to October & November 2020

Rescheduled seminars:

Indian Ocean Worlds and the Anthropocene

The Little Ice Age in Tokugawa Japan and Mughal India: Early Modern Perspectives

The Arts of Living in a Precarious Age

Environmental Crisis and Security in the Indian Ocean



"Narrative in the Age of Political Extremism": with Deborah Baker

Distinguished Writer-in-Residence

NEW DATE. Spring 2020 seminar rescheduled to October & November 2020

Books on the reading list to be discussed during the rescheduled seminars:

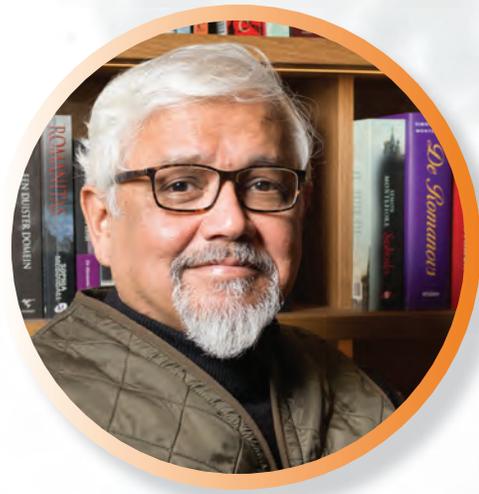
The Plot Against America, Philip Roth, *speculative fiction*

One of Us: The Story of a Massacre in Norway, Asne Sierstad, *narrative non-fiction*

American War, Omar el Akkad, *speculative fiction*

The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11, Lawrence Wright, *nonfiction*

Disturbance: Surviving Charlie Hebdo, Philippe Lancon, *memoir*



Thoughts on COVID-19

Amitav Ghosh

In early March 2020, well before New York City was forced into a lockdown by the COVID-19 pandemic, I had the good fortune to be offered a set of three disposable masks by a Bengali pharmacist in my Brooklyn neighborhood. Little did I know then that over the following weeks those flimsy little face-coverings would become the most valued of my belongings.

At that time the official line on face masks, in the US, was that they were not effective in preventing infections. The fact that they were mandatory in East Asian countries was often presented as the result of a cultural inclination, almost a superstition. Commentators mused on whether masking would be compatible with Western culture and its traditions of individualism.

It was in the second week of March that I wore a mask for the first time, while out on a walk in a park near my home. The city was not yet in lockdown at that time (that would not happen until March 20) but social distancing, and sheltering in place, had been strongly recommended. Despite that, restaurants and bars were still open, as were the tennis courts in the park, which were all full. There were very few masks to be seen and people were noticeably wary of those who were wearing them; it was as if masks were the pandemic's scarlet letter, worn only by potential super-spreaders.

The official US line on masks did not change until mid-April, when it was finally admitted that the reason why East Asian countries had mandated the wearing of masks was not due to cultural inclinations, but because there was plenty of epidemiological evidence to indicate that they helped restrict the spread of respiratory diseases. It also became clear at that time that the earlier directives, discounting the effectiveness of masks, were part of a broad effort to conceal the critical shortage of protective equipment in the US.

But people had evidently come to their own conclusions for there was a steady rise in mask-wearing long before the official position changed:

by the end of March most people in my neighborhood were wearing masks. But there were many who weren't and from what I observed on the streets around my house, it seemed that the unmasked belonged mainly to a distinct demographic group: young, white men.

The disparity persisted into early April, by which time most people were wearing masks when they went out of doors. The minority who were not, or so it seemed to me, were still mainly young, white and male. My impressions were eventually confirmed, at least partially, by news reports and research. A study that focused on gender differences found that: "Men more than women agree that wearing a face covering is shameful, not cool, a sign of weakness and a stigma..."¹ Since white respondents were over-represented in this study, it is a fair assumption that the above views were expressed mainly by white men.

At that time, I happened to be in the thick of reading, and writing, about settler-colonialism and bio-political conflict—that is to say conflicts in which disease and ecological disruption were weapons of war, deployed by European colonists against the indigenous peoples of the New World. I began to wonder whether there might be a connection between the history of settler-colonialism and the cultural contexts that made mask-wearing seem 'shameful, not cool, a sign of weakness and a stigma'.

The concept of a 'bio-underclass' has been in circulation for some time; it is generally used to stigmatize a largely African-American group: cocaine-addicted mothers and their children. The notion is clearly imbued with prejudice (it doesn't, for example, include opioid addicts, who are mainly white) but the very fact that it exists implies that those who give it credence must also believe in the existence of another, unnamed category: a 'bio-overclass'—a group that has (or believes itself to have) certain superior biological characteristics, among them a greater resistance to disease, because of factors like age, income, state of health, and, of course, race. Could there be a link, I wondered, between these beliefs and those of European settlers, who also thought of their bodies as being inherently superior, in the sense of more resilient and less susceptible to disease, than those of non-whites. Why else would white men persist in believing, against the evidence, that they were less likely to be susceptible to COVID-19?

No, I told myself, in real life connections such as these don't emerge so tidily out of the messy processes of history. But then the evidence began to mount. The sceptics who were questioning the necessity of a lockdown, and those who were noisily voicing protests, were overwhelmingly white, as were the people who were demanding to be allowed to go back to work because they were young, healthy, had no co-morbidities, and were therefore eager to take their chances. Soon it became clear that mask-wearing had become a front line in America's culture wars, with clear demographic distinctions between those on either side.

The battle lines became even clearer in early April when reports began to appear confirming what many had long suspected: that Covid-19 had claimed a disproportionate number of victims from minority communities, especially Latino, black, and Native-Americans. The COVID-19 Racial Data Tracker has since been posting detailed statistics on the subject.² Summing up the findings the historian Ibram X. Kendi wrote on May 4, 2020: 'In Alabama, black people compose 43.51 percent of the cases and 45.82 percent of the deaths, while making up a mere 26.8 percent of the population, resembling disparities in Mississippi, Tennessee, Colorado, and South Carolina. In Texas and Maine, black people are disproportionately infected with the coronavirus. In Iowa, the black infection percentage is quadruple the black share of the population, while Latinos may be faring even worse because of a coronavirus outbreak in meatpacking plants. In Utah, Latinos are 14.2 percent of the population, but 36.48 percent of coronavirus cases. In Alaska, the Asian infection percentage is more than double the Asian population share, as it nearly is in Tennessee. In Idaho, the death disparity for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders is the highest for any group. In Wyoming, Native Americans make up 2.7 percent of the state, but 18.49 percent of the coronavirus cases, one of the most dreadful racial disparities in the country....'³

The response to the findings was startlingly at odds with the notion that liberal democracies value all lives equally. The commentators and elected officials who expressed outrage and demanded measures to address the racial disparities were relatively few. Ranged against them was a broad coalition of politicians and demonstrators whose attitude is perhaps best summed up by a headline in *The Atlantic*: 'The Coronavirus Was an Emergency Until Trump Found Out Who Was Dying'.⁴

Adam Serwer, the writer of the article, observes: 'The coronavirus epidemic has rendered the racial contract visible in multiple ways. Once the disproportionate impact of the epidemic was revealed to the American political and financial elite, many began to regard the rising death toll less as a national emergency than as an inconvenience. Temporary measures meant to prevent the spread of the disease by restricting movement, mandating the wearing of masks, or barring

large social gatherings have become the foulest tyranny. The lives of workers at the front lines of the pandemic—such as meatpackers, transportation workers, and grocery clerks—have been deemed so worthless that legislators want to immunize their employers from liability even as they force them to work under unsafe conditions.'

Soon there were many more indications that American political and business elites (the 'bio-overclass') had decided to sacrifice large numbers of workers, disproportionately minorities (the 'bio-underclass'), at the altar of the economy. Several states, mainly in the south, began to open up their economies; meat-packing plants, where the workers were disproportionately from minority communities, were ordered to reopen, even though many of them had been hot spots; the owners of these plants were exempted from legal liabilities while workers were forced to return by threats like the cancellation of unemployment benefits and the suspension of welfare payments. When these measures were challenged in court, the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, pointed out that the victims of COVID-19 in one badly-hit country were merely workers at a meatpacking plant, not 'the regular folks'.⁵

In effect, the publication of the demographic data on the victims of the pandemic, far from helping the cause of the worst-affected groups, made their situation even worse. The impacts of the measures taken to address the disparities were negligible, while the counter-measures that forced workers to return to their workplaces ensured that those who had suffered disproportionately would suffer even more.

For me, this confirmed an inkling that I have long nurtured in relation to climate change. One of the messages that climate activists often emphasize, with the best of intentions, is that those who will be worst hit by climatic disruptions are the poor and vulnerable. The idea, no doubt, is that this message will bring about a change of heart among the more fortunate by appealing to their sense of justice and morality. The pandemic has brought to light a much darker reality, demonstrating that those who believe themselves to be safe will have no compunctions about deepening the suffering of others, especially if they happen to be of a different color, language or culture. Needless to add, the more fortunate will be even more inclined to jettison moral qualms if they also believe that the less fortunate are part of a 'bio-underclass', whose weakness is an inherited characteristic. ■

— Brooklyn, May 18, 2020

1 https://nypost.com/2020/05/14/men-less-likely-to-wear-face-masks-because-theyre-not-cool-and-a-sign-of-weakness/amp/?__twitter_impression=true

2 <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vRMTptXT8ipOUZwfQtDTbA3al8OWlitxvf1Vj-OwkyY5Jji7EiA4qeK6K5KwkNP5V7FT1PMuDnYzq7/pubhtml#>

3 Kendi, Ibram X., "We're Still Living and Dying in the Slaveholders' Republic", *The Atlantic*, May 4, 2020.

4 Serwer, Adam, "The Coronavirus Was an Emergency Until Trump Found Out Who Was Dying", *The Atlantic*, May 8, 2020.

5 Ibid.



Virus

From the Latin word for poison or toxin

Deborah Baker

Under the electron microscope SARS-CoVi-2 looks like a Christmas ornament. Its spiky filaments give the family of viruses from which it arose the name of corona or crown. Soon after we first heard of it, we learned the name of the disease that follows exposure, COVID-19. And while we waited the virus' arrival, we learned phrases like social-distancing, sheltering in place, and flattening the curve. We learned the difference between a surgical mask and an N95.

When SARS-CoVi-2 finally arrived, our sense of time, which had been moving slowly up to that moment, sped up. Overnight entire industries collapsed and tens of thousands, then tens of millions, lost their jobs. Borders shut down, shops and restaurants and classrooms closed, fleets of planes were grounded and global trade was largely halted. And we were left lying awake in the middle of the night.

How long will my savings last? How will I pay for my prescriptions? What am I going to feed my children? How do I explain the virus to them? How are my parents going to get their groceries? Where is next month's rent coming from? Only very lucky people could ask larger questions than these.

The skies cleared. The streets quieted. Wildlife made tentative forays into empty cityscapes. Seismologists noted that even the earth itself stopped shaking. Communities organized rent strikes. Churches set up food kitchens. Teachers turned lesson plans into online courses. Closets became offices. And if we were not essential workers we sat in our tenements or apartments, in our houses or second homes, wondering where the virus would strike next. *How soon before the peak comes? Will our hospitals be overwhelmed? When would tests become available?* The federal government was worse than useless. We were alone. We had no life experience from which to draw on to understand what was happening. We traded bits of news over our phones, who has it, who is in hospital.

This was how a mutant strand of protein we couldn't see, could only try to imagine, made its way into our lives. If we are safe and not in mourning, if the peak has come and gone, more abstract questions now arise. *When will the future arrive? What will it look like? Will we remember what this moment felt like when it is all over or will we be too busy trying to survive to entertain such questions?*

SARS-CoVi-2 is not a parasite, but like a parasite it is unable to replicate without a host. It insinuates rogue proteins into the healthy cells of our bodies, hijacking their metabolic works in order to make more viruses. Sometimes the virus is so quickly defeated by our body's defenses that its presence will be scarcely noted. Other times it will be the virulence of our immune response that ends up killing us. But if the virus is given free reign, it will continue turning healthy cells into virus factories until our entire body becomes a feverish host, spreading infection within and without until our every organ is compromised and we die.

Some days I am afraid of getting the virus and dying. At other times I am afraid of getting the virus and passing it on to someone I love who will die. This happens somewhere every day. These are normal fears. But for some fear is a fragile door separating "us" from "them."

"Them" doesn't mean the infected. It is a fear of those who leave their homes every day to service the healthy and the sick, until they become sick themselves. In America, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Hispanic immigrants and African Americans largely because they make up a large portion of what we now call "essential workers." The statistics echo statistics and studies we have read all our lives. This fear of "them" resembles the virus; it is a toxin and a poison and requires constant vigilance to avoid being infected by it.

Some people are not at all scared of the virus; they are angry at having their lives turned upside down. They are proud of their independence and their patriotism but are sponsored by big money and openly incited by a president. They are strangers to cowering in fear before a capricious and unjust power. They are largely white people and they will bring the virus to the doors of the vulnerable and open them wide.

If I were to ask an epidemiologist what the arrival of SARS-CoVi-2 signifies, he or she would not know how to answer me. Yet much as a priest is compelled to see in a plague of locust a sign that the local deity is angry, some are as compelled to make meaning from disaster as others are compelled to make money. Unlike local deities, viruses have long been considered non-conscious and non-autonomous, compelled by intra-molecular forces we only vaguely comprehend. This is why the critical role viruses played in evolution was long overlooked.

Evolution through natural selection occurs over long stretches of time, not months. Though it is tricky thing to project agency onto SARS-CoVi-2 I keep returning to this question: *what does it want? How quickly will we, not as a species, but as a culture and a society, adapt to its desires?* Until this virus arrived, all the signs that our planet was in acute distress did not change our behavior. Only the prospect of dying did that. Placating angry deities has always meant sacrifice and SARS-CoVi-2 is an ungrateful god. It is a social critic with a poison pen, highlighting all the ways we have failed. Domestic violence is exploding. Racism struts on our streets. Homeless encampments, prisons, nursing homes, meatpacking plants, and border detention camps have become hotspots of infection. Finally, there is our healthcare system, primed for profit not pandemics. *We can promise to make changes but who or what are we negotiating with?*

Having cycled through legions of animal and human hosts, perhaps corona, that royal family of viruses, has finally figured out how to take us on to preserve what is left of life on earth. This virus has evolved to exploit our weaknesses. And if we continue to believe that we are a chosen species, it will eventually find a way to prove us wrong. ■



HistoREMIX

2020 Humanities Week

February 23-28



The way history blends with, and affects, our day-to-day lives via art, media, music, and awareness of our surroundings changes constantly. This year, our undergraduate student leaders Michael Spalthoff and Noelle Baker chose this as the focus of Humanities Week 2020. Revisiting historical figures and their impacts, and the way history has shaped Charlottesville; retelling historical stories with modern twists; and, reclaiming cultural and historical stories in today's climate were just some of the foci of HistoREMIX.

The week began with a collaboration with UVA student group Broadway Talks Back, bringing in Broadway and London West End performers for a panel discussion. *Six*'s Maiya Quansah-Breed from London's West End and *Wicked*'s Stephanie Torns from Broadway spoke about their theatre and performance experiences and answered questions from the audience in a captivating session moderated by school of Commerce student Kristen Kelly in the UVA Chapel. The musical themes continued throughout the week with South African hip-hop artists "X" and "Bliss" bringing the Black Power Liberation Station of Grahamstown, South Africa to Wilson

Hall. This multimedia engaged workshop involved student groups, faculty visitors from the University of Virginia's College at Wise, enthusiastic crowd participation, members of the Charlottesville community, and a great range of arts and crafts.

"Americans Who Tell the Truth" exhibited portraits by artist Robert Shetterly and a selection of Charlottesville High School student's portraits of their own "truthtellers" in a drop-in style exhibition, where student spoken-word group Flux put on an open mic performance. Other student performances across the week included a hugely successful comedy evening on The Corner, a production of "I Never Saw It Coming," and a puzzle poetry session. We were also fortunate enough to see the Rotunda Planetarium, with a specially prepared talk from the IHGC's former graduate intern, Neal Curtis, who was one of three graduate students who brought the Rotunda Planetarium to life. Thomas Jefferson's vision for the Rotunda was on full display, and was complemented by performances from two UVA student *a cappella* groups, Academical Village People and 'Hoos in the Stairwell. ■

SUNDAY

Broadway's *Wicked* and London's West End's *SIX* Cast Members

CO-SPONSORED WITH . Broadway Talks Back

MONDAY

"FLUX Poetry JAM"

BY . FLUX, Puzzle Poetry

"I Never Saw It Coming"

BY . Artists for Change

TUESDAY

"Comedy Night at Crozet Pizza"

BY . Amuse Bouche, Hot Kids Comedy, The Whethermen

WEDNESDAY

"Making Liberatory Spaces: The Black Power Station comes to Wilson Hall"

WITH . Amuse Bouche, Hot Kids Comedy, The Whethermen

PERFORMANCES BY . Xolile "X" Madinda and Bliss, Grahamstown, South Africa

THURSDAY

"The Rotunda Planetarium"

PRESENTED BY . Neal Curtis

PERFORMANCES BY . Academical Village People and 'Hoos in the Stairwell

FRIDAY

"Portraits of Americans Who Tell the Truth"

BY . Robert Shetterly, and students from Charlottesville High School

"Flux Poetry Showcase"

BY . Flux Spoken Word Poetry



Left
Six cast members from London's West End; Maiya Quansah-Breed, front center

Right, top to bottom
Stephanie Torns of Broadway's *Wicked*, and Maiya Quansah-Breed of *Six*

Clay Fellows

2019–20

Faculty Fellows

Herbert (Tico) Braun

Professor, Department of History

PROJECT . "How cultural practitioners, activists and local officials from Colombia employ humanities to promote peace and respond to a long history of political and social violence"

Farzaneh Milani

Professor, Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures; and, Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies

PROJECT . "The State of the Arts in Iran Forty Years after the Islamic Revolution"

Alan Taylor

Professor, Department of History

PROJECT . "Expanding the Frontiers of Science: Humboldt, Jefferson and the Opening of the American West"

Nomi Dave

Assistant Professor, Department of Music

PROJECT . "Feminism in the Republic of Guinea"

Lise Dobrin

Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology

PROJECT . "Visit to UVa by Dr. Andrew Moutu, Director of the Papua, New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery in spring 2020"

Elizabeth Meyer

Professor, Landscape Architecture

PROJECT . "Plant Humanities" Symposium

Jennifer Greeson & Lisa Woolfork

Associate Professors, Department of English

PROJECT . "Teaching Hard History" - initiative by the Teaching Tolerance program of the Southern Poverty Law Center

Student Fellows

We'Aam Alabdullah

School of Architecture

PROJECT . "An Everyday Approach to Study Daily Life at Kuwait City's Alshaheed Park"

Cory-Alice Andre-Johnson

Department of Anthropology

PROJECT . Anthropological field research on secondary funeral practices in Belo sur Mer, Madagascar

Thomas Antorino

Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese

PROJECT . "Feminine" Bestsellers: Gender and Modernity in the Spanish Woman Writer's Short Novel, 1907-1936

Nicole Bonino

Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese

PROJECT . "Making Art in Migration: From the Italian Colonization to the Argentine Tango, 1880-1930"

Nyima Cape

Department of Religious Studies

PROJECT . Tracing the historical unfolding of the body of Tibetan scriptures called *The Seminal Heart of the Dakini*

Vivien Chang

Department of History

PROJECT . "Creating the Third World: Anticolonial Diplomacy and the Search for a New International Economic Order, 1960-1974"

Ariel Paige Cohen

Department of History

PROJECT . "Cyrus Adler and Nameless Exhibitionists: Jews, Genders, and Museums in Twentieth-Century America"

Neal Curtis

Department of English

PROJECT . "Forging Boundaries: How Literary Impostures Trouble Divisions between Manuscript and Print"

Charles Hamilton

Department of History

PROJECT . "'Solidarity not Surrender': Queer Antifascism and the Politics of Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Europe"

Casey Ireland

Department of English

PROJECT . "Remains of the Hunt in Middle English Literature"

Fnu Kamaoji

Department of Religious Studies

PROJECT . "The Death and Return of Female Revenants in Tibet"

Allison Martha Kelley

Department of History

PROJECT . Researching the history of Latter Day Saints affiliation with the Republican Party

Kristen Kelly

School of Commerce

PROJECT . Bring 2 Tony Award Winners to UVA to talk with students

Samuel Lemley

Department of English

PROJECT . "Antiquarianism: A Seventeenth-Century Mode"

Christopher Luna

Department of Music

PROJECT . Expanding research on the anthropophony (human-derived sounds) derived from spiritual practice of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Justin Mann

Department of Art History

PROJECT . "Assembling a Monastic Landscape: Middle Byzantine Monasticism in Central Greece"

Julianne McCobin

Department of English

PROJECT . Archival work in the Natasha Trethewey papers at Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library

Astrid Lorena Ochoa-Campo

Department of Spanish, Italian & Portuguese

PROJECT . Dissertation explores representations of mother-daughter relationships in the works of women writers of the Colombian diaspora

Najee Olya

Department of Art History

PROJECT . "Constructing the African in Archaic and Classical Greek Vase-Painting: Images, Meanings, and Contexts"

Wu Qu

Department of History

PROJECT . Dissertation explores American and Chinese POWs' (Prisoners of War) experiences during the Korean War

Kevin Rose

Department of Religious Studies

PROJECT . "Living Green: the Neoliberal Climate of Protestant Environmentalism"

Dylan Spivey

Department of Art History

PROJECT . "Contested Classicism: Palladianism and the Invention of the English Baroque, 1715-1757"

Christopher Whitehead

Department of History

PROJECT . Examines the transformation of the Lake Champlain Valley from a contested border between native worlds into an imperial borderland

IHGC Distinguished Visiting Scholar-in-Residence 2019-20

Jane Taylor

Andrew W. Mellon Chair of Aesthetic Theory and Material Performance; and, Director of the Laboratory of Kinetic Objects (LoKO) based in the Humanities Center, University of Western Cape, South Africa

LECTURE

"Newes from the Dead"

October 4

SEMINAR

William Kentridge's *Other Faces*

October 10

Sponsored by the Mellon Global South Lab

PRESENTATION

Of Moving Beings, and Being Moved"

October 11

At launch of Mellon Performance Cultures & Creative Embodied Practices Lab



Professor Jane Taylor's three-week residency (September 24–October 16) saw the launch of a new IHGC Mellon Humanities Research Lab, "Performance Cultures & Embodied Creative Practices"—a collaborative venture between UVA's departments of drama and music and UWC's humanities center. Taylor has been instrumental in fostering this collaboration and has involved several UVA colleagues in community-based arts and puppetry projects in Cape Town. While in residence, she gave two public lectures, taught a class in drama, guest-lectured in a graduate course in English, and worked with the new Lab leaders to develop an action plan for the Lab. Taylor's enthusiastic and successful visit helped catalyze a wide range of arts and performance initiatives.

Her lecture "Newes from the Dead" focused on an unnatural "Moment in the History of Natural Philosophy," exploring the remarkable circumstances surrounding the death of a young woman hanged in 1650 in Oxford, England, for infanticide; her body given to the University for an anatomy lesson which was also a lesson in law, power, and patriarchy. In 2011, following a commission from Renaissance scholar Stephen Greenblatt, Taylor staged a theater work of this event to conceptualize through performance the relation between natural history, puppetry arts, neurology, and the materiality of being.

Taylor's brief presentation at the October 11 performance arts lab launch illustrated how the performing arts in South Africa are transforming the geographies of exclusion associated with the history of apartheid and its legacies.

Taylor also shared with students and faculty her work and experiences as a distinguished playwright, creative writer, and scholar of performance theory. She leads several interdisciplinary projects on shifting conceptions of the human-biomedical, informatic, and geological-under conditions of late modernity. She engages with visual and performing artists, activating considerations of how the aesthetic defines and delimits conditions of human existence. In addition to the Greenblatt play, Taylor has written several plays for puppets, working with renowned puppetry artist William Kentridge and the Handspring Puppet Company. ■

Mellon Humanities Research Labs



The Global South Concept and Practice

CO-DIRECTORS. Camilla Fojas, *Departments of Media Studies and American Studies*; and, Debjani Ganguly, *Department of English*

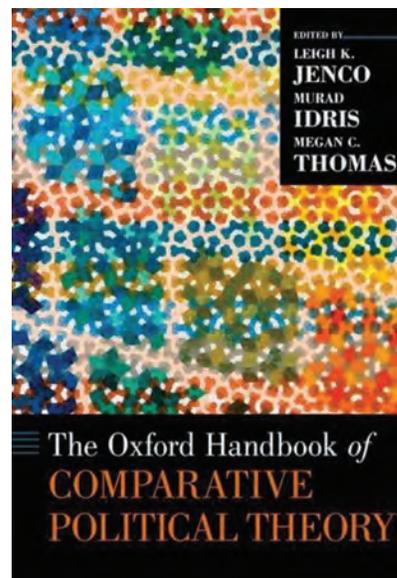
This core Mellon Lab serves as the intellectual and strategic hub for UVA's Mellon Global South program. It seeds research workshops and curricular initiatives on the Global South across the College, convenes Mellon Faculty Fellows' seminars, offers fellowships to PhD students to develop their dissertation projects with the interdisciplinary Lab faculty, and builds partnerships with other global research centers.

☀ Although many seminars and speakers were cancelled in Spring 2020 due to COVID-19, the Lab's offerings this year were rich. ■

- A partnership in arts and performance cultures with the Humanities Center at the University of Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa, resulted in a new Mellon Lab on *Performance Cultures & Embodied Creative Practices* launched in Fall 2019 (see pp. 23, 27, and 36).
- Four PhD students were awarded competitive fellowships in 2019–20 to develop their dissertation projects: Elizabeth Dorton (Spanish); Cherrie Kwok (English); Heidi Nicholls (Sociology); and, Ray Qu (Anthropology). Lab faculty workshopped the prospectuses of two 2018–19 fellows: Joseph Wei (English) presented his work on Asian-American poetics; and, Dallas Tatman (Religious Studies) presented his work on religion and sport in Senegal.
- New Media Studies faculty Lab members presented their work: Aswin Punathembekar spoke about his project on the circulation of political affect through sonic means; and, David Nemer spoke about his research in Brazil through the WhatsApp platform, particularly its deployment in the country's politics.
- Camilla Fojas collaborated with Duke University's Franklin Humanities Institute on a graduate student-led project, "The Global South After 2010: Epistemologies of Militarization," resulting in a special issue of *Cultural Dynamics* (Fall/Winter 2019). Debjani Ganguly was appointed to the advisory board of University of Tübingen's Interdisciplinary Center for Global

South Studies, and invited to teach in its 2021 summer school. Ganguly established collaborative links with the Center for Studies in Developing Societies (CSDS) in New Delhi, and is working on a proposal for a two-year research collaboration with CSDS, Duke, Bologna, and WISER, to be submitted to the CHCI-Mellon program in Spring 2021.

- Publication and research outputs from Lab projects include a special issue of *New Literary History* on "The Global Novel: Comparative Perspectives" (ed. Ganguly, June 2020), and Camilla Fojas' completed manuscript, *Border Óptica: Cultures of Surveillance along the U.S.-Mexico Frontier* (NYU Press, 2021). Other Lab members benefitting from manuscript/article workshops include: Fahad Bishara ("Law and Economic Life in the Islamic World," *History Compass*, April 2020); Samhita Sunya (*South by South/West Asia: Transregional Cartographies of Cinematic Action Genres*, forthcoming, University of California Press); and, Murad Idris (*The Oxford Companion to Comparative Political Theory*, 2019).





2

Coastal Conservatory

CO-DIRECTORS. Matthew Burtner, *Department of Music*; and, Willis Jenkins, *Department of Religious Studies*

In Fall 2019, the Conservatory held a four-day Coastal Futures Festival with seminars, installations, performances, and field exercises held at the Eastern Shore and in Charlottesville. Highlights of the festival included a public opening of “sounding science” installation at the Barrier Island Center, and a concert with internationally-known musical group, Eighth Blackbird, featuring new work from UVA composers. This was part of a broader 10-day UVA Convergences event on environmental humanities, with Conservatory directors involved in all events. Convergences opened with the “Coasts in Crisis” Caribbean art event, planned by Conservatory researcher Charlotte Rogers and co-founded by the Conservatory and UVA’s Environmental Resilience Institute. Conservatory researchers have published new work in journals of science and humanities, and created musical compositions.

✨ Before the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled University activities and travel, the Conservatory had invitations to present at the annual meeting of the global Consortium of Humanities Centers & Institutes (CHCI) at the University of Arizona, at STREAMS in Stockholm, among other international venues. ■

News stories

Jackson, Stefanie. “BIC’s ‘Sounding Science’ Exhibit Lets Visitors Hear Coastal Changes.” *Eastern Shore Post*, September 26, 2019.

<https://www.easternshorepost.com/2019/09/26/bics-sounding-science-exhibit-lets-visitors-hear-coastal-changes/>

Samarrai, Fariss. “Coastal Futures Conservatory Merges Science, Arts, Humanities for Environment.” *UVA Today*, September 30, 2019.

<https://news.virginia.edu/content/coastal-futures-conservatory-merges-science-arts-humanities-environment>

———. “Confronting Climate Change Through Sound.” *Living on Earth*, February 22, 2019.

<https://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=19-P13-00008&segmentID=5#.XHxIHCfuxLg.twitter>

Above
Willis Jenkins, left, and Matthew Burtner, 3rd from left, along with members of Eighth Blackbird and UVA Music graduate students, performed John Cage’s “Inlets” (1977) using amplified shells to dip and pour water, the sound of fire, and a conch shell blown as a horn.

Inset
Members of Eighth Blackbird perform during the New Arctic Symposium



Asian Cosmopolitanisms

CO-DIRECTORS. Natasha Heller, *Department of Religious Studies*; Sylvia Chong, *Departments of English and American Studies*; and, Charles Laughlin, *Department of East Asian Languages, Literatures & Cultures*

Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 events focused on the third of the Lab's themes, the politics of knowledge. Amy Olberding (University of Oklahoma) gave a talk drawing on axial age Confucian texts to reexamine the concept of civility for our contemporary age. Maria Heim (Amherst College) looked at claims about the universal and the particular in Pali Buddhist textual interpretation, and how these might complicate Western assertions of universalism. Daniel Asen (Rutgers University) used the history of fingerprinting and travel documents to discuss the formation of new types of identity in Nationalist China. In conjunction with the publication of the *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Political Theory*, the Asian Cosmopolitanisms Lab and the Department of Politics co-sponsored a panel that brought editors Murad Idris, Leigh K. Jenco, and Megan C. Thomas into conversation with Ian Baucom, Roxanne L. Euben, and Lawrie Balfour, and also hosted a graduate student discussion with this event. New faculty Lab member Anri Yasuda led a stimulating reading group discussion on world literature, untranslatability, and the ideals of cosmopolitanism. ■

Amy Olberding

University of Oklahoma

"Manners and Civility in Practice"

September 23, 2019

Co-sponsored with Corcoran Department of Philosophy and The Project on Religion and Its Publics

Maria Heim

Amherst College

"The Contextual: A Rethinking of the Universal"

October 14, 2019

Daniel Asen

Rutgers University

"Crime, Security, and Citizenship:

The Politics of Fingerprinting in China, 1920s-1940s."

November 15, 2019

Co-sponsored with the IHGC Surveillance & Infrastructure research group of the Humanities Informatics Lab

Murad Idris, Leigh K. Jenco, and Megan C. Thomas in conversation with Ian Baucom, Roxanne L. Euben, and Lawrie Balfour

Pluralizing Political Thought:

Introducing The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Political Theory

January 16, 2020

Co-sponsored with Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics



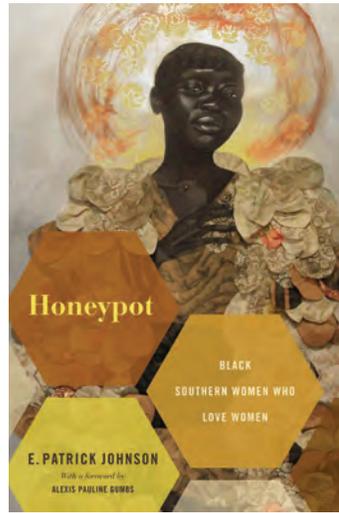
Performance Cultures & Embodied Creative Practices

CO-DIRECTORS. Michelle Kisiuk, *Department of Music*; and, Marianne Kubik, *Department of Drama*

The Performance Cultures & Embodied Creative Practices Lab was launched in October 2019 and convened monthly conversations for Lab members from music, drama, dance, English, and religious studies to uncover the intersection of their creative practice research agendas. The Lab funded proposals advancing PhD student Tim Moore's creative research in New Zealand on *taonga puoro*, an indigenous arts practice embodying Māori performance; a UVA residency with xylophone master Tijan Darwana; a performance by E. Patrick Johnson of his one-person show *HONEYPOT: Black Southern Women Who Love Women*; and, an interactive, site-specific performance project, *[PERFORMANCE X]: Empathy Across Space, Time and Species*, which builds on the premise that human survival depends on our ability to live well with others. The Lab's first-year highlight was planning a three-day symposium

at Morven Farms with collaborators of the book project *Tensions of Desire: Performance and the Entanglements of the Erotic, Trauma, and the Intimate*, with a keynote performance by Ama Aduonom of her award-winning *Walking With my Ancestors*, based on field research in the slave dungeons at Ghana's Cape Coast castle.

☀ While the symposium and all subsequent events were cancelled in March due to COVID-19, the Lab invested in a University-wide membership in *virtualchoir.net* to prepare for a shift to virtual performance projects in 2020-21, tested by Kisiuk's students in her UVA Engagements course, *Cultures of Play(ing)*. The Lab will reschedule the symposium in 2020-21 and anticipates more cross-discipline collaborative efforts and project proposals. ■



Left to right
Ama Oforiwaa Aduonom

E. Patrick Johnson's *HONEYPOT: Black Southern Women Who Love Women*

Madayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala, exhibition at Kluge-Ruhe. Artist and curator Wukun Wanambi teaches UVA students about Yolngu bark painting.

5

Mapping Indigenous Worlds

CO-DIRECTORS. Jim Igoe, *Department of Anthropology*; and, Max Edelson, *Department of History*

The Mapping Indigenous Worlds Lab seeks to understand space and place from Indigenous perspectives, including UVA's contemporary relationships to Native communities in the Commonwealth and beyond. In 2019-20, the Lab supported collaborative research, curriculum development, and on-Grounds events related to these goals. The Lab funded two research projects:

1. Mapping Indigenous Relations through Language Contact and Phylogeny, undertaken by Mark Sicoli (Anthropology) and undergraduate research assistants; and,
2. Interactive Digital Timeline for *Madayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, organized by Henry Skerritt and Eleanore Neumann, in collaboration with scholars and artists from Australia.

In October, the Lab co-sponsored an educational canoe trip on the Nottoway River with the Coastal Futures Lab. The trip was led by Nottoway Tribal Councilwoman, Beth Roach, and hosted by the Nottoway Tribe Cultural Center. Students attended from three classes: Introduction to Native Studies, taught by Kasey Jernigan; Indigenous Landscapes, taught by Jim Igoe; and, Global Ethics and Climate Change, taught by Willis Jenkins. In December, the Lab hosted a water Justice Day, with visits from Beth Roach and Ryan Emanuel, who spoke to undergraduate classes about water justice and Indigenous

communities in the Mid-Atlantic States, and convened a workshop on Ryan Emanuel's forthcoming book, *Water in a Lumbee World*. The Lab supported curriculum development by Kasey Jernigan and David Edmunds for a new course, "Indigenous UVA." In Fall 2019, Max Edelson taught a graduate course, *Historical Geospatial Visualization*, focusing on "Mapping Indigenous Worlds in Early North America."

These activities revolved around the Lab's commitment to bring together Lab members to work on digital visualization, gather resources for teaching and research, and create conversations about members' respective projects. Led by graduate research assistant Chris Whitehead, the Lab launched the Mapping Indigenous Worlds website, listing affiliated graduate students and faculty, the Lab's crowd-sourced "Annotated Bibliography of Indigenous Space and Place," and links to visualization projects that will compose a Mapping Indigenous Worlds Atlas. The Lab hosted February and March meetings showcasing ArcGIS Online and Storymaps, two resources for building online maps, and GIS specialist Chris Gist led members through a tutorial on how to build projects with these platforms. After the pandemic ended in-person meetings, research assistant Chris Whitehead created the first of a series of online tutorials, "How the Pieces Fit Together," on the Lab website's GIS page. ■

Humanities Informatics Lab

CO-DIRECTORS. Debjani Ganguly, *English*; Jack Chen, *East Asian Languages, Literatures & Cultures*; and, Alison Booth, *English and The Scholars' Lab*

The Humanities Informatics Lab, a three-year project funded by UVA's Strategic Investment Fund (SIF), has brought together faculty and advanced student scholars who study the relationship between human culture and technology and explore the management, control, and flow of information, in both historical and contemporary contexts. The Lab encourages a critical and often-neglected dialogue between humanities scholars and those working in the fields of information studies and data science. Led by faculty from disciplines across the University, the Lab's four interdisciplinary research groups continued leveraging UVA's strength in the humanities and information sciences through active collaboration. They fulfilled a key Lab objective in funding curriculum grants to develop courses addressing questions about the "human" in our information age.



These courses and Lab exhibitions, installations, and outcomes were to be highlighted in a three-day symposium in April 2020 that was canceled due to COVID-19 closures. The IHGC appreciates the Strategic Investment Fund Program and Office of the Vice President for Research for extending the Lab's funding deadline through December 2020 so the Lab may present its amazing projects and work in the online "final showcase" scheduled throughout Fall 2020.

Research Groups

Human and Machine Intelligence (HMI)

CO-LEADERS. Paul Humphreys, *Philosophy*; and, Vicente Ordonez-Roman, *Computer Science*

The HMI group had a successful year with internal and external speakers on topics ranging from the future of work to computer ethics. Two of the weekly sessions produced enough controversy that later sessions were set up for extended responses from HMI members. The group grew to more than 100 members from nine schools across UVA and 14 departments in Arts & Sciences, with rotating groups of 20 or more attending the weekly meetings. A number of research papers and dissertations originating through interactions at HMI meetings have been written, and five members received "3 Cavaliers" UVA research awards. As a gesture of confidence in HMI's contributions, the Dean's Office in Arts & Sciences awarded HMI a grant for the 2020–2021 year to continue its activities.

☀ HMI cancelled its March–April 2020 activities due to COVID-19, but it planned Summer 2020 special online sessions.

HMI thanks the Humanities Informatics Lab and IHGC for its generous support over the last three years. ■

Raf Alvarado

Data Science Institute, UVA

"On The Age of Surveillance Capitalism"
September 4, 2019

Joint session with the Surveillance & Infrastructure research group of the IHGC's Humanities Informatics Lab

Robin Hanson

*Economics, George Mason University
and Oxford Future of Humanity Institute*

"Where Does Automation Win, in the Short and Very Long Run?"
September 11, 2019

Greg Wheeler

Professor, Philosophy and Computer Science, Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, and, Director Centre for Human and Machine Intelligence

"Prolegomenon to Machine Epistemology"
September 18, 2019

Juan Carlos Caicedo

Broad Institute, Cambridge, MA

"Visual Recognition for Quantitative Biology"
September 25, 2019

Zac Irving

Philosophy, UVA

"Beyond Importance: Exploration as an Attention Norm"
October 2, 2019

Haifeng Xu

Computer Science, UVA

“The Complex Roles of Information in Strategic Interactions”

October 9 , 2019

Deborah Hellman

School of Law, UVA

“Algorithmic Fairness”

October 16 , 2019

Cameron Buckner

Philosophy, University of Houston

“The Comparative Psychology of Artificial Intelligences”

October 25 , 2019

Worthy Martin

Computer Science/IATH, UVA

Chip Levy

Neurosurgery, UVA

Vicente Ordonez-Roman

Computer Science, UVA

Cameron Buckner

Philosophy, University of Houston

Panel + audience discussion on adversarial examples in AI

November 6 , 2019

Paul Humphreys

Philosophy, UVA

“Some Thoughts About the Epistemic Dimensions of Contemporary AI and Data”

November 20, 2019

Natasha Foutz

School of Commerce, UVA

“Applications of Machine Learning to Marketing Big Data”

January 22, 2020

Catherine Schuman

Oak Ridge National Laboratory

“Neuromorphic Computing and Machine Learning”

February 5, 2020

John Basl

Philosophy, Northeastern University

“Computer Ethics”

February 12, 2020

Jordan Rodu

Statistics, UVA

“The Principled Prediction-Problem Ontology: When Black Box Algorithms Are (Not) Appropriate”

February 19, 2020

John Chamberlin

Observatory Group

“AI, Financial Markets, and the Future of Work”

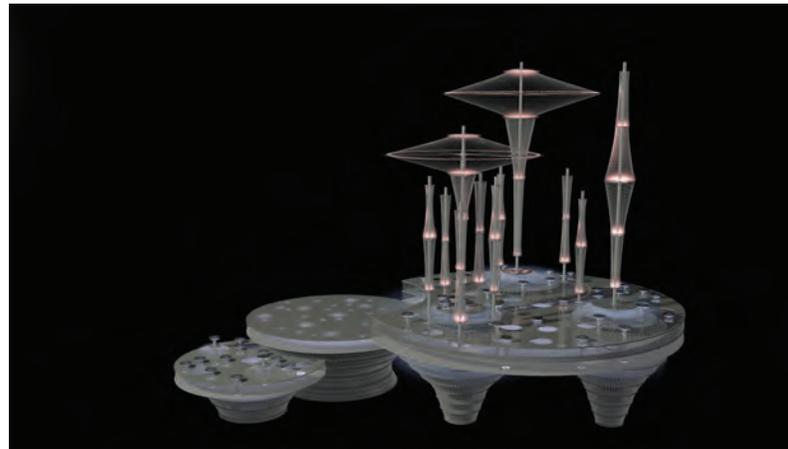
February 26, 2020

Sarah Brayne

Sociology, University of Texas at Austin

“Data and Discretion in 21st-Century Policing”

March 4, 2020



Top to bottom

Lectures and Projects

Row 1

Human and Machine Intelligence, Raf Alvarado and Paul Humphreys, left to right

Smart Environments Research Assistant, Davis Eddy, works on the fabrication of Ostenda Prototype (pp. 31-33)

Row 2

Smart Environments, rendering of Ostenda Prototype (pp. 31-33)

Row 3

Network/Corpus: Tucker Kuman, Brad Pasanek, and Rennie Mapp (p. 30)



Network/Corpus

CO-LEADERS. Rennie Mapp, *Digital Initiatives at UVA*; and, Brad Pasanek, *English*

The Network/Corpus research group continued exploring Digital Humanities (DH) approaches leading to scholarly and technological innovation in humanities disciplines and supporting UVA's new graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities. Program leaders collaborated with scholars globally to host events and workshops designed to bring DH tools into disciplines across the University. The group's focus spans the high-performance computing and 3-D fabrication work of the Puzzle Poesis group, as well as DH workshops and lectures based around recent developments in the theory and practice of computational analysis of large text corpora.

☀ **Some final-year plans were cancelled due to COVID-19, but will continue remotely in Fall 2020.** ■

Puzzle Poesis, under Professor Brad Pasanek, held weekly meetings to forward various creative projects including: Computer Science undergraduates worked with Professor Nathan Brunelle on software that would solve puzzles; and, an undergraduate worked with Pasanek on an online puzzle poem—a sound poem, the constituent elements of which could be reordered by clicking and dragging.

☀ **These projects were put on hold with COVID-19, but will continue in Fall 2020 by coding remotely.**

Network/Corpus enhanced the Certificate in Digital Humanities program in collaboration with UVA's Research Computing Services by developing a prototype workshop structure enabling participants to fill in technical skills gaps with targeted coding instruction.

The **Network/Corpus Workshop + Studio**, a ten-day workshop with studio hours for supported study, delivered the specific Python coding skills needed to perform large-scale text analytics.

Rennie Mapp organized this workshop with Jacalyn Huband, Computational Research Consultant for UVA's Research Computing Group, with the specific goal of preparing the workshop's six participants for Rafael Alvarado's "Exploratory Text Analytics" in Spring 2020 in the School of Data Science. Overlapping with the Network/Corpus Workshop + Studio was a text analytics residency by Katherine Bode of Australian National University. Bode's visit was coordinated with a DH Certificate Colloquium, where she offered a lecture "What's the Matter with Computational Literary Studies? The Case against 'The Computational Case against Computational Literary Criticism,'" addressing a recent polemical publication in *Critical Inquiry* by Nan Da. The Network/Corpus workshop group met with the development team from JSTOR/ITHAKA as part of a Design Sprint to learn their new text analytics platform and to participate in usability studies for this platform.

Other activities and events during the 2019-20 academic year included:

- **Puzzle Poesis** presented the annual Sonnet Games competition with the English Department.
- DH@UVA Mixers offered opportunities for the larger Humanities Informatics Lab to connect with the DH community.
- Brad Pasanek presented puzzle research in Fall 2019 at the University of Texas at Austin.
- Professor James English, John Welsh Centennial Professor of English, and Director of the Price Lab for Digital Humanities, University of Pennsylvania, held a discussion of "The Long Arc of Prestige" from Ted Underwood's book *Distant Horizons*.

Above, left to right
Rennie Mapp, Brad Pasanek

Clockwise, from upper left

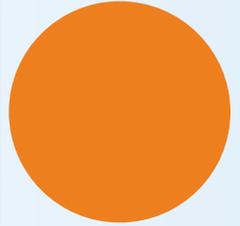
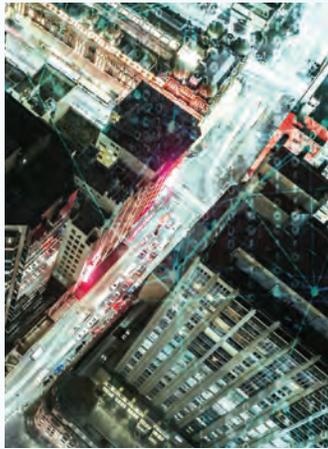
Research projects

Puzzle Poesis (p. 30)

Network/Corpus (p. 30)

Human and Machine Intelligence (p. 28)

Surveillance and Infrastructure (p. 33)



Smart Environments

CO-LEADERS. Mona El Khafif, *Architecture and Urban & Environmental Planning*; and, Jeana Ripple, *Architecture*

In its first two years, the Smart Environments group collaborated on a series of 11 Data Dialogues and five Data Projects by cross-disciplinary faculty and student teams. Data Dialogues were open meetings and discussions of work across architectural design fields, urban planning, public policy, music, geosciences, and engineering. They raised critical design- and data-focused questions centered on data authorship and the use of data as a generative device rather than the optimization or predictive uses dominating design fields today. ■

DATA Projects 2019-20

Smart Environments in its third year accomplished all its goals and projects, which will premier in Fall 2020: course development for a new class “SARCH Smart Environments”; design and installation of the DATA Project exhibition opening; design development and fabrication of all DATA projects for exhibition; development of the DATA Exchange panel with two keynote speakers; and, development of an upgraded website that also serves as a virtual exhibition. In all, 11 faculty members and more than 12 research assistants contributed to these DATA projects and related research areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



grounding.cloud | urban and environmental planning, architecture

PROJECT LEAD. Ali Fard + Research Assistant

The extractive logic of “the cloud” relies on an uneven geography that extends far beyond the screens and smart environments it propagates. This project grounds this extended geography through

Above, left to right
Mona El Khafif, Jeana Ripple



four conceptual territorial strata of Farms, Pipes, Mines, and Enclaves, which collectively make up the operational landscapes of the cloud and heavily contribute to the global extension of the forms and operations of smart urbanism. The project utilizes drawings, maps, animations, and other web-based media to construct a nuanced spatial understanding of the cloud and how and where it operates.



Ostenda Illuminata | urban and environmental planning, architecture
PROJECT LEAD. Mona El Khafif, Andrew Mondschein, Eric Field, Zihao Zhang + Research Assistants

Ostenda Illuminata investigates how data-responsive urban architectures can function as tools of communicative action, increasing urban imageability and socio-political responses to urban environmental challenges. The project is designed as public space installation and is equipped with sensors to help communities understand environmental conditions that we can't see or sense with our own five senses. It collects these data and reveals them locally as well as on a live map produced in real time. A series of responsive prototypes were designed, fabricated, and tested. The project was further developed as a responsive ecology consisting of, like a forest, three different species and three different aggregated grounds, primarily responding to motion and sound. The sensor system aggregates data over the day which is then reflected in the physicality of the installation and the website. The artificial base for this installation is created through a script built on metaball logic (n-dimensional iso-surfaces that meld and repel one other when a defined proximity threshold is overcome), integrating a series of parameters. By defining the overall stalk height, LED ring diameters, and layout, the script can create endless variations of flora ecologies. This digital machine was coded to generate and test a series of prototype iterations. Fabrication begins in July 2020 and culminates in a Fall 2020 interactive installation.

Accompanying research expanded into a new three-year research project, "Networked Public Spaces (NPS)," which has also been funded

by UVA's Strategic Investment Fund. NPS investigates how data responsive urban architectures function as part of an ethical, humane, and accessible conceptualization of technology-embedded public space.



Material Epidemics: Health, Segregation, and the Built Environment | architecture, landscape architecture, law, urban and environmental planning

PROJECT LEAD. Jeana Ripple, Andrea Phillips Hansen + Research Assistants

The Urban Material Index project builds off ongoing Smart Environments dialogues, specifically "Open Source Risk Assessment," GIS, and grasshopper workshops, "Civic Hacking/Community Mapping," and "The Type V City." It utilizes original urban material pattern research, presenting building stock material data and correlative risks of eight cities to a broad audience through an interactive web-platform. The project completed research on material, health, and urban renewal in Charlottesville, and produced an article accepted for publication in *The Journal of Architectural Education* (September 2020).

☀️ **Development of an interactive material website production was delayed by COVID-19; it's slated for completion in 2020-21.**



Algorithmic Cultivation | architecture, landscape architecture

PROJECT LEAD. Brad Cantrell, Robin Dripps, Lucia Phinney, Emma Mendel + Research Assistants

Algorithmic Cultivation is a responsive landscape that designed and constructed the robotic armature, lighting system, and planters for an artificial landscape and ecology project. It was designed with prototypes, and is now documented in drawings. The project has developed the representations and scenarios for the maintenance of plants based on collected data sets of historical wind and weather data.



The Geosocial Image of the City | urban and environmental planning

PROJECT LEAD. Guoping Huang

The Geospatial Image of the City project developed a java code to extract photos that are geotagged and classified as “urban” from Flickr.com. A 3D digital surface model of Boston was created by using LIDAR data from the USGS website. By reproducing and overlaying the viewshed of each photo over the digital surface model, the exposure of each urban space on social media is now visualized and quantified. In addition to Flickr photos, social media data from TripAdvisor and Strava have been extracted and visualized by using similar web-scraping and spatial analysis techniques. Collectively, these visualizations represent a new geospatial image of the city of Boston pivoted around “shareability,” a major contrast to the city’s image of “legibility” in Kevin Lynch’s classic study.



Data Exchange 2020 | architecture, landscape architecture, law, urban and environmental planning

The data projects facilitated a deep investigation of questions raised during the data dialogues, and were conducted as teamwork between students and faculty. These conclude with the final Humanities Informatics symposium rescheduled to online in Fall 2020. The confirmed keynote speaker is Dietmar Offenhuber, Northeastern University, whose research focuses on the relationship between design, technology, and governance. The Smart Environments group finalized the exhibition design featuring the outcome of the data projects, as well as a documentation of the DATA dialogues. The projects range from physical objects to drawings and digital displays, and feature presentation and panel discussion with data projects’ contributors and external guests.



“SARCH Smart Environments”

The team is developing this new class that will be open to all students from the School of Architecture and other departments across Grounds.



Surveillance and Infrastructure

CO-LEADERS. Camilla Fojas, *Media Studies and American Studies*; and, Natasha Heller, *Religious Studies*

The Surveillance and Infrastructure research group of the Informatics Lab hosted two noted scholars in Fall 2019 with at least two events planned for Spring 2020 that were cancelled as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. David Nemer, UVA Department of Media Studies, presented his work to audiences from both the Surveillance and Infrastructure research group and the Mellon Global South Lab. Professor Nemer’s talk, “From Misinformation to Extremism: How WhatsApp Is Affording Radicalization in Brazil,” focused on his research on misinformation and radicalization in Brazil through the WhatsApp platform, particularly about how it has been deployed for political purposes. The group also invited Professor Daniel Asen, Rutgers University, to speak on “Crime, Security, and Citizenship: The Politics of Fingerprinting in China, 1920s-1940s.” He spoke about the process of introducing modern practices of fingerprint identification to China during the first few decades of the 20th century and how fingerprinting intersected with other surveillance techniques used during this time period, including the use of travel passes and identity documents during the Japanese occupation and the new national identity documents implemented by the Nationalist government. In Fall 2020, the group will present a panel with its major contributors in the rescheduled Humanities Informatics Lab’s “final showcase.” ■

Above, left to right
Camilla Fojas, Natasha Heller

PhD Public Humanities Lab Projects

2019–20

CORE MEMBERS. Matthew Slaats, *Architecture*; Madeline Zehnder, *English*; Neal Curtis, *English*; Mathilda Shepard, *Spanish, Italian & Portuguese*; Dipsikha Thakur, *English*; Dana Moyer, *Politics*; Jeff Carroll, *Philosophy*; Ciara Horne, *Systems Engineering*; and, Savanna Morrison, *Music*

1

Rotunda Planetarium

CO-INVESTIGATORS. Neal Curtis and Madeline Zehnder

The Rotunda Planetarium Project revisited Thomas Jefferson's inaugural vision for the UVA Rotunda, the architectural centerpiece of the University, as well as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. IHGC PhD students from the Department of English—Neal Curtis, Samuel Lemley, and Madeline Zehnder—conceived of, secured funding for, and produced the project. They received an impressive \$30,000 grant from the Jefferson Trust, an initiative of the University of Virginia Alumni Association, in addition to an IHGC sponsorship and funding from the Buckner W. Clay Endowment. On November 1, 2019, an

afternoon and evening symposium was held with speakers from both UVA and Harvard University, culminating in the unveiling of the 70-foot celestial map projected on the ceiling of the Dome Room. Through an array of digital projectors, the Rotunda's famous and historical Dome Room was transformed into a vast enlightenment planetarium during Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. A paired exhibition, "Rotunda Planetarium: Science and Learning in the University of Virginia's First Library," displayed books, instruments, specimens, and artifacts from the Rotunda's early history (see p. 12). ■

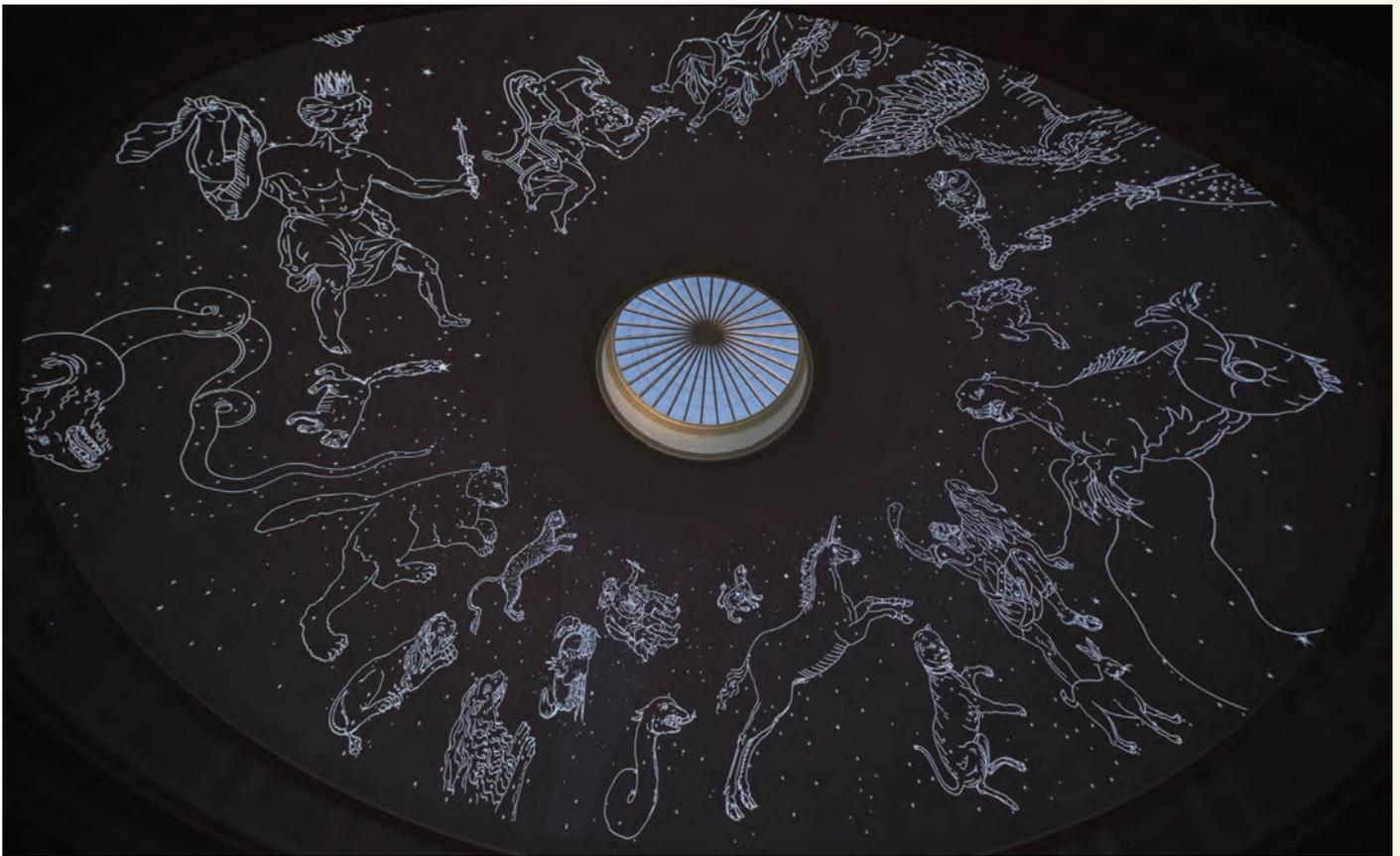
2

Books UnBound

CO-INVESTIGATORS. Mathilda Shepard and Dipsikha Thakur

The Books UnBound Working Group explores the reading practices that characterize our constantly-evolving relationship with print culture and digital media. The group examines the intersections between reading and action, where "action" is understood broadly to include activism, pedagogy, performance, and the formation of networks of care. Members also examine how communities—in Charlottesville

and beyond— have mobilized the production, consumption, and distribution of print materials to cope in times of crisis. To this end, the group launched a website that explores radical and free reading spaces through photo essays, interviews, blog posts, and videos—www.booksunbound.net. ■



Above
The Rotunda Planetarium Project revisited Thomas Jefferson's inaugural vision for the Rotunda, transforming the vaulted ceiling of the Dome Room into a 70-foot celestial map of the night sky through networked small computers running images from an array of digital projectors.

Opposite
Enlightened IHGC PhD students, Neal Curtis, Sam Lemley, and Madeleine Zehnder, curated and produced the Rotunda Planetarium.

3

Imagining Just Cities

CO-INVESTIGATORS. Ciara Horne, Savanna Morrison, and Matthew Slaats

Focusing on spaces of incarceration, local government, and neighborhoods, the group considered how new voices can be heard and more transparent/accountable processes designed in order to realize cities that are truly the production of their broader

communities. The research group delved into the opportunities that cities provide as structures for improving equity and enhancing inclusion both through physical and social systems. ■

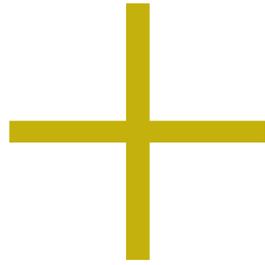
4

Lab in the Time of COVID-19

Several members of the PhD Public Humanities Lab have been involved in community-based efforts in Charlottesville to ensure that those who need help are able to receive it. Assisting with the creation of the social media #MutualAidCville, Lab members have been

involved in grocery deliveries for high-risk groups, non-profit efforts to ensure lower-income households have food and childcare, among other activities. The groups whose projects support this planned to move some Lab activities online during Summer 2020. ■

Global



Partnerships



South Africa Partnerships

The IHGC has established collaborative projects with two universities in South Africa, University of the Western Cape (Cape Town) and University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg). With UWC's Center for Humanities Research (CHR), our Institute is collaborating on a new two-year Mellon Lab on *Arts and Performance in the Global South*. Faculty from UVA's Drama and Music departments are leading this Lab along with directors of CHR's *Laboratory of Kinetic Objects* (LoKO), Jane Taylor and Premesh Lalu. The primary focus of the Lab is the arts of moving objects, and the shifting ground of kinesis and aesthesis with dramatic shifts in digital technology, AI, and robotics. Puppetry arts will be a major feature of this Lab as it explores questions of race, environmental crisis and the displacement of the human by technology. The Lab was formally launched in Fall 2019 with the UVA visit of Jane Taylor, UWC's Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Aesthetic Theory and Material Performance. As a build up to this Lab, in December 2018, drama and movement faculty, Marianne Kubik and Steve Warner, participated in the Barrydale community puppetry arts festival just



Top. The Barrydale Giant Puppet Parade, a large-scale annual public puppetry event held in the rural town of Barrydale, South Africa.

Middle. University of the Western Cape upper campus

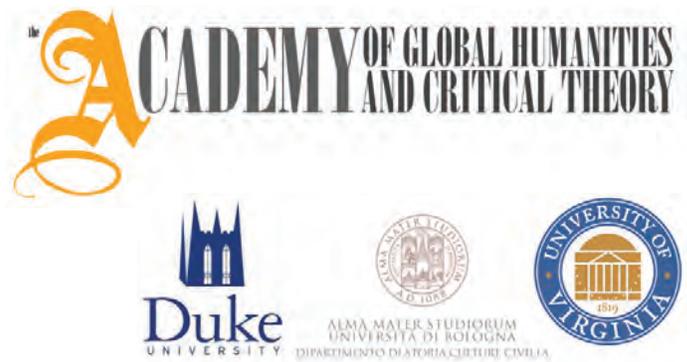
Bottom. The Laboratory of Kinetic Objects (LoKO) at the CHR hosted a colloquium on Subject/Object relations.

outside Cape Town coordinated by Jane Taylor. In July 2019, our music and drama faculty visited UWC for the launch of the next phase of LoKO with UVA and University of Toronto as partners.

The IHGC has partnered with University of the Witwatersrand on its Mellon-funded project on Oceanic Humanities for the Global South, led by Isabel Hofmeyr. Our Institute has partnered with University of the Witwatersrand on its Mellon-funded project on *Oceanic Humanities for the Global South*. This five-year project seeks to institute oceanic humanities as a field through graduate curriculum development and training, research production, building transnational global south teaching and research networks, and public humanities activities and platforms. The project is organized around three major clusters: Literature and Oceanography, Hydrocolonialisms, and Indian Ocean Energies. Our Mellon Global South Lab is a key partner in this initiative and together we have hosted workshops and faculty-student exchanges. In April 2018, a PhD student from Wits, Mapule Mohutasi, was in residence with us, and shared aspects of her project, *Black Aesthetic and the Deep Ocean: Archive or Rubbish Dump*, with fellows, faculty, and graduate students. She also participated in a graduate workshop convened by our *Environmental Humanities Collective*. Our collaboration will continue in the next academic year with a Fall 2020 seminar and reading group on “Indian Ocean Worlds and the Anthropocene” with the novelist Amitav Ghosh and Sunil Amrith, the Indian Ocean historian from Harvard. ■

Academy of Global Humanities and Critical Theory

The Academy of Global Humanities and Critical Theory is a research entity established in 2016 and jointly promoted by the University of Virginia, Duke University, and the University of Bologna. The Academy is predicated on the assumption that the humanities and the interpretative social sciences need a global perspective in order to break down the “methodological nationalism” that has dominated them in the past and to envisage new interpretative frameworks. Such an approach calls for a radical intermingling of diverse disciplines, traditions, and fields of critical thought from across the globe. At the heart of the Academy is a graduate Summer School in global humanities and critical theory that offers students from around the world courses, workshops, lectures, and symposia by outstanding faculty. The IHGC is UVA’s key facilitator of this



collaboration that includes the graduate summer school, faculty exchanges and collaborative workshops with Duke and Bologna. IHGC Director Debjani Ganguly and Associate Director Camilla Fojas are members of the advisory board of the Academy and are seminar faculty in its annual graduate summer school. Ganguly and Sarah Nuttall from Witwatersrand lead a project on “Rethinking the Human in the Humanities.” ■

Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes | CHCI

Established in 1988, the CHCI is a global professional body consisting of humanities centers, institutes, research libraries, and related organizations. The Consortium serves as a global arena for discussion of issues germane to cross-disciplinary work in the arts, humanities, and interpretive social sciences. As an international network, it cultivates new forms of multilateral collaboration and experimental models for research, pedagogy, and public engagement. While based in the United States, CHCI currently has a membership of 260 organizations and affiliates in 23 countries and 46 US states. It has regional partners across Africa, East Asia, Europe, Australia, and Latin America. The Consortium is governed by an advisory board of 24 distinguished scholars and directors of Humanities Institutes who steer the intellectual and institutional mission of the organization.

IHGC is an active member of the CHCI, and IHGC Director Ganguly is active member on the CHCI’s International Advisory Board and in many of its key initiatives. She is a member of several sub-committees of this Consortium, including the program committees of meetings/conferences in Dublin (June 2019) and New Delhi (December 2019). The CHCI Annual Meeting is an opportunity for members to network and build professional linkages, as also to explore new frontiers of research in the humanities and interpretive social sciences. ■

Humanitarianism in the Time of Corona

Debjani Ganguly, *Director of the Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures*, convened a Pavilion Seminar on 'Humanitarianism' for third- and fourth-year undergraduates in Spring 2020. Her students wrote blogs about their experience of the pandemic while attending the seminar. Their blogs feature in this section. Below, Ganguly narrates her experience of teaching this interdisciplinary seminar during the pandemic.

My experience of teaching a Pavilion seminar on Humanitarianism in the midst of the coronavirus crisis has been uncanny. While we discussed ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, the apartheid in South Africa, the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Syrian civil war, not to mention the global refugee crisis, our country was experiencing a humanitarian crisis on a scale that surpassed the casualties of its many wars combined.

Our syllabus was built around the escalation in genocidal violence, ethnic conflicts and the global war on terror as a result of the post-Cold War realignment of the world order. We explored the stupendous growth of the global humanitarian industry due to the magnitude of civilian carnage these conflicts have caused. The students also studied the impact of digital technologies that incessantly mediated sites of violence for witnessing publics around the world. The course offered interdisciplinary perspectives



on the urgency of thinking ‘Humanitarianism’ in our time by drawing on historical, literary, cinematic, anthropological, legal, and new media resources.

My students diligently absorbed the moral import of humanitarianism as a politics of precarious life. Humanitarianism, we read, was a moral economy centered on the figure of the human who suffered. Our readings were challenging enough. We explored the rise of humanitarian discourse during the Abolitionist era. We analyzed the work of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the 1951 Refugee Convention that created the UNHCR, and scores of humanitarian NGOs. We read about the harrowing life story of a refugee from South Sudan, and analyzed a ream of essays on life in refugee camps. We parsed concepts such as ‘state of exception,’ ‘bare life,’ and Ubuntu. We heard testimonies of apartheid victims on the website of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The students wrote essays on the Rohingya genocide and the Syrian civil war.

Little did we know how quickly our world would be engulfed by a global humanitarian crisis unleashed by a spec of RNA that looked like a ball of blue-gray wool with red spikes.

We were shaken out of our sober contemplation as daily images of devastatingly ill COVID-19 patients, terrified families, and overworked and under-protected healthcare workers, overwhelmed our screens. My students’ anguish when they realized that they do not exactly inhabit a nation-state with a moral economy attuned to public suffering was hard to witness. It was even more difficult to witness their struggle with dissolving safety nets. One student experienced a catastrophic loss of family income when her parents’ nail and haircutting salon shut down. She took up work in a neighborhood grocery store and coped with long hours that left her exhausted. Another lost both his grandmothers within a week. They lived in nursing homes. Yet another student, already compelled to be in a family setting with a history of violence, now experienced trauma of another kind. One student worked long hours in a pharmacy and lived in fear of the virus every day. Each confronted the reality of a bleak professional future.

Their courage and resilience humbled me. They logged in to my seminar week after week despite their fears, their grief, their anguish. They were determined to complete their assignments. In a disintegrating world, their education appeared to be the one thing they fiercely held on to.

I adapted the readings to help them understand the enormity of the pandemic. We explored histories of epidemiological crises such as the 1918 flu pandemic. We began to rethink notions of human autonomy and freedom, and the limits of the liberal idea of inviolable selfhood. We registered the impossibility of separating the biological from the social in a crisis such as this. We learned how the virus was a transboundary and quasi-natural figure, neither animate nor inanimate, and that viruses were the most abundant biological entities on the planet. We turned to insights by virologists who explained that viruses are part of our genetic and evolutionary history, that they are not enemies external to us. They only turn virulent when we disturb their natural habitats. We became ever more alert to the dangers of biologizing precarious humans, as seen in the history of eugenics and genocides.

Our weekly seminar sessions began with a half hour well-being round when we heard and comforted each other. We morphed, as it were, into a micro humanitarian crisis group. It was deeply moving to see my students emerge from this learning experience with a determination to build a more empathetic world. Many already volunteered at local health centers and humanitarian organizations. They shared their aspiration to pursue a vocation dedicated to the cause of the precarious and the vulnerable. The hope I experienced in hearing their resolve has given me the strength to face the long and uncertain journey ahead of us. I invited the students to write blogs about their experience of the pandemic. Their poignant reflections appear in the subsequent pages.

— Debjani Ganguly

Blog

Sasha Duckworth

I cancelled my flight to Paris on March 4th, two days before it was set to depart. I was in the middle of re-reading *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner. Kushner penned the play in response to the U.S.'s mishandling of the HIV/AIDS crisis, emphasizing how his characters' future health was directly tied to America's own. Like most people, however, in cancelling my flight I was focused on the endless flow of news, scrambling for insight from experts, and making arrangements in case the University shuttered its doors. It was hard to slow myself down enough to notice how my choice in literature fit so perfectly with the worsening state of the world. As I packed up my apartment, I thought about my flight, and how I was reminded image described at the end of the play:

"The plane leapt the tropopause, the safe air, and attained the outer rim, the ozone, which was ragged and torn, patches of it threadbare as old cheesecloth, and that was frightening."

Overnight, an entire industry arose to aid our global transition to social distancing. GrubHub, Amazon, Instacart, Brooklinen all promised that we would never have to put on pants again. I tapped through endless streams of online challenges—from doing 10 pushups to drinking shots on camera—on friends' Instagram stories. An army of lifestyle bloggers informed me of the many places I could still get flour to fuel my new baking obsession. I was invited to twin group chats: "Corona Optimism" and "Corona Pessimism." Online workout classes appeared *en masse*—possibly in response to new fears about our health (or at least a way to profit from those fears). Writers began to contemplate their bodies in different ways. "Now is the time to cultivate the art of Sitzfleisch," wrote Alexandra Schwartz in the *New Yorker*. "Literally 'sitting meat', this excellent German term indicates both the material that one sits with—the tush, booty, rump, whatever—and the ability to remain seated upon it for periods of great duration." I started getting targeted ads for butt cushions.

Following the first week of online classes, I began to think about the ways in which we are changing as our minds increasingly inhabit online space. Although we physically remain inside, we still move freely, visiting friends' homes and commuting to work, virtually. I have spoken to my family living in Ukraine more in the past 3 weeks of quarantine than I have in the past 3 years. Zoom has transformed us into phantoms, allowing our apparitions to occupy distant spaces for hours at a time. How does this enforced dualism affect our sense of self? The dissonance between my mental state and my physical existence exhausts me. In the same vein, the dissonance between my life and personal inconvenience, and the horror stories being told on TV about hospitalization and widespread economic collapse reminds me of how helpless I am.

I believed that quarantine would resemble childhood. I imagined I would spend long, aimless hours occupied by boredom. I fantasized that I had finally obtained enough free time to explore hidden passions and embark on new projects. In reality, I found the similarity to childhood unsettling. As a child, the home was a place meant to be filled with thoughts, with every space and object taking on a new form or meaning each day. As an adult, I find my creative abilities to be more limited. The time I spend staring into the void (or my phone) tends to be obsessive rather than imaginative. My days are no longer slow; I do not wait for my parents to provide me food or entertainment, I must do everything for myself. The bored hours I spend in quarantine feel nothing like the bored hours I spent as a child—though I am not productive, I am constantly distracted.

Every so often, I will dip out of the news cycle, just long enough to finish an urgent assignment or complete a reading, and return to find the narrative even more weary than before. Enthusiastic bread recipes are replaced by reflections on empty cities, dying industries, and streets filled with sirens. The messages populating "Corona Pessimism," sent in by different people from across the U.S., all begin to describe the same sense of lost control. During conversations with friends, I frequently reference a psychologist's think-piece on how tele-therapy can only reveal the strangeness of life. More and more often, I see obituaries. I anticipate that these heartfelt announcements will become more lifeless as time goes on, shortened to the objective facts of people's existence as we become worn down by grief.

To live in quarantine is to live in a constant state of self-denial. Human impulses must be repressed, the natural desire for connection contradicts the natural desire for survival. When I watch Netflix, I find myself perplexed when I see people on screen casually meeting on the street, going to parties, hugging, or kissing. In addition to self-denial, quarantine requires a constant focus on the present. Social distancing becomes manageable if we do not think of the past, the future, or the possibilities of a normal world. It is a dark sort of mindfulness, necessary for the protection of human life, rather than to improve focus and achieve gratitude.

The tension between our self-imposed unfreedom and the body's mental and physical fragility has become overwhelming at times. I have since stopped reading New Yorker essays and watching cable news, vowing only to read the play I took with me when I moved out of my apartment. To me, it seems that Tony Kushner, flying in a plane high above the Earth's atmosphere, accurately describes the stakes of our current interconnected condition:

"Souls were rising, from the earth far below, souls of the dead... like skydivers in reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling and spinning. And the souls of these departed joined hands, clasped ankles, and formed a web, a great net of souls, and the souls were three-atom oxygen molecules, of the stuff of ozone, and the outer rim absorbed them, and was repaired."

Consideration for our fellow human being is not simply a technique for survival, it is a precondition for healing.

I have slowly started to accept the destruction. It is all a part of the necessary experience to build a better, more humanitarian future. Nothing is lost forever. Kushner writes, "In this world, there's a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind, and dreaming ahead." That's what I would like to believe. ■

Blog

Seth Gulas

I'm constantly reminded of Ruth Kluger's book *Still Alive*. From her time growing up in the Third Reich and in various concentration camps and ghettos, she learned that children adapted much better to the societal shock that was the Nazi regime. The adults who had known a sense of normalcy were driven insane by their attempts to rationalize everything while the children were able to make sense of the new chaos because they only knew the chaos. My generation is more adept at living through 'extraordinary' conditions because we have known several of these major events: 9/11, 2008 Market Crash, the elections of Obama and Trump, the normalization of mass shootings, among other things. Now we are living through a global pandemic. This is not my attempt to rationalize the pandemic, but rather write out how the chaos I have been used to for all my life is continuing, just in a different form.



Getting an email from UVA while on the beach in Florida on March 11 was a moment we had been anticipating, but anticipation did not prepare us for how much it would impact us. Our initial reaction to hearing other schools were extending spring break was to plan to take our time on our trip home and spend time in Charleston and Savannah, maybe other places. As the days went on and we started packing to drive back to Virginia, the mood had drastically shifted to "we have to get home immediately." After a 13-hour drive from Melbourne Beach, FL to Charlottesville, VA, my apartment-mates and I hastily packed up the place I had called home for two years not knowing what the future would hold.

March 19, 2020

I made my first trip to the grocery stores to stock up on things that I would need for the foreseeable future. The people who are out working and are making sure this world still functions, from health professionals to grocery store clerks and others in typically 'looked down upon' occupations, are the real heroes of all of this. While I was out, I was confronted three times and asked why I was out and about by older folks. They questioned why I was out putting the elderly at risk, one even saying, "It's because of the kids my age that the virus has killed so many." Less than 10 minutes later, that

same woman argued with the cashier about how much toilet paper she could purchase. It was in that moment, that I realized this virus was going to bring out the worst in many people.



What does 'normal' mean? Whatever our conception of normal was before all of this, I know we won't return to that. We are going to have to find a new normal, and that is going to take time. We will have to find normal at home, and then again once everything is open.

March 19, 2020

I've realized that even though I developed a plan to get healthier, that should not be my top priority. I can't be putting these grandiose expectations on myself in this pandemic. This extends to schoolwork too, my main priority should just be finding ways to get by, not on maximizing productivity because it will just cause more stress.



I'm tired. I'm tired of people saying they are doing well, and that their life is good. If on the off chance it is, then congratulations, but please give me the liberty to say that I am not okay. I do not enjoy this. Describing this time as 'unprecedented,' 'extraordinary,' or using other euphemisms is fine and dandy for some time, but let's just call it what it is. A profanity.

April 18, 2020

Last month felt like a whole year in itself, but this month has raced by. All of a sudden, the end of the semester is approaching and all the work that comes with it is just a dark cloud looming overhead, like a constant burden at the back of my head. With that being said, the mere fact that I only really have to worry about schoolwork is something that I am extremely grateful for.



This sense of loneliness is overwhelming. In light of all the solidarity that is present, I have to give myself time to acknowledge the ways in which we are alone in this. I say this knowing full well that staying at home and social distancing is for our benefit. This virus has made prisoners out of all of us. We are prisoners in our own heads, in our own beds, in our own homes. Prisoners to our thoughts and feelings. I spend all this time in my own head. When I lay my head to rest at night, I do not feel connected to the world outside, I feel isolated.

April 24, 2020

Going on drives has always been a great way for me to clear my head. I just came back from a three-hour drive to nowhere. I had no plan, no route, no expectations. The feeling of having no destination is liberating in a way; it shows that you don't have to have a plan. Just take things turn by turn, day by day.



The 'normalcy' I have found in this time is exactly why I have nothing much to write about in terms of things that happen. I wake up around 9am to go to my kitchen and pour myself a cup of coffee. I sit in front of my laptop and shuffle back and forth between work and procrastination. After lunch, I go on a run and then do either yoga or a workout or both. After showering my parents arrive home from work and we make dinner. Then I get back to work for the night until I decide enough is enough, then I watch Netflix until I fall asleep. This is my daily routine, for the most part. It has been for the past 42 days, and it will be for at least another 44. ■

. **normal** . tired .
. extraordinary .
. **profanity** .
. **loneliness** .
. prisoner . **isolated** .
. **normalcy** . routine .

Blog

Nisha Dabhi

At first, I found quarantine frustrating. Really frustrating. Initially, it took so much energy to just get up. Having so much time to fill was daunting. I did not really do much of my schoolwork, because every time I would try, I would literally feel nauseous, sick to the pit of my stomach. Looking at schoolwork would get me upset that we were living in this pandemic world—a world where everything I've been working for the past four years has been stripped bare. My final goodbyes. My final memories of undergraduate experience, laughing with friends. My job at J Crew. My graduation. It seemed that everything had been just taken away—just like that. This was the semester I was supposed to remember as the best time of my life. All gone.

Yet, experiencing this quarantine has really opened my eyes. The amount of miscommunication circulated by our leaders is really concerning. We see them stand on podiums, almost daily, giving false information about medications, preventive measures, and vaccinations. Why are people, who aren't health professionals, even authorized to speak like this? Doctors have years and years of training, yet people who have no idea about basic biology are trying to tell the public about what could work? Who made them God?

You notice how this (false) information is digested by the public: a population already vulnerable, desperate and frustrated. I volunteer as an EMT and several times this has been apparent. Patients with fevers tell me they "don't believe in corona." Some resist wearing a mask despite their fevers. People do not see the severity of this virus. My dad, a physician, told me long before corona, that if his patients aren't following his medical advice, it is probably because he hasn't communicated clearly enough the information. We need leaders that communicate clearly, not leaders who use divisive language aimed at shifting the blame to others.

The amount of miscommunication—and the lack of initiative to try and make everyone understand—is honestly the most frustrating part of this. A few weeks ago, a patient with all the symptoms of the virus, who was a non-native speaker of English told us via her translator friend—after much prompting—that she had been tested for the virus, but had been discharged from the hospital prior to

getting her test results. I was furious to hear this, more furious than I have ever been in my life. Did she know she could have the virus and could be spreading it to us as EMS, but also to the hospital staff? Did she know going to the hospital was itself risky, since they had confirmed cases? I was livid. I felt adrenaline pumping through my bloodstream, wondering what would happen if I got the virus. What if I gave it to my parents? What if I couldn't do my volunteering work anymore?

Days later, I had a realization that what I had witnessed was part of a systematic problem—people genuinely don't get how serious this pandemic is. And, even those who do, often don't have access to the right information—especially those who are non-native English speakers, or are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Whenever I go to the grocery store, I am appalled by the number of people wearing masks incorrectly. What is the point of wearing a mask if you aren't trying to create a seal between the mask and your face? On social media I see the same with gloves. There's a misconception that wearing gloves immediately gives you immunity—like wearing gloves is the cure. I remember being frustrated when seeing a picture on Facebook of a person in a subway eating French Fries while wearing gloves—she was touching the fries with her gloves and then putting them into her mouth. Does she realize that everything that she touches—including the virus—is now going to find a way into her mouth?

Someone told me about a "study" (of around 30 or so people) which claimed smoking helps corona patients. I remember thinking (sarcastically), "Sure, because smoking would kill you before the virus!" Yet I was both angry and upset. Angry because people take these studies seriously, when they are clearly not. Upset, because this study made me think of my grandpa.

My grandpa (Dada) died of COVID-19 on April 16th. He was in a nursing home in New Jersey, had many predispositions (he had a heart attack, stroke, and was a smoker for years). My family was devastated, especially since my Dada had lived with us throughout my childhood. It was a horrible situation. My dad saw

my Dada hours before he died, so he is currently quarantined in our basement. My grandma, who saw my Dada die before her own eyes, has to stay in that same room at the nursing home where she saw that happen—she can't leave anytime soon, because she is still positive for COVID-19. My father couldn't carry out the funeral rites rituals for my Dada (he is their only son). And, my sister, my mom, and I were all denied a final chance to say proper goodbye. The last time I saw him was over FaceTime two days before he died, where he was attached to a non-rebreather, just waving his hands, and not really talking. Not really acting like the Dada I had seen during Thanksgiving, when he called me "Nisha the Great" and asked if I had fulfilled my long-time dream of becoming a doctor ("Nisha, are you doctor yet?"). Every time I talked to him, he only wanted to see me happy—he often told me he would stay on this Earth at least until I was a doctor.

His death really reminded me of something greater, though: some people have lived in a "pandemic" their whole lives. Some people never get to say goodbye to their loved ones. Others may never have a graduation or "the best semester of their lives" because they cannot afford to go to college. This pandemic has given me perspective—reading the awful stories from around the world—has, in a way, made me more grateful for the life I have. I have a house large enough where I can quarantine without feeling confined. I have a computer to complete my degree online. I live with a loving mother, father, and sister, and though we sometimes irritate one another, I do not have to worry about any kind of abuse. I still have food on my table. I know many who are not so fortunate. I want to express how thankful and blessed I am, to have these things in my life. Missing those things that give my life meaning—friends, hugging my neighbors, eating out—make me realize how meaningful the small things are. I know now that each laugh matters, and you never know when something might be taken from you. **And so, to future Nisha looking back at this when it's over, remember to be more grateful for all the things in life. You never know when your "last" really is. ■**

Blog

Madison Floyd

April 1, 2020

I wish someone would tell me this whole experience is an April fool's joke, and we can go back to normal. I miss my friends. I miss the bars. I miss being social. I miss the gym. I miss walking to class. I miss going shopping. I miss not being scared to leave my house. I miss when my hands weren't cracked from washing them so much. A month ago, today we were about to start spring break. We were so excited for the traveling and the nice weather that was headed our way. We were excited for the parties during the day out on the lawns of the frat houses and for sun tanning on the lawn in front of the rotunda. We had no idea that our life was going to change so dramatically.

April 5, 2020

Very hard day today. The rescue squad (where I volunteer) was a place I used to love to be. All my friends were there. Everyone was always high-energy, and you could always hear laughter. That hasn't been the case in weeks, and I'm so sad every time I go in. We used to buy food for ourselves from grocery stores and cook for our crews every shift (with money provided by our station). Once COVID hit, the city didn't want us going into grocery stores anymore and risking contaminating the public. That was okay, and for a few weeks the city provided really good catered food: Jimmy Johns, Chipotle, Roots, pizza, etc. We were always full, and it was a nice gesture that made things seem kind of okay again. Since our squad is run entirely by volunteers, we don't get paid, and we definitely don't get hazard pay for working during the pandemic. This food was essentially our only form of payment. Now, however, we get food from a small non-profit that provides to people during natural disasters. We get a piece of fruit, ½ a cup of veggies, and about a cup of rice with some beans or a sprinkle of beef on top. It is pathetic. I ate three and was still hungry. Our station is "trying to find a solution" but is getting frustrated with us for ordering our own food in the meantime. Apparently, the other city groups are upset that we were getting fed and no one else was. Unbelievable! We are the busiest volunteer agency in the nation. The city would crumble without our 80+ volunteers, who run thousands of calls a year. There's no way



COVID-19's social-distancing signage replaced graduating students on the Lawn during the cancelled Graduation Weekend 2020.

the career agencies would be able to handle the load. And that is okay because we love what we do, but for us to not even be fed is absolutely ridiculous.

This is just a small example of the freedoms and small things that have been taken away. Morale is extremely low, and we all feel like alone, under a leadership board making blind decisions. The only thing we all talk about anymore is how miserable we are and how much everything sucks. Even those who are supposed to be the excited, untouchable, bubbly personalities are hitting a low point.

I guess this is what it is like to be an essential worker

April 7, 2020

Even sadder day today. Woke to a phone call; the infection control officer from the rescue squad calling to inform me that one of my patients from Monday tested COVID positive. The patient had a psychiatric problem and had refusing to answer any of my questions. I couldn't have known that she had COVID symptoms. I was not wearing the appropriate PPE to shield myself when I met her. Had she told me she was had a cough or shortness of breath, I would have taken more care to protect myself.

I am so mad and frustrated. I'm trying to tell myself that it isn't her fault that she refused to comply with my questions, but I also feel angry at how oblivious she was to the risk she exposed me to. I have to check my temperature twice a day for the next two weeks to make sure I didn't pick up the virus. I feel so vulnerable and frustrated. Why do I even do this? I don't even get paid. I barely get fed. Nothing seems worth it.

I think mostly about my boyfriend, who began living with me over spring break after his school shut down the dorms. He is a diabetic. The virus will hurt him much more than it will hurt me. Part of me thinks I should tell him about my exposure. The other part doesn't want him to live with the same anxiety I am living with right now, the constant fear and hyperawareness of any possible symptoms.

I guess *this* is what it's like to be essential.

April 13, 2020

Billy (my boyfriend) and I oscillate between being sad and comforting each other. I cried for a while after coming home from rescue the other night. I cried for the happy souls that have been dampened, the fear that has been instilled in us, the depression that has blanketed our lives, the boredom that constantly consumes us. I cried for the memories we are losing every single day that we could be making if this stupid, terrible, ugly disease didn't ravage our world. And Billy hugged me while I cried and told me he wished he could make it better. We both knew he couldn't.

Today Billy cried. He cried because he just wanted to do something. He didn't care what. His classes are a joke. He doesn't have a job. Most of his belongings are still in his dorm, being held hostage until all of this is over. He drove to Barnes & Noble, hoping there was some way they were still open so he could browse some books, read the summaries on the back to pass some time. They were closed. He tried to order some books from Amazon. They are prioritizing essential items; his books wouldn't arrive for two weeks. "We can't even read." He cried for the life that he feels that he is wasting. He cried for feeling useless. He cried for being helpless. I hugged him and told him I wish I could make it better. We both knew I couldn't.

April 15, 2020

After breakfast I find myself in the same monotony of not knowing what to do with myself the rest of the day. I am so incredibly swamped with work as the final days of classes approach, but I find it hard to make myself do anything productive. What is the point? I don't even have graduation to look forward to.

I spent some time outside yesterday, which was great. I did my workouts on a hill across from my apartment, and it was nice to see new faces and hear voices, even if they weren't talking to me. The time passes so quickly that I was almost late to my class. Good thing all I had to do was long onto my computer...

I definitely want to get the most I can out of my classes right now, but I struggle to stay engaged. It just seems pointless right now. Every day I see new estimates of how long this quarantine will need to last. This morning I saw an estimate from Harvard that we may have to live our lives in a state of intermittent quarantine through 2022. I can't do that. I can't. Even two (TWO!!) more months of this seems miserable and unachievable. At least right now I have school to distract me. I don't know what I will do when that's over. I can't decide if I think it'll be better or worse, honestly.

April 16, 2020

Today I went to work in the pharmacy. It mimicked my experiences at the rescue squad. My usually chipper, quick to joke, and fun to be around colleagues are all affected by this pandemic. Though we are physically healthy, everyone's mental health has been affected. I told my manager (a pharmacist) that I was writing this blog for an assignment, and that it's really helping me to transcribe my feelings. She joked that she should be journaling too, but that by the evening she is too drunk to write. I chuckled, but she was serious. I felt uncomfortable and didn't know what to say. I guess she is feeling the depressing pressure of being essential too.

I long for things to be normal again. June 10th feels ages away, and I hate to think that I am just wasting my days between now and then. I also have a sombre feeling that June 10th won't be the end of all of this. That date is kind of funny to me. What makes June 9th different than the 10th? I hope the virus knows that it needs to leave by then.

April 17, 2020

A month ago, today we got the email telling us that final exercises (graduation) would be cancelled. I think we all cried that day. I cried that night, and I sobbed the next morning. I asked my mom to tell our family so they could cancel their travel arrangements. I ignored all of the sympathy texts on my phone, and I cried.

To me, graduation was what made everything worth it. All of the hard days, the long nights, the weeks of working 30+ hours on top of my full-time classes; all of that was going to be worth it because I had a beautiful, exciting, pride-filled graduation to look forward to. That was going to be a moment of transition where I left behind my days of working so hard for grades, beating myself up for not doing well on assignments, and building my future. It was supposed to be an amazing weekend full of celebration surrounded by everyone I loved most. I was excited to close my college career and transition to working, putting my degree to use, and blossoming in the real world.

Instead, my classes will end. I will take my finals in my apartment. There will be no clapping for the professors in the big lecture halls or goodbye hugs to my classmates whom I may never see again. There will be no happy, bittersweet tears. Then I will wake up the next day and do nothing. Everything will look the same, feel the same, and be the same. The job market is frozen, so I have no new job to look forward to. I will continue working in the same place as I did before I finished my degree. My graduation cap and gown will continue to collect dust in my closet. But it will all be over, just like that.

A month from yesterday, May 16, was the day I was supposed to walk across the stage. My heart hurts.

April 20, 2020

I spent some time in the woods this weekend. It was a lot of fun, and it was nice to have an activity to fill my time with.

The real significance of the trip came at night, when I looked into the sky. Stars have always been very important to me. I feel like that is where my deceased loved ones reside, so when I tipped my head back and saw more stars than ever before, I was blown away. There were thousands, all signs that something exists beyond us, and all reminding me how absolutely tiny I am. It was beautiful.

I couldn't help but think that this was the same sky that our founding fathers looked at, and the Romans before that. This was what the cavemen and the dinosaurs saw. It reminded me how short our time is on this planet and how much everything around us is always changing, destined for an end at some unforeseen point in time. I don't think that this is our end, but if it is, we wouldn't have any way to know it.

April 25, 2020

I am thankful for my amazing professor who gave us this opportunity to express our thoughts and emotions. I am sad, however, that this blog does not have a happy ending. It has no ending, really. I am still living in the middle of this depressing, uncertain time. I have no conclusion or excitement to end with. I will wake up tomorrow and do the same things I've been doing the last 30 days. I will continue to mourn the loss of my last year at UVA. I will mourn the loss of my time with my friends, and I will mourn the daily sense of comfort and excitement I have lost, only to be replaced by anxiety and emptiness. I will mourn the fear every morning that I will wake up and begin experiencing symptoms of the disease.

The stay-at-home order has a month and a half left, and even then, there are many sources predicting that this world will not return to normal for years. I hate it. The worst part is how helpless I feel. I cannot get a new job; I cannot spend time with my friends; I cannot live my life.

I hope that this blog may resonate with someone else, finding a piece of themselves in the emotions I have been battling through this time. More than anything, I hope that we may return to normal sometime soon. I will never get back these days, weeks, months that Corona has taken from me. If I were to die today or next week, I would die feeling that my final months here were absolutely wasted. I'll never forget this feeling, and I hope I soon get to combat it with a newfound excitement and appreciation for the time spent doing things with other people, outside, in public, crowded, sweaty spaces.

I miss my life. ■

Blog

Madeleine Wallach

The hardest part has been coming to terms with the idea of time. The idea of time seems to have changed in these past few months. In the beginning of March had anyone asked me about my plans for the rest of the semester, I would have replied with a bright smile and a remark about having all the time in the world to spend with my friends. Now, I would probably reply with a slightly dimmer countenance: all I have now is time.

In your last semester, you feel infinite. The world is at your fingertips. Spring semester of your fourth year is all about checking those last little boxes on your "120 Things to Do Before We Graduate" list and spending time with your best friends while you all live close by. You are gearing up for your grand entrance into the real world by packing as many college memories into the gap between spring break and walking the lawn as you can. These were going to be our golden days.

And then they weren't.

It's been odd to adjust to this new reality. We are left with only the dreams of what should have been. We fall into this blank monotony of hours, broken up by zoom calls and whatever else we can come up with to take our mind off the bleak reality we find ourselves in. Homework in a way becomes an outlet for our creativity and for our frustration. For once in our lives, it is a welcome distraction.

COVID makes you think about how much we put off when we think we have more time. I find myself trying to take a step back and appreciate what was. Andy Bernard from 'The Office' said it best: "I wish there was a way to know you're in 'the good old days', before you've actually left them." When I stood on the edge of the Coupes stone wall swaying to the music of my friend's band that last Tuesday before spring break, I had no idea that would be the last time. I skipped the Thursday classes before spring break to catch a flight to California with my roommates. I didn't know that I had just skipped my last in person class of my undergraduate life. Maybe I wouldn't have scheduled the flight that day if I had known.

Rumors were growing about the possibility of online classes as we packed our bags for spring break. The idea seemed glorious! Being



“Pledge of Social-Distancing” signage invokes UVA’s venerable Honor System, imploring visitors to the Lawn to pledge to keep themselves and others safe.

able to spend all day hanging out with my friends while watching pre-recorded lectures when I felt like it. Every student’s dream: college life without the classes. I was sitting on a little reclining chair in the lobby of the Maya Hotel waiting for an Uber to LAX when we all received President Ryan’s email.

There was a moment of pure bliss, followed by the shattering realization of what this actually meant. The next few weeks passed with one of my roommates and I locked away in our Charlottesville apartment clinging to the hope of graduation. The promised April decision date came sooner than we hoped, as did the accompanying tears and numbness. That night, in an apparent stand of Wahoo solidarity and in direct defiance to the social distancing orders, many of the remaining fourth years flocked to the steps of our mother Rotunda. Through the tears we choked out a heartfelt rendition of the Good Ole Song, all while being watched over by Ambassadors who didn’t have the heart to tell us to leave. It was a desperate grasp at a sense of normalcy.

In the coming weeks, I found myself shuffling into a new normal: if this was to be my life for the foreseeable future I might as well get used to it. I have my two horses in Charlottesville so escaping to the barn everyday was glorious. I figured I might as well pick up some new habits while I had the time, so my roommate and I set about learning to skateboard. We are not very good, but it gets us out of the apartment. We take nice long walks around Charlottesville every day. Until mid-April, we would spend a few hours every day playing field hockey or simply sitting and talking at Mad Bowl (a nickname for a field near grounds). That ended when

the police posted signs condemning the use of Mad Bowl as an Honor Code violation. The long arms of the Honor Code still strike fear into many a Hoo during these uncertain times. So, our walks became longer to make up for the loss of our field.

We have been cheated out of one of the most important experiences of our lives—our graduation—by something we can’t control. It isn’t fair, but it’s what we got. I’m one of the lucky ones, I’m able to stay in my Charlottesville apartment where I have decent wi-fi and a roommate to keep me company. As we near our “graduation,” we find ourselves being tossed out unceremoniously into a world that doesn’t seem to have a place for us right now. There are no jobs eager to hire us, no grand travel plans to be made. We are now back in the arms of parents who had most likely hoped we had fled the coop. And so, we will have to bow our heads and power on in the way that only UVA could have taught us.

When this is all said and done, things will be different. “Normal” will be different, if only in that people will be nicer. The worst of times bring out the best in people. There will be a new sense of appreciation for the little things that are often taken for granted, such as a hug or a drink out at a bar with friends. Times like this push all of us to the limits of our understanding and how we decide to move forward will be what defines us.

For the heartbroken Hoos, there is a sense of relief in that we will all be back together in either October or May to walk the lawn together. At least we all have our memories of UVA to hold on to and to keep us grounded as we explore this new terrain. UVA has taught us the importance of being able to adapt to what is set in front of us and how to handle ourselves with dignity in the face of adversity. To my fellow Hoos, I expect it will be the most joyous of reunions if we do indeed get to meet in May 2021. ■

Blog

Luke Fischer

Each day, it becomes more and more evident how lasting the effects of the pandemic crisis are going to be. At first, there was a lot of confusion and misinformation; frankly, no one knew how fast this would spread, how extreme the measures of curtailing exposure we would need to take would be, and how much time in isolation would need to pass before we might put this pandemic behind us. The last part is still uncertain. No one really knows how long it will take for things to improve—for life to go back to normal. There are rumors that the number of cases will peak in the US in the next month (I'm writing this in April). Some say two months. Some think that we will be socially distancing through the fall.

There is still so much conjecture and long-term projection because things are getting worse by the day. As I'm writing this, the most updated count is 999,695 coronavirus cases in the world. That means that the world will hit 1 million cases by tonight. This includes 51,314 deaths. The United States, to everyone's astonishment, has the largest number of COVID cases and deaths in the world—surpassing Italy and China which were originally the countries hit the hardest.

New Jersey is the state with the second-highest number cases, after New York. I'm here, but again it doesn't feel much different. In the seventeen days that I've been home, I've only left the house four times, each to walk Sunny at a park, which remains open. Basically, we are living in a state of occupation right now. Everyone is advised to stay inside their homes and only leave for essential purposes, like grocery shopping and medical visits. Most people are self-treating non-urgent medical issues where they can because everyone is afraid of contracting the virus if they go to the hospital or doctor's offices. Personally, I'm insulated from what's going on and feel blessed I'm really only mildly inconvenienced by the pandemic lockdown. But this is not to say that I'm not cognizant and hyper-aware of the destruction that this virus has caused worldwide. Obviously, my life has been put on pause, and some really important milestones have been disrupted—including my college graduation. But the repercussions that people across the world are facing are so grave that I feel ashamed to complain about my experience.

In Peru, 72% of the population works in the informal, day labor sector. With the country on lockdown like the rest of the world, a vast majority of the population that relies on daily wages to feed themselves and their families are facing massive food insecurity. People are starving to death because they cannot earn money to buy food and water. As I understand it, in India 40% of the population works in the informal sector, which employs most of the daily wage workers who have no safety net. Due to social distancing guidelines and the lockdowns placed on this country of 1.3 billion, these people are no longer employed. To add insult to injury, workers are forced to walk thousands of miles to their native villages because public transportation is not an option. There is a large middle class in India, about 500 million, if I'm not mistaken, who can isolate themselves and their families with some degree of safety. This proves that social distancing is a *privilege*. So many people throughout the world don't have homes large enough or homes at all to be able to isolate themselves from society. That means that the most destitute will be hit the hardest by this virus.

*...social distancing is a privilege.
So many people throughout the
world don't have homes large
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to isolate themselves from society.*

I received a *Washington Post* notification on my phone the other day that read: "Coronavirus kills its first democracy." Hungary's PM Viktor Orban eliminated the country's checks and balances with a bill that passed through Parliament providing him sweeping emergency powers, indefinitely. For me, this added a completely new dimension to the pandemic. I really only considered it to be a global public health issue, not a political issue. But leaders across the globe can and are using this crisis as a means to seize more power. This, I believe, is scarier than the virus itself.

On top of this, the US and world economies are failing because of business closures. Businesses not making profit can't afford to pay their employees, and whilst Congress has passed a bill that can inject some money into the economy and help those below a certain income level. But this is only a temporary measure and will not protect large sections of the population from destitution in the long run.

I chose denial at the beginning of all of this, but now I'm going to choose to educate myself instead because I recognize that we are living in historic times...

What's so unique about all of this is that we really can't do anything to stop it except to isolate from each other to stop the spread. There's no strategic or tactical solution, like we might have seen in response to other crises, because now we're battling against nature, not another country or territory.

I feel like there are only two ways to handle the circumstances that we find ourselves in: to live in a state of denial, ignoring everything outside the walls of our homes; or to try to learn as much as we can about what we are going through and how the human race has endured similar crises throughout history. I chose denial at the beginning of all of this, but now I'm going to choose to educate myself instead because I recognize that we are living in historic times—even though I really wish we weren't.

I am a strong believer in human resilience. I hold out hope that like after every period of crisis, people will come together after COVID-19. The Great Depression resulted in families turning toward each other and finding meaning in simplicity. And didn't the Black Plague drive Europe out of the Dark Ages and into the Renaissance? Maybe this will veer our generation away from what seems like deep-rooted materialism. Maybe the people of this age will be reminded of the value and fragility of life. Maybe it won't do anything at all. Either way, right now we're in the thick of it, and it's going to take much more time and much more struggle to find the silver lining in all of this madness. ■

Blog

Amy Luu

The coronavirus pandemic has really made the world take a 180 degree turn. Adjusting to the 'new normal' that we are living in right now has definitely been a difficult process for me. Weekend outings with my friends have turned into binge watching Netflix with my dog. Walking from class to class has turned into moving between my room, kitchen, and living room to attend Zoom classes. Working 15-20 hours a week at Harris Teeter has turned into 25-30 long hours while wearing a hot mask and sweaty gloves. These 'problems' I'm experiencing are so miniscule compared to the larger picture. I am very grateful that these are the only issues I'm dealing with right now. I can't begin to imagine the pain and suffering of COVID-19 patients and their families. However, while my 'problems' aren't as big as others' are, they are still present and it is important to recognize them.

I found out classes were moving online while I was at home for Spring Break. My mom tried to convince me to stay at home, however, I knew that it would be in my best interest to go back to Charlottesville so that I could still work and also focus on my school work. As a third year, I have become accustomed to living on my own and doing my school work without the distracting presence of family. When I returned to Charlottesville, I thought that the adjustment to online classes wouldn't be so bad. I thought that everything in my life would remain the same apart from taking classes online. Clearly, I was very wrong about this. Harris Teeter began adjusting its store hours due to the coronavirus and I could no longer send my dog to the dog sitter on the days I had classes. This began to take a toll on me because my hours were affected and I was constantly distracted by my dog, Eve, while I was home and trying to study. All Eve wanted to do was play and snuggle because I was home 24/7. She didn't understand why I wasn't playing and her behavior changed, which added to my stress. At this time, I really appreciated my parents, especially my mom, because I realized having a puppy is a bit like having a baby. I



A sign of the times, masks became 2020's most desirable work aid and office supply.

honestly don't know how my parents managed to take care of two babies while still working. Eve wanted constant attention and it was difficult to find balance between school, work, and her.

To make matters worse, I found out that my mom was no longer working and she was unable to get unemployment money. This was especially concerning because my mom is the head of the household. I began to pick up extra shifts when I could so I could help out my mom in any little way possible. My mom is usually the

...I found out that my mom was no longer working and she was unable to get unemployment money.

strongest person I know; she always seems to have everything together and she always has a game plan. However, this time she had no idea what to do. Seeing her become worried and not being able to do much to help her, really hurt and saddened me. This was when I really started to see how serious this whole pandemic was. With all of this stress, I began to lose motivation to do my school work. Paying attention and engaging with classes became more difficult because I was so tired from working and tending to my dog in between studying. I constantly felt like I had no time to do anything anymore because I was either working, on Zoom for classes, or giving my dog attention so she would leave me alone during those classes. Usually these three things are separated for me. I used to not work on the days I had the majority of my classes. I used to do homework in between my classes. And I used to have designated times to do things with my dog. Now all of these are meshed together, and on some days, I feel I'm going slightly insane.

Because I cannot get school work done during the day anymore, I have begun staying up late at night to finish assignments. This has been hard because I'd fall asleep in the middle of doing an assignment. I was sure I wasn't submitting my best work. But on most evenings, I was too tired to care about the quality. Life became a matter of daily survival with little striving toward excellence.

I am an extroverted person who thrives on human interaction. Not being able to see my friends or go to different places is really taking a toll on me. At the start of the pandemic, I walked Eve with my neighbors and their dogs. However, because the pandemic is getting worse and I work in a grocery store, my neighbors no longer want to walk with me. I completely understand their anxiety, but now I feel really alone and the isolation has been hard to deal with. I try to call my family and friends as much as possible, and I try to walk with Eve when I can to keep busy. However, it's not the same and the lack of human interaction is really getting to me (seeing people at work doesn't feel the same as seeing friends/family). I feel weird in my body when I realize that I have literally gone all day without talking to someone. Sometimes I don't want to call my friends or family because I don't want to feel like I keep bothering them. I'm finding it hard to learn how to be alone.

I truly don't like my new 'normal': I am constantly tired and I don't feel like I have my life together. It has been difficult to figure out my new routine of work, school, and Eve. But, with the semester coming to an end, I am hopeful that I will start to feel a little better with one thing off my plate. Again, I know that I don't have it as hard as others do. I am so, so thankful that the people I care about most and I are still healthy. At the end of the day, that's all I can really ask for. ■

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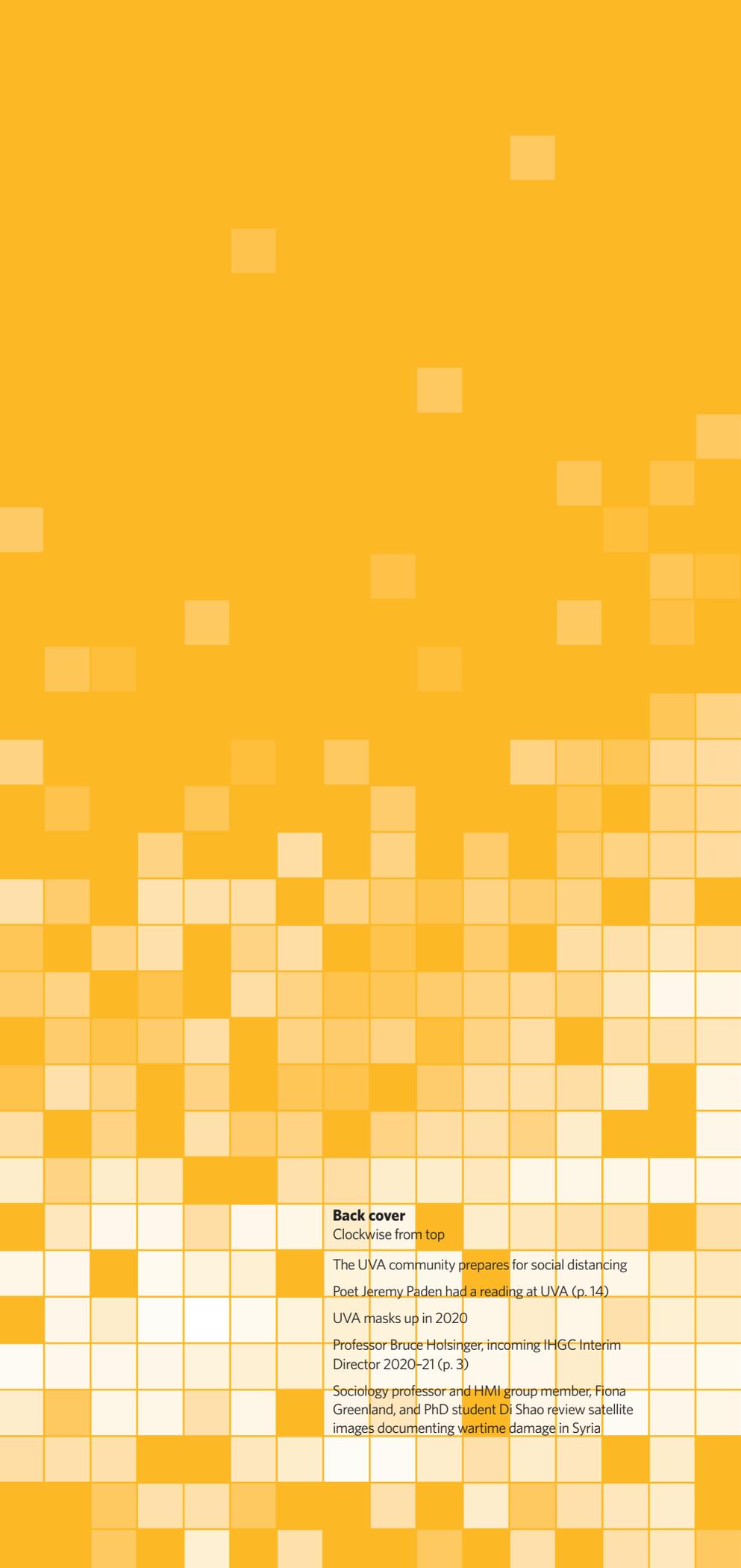
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Back cover

Clockwise from top

The UVA community prepares for social distancing

Poet Jeremy Paden had a reading at UVA (p. 14)

UVA masks up in 2020

Professor Bruce Holsinger, incoming IHGC Interim Director 2020–21 (p. 3)

Sociology professor and HMI group member, Fiona Greenland, and PhD student Di Shao review satellite images documenting wartime damage in Syria

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