

Master of Arts in Cultural Studies Graduate Research Conference
May 23, 2014

Presentation Abstracts (by alpha)

Christa Bell

The Problem with Worshipping Women: An Exploration of the Role That Self-Esteem Plays In the Production of Spiritual Culture

This presentation is part of an auto-ethnographic inquiry into the role that self-esteem plays in the production of spiritual culture. In a subjective exploration of stories from my life, with an emphasis on stories occurring within my two-year tenure in graduate school, I will center my own experiences as an artist, a producer of culture, and an emerging academic who is also Black, American, and female in order to examine how internalized cultural beliefs have impacted my perception of myself as well as my ability to create culture.

Capstone Adviser: Susan Harewood

Portfolio Adviser: Bruce Burgett

Jun Chen

The Efficacy of Performance-based Pedagogies for Developing Cross-cultural Communication Skills

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the efficacy of theater exercises in facilitating cross-cultural communication and to study the place of body/embodiment in communication. I analyze two theater workshops I led with a diverse group of people—including Chinese international students from different regions—at the University of Washington Bothell. The workshops emphasized the non-verbal aspect of communication and consisted of theater exercises in which people primarily used their bodies to communicate instead of talking. Participants' previous cross-cultural communication experience and their workshop learning experience were gathered through a debrief session after each exercise, a pre-workshop questionnaire and a post-workshop questionnaire. The workshops were also video recorded for tracking physical patterns and themes about cross-cultural communication. The workshops sought to examine effective ways to develop cross-cultural communication skills.

Capstone Adviser: S. Charusheela

Portfolio Adviser: Ron Krabill

Second Reader: Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren

Jan Harrison

Drawing on Memory: An Exercise in Experience and Articulation

Scholars within the past 10 years have produced studies exploring the origins of African American philanthropy rooted in agency. Absent from these discussions is historical inquiry depicting class struggles impacting Black education and wealth and ultimately the role of Blacks as benefactors and beneficiaries of charity. Undoubtedly race remains a most contentious divider of people; however the impact of class is also extremely important. Seeking to

understand African American philanthropy with an excavator's eye, I will analyze critical moments between 1900 and 1940 involving internal tensions among Black leaders Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey. These tensions reveal much about race and issues of segregation and desegregation within the context and acknowledgement of America being a slaved society. However, they also are important to helping us think about questions of class.

Capstone Advisor: Ron Krabill

Portfolio Advisor: Sarah Dowling

Lisa Herriott

Respite: a place of change, hope, and healing

I am interested in the ways we create spatial environments that produce meaning and resilience for a culturally diverse population. In particular, I am working with a sector of the homeless population in medical respite. The goal of this project is to explore the meaning of place and community as it relates to health and well-being within the Edward Thomas medical respite center at Jefferson Terrace. This project works with the residents and staff of the Edward Thomas House to engage in a participatory art project and design challenge, in efforts to shape their interior environment at the respite center with a collective reflection of their voices using questions that ask their perspective on place, health and well-being. Through a series of workshops that engage creativity and human-centered design guidelines, a collaboration and consensus will be developed to inform the ultimate design of a new welcoming entry area. Through this project, I hope to add a layer of inclusion and resilience within the walls of the respite center that provides some positive connection to their healing process and resonates with them after they leave.

Capstone Advisor: Johanna Crane

Portfolio Advisor: Christian Anderson

Vanessa Hooper

Can I Tell You My Story

When thinking about prisoners many Americans assume that we are talking about dangerous criminals, murderers, rapists, and "bad" people. Much of the U.S. population does not challenge or question the processes of imprisonment and therefore believe that putting people in jail is a way of protecting 'us' from 'bad people.' After working at the King County Juvenile Detention Center teaching poetry as a form of writing therapy to incarcerated youth, my image of a criminal was challenged, negated, and blown away by the intelligence, beauty, ambition, and stories living behind juvie walls. Through poetry I was able to work with youth to make their traumatic histories into works of art. This project provides a window into the lives of incarcerated people. The hope is that this project will help build awareness and understanding that might lead to changing our corrupt and crippled justice system through the words and experiences of those inside.

Capstone Advisor: Dan Berger

Portfolio Advisor: Crispin Thurlow

Gina Hutter*Visualizing Public Private Partnerships*

Public Private Partnerships are a complex product of globalization and evolving capitalist business models. My research seeks to articulate and artistically visualize the intricate relationships that exist between the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. I provide three auto-ethnographic examples based on my experiences as a graduate student, an intern, and a volunteer. In doing this, I hope to demystify some of the current work being done in the name of charity, and expose the powerful role the nonprofit industry plays in reinforcing hegemonic inequalities across sectors.

Capstone Advisor: Sarah Dowling

Portfolio Advisor: Crispin Thurlow

Nora Johnson*White Allyship: A Racial Project for Well Meaning White Folks*

White Allyship is becoming a popular anti-racist strategy for white people who aspire to work in solidarity with people of color in resistance to white supremacy. My research interrogates White Allyship by placing it within the framework of an Oppositional Racial Project, according to Racial Formation Theory. Omi & Winant developed this theory to account for the unstable and contested processes by which race is socio-historically constructed. In this presentation I will describe the White Allyship script as it is performed by Tim Wise. My findings critically evaluate its successful entrance into public discourse, and problematize the discursive corners white allies seem to talk themselves into. By placing this discourse within the context as one of many oppositional racial projects, I am hoping to make it more available to adaptation and revision, and therefore available to expand the conversations that white people are able to have about oppositional whiteness.

Capstone Advisor: Carrie Lanza

Portfolio Advisor: Kari Lerum

Judith Kuleta*Understanding the Culture of Resistance to Inclusion of Women in the American Fire Service*

The gender and racial demographic of the American Fire Service remains primarily white and male. Despite efforts in affirmative action, recruitment, policies and training, it continues to be difficult to both attract and retain women. The fire service has called for a change in the culture to ensure a more welcoming and inclusive workplace. Drawing on cultural studies theories along with my own lived experience in the fire service and oral stories, I examine the continuing marginalization of women within the American Fire Service. The focus of this study is not to place blame nor create 'them and us' thinking. The intent is to understand how groups are marginalized and move forward an agenda where this topic can continue to be discussed in an atmosphere of open and honest dialogue.

Capstone Advisor: Kari Lerum

Portfolio Advisor: Bruce Burgett

Bogdana Manole

Haida's strategies for claiming recognition through natural resource management: A Comparative Analysis

My research analyzes two corporations started by the Haida Nation in British Columbia, Canada, and explores their recognition by the Canadian government. I present a comparative analysis of the relationship between the natural resources used by the two corporations and their economic commodification practices. Although both corporations are framed in cultural terms and their connection with nature, they operate in very distinctive ways: HAICO, a recognized successful business, is logging timber, produces hydropower, does aquaculture, and encourages ecotourism. On the other hand, Haida Salmon Restoration Corporation, is a hotly contested corporation that is bioengineering the Pacific Ocean to encourage phytoplankton bloom that would feed the ever diminishing population of Pacific salmon. My research asks what are the strategic ways the Haida Nation use the natural resource management strategies to claim recognition? My findings indicate a strategic indigenous hybridity that is shaped by the political-economic context.

Capstone Advisor: Gwen Ottinger

Portfolio Advisor: Johanna Crane

Sofia Piel

Fish, Sitar, and Blood: The Senses as Cultural Representations of Home

In what ways are we considering the senses when we investigate questions of identity and belonging? Using Pike Place Market as my site of exploration, I investigate the connection between sensory experience and the idea of home. I've worked with 10 individuals who have migrated to Seattle from other parts of the world. Using a mini-ethnographic /oral history method of research, I've encouraged them to convey their sensory experience of home using descriptions, images, and sounds. As sociologist Les Back states, the "social relations" of the senses inform us of the ways community is created and experienced. I believe that being attuned to the senses can extend our analytical abilities beyond what the mind alone can achieve, and can open pathways to communication across spatial and cultural boundaries. This project explores that concept from the perspective of those who have crossed boundaries of space in migration.

Capstone Advisor: Christian Anderson

Portfolio Advisor: Julie Shayne

Amber Rozier

"This Is For My Niggas": Examining Racialized Language and Representation in Contemporary Media

There are those that would argue that race, racism, and race-based discrimination are things of the past. Certainly the advancements made in the way of the civil rights since the passage of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; plus the racial and ethnic diversity in popular media and the workplace, and the election of President Barack Obama might suggest to some that this is the case. There is however, ample evidence to suggest that the United States is far from the

post-racial society it portrays itself as in national and international media; between January 2013 and February 2014, the word “nigger” and the euphemism “the N-word” showed up in 471 news publications. This project employs narrative analysis to examine three cases featured in news stories published in this time frame. My goal: examining how the word “nigger” is used in contemporary forms of media and what it might reveal about race and racism in the United States today.

Capstone Advisor: Susan Harewood

Portfolio Advisor: S. Charusheela

Lauren W. Russell

Sowing and Reaping: Seattle’s Community Gardens Serve as Sites of Innovation, Spirituality, and Resistance

Residents of Seattle, Washington are making food a part of the urban landscape by participating in community gardens and P-Patches. Through interviews and site visits, I have come to know that these gardens are more than sites of food production. Gardeners have defined them as sites of community, spirituality, and resistance to the industrial food system. Their actions also reach outside of the garden, as each P-Patch has a “Giving Garden”, where food is grown and donated to local food banks and other charitable organizations. Seattle’s eighty-nine P-Patches are run by volunteers, yet the land is not collectively owned; instead it is owned and managed by the City of Seattle. Gardeners plant their crops in privately owned public spaces, and because these spaces are open to the public they deal with theft and vandalism. By gardening on city property, they have access to land, low-cost plots, and free resources. Gardening allows Seattle residents to connect with the earth and their community through the acts of sowing and reaping.

Capstone Advisor: Benjamin Advisor

Portfolio Advisor: Crispin Thurlow

Nate Stout

Stop Making Sense: Identity, Common Sense, and Experimental Writing

What is the political efficacy of the first world white heterosexual male? How do people existing within the frame of the hegemonic ideal take care to work against unjust powers, as opposed to recirculating them as a means to what we imagine to be a better end? This presentation explores the role artistic experimentation can play in recognizing and negotiating internalized power structures and its potential to make strange everyday materials that might be taken for granted. This is complex theoretical work that calls upon persistent questioning and reflection to locate blind spots that encourage certain readings of the world, and the desires that govern thought and action within it. Experimental writing, influenced by the Surrealists, Oulipo and the Negritude of the Caribbean, offers a contemplative and proactive start to identifying problematic thought structures that accompany privilege, and help to make room for potential identity formations and relationships across difference.

Capstone Advisor: Joe Milutis

Portfolio Advisor: Dan Berger

Ronnie Thibault

The Cultural Politics of Representation, Global Development & Developmental Difference in the United States: Radical Digital Cartography as a Cultural Studies Methodology

Representations of helpless, destitute, and victimized children located 'somewhere' in the global South and tragic, autistic people isolated in worlds of their own in the United States saturate fundraising campaigns, news and documentary programs, and online and print journalism. This project combines mixed methods of critical cultural analysis with conventions of digital radical cartography to explore similarities in how developmental disability service agencies, global development projects, and the structures they depend on produce African and Autistic subjectivities across time and place. These maps provide an accessible archive of humanitarian and global development marketing campaigns, news articles, political correspondence, and historical documents as a strategy to entice critical interaction with the analytical frame of the research. This process introduces emerging patterns in the historical, political, social, and economic structures that frame African and Autistic populations and raises new questions regarding why societies continue to embrace these privileged ideologies as righteous, decent, and noble practice.

Capstone Advisor: Ben Gardner

Portfolio Advisor: Ron Krabill

Calvin Timmons

Critical Actions: Intervention into the Process of Knowledge

My presentation highlights a combination of my portfolio and capstone work. I provide an overview of the projects I undertook during my time in MACS including: alternative writing projects, a documentary project about Seattle's Central District, and my capstone project with a Korean American English ministry. The projects include work related to Ethnic Studies, Sociology, and History and attempt to address questions related to Asian American, Cultural, and Carceral Studies. The synthesis of my portfolio and capstone works yields two important insights: the theme of addressing the social death of groups and individuals throughout much of my work and re-conceptualizing processes of producing and validating knowledge. It is my intent that exploring these projects in some depth will provide new ways for thinking about the production of knowledge, community-based research, and the topic.

Capstone Advisor: Amoshaun Toft

Portfolio Advisor: Sarah Dowling

Nicole Wilson

*Everybody's Got Sh*t: The Marginalization of Mental Illness in Higher Education*

This project seeks to tackle what I have identified as a problem of benign neglect towards individuals who suffer from mental illness within institutions of higher education. Throughout the course of my journey through higher education, I have come to realize that what we, as academics, often neglect is ourselves – our health, our families, our lives, our time, and above all, our mental well-being. My experience through the world of academia has been shaped by the challenges and struggles that I have faced within the context of my own ignored mental health. I have developed this research project by utilizing myself as a case study for data in

conjunction with research that incorporates nationwide statistics and findings to develop suggested interventions that I believe institutions should apply to their policies and procedures regarding psychological support for their students.

Capstone Advisor: Crispin Thurlow

Portfolio Advisor: Georgia Roberts