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Humanities Institute “Ignorance in the Age of Information” Event Series Continues with Scholarly Take on Misinformation in the Digital Age

CLAREMONT, CALIF. JANUARY 5, 2019—With the rise of digital and social media, information has become more accessible to more of us than ever before. The consequence: we are also more susceptible to deceit and manipulation via these sources of information. But is this a new phenomenon, or are we just now noticing its pervasiveness? The Scripps College Humanities Institute will attempt to address this question and more as it continues its series based on the theme, “Ignorance in the Age of Information,” organized by Scripps College Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Humanities Institute Yuval Avnur.

“I’m excited about this program because it is both timely and intellectually very challenging, particularly because this phenomenon lies at the intersection of several different disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, computer/data science, sociology, politics, and media studies. It’s a genuinely interdisciplinary topic, and one that is of clear and direct interest to us all.”

A handful of media and academic luminaries will visit Scripps to discuss some of the complex topics surrounding the content of misinformation—like “fake news”—and the forms it takes—like the “echo chambers” or “filter bubbles” of social media news feeds.

The *New Yorker*’s **Andrew Marantz** investigates social media trolls on college campuses, interrogates the delicate negotiations between free speech and contemporary online life, and explores the mainstreaming of fringe politics and social media; **Karen Douglas** explores the nuances of conspiracy theories; Harvard’s **Rebecca Lemov** discusses brainwashing, technologies of mind control, and the cataloging of dreams; and many more.

“Misinformation is a problem for democracy because you’re supposed to vote society’s, or at least your own, interest, but to figure that out you need proper information,” says Avnur. “When it’s so easy to be misinformed, people can’t properly function as citizens.”

“We have more information, but we arguably understand less. That’s the puzzle,” he says.

Founded in 1986, the Humanities Institute at Scripps College presents a thematic program each semester on a topic related to the humanities. As part of Scripps’ tradition of interdisciplinary education, this program includes lectures, conferences, exhibitions, performances, and film series bringing prominent and younger cutting-edge scholars to campus.

For more information about the Humanities Institute, visit scrippscollege.edu/hi/.

Full Lineup

February 6
Karen Douglas



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University of Kent Professor of Social Psychology **Karen Douglas** explores the nuances of conspiracies: Why are conspiracy theories so popular? Who believes them, and why? And what are their consequences?

Tuesday, February 12, 12:15pm Hampton Room

Sally Wen Mao, the 2017 Pushcart Prize winner, confronts the spectacle of the internet, artificial intelligence, the past and the future, and the roles and representations that women of color endure in order to survive a culture that seeks to consume them in her poetry collection, *Oculus*.

Tuesday, February 19, 6pm, Balch Auditorium

The *New Yorker's* Andrew Marantz.

Andrew Marantz is an expert when it comes to the rapidly changing online media landscape. *The New Yorker* writer investigates social media trolls on college campuses, interrogates the delicate negotiations between free speech and contemporary online life, and explores the mainstreaming of fringe politics and social media in his new book.

March 27

Cal Biruk

Oberlin anthropologist Cal Biruk comes to Scripps to explore the social worlds, transactions, and politics that emerge in and around research projects collecting health data in Malawi, and their implications for how we understand numbers and enumeration in global health and beyond.

April 3

Holly Lawford-Smith

Political philosopher Dr. Holly Lawford-Smith examines the role of the individual within the collective. She works on collective action, collective agency, collective responsibility, and collective punishment.

April 25

Rebecca Lemov

Rebecca Lemov, professor of the history of science at Harvard, studies key moments from the history of experiments in human and behavioral sciences. Her topics of interest include brainwashing, technologies of mind control, and the cataloguing of dreams.

Conference: Ignorance in the Age of Information

Saturday, March 30

9 a.m.-6 p.m.

Five major scholars of social epistemology present and discuss work on the perils of the age of information, the nature of ignorance in a social context, and other problems with our contemporary epistemic environment.

Jason Stanley (Yale), Quassim Cassam (Warwick), Jennifer Lackey (Northwestern), Sven Bernecker (UC Irvine), Regina Rini (York)

***Scripps College** was founded in 1926 by Ellen Browning Scripps, a pioneering philanthropist and influential figure in the worlds of education, publishing, and women's rights. Today, Scripps is a nationally top-ranked liberal arts college and women's college with approximately 980 students, and is a member of The Claremont Colleges in Southern California. The mission of Scripps College is to educate women to develop their intellects and talents through active participation in a community of scholars, so that as graduates they may contribute to society through public and private lives of leadership, service, integrity, and creativity.*