



VISITING
SCHOLAR
PROGRAM

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Public Lecture Offerings

“The Humanities and the Other Humans”: On the Fate of the Humanities in a Pluralistic Age

While the crisis of the humanities continues to make headlines and remains a hot topic of conversation, the debate over the humanities fails to engage a deeper and more challenging issue. Despite the richness of the tradition of the humanities in the modern age, humanistic culture and education have not proven to be a shield against acts of inhumanity. Indeed, in our challenging times, we must confront a more challenging question, namely, “What is the fate of the humanities in a pluralistic but polarized society?” This question presents us with several complex issues that go to the very heart of the humanities. This lecture unfolds a novel conception of the humanities informed by the cultures and ideas of “other humans.” Such a humanities may offer critical resources for facilitating a renewal of collective social and intellectual life.

“With God on Our Side”: On Religion and American Public Life in a Secular Age

From political protests to war memorials to public school curricula to displays in public buildings, religion raises a number of substantive issues for politics and American public life. This lecture critically examines the complex and contested relationships between religion, politics, and American public life with an acute focus on the closing decades of the twentieth and opening decades of the twenty-first centuries. The lecture examines several significant cultural, historical, and political issues at stake in this contested arena. In addition, specific and sustained

attention will be given to historic and contemporary perspectives on the relationship between religion and democracy in times of deep political conflict.

"On Earth As It Is": On Ethics and the Environment in the Age of the Anthropocene

"We are now faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. . . . Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, 'Too late.'" Martin Luther King, Jr.'s bracing words from his 1967 "A Time to Break Silence" speech delivered at the Riverside Church in New York underscore the immediate and urgent need to create a just and sustainable world. Today, we face an existential threat to the very future of humanity as a result of human induced climate change. This existential threat to human life on the planet forces us to confront the necessity for deliberate and committed action to create new forms of sustainable human community. This lecture calls for a broad conception of environmental ethics as a critical and necessary response to our contemporary climate crisis. By revisiting King's ideal of "beloved community," the lecture articulates an ethical framework that supports the urgent call to create a transformed and livable world.

Seminar Offerings

Organic Leadership and Deep Democracy

"A strong people don't need strong leaders." This statement by famed organizer and activist Ella Baker captures her unique philosophy of leadership and her vision of deep democracy. Baker's commitment to organic leadership is one that shaped the social, economic, and political transformations of the second half of the twentieth century. This seminar will examine the ideas, models, and philosophies of leadership of select artists, activists, and intellectuals from the complex and protean modern black freedom movement. The seminar will also critically assess the implications of organic leadership for contemporary politics and society.

Philosophy, Democracy, and Race

Whether formulated as an idea, question, or problem, the concept of race has played a pivotal role in the history and development of modern thought and democratic practice. In this seminar we will examine a select group of texts and thinkers who highlight the problems, methods, and techniques for interrogating the interrelationships between the philosophy, democracy, and modern conceptions of race. The seminar will give sustained attention to questions of ethics and politics. The seminar will also engage the complex ways in which novel practices of philosophy can help us make sense of the complexities of race while also providing critical theoretical resources for supporting and sustaining practices of deep democracy.