

FORUM

SPRING
2021

COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES



Mason's Institute for Immigration Research

Inserting facts into the public conversation
on immigration

IN THIS ISSUE: GRADUATING STUDENTS • RESEARCH • CAREER • TEACHING • COMMUNITY



Greetings, College of Humanities and Social Sciences community!

When I came to Mason in August 2018, Robinson Hall A was still standing, robots weren't delivering food throughout campus and the surrounding community, and Amazon hadn't yet committed to bringing its second headquarters to Northern Virginia.

Fast forward to now: The Fairfax Campus's newest building, Horizon Hall, opened in late January. Our move into the third-through-sixth floors of the building will be complete before this second issue of our new zine is in your hands or available digitally on your phone. The demolition of Robinson Hall B is underway. Renovations of Harris Theatre will begin soon. The transformation of Wilkins Plaza, encompassing the Enslaved People of George Mason Memorial that is both inspired and informed by archival research undertaken by CHSS faculty and Office of Student Scholarship, Creative Activities, and Research students, will be complete by fall 2021. And a student-designed visual tribute to Black Lives Matter is a new fixture on Patriot Circle near Peterson Family Health Sciences Hall.

These physical transformations to the heart of the Fairfax Campus have been underway during COVID-19—and have proceeded either in spite or because of the crucible of interrelated global pandemics our university, this country, and the world have been grappling with since at least last March. So, as I look through the pages of this issue of *Horizon*, my overall feeling is one of *hope*.

Hope in the promise of COVID-19 vaccines and the prospect that these will enable Mason's campuses to once again serve as thriving centers of in-person learning, research, and community engagement activity. Hope in our faculty's inspiring work with students, colleagues, and community members—whether this work is taking place in virtual activities that reach global audiences or in place-based teaching and research activities on our campuses in Northern Virginia and Korea. Hope in the accomplishments of our most recent graduates, who prevailed through one of the most difficult years imaginable and graduated despite it all.

Mason prides itself on being a place of innovation, committed to creating a more just, free, and prosperous world. You will find ample evidence of how our faculty, students, and alumni realize and embody these institutional commitments as you read this issue of *Horizon*.

I take this opportunity to thank not only our faculty but also our staff, students, alumni, partners, donors, and advisory board members for everything you do to support this college's education, research, and public service mission.

With all good wishes,

Ann Ardis

Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

ON THE COVER

The world map in Horizon Hall is oriented "South-up," with the George Mason motto, "Freedom and Learning," displayed in the many languages spoken in the Mason community. The text interacts with light and shadow to embrace ideas of perspective, change, transformation, and different ways of seeing.

Photo by Evan Cantwell

HORIZON, SPRING 2021



The College of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Erratum: The summer 2020 edition of *Horizon* noted that 2019 Mason Winter Graduation speaker **Zainab Salbi**, BIS '96, "came to Mason as an Iranian immigrant." Ms. Salbi immigrated to the United States from Iraq. We apologize for our error.

A CLASSIC PEDAGOGY FITS A MODERN TECHNOLOGY

COVID-19's disruptions to teaching and learning demanded innovative ways to engage students online. In fall 2020, **Charles Garrettson**, assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies, found success through an ancient pedagogy with the two sections of RELI 100 that he taught remotely: the Socratic method.

In the Socratic method, named for Greek philosopher Socrates (470–399 BCE), an instructor structures a dialogue with students through a series of probing questions. Class discussion helps students understand both their fundamental beliefs and course concepts more completely.

“In a religion class, maybe the first question I’ll ask is ‘What is religion?’” Garrettson explains. “You’ll get silence until finally someone brave enough [suggests an answer]. I will respond with asking *more* questions, so of course it’s very intense the first time. The students aren’t sure what to think.”

With support from the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning, Garrettson found ways to vary the structure of his classes. “It wasn’t just us talking,” he says. “I also allowed a chat function, so shy students could feel better—I hope—about engaging. And we had a breakout group and, again, those went really well.”

Despite initial uncertainty about online teaching, Garrettson was pleased to find that most of the students reacted very favorably to the discussion-based classes. “The point is to get the students to recognize that they are capable of thinking for themselves,” he says. “It’s not just about critical thinking skills and it’s not just about the topic, but it’s also about them and their own self-worth. Isn’t that what liberal arts education should be doing?”



GETTY IMAGES

WATERSHED LIT: A HOME FOR MASON CREATIVE WRITING'S PUBLISHING AND LITERARY ENDEAVORS

Watershed Lit: Center for Literary Engagement and Publishing Practice represents a commitment to the dynamic ways that literature connects people and to students' professional development in a rapidly changing world.

“Students come to Mason to push their craft and study with our excellent faculty,” says **Gregg Wilhelm**, director of Mason Creative Writing. “But if they graduate from the program without being more thoroughly prepared for the job market, we think that’s a disservice. The many ways students can get involved with Watershed Lit make for unique experiential-learning, resume-building opportunities.”

Watershed Lit harnesses synergies from initiatives that have sprung from Mason Creative Writing since the establishment of the MFA program in 1980: Fall for the Book, a nationally prominent literary festival; Stillhouse Press, a literary imprint and “teaching press”; the Cheuse Center, which brings international writers to campus and supports students' international research; *Poetry Daily*, an online anthology of contemporary poetry; the Northern Virginia Writing Project and its Writers in the

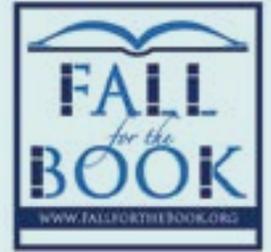
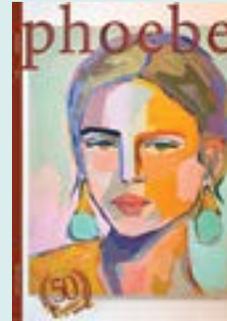
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Schools program; and two highly regarded literary journals, *So to Speak* and *phoebe*.

“The center can make a huge impact in the literary world in general,” says **Debra Lattanzi Shutika**, chair of the Department of English and the center’s inaugural director. “It’s a completely public-facing project. Everything that we do interfaces with a constituency outside of campus, so it’s an opportunity for students to think about the world of literature in a much broader context than what you see in the classroom.”

“There’s literally nothing like this in U.S. higher ed,” says Wilhelm.



OPENING DOORS FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS: JANE FLINN NOTES A MILESTONE WITH GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Jane Flinn has a fascination with the brain that she has shared with Mason students for more than 50 years.

Her work has left a lasting mark on the psychology program, the university, and of course, the students she has trained. Her service to the department, where she has taught since 1974, has been distinguished. Since 2016, she has served as the director of

Mason’s Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience Program; from 1995 to 2006 she directed that program’s predecessor, the Biopsychology Program. From 2006 to 2016 she was the director of the undergraduate Neuroscience Program.

She also served as the Psychology Department chair from 1984 to 1995.

Along the way, she has received the David J. King Teaching Award, the University

Mentoring Award, and the Distinguished Faculty Award, which she was awarded twice.

Flinn helped create Mason’s doctoral program in psychology. Launched as a PsyD, it was one of the university’s first two doctoral programs, and she later spurred its conversion to a PhD program. During her tenure as chair, she reintroduced master’s degrees in psychology, led the move to create specialties within the MA program, and introduced the accelerated master’s degree in cognitive and behavioral neuroscience. She hired many of the faculty members who have made Mason’s Psychology Department a leader in research for the university. Under her leadership, the *National Chronicle of Higher Education* recognized the department as one of the most improved programs in the country.

Susanne Denham, professor emerita, worked with Flinn for decades. “She exemplifies the tagline on her emails that reads ‘Make haste to be kind,’” she says.

Photos from Flinn’s career, compiled by the Department of Psychology for a virtual celebration of Mason’s Green and Gold University Day recognition.



CHSS Addresses Contemporary Societal Pressures with Advocacy, Action

PHOTO PROVIDED



SUPPORTING ESSENTIAL WORKERS

“It’s that commitment to the community, and really making sure that we’re reaching people who couldn’t otherwise access services—it’s just such a strong part of our mission.”

—**Robyn Mehlenbeck**, director of Mason’s Center for Psychological Services, speaking on FOX5 DC about the center’s free mental health support for essential workers. Between November 6 and mid-January, the program served nearly 60 callers, with 33 persons referred for further services (also free of charge).

PHOTO PROVIDED



POLITICAL STRUGGLE OVER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

“More than 50 years after the first affirmative action programs were adopted, it is still more popular to hoard opportunity than extend it to the greater collective. And this logic, if left unchallenged, will continue to decimate our democracy.”

—**Amaka Okechukwu**, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, in an *Inside Higher Ed* opinion on the failure of California voters to enact Proposition 16, an initiative that would have overturned a 24-year ban on affirmative action.

ACTION ITEMS FOR PROGRESS

“For the first time in decades, individuals and communities of all backgrounds are making a commitment to end silent complacency and complicity with discriminatory structures and practices.”

—**Christy Pichichero**, associate professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, in an article in *Authority Magazine* where she shares “5 Steps That Each of Us Can Take to Proactively Help Heal Our Country.”



PHOTO PROVIDED

PHOTO PROVIDED



AT THE FRONT LINE OF THE PANDEMIC

“Five floors below us, and descending to the fourth floor of the Lord Baltimore Hotel, the rooms are filled with local residents diagnosed with COVID-19, or people who are highly suspected of having the illness...shuttled here from all over the Baltimore area because they could not safely isolate.”

—**Gregg Wilhelm**, director of Mason Creative Writing, wrote a *Baltimore* magazine article about living in the Lord Baltimore Hotel during summer 2020, while his wife, Marik Moen, worked there at the ad hoc Triage Respite and Isolation Center.



Institute for Immigration Research Quantifies Immigrant Contributions

The Institute for Immigration Research (IIR) produces valid, reliable, and objective data on immigrants and immigration to the United States and disseminates this information through peer-reviewed academic journals and in print and digital formats that make the research easily accessible to policymakers, the media, the business community, and the general public.

Launched in 2012 with a generous donation from Diane Portnoy, founder and CEO of The Immigrant Learning Center Inc. (ILC), IIR operates as a joint venture between the ILC and George Mason University. The ILC is a nonprofit organization that provides year-round English classes to Boston-area immigrant and refugee adults as it strengthens students' leadership, problem-solving, and job skills. Portnoy herself arrived in the United States as a toddler with her parents on a converted battleship full of refugees at the end of World War II. She has a strong background in and commitment to adult education, as well as the ILC's mission to correct misinformation about the contributions of immigrants. IIR provides data to move that mission forward.

As the world combats the COVID-19 pandemic, IIR has illustrated the contributions of foreign-born scientists. Recent research into the development of a COVID-19 vaccine noted that immigrant scientists are playing an outsized role in the work of the biomedical industry. Despite representing 13 percent of the total U.S.

“Part of our mission is preparing the next generation of immigration scholars, and we take that very seriously.”

—**Michele Waslin**, IIR program coordinator

population, foreign-born workers make up 19 percent of all workers in the medical equipment and supplies manufacturing, pharmacies and drug stores (retail), and pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing sectors of the biomedical industry.

IIR’s concise, data-driven Immigration Data on Demand (iDod) reports, customized for individual and organizational requesters, also contribute to an understanding of immigrant populations in particular geographic regions. IIR has produced more than 200 iDod fact sheets, many of which are available in an online library at iir.gmu.edu.

These reports are a training tool for the students who work with the institute. “It’s a service of value for people who request them, but the students who work on iDod develop real skills,” says **James Witte**, sociology professor and IIR director. “They learn how to use geographic information systems and work with census data, and we place a real premium on quality through an internal data review process.”

The student contribution into the institute’s work “is something that sets us apart from other larger, non-academic immigration research institutes,” he adds.

“Part of our mission is preparing the next generation of immigration scholars, and we take that very

seriously,” says **Michele Waslin**, IIR’s program coordinator. “It’s teaching them quantitative and qualitative research skills, but also making sure that they are aware of other research, making sure that they’re aware of current events, and [of] what’s happening with immigrants and immigration policy.”



Above, IIR director James Witte speaks at the institute’s Immigrants and Community Colleges: Opportunities and Promise conference.

Left, Diane Portnoy, founder and CEO of The Immigrant Learning Center, talks with James Witte and Jane Censer, professor emerita in the Department of History and Art History.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE CENTER TO HIGHLIGHT HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Mason's university-wide Center for Humanities Research (CHR) launched in the fall to support and showcase humanities research, foster interdisciplinary research partnerships, enhance intellectual life on campus, and engage the public in dialogue over the importance of the humanities in the contemporary landscape.

"The humanities are more important now than ever as they provide a navigational tool for us to make sense of what's going on in the world and imagine a better future," says George Mason University president Gregory Washington. "This center makes humanities research visible and accessible to the campus and the broader community."

The college is partnering with the Office of the Provost in supporting the establishment of CHR. "This new center will offer faculty and students across the university the freedom to grow in ways they never imagined," says Provost Mark Ginsberg.

"This center offers the promise of engagement with the humanities for the entire Mason community," says Dean **Ann Ardis**. "We are deeply grateful for the inclusion of a Center for Humanities Research among Mason's university research centers, denoting the university's recognition of these disciplines' contributions to the vibrancy of George Mason University's intellectual community and community engagement activities."

CHR will serve as a research incubator, providing scholarly support and funding for faculty and graduate students, and as an intellectual hub for the entire Mason community encouraging research partnerships and collaborations and hosting conferences, lectures, workshops, reading groups, and working groups (see chr.gmu.edu for an overview of programming).

"Humanities research is normally solitary work," says **Alison Landsberg**, the center's inaugural director, who teaches in the Department of History and Art History and the Cultural Studies PhD Program. "Yet there is so much to be gained when we engage in intellectual exchange." Each semester CHR will support a cohort of residential fellows, all of whom are working on projects related to an annual theme. They will engage with each other and with the larger intellectual community about their research projects.

Landsberg said that CHR's theme for 2020–21 is "Dissent," inspired by the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020 and the passing of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. In the fall, CHR hosted a panel discussion with humanities center directors on "Humanities Centers as Sites of Dissent," and spring 2021 will bring more programming around the theme. CHR's leaders will encourage participation from across the university and among scholars at the regional and national levels. The center will also be a home for public humanities in Northern Virginia, establishing partnerships with Virginia Humanities and the Fairfax County Public Library, and engaging in projects with communities and constituencies in Virginia and the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area more broadly.

The center's steering committee reflects the breadth of Mason humanities research: **Denise Albanese**, Cultural Studies; **Maria Dakake**, Religious Studies; **Rachel Jones**, Philosophy; **Rachel Lewis**, Women and Gender Studies; **Matthew Karush**, History and Art History; **Kristina Olson**, Modern and Classical Languages; and **Debra Lattanzi Shutika**, English.

The Center for Humanities Research is located in Horizon Hall on Mason's Fairfax Campus.



Alison Landsberg



PHOTO BY EVAN CANTWELL

COMBATTING CLIMATE MISINFORMATION WITH A SMARTPHONE

John Cook, a research assistant professor at Mason's Center for Climate Change Communication, has developed a smartphone game that uses critical thinking and cartoons in the fight against dangerous climate change misinformation. Cook launched the *Cranky Uncle* game on December 15 after spending more than a decade studying different ways to counter misinformation. The game is available for free for iPhone and Android devices.

"Misinformation does great damage to society," Cook says. "An essential solution is making the public more resilient against fake news. But how? Gamification is a powerful approach that can potentially reach many millions of people."

The game uses a resilience-building technique known as active inoculation. In the game, players are mentored by a cartoon character, Cranky Uncle, who is dismissive of scientific evidence on climate change, vaccines, COVID-19, and other issues. As players learn the techniques used to deny science, they gain points on their quest to become a cranky uncle.

"If you want to learn how to spot someone cheating at cards, first you have to learn how to cheat at cards," explains Cook.

"Misinformation does great damage to society. An essential solution is making the public more resilient against fake news. But how? Gamification is a powerful approach that can potentially reach many millions of people."

—**John Cook**, Mason's Center for Climate Change Communication

Cook, who used to draw cartoons for a living before becoming a scientist, illustrated many of the cartoon depictions of logical fallacies. He called the cumulative impact of humor, cartoons, and games a powerful one that compels players into critical thinking through gameplay.

"The deeper a player gets into the game, the more resilient they become against misinformation," he says.

Cook is the founder of the Skeptical Science website (skepticalscience.com) and the lead author of a study that found 97 percent scientific consensus on climate change. He spent the last decade examining how to best counter climate science denial. His research, which focuses on the responses of high school seniors and college students, is designed to explain the techniques of denial to make the public more resilient against climate change misinformation.

Learn more about the game at crankyuncle.com.



John Cook

PHOTO BY WENDY COOK



PHOTO PROVIDED

ONLINE EXPERTISE, LEADERSHIP AT UMGC

Gregory Fowler, MA English '95, has been named president of University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC).

Fowler previously served as president of Southern New Hampshire University Global Campus. His 25-year career in higher education has focused on online, competency-based, and hybrid learning.

Following his graduation from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Fowler worked at the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in Washington, D.C. During that time, he earned his master's degree.

"My time at Mason came at a very formative period early in my career," says Fowler. "I attended Mason while I was working full time at NEH, where I was navigating the complexities of government funding of the arts and humanities. Mason gave me a new approach to how technology could enhance the learning experience—a key perspective that has informed my work in online education to this day."

Fowler became a lecturer and assistant professor in literature and American studies at Penn State



University–Erie while finishing his doctorate in English and American studies from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is a two-time Fulbright Senior Scholar and has held senior-level academic and administrative positions at Western Governors University and Hesser College. Fowler holds an MBA from Western Governors University and was a Charles A. Dana Scholar at Duke University. He is considered a leader in online education.

"Mason gave me a new approach to how technology could enhance the learning experience—a key perspective that has informed my work in online education to this day."

—**Gregory Fowler**, president, University of Maryland Global Campus



EXPERIENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN POLICING

Michael "Mike" Brown, PhD Criminology, Law and Society '19, has more than four decades of experience in public service, law enforcement, safety oversight, and public policy. He was appointed chief of the Alexandria Police Department in January 2017. Prior to his appointment, he held positions at the Office of Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the California Highway Patrol, and California's Business, Transportation, and Housing Agency.

Brown has a master's degree in criminal justice from California State University, Los Angeles, and

a master's in management from the California Polytechnic State University, Pomona. He currently serves as co-chair of the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Research Advisory Committee and is a member of the National Police Foundation's Board of Directors.

Over the years, Brown has been recognized as the law enforcement officer of the year by various organizations. He has lived in Alexandria, Virginia, since 2010 with his wife, Kirsten Knapp, who is a deputy sheriff with the Alexandria Sheriff's Office. He was recognized as the College of Humanities and Social Sciences' Distinguished Alumnus for 2020.



MASON AUTHOR GIVES VOICE TO GENERATIONS OF NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN

Despite the pandemic, 2020 was an amazing year for **Kelli Jo Ford**, MFA Creative Writing '07. In addition to being named to *O Magazine's* list of "Native American Authors to Read Right Now," Ford's debut novel, *Crooked Hallelujah*, was named one of the best books of 2020 by *Publishers Weekly* and was on the long list for the 2021 Carnegie Medal for Fiction, among other accolades.

Crooked Hallelujah is a novel in stories that follows four generations of Cherokee women over five decades. Ford discussed her book as part of this year's virtual Fall for the Book festival.

It isn't easy to launch a book in a pandemic, but Ford has been able to find a silver lining in the many virtual book talks and readings she has given.

"My mom and aunts get to attend as many of these readings as they want," says Ford. "And, on a normal book tour, I would have to be away from home." Home is in Richmond, Virginia, where Ford

lives with her husband and fellow MFA alumnus poet **Scott Weaver** and their 7-year-old daughter, Cypress.

Ford, who is a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, says she has "always been a scribbler" and wrote a lot of "really bad poetry" as a young person, but didn't start writing seriously until her late 20s.

The first in her family to graduate from college, Ford was a student at Loyola University New Orleans when one of her teachers told her she was better at fiction. She then found Mason's MFA program.

Ford says that she really didn't know a lot about getting an MFA when choosing Mason but found what she needed from her very first fiction workshop with author Richard Bausch, who was the Heritage Professor of Writing at Mason at the time. The world in *Crooked Hallelujah* is one that Ford found herself creating from that very first fiction class.

EXERCISING LEADERSHIP TO CHAMPION DIVERSE VOICES

Torey Carter-Conneen, BA Economics '06, joined the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in September 2020 as chief executive officer. ASLA is a community of nearly 15,000 members whose mission is to advance landscape architecture through advocacy, communication, education, and fellowship.

Carter-Conneen's goal in leading ASLA is to expand the profession to underrepresented groups and diverse communities. He is especially attuned to the importance of cultivating diversity by championing diverse voices. He is committed to mission-driven work that enables transformation through service. This passion has driven his career; he has served in executive leadership roles with the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Center for American Progress, the LGBTQ Victory Fund and Institute, and MV Transportation.

Carter-Conneen credits Mason for engaging his interest in economics and developing his path as a

leader. He sees our world's dramatic change as an opportunity to reshape the discourse from every facet of our lives, both professional and personal. His advice for students and young alumni comes from a theme in John Meacham's *The Soul of America*: "We have been through tough times like these before and we get through them with tenacity and optimism, qualities Mason students come by naturally."

In addition to his work with ASLA, he is a volunteer member of ASAE's Executive Management Professional Advisory Council and a board member for Shepherd's Table, a community organization providing food and support to people in need. Carter-Conneen's focus on creating healthy, equitable, and safe environments is also part of the legacy he hopes to leave for his children, Drew and Aiden, whom he raises with his husband, Mike.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASLA

CHSS CELEBRATES THE CLASS OF 2020

In December 2020, CHSS joined George Mason University in a virtual degree celebration for its graduating students. Recognizing this “class like no other,” Dean **Ann Ardis** congratulated the graduates on their determined dedication to their studies and their perseverance in engaging with their learning opportunities during a challenging time.

The college saluted its students through a virtual web celebration and in its social media channels, and welcomes them to the community of CHSS alumni!



PHOTOS PROVIDED



NEW BOOKS FROM THE CHSS COMMUNITY

The City of Good Death

Priyanka Champaneri, BA English '05, MFA Creative Writing '10, has written a debut novel that was named winner of the 2018 Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing. Released in February 2021, *The City of Good Death* brings the reader into India's holy city of Banaras, where the manager of a death hostel shepherds the dying who seek the release of a good death, while his own past refuses to let him go.

Banaras, located on the banks of the Ganges, holds one ultimate promise for Hindus: It is the place where pilgrims come for a good death, to be released from the cycle of reincarnation by purifying fire. As the dutiful manager of a death hostel in the city, Pramesh welcomes the dying and assists families bound for the funeral pyres that burn constantly on the ghats.

After 10 years in the timeless city, Pramesh can nearly persuade himself that here, there is no past or future. He lives contentedly at the death hostel with his wife Shobha, their young daughter Rani, the hostel priests, his hapless but winning assistant, and the constant flow of families with their dying kin. But one day the past arrives in the lifeless form of a man pulled from the river—a man with an uncanny resemblance to Pramesh.

Told in lush, vivid detail and with an unforgettable cast of characters, *The City of Good Death* is a remarkable debut novel of family and love, memory and ritual, and the ways in which we honor the living and the dead.



PHOTO BY LAUREN BRENNAN

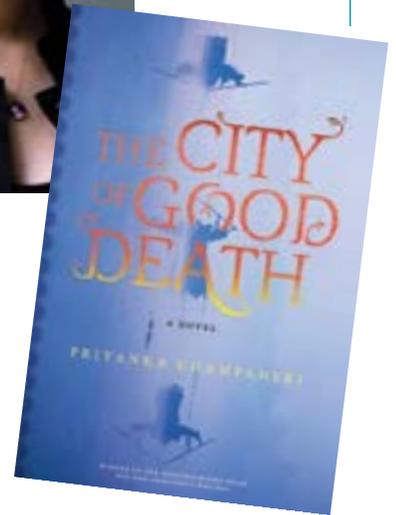
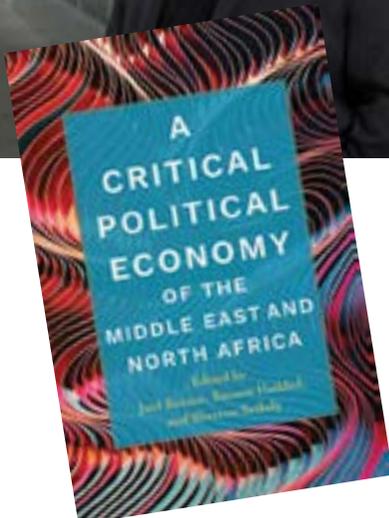


PHOTO BY CREATIVE SERVICES



A Critical Political Economy of the Middle East and North Africa

Bassam Haddad, director of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Program, co-edits this book, which offers the first critical engagement with the political economy of the Middle East and North Africa. Challenging conventional wisdom on the origins and contemporary dynamics of capitalism in the region, the book's essays demonstrate how critical political economy can illuminate both historical and contemporary dynamics of the region and contribute to wider political economy debates from the vantage point of the Middle East.

Leading scholars, representing several disciplines, contribute thematic and country-specific analyses, critically examining major issues in political economy—including the mutual constitution of states, markets, and classes; the co-constitution of class, race, gender, and other forms of identity; varying modes of capital accumulation and the legal, political, and cultural forms of their regulation; relations among local, national, and global forms of capital, class, and culture; technopolitics; the role of war in the constitution of states and classes; and practices and cultures of domination and resistance.



JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE RECENTERS FOCUS

Mason's Folklore Program faculty announced major changes to the *Journal of American Folklore* at this year's annual meeting of the American Folklore Society.

Lisa Gilman, *JAF* editor-in-chief, and associate editors **Benjamin Gatling**, **Debra Lattanzi Shutika**, and **Lijun Zhang**, all faculty members in the Folklore Program, have committed to making *JAF*—the flagship journal of the American Folklore Society—more inclusive by actively publishing materials that reflect the diversity of people and research in the field of folklore studies.

The Mason editorial team's larger goal is to change the perception of the journal and ensure that its authors and content reflect the diversity in the field. Key structural changes will allow for prioritizing scholarship that critically engages social issues around race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and citizenship, especially by people representing diverse positions. In summer 2020, Gilman facilitated a critical self-reflection process for the journal's diverse editorial team to determine what was contributing to white dominance. "Several [Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)] members of our editorial team shared that they had always heard that the journal was 'not for them.' I therefore realized that it is critical for the editorial team to reflect the diversity of whom we hope to publish as well as [find] mechanisms to invite and encourage BIPOC folklorists to submit their work. We have also created new

sections in the journal intended to make it more accessible and relevant to diverse professionals working in a variety of capacities."

Gilman and **Tanya Boucicaut**, a PhD student in Mason's Writing and Rhetoric Program and *JAF*'s editorial assistant, will edit a special issue of the journal, "African American Expressive Culture and Protest, Imagination, and Dreams of Blackness," anticipated for fall 2021. A special issue, "Latinx Folklore: Transnational WOC Feminist Perspectives," is also in the pipeline. Gilman hopes that the changes in journal content and the inclusion of more diverse scholars will impact the field for years to come.

"In order to dismantle institutional racism, we must be honest about the white supremacy that is inherent in all the organizations and entities that scaffold an institution. If we use our research skills to analyze how white supremacy is sustained in our institutions, we can explicitly and strategically develop multipronged approaches to changing the power structures while simultaneously increasing inclusivity and diversity. By dismantling institutional inequalities within our journal, and by extension, [our] field, our work parallels the ongoing racial justice initiatives on Mason's campus, such as President Washington's Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force."

Mason's *JAF* editorial team's term runs until 2023.

Bruja

MARY WINSOR, MFA CREATIVE WRITING '20

The mare backs out of the rusty trailer that was never meant to haul a horse of her size. She doesn't miss a step as her freshly shod feet find the ground. She approaches Roy and me as though we are her old friends, not strangers she met for the first time at the sale barn this morning. Standing before Roy, she lowers her head, but no greeting leaves her throat. Roy unbuckles her halter and slips it off her head; he replaces it with the new one he bought for her at the feed store this morning. Roy lifts the mare's thick forelock through the halter, then struggles with the buckle.

"Got-damn, the neck on her!" he says. "I'll have to punch another hole in this strap."

"What's her name?" I ask.

"It's on her papers," Roy says. "Brouhaha. Cashier the sale barn said it's German or some damn thing."

"Can I name her, then? Something different?"

"We'll see," he says.

This means he hopes I will forget. But I won't. Spending the summer here with him and naming one of his horses is as close as I'll ever get to having one of my own. I know it, Roy knows it, and my parents know it. Which is why they sent me down here alone, no little siblings or cousins to tend, until school starts in New Mexico.

"Being the oldest, it's hard," my mother told me when she dropped me off at her parents' house in South Phoenix. "It's like being a mother, except without the good parts. You deserve some time to yourself, honey. Have a little fun."

And so I have. But summer's almost over, and I am homesick for my little brothers' pestering and noise, for their elbows and heels digging into my ribs when they've fallen asleep in my bed after a scary story. And I miss my sisters' pranks, and the way they hear what I mean, not what I say. They would all love Roy's new mare.

Mary Winsor grew up in the American Southwest, the setting for most of her fiction and essays. She is a recent graduate of the MFA program at George Mason University. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Atticus Review*, *Blue Mesa Review*, *La Presa*, *Ploughshares*, *Longreads*, and *Carve*. "Bruja," excerpted here, appears in the Fall 2020 edition of the *Blue Mesa Review*, where it was recognized as the 1st Place Fiction award winner.

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