CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA CONSORTIUM & THIRD BIENNIAL EMERGING SCHOLARS CONFERENCE

30 years of AFS: Looking back, looking forward

GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

February 10-11, 2017

This event is co-sponsored by the Central Pennsylvania Consortium, The Consortium for Faculty Diversity at Liberal Arts Colleges, the Office of Multicultural Engagement, the Departments of Art & Art History, Political Science, Latin American, Caribbean, & Latino Studies, Interdisciplinary Studies Program, and the Sunderman Conservatory of Music
The Africana Studies Program at Gettysburg College is pleased to present the 3rd Biennial Emerging Scholars in Africana Studies Conference in collaboration with the Central Pennsylvania Consortium. The theme, “Looking back, looking forward”, celebrates 30 years of AFS at Gettysburg College. Invited scholars will participate in a series of roundtable discussions, focusing on Africana artistic and literary expression, histories of political activism, education, and the role of Africana Studies in global contexts. Conference attendees are invited to participate in dialogues aimed at broadening their understanding of the field of Africana Studies. They are encouraged to engage with emerging scholars whose work highlights the interdisciplinary nature of Africana Studies, while also illuminating central concerns of the field. Moreover, attendees will be empowered to consider how their own work and developing research agendas can lay the foundation for the future of Africana Studies. This conference is an excellent opportunity for students to engage in conversations with young scholars conducting fascinating research domestically and internationally. Moreover, the conference serves as a call to students to consider their own role in shaping the future of the discipline, the academy, and the world.

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In 2018, Africana, Afro American, Black, African American, African/African American, Pan African Studies, and Africology will celebrate its Golden Anniversary. Prior to 1968, black scholars, bibliophiles, teachers, and activists advocated and supported the study of Black history and culture. During the Civil Rights/Black Power Era activists forced universities to hire black faculty and offer courses that centered on the black experience. Africana Studies combines the scholarship of academics with the work of activists and this synthesis has produced three major intellectual interpretations and political praxes: integrationist, nationalist, and the black radical tradition. My talk examines these schools of thoughts and action, how Africana Studies transformed some parts of the academy, but left other parts untouched, and how the next fifty years are crucial for the discipline if it wishes to remain a catalyst of change to bring justice to the world.

David Canton is an Associate Professor of History and Director of Africana Studies. Last year, Professor Canton served as the Interim Dean of Institution Equity and Inclusion at Connecticut College. He graduated with a B.A. in History from Morehouse College, received his M.A. in Black Studies from The Ohio State University and earned his PhD in history from Temple University. Professor Canton is the author “Raymond Pace Alexander: A New Negro Lawyer Fights for Civil Rights in Philadelphia”. The biography examines Alexander’s role in the civil rights struggle in Philadelphia from the New Negro to the Black Power Era. His book won the 2011 W.E.B. Du Bois book award from the Northeast Black Studies Association. His new book project is titled “What are You Going To Do About It” the memoirs of Joe Madison, an African American talk show radio host and civil rights activist. The book is scheduled to come out on in September. He has been on National Public Radio in Connecticut and his African American history class was featured on C-Span American History Television.

“Spaces of Un/Belonging: Gender and Faith in Tivoli Gardens”

Kijan Bloomfield
Religion, Ethics, and Politics
Department of Religion, Princeton University

“Spaces of Un/Belonging: Gender and Faith in Tivoli Gardens” examines the pleasures and challenges women and girls experience as members of a charismatic church located in Tivoli Gardens—a garrison community in Kingston, Jamaica. Drawing on interviews, focus groups, and field work observations, this talk addresses the following questions: What are the spiritual and cultural criteria that define “belonging”? In what ways do women and girls derive meaning from their membership and involvement in the church community? How does belonging in this space contrast with their sense of (un)belonging in the larger community of Tivoli Gardens, and Jamaican society? The women and girls featured in my talk speak to the difficulties of living in a community deeply affected and shaped by the failures of the Jamaican state. In a milieu characterized by violence and uncertainty, membership in this faith community provides women and girls with a framework to build resilience and a language to define their own possibilities.
My dissertation research focuses on the stories, epistemologies, and transcultural teaching practices of educators working with immigrant and refugee youth at a community-based after-school program in the US Midwest. In this talk, I will address one of my key research questions: How can the stories of (New) American educators contribute to a more comprehensive view of immigrant communities in both academic and sociopolitical discourse? I will also draw on black feminism and indigenous methodologies, including the notion of insider-outsider research and 'Double Dutch Methodology,' in order to (a) reflect on the relationship between decolonized research practices and African American values, and (b) discuss the notion of blackness as a familiar and “foreign” identity.
There can be as many as four roadblocks on the ten-mile stretch of road as one enters Harare. Zimbabwe has been in a period of unprecedented economic crisis, at the height of which inflation hit 89,700,000,000,000,000,000,000% in November 2008. In the wake of the crisis, there has been a proliferation of official police roadblocks throughout the country. What was once a ten-minute drive to drop children off at school has become an hour-long series of stops and negotiations with the police who man the roadblocks, in a country with no militia and no armed conflict. This paper examines what the law comes to mean in the face of such constant policing. By closely examining encounters between police officials and those they police at roadblocks, the paper examines the ways conceptions of legality are negotiated, contested, and reconfigured at roadblocks, and the ways roadblocks become sites of deviation, rather than sites for the operation of disciplinary power. The paper is based on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Zimbabwe, from June 2014 to August 2015.
“AFS and Activism: Examining Global Movements for Social Justice”
Moderated by
Professor Chipo Dendere
Derrick K. Gondwe Scholar and
Visiting Assistant Professor of Africana Studies

“Black Geographies in Democratic South Africa”

Yousuf Al-Bulushi
Assistant Professor of Peace Studies
Goucher College

Since Nelson Mandela stepped down from his role as the country’s first democratically elected president in 1999, South Africa has witnessed a series of renewed popular revolts. From HIV/AIDS patients to farmworkers, striking miners to university students, new and old political subjects have taken to the streets to contest the unfinished nature of the liberation project in what is today one of the most unequal countries in the world. Unrest among the urban poor has figured centrally in these rounds of revolt, with struggles often emerging around issues of homelessness, land occupations, sanitation, electricity, and local governmental corruption. This talk will take the struggles of the urban poor in the city of Durban as a window into understanding the geographical stakes of popular movements throughout the country. In so doing, I will make an argument about the methodology of Black Geographies as a field which must pay particular attention to the spatial practices of insurgency.
Some Afro-Brazilian activists have strategically used a binary notion of race, contrary to the Brazilian narrative of racial mixture, in order to make claims to the State for health reparations for sickle cell disease (SCD). SCD is not a biological marker for race, but it can be considered a marker for ancestry from a geographic location where malaria is or was prevalent. The claims for health are legitimized by a biological and cultural distinction embodied almost exclusively by Brazilians with African descent. The presence of the S allele, thought to have come to Brazil via the forced migration of enslaved Africans, in addition to the ways in which blackness in Brazil are often defined by “markers of a distinctive black culture” (Kent and Wade, 2015) contribute to the ways in which biocultural citizenship is enacted for some Afro-Brazilians. This particular utilization of biology and culture contribute a new and distinct way to think about how race and skin color are used as tools of agency for diasporic communities. Within this talk, I’ll argue that through particular biopolitical processes, activists have managed to successfully reconfigure their relationship with the State, and to secure rights of citizenship through health advocacy.
In recent years, Sub-Saharan Africa has seen the emergence of multiple social movements demanding societal change and opening up democratic space. As with the Arab Spring, Africa’s social movements have been birthed across countries that share similar sociopolitical environments to each other: they have large youth populations, face ongoing failures in service delivery, limited economic opportunities, and often have autocratic governance structures. They are generally sparked by a frustration over ‘bread and butter’ issues – no access to clean water, expensive school fees, or lack of employment – but often transform into mass movements that challenge the structures of power in their societies. Characterized by a commitment to nonviolent struggle, these youth-led social movements have drawn attention to the plight of ordinary people in their countries, and called both their governments and opposition parties to account. Lucha (DRC), Trop, c’est Trop (Mali), T’ena Marre (Senegal), the Citizens’ Movement (Zimbabwe) and the Jobless Brotherhood (Uganda) are all nonviolent, nonpartisan movements with similar features to each other but which trace distinctly different courses to the traditional opposition in their countries. Last year, a social movement in Burkina Faso succeeded in overthrowing a longtime dictator. Throughout Africa, organizers face brutal repression for their activism. Repressive regimes often use very similar tactics to clamp down suggesting that they learn from each other. Yet their has not been sufficient learning and cross pollination of ideas between the social movements on the continent that share so much in common. This research maps social movements across Sub-Saharan Africa and identify common features and areas in which movements can learn from each other.
This talk explores how black artists and activists have used embodied performance to unsettle historical demands for black patience. From the slave castle to the hold of the slave ship, from the auction block to commands to “go slow” in fighting segregation, black bodies have historically been forced to wait, coerced into performing patience. This talk foregrounds a troubling contemporary spectacle of black waiting: Mike Brown’s body lying for hours in a Ferguson, Missouri, street. Not only was Mr. Brown slain at the hands of police, but he was forced into a violent and excessive performance of waiting—even in death. I use this traumatic occasion of black waiting to think through the history, politics, and aesthetics of black patience, paying particular attention to the role of black embodied performance. I argue ultimately that blackness is at once a history of waiting and a powerful refusal to wait. I demonstrate how patience, for black people, has historically functioned as virtue-turned-tool of white supremacy—one that was as relevant to African slavery as it is to the Black Lives Matter Movement.
This project establishes a comparative transnational framework, arguing that a nascent Caribbean public sphere is emerging through and across contemporary visual arts practices of Haiti, Bahamas and Trinidad. Bringing together Memory Studies with Public Policy and deploying an ethnographical methodology, this project carefully examines unmapped artistries of the Caribbean, not as an art historical project but as part of a cultural studies analysis of the relations between artistic practice, citizenry and economics. This project introduces new vocabularies for explaining current Caribbean conditions in relation to Western thought while accounting for shifts in practice and increased international visibility.

What I term counter-cultural-memories are creative expressions that make use of folklore, spirituality (Christianity, Vodou syncretism, Orisha) and traditional cultural forms (Carnival and Junkanoo). Such memories manifest as contemporary formats of conceptual, visual, sonorous and corporeal performances. Caribbean visual artists resist and transgress historical ways of knowing, categorical divisions such as monument, performance and spectacle, spatial, geopolitical and ideological frontiers, while making use of the tools and resources of formal institutions like museums. Through such counter-cultural-memory practices, artists augment their power on socio-economic levels. In other words, they develop the arts as sustainable civic practice. I argue that transgressive counter-cultural-memory practices of Caribbean artists circulated and built through networks of practitioners, dialogues, events and Internet technologies, generate new levels of cultural capital for the Caribbean region marking a new era.
Scholars and critics dedicated to the history of African American women's art making and issues of representation have deftly illustrated that since the nineteenth century, African American women trained in the fine arts have consistently created works to confront and reject stereotypical representations of Black women in western visual culture. Nonetheless, this tradition of visual resistance to western culture's damaging and spurious pictorial record of Black women is just one thread in the fabric that connects the works of African American women artists through history. The unifying essence of artworks by African American women is an emphasis that the primary components of a Black woman's identity: race, gender, sexuality, class, and selfhood have always been fundamentally integrated, therefore making both her identity and her oppressions multilayered and multidimensional throughout her existence. And, it is this multilayered aspect of Black women's lives that has been instinctively essential to African American women's art making throughout the past two centuries. New Directions in Black Women's Visual History offers fresh theories of visible-aggregation and Black feminist visuality to historicize African American women artists’ centering of the multilayered quality of Black women’s experiences. By placing Black women's lives at the core of their creative practices, African American women visual artists demonstrate a historical commitment to artistic expressions that espouse a Black Feminist ideology.