

DESIGNING A NEW TOMORROW

Randolph Hester Combines Democracy and Ecology Through Design

Randolph Hester's work is about remaking American cities so people can live and work better with their neighbors and others in their community. It is about people coming together to solve intricate problems in a way that makes it possible to sustain both liberty and our way of life while preserving the ecological systems on which we depend. It is about helping people regain a sense of pleasure from the places where they dwell.

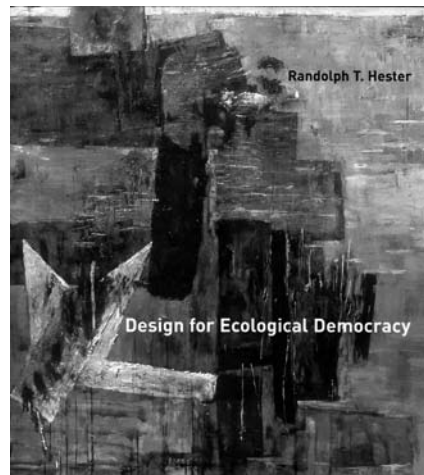
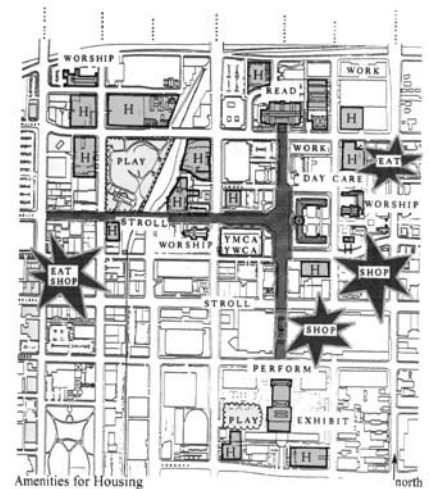
It is about ecological democracy.

In his 2006 book *Design for Ecological Democracy*, Hester, the 2010 William Allan Neilson Professor, explains, "Ecology and democracy are powerful but separate entities. (They) have seldom been partners in modern life, either in the political landscape or in the mundane details of everyday life. Whatever legitimate bases for the schism, applied ecology and participatory democracy must be married, otherwise human habitation and life itself cannot be enduring and joyful."

to the poisons we have inflicted on ourselves and habitation." He sees ecological democracy as the best option for creating a new urban ecology and an active democracy that will have radically new forms of habitation that do not center around extravagant architecture, but rather around what he considers the key elements of a successful and livable community, around the foundations that form the basis of a satisfying and sustainable life. In his book, he explains that once the new physical city is attained, it will lead the way to social transformation.

In *Design for Ecological Democracy*, Professor Hester outlines three foundational issues that must be reformulated to achieve these goals. He has designated them "Enabling Form," "Resilient Form" and "Impelling Form." He explains that "Enabling Form" helps us get to know unfamiliar neighbors and facilitates working with them and others to solve difficult problems. *Resilient Form* turns density and smallness from scorn to advantage and limits the extent of urbanization within the bounds of a region, enhancing sustainability and providing healthy doses of natural magic for everyday life. *Impelling Form* produces cities that touch people's hearts, that impel us by joy rather than compelling us by insecurity, fear, and force."

During the spring 2010 semester, Hester will take part in the *Neilson-Kahn Seminar*, an eight-part series that incorporates his three Neilson Professor lectures and that is embedded within the LSS 100 course (*Issues in Landscape Studies*) of the Landscape Studies program. In them, he will discuss the fundamental concepts of ecological democracy and will offer case studies from his extensive experience as a landscape architect and urban designer in the United States and Asia. His first Neilson Professor lecture, on Monday, February 1, is titled *Design for Ecological Democracy*; the second, on Monday February 15, is titled *Geometry and Activist Ecology*; and his final lecture, *Sex, Lies, and Real Estate*, will take place on Monday, April 5. More details about the topics of all three



Hester does not expect the process of bringing together these two disparate but essential forces to be simple, nor does he expect a composite ecological democracy to be a panacea for all the challenges facing modern and future cities, but he does feel that bringing ecology and democracy together will offer hope and will provide "an antidote

lectures, as well as the others in the *Neilson-Kahn Seminar* (by Marcia McNally, Anne Whitson Spirn, Setha Low, and Frances Moore Lappé) can be found on pages 6 & 7 of this newsletter and on the Kahn Institute Web site at www.smith.edu/kahninstitute. All of the lectures will take place in Weinstein Auditorium in Wright Hall, and each one will begin at 4:30 p.m. All are free and open to the public.

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About the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

Director & Staff

Rick Fantasia

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Barbara Richmond 1940 Professor in the
Social Sciences, and Professor of Sociology

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From left to right, Kara Noble, Chrissie Bell,
and Rick Fantasia.

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Judith Cardell, Associate Professor of
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Christopher Loring, Director of Libraries

William Oram, Helen Means Professor,
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2010-2011 LONG-TERM PROJECT

WHY EDUCATE WOMEN? GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITY



Although the meetings and other activities for the 2010-2011 long-term project *Why Educate Women? Global Perspectives on Equal Opportunity*, will not begin until the fall of 2010, project organizers are already busy laying the groundwork essential to ensuring their colloquium will provide a successful and stimulating intellectual experience for its Fellows and for the entire campus

community. In December, the newly selected Faculty Fellows for the project came together for a preliminary meeting at which they discussed the project's schedule and brainstormed a list of potential visiting scholars and lecturers. They also talked through the application process for Student Fellows, as well as orientation plans to help prepare incoming students to conduct what for many will be their first substantial research project.

Fellows in the *Why Educate Women?* project will undertake a cross-cultural examination of women's ongoing struggle to become literate, educated participants in the societies into which they were born. The goal of the project will be to invite an interdisciplinary discussion of the rationales offered for efforts to expand, restrict, or redefine educational opportunities for women. Fellows will be looking not only to faculty and students from a broad range of disciplines at Smith and in the Five Colleges, but are also seeking to engage their colleagues in Women's Education Worldwide, a growing network of women's colleges that encompasses institutional members from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania and, it is hoped in the near future, Latin America. The Organizing Fellows hope to conclude the project with a major, culminating event at Smith that brings to campus teachers and scholars from around the world.

FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS AWARDED FOR WHY EDUCATE WOMEN?

The following Smith and Five College faculty and staff members have been awarded fellowships in connection with the Kahn Institute yearlong project for 2010-2011, *Why Educate Women? Global Perspectives on Equal Opportunity*.

Organizing Fellows:

Susan Bourque, *Government* and Rosetta Marantz Cohen, *Education & Child Study*

Faculty Fellows:

Riché Barnes, *Afro-American Studies*

Lauren Duncan, *Psychology*

Laurie Fenlason, *Public Affairs*

Patricia Gonzalez, *Spanish & Portuguese*

Nicholas Horton, *Mathematics & Statistics*

Susannah Howe, *Engineering*

Suleiman Mourad, *Religion*

Christine Shelton, *Exercise & Sport Studies*

Patricia Skarda, *English Language
& Literature*

Cristine A. Smith, *International Education
(University of Massachusetts)*

Janie Vanpée, *French Studies*

Tina Wildhagen, *Sociology*

STUDENTS INVITED TO APPLY FOR FELLOWSHIPS IN WHY EDUCATE WOMEN?

Students in the Classes of 2011 and 2012 are invited to apply for Student Fellowships in the Kahn Institute collaborative research project *Why Educate Women? Global Perspectives on Equal Opportunity*, which is being organized by professors Susan Bourque (*Government*) and Rosetta Marantz Cohen (*Education & Child Study*) and which will take place during the 2010-2011 academic year. All Student Fellowship applications must arrive at the Kahn Institute no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, February 26, 2010.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT?

A full description of the project is available on the Kahn Institute Web site at www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/future.php. Students interested in applying should also attend the information meeting at 5:00 pm on February 8 (see previous page for details).

WHAT DO STUDENT FELLOWS DO IN A KAHN PROJECT?

Student Fellows in Kahn Institute projects participate as peers with Faculty Fellows, engaging in their own research and sharing all project activities. Each week when classes are in session, Student Fellows attend the project's colloquium meeting and meal. At the colloquium, both students and faculty develop their research and discuss one another's work-in-progress. The social and intellectual interaction of the group continues at a light supper that immediately follows. Student Fellows are expected to attend these weekly sessions for the entire academic year.

Project Fellows also invite visiting scholars to join their colloquium discussions and sometimes to present public events (e.g., lectures, performances, symposia, conferences) that open the project's work to the rest of the academic community and to the general public. Student Fellows are also expected to attend the special events associated with their project.

WHEN ARE THE WEEKLY MEETINGS FOR THIS PROJECT?

The weekly meeting and meal for the *Why Educate Women?* project will take place on the following schedule:

Tuesdays, 3:30-6:30 pm

Colloquium Meeting: 3:30-5:30 pm; Dinner: 5:30-6:30 pm

Student Fellows must be able to arrange their schedules so they can attend both the colloquium meeting and the dinner every Tuesday when classes are in session throughout the entire academic year.

HOW DO STUDENT FELLOWS PREPARE TO PARTICIPATE?

The Kahn Institute has established an orientation program for Student Fellows. Participation in the following orientation sessions is required. (*NOTE: Special arrangements can be made for students who will be studying abroad during the spring of 2010.*)

Friday, April 23, 2010, 2:30-4:00 pm

Research instruction session with college reference librarians to select five to six key works to read during the summer.

Friday, April 30, 2010, 3:00-4:00 pm

Orientation meeting with Kahn Institute Director

Summer 2010: Independent Study & Research Preparation

During the summer of 2010, Student Fellows will be expected to read five or six key works in their fields of interest. Those readings will be resources to use in developing three significant research questions that could serve as the basis of the research undertaken by the Student Fellow during the project year. Research questions will be submitted via email to the Institute's Director in the late summer.



Right to left: Sarah C. Miller '10, Meenakshi Menon '10, and Mary Harrington at a Wellness & Disease colloquium meeting

Late August 2010: Orientation Workshop

All Student Fellows will be expected to return to campus early in the fall, before classes resume, to attend a research training workshop designed to help them develop and refine the focus of their research projects. Housing and meals will be arranged by the Kahn Institute. The dates for the workshop will be set by the end of February.

HOW MANY STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE?

The *Why Educate Women?* project can accept up to six Student Fellows.

DO STUDENT FELLOWS GET PAID?

Student Fellows will be paid \$500 for their summer work reading and preparing research questions. They will also receive a fellowship stipend of \$2,000, which is distributed in equal bi-weekly payments for their ongoing research during the 2010-2011 academic year.

HOW DO I APPLY FOR A STUDENT FELLOWSHIP?

If you are interested in applying for a student fellowship in this project, you should:

- Read the project description carefully
- Attend the informational meeting on February 8 at 5pm.
- Submit an application via email to the Kahn Institute **no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, February 26, 2010**. Your application should be emailed to kahninst@smith.edu and should include:
 - A paragraph or two explaining why you are interested in joining the project and the types of questions you would like to pursue
 - Your resume, including optimum mail and email addresses, which will be used to contact you
 - A list of three Smith faculty members with whom you have taken courses in the past two years
 - A copy of your transcript. Please request your transcript using BannerWeb. Transcripts should be addressed to: Kahn Liberal Arts Institute, Neilson Library and should arrive at the Kahn Institute no later than **Friday, February 26, 2010**

SPRING 2010 SHORT-TERM PROJECT

IMMIGRATION, NATIVISM AND THE LIMITS OF TOLERANCE

Organizing Fellow: Peter Rose, *Sociology*



In Europe today, one of the biggest topics of dispute is over the influx of “outsiders.” While many are political refugees seeking asylum, many more are economic migrants hoping to improve their life chances and those of their children and to

support families with remittances sent back to their home countries. Opposition to the presence of such newcomers has come from a wide range of concerned people: from workers who feel threatened by those they claim undercut the labor market to nationalists who see their societies threatened by the influx of “unassimilable aliens.” Many others argue that, while they are willing to keep the doors open, all who enter—and all who are there—must adhere to the principal rules of their civic cultures.

THE COLLOQUIUM

In the United Kingdom and on the Continent, where few ever think of their societies as “nations of nations” or invoke the idea of *E pluribus unum*, the resentment of foreigners, particularly those from North Africa, the Balkans, Turkey, South Asia, and the Middle East, is widespread and growing, even in the most ostensibly liberal of countries. In many places, widespread concern about the threat of “Islamic fundamentalism” has contributed to and intensified paranoia and resurgent nativism readily exploited by extreme nationalists. There, old arguments about the challenge of diversity and the “limits of tolerance,” familiar to American social scientists and policy-makers for decades, have become dominant themes in heated debates in the parliaments, in the media, and in the streets, but they are often addressed from very different cultural perspectives.

Can we identify the key causes—whether they be social, economic, political, or religious—of the mounting tensions over migration in

today’s Europe? What are the results for so-called host societies and their citizens, as well as for petitioners for admission and especially for those who are citizens but who share particular racial, religious, or ethnic backgrounds with those who are “suspect”? Participants in this short-term Kahn Institute colloquium will address these issues. While not ignoring the situation in the United States and our own debates about immigration, the focus will be on Europe and on similarities and differences based on culture and history and social policies.

The colloquium for this short-term project will meet at the Kahn Institute on the schedule below. Papers prepared by participants relating to these matters, on general themes, or in the form of case studies examining interactions of groups in particular societies (e.g. Moroccans in The Netherlands) will be discussed. For those interested, finished papers written by Fellows will be considered for inclusion in a special issue of the social science journal, *Society*, which is scheduled to be published later in 2010.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

- Friday, April 9, 4:00-7:00 pm
Discussion sessions followed by dinner
- Saturday, April 10, 9 am-4 pm
Discussion sessions (schedule includes lunch)

CALL FOR APPLICATION FOR FACULTY FELLOWS

This short-term project is now accepting applications for Faculty Fellows; it can accept up to nine Fellows, and each one will receive a stipend of \$500.

Faculty who are interested in applying are encouraged to read the project description (above) or to contact the Organizing Fellow for more information. Peter Rose can be reached via email at prose@smith.edu.

To apply, send a letter of interest via email, campus mail, or Five College mail to Rick Fantasia (rfantasi@smith.edu), the Kahn Institute’s Director, on or before **February 26, 2010**. In your email, please include the title of the project and provide a brief explanation of why you are interested in it, what you feel you can bring to it, and what you hope to get out of it.

DID YOU KNOW?

Betty Hamady Sams ‘57 and James F. Sams Fund

The Kahn Liberal Arts Institute administers a restricted fund established by Betty and James Sams, called the Betty Hamady Sams ‘57 and James F. Sams Fund, to support the study of Arab history, culture, politics, religion, and art at Smith College. The intent of the fund is to foster greater understanding among Americans and people of Arab countries. If you would like to apply for a grant from the fund, please write to Rick Fantasia rfantasi@smith.edu. Uses may include, but are not limited to, support for Smith College faculty research and travel, student research and travel, student internships, guest speakers and special events, library and art acquisitions, or other appropriate uses.



2010-2011 NEILSON-KAHN SEMINAR

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY: READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN A POSTMODERN WORLD

Wayne A. Meeks, 2010-2011 Neilson Professor

During the fall of 2010, the Kahn Institute will continue its partnership with the visiting William Allan Neilson Professor in presenting the *Neilson-Kahn Seminar*. The project will bring together Wayne A. Meeks, the 2010-2011 Neilson Professor, with Smith and Five College faculty and students to forge a stimulating intellectual community and to create special time and space for Smith scholars whose work and teaching would most benefit from systematic interaction with Professor Meeks.

Joel Kaminsky, Suleiman Mourad, and Vera Shevzov, all from the Religion Department, have been coordinating arrangements for the *Seminar*, which will center around the theme *Through a Glass Darkly: Reading the New Testament in a Postmodern World*. They will join Professor Meeks and a group of other Smith faculty, visiting scholars and students in a five-part series of lectures, colloquium discussions, and readings extending throughout the fall 2010 semester.

Wayne Meeks's three Neilson Professor Lectures will form the *Seminar's* core (see the box to the right for dates and details). After each lecture, *Seminar* participants will join Professor Meeks for dinner and an extended discussion of the issues and questions from that day's talk. The *Seminar* will also include two special sessions to further examine related topics. The first, titled *Reading the New Testament Text: The Gospel of Mark as a Novel*, will take place on October 25 and will allow Religion students to join the group for a scholarly discussion of the Bible. On December 6, the group will be joined by Dale Martin, one of the co-authors of *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later*, a collection of essays that revisits key issues in Meek's landmark book, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, to discuss the two works.

The *Neilson-Kahn Seminar* and the public lectures encompassed within it promise a vibrant intellectual experience for participants and the entire Smith community.

Wayne A. Meeks is the Woolsey Professor of Biblical Studies Emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies, Yale University, where he taught from 1969 until 1999. He was Chairman of the Department 1972-75, Acting Chairman 1978-79, 1982-83, and Director of the Division of the Humanities of the University 1988-91. He taught at Indiana University from 1966-69 and at Dartmouth College from 1964-65. Before that he was a campus pastor in Memphis, Tennessee, for the Presbyterian Church. He has served as president of the Society of Biblical Literature (1985) and Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (2004-05). He holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Uppsala and is a fellow of the British Academy and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is best known for his publications on the writings of the apostle Paul and on the Fourth Gospel, for his investigation of the social history of earliest Christianity, and for work on the formation of early Christian morality.

Neilson-Kahn Seminar Schedule Fall 2010

Wayne A. Meeks, the William Allan Neilson Professor for 2010-2011, will present the following three lectures, which will be incorporated into the *Neilson-Kahn Seminar*, in the fall of 2010. **The three Neilson Professor Lectures will take place in the Neilson Browsing Room in Neilson Library beginning at 4:30 p.m.** Each will be followed by a question and answer session. All three lectures are free and open to the public.

Monday, September 27:

The Myth of the Self-Interpreting Text: Communities Making Scripture Making Communities

The metaphor so familiar in religious and even in political discourse, "The New Testament tells us. . ." or "The Bible teaches. . ." conceals complex strategies. What do we mean when we claim that a text "speaks" with authority? How does a text get to be sacred? Communities may be created by sacred texts—but sacred texts evolve in communities. What is the social and cultural process by which this dialectic works?

Monday, October 18:

Naming Jesus: History, Midrash, and Myth

The earliest followers of Jesus struggled to find appropriate images to say who Jesus was—to themselves and to others. This was a self-involving process, for it was at the same time a struggle for the identity of a new movement. It was at heart an interpretive process, both in the broad sense that the work of forming an identity always interprets the world and simultaneously interprets one's own being in it, and in the specific sense that sacred texts and traditions about their meaning were centrally involved. Comparison with other movements of the time, both within Judaism and in the wider culture of the Mediterranean basin, helps us to understand the process better.

Monday, November 8

The Rise and Fall of Historicism—and What Do We Do Now?

The emergence of what we have called scientific history and, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, confidence that such history could determine what the New Testament means comprise a central theme in post-Enlightenment intellectual history. That confidence has, to say the least, been severely shaken in recent decades. We have discovered that, inevitably, our pictures of the past are shaped by reflections of ourselves and our cultures. If then history can't answer our questions, what can? What remains the useful role of history in interpretation—and what kind of history?

SPRING 2010 KAHN INSTITUTE LECTURES

February 1: Randolph Hester (Neilson Professor Lecture)

Design for Ecological Democracy

In this lecture, **Randolph Hester**, the 2009-2010 William Allan Neilson Professor and Professor of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning and Urban Design at the University of California, Berkeley, will discuss sacredness, nature, community, power and creative confrontation, recombinant and reciprocal geometries, and living smaller. He will outline the principle ideas underlying his 2006 book *Design for Ecological Democracy*, describing two competing approaches to urban landscape design during the modern era, one based in ecological science, the other in social factors and justice. He will show how the two might be combined to create more sustainable landscapes, and will introduce a design proposition using enabling, resilient and impelling forms and discuss how they can be applied to community and city design.



February 15: Randolph Hester (Neilson Professor Lecture)

Geometry and Activist Ecology

Randolph Hester will build on the previously introduced idea of recombinant and reciprocal geometries, using the story of efforts to save the black-faced spoonbill (*Platalea minor*) from extinction to demonstrate how the creation of detailed geometries can clarify and sometimes resolve conflicts over land use as “territory” from the regional to the intimate scale. He will present an overview of the habitat needs of the endangered species and competing science; the spatial requirements of dominant and conflicting land uses in this case in Taiwan and Korea; the land use geometries of alternative economies including fishing, value-added products, ecotourism and cultural tourism; the geometries of the daily life patterns of local residents; and present a means of resolution through accurate and creative synthesis of the geometries. Along the way, ecological activism at both the grassroots and international levels will unfold as genuine green and green washing.



February 24: Amy Rothenberg

The A Cappella Singer Who Lost Her Voice and Other Tales from Natural Medicine

Amy Rothenberg ND, a licensed naturopathic physician, teacher, and author, will share case studies and observations from her experience working with patients over the past 24 years. She will discuss the philosophical principles and practical applications of complementary medicine both in the clinic and in the training of physicians. Dr. Rothenberg will also explore and elaborate on the potential for collaboration across medical research and practice, as well as in medical education.



February 25: Carolyn Dinshaw

How Soon Is Now? Problems of the Present, Medieval & Modern

A monk follows a bird beyond the cloister and upon returning discovers he’s been gone for 300 years. A king is led into a cave by a royal pygmy and emerges to find an entirely different language and ruler in his land because it’s over 200 years later. In this talk **Carolyn Dinshaw**, Professor of English at New York University, will examine several such Rip van Winkle stories from the Middle Ages, as well as a retelling of such a tale in modern times, to contemplate the perplexing nature of the present, the now. In the process, she will demonstrate that the everyday temporal linearity we think we experience is extraordinarily fragile, and the effects of time are queerer than we might suspect.



March 1: Marcia McNally

From Flyway to Shophouse: Neighborhood Landscapes in the Glocal World

Does the neighborhood landscape matter? Whether as a unit of analysis for action research, a site for professional practice, a common denominator in cross-cultural comparisons, or the landscape of our daily lives, the answer is a resounding, “You bet.” **Marcia McNally**, Associate Adjunct Professor of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning at the University of California, Berkeley, will present four frames of the same view from research sites in Taipei, Taiwan; Kyoto, Japan; and Los Angeles and Berkeley, California that underscore the importance of the neighborhood in our glocal (simultaneously global and local) lives.



March 22: Setha Low

Rethinking Urban Parks, Social Justice, and Cultural Diversity

Urban public spaces are where race, class, gender, age, sexual preference, ethnicity, and ability differences are experienced and negotiated in a safe forum for political action, communication, and democratic practice. Those spaces offer an empirical means for thinking about cultural diversity in the creation of a more just city. In this lecture, **Setha Low**, Professor of Environmental Psychology, Geography, Women’s Studies, and Anthropology at City University of New York, examines the difficulties in defining and studying what constitutes an equitable distribution of public space, how those issues necessitate employing a broader framework of justice to utilize the lessons learned from planning and design practice, and how to encourage the use of public spaces for democratic practices. She argues that three dimensions of justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—are essential to address the multiple kinds of perceived injustice.

April 5: Randolph Hester (Neilson Professor Lecture)

Sex, Lies, and Real Estate

Many planners believe that sustainable American cities must be somewhat denser, and that exurban development must be controlled to allow space for ecosystems to function to provide food, water, clean air and other resources within the bioregion. Yet density and limited extent are seldom successfully addressed in city making. In this lecture, Randolph Hester explains why through an exploration of the creation of a Big Wild Greenbelt around Los Angeles, a case where extent is being limited. He will describe the primary conflicts that arose during this effort, the techniques that worked and did not work as it progressed, and the lessons learned from it.

April 6: Gregory Miller

The Behavioral and Biological Residue of Childhood Adversity

Children who are exposed to social and economic adversity in the early years of life show increased susceptibility to the chronic diseases of aging when they reach their 50s and 60s. These findings raise a difficult mechanistic question: How does early adversity “get under the skin” in a manner that is sufficiently persistent to affect vulnerability to diseases that arise many decades later? In this lecture Gregory Miller, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, will discuss findings from his ongoing research, which suggest that early adversity is programmed into cells of the immune system at the level of the genome, resulting in a pro-inflammatory phenotype that probably contributes to the chronic diseases of aging. He will also discuss newer findings that identify the family context as a powerful moderator of these effects, explaining how conditions such as high levels of maternal warmth in early life can offset the pro-inflammatory residue of childhood adversity.



April 12: Anne Whitson Spirn

Top-Down/Bottom-Up: Rebuilding the Landscape of Community

Since 1987, Anne Whitson Spirn, Professor of Landscape Architecture and Planning at MIT, has worked in and studied the Mill Creek neighborhood of West Philadelphia, focusing her research, practice, teaching, and community service around the West Philadelphia Landscape Project (WPLP). WPLP combines top-down (comprehensive) and bottom-up (grassroots) approaches to planning and design, engaging dozens of organizations and hundreds of individuals, including groups who rarely work together, such as inner-city residents, middle-school and college students, and water engineers. It brings together concerns that are often treated separately, such as vacant urban land, combined sewer overflows, and troubled public schools, and views them as opportunities for integrated solutions rather than disconnected liabilities. In this lecture, Professor Spirn will explain how in her work, practice is used to develop and test theory, and theory to frame and critique practice, in a process of alternating between engagement and detachment.



April 19: Frances Moore Lappé

Liberation Ecology: Shedding Disempowering Ideas to Create the World We Want

Polar ice is melting even faster than scientists had predicted only a few years ago, and each year we're losing forest that covers an area as big as Greece. In only a few years, the number of hungry people worldwide has grown by a fifth, which means that hunger now harms more than a billion of us. In this lecture, social change and democracy activist and founder of the Small Planet Institute Frances Moore Lappé explains how we can make a planet-wide turn toward life if we break free of a mental map—a set of reigning but misleading ideas—that disempower us, taking us down, down, down and reinforcing feelings of despair. She will discuss why nothing is more important than examining these disempowering ideas and replacing them with evidence-based ways of seeing that energize us to engage.



April 20: Geneviève Rail

Confessions of the Flesh: Obesity, Medicalization, and (Bio)Pedagogies of Impending Epidemics

Geneviève Rail is currently a professor at Concordia College, where she is the principal of the Simone de Beauvier Institute, an institute within the college that is dedicated to studying the condition of women's lives. Her research is centered on the intersection of race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. She examines conceptualizations of women's bodies and health, how they are influenced by science and medicine. Her most recent work has been on young women's discursive constructions of the body and health in the context of obesity.



April 22: Carol Mancusi-Ungaro

Is Art Timeless?

Carol Mancusi-Ungaro serves as Associate Director for Conservation and Research at the Whitney Museum of American Art and Founding Director of the Center for the Technical Study of Modern Art at the Harvard Art Museum. She consults on the conservation of twentieth-century paintings and founded the Artists Documentation Program, a program in which she interviews artists about the technical nature of their art. She has lectured widely on the conservation of modern art and contributed to monographs on Jasper Johns, Brice Marden, Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock and to the catalogue raisonné of Barnett Newman. She continues to engage in research, documenting the materials and techniques of living artists as well as other issues pertaining to the conservation of modern art.



LOOKING AHEAD 2011-2012

EVIL

Joel Westerdale, *German*

Craig Davis, *English Language & Literature*

Organizing Fellows

“What is evil?” Philosophers and saints, politicians and scientists have long grappled with the concept of evil. Some locate its origin in sin, others in our genes. For some it arises from ignorance, for others from resentment, and still others doubt whether it even exists at all. It is a vexing concept, one that has always fascinated and repulsed. The notion of evil has played a formative role in the varied cultures around the world and has had a tangible impact on the way societies interact with one another.

Evil is a concept that has been subjected to widely varying interpretations and definitions. For example, for some, an uprising against an established regime is an evil act that throws society into chaos, but for others the same uprising constitutes an act of liberation from an oppressive, evil moral order. What is designated as evil by some may seem, from a different perspective, little more than a minor transgression of an apparently arbitrary code, an act that commands admiration rather than reproach. That which was once regarded as evil may cease to be denounced as time passes. The celebration of transgression in the wake of Nietzsche has thrived in recent decades, though such presumptuousness has a long list of fictional and historical forebears, including Giordano Bruno and Milton’s Lucifer. But how are such Faustian figures to be reconciled with the kind of evil that is considered unredeemable, the sort that challenges the very notion of comprehensibility? Why are some forms of evil considered “justifiable”? Should they be placed in the same category as genocide, rape, torture, and cruelty? How could the pursuit of forbidden knowledge be equated with the horrors of “man’s inhumanity to man”?

Evil has been identified, labeled, applied, vilified, celebrated and even turned into entertainment. Its influence extends in different manifestations and with varying definitions and degrees of intensity, across every epoch and nation throughout history, in every aspect of life and subject of study, from religion (as in Job’s questioning of God’s justice) to science (as in Oppenheimer’s criticism of the atomic bomb) to literature (as in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*) to politics (as in the rhetoric of recent administrations). Its scope has been far reaching, touching directly or indirectly all manner of disciplines and discourses, influencing and being applied across a broad range of actions, philosophies and

behaviors ranging from those considered little more than mischievous peccadilloes to ethnic cleansing. The concept of evil has been used to define what is acceptable and what is taboo, what is a culturally laudable norm and what is an abomination, what (or who) is humane or inhumane.

But who decides what is evil? How does the label “evil” itself function as a tool of power? How does it enable strategies of exclusion and justification while providing the security of moral absolutism? How are both the concept of evil and its uses as a label applied in different sizes and kinds of groups and systems? Does the designation of evil hold the same stigmatizing power in different cultures and across various historical periods? How do various cultures and individuals handle evil differently, and how is it represented in the cultural fabric, in the art, the painting, the literature, the music of a society? How are reactions to evil reflected in political, social, and economic systems and practices?

This project will bring together a diverse group of scholars to explore the concept of evil and the practices of its invocation and reception. The goal will be not so much to establish the nature of evil in the world, but to examine and try to determine the functions it serves in various discourses, systems, actions, and interactions. Each Fellow will bring to the group a set of questions or cases from within their particular discipline reflecting the many facets of evil as a subject of study. As we examine these distinct perspectives, we will also work within a collaborative framework that will afford us an opportunity to see beyond disciplinary horizons and to develop a genuinely cross-disciplinary engagement. Fellows may explore philosophical, religious, sociological, ethical, cultural, political, literary, artistic, scientific, or even linguistic questions about instances of evil or applications of it. Each will bring a unique perspective on the subject to the group. Anthropologist’s understanding of the term “evil,” for instance, will differ from that of a philosopher or from that of a bioengineer. Conjoining different perspectives from a diverse cross-section of disciplines promises to provide a provocative series of discussions and a thorough and multifaceted investigation of this concept.



LONG-TERM PROJECTS

RENAISSANCES: A MULTIPLICITY OF REBIRTHS

Nalini Bhushan, *Philosophy*

Jay L. Garfield, *Philosophy*

Organizing Fellows

From Dublin to Calcutta, from Harlem to Ulan Bator, the term “renaissance,” or some variant thereof, has been used in distinct and intellectually stimulating ways. This term, always recalling—despite enormous differences in detail—the European Renaissance from 1420 to the 1600s, is used both to celebrate cultural recovery and assertion and to challenge regimes of power. This project will consider the concept of “renaissance” as a process of change that involves broad social, scientific, economic, cultural, and philosophical transformations of a society and its traditions in confrontation with modernity.

Renaissances tend to emerge in the context of exchanges between cultures, between tradition and modernity, between schools of thought, or between artistic, political or scientific movements, but it can be difficult to appreciate a renaissance in one area of a society or culture without considering its impact on other aspects. For instance, it is difficult to appreciate a renaissance in art without attention to its influence in science or its effects on economic structure. In this project, we will consider how a renaissance affects the parts and the whole, how the intrusion of one culture, philosophy, or set of ideas in one area can lead to sweeping change in others. We will analyze how the dominance of one society, school of thought or political system by another can become a source of creative appropriation, and we will ask about the complex relations between science and technology, material production and the social, political and artistic dimensions of culture during such a process of sweeping change. We will consider in what circumstances cultural exchange—whether invited or not—can lead to renaissance, what forms such interactions take, and what range of dénouements these periods of transformation deliver. We are interested in exploring a wide variety of renaissances in different eras and in different parts of the globe, and their impact in a variety of disciplines.

This Kahn project will bring various analytic frameworks to bear in exploring the general phenomenon of renaissance and the similarities and differences between distinct types and instances of them. Fellows will examine case studies ranging from the European Renaissance after the Middle Ages to the revolutionary transformation of Mongolia in recent times. We will address the symbolic dimensions of renaissance, asking how communities represent themselves and their trajectories in the context of cultural upheaval and renewal. We will also explore the complex

relationships between modernity and tradition during such transitions, considering when they involve explicit rejection of tradition and when they encompass re-appropriation of it. We will explore the contribution of science and technology in times of change and the impact of renaissances on the practice of science, on the social construction of knowledge, and on individual scientists and scientific fields. We will also examine material culture and class configurations, considering the economic and technological dimensions of a renaissance. Other topics of interest to participants may include instances and types of change within world cultural history and the influence of those transformations on cultural practices and outputs, such as art and music, and the often vexing questions of authenticity that can arise as a result.

We invite participation by scholars from across the college. This project will be of interest to faculty studying topics such as the historical and cultural connections or affinities between different moments of cultural resurgence (e.g. Young Ireland and Young India; Harlem, Dublin, and Prague; the transcendentalist writers of the “American” renaissance); the impact of renaissances on diaspora consciousness and artistic production in a postcolonial world; religious revival and evolution during periods of rebirth and transformation; the ways in which societal changes, such as those in France, Algeria, and the Caribbean, generate genre fusion in the arts; the economic determinants and effects of societal metamorphosis (for example, the impact of colonialism, capitalism and the impact of global trade); the political structures that are devised in or that emerge from renaissances; the re-emergence of nations, such as Mongolia and former Soviet republics, into the international community as a result of transfiguring change; the class origins of societal transfiguration and their impact on class stratification; and the role of science and mathematics in initiating periods of change, and, conversely, the impact of societal evolution on the scientific process and on the lives of individual scientists (e.g., Galileo, Bose, Ramanujan). These are but a few examples of prospective topics; there are many more areas to explore that we cannot imagine, but that we welcome with great enthusiasm.



MID-YEAR REPORTS



TELLING TIME

Its Meaning and Measurement

By **Bosiljka Glumac**, *Geosciences*
Richard Lim, *History*
Organizing Fellows

Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio.

“What then is time? If no one asks me, I know the answer. But if I want to explain it to someone asking the question, I do not know.”
—Augustine, *Confessions* 11.14.17.

Over the course of the fall semester, *Telling Time* Fellows have been discovering that there is much truth in what Augustine of Hippo



Richard Lim

wrote more than 1600 years ago, and it has been an intellectually exhilarating experience. Fellows began by discussing their progress during the summer and shared thoughts on readings drawn from the wide range of disciplines represented in the group.

Student Fellows gave a rousing thumbs-up to the summer “Boot Camp” where they refined their project focus and research skills.

To kick off our work together, David Dempsey and consulting conservator Monica Berry engaged us on the pragmatic and ethical dimensions of historic conservation of the sundial donated to the college by the Class of 1883. Then, at the suggestion of Suzan Edwards, we brought Anthony Aveni, astronomer, anthropologist and founder of the field of archaeoastronomy from Colgate University. He delivered a standing-room-only public lecture titled *The End of Time: The Maya Mystery of 2012*, in which he debunked the current hoopla regarding the Mayan apocalypse of 2012. The next day he joined two Smith experts on the Maya, Fernando Armstrong-Fumero and Dana Leibsohn, to discuss Mayan calendrical strategies and their broader meaning with Fellows.

Kahn projects can only thrive if the Fellows gain a sense of intellectual cohesion and mutual engagement and camaraderie. To foster that kind of interaction, we next organized two roundtable discussions to identify and elaborate on key themes and concepts. The first, *Time and Its Measurements*, focused on questions about calendars, clocks, dating methods,

and their implications, while the second, *Time and its Meanings*, addressed the social and cultural constructions of time, temporal rhythms and structures, and narratives of the past, as well as metaphysical and scientific views regarding the nature of time itself.

Among the questions that Fellows deem significant are linear versus cyclical approaches to time and temporality; how modern precision, accuracy, and scale in time measurement have shaped our understanding of time; how time comes to be represented visually and how it is narrated in texts; and various human technologies for keeping and “managing” time.

Indeed even plants have a technology for managing time. In October, Carolyn Wetzel introduced Rob McClung, a leading expert on plant circadian rhythms from Dartmouth University, who gave a lecture on the genetic analysis of plant circadian rhythms and then joined a colloquium meeting. David Dempsey, Carolyn Wetzel and Student Fellow Maggie Dethloff ‘10 then led a discussion of how time is represented and consciously played upon by modern artists.

Darcy Buerkle and Cornelia Pearsall led discussions over the next two weeks on modern literary approaches to time and narrative. Some of the readings they brought to the group included famous short stories by Jorge Luis Borges.

In November, Suzan Edwards organized a panel of Fellows, and Nancy Bradbury, Carolyn Collette, and Lonicer Lytle ‘10 jointly traced the development of timekeeping instruments from sundials to modern mechanical clocks.

Next, Sara Pruss and Bosiljka Glumac introduced us to Michael Williams, chair of the Department of Geosciences at the University of Massachusetts, who spoke on new methods for dating and explaining geologic processes and on the challenges of understanding and explaining long spans of geological time. He shared details about his public outreach project, *The Trail of Time*, at the Grand Canyon. During the next day’s colloquium, Professor Williams explained his personal belief that the ability to conceptualize deep time was linked not only to his academic work as a geologist but also to his life-long quest for finding

meaning in his work on the earth’s history.

When we conceptualized this project last year, we thought that one of its goals would be to gain a greater reflexivity in our individual thinking about our own intellectual practices in connection with time and temporalities, and to enrich our understanding of these topics by becoming exposed to the variety of understandings and practices across disciplines other than our own. This has been working very well so far. Natural scientists are still talking to humanists and vice versa! Indeed, we have been struck by everyone’s intellectual generosity and openness and by the sheer willingness to engage with each other’s material. Humanists have done their best to grasp the finer points of quantum mechanisms, the chemistry of plant circadian rhythms, and the use of the mineral monazite in geochronology, while scientists have worked through postmodern narratives and their approaches to temporality with equal equanimity.

A shared passion that unites the group is the question of how contemporary art and culture address time and temporality. To explore this theme, we visited Yale University Art Gallery where Jennifer Gross, the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, led us through *Continuous Time*, an exhibit she curated featuring a selection of work by eleven compelling contemporary artists who demonstrate a keen interest in time and sensory perception in their work in diverse media, including film, video, photography, painting, and sculpture. At our final meeting of the fall semester, sociologist and Kahn Institute Director Rick Fantasia and Student Fellows Brigid Fitzgerald ‘10 and Catharina Gress-Wright ‘11 led a discussion based on E.P. Thompson’s classic essay on “Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism,” just in time to ready us for a holiday season devoted to the leisurely pursuits of recuperation, reconnection with family and friends and, of course, mass consumerism!



Brigid Fitzgerald ‘10

YEAR-LONG PROJECTS

By **Benita Jackson**, *Psychology*
Mary Harrington, *Psychology*
Organizing Fellows



In our yearlong *Wellness and Disease* Project we are exploring the multi-faceted, complex nature of health determinants. The Fellows participating in this project come from disciplinary orientations that are pertinent to health research in sometimes apparent and sometimes surprising ways. From comparative literature to immunology, neuroscience to philosophy, sociology to anthropology, health psychology to medicine, public health to exercise and sport studies, and studio art to critical cultural studies, we span a wide range of content areas and methods. In fact, each individual Fellow asks a research question that spans multiple areas of expertise, as can be seen by the short descriptions of each Fellow's project: www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/wellness_fellows.php. At times it has been challenging to find a common language while engaging in conversation with a community encompassing such a breadth of knowledge. It has meant being willing to ask questions that might seem obvious ("What does that mean?") and also being open to having colleagues question some of the most fundamental premises in one's own thinking.

As co-organizers, we have emphasized studying mechanisms spanning the cellular, psychological, and social levels, as well as how those levels interact. Our guest speakers for Fall 2009 gave us stunning examples of how one might successfully bring multiple levels of analysis to fascinating research questions such as can a behavioral practice like meditation actually effect physiological processes such as inflammation (Charles Raison, Emory University)? If wealth predicts health, why is life in the U.S. "nasty, brutish, and short?" (Ichiro Kawachi, Harvard University). And how do our closest social relationships shape the ways people cope with an illness (Tracey Revenson, City University of New York)?

Learning from visiting scholars provided important focal points for our project, though a typical weekly session included other activities. A recent PBS series—*Unnatural Causes, Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* (www.unnaturalcauses.org)—served as a common text to start off the semester. We watched, discussed,

and debated clips about topics from the series, including the impact of socioeconomic status on chronic disease and the role of racism in producing striking disparities in infant mortality between African-American and White-American babies. Another week we took a field trip to the Zen Center on Main Street to visit with the Buddhist Chaplain of Smith College, **Dr. Catherine Hondorp** (www.networkspinal.com/about_dr.cfm). She engages with suffering both clinically (as a Network chiropractor) and spiritually (as a Zen priest). By visiting her examining room, adjacent to a meditation area, we learned and asked questions about this alternative approach to understanding health through a wellness-care approach. Another local field trip was to Forbes



Benita Jackson (front), Mary Harrington, Susan Levin, and Emily Earle Royal '10

Library, to see photographs that Fellow **Les Jaffe**, MD (college physician) and his spouse **Liliana Klass** took during their adventure last year to Tibet—the exhibit was titled *Tibetans in Exile / Tibetans in Tibet*.

To encourage each of us to write about our own projects early and often, we christened a collective writing journal where each week Fellows were invited to declare a manageable writing goal. We celebrated major milestones such as submitting Institutional Review Board applications or getting an article published, nurturing playfulness and a community spirit to counter the often isolating work of academic research and writing.

Indeed, perhaps the most satisfying part of the semester has been seeing how each of our projects developed over the term. We shared our work in various phases, and are excited to see the directions our individual projects may take next term. If you'd like to hear in detail about some of our work, the student Fellows will deliver presentations during the on-campus Celebrating Collaborations conference.

Each Fellow's scholarship will be inspired further by our ongoing colloquium sessions and an exciting slate of speakers for spring 2010. **Amy Rothenberg, ND**, co-director of the New England School of Homeopathy, will discuss the concepts of wellness and disease from complementary medical practices such as naturopathy and homeopathy; her practice as a naturopathic family physician; and the challenges and progress in applying Western scientific inquiry in her field. **Greg Miller, PhD**, is an associate professor at the University of British Columbia and co-director of the Psychobiological Determinants of Health Laboratory. He will talk about his cutting-edge research driven by the hypothesis that children reared in low socioeconomic environments are often exposed to social and physical "pollutants" that shape the epigenetic landscape of the developing nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. **Geneviève Rail, PhD**, Principal of Simone de Beauvoir Institute,

Concordia University, will provide a feminist perspective on health in her discussion of obesity and body image. We look forward to some fun in February, when we co-sponsor a performance of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Abridged* as part of the Northampton Arts Council's Four Sundays in February program on Sunday, February 14 at 2:00 p.m. at the Academy of Music.

We gratefully acknowledge the cheerful and able staff of the Kahn Institute: **Kara Noble**, **Chrissie Bell**, and **Rick Fantasia**. Their often behind-the-scenes work allowed Fellows to focus on the academic scholarship and fellowship, knowing that food, funding, and other

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT INTERDISCIPLINARITY ANYWAY?

By Rick Fantasia, *Director*

Photo by Jim Gipe



The Kahn Institute has been described—and we often describe ourselves—as an “innovative center for collaborative and interdisciplinary scholarship.” It’s a reasonable description, although perhaps somewhat circular, since it is the nature of our collaboration and of our interdisciplinary engagement that make us innovative. One innovative form of collaboration we practice is bringing together undergraduate student-

scholars and faculty scholar-students as equals for extended intellectual interactions. Of course, it is not a completely equal collaboration since faculty come to the table with a good deal more experience and confidence in doing scholarship than students. What a yearlong Kahn project often demonstrates, however, is that in taking students seriously and treating them like intellectual peers, their confidence goes up and deepens their intellectual experience, with the result that their ability to behave like real scholars can be greatly enhanced. I’m not aware of any other institution, institute, or humanities center that does this kind of collaborating and that’s why it seems right to call it innovative.

We tend to think of any interdisciplinary collaboration as innovative, but I’m not so sure. Our projects bring together scholars from a range of disciplines for sustained intellectual interaction. For example, our current year-long project, *Telling Time: Its Meaning and Measurement*, has two geologists at the table with two historians, four scholars of English literature, two anthropologists, two biologists, two art historians, a scholar of East Asia, a musician, a philosopher, an astronomer, and a physicist. This is surely a radically interdisciplinary mix, and if the notion of “two cultures” or an unbridgeable gap between literary and scientific cultures, can still be considered a fair formulation, Kahn projects are places where these divisions are regularly challenged, if not breached.¹

There are many kinds of interdisciplinary work. In some, scholars bring a perspective from one discipline to shape thinking in another. In others, a research team of scholars from different disciplines might work toward a common solution to a single problem. Kahn Institute projects are different. We bring together the eyes and the ideas of scholars who’ve been trained in different disciplines to consider a broad set of questions while they simultaneously pursue their own individual research. Meeting together weekly for the academic year, they share their respective analytical frameworks and research approaches. They aren’t usually seeking a common solution to one problem or question, but are rather sharing thoughts and methods they can apply to their own individual ones. While that occasionally leads to a joint writing project or research collaboration, more often it simply stretches everyone’s mind and sometimes introduces or modifies questions. It’s almost always a good thing to have one’s mind broadened, but doing so can also have distorting effects, since those who haven’t cultivated the capacities for critical analysis in a discipline may not be in the best position to offer a meaningful critique of disciplinary ideas. So while our process can be an opportunity to challenge conventional approaches, it might lead to uncritical acceptance of misleadingly superficial understanding.

This is akin to something I’ve observed in the social sciences. Analysts from many fields have been able to write lucidly about the conditions of social life, particularly about race and gender, without regard to standard social science methodologies. These research methods can bring analytical rigor and reliability, but can also sometimes impede our ability to communicate ideas clearly. Scholars from other fields may be quite eloquent, but face inherent analytical limitations because they aren’t able to bring to bear tools designed to dig below textual and symbolic surfaces, to penetrate institutional structures, or systematically analyze practices and social interactions. A lot can be lost in translation if the objects of social analysis are in focus but the methods of social research are not.

That makes me wonder why interdisciplinary scholarship has lately been considered better than disciplinary scholarship. Disciplines and inter-disciplines have always existed in relation to one another and I don’t think that it could be any other way. Interdisciplinary practices depend on and are often mutually constituted by disciplines. One scholar has characterized the institutional structure of American academia as a “structure of flexibly stable disciplines, surrounded by a perpetual hazy buzz of interdisciplinarity.”² That sounds about right, although there are interdisciplinary fields that seem more “flexibly stable” than hazy. I know disciplines can ossify over time, with certain theories and methods achieving a position of domination and then stifling new approaches and ways of seeing. And disciplines often produce over-specialization that can make for a limiting narrowness of vision. The interstitial zones at the edges of disciplinary practice tend to house the scholarly troublemakers and malcontents whose unconventional perspectives are anathema to those who dominate a field (and perhaps an attraction to those who do not). The struggle over the proper literary canon or over what constitutes “good scholarship” within disciplines is never neutral and often represents a veiled effort to impose certain standards of legitimacy (and therefore illegitimacy) in the field. Exclusion and inclusion is often the name of this game within disciplines, but interdisciplinary fields develop their own passkeys as well.

Interdisciplinarity almost always sounds like a good thing, but it would seem to depend on what gets left out of the analytical mix and how that might affect just how good it actually is. Yes, we should push against disciplines to transcend conventional thinking. Sometimes this will produce new interdisciplinary practices and perspectives, but it will likely also produce new conventions that will impose their own limitations. After serious thought and deliberation we may decide to conjoin several disciplines to facilitate the pursuit of new areas and arenas of knowledge, but we should be clear that we’re doing so because of its intellectual promise and not because it may be a good admissions ‘hook’ or a good opportunity for fundraising or budget-trimming. Our charge is to produce scholarship that is careful, important, and imaginative, whether it is done within disciplines or outside of them.

¹ C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1961)

² Andrew Abbott, *Chaos of Disciplines* (Chicago, U. of Chicago Press, 2001) p. 136.