



Oregon Humanities Center

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Winter 2020

Algorithms that shape our lives encode inequities

From everyday apps to complex algorithms, technology has the potential to hide, speed, and even deepen discrimination, while appearing neutral and even benevolent when compared to racist practices of a previous era. Ruha Benjamin, author of *Race After Technology*, explores the world of biased bots, altruistic algorithms, and their many entanglements, and provides conceptual tools to decode tech promises with sociologically informed skepticism.

Join us for the first lecture in our series “Convergence: intersections between the sciences and the humanities.” Ruha Benjamin will give the 2019–20 OHC Cressman Lecture in the Humanities, “Beyond Buzzwords: Reimagining the Default Settings of Technology and

Society,” on Tuesday, February 4, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive St. in Eugene. She will present the concept of the “New Jim Code” to explore a range of discriminatory designs that encode inequity: by explicitly amplifying racial hierarchies, by ignoring but thereby replicating social divisions, or by aiming to fix racial bias but ultimately doing quite the opposite. Benjamin will also consider how race itself is a kind of tool designed to stratify and sanctify social injustice, and discuss how technology is and can be used



toward liberatory ends. Benjamin will challenge us to question not only the technologies we are sold, but also the ones we manufacture ourselves.

Benjamin is an Associate Professor in the Department of African American Studies at Princeton University, where she studies the social dimensions of science, technology, and medicine; race and citizenship; knowledge and power. She is also the founder of the JUST DATA Lab, and a Faculty Associate in the Center for Information Technology Policy,

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Exciting environmental events featured in early March

With each record-breaking storm or flood it becomes clearer that climate change and rising seas are transforming the coastline of the United States.

Writer Elizabeth Rush travelled from vanishing shorelines in New England to inundated bayous in Louisiana to chronicle the impact of sea level rise on vulnerable communities and ecosystems. She employed a literary approach for her recent book *Rising: Dispatches from the New*



American Shore, a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction. “I believe that language can lessen the

distance between humans and the world of which we are a part; I believe that it can foster interspecies intimacy and, as a result, care.”



the Climate Crisis,” on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive St. in Eugene.

What might we learn from the people living on climate change’s front lines about the future that we share? In her talk, Rush will speak about a small

Elizabeth Rush, the 2019–20 OHC Robert D. Clark Lecturer, will give a talk, “On Rising Together: Creative and Collective Responses to

community on the eastern shore of Staten Island—a place that hurricane Sandy both undid and remade from the ground up—investigating the storm’s aftermath and the radical decisions residents made about how to overcome their shared vulnerability. She will give voice to those who traditionally have been left out of environmental discourse and how we might make the conversation more whole moving forward.

Rush teaches Creative Nonfiction at Brown University. In 2019 Rush was named the National Science Foundation’s Antarctic Artist and Writer. She joined scientists from the United States and Great Britain aboard the R/V Nathaniel B. Palmer for a 50 day scientific “cruise” to the Thwaites Glacier, one of the most remote regions in the world.

Rush’s talk is free and open to the
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OHC cosponsors two esteemed early music ensembles

Two world-class performances of early music come to Eugene this winter. The Oregon Humanities Center's Endowment for Public Outreach in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities is a major cosponsor of Cappella Romana's concert "Hymns of Kassianē" on Thursday, January 9, 2020 at 7:30 p.m., and The Boston Camerata's performance of "Ludus Danielis" or "The Play of Daniel" on Saturday, February 8, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. Both performances will take place at Central Lutheran Church, 1857 Potter St.

With "Hymns of Kassianē" concertgoers will discover the ancient music of ninth-century nun, poet, and hymnographer Kassianē, a.k.a. Kassia, sung by an ensemble of female and male psaltēs (cantors). This

concert features rarely heard music by Byzantium's most formidable and prolific female composer. New discoveries, researched and led by Cappella Romana music director and founder Alexander Lingas, complement Kassia's famous *The Troparion of Kassianē* or *Hymn of Kassianē*, a confessional by Mary Magdalene to Christ as she pours myrrh over His head just before His passion; and *Augoustou monarchesantos* or *When Augustus reigned*, which compares and contrasts the reign of Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE), the first Roman emperor, with the rule of Jesus Christ.

The renowned early music group The Boston Camerata, under the direction of French musician and musicologist Anne Azéma, will be in Eugene for a



Scene from *The Play of Daniel*

six-day educational and performing visit culminating in a public performance of the rare musical drama "The Play of Daniel." Written about 1230 at Beauvais Cathedral in northern France, "The Play of Daniel" is a powerful medieval mystery play that combines old and new, bringing together music and movement, theater and liturgy, light and shadow, to retell the biblical story of the young prophet for today's audiences. This will be a rare opportunity to hear the Middle Ages as it actually sounded, using a manuscript actually written in neumes (medieval musical notation).

In the days preceding the performance members of the ensemble will visit numerous classes and give talks across campus.

Both "Hymns of Kassianē" and "The Play of Daniel" are free and open to the public. For more information about Cappella Romana's concert contact Stephen Shoemaker, sshoemaker@uoregon.edu. For more information about The Boston Camerata's performance contact Gina Psaki, rpsaki@uoregon.edu.



Cappella Romana

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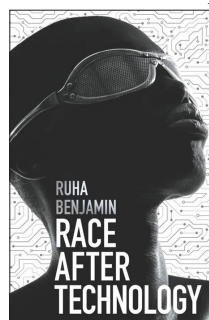
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Program on History of Science, Center for Health and Wellbeing, Program on Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Department of Sociology. Benjamin serves on the Executive Committees for the Program in Global Health and Health Policy and Center for Digital Humanities.

Benjamin's first book, *People's Science: Bodies and Rights on the Stem Cell Frontier* (2013), investigates the social dimensions of stem cell science with a particular focus on the passage and implementation of a "right to research" codified in California. Her second book, *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (2019) examines the relationship be-



tween machine bias and systemic racism, analyzing specific cases of "discriminatory design" and offers tools for a socially-conscious approach to tech development. Her edited volume, *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life* (2019), brings together a set of scholars who explore the interplay between in-

novation and containment across a wide array of social arenas, past and present.

Benjamin's talk is free and open to the public. First United Methodist Church has free parking. For more information contact ohc@uoregon.edu or call (541) 346-3934.

Artist addresses satire in fairy tales

Dorothee Ostmeier, Professor of German and Folklore and Public Culture, will teach "Magic, Uncanny, Surrealist and Cynical Tales" during the 2020 winter term. She will introduce students to artist Peregrine Honig's "Father Gander"



(2005), a suite of six-color lithographs with chine collé, from the collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA). Peregrine Honig will give

a talk about her prints, "Satire and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Art Projects of Peregrine Honig," on Thursday, February 20, 2020 at 2 p.m. in the JSMA.

Ostmeier's class, based on her scholarship on fairy tale traditions in the contexts of gender studies and the history of satire/cynicism, will establish

a framework for the discussion of Honig's visual mediation of classical knowledge and contemporary critical reflection. Honig's six lithographs present satirical commentaries on specific classical tales, mostly from the Brothers Grimm.

Honig's prints place their fairy tale characters into forests that surround the figures in the shape of symmetrical filigree paper cuts. These delicate surroundings (portals) contrast with the colored comic-like characters and call attention to the conflicts between the aesthetics of the tales, and their subversive popular and Disney-esque celebrations of bourgeois gender stereotypes. The addition of rhyming couplets to each print sharpens the commentary. Onlookers are forced to face the hidden agenda that the classical fairy tales hide: "prostitution, incest, captivity, and other social calamities."

Peregrine Honig's visit to the UO is cosponsored by the OHC's Endowment for Public Outreach in the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities. For more information contact ostmeier@uoregon.edu

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public. The First United Methodist Church has free parking. For more information contact ohc@uoregon.edu.

Earlier that week the UO's Office of Sustainability and the Student Sustainability Center will host, and the OHC will cosponsor, the annual Washington and Oregon Higher Education Sustainability Conference (WOHESC) "Root Causes to Sustainability Challenges and Positive Actions to Address Them" March 2-4, 2020 in the EMU. Conversation, workshops, and networking opportunities will empower participants to advance environmental performance at Washington and Oregon State institutions of higher education.

This year's keynotes are Jessica Black, Director of the Center for Indigenous Health, Culture and the Environment, and Associate Professor of Environmental

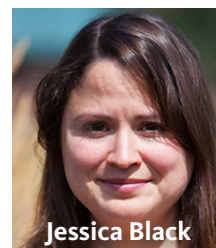
Science at Heritage University in Toppenish, WA; and Terry McDonald, Executive Director of the St. Vincent DePaul Society of Lane County. The conference also features panels including "Understanding the Crisis of our Time: Writing About Climate Change."

For more information, conference program, and registration go to: wohesc.org

In addition, the 2020 Public Interest Environmental Law Conference (PIELC) "Migration" will be held March 5-8, 2020 at the University of Oregon. PIELC is a preeminent annual gathering for environmentalists worldwide. It is organized solely by the volunteers of Land Air Water (LAW), a UO student environmental law society.

Elizabeth Rush will participate on a panel on March 5 at 4 p.m. PIELC includes over 125 panels, workshops, and presentations. Each day of the conference culminates with keynotes from respected activists, scientists, politicians, philosophers, and authors.

For more information and the conference program, visit pielc.org



Jessica Black



Terry McDonald

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OHC Wine Chat: Strange Cohabitations in church

The OHC's next Wine Chat will feature David Luebke, professor of History. His talk, "Strange Cohabitations: Sharing Churches after the Reformation, 1530–2020," will take place on Thursday, January 23, 2020 at 6 p.m. at Civic Winery and Wines, 50 E. 11th Ave. in Eugene.

At one time or another, approximately 1,000 churches in Europe were shared by two or more Christian religions—Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist. About 120 still exist today in France, Germany, and Switzerland; in recent years, a few new ones have been created. The story of how they formed, how they evolved, and how they faded away can tell us a great deal about the shifting meanings that ordinary people ascribed to community, religion, toleration and intolerance from the sixteenth century to the present.

David Luebke is a historian of early modern Europe whose work focuses on the religions and political cultures of ordinary people in the German-speaking lands. He is a 2019–20 OHC Faculty Research Fellow. This talk will feature research from his current book project. Luebke is the author of *Hometown Religion: Regimes of Coexistence in Early Modern Westphalia, 1535–1650* (2016), which examines 16th-century communities that accommodated more than one Christian faith and how they coped with the vagaries of religious diversity during the century after the reformation.

Civic Winery and Wines is an urban winery, wine bar and bottle shop housed in a restored 1930s building featuring

reclaimed wood from Eugene's historic Civic Stadium. The winery focuses on organic and biodynamic grape production aged on site in locally made ceramic amphorae.

The event is free and open to the public. Beverages are available for purchase. For more information call (541) 346-3934.

