

Master of Arts in Cultural Studies Graduate Research Conference

Thursday and Friday, May 19-20, 2011
University of Washington Bothell

Presentation Abstracts

Debbie Brown

Today's presentation is a critique of the populist development discourse (commonly associated with several western white men at the forefront of the public discussion) around two-thirds world development, specifically critiquing over-use of the phrase "empowering women," and the (RED) consumer-as-philanthropist movement. This talk is situated within a larger project in which I listened to oral histories of female subsistence farmers in Zambia and sought to make sense of the disconnect between western development discourse and what I was seeing in the field.

Jill Dewald

Through the work of autoethnography, ethnography, and creative story-telling, this project examines ideas of home, and what home means. Paul Willis says: "In making our cultural worlds we make ourselves." With our experiences we develop who we are. How do our pasts, our representational and actual experiences, and our home spaces affect who we become? Before we choose, a cultural space is chosen for us, and this initial immersing sets the stage for our lives.

Pei-Chia Fan

I am exploring how Taiwanese working in China form their identity in postmodern times. In this generation, the high development of communication technology and transportation cause migration and the flow of information. Additionally, family background and history are still affecting the identity formation of Taiwanese. Thus, people shape their identity by their various and colorful life experience. This presentation will show what kind of elements influence the identity formation of Taiwanese workers in China.

Caroline Fors

This research project consists of an assessment of the experience of female participants in the UNITAR Fellowship for Afghanistan, through an evaluation of the program components, delivery methods, and challenges. A reflection on the research process, findings, and on the future of Afghan women leadership is provided, including an examination of the tensions, challenges, and opportunities that underlie any research process conducted by a westerner in the global South, and any western intervention into Afghanistan.

Priya Frank

World music artists are often labeled with specific identities to market them to western audiences. My research examines how a university arts organization enforces these representations, but also provides contested spaces that allow artists to speak back. Through teaching, dialogue, and collaboration, the artists redefine their marketed identities. Understanding the ways that artists and other cultural workers contest these spaces helps us consider the importance of performance and agency.

Peter Freeman

This work questions the discourse of “homelessness” within an experiential learning program called Urban Plunge, and argues that the program itself is embedded in a larger discourse that discourages the investigation of the term’s historical and contemporary meanings. To address this, the author uses a combination of discourse analysis and observation to examine the language used within Urban Plunge, and provides steps that the program can take to mitigate the effects of the overarching discourse.

Ruth Gregory

A textual analysis of the methodologies employed in four introduction to cinema history textbooks. How has cinema studies approached historical research in the past? And how should we do it in the future?

Mona Halcomb

Considers how this Assimilation Policy is responsible for the problematic long-term negative consequences for Native American Communities including the current Native American Achievement Gap. Waging a different kind of war, the United States used the boarding school as an assimilation tool to completely rid Native Americans/Alaskan Natives of their culture. They lost everything, language, dress, religion, and family connections.

Paul Johnson

My research examines how revenue-generating college athletics and modern day sports are part of a neo-colonial frame that exploits, re-inscribes race and fuels a social divide. Through the theoretical lens of Cultural Studies, I also look at human agency, sovereignty of the human body, and where power and control resides within the machine of for-profit sports. A better understanding about this topic can lead to radical educational and academic reforms.

Evemarie Theryn B. Kigvamasud’vashti

The purpose of this capstone is to research the intergenerational transmission of a lynching story within a single African American family and its effect on childrearing. My objective is to examine Black family storytelling as a familial form of protection. The goal is to offer insight into understanding the process of Black family story sharing that works to establish codes of behavioral used to navigate hostile public spaces.

Martha Levenson

Using a performance based research methodology, which asks how the tools of the arts can be used to do research in the context of making and transforming not only staged performances but also performances of everyday life, this question of why museums matter is answered. The lenses of situated knowledge, material culture, and museum learning theory provide theoretical framing for the choice of a performance-based methodology in evaluating museum educational outreach programs and designing outreach materials.

Salem Lévêque

Existentialism views emotions, thoughts, actions, and feelings as internal dialogs from which the "self" ultimately gains meaning. By examining the internal subjectivity that forms "self" existentialism could then be used within cultural studies as a tool for fighting external conditions placed upon the "self". My capstone examines the theories of Frantz Fanon, Albert Camus, and Jean Paul Sartre as discourses for engaging ego-centric, often oppressive, forms of cultural work.

Jen Lockett

Multi-media research project focused upon the embodied experience of cinema and the relationship between artists, spectator and film. I explore the medium through the production of my own triptych of short, experimental films and through the analysis of several mainstream films of various genres and styles to determine what it is that constitutes the visceral reaction the spectator receives from watching film.

Amanda Martin Sandino

The purpose of this project is to consider the dualistic and often problematic philosophies of pain that have contributed to the physician's position of power over her patients, such that her expertise extends even to knowing more about her patient's state of being than the patient himself.

Marilyn Peterson-Richter

Language and text are coded in complex layered meaning which are embedded in our everyday culture and become how we interpret our world. Constant emersion in these coded text reinforce constructed gender identities creating a mimetic realism we are expected to fulfill within our culture. Culture, however, is not a stagnant immobile entity chained to the past, rather it is a malleable ever-changing body that is capable of evolving to embrace a more just world.

David Ryder

This project includes a discourse analysis of the institution of photojournalism and the processes that inscribe whiteness. I analyze mainstream photojournalism practices, photo contest winners, an iconic photojournalist, and my own photography to show that photojournalistic whiteness is not only a question of oppressive imagery, but also of space and of audience. I offer two practice-based approaches to intervening in the inscription of

whiteness through original photojournalistic work, while reflecting on my successes and failures.

Ryan Sackman

I contend that fathers in this country are discriminated against when it comes to child custody after a separation. The normal social privileges that men are frequently afforded play against them when seeking custody of their children. This problem presents a cultural divide that is deeply entrenched in, gender construction, cultural norms, and discursive practices. I examine this process through interviews with several fathers that have experienced a divorce, custody hearing, or trial.

Diane Venberg

My essay addresses the current discourse surrounding conventional animal agriculture (concentrated animal feeding operations) and trends towards more sustainable, local and “humane” production methods, commonly called “happy meat.” While created to appease consumers’ concerns of slaughterhouse cruelty, environmental destruction, and human health risks of factory farmed animal foods, “happy meat” neglects to question embedded cultural norms that exploit and reify animals as mere products for consumption. It also emphasizes class divisions due to its’ high cost, misleading labeling and limited availability.

Shuai Wang

In the present age, cultural elements such as social values, religion and beliefs, cultural integration and identity play an increasingly visible role in the way heavy metal music has developed. This research project will investigate cultural differences between Chinese and American heavy metal and also explore pertinent successful experiences in the US in order to help the development of Chinese heavy metal. In order to do so, the interplay of business with cultural issues will be analyzed.

Luke Ware

The goal of the Invisible Web Project is to create sites of critical inquiry in journals, classrooms, and online to examine the invisible practices, rituals, discourses, and governance that control and shape the Web today. As the Web becomes steadily more integrated into our daily lives, this project seeks to interrogate the ways in which technology is socially fetishized as “magical,” “revolutionary,” and “free” primarily by identifying and deconstructing those discursive claims.

Holly Johanna Winters

As a Spanish/English bilingual language educator, I have learned how culture is inherent in the study of language, and cultural studies has paved the way for exploration into where and how these connections exist. Latino cultures and Spanish language are highly prevalent in the United States, and I have directed my capstone research towards furthering my understanding of how to build Spanish/English bilingual programs that foster support for growing Latino communities through pedagogy and cultural understanding.