

Centering Race in the Humanities: Legacies, Interruptions, Futures

Thursday, June 10, 2021

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sponsored by the [Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America \(CSREA\)](#) and the [Cogut Institute for the Humanities](#)

Speaker Biographies

Stephen Best is a Professor of English at UC-Berkeley and is the author of *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession* (University of Chicago, 2004), and *None Like Us: Blackness, Belonging, Aesthetic Life* (Duke University Press, 2018). His research explores the nexus between slavery and historiography: the preoccupation with establishing the authority of the slave past in Black life as that project quadrates with a critical sense of the limits of historicism as a mode of literary study. He is currently co-editor of the journal *Representations* and has edited a number of special issues in his time on the board – “Redress” (with Saidiya Hartman), on theoretical and political projects to undo the slave past, “The Way We Read Now” (with Sharon Marcus), on the limits of symptomatic reading, and “Description Across Disciplines” (with Sharon Marcus and Heather Love), on disciplinary valuations of description as critical practice.

His work has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the Hellman Foundation, the Humanities Research Institute (University of California), and the Ford Foundation. In 2015-2016, he was the Mary Bundy Scott Professor at Williams College, and in 2020, the Whitney J. Oates Fellow in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University.

Farah Jasmine Griffin is Chair of African American and African Diaspora studies, and the William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature and African American Studies at Columbia University. She is also an affiliate faculty of the Center for Jazz Studies. Professor Griffin received her B.A. from Harvard University, where she majored in American history and literature, and her Ph.D. in American studies from Yale University. Her major fields of interest are American and African American literature, music, and history. She has published widely on issues of race and gender, feminism, jazz, and cultural politics. Griffin is the author of *Who Set You Flowin?: The African American Migration Narrative* (Oxford University Press, 1995), *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends: Letters from Rebecca Primus of Royal Oak, Maryland, and Addie Brown of Hartford Connecticut, 1854-1868* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* (Free Press, 2001), co-author, with Salim Washington, of *Clawing At the Limits of Cool: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and the Greatest Jazz Collaboration Ever* (Thomas Dunne, 2008), and *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artists and Progressive Politics During World War II*, (Basic Books in 2013). Her forthcoming book, “Read Until You Understand: The Profound Wisdom of Black Life and Literature,” will be published by W.W. Norton in September 2021.

Kathryn Lofton is a scholar of religion in American history who has written extensively about capitalism, popular culture, and the secular. Her earliest scholarly writing examines the history of Protestant modernism and fundamentalism in the United States and the historiography of African American religion. Her first book, *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon* (University of California Press, 2011), contends that religion is a form of a social life observable outside of scriptural traditions and

nonprofit organizations. Her second book, *Consuming Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), pursues the dependent relationship between religion and consumer capitalism through a series of case studies including Herman Miller, Inc., the Kardashian family, and the Goldman Sachs Group. She has served as an editor-at-large for *The Immanent Frame*; co-curated (with John Lardas Modern) a collaborative web project on spirituality titled *Frequencies*; and currently co-edits (also with Modern) “Class 200: New Studies in Religion,” a book series with the University of Chicago Press. In her many academic and popular essays, she argues for increased theoretical awareness of method, critical authorship, and scholarship’s relationship to fields and wider histories. Lofton earned an A.B. in history and religion and the humanities from the University of Chicago in 2000, and her Ph.D. in religious studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2005.

[Dylan Rodríguez](#) is a Professor in the Department of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Riverside (UCR). He was named to the inaugural class of Freedom Scholars in 2020 and is President of the American Studies Association (2020-2021). He recently served as the faculty-elected chair of the UCR Division of the Academic Senate (2016-2020) and as Chair of Ethnic Studies (2009-2016). After completing his Ph.D. in ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley in 2001, Dylan spent his first sixteen years at UCR in ethnic studies before joining media and cultural studies in 2017.

Dylan’s thinking, writing, teaching, and scholarly activist labors address the complexity and normalized proliferation of historical regimes and logics of anti-Black and racial-colonial violence in everyday state, cultural, and social formations. He conceptualizes abolitionist and other forms of movement as part of the historical, collective genius of rebellion, survival, abolition, and radical futurity. What forms of shared creativity emerge from conditions of duress, and how do these insurgencies envision—and enact—transformations of power and community?

Dylan is the author of three books, *White Reconstruction: Domestic Warfare and the Logic of Racial Genocide* (Fordham University Press, 2021), *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006) and *Suspended Apocalypse: White Supremacy, Genocide, and the Filipino Condition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). He is co-editor of the field-shaping anthology *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader* (Duke University Press, 2016) and has written in a wide cross-section of scholarly and popular venues, including *Social Text*, *Black Agenda Report*, *Harvard Law Review*, *American Quarterly*, *Radical History Review*, *Colorlines*, *The Abolitionist*, and *Scholar & Feminist Online*. He has served as an editor or editorial board member for numerous journals and presses, including the University of California Press, *American Quarterly*, *Journal of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association*, and the recently founded *Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics*

Dylan is a founding member of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association and Critical Resistance, a national carceral abolitionist organization. He is part of the Abolition Collective and Scholars for Social Justice and continuously works in and alongside various radical social movements and activist collectives. He has appeared in a variety of broadcast media venues, including programs hosted by Huffington Post Live, The Real News Network, and radio stations in Los Angeles, New York City, the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Area, Montreal, and Santa Barbara.

Discussant Biographies

[Matthew Guterl](#) is a Professor of Africana Studies and American Studies and Chair of American Studies at Brown University. A historian of race and nation, with a focus on United States history from the Civil War to the present, he has written books on race and the Progressive Era, on Southern slaveholders and the Caribbean, on the history of and cultural context for racial profiling, and on the life of Josephine Baker. He also co-authored, with Caroline Levander, a book on the politics of the modern hotel. Currently, he is working on a global biography of the queer, cosmopolitan, human rights activist, Roger Casement, and a book on class-passing, cross-dressing, and race-passing.

[Kevin Quashie](#) is a professor in the department of English at Brown University who teaches Black cultural and literary studies. He is the author or editor of four books, most recently *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2012) and *Black Aliveness, or A Poetics of Being* (Duke University Press, 2021). Black feminist/women's studies has long been central to Quashie's thinking about Blackness. He also writes and teaches on Black queer studies and on aesthetics.