



INTERDISCIPLINARY HUMANITIES

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Note from the Editor

In this inaugural issue of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group Magazine, we received contributions from numerous IHGG graduate students who are doing fascinating humanities work across the globe. The editors envision the magazine to be a space to showcase the work of IH graduate students and faculty, especially as we're housed in separate disciplines, despite occupying the same program—we're often distanced from the day-to-day realities of each other's research because we're so immersed in our own. In a visual format, the IHGG Magazine is a space for bridging our interdisciplinary projects. If you're interested in contributing to this semesterly newsletter, email isoto5@ucmerced.edu.

Sincerely,



On the cover: Lantana flowers in the foreground with the new Arts & Computational Sciences (ACS) Building behind. The ACS building opened this academic year—some IHGG graduate students and affiliated faculty are housed there.



Immigration & Citizenship Legislation 1790 - 2019

Join us for a display of a visual timeline on the legacy of ~230 years of immigration and citizenship legislation and advocacy in the U.S. Light refreshments will be served.

COB-2 290 | Nov 14 | 10:00 - 4:00



Opening Remarks 10:15
CRES 020, CRES 122, SOC 282

Alejandro Jurado 12:00
ICE Out of Merced
Community Organization

Amy Lin 12:30
ASPIRE (Asian Students
Promoting Immigrant Rights
through Education)

Linda Barreto 1:30
UCM alum, immigration
lawyer Prof. at San Joaquin
College of Law



Sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Humanities and Sociology Graduate Groups

As part of a cross-class collaboration between CRES 020 (Introduction to Asian American Studies), SOC 182 (Topics in Immigration), and CRES 122 (Comparative Immigrations), we are putting together an event called Immigration and Citizenship Legislation from 1790 - 2019 on Thursday, November 14 from 10:00 - 4:00pm in COB2 290. Our students have been working on a semester long visual timeline to chart major U.S. legislation, court cases, and actions related to immigration and citizenship to critically analyze how racial, classed, gendered, and national discourses have and continue to frame these conversations and policies. We will also be featuring an interactive mural by local student artists and guest speakers from the community organizations ICE Out of Merced and ASPIRE (Asian Students Promoting Immigrant Rights through Education) as well as Linda Barreto, a UCM alum and immigration lawyer from the Central Valley. Light refreshments will also be served. Hope to see you there!

For more information, please contact:

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BROWN BAG TALKS: PRESENTATION SERIES

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We're looking for presenters.

Are you presenting a conference paper soon?
Did you finish writing a chapter?
Are you interested in peer feedback?

If so, sign-up for an IHGG Brown Bag Talk.

20 minute presentations with Q&A sessions provide valuable feedback for your next draft.

To sign-up, please contact IHGG Chair, Dr. Dawson:
kdawson4@ucmerced.edu

Photo: Brown Bag Talk by IHGG Graduate Student, Shiloh Green, entitled "Housing Hegemony: Race, Citizenship, and 'Neoliberal Diversity' on the Irvine Ranch."

REFLECTIONS ON A RECENT PUBLICATION:

MOVING BEYOND THE FRAME:

Geovisualization of Landscape Change Along the Southwestern Edge of Yosemite National Park

By: Adam Fleenor

Ph.D. Candidate, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

Article Abstract: As part of the 1930s New Deal programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps funded a team of photographers to capture forest landscapes, including those in the Stanislaus National Forest and southwestern portion of Yosemite National Park. While initially, the program focused on assessing travel time, terrain challenges, and viewable area, the program went on to acquire expressly made Osborne Panoramic Cameras, which were used to take panoramic photos from fire towers and other potential lookout peaks...

The impetus for the above article began when a fellow IH graduate student was telling me about this environmental class he was taking with Dr. Jeff Jenkins, a geographer from Santa Cruz who landed in the Gallo Management program. Being a professional geographer myself in the past, I wanted to meet a fellow map jockey. I was also looking for an outside committee member. My friend told me Dr. Jenkins was organizing a talk for Jordon Fisher Smith, so I showed up and started talking to him after the presentation. Brushing off my five-minute elevator research speech I learned in IH 203, I was able to peek his interest and land a meeting with him the next week. I emailed my CV and started looking up anything I could find on him.

“I wanted to meet a fellow map jockey. I was also looking for an outside committee member.”



Photo: Inside the Fire Tower.

It was in this meeting that Dr. Jenkins asked about my experience in river restoration and endangered species mitigation. Specifically, he asked about my time working for the Oregon Forestry Department, how strong my tree identification skills were and fieldwork in general. He finally confessed he had a project that needed specific skillset: forest ecology, fieldwork in rough terrain, and writing.

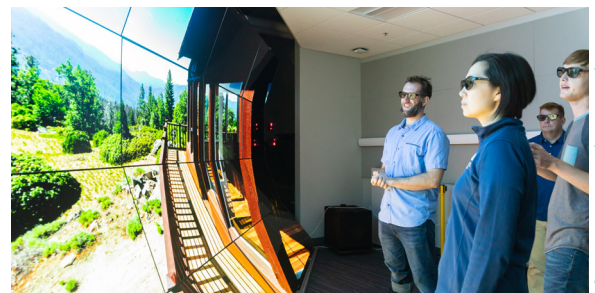


Photo: UC Merced Wave Lab.

I am comfortable with my ecology skills and I spent many weeks in the Belizean jungle helping rediscover and map Mayan caves. However, my writing skills were something I developed later in life, to this day anxiety keeps me company at the keyboard. He nonetheless asked me to lead the fieldwork and take the initiative on writing an article. I was looking for a committee member and ended up with a \$7000 summer research job. Opportunities sometimes arise in unexpected places.



“Opportunities sometimes arise in unexpected places.”

Dr. Jenkins brought in Fisher Dietz to join the team. He was a Computer Science and Engineering student who had mastered the WAVE lab computers and the CaveCam camera that is one of two ever made (see article). He was an outgoing undergraduate, class of 2018, who was happy to take a break from the lab. He had demonstrated the WAVE and camera many times for UC alums and potential donors but had yet to employ the technology in the field. We camped and hiked together all summer; he would carry the ~70-pound camera and I had the tripod and water. I do not think his feet will ever be the same.

It was late summer and we had three more sites to find and shoot. Fisher needed to get ready for the fall semester so I enlisted my father-in-law Ken for the last trip to Yosemite. He had grown up in the Bay Area and has spent many summers camping and hiking in the park. Ken had figured out where the last fire tower was located and we were able to finish the fieldwork. That experienced reminded me how invaluable local knowledge can be.

We took the 2018 fall semester to process the pictures (Fisher), write a draft of the article (me), and look for a publisher (Dr. Jenkins). We sent a manuscript to publisher after publisher getting comments like “this is interesting but does not fit in our journal, try...” Consequently, Dr. Jenkins and I reworked the article to focus on the methodology of our work and found a home with the Journal of Geovisualization and Spatial Analysis. Things were looking up; we received a revise and resubmit with comments from peer reviewers. One thing I learned about the revision process is that it is a strange mix of defending our work while also respecting and incorporating aspects of the reviewer’s sage advice. I worked with Dr. Jenkins and Fisher to respond to each reviewers’ comments and arguments while also stating our case for keeping something the reviewer did not like. In the later case, we offered additional citations to support why something was beneficial to our analysis.

Overall I was very grateful to be part of this project and the writing process, though it was admittedly both physically and academically demanding. One day soon after the work was completed, I was sitting at my favorite watering hole near my house when some regulars came and joined me. These regulars are professors at Stanislaus State who had been offering advice and encouragement during my crazy semester. I was excited to share that I had entered ABD status the week before and now have my first publication. “What is the title of your article?” one guy asked. In that moment I drew a blank. I was academically fried from spending so much time thinking about and rewriting the article content that I had forgotten the title. He bought me another beer and said “don’t worry, we have all been there.”

ASIAN AMERICAN RACIAL COMPLEXITIES & THE ALLURE OF INCLUSION IN THE HARVARD CASE

By: May Kao Xiong

2nd year graduate student, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

The Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) (2018) sued Harvard University over admissions practices that are allegedly discriminatory against Asian Americans. Conservative activist Edward Blum heads SFFA, which is a non-profit with support from many Chinese Americans including recent immigrants. If the ruling is found in favor of SFFA and the Asian Americans it purports to represent, it will likely alter, possibly remove entirely, affirmative action and considerations of race and ethnicity as a means for creating diversity on college campuses in the admissions process. My focus in this piece is not directly on the judicial decision in the Harvard case, per se. Rather, I am examining manifest and latent racial interests of those involved in the case, particularly Asian Americans. Thus, it is problematic to define or understand this case strictly as a racial issue on behalf of Asian Americans claiming discrimination. Instead, the Asian Americans involved in this lawsuit represent a par-

ticular socioeconomic class and sub-group of Asian Americans with certain self-interests, e.g. to see their children attend Harvard University or other Ivy League universities. What is at stake for these Asian Americans in this case is that graduating from an Ivy League institution nearly guarantees graduates a place in an elite class with certain understood privileges or entitlements. The cultural capital that comes with graduating from these universities allows for opportunities that are not open to those who attended less exclusive schools. These Asian Americans, particularly Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, who dominate SFFA, support eliminating affirmative action from the admission process and are not seeking to achieve fairness for Asian Americans as they claim; instead their interest in the lawsuit reaffirms an elite structure whereby not all Asian Americans will be included nor will all minorities benefit. This group, composed of those who immigrated from China

within the last ten years, came to the US after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident or through the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992 (which granted green cards to Chinese nationals), shared similar backgrounds and perspectives. According to Joe Wei, the managing editor of the World Journal, the more recent immigrants were of a professional class that included engineers and tech workers, who had resources to move directly into the suburbs. Many of them came with little to no knowledge of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (a time when immigrants coming from China were poor and used as cheap labor), Vincent Chin, and other Asian American civil rights struggles. Yukong Zhao, an anti-affirmative action advocate, created the Asian American Coalition for Education (AACE) to eliminate racial categories from college applications. Zhao's son was not admitted to top colleges, which he attributed to affirmative action. Zhao's AACE message aligned with Blum's anti-affirmative mission so it

“history has proven that racialized others continue to be targets of racism and discrimination even after they have acquired legal rights.”

To interrogate this racial case further, I turn to Denise Ferreira Da Silva's *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (2007) in which she argues that when the racial other attempts to seek self-determination or inclusion, they will not fully achieve it because the racial is inscribed in modern representation and it remains ever so present in the racial other even after “inclusion” or supposedly acquiring “self-determination,” i.e. racism prevents full inclusion. In the case of the Asian Americans involved in SFFA against Harvard and its admissions process play into the alluring racial project as outlined by Silva. That is, rather than becoming self-determined subjects, they become the means for SFFA to accomplish its agenda of eliminating affirmative action and race conscious considerations should the court decision return in favor of SFFA and Blum. Even the hopes and desires of Asian Americans to acquire the cultural capital from graduating from an Ivy League institution does not protect them from facing discrimination in other ways. Though these Asian Americans are a means for Blum, they are willing participants because they see their access to this particular space as a path toward achieving inclusion and no longer being racialized. They believe in the model minority myth in which they are separated from other minorities. However, history has proven that racialized others continue to be targets of racism and discrimination even after they have acquired legal rights.

The category of Asian American and race conscious admissions, as exemplified by the Harvard case, demonstrate that there are vital issues which will impact diversity

at the university. Although this case has recently been dismissed by the Federal District Court in Boston, Blum quickly filed an appeal with the U.S. First Circuit Court of Appeals and this case will likely make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court. If successful, this case could potentially lead to the removal of categories like Asian American and thus trigger the elimination of race conscious admission and its role in diversifying the student population and providing more meaningful perspectives within the classroom and on campus. Elimination of large racial categories, such as Asian American, may be a solution to prevent essentialization of all the categories' subgroups and therefore, allow for the recognition of different experiences that have been historically silenced, e.g. Hmong, Igorot, Cambodians, Laotian, etc., within the Asian American category. Whether these categories exist or not, Asian Americans will continue to experience racism because their racial otherness does not disappear even if they achieve degrees of inclusion, e.g. through the means of admissions into Harvard or other Ivy League institutions or by becoming a part of an elite class of Asian Americans who have acquired cultural capital.

“allow for the recognition of different experiences that have been historically silenced, e.g. Hmong, Igorot, Cambodians, Laotian, etc., within the Asian American category.”



THE LIMITS OF IRRIGATION DISCOURSE: A CHALLENGE FOR CALIFORNIA AND THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

By: Omar González

Undergraduate, History + Critical Race & Ethnic Studies | Double Major
Political Science | American Studies | Chicano/a Studies | Triple Minor

According to Michel Foucault, discourse “governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about...it also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others.” (Hall 72) With discourse being the collection of statements with regards to a particular subject in a specific historical moment, it shows how power is applied. Power is only utilized in accordance with constructed truths. Foucault claims absolute truth to be non-existent with all known truths being the product of discourse determining what is acceptable forms of knowledge to live by. (Hall 76-77) In other words, knowledge is only known to be true because everyone collectively agrees for it to be true. Discourse is not exclusive to a ruling or elite class because anyone can contribute to the development of discourse by voicing their opinions. However, the elite are more readily able to exert their influence over discourse allowing for their beliefs to be disproportionately represented. Despite this limitation, everyone shares in the wielding of power through their influence of discourse, which can have a significant impact if people are able to act or speak collectively. (Hall 77) However, discourse itself can be restrictive in the development

of ideas and use of power. With nothing meaningful existing outside of discourse, solutions to problems in a specific historical moment can only develop from an existing body of knowledge until the discourse is able to change significantly. Although abstract, Foucault’s explanation of discourse and its relation to power has a very real impact on the state policy as it relates to irrigation in the Valley.

Current discourse on poverty and agriculture is limiting and very misleading in the San Joaquin Valley because it relies on a traditional neoliberal perspective. The Delta Tunnels and higher water allocations are able to have a strong appeal in the Central Valley because agriculture and the effects of irrigation are placed within a neoliberal framework.

“Foucault’s explanation of discourse and its relation to power has a very real impact on the state policy as it relates to irrigation in the Valley.”

For example, agriculture is the main producer of wealth in the Valley, making the Valley's economy heavily dependent on the health of the agricultural industry. Neoliberal thinking suggests that with a significant amount of the Valley's labor force being tied to agriculture, the wealth distribution in the San Joaquin Valley can be significantly increased if agricultural profits are improved. A clear method to increasing the value of the agricultural industry is by allocating more water to farms in the Valley. In other words, more irrigation allows for the Reaganomics of agricultural wealth to trickle down in the Central Valley to "end" the wealth disparities experienced by the Valley's poorest. (McFarlane 7-13) This line of reasoning makes sense only under a neoliberal discourse. The owners of farmland in the Central Valley promote and strengthen this discourse through the placement of billboards and signs advocating for more water. Agribusiness directly benefits from strengthening this discourse because it places a high value on the profits they are able to generate from their farmlands, which in turn makes policies that favor these corporations favorable among the public. However, limiting discourse on the Val-

ley's wealth distribution to focus solely on the issue of water availability prevents any real discussion of alternative solutions and undermines irrigation's history of failure.

The Central Valley Project of 1933 and subsequent irrigation projects have attempted to spur a prosperous society in the Central Valley through irrigation. Unfortunately, these projects have only led to the hoarding of wealth by the owners of the Valley's farmlands, while the majority of the population continues to suffer from strengthening wealth inequalities. For example, agriculture in California has become a nearly \$50 billion industry, but the Valley continues to have among the highest child poverty rates in California. Irrigation has proven itself to be incapable of solving wealth inequality in the Valley, which is not surprising when considering that technology is inefficient at changing social structures on its own. Rather environmental technologies like irrigation only reinforce existing social structures that has led to the hoarding of resources by a smaller group of people. (Lopez-Calvo 18) A humanist approach needs to be applied to irrigation and agriculture to prevent the constant re-

production of the Valley's oppressive social structure. In order to do so, it is vital we recognize the failure of irrigation to remedy the Valley's ills and consider real solutions like land redistribution.

Current discourse has blinded residents of the Valley to the realities of irrigation making the Delta Tunnels appear to be the solution to their financial ills. Convincing them otherwise and achieving serious reform to combat wealth inequality in the Valley requires alternative solutions to enter the discourse first. Land redistribution once popular in the Valley during the 1960s/1970s was championed by National Land for People (NLP). Founded by George Ballis of the United Farm Workers, the NLP fought valiantly for land redistribution in the Valley until the group dissolved in 1982. (Carlisle-Cummins) The appeal of land redistribution is increasingly seen as a fantasy as the discourse on neoliberalism continues to strengthen. Only after alternative solutions like land redistribution have entered the discourse will it be possible to have a serious discussion on how to solve the Valley's wealth disparities.



Photo: Billboard showing high rate of medi-cal in Merced County (California Endowment)

A CALL FOR PRISON ABOLITION BEYOND AB-32

By: May Yang

Predoctoral Fellow, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

California is set to ban private for-profit prisons including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centers with the recent passing of Assembly Bill 32 on September 11, 2019. Sixty-five California State Assembly members voted in favor of AB-32 with the expected signature of approval by Governor Gavin Newsom, but the question remains as to how this bill will affect the lives of prisoners and immigrants who are currently detained and being 'processed' within these centers. The bill prohibits the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) from entering into or renewing contracts with private for-profit prisons after January 1, 2020. It is set to eliminate the current use of these private detention facilities by January 1, 2028 and prohibits their future use in California, "except when specified."

"This exception in AB-32 evidences how neoliberal policies flourish within California's western frontier."

This exception in AB-32 evidences how neoliberal policies flourish within California's western frontier. The bill foregrounds an imaginative geography of

liberalism which seemingly refuses participation with for-profit prison corporations, while also creating an indeterminate state of exception that potentiates a maintenance of neoliberal economic policies. For example, Senate Amendments include allowing the "CDCR to renew or extend contracts with private for-profit prisons if needed to comply with any court-ordered population caps," and that "the prohibition does not apply to facilities providing evaluation or treatment services to a person who has been detained, or is subject to an order of commitment by a court," or any "school facility used for the disciplinary detention of a pupil."² At face value the bill appears as a wholesale solution to prison reform. However, it doesn't account for the lives that live and pass through these sites of abjection and states of exception. AB 32 is an attempt to untangle the bond between private for-profit corporations and California's prisons and detention centers but it does not undo or reform institutionalized forms of discipline and punishment which utilize spatialized segregation as a method of containing those interpolated as unlawful or illegal. How then, do we procure livability for those lives affected by state apparatuses of discipline and punishment in this watershed moment in California's legal history?

AB-32, if signed, will go into effect January 1, 2020. The contracts for four private prisons are set to expire by 2023,³ and under AB-32 the four large detention centers with the combined capacity to hold up to 4500 people will be forced to shut down in five years. News outlets such as The Guardian and U.S. Newsweek reported this as a victory for criminal justice reform and immigrant advocacy groups. However, these narratives fail to address the continued structural and institutional reform needed to provide equitable conditions of living for affected persons. In as much as neoliberalism imagines the prison and the detention center to be the space that justifiably contains unlawful or illegal persons, the American public must be ready to accept the larger challenge – to recognize how these spaces are part of a larger structure of violence persons, the American public must be ready to accept the larger challenge – to recognize how these spaces are part of a larger structure of violence aimed at the abjection and destruction of peoples based on their race, gender and citizenship status. Michel Foucault argues that institutional law and state sovereignty are only the terminal forms that power takes.

Rather than understanding law and sovereignty as hierarchies

“What we have to reckon with is the ideological narrative that has been fixed onto the prisoner and immigrant body constructing them as a threat to the U.S. social body.”

of power, we must consider how power works through multiple relations of forces exercised through state apparatuses such as the prison industrial complex. These relations of forces of discipline and punishment are not only located within prisons and detention centers, but are exercised in everyday life by everyday people. The criminal or illegal is discursively produced through the social body allowing for legal measures to then be brought onto their bodies through the logic of justice. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina we witness how news media and conservative weblogs criminalized African American victims as “looters” who were stealing from abandoned grocery stores. On the other hand, whites were humanized as having “found” resources for survival.⁵ As Lisa Marie Cacho has argued, we must be cognizant of the fact that racial stereotypes are not accidental but are an apparatus of the logic within racialized violence that we must undo and reform. We must be critical of how U.S. sovereignty exercises necropolitical violence in tandem with neoliberal policies throughout everyday life. More importantly, we must be critically aware of how we as citizens participate in violence by sanctioning practices of racialized securitization through policing and border control.

“The perception of the existence of the Other as an attempt on my life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen my potential to life and security – this, I suggest, is one of the many imaginaries of sovereignty...” – Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics”

What we have to reckon with is the ideological narrative that has been fixed onto the prisoner and immigrant body

constructing them as a threat to the U.S. social body. In his article on necropolitics, Achille Mbembe argues that necropower operates spatially, dividing and compartmentalizing territory through forces such as policing.⁶ Furthermore, “national identity is imagined as an identity against the Other.”⁷ Mbembe’s concept of necropower positions us to account for the ways weapons are used to destroy people through the creation of death-worlds. Death-worlds are spaces of social existence produced through the violent force of sovereign power, wherein politics is the action of death-making. This is evidenced in sites such as the prison and the detention center subjecting persons into a status of what Mbembe terms as the living dead.⁸ This form of social death, wherein prisoners and detainees are not afforded the same rights and liberties as “free citizens,” bars them from full recognition as human in the eyes of the law and the social body of sovereignty.

The question now is to consider how U.S. sovereignty is able to exercise this kind of violence, and the answer lies in the fact that sovereignty itself is the exercise of violence. Texas, California, and Arizona are the top three states to detain the most immigrants, with California holding up to 6,527 detainees per day.⁹ Over 60 percent of people across the U.S. are detained in privately-run prisons by corporations such as GEO Group and Corrections Corporation of America/Core Civic.¹⁰ In the heart of the Central Valley, Fresno holds its very own ICE Office on 733 L Street. Lizbeth Abeln of the Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice argues, “[W]hat Ice does is they locate in these very poor and remote areas. The private prison comes in and lobbies and promises jobs, and tax

money.”¹¹ Fresno is ranked as 15th in the nation for people living in poverty where approximately 80 percent of people do not hold a bachelor’s degree.¹² Not only are prisoners’ and detainees’ lives in the mix of this violence but also the lives of low-income locals who have been systematically barred from fair access to education. At the heart of the Central Valley, with concentrations of prisons and budding ICE detention centers, we witness the detritus of neoliberal California. Wedged between a multi-billion-dollar Silicon Valley and the dreamscape stardust of Los Angeles is the evidence of sovereign violence at work.

It is at this meeting place between the carceral state, xenophobia, and regional disenfranchisement that we must begin the work of abolition. Abolition begins through the recognition that our lives, part and parcel to sovereign power, must undo the violent conditions of sovereign power. Can we imagine and procure a collective livability that refuses to reproduce the trauma of necropolitical containment and the segregation of lives? Angela Davis argues that the ideological work performed by the prison industrial complex is to “relieve us of the responsibility of seriously engaging with problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism.”¹³ Davis and Ruth Gilmore assert that the prison is presented as a solution to socio-economic problems, imagined to provide value, jobs and economic development to rural and low-income geographic sites. I propose that we shift our critical imagination towards the development of K-12 education in low-income residencies as part of this abolitionist project.



On the Frontline: Arts in Hong Kong Protest

By: Kuan-ying “Gwen” Kuo

Ph.D. Candidate, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

On August 19th, artist Sanmu Chan walked by the Lo Wu station, a northern stop on the Hong Kong MTR east rail-line, more than two policemen came to him unexpectedly, grabbed his arms taking him sitting in a car parked on the sidewalk. Chan was brought to the police station in Shenzhen, a city of mainland China and yet adjacent to Hong Kong in less than a five-minute train ride. For nearly eight hours, two officers overwhelmed Chan with aggressive crossquestioning about his political stance, forcing him to reveal the details of his friends and personal activities. Being accused of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” a crime subjected to a maximum five-year sentence, Chan could not be free until he signed a document stating that he will not participate in any illegal assembly.

Sanmu Chan, a Hong Kong-based, Beijing-born art curator and performance artist, is not the only one encountering threats and white terror from China in recent months. Chan owned a nonprofit cultural space, the Green Wave

Art, hosting exhibitions, live performances, and book readings. But in April, the Green Wave Art was forced to shut down by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council claiming that the space failed to pass a license for public “entertainment.” The community members, however, believe it is a political censorship, particularly of an upcoming exhibition memorizing the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest, which was planned for months with supports from Hong Kong citizens and expected to open on June 4th.



Photo: Anonymous. “Be Water.” Poster. © Image courtesy of anonymous artist via Telegram.

Ideally, art is a form of free speech and self-expression, but the sudden closing of the Green Wave Art and Sanmu Chan's detention in less than two months expose an ongoing, intensifying censorship and surveillance on contemporary Chinese art scene, corresponding to a sensitive time when Hong Kong pro-democratic protest has lasted for more than three months and gets even heated. To address his dissent about the shrinking space for artistic expression, Chan installs a wood sculpture with a thumb-down gesture outside of the police station. This outdoor installation attracts public attention and his criticism against the authority has gained volume as the incidents of police brutality increases. Chan's disparaging gesture freezes as a sculpture, in dialogue with a photography by Ai Weiwei, another artist and a high-profile humanrights activist, also known as the conscience voice of China.

In Ai Weiwei's photography, *the Study of Perspective: Tiananmen*, Ai Weiwei points his middle finger toward the gate to the Forbidden City, a site of power where a portrait of the Chinese Communist Party chairman hangs on the wall. The artist's provocative gesture substitutes the traditional architect's "thumb on forearm" to measure the subject.

"Ideally, art is a form of free speech and self-expression"

Ai Weiwei's arm extends across the Tiananmen square, a place that witnessed a three-month-long peaceful, prodemocratic student movement that turned into a brutal massacre on June 4th, 1989. Silently delivering the artist's implicit anger, this photo indicates an anti-totalitarian viewpoint: the massacre is unforgettable and unforgivable.

And now, Ai Weiwei supports Hongkongers' pro-democratic determination through his action. Though Ai personally is in exile after his imprisonment by China a few years ago, he organizes a team to document the protest and updates on his social media. He concerns the PLA (China's People Liberation Army) has mixed in Hong Kong undercover police force, and has infiltrated in the protest and created incidents to escalate violence. "This has already been demonstrated in 1989 when tanks were sent in to crush the non-violent student protests," Ai Weiwei told the BBC in a radio interview. "After 1989, the Chinese state faced no serious repercussions for their actions when the West failed to enact sanctions.

The Tiananmen Square tragedy has been rooted in the minds of Ai Weiwei and many contemporary Chinese artists, and has motivated them consciously to engage in the international occasions and voice out against tyranny, pursuing the free speech and artistic expression.

This freedom that millions of Hongkongers took to the street fighting for, has shown on various artworks circulating around and promoting the movements. A poster plays around the symbols of the "mind the gap" sign in the subway, which now refers to a suspicious mob attack at the Yuen Long metro station on July 21st when over one hundred armed men in white shirts indiscriminately attacking passersby and caused forty-five people injury, including elders and a pregnant woman. Controversially, the police arrived on the site with more than thirty minutes' delay and the mob was gone. This implies the authority being complicit and even encouraging the violence.

"Be Water," another widespread poster reads, a quote from Bruce Lee's martial art philosophy suggests the protesters always adapt to the situation, going with the flow in the rally to evade the enemy's control, and being undefeatable as a tactic of this heedless movement. By a busy entrance on the highway Lung Cheung road, a graffiti text boldly appears on a concrete wall: "7k for a house like a cell and you really think we out here scared of jail?" clearly expresses young Hongkongers' frustration toward the drastic increasing gap between housing price and average wage.

The authors of these posters are anonymous. This anonymity shows some hints about how the authority tries to create white terror toward the protesters through overreaching surveillance cameras and digital systems intimidating people to speak their minds. But the longing for freedom and self-expression is unstoppable. The paranoid reaction toward the pro-democratic protest, in fact, reflects the authority's fear that the contagion of free speech would eventually trigger the collapse of a totalitarian state. To credit the authors of these posters is no longer the most important issue, because these artists are all becoming water, merging together and flowing toward a better future. The art itself speaks a human language for freedom.



Figure 1: Palefsky (left) explaining dental analysis and inventory procedures with Silpakorn University undergraduate mentee Kaewsiri Devanwaropakorn (right) at the archaeological site of Ban Pong Manao in 2018.



REFLECTIONS ON A RECENT PUBLICATION:

COLLECTING WILD EDIBLE PLANTS IN CENTRAL THAILAND

By: Gina Palefsky

Ph.D. Candidate, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

As an archaeologist, I am interested in understanding the lived experiences of past peoples. My research focuses on food as a locus of social identity during the prehistoric Metal Age in central Thailand (c. 1100 BCE – CE 500). During this time, central Thailand was a hub for local and long-distance trade, and populations experienced influxes of non-local peoples, goods, and ideas that transformed the social fabric of daily life. I am interested in understanding how the consumption of specific crops and categories of foods—especially wild endemic plants and species introduced through immigration, trade, and exchange—may have recursively shaped social boundaries and community identities.

I use a combination of field- and laboratory-based analyses of archaeological materials to investigate foodways. Chemical signatures of the foods a person consumes become incorporated into bones and teeth, recording an individual's dietary history across the lifetime. Similarly, radiogenic strontium isotopes, derived from a location's underlying bedrock, provide information about a person's region of residence during the time of hard tissue formation. My research explores how foodways changed over the course of individual lifetimes and between generations and considers how these changes may be related to patterns of non-local immigration to the region.

“some of my favorite fieldwork memories now revolve around times spent cooking wild plants that may have been familiar to the ancient peoples of central Thailand.”

During my graduate studies, with support from the UC Merced Center for the Humanities, I have spent a portion of each summer in central Thailand analyzing ancient human skeletal remains to reconstruct basic demographic profiles (e.g., biological sex and chronological age), identify dental and skeletal pathologies (bone fractures, dental caries, etc.) and document cultural modifications of the body (intentional tooth ablation) in museum and field storage facilities (Figure 1). This summer, thanks to the Lewis and Clark Fund for Exploration and Field Research, my days started before the sun arose, foraging wild edible plants in the fields on my host family's farm (Figure 2), and talking to community elders who collect wild foods to sell at local markets (Figure 3). Wild foraged foods are a significant component of contemporary Thai food traditions, particularly in rural regions, and serve as an important buffer against food scarcity during droughts and other agricultural calamities. Many elders were happy to share their traditional knowledge about



Figure 2: Collecting wild star gooseberries (*Phyllanthus acidus*).

collecting and preparing edible wild foods, and some of my favorite fieldwork memories now revolve around times spent cooking wild plants that may have been familiar to the ancient peoples of central Thailand. By the end of fieldwork this year, I collected and prepared samples representing more than 100 wild edible plant species that will serve a twofold purpose for my dissertation research. First, chemical analyses of plant samples will provide important baseline information, making it possible to contextualize and interpret long term trends in human foodways in this region. Second, plant samples will be used to build a reference collection for the analysis of dental calculus phytoliths, the microscopic plant fossils that become trapped in dental plaque. The reference collection will enable this research to identify the consumption of specific genera and/or species of plants, including newly-introduced crops and foraged plant foods during the Metal Age in central Thailand.

The results of this analysis were published in the August 2019 volume of the *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* (DOI: 10.1002/oa.2766).



Figure 3: Vendors at the Lopburi Municipal Market selling vegetables, including many wild foraged plants.

MY SUMMER IN MUSEUMS

By: Alyson Caine

Ph.D. Candidate, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

“

My research aims to understand if and how migrant status intersects with social status in ancient Egyptian skeletal collections.

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Over the summer I collected data from two of three of the sites I will use for my dissertation. My research focuses on three Egyptian sites, Thebes, Lisht, and Naga-ed-Dêr, which are all museum legacy collections. Legacy collections are archaeological material that was been collected by a known individual, curated, and housed within a museum previous to modern curation standards. These collections are frequently missing contextual information and lack the resources for proper preservation and documentation. The three sites included in my dissertation research comprise a sample size of approximately 850 individuals all with incomplete contextual backgrounds. This summer I visited two collections, Naga-ed-Dêr and Lisht, curated at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and National Museum of Natural History, respectively.

I started my summer at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (PAHMA) at Berkeley, California. While visiting the Hearst, I conducted macroscopic analyses of individuals which included looking for normal variants in teeth and cranial features. For approximately one month I assessed

and recorded a variety of features from a total of 187 individuals that were excavated from the Naga-ed-Dêr cemetery. Where possible, age, sex, and evidence of disease were also recorded to further contextualize the individual experiences of these people. In my time at the PAHMA, I was able to complete data collection for all the individuals within the scope of my research.

Following my work at the Hearst, I traveled to Washington D.C. to conduct data collection of individuals from Lisht cemetery housed at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), Smithsonian Institute. The same methods were used for Lisht individuals as those used for individuals from Naga-ed-Dêr cemetery. During my month of data collection at the Smithsonian, I was able to observe 177 of the 515 individuals excavated from the Lisht cemetery. In the spring, I will be traveling to Los Angeles to present the data I collected at annual anthropology meetings, American Association of Physical Anthropologists and Paleopathology Association.

During the summer of 2019, I was able to complete approximately a third of the data collection nec-

essary for my dissertation. With support from the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City, I will be continuing data collection next summer analyzing individuals from Thebes cemetery, curated at the AMNH. I will also return to Washington D.C. again to analyze more individuals from Lisht cemetery, curated at the NMNH. I am hoping that by the end of next summer I will have more than half of my data collected and can begin writing my dissertation.

“

“During the summer of 2019, I was able to complete approximately a third of the data collection necessary for my dissertation.

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WHY COLORADO?

By: Angelica N. Garcia

3rd Year Graduate Student

Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

There are many wonderful states in the American Southwest, which boast beautiful landscapes, unique cultures, and rich histories. My graduate research focuses on the mountainous state of Colorado. I have traveled multiple times to this state, and every single time I have found something new in its historical landscape. There is more to Colorado than its cities, national parks and tourist traps. Colorado, its natural resources and people, were and continue to be vital to the growth and stability of the United States. Natural resources such as gold, silver, copper, and coal have been mined in Colorado since the nineteenth century. The mining industry in Colorado was powerful and made the state

into what it is today. I explore the change of the built environment in the U.S. Southwest, and I have chosen to focus on Colorado, because of its urban transformation prompted by the forces of industrial capitalism. I believe the state of Colorado is incredibly important for what I want to accomplish in my graduate work. Not only is the state important academically, it holds a special place in my heart. I have traveled down abandoned roads, walked along the coal miners' route, trudged through snow, wandered through cemeteries in blazing heat, hiked multiple nature trails, toured countless museums, and have walked in the footsteps of men and women who built Colorado.

“I explore the change of the built environment in the U.S. Southwest, and I have chosen to focus on Colorado, because of its urban transformation prompted by the forces of industrial capitalism.”

Short message from the LATINX GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

By: Lorraine Ramos & Laura Gomez

4th Year Graduate Students, Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Group

“Latinx (l - tē- neks): of, relating to, or marked by Latin American heritage –used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina.” - Merriam-Webster (2018)

Founded in 2016, the Latinx Graduate Student Association (also known as LGSA) is a graduate student-led organization of Latinx scholars who support one another through the graduate school journey here at UC Merced. Designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in 2010 by the U.S Department of Education, UC Merced enrolls 54.7% of Latino/a undergraduates¹. At the undergraduate level, Latinx students are well represented however the same cannot be said about latinx students in graduate programs.

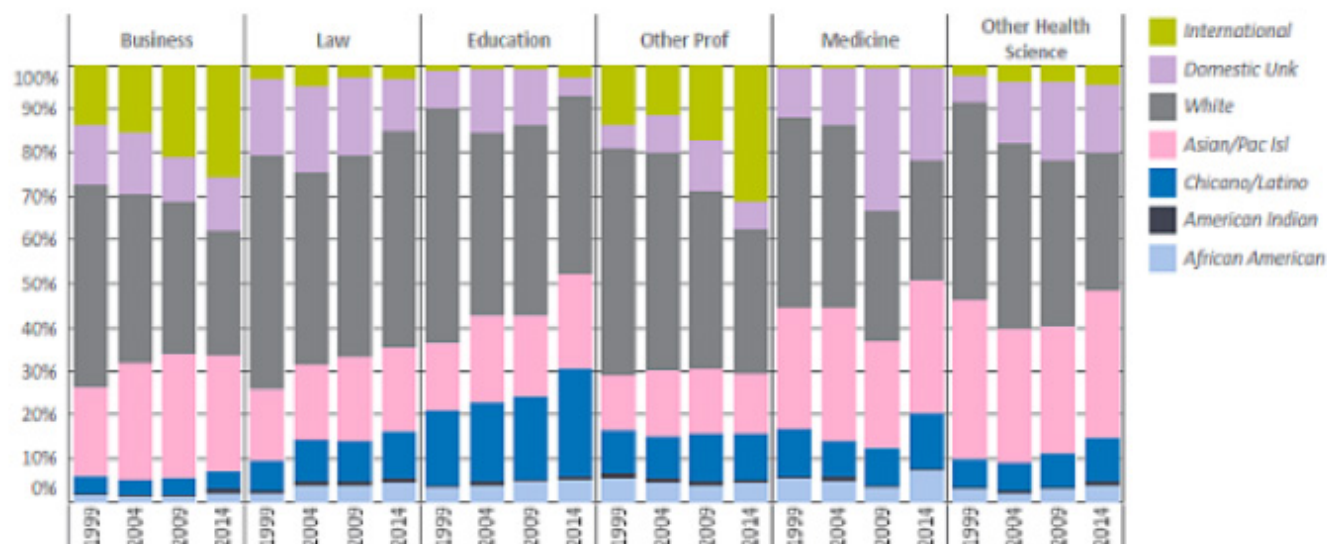
According to the 2015 University of California Accountability Report² (pictured below), Chicano/a and Latino/a students and African-American students remain underrepresented in UC graduate programs. With only 7% of Ph.D.s awarded to African-Americans, and 7% Ph.D.s awarded to Latinos/as, and less than 1% Ph.D.s awarded to American American and Alaskan Native³. LGSA hopes to serve as a space to engage in critical discussions about our futures as professionals and academics in addition to providing a source of strength and camaraderie as we negotiate our roles as mentors to the 54.7% of Latinx undergraduates attending UC Merced.

As Latinx scholars, LGSA seeks to facilitate a network

of academics and professionals dedicated to the upliftment of the the Latinx community through scholarship and community engagement. As an academic collective we build camaraderie to survive the ivory tower that continues to marginalize Latinx scholars, Latinx students, and Latinx educators.

Along with the weekly workspace (every Wednesday from 3:00- 4:00 p.m. in COB 190) this fall, LGSA will host the annual Latinx Research Symposium (November 14th, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.). This research symposium is open to all UC and CalState students, graduate and undergraduate. This year’s theme, “Public Research: Academics, the Public, and Social Responsibility” asks researchers to reimagine their academic production as public works/projects. In accordance with the conference theme LGSA seeks submissions that examine the relationship between academics, the public, and social responsibility. Inspired by Gloria Anzaldua’s insight on Latinx and queer double consciousness¹, we ask that submissions contend with the capacity of academic traditions to “hold us back with their bag of reglas de academia”². Open to all community members, this symposium invites academics to consider their work within its broader impacts and potential applications.

7.2.3 Racial/ethnic distribution of graduate professional degree students, by discipline, Universitywide, Fall 1999 to fall 2014 (selected years)



- Call For Papers -



2019 LATINX RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Public Research: Academics, the Public, and Social Responsibility

Date: *TBD. See details below.

The Latinx Graduate Student Association, a student-led organization, welcomes proposals for the 2nd Annual Latinx Research Symposium at the University of California, Merced, on November 8, 2019. This year's theme, "Public Research: Academics, the Public, and Social Responsibility" asks researchers to reimagine their academic production as public works/projects.

As a network of Latinx scholars, LGSA's Research Symposium seeks to highlight the work of Latinx graduate students and undergraduate students across academic disciplines. In accordance with the conference theme **Public Research**, LGSA seeks submissions that examine the relationship between academics, the public, and social responsibility. Inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa's insight on Latinx and queer double consciousness,¹ we ask that submissions contend with the capacity of academic traditions to "hold us back with their bag of *reglas de academia*."² Open to all community members, this symposium asks academics to consider their work within its broader impacts and potential applications.

The 2019 Latinx Research Symposium welcomes all disciplinary traditions and interdisciplinary approaches. This Research Symposium invites graduate students and encourages undergraduate applicants. Suggested topics include:

interdisciplinary humanities	economics	environmental systems	sociology
public health	electrical engineering & computer science		political science
mechanical engineering	applied mathematics	psychological sciences	physics

We encourage applicants to consider the following formats: traditional panels, lightning sessions, roundtables, individual presentations, and poster-boards. For complete panels, please submit a **200-word panel abstract and 150-word individual abstract**. For individual submissions, please submit a **300-word abstract**.

The original October 18 deadline has been extended until further notice.

For more information or to submit an abstract, please email lgsaucm@gmail.com

¹ Du Bois, W. E. B. 1968. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Chicago, A.g. McClurg, 1903. Basic Afro-American Reprint Library. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp.

² Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. 1987.

7th Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Student Conference

“The Production of Space & its Interdisciplinary Study”

APRIL 3-4, 2020 | UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

The Planning Committee for the 2020 Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Conference is excited to share the conference's Call for Papers. The theme of the 2020 IH Grad Conference is “The Production of Space and its Interdisciplinary Study.” This theme draws upon the ideas of Henri Lefebvre in his work *The Production of Space*. We hope to see this theme approached from many perspectives and encourage submissions expanding the idea of space. Our goal is to engage in discussions with the goal of creating a space for interdisciplinary collaborations and discussions. As always, submissions which address the theme are strongly encouraged, but all abstracts will be considered regardless of their connection to the theme.

The 2020 IH Grad Conference will be held April 3-4, 2020 at UC Merced. Please see the attached Call for Papers for submission requirements and additional information. Help us make this conference a success by submitting an abstract and presenting your research. We are looking forward to a wonderful conference. Questions may be sent to ihgradconference@ucmerced.edu.



Photo: “The Proverbial University: Race, Surveillance, and Resistance” panel at the 6th Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Student Conference at the University of California, Merced.

Call for Papers: IH Graduate Conference 2020

Conference Theme: The Production of Space and its Interdisciplinary Study.

“If space is a product, our knowledge of it must be expected to reproduce and expound the process of production. The ‘object’ of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*.”

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*

When: April 3-4, 2020

Where: University of California, Merced

The IH Graduate Students are pleased to announce the 7th Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Conference. The Conference Committee invites submissions of abstracts from all students conducting research in the humanities, with an emphasis on graduate research. Abstract proposals which address this year’s theme are strongly encouraged, but all submissions, regardless of region, temporality, or discipline, will be considered. Submissions may take the form of individual presentations, research posters, and panel discussions. Additionally, some presenters may be invited to participate in roundtable discussions.

To be considered, submit a 300-word abstract by the January 5, 2020 deadline. Please email the abstract with a brief author bio to ihgradconference@ucmerced.edu. Abstracts should also indicate the A/V and technology requests for your presentation. Panel proposals should include at least three abstracts and the corresponding author bios with a brief explanation (300 words or less) of the overall theme of the panel.

NEWS & UPDATES

October 8, 2019, IHGG Admissions & Fellowships Graduate Representative, Laura Gomez, facilitated a workshop on fellowship applications. Laura shared information on upcoming fellowship opportunities and discussed the formation of a “Fellowship Friday” writing group. Please contact a Grad Rep for more information on the fellowship writing group.



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A PODCAST BY THE INTERDISCIPLINARY HUMANITIES GRADUATE GROUP
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED.

TWENTY MINUTE EPISODES THAT BLEND HUMANIST RESEARCH WITH SHORT INTERVIEWS.

TUNE IN. SPRING 2020. DETAILS COMING SOON.

