Humanities and Public Life Conference 2019

Embodied Intelligence: From Buddha to AI

Monday, September 16

8:30AM to 9:45AM

Speaker: Gray Miles

Title: Saviour <u>and</u> Damnation: AI and the Public Imagination of the Future

Abstract: When Elon Musk, the erratic and attention-seeking CEO of Tesla, clashes on Twitter with Humanities gadfly par excellence Steven Pinker over the dangers and benefits of AI, you know that our fears and hopes around the possibilities of artificial intelligence have percolated up into the centre of our imagined futures. No longer confined to the fever dreams of science fiction writers, musings about AI's impact on future employment has been seized on by policy makers, AI's implications for human evolution have been considered by historians, and AI's potential for business is being eagerly touted by a host of rent-seeking, self-appointed experts. How will AI *really* change our world in the years to come? This is unclear. But what does seem apparent is that the way we think and talk about AI reveals a great deal about our contemporary intellectual landscape, our preoccupations, and our fascinations. This talk will explore the discourse around AI with the aim of uncovering what clues it may hold to how we imagine the future.

Bio: Gray Swift Miles is a Professor of Humanities at Dawson College in Montreal and a former foreign correspondent, television journalist, and documentary filmmaker whose subjects have included the impact of biased media coverage of the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, international conflict, drug-trafficking, and technology and culture. Gray attended the University of King's College, the University of Guadalajara, the University of Salamanca, the University of British Colombia, Harvard University, and graduated with a PhD in Sociology from Tulane University in 2014. Gray has lived in Mexico, Spain, Chile, Colombia, Brazil and New Orleans where he worked as a journalist and filmmaker, and later, back in Bogotá and Rio de Janeiro, conducted sociological research on drug-trafficking gangs and the communities within which they operate on a Guggenheim fellowship. Gray has recently returned from a Leave of Absence in Mexico after working on his first novel, tentatively titled "Metabolic Rift."

10AM to 11:15AM

Speaker: Robert Stephens

Title: AI and "The Two Cultures"

Abstract: Exactly sixty years ago, British novelist and scientist C.P. Snow published a famous lecture entitled "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution" in which he lamented the lack of interdisciplinary understanding between scholars in the Humanities and in the Natural Sciences. He described an increasing intellectual divide, where academics in the Humanities did not know, or even want to know, basic principles of Science and Mathematics, while many professional scientists began to view study in the Arts and Humanities as a sort of waste of time. Snow believed we needed to reorganize our education systems in order to produce a citizenry that maintained interest and competence across this divide. Sixty years later, how are we doing?

In this talk I will address the degree to which interdisciplinary respect and understanding has increased and/or decreased since Snow's time, with a special focus on the impact of explosive growth of AI-related technology in recent years, and the trajectory we can anticipate going forward. Do all of us need more STEM education in order to better navigate, understand and be employable in the AI-dominated future we are speeding towards? Or do we need more Humanities and Arts education to keep ourselves grounded and wary of technological overreach, and to ensure that a world full of autonomous, decision-making algorithms and machines still upholds human ethical concepts that may lead to a just, responsible future? Is it possible to do both?

Bio: Robert Stephens teaches Philosophy and Humanities at Dawson College, and is the current Coordinator of the ALC Arts & Culture Profile. He has a PhD in Philosophy from McGill University, where is dissertation was focused on defending a "computationalist" theory of human cognitive architecture, in which problems faced in the development of AI are used to help illuminate how the human mind is organized, and how human cognitive limits may in turn be usefully studied to inspire new designs for artificial minds. Before coming to Dawson, he was a High School English and Drama teacher. In his spare time, he builds custom electric guitars and ukuleles.

11:30AM to 12:45PM

Speakers: Members of the Executive of Dawson's AI Task Force (Sameer Bhatnagar, Raymond Bourgeois, Jaya Nilakantan, Carl Saucier-Bouffard, Jonathon Sumner, and Joel Trudeau)

Title: AI at Dawson College

Abstract: Recently Dawson College passed a three-year comprehensive plan in support of a strategy for the inclusion of AI in programs and certifications through curriculum, extra-curricular and cross-disciplinary activities, professional development, and research. This symposium surveys recommendations and actions to be taken from the plan and invites all stakeholders to a wide-ranging discussion on the integration of AI in Dawson College's activities.

Bio: Sameer Bhatnagar, Jonathon Sumner, and Joel Trudeau teach Physics at Dawson College. Raymond Bourgeois is Dean of Academic Initiatives at Dawson College. Jaya Nilakantan is a faculty member of the Department of Computer Science Technology at Dawson College, while Carl Saucier-Bouffard teaches in its Humanities department.

1PM to 1:45PM

Speaker: François Paradis

Title: How AI Can Be of Service to the Dawson College Community

Abstract: Dawson College's three-year AI plan partly consists in developing AI-powered services for both faculty members and students. This presentation will give an overview of two current initiatives: *chatbots*, which are currently used in the library to answer common student questions, and AI-driven tools for document classification, which are used for the digitization of student files. We will briefly introduce the concept of data analytics to help predict students' success, and new learning analytics features available in Moodle.

Bio: François Paradis holds a PhD in Computer Science from the Université Joseph Fourier (in France) as well as a Masters in Computer Science from the Université de Montréal. Between 1997 and 2009, he was a research fellow in many research centers, including the CSIRO (in Australia), the NACSIS (in Japan), and the University Waikato (in New-Zealand). Mr. Paradis is currently Director of Information Systems and Technology and Corporate Affairs at Dawson College. He also sits on the board of the *Réseau d'Informations Scientifiques du Québec* (RISQ).

2PM to 3:45PM

Speaker: Sydney Swaine-Simon

Title: The Do It Yourself Augmented Human

Abstract: The recent surge in popularity around advanced Artificial Intelligence has forced society to explore how the technology will impact our daily lives. Many believe that job security can no longer ever be truly guaranteed as the combination of advanced robotics and AI-enabled automation will cause humans to be completely replaceable. For many, the only way which humans can remain relevant in the future is if somehow the body and AI can become one and we slowly start to augment our capabilities with human-embedded technology. Many assume that human augmentation may be something done in labs or will be done by medical professionals; however, it is possible that it goes in a completely different direction. During this presentation, we will explore a potential future where human augmentation becomes a Do it yourself process where people at home may augment themselves to remain competitive with AI.

Bio: Sydney is a Montreal native with an innate love for technology and innovation. Some of his notable contributions include co-founding District 3, Concordia's innovation center. Sydney also co-founded NeuroTechX, a non-profit organization which has built the largest network of neurotechnology enthusiasts. Sydney has extensively worked in the AI space on initiatives such as AI XPRIZE, AI For Good Summit, and the AI Common. He also is a core member of the DEF CON Biohacking Village and contributes to Mozilla's Open Leadership Program.

4PM to 5:45PM

Speaker: James Requeima

Title: Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence: Pitfalls and Possibilities

Abstract: Recently, Machine Learning has accomplished amazing results in areas such as machine perception, machine translation, playing games, automated driving, and recommendation systems. Amid the growing success of Machine Learning and Artificial intelligence has come a lot of media coverage around benefits as well as concerns around the safety of these technologies. While many concerns around AI are valid, others stem from a misunderstanding around what machine learning is and of what it currently capable.

In this talk, I will give an introduction to machine learning and highlight the differences between current approaches to artificial intelligence and what is often thought of as "Classical AI". I will introduce some of the popular machine learning models used today in research and industry such as Deep Neural Networks. We will look at some of the tasks at which machines are currently very good and those where machines fall well short of human abilities and where there is much room for improvement through research. I will also explain the areas of Bayesian optimization, meta-learning, transfer learning, and reinforcement learning, and discuss some of my research in these areas.

Bio: James Requeima is a member of the department of mathematics at Dawson College Montreal and a PhD student in Machine Learning at the University of Cambridge under the supervision of Dr. Richard E. Turner. He is currently a Senior Researcher at Invenia Labs Cambridge and a visiting student at the Montreal Institute for Learning Algorithms under the supervision of Yoshua Bengio, winner of the ACM A.M. Turing Award. Previously, James obtained a Master's in Machine Learning and Speech and Language Technologies from the University of Cambridge under Zoubin Ghahramani, and a Master's in Mathematics from McGill University under Daniel Wise, both Fellows of the Royal Society. James' research interests include meta-learning, Bayesian optimization, and approximate inference for Bayesian methods.

6:30- 8:30 PM

Film Screening: *Ex Machina*

"Caleb, a 26 year old programmer at the world's largest internet company, wins a competition to spend a week at a private mountain retreat belonging to Nathan, the reclusive CEO of the company. But when Caleb arrives at the remote location he finds that he will have to participate in a strange and fascinating experiment in which he must interact with the world's first true artificial intelligence, housed in the body of a beautiful robot girl." (DNA films description)

Followed by discussion hosted by Hassan Arif

Bio: Hassan Arif is a PhD student at McGill, working on the relation between appearance and reality in the context of revelation, reason and aesthetics. He is currently examining the writings of Syriac Christians in 8th century Baghdad who claimed the superiority of Aristotelian logic over Arabic grammar. He is also interested in the study of language as it mediates between form and meaning and its significance in setting the expectations and scope for Artificial Intelligence.

Humanities and Public Life Conference 2019

Embodied Intelligence: From Buddha to AI

Tuesday, September 17

8:30AM to 9:45AM

Speaker: Anne Boily

Title: AI and Perception: Comparing Humans and Machines

Abstract: Technological advances in the development of artificial intelligence systems confront us with several fundamental questions. Many of them are philosophical since our very understanding of what it means to be human is put into question by both such scientific breakthroughs and by our projections of their consequences. This presentation will focus on how these advances should be understood given the accounts of intelligence, mind, and body offered by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hubert Dreyfus. I will proceed as follows. I will first explore the distinction between mind and brain. Then I will present Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the perceived world, more precisely, on his notions of "feeling," "space," "the other," as well as on their relation to "temporality." I will then invoke Dreyfus's work on artificial intelligence and proceed to an evaluation of its relevance in the contemporary context, taking into account the breakthroughs as regards deep learning since 2010. Both Merleau-Ponty and Dreyfus attempt to define and analyze "embodied intelligence," and this is why I think they can be mobilized as relevant thinkers in the context of the college study of AI.

Bio: Anne Boily is a Ph.D candidate in political science at the Université de Montréal and a young researcher affiliated with the Canadian Center for German and European Studies (CCÉAE). She specializes in political philosophy. Her research focuses on the ethics of artificial intelligence, hermeneutics, and political dialogue.

10AM to 11AM

Speaker: Mike Deutsch (Kids Code Jeunesse)

Title: AI for Regular People

Abstract: By now we have all absorbed the message that artificial intelligence is changing our society. Even those of us who don't directly work with AI are using it in our daily lives -- and contributing to it too -- often without thinking about it. So if you don't work in the technology sector, how much do you really need to know about AI?

At Kids Code Jeunesse, we have been introducing Canadian teachers and kids to computing for six years. In this session we will share our introduction to artificial intelligence for everyone. With a few AI concepts, a hands-on demonstration, and some ethical questions, we will help you start to build your algorithm and data literacy. You will see how we all fit in the AI picture as participants and contributors.

Bio: Mike Deutsch leads the Education Research and Development team at Kids Code Jeunesse (KCJ), a computing education not-for-profit. He focuses on KCJ's platforms, curricula, and teaching, helping the KCJ crew produce great workshops in classrooms and events across Canada. He also researches computing pedagogy as a Master's student at McGill University. Mike is a product of the 1980s wave of LOGO and BASIC and floppy disks, and loves helping teachers, parents, and students join today's wave.

11:15AM to 12:45PM (note special start time!)

Panel: AI and the Arts: The Rhetoric and the Reality

Moderator: Cheryl Simon

Panelists: Shawn Bell, Anna Eyler, Neil Hartlen, Jesse Hunter, Bérengére Marin-Dubourd, and Robert Stephens

Abstract: The panel brings together faculty from the ALC profiles at Dawson and artists/academics from the Montreal community for a conversation exploring how artificial intelligence has been imagined within the arts (film, literature, theatre), how it is used in contemporary cultural production (filmmaking, animation, interactive arts, gaming, computational photography, predictive text in writing and editing applications), and communications practices (marketing, surveillance and platform capitalism), and to speculate about the future of arts education in a world of AI. Chief among other concerns is the impact of algorithmic processes on cultural work: how does the sorting and classifying function of culture change when conducted by the computational processes of media services and marketing platforms rather than by human participants, and to what effect? We'll also discuss the different allegorical functions that AI serves in literature and film, the historical value of information in the algorithmic age and how algorithmic culture impacts contemporary social life.

Bio: Cheryl Simon is the ALC Coordinator as well as a Cinema-Communications teacher at Dawson College. Shawn Bell and Bérengére Marin-Dubuard both teach Interactive Media Arts at Dawson College. Jesse Hunter teaches Cinema-Communications at Dawson while Neil Hartlen is a faculty member in its English department. Robert Stephens teaches in both the Humanities and the Philosophy departments at Dawson College. Anna Eyler is a MFA student in sculpture and Ceramics at Concordia University.

1PM to 2PM

Speaker: Brett H. Meyer

Title: The Algorithms Aren't Alright: Why Machine Learning Still Needs Us

Abstract: Machine learning (ML) has recently achieved human or better performance on a wide variety of tasks, from computer vision to natural language processing, and is poised to transform nearly every aspect of the way we live, work, and interact. However, ML is not yet a panacea: computer vision and speech recognition systems are easily fooled. Because ML algorithms cannot justify their choices, adoption in some areas, such as medicine, is challenging; and, while it has never been easier to apply machine learning, choosing the right data is difficult and fraught, especially when building systems that use personal data and affect people directly. ML is changing the world, but is a long way from taking it over. In this talk, I will give a brief overview of one important form of machine learning: deep learning. I will then discuss key challenges in deep learning: robustness, explainability, and bias; and their implications.

Bio: Dr. Meyer is an Associate Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at McGill University, and co-founder of Effortless AI, a deep learning software start-up. His research usually involves developing algorithms that automate the design of computer systems; he has also taken a recent interest in automotive and aerospace cybersecurity, and optimizing hardware and software for machine learning.

2:30PM to 4 PM

Speaker: Bérengère Marin Dubuard

Title: Intelligence Everywhere: What Artistic Explorations Can Tell Us Through and About Technological Developments

Abstract: Recent developments in what is commonly called "artificial Intelligence" have introduced questions about creativity and art production. People wonder if machines will become so creative that human imagination might soon no longer be required to produce artworks. Some present their work as being produced "in collaboration" with machines. I would argue that creativity, in the realm of art, is a concept rooted in the sense-making ability of the person orchestrating it as well as in the social context in which it is being examined. I am proposing to explore the relationship between art and technology in history to show how automation has been investigated by artists dating back to the early 20th century. Parallel to these experiments, the conversation concerning what constitutes the focus of an artwork has also taken place starting notably with the introduction of Marcel Duchamp's ready-made into the art gallery and Walter Benjamin's 1935 text "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in which he considered the shifting function of the artwork in a society reconfigured by technological development. This will lead me to present a selection of prototypes and artworks from early cybernetic systems based on aspects of biological brains to the latest artworks made with and about machine learning algorithms along with the ideas and worldviews they bring forth to the public.

Bio: Bérengère L. Marin-Dubuard (aka beewoo) is a media explorer who likes to experiment with perception in the entangled built and digital architecture through photography, motion graphics, live video processing, tangible media and interactivity. Questions related to agency, control, embodiment and perspective as they are affected by technological development are at the roots of these explorations. Bérengère has worked on many projects within collaborations such as Battery Operated and Kit Collaboration. Focusing on Open Source Software, she instigated and ran artistic creation programs such as Autonomy and Activism and Digital Ludology at the media center Studio XX in Montréal. She now teaches in the Interactive Media Arts (IMA) profile at Dawson College. Her latest work investigates immersive architectural representation and tangible interfaces at the junction between media arts and games.

4PM to 5:15PM

Speaker: SPACE : Andrew Katz and Joel Trudeau

Title: *The Intelligence of the Body: TECHNIQUE and Embodied AI*

Abstract: Rapidly emerging realities such as AI and climate change require new competencies in society, and in education—first and foremost the capacity to engage in complex problem solving. S.P.A.C.E. (Sciences Participating with Arts and Culture in Education) will present ways that students can develop those complex problem solving skills in their time here and Dawson and beyond.

Bio: Andrew Katz has taught English and Creative Writing at Dawson College since 2006, and is also the author of a picture book for children, *How To Catch A Bear Who Loves To Read*.

Joel Trudeau has taught in the Physics Department since 2004 and founded SPACE in 2008 with a group of dynamic students. He is also project co-lead of the DawsonAI Initiative and works in the area of open innovation for education

Lisa Steffen has taught History at Dawson College since 2006 and engages in Learning Communities, WID and the Peace Certificate.

6:30-8:30 PM

Speaker: Waël Chanab

Title: Transembodiment: A virtual walk in another's shoes.

Abstract: This talk will explore why virtual reality can be an important step towards re-connecting us to each other in an era where technology seems to be driving us apart. Come and try out VR for yourself!

Bio: Waël Chanab is the president and cofounder of Imagine360, an award winning Montreal based immersive marketing and interactive media firm, established in the domain since 2012. His passion for innovation and storytelling has led him and his company to produce over 100+ high-end turnkey Virtual Reality experiences (VR), Augmented Reality projects (AR), Mixed reality experiences (MR), integrating virtual tours, 360 videos, creation of VR/AR apps, photogrammetry scans, 360 HDRi, virtual galleries, aerial videos and VR real-time rendering compatible with all the latest virtual reality headsets.

Driven to create what always seemed impossible, Waël enjoys tackling the most challenging questions in areas that he is passionate about. With a major in physics, philosophy, multidisciplinary science, and experience while working Hollywood in experiential, online and digital marketing, he masters some of the most up-to-date immersive technologies. He believes that to really understand something, you need to explore it in its utmost potential.

Humanities and Public Life Conference 2019

Embodied Intelligence: From Buddha to AI

Wednesday, September 18

8:30- 9:45 AM

Speaker: Wanming Wang

Title: From Ancient Asian Culture to Digital Intelligence

Abstract: This presentation demonstrates how scholars study digitized classical Chinese literature by using the online digital archive and database Ming Qing Women's Writings. I begin with an introduction of the Chinese writing system and classical Chinese literature, in which I emphasize their uniqueness by comparing them with alphabetic and consonantal writing systems and English and French literature. Then I introduce the structure and contents of the database and argue for its importance in enabling scholars and other readers from all over the world to have access to the literature of a particular historical period (ca. 1500-1900) from a particular country, which had been only able to circulate narrowly. The second half of my presentation focuses on the advantages and limitations of the Microsoft Access file downloaded from the database and of the data-mining algorithms in the study of the texts from the database. My examination shows that these new technologies have provided the scholars with new thoughts, methods, and techniques; at the same time, they have encountered difficulties in searching for the data and thus raised questions to the

database's potentials and possibilities. These questions have urged the scholars to reflect on the "revolutionary" role and "groundbreaking" significance of digital intelligence in the study of non-Western cultures and non-Latin texts and realize the weakness of the new technology and the irreplaceable position of the human in this field.

Bio: Wang Wanming is a PhD candidate in the Department of East Asian Studies at McGill University. Her major field is classical Chinese poetry and her research interests also include digital humanities as well as literary criticism, women's literature, fiction, and literary culture in local history in late imperial China. She has worked as a research assistant for the database Ming Qing Women's Writings since 2006.

10-11:15 AM

Speaker: Katherine Dempsey

Title: Grokking and Talking about AI

Abstract: What is AI? It depends on who you ask. Not unlike consciousness, a clear definition of artificial intelligence, even within the expert community, is elusive. And the changes resulting from advances AI are pervasive but often hidden. Most people are unaware of the impacts AI is already having on their daily lives, and the social and cultural implications of increasing AI ubiquity.

Part of the problem is that the conversations around AI involve language that is at once familiar and vague — this is especially apparent in the discussions relating "Ethical AI" or "AI for Good" — what is ethical? good for whom? Terms such as these are not always accountable.

This talk aims to both demystify and challenge the language at the heart of our relationship with AI and in doing so, invigorate social thought and radical new visions of what we now mean when we say "intelligent."

Bio: Katharine Dempsey is a Montreal-based writer, and the founder and editor of *Mai,* a quarterly journal and digital newsletter devoted to the critical, independent examination of the cultural and social implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and related technologies. Katharine's work has appeared in *The Nation* and the *Washington Spectator* and she examines the gap between academic AI research and public discourse as a member of the interdisciplinary research collective, Machine Agencies, at Concordia University's Milieux Institute.

11:30 AM- 1PM

Presented in collaboration with the Dawson Peace Centre

Speaker: Nevline Nnaji

Title: Film Screening: Reflections Unheard: Black Women in Civil Rights

Abstract: Through the personal stories of several former black female Civil Rights activists, *Reflections Unheard: Black Women in Civil Rights* unearths the lesser-known story of black women's political marginalization between the male-dominated Black Power movement, and the predominantly white and middle class Feminist movement during the 1960s and 70s, as well as the resulting mobilization of black and other women of color into a united Feminist movement.

Reflections Unheard is a feature length documentary, and the first of its kind to focus exclusively on black women's contributions and experiences during the Civil Rights era.

Bio: Nevline "N3VLYNNN" Nnaji is a Creative Director, Pole Dance Artist, and Writer. A Renaissance woman in the truest sense, Nnaji's Artistry and background spans across a variety of mediums and disciplines, including Dance, Film, Visual Arts, Prose, and Fashion. Nnaji's feature-length film, *Reflections Unheard: Black Women in Civil Rights*, was her first major Art project, which she released at the age of 22. Since then, *Reflections Unheard* has screened in several Universities and Film Festivals all over the world, uniting culturally diverse educational, activist, and Arts audiences.

1-2:15 PM

Q+A with Nevline Nnaji

2:30-3:45 PM

Speaker: Zach Melzer

Title: "Reconnaissance: Projection Mapping and the Architectures of the Quiet Revolution"

Abstract: How is "intelligence" embedded into the so-called "smart city"? Focusing on Montreal's Quartier des Spectacles, this presentation will analyze how the making of smart environments are shaped by local economic and political histories. It will illustrate how through the use of projection mapping technologies—software and digital projectors that allow for the seamless display of high resolution moving images onto existing architectures—the recent rebranding of one of the city's entertainment districts belongs to a rather long history of reconnaissance, one that is shaped specifically by the histories of Québec's Quiet Revolution. Highlighting the sites where projection mapping takes place, this presentation will analyze how knowledge is mapped onto, recognized, identified, legitimized, and gratified in the histories of the area's architecture.

Bio: Zach Melzer is a doctoral candidate in Film & Moving Image Studies at Concordia University. His research combines media studies with architecture and urban studies in order to investigate the regulations and infrastructures of moving image technologies and cultures in Piccadilly Circus (London), Times Square (NYC), Yonge-Dundas Square (Toronto), and Quartier des Spectacles (Montréal). His work is published or forthcoming in Canadian Journal of

Film Studies, Écranosphère, Synoptique: An Online Journal of Film and Moving Image Studies, and The Routledge Companion to Urban Media and Communication.

~~4-5:15 PM~~ Cancelled

~~Speaker:~~ ~~Joseph Rafla~~

~~Title:~~ ~~Visualizing Language~~

~~Abstract:~~ ~~The language of the film screen is ubiquitous. Hollywood's wide release features, like The Godfather (1972) or Wonder Woman(2017) are experienced by millions of people all over the world. However, before a movie makes it on screen, it has to make it as a screenplay, the blue print of a movie. With films costing 10's of millions of dollars to produce, it helps to have the best blueprint possible. Computers and language make strange companions, but increasingly computers are capable of analysis at scale that is impossible otherwise. "It is the work of humanities scholars to race patterns in language, in narratives, in art, and other cultural artifacts" (Armoza 7). In my esearch, I'm looking at the language of one specific type of scene which is common to all screenplays. It's the scene that changes everything: when Alice drinks the potion, shrinks to thumb size, and jumps through the keyhole; when Don Corleone gets gunned down, or when Forrest Gump runs so hard he breaks his polio leg braces. These are scenes which change what the story is about. I use the computer to look at a small collection of such scenes and attempt to visualize their sentiment language as a way of seeing salient patterns in a screenplay, a process which is helpful in the development of screenplays. The computational techniques I use, corpus linguistics, are not specific to screenplays, they can be applied to any type of text. The computations led me to the making of the SentiPulse Viz., a data visualization which 'maps' of the changes in mood of the text. The SentiPulse viz uses, as a model, the graph of Pulsar CP 1919, which was discovered in a Cambridge observatory in 1963.~~

~~Bio~~~~:~~

6:30- 8:30 PM

Speaker: Carina Raisman

Title: Yoga to maximize energy and minimize stress

Abstract: Drawing on a strong academic background in health sciences, I will explain my approach to yoga, which integrates anatomy, physiology, immunology and cognitive psychology to establish and maintain balance between the Stress Response and the Relaxation Response. Understand how the nervous system is regulated and managed, breath by breath! You will have a chance to try out some exercises for yourself.

Bio: Carina Raisman has been practicing Yoga for over fifteen years and teaching for ten. She is certified by Yoga Alliance in Ashtanga Yoga, and complements her practice and teaching through various forms. Her main sources of inspiration are Satyananda and Anusara.

Carina's academic history shows clearly her interest in Health Sciences. Graduating with honors from McGill University, obtaining a BSc in Microbiology and Immunology, she enriches her education with a year abroad at the Faculté de Pharmacie in Montpellier, France, providing added knowledge in many fields, namely pharmacology, homeopathy, and plant-therapy.

Dance, bodywork, and macrobiotic nutrition have helped her to see what cannot be seen under a microscope: health cannot be pinpointed to a part or a particle, if not the delicate balance of all parts working fluidly together.

At the present, Carina is devoting time to bridging the gap between modern medicine and Yogatherapy, and integrates aspects of Anatomy, Physiology & Immunology to the teaching of yoga. Through research and collaboration, Carina aims to integrate Yoga into the public health system, making Yoga accessible to all.

Her yoga classes emphasize alignment, posture, stress management, and awareness of breath. Private classes are available for those who wish to progress in their practice, also yoga therapy sessions for depression and insomnia.

Humanities and Public Life Conference 2019

Embodied Intelligence: From Buddha to AI

Thursday, September 19

8:30- 9:45 AM

<u>**Note:**</u> **This presentation will take place in the Dawson Theatre**

Speaker: Daniel Goldsmith

Title: *Visual Storytelling, Trauma, and Resilience*

Abstract:

Why do certain effects of trauma endure? How do traumatic experiences transform us? What is the connection between trauma and resilience?

Felix and Anya is an illustrated story I co-authored that addresses these questions, and in so doing, challenges common perspectives on trauma. The story opens a space where we can examine how to find a gift in what we might otherwise consider burdensome. For these characters, this process is catalyzed by the overwhelming power of the natural world. Along with the essential tools of courage, awareness, and a supportive community, I will invite you to consider how nature can play a pivotal role in transforming the way we relate to ourselves.

Bio: Daniel Goldsmith teaches in the Humanities Department at Dawson College and is the author of *Choose Your Metaphor: Walking the One Path That Goes by Many Names*. When he's not running after his energetic children, Daniel can be found roaming the Quebec countryside with a book of philosophy and a yoga mat in his backpack.

10 - 11:15 AM

Note: This presentation will take place in the Dawson Theatre

Speaker: Fiona Hanley

Title: What the heck is Ecological Intelligence, and can it help save us from the Climate Crisis?

Abstract: Despite an acceleration of alarming climate events over recent years, including floods, wildfires, and heatwaves, that have had direct visible impacts on people within our own communities, most of us either fail to recognise any real need for alarm, or have managed to push our concerns to the background and continue life as usual.

We have radically altered the ecosystem upon which we depend for our lives, to the point that our future is now in question, but our economic, political, social and educational systems continue relatively unaltered in the face of major planetary system disruption.

David Orr famously said education is no guarantee of decency, prudence or wisdom, but that only education of a certain kind offers the possibility of saving us. Thomas Merton cautioned youth to stay away from any ambition for "success" as it has come to be understood. We need instead to foster an understanding of how to live well in the world, so that we learn to understand the profound relationship we have with natural systems, the power to heal and to harm.

What kind of education therefore can make a difference in how we respond to this climate emergency? How must we respond in our educational institutions to inspire the kind of hope that leads to immersive action on climate? Ecological intelligence, or ecoliteracy, has been proposed as a means of doing so, of developing empathy with the natural world, of inspiring engagement, and in finding ways to live harmoniously, sustainably, and collaboratively with each other and our fragile planet.

Bio: Fiona Hanley is a Registered Nurse, and nursing faculty member at Dawson College and McGill University. She is a board member of Canadian Nurses for the Environment (CANE), and *Synergie Santé Environnement*, and has a long history of environmental activism, particularly in bringing attention to the crucial role for nurses and other health professionals in environmental health and climate action.

She has done many conference presentations focused on environmental health in Quebec and Europe, as well as a number of webinars, including this past June "*Soutenir l'écolittératie dans la pratique infirmière*" for the Canadian Nurses Association.

1 PM - 2:15 PM

Speaker: Erica Harris

Title: The Dancing Philosopher

Abstract: In 2006, Sir Ken Robinson gave one of the most famous talks in TED history entitled "Do schools kill creativity?" In his talk, he asks: why don't children learn dance in school every day the way they learn math? His answer is that "as children grow up, we start to educate them progressively from the waist up. And then we focus on their heads, and slightly to one side". He claims that the whole of the education system is geared towards producing "disembodied" university professors who "look upon their body as a form of transport for their heads." Part of the reason this happens is because we have been told, since the time of Aristotle, that a human being's ability to reason is the best thing about them. According to Aristotle, *good* humans should focus on activities that develop our reason. Not all philosophers agree, however. Maurice-Merleau-Ponty, a French philosopher writing in the mid-20th century, argued that, in many ways, our bodies know a lot more than our rational minds could ever grasp. Perhaps it is no coincidence that he was one of the few philosophers who loved to dance. In this talk, we will confront the depth of our bodily knowledge through dance and watch as we stumble over the words to rationally describe what we are doing. Be prepared to move (if only in your seats)!

Bio: Erica Harris is a teacher in the Humanities and Philosophy departments at Dawson College and lectures at McGill University. Her research background is in the philosophy of embodiment, art, and anxiety. She specializes in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty by day, and by night is a jazz and blues dancer.

2:30 PM - 3:45 PM

Presented in collaboration with the Dawson Peace Centre

Speaker: Waneek Horn-Miller

Title: Indigenous Reconciliation: Finding Common Ground Through Dialogue

Abstract: While working for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Waneek Horn-Miller knew process was just as important as results. The inquiry sought to expose the underlying causes of violence in this country—and make recommendations to eliminate them—in a timely, organized fashion. But this had to be balanced with the emotional needs of participants—their deep need to be heard, validated, and humanized. In other words, it needed to grant victims, and their families, the opportunity to heal. In this keynote, Horn-Miller unpacks the hard but necessary work ahead of us if we want to escape our history of conflict and move to a place of shared understanding. If we embrace the true spirit of reconciliation, we need to make it a way of life—a cornerstone of how we proceed as a multicultural society—and not just a destination. To Horn-Miller, this takes listening, and dialogue; it means extending empathy to those with different outlooks, and not shying away from debate; it means solutions-based thinking rooted in our shared aspirations. But if we can do this, we can do something unique in this country. And we can embrace what reconciliation is all about—a way of addressing wrongs, living in harmony, and healing for those who need it most.

Bio: What does it mean to fight for what's right, and truly succeed? That's the story of Waneek Horn-Miller: a true inspiration, whose story from hardship to triumph is the stuff of legend. As a teenager from Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, she was stabbed near the heart by a Canadian soldier while protesting the infamous Oka Crisis—and nearly lost her life as a result. Battling PTSD, she persevered, becoming a champion swimmer: representing Canada at the Olympic Games, and winning gold at the 1999 Pan American Games. Today, she's turning more hardships into triumphs, as one of the most articulate and vibrant Indigenous advocates today.

4PM - 5:15 PM

Speaker: Brian Redekoff

Title: People Falling Down: The Essence of Humour and Comedy

Abstract: What makes something funny? According to the philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), all humour is rooted in the mismatch or incongruity of a living body behaving like a mere machine. In this talk we'll explore and test Bergson's theory using various examples from comedy. Throughout the talk we'll see the remarkable "embodied intelligence" at work in everyday life and how comedy plays with the relation between body and mind.

Bio: Brian Redekopp was born and raised in rural Saskatchewan. From the prairies, he headed east, where he earned a B.A. at Carleton University's College of the Humanities, an M.A. in Philosophy at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, and finally a Ph.D. in Philosophy at McGill. He has been teaching in Humanities and in Philosophy at Dawson since 2011. He also organizes the Dawson Philosophy Club, a philosophy discussion group for students and faculty.

6:30PM - 8:30 PM

Speaker: Christopher Byrne

Title: The Sound of One Hand: Zen and the Art of Embodied Knowledge

Abstract: According to the way it is traditionally defined, Zen Buddhism is grounded in the practice of silent meditation and directed toward an enlightenment experience that is beyond words. Zen is thus said to be impossible to communicate in language and is typically imagined as rejecting philosophical and literary study. At the same time, however, the Zen Buddhist tradition has produced a voluminous amount of literature, in addition to having a profound influence on the literary traditions of East Asia and, more recently, the West. What then is the relationship between Zen practice and literature? This talk will address how language and Buddhist philosophy play an integral role in Zen meditation, whose function is not to abandon language and cognitive activity, but rather, to realize and embody Buddhist philosophical principles in practice. In turn, Zen practitioners have developed distinct literary means for embodying Zen's "wordless" meditative insights in language.

Bio: Chris Byrne is an instructor in the Humanities Department at Dawson College and holds a Ph.D. in East Asian Studies from McGill University. His interests in East Asian religion, philosophy, and literature led him to study the ways Zen Buddhist monks and nuns adapted and transformed the conventions of Chinese poetry for religious purposes, particularly as a means to express Buddhist philosophy and the silent wisdom of meditation.

Humanities and Public Life Conference 2019

Embodied Intelligence: From Buddha to AI

Friday, September 20

8:30 - 9:45 AM

Speaker: Ahmad Banki

Title: Rational Choice Theory

Abstract: How rational are we, and in what sense? In this talk you will learn how to apply critical thinking to the concept of homo economicus by analyzing its definition, assumptions, conditions and practical implications. You will also learn how human rationality is at the foundation of ethical values such as freedom and tolerance.

Bio: Ahmad Banki is a professor of economics at Dawson College. He studied at the University of Calgary and McGill. His interests include behavioural economics, game theory, existentialism and libertarianism.

10 - 11:15 AM

Speaker: Janine Maila

Title: The body is a garden

Abstract: In traditional Chinese medicine, the body is viewed as a garden, in which one element is interdependent with the other, creating an ecosystem that can only be addressed as a whole. In this view, our body is a microcosm of nature, and by understanding nature we can better support our bodies. This is in contrast to the western medical view in which the body is seen as a machine with parts that are separate from one another and can be removed and replaced. In this talk, we will compare these two views as well as explore 5 element theory, a central tenet of Chinese medicine and how it can serve as a map for health and wellness in our world today.

Bio: Janine Maila is a yoga teacher, acupressurist and teacher. She has a B.A. from McGill University in Psychology and Religious studies. For the last 7 years, she has been running her holistic health practice in Montreal and teaching workshops and programs integrating yoga and Chinese medicine. Her passion is to empower and educate people with the tools to live a healthy and balanced life. She is also a musician, singer and poet. www.ayniholistic.com

11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Presented in collaboration with the Dawson Peace Centre

Speakers: Asim Zia and Susan Sgorbati

Title: Transboundary Water In Cooperation Network (TWIN): Environmental Diplomacy and Sustainability

Abstract: We will discuss the inspiration, negotiations and knowledge that contributed to the formation of TWIN: Transboundary Water In-Cooperation Network. www.transboundarywater.org

TWIN is now working on three transboundary rivers: the Kabul River between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Jordan River between Palestine, Israel and Jordan, and the Kali River between India and Nepal. TWIN's objectives currently are developing global water quality standards, implementing water monitoring by communities as citizen scientists, training and education, and facilitating negotiations between conflicting interests of groups accessing clean water.

TWIN as a network of networks has an approach that is based on an understanding of complex systems, a convergence of levels of governance and a concern for the impact of forced migration due to climate change.

Bios: Dr. Asim Zia is serving as a Professor of Public Policy and Computer Science in the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, with a secondary appointment in the Department of Computer Science, at the University of Vermont. He is Director of the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security (IEDS) and Co-Director of the Social Ecological Gaming and Simulation (SEGS) lab at the UVM. His scholarship, research and public service activities have focused on advancing the interdisciplinary fields of complex systems modeling, computational policy analysis, governance network analysis, coupled natural and human systems and social ecological systems. He has served on scientific review committee of national socio-environmental synthesis center (SESYNC) (2014-17), acts as an academic editor for PLOS One (since 2013), and associate editor of Complexity, Governance and Networks. He has a Ph.D. in Public Policy from the Georgia Institute of Technology; recipient of 2004-2005 best dissertation award from the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, a post-doctoral fellowship from the National Center for Atmospheric Research (2004-2006), a fellow at the Gund Institute for Environment (since 2011), a senior research fellow for the Earth System Governance project (since 2012) and a senior fellow for Global Change Impact Studies Center (2018-19).

Susan Sgorbati is the Director of The Center for The Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) at Bennington College, where she was the former Dean of Faculty and holds The Barbara and Lewis Jones Chair for Social Activism. She created and directs The Conflict Resolution program and curriculum at Bennington College that includes courses in negotiation, mediation, environmental dispute resolution, conflict resolution theory, complex systems, design and court processes. Since 2011, she has collaborated on projects with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (New England Region) and the Village of North Bennington, Vermont. She has since created "The CAPA Leadership Institute" that brings young environmental leaders from conflict zones to Bennington College for a ten-day residency. The first year brought leaders from the Middle East: Israel, Palestine and Jordan. This September, leaders from Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan came to Bennington, joined by former participants. CAPA has five areas of research and public action: Human Rights and Peacebuilding, Environment (Water, Food and Energy), Activating Democracy, Art and Public Action, and Progressive Education.

1 PM - 2:15 PM

Speaker: Nadia Khouri

Title: The Intelligence of Empathy. Why We Should Read Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

Abstract: Empathy, the ability to understand the feelings of others, comes to us naturally. It is "embedded" in us. Neuroscientists tell us it is a function of "mirror neurons." Unfortunately, the capacity of human beings to harm each other, be cruel, indifferent and callous to other people's suffering is also embedded. It is an expression of emotional alienation, perhaps of "mirror neurons" gone wrong. Conversely, empathy is an expression of deep emotional involvement with others but it isn't a simple neuronal reaction. It stems from our ability to think and reason, to comprehend and identify, discern between one thing and another, draw analogies between oneself and others, walk in their shoes, use imagination, and develop an ethics of how we want to live together, all of which indifference to the pain of others is incapable of. These cognitive abilities are not inherited but learned. They are not strictly empathic, but empathy cannot occur without them. It must be "intelligent" as a sentiment. What makes it so?

If we agree with developmental psychologist Howard Gardener that there are 9 types of intelligence or "smarts" in reading nature, discerning sounds, using reason, tackling existential questions, developing interpersonal relations, coordinating mind with body, polishing linguistic skills, knowing oneself, and visualizing the world in 3D, then the right kind of empathy is intelligent in its ability to encompass them all. Arguably, the most accomplished discussion of this philosophy of sentiments is to be found in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. This is the subject of my paper.

Bio: After many years of teaching in the Humanities Department Nadia is now scholar in residence at Dawson. She earned her B.A. from Alexandria University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. from McGill

University. Her thesis on the impact of the Enlightenment and its transformation in America earned her the Dean's Honours award. Among her many interests is a love for opera which she considers to be a complete form of art and a testament to the aesthetic potentials of human beings. You can subscribe to her opera newsletter and browse her list of opera databases, societies and composers on her homepage. Nadia is now pursuing a project entitled "The Philosophy of Happiness from Plato to the UN World Happiness Report." Her book *Le Biologique et le social* is a critical analysis of all reductionist biological determinisms.

2 PM - 3:45 PM

Speaker: Sara Cohen-Fournier

Title: Decolonizing health care

Abstract: Who lives and who dies? Who listens and who talks? Health care is a space where these questions are constantly, often silently, tackled. We will look at the case of two young Indigenous girls who voiced their concerns about wanting Indigenous traditional healing rather than conventional modern medicine. We will be able to understand how epistemic injustices are played out in health care decisions, and how we can create spaces to decolonize health care.

Bio: Sara Cohen-Fournier is currently a resident doctor in Psychiatry at McGill University. She received her training in medicine at Université de Montréal. Prior, she received her M.A. in Oral History at Columbia University, and was a research coordinator at Concordia University for the project Life Stories of Montrealers displaced by war, genocides and human rights violations. She is interested in deepening her understanding of the essence of listening, in communities that have been historically marginalized.

4 PM till…. Let's see!

Reception, wine and cheese, in the colab 3F36. Everyone welcome!