

Humanities, Truth and Lies

The Vanier College Humanities Symposium 2012

EVENTS SCHEDULE

February 1 – 3
Vanier College Auditorium A-103



● INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE – Dr. Martin Luther King ● I AM A THINKING THING, A THING THAT THINKS – René Descartes ● THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF LIES; LIES, DAMNED LIES, AND STATISTICS – Benjamin Disraeli ● ONLY TRUTHFUL HANDS WRITE POEMS – Paul Celan ● MAN IS THE ONLY ANIMAL THAT BLUSHES - OR THAT NEEDS TO – Mark Twain ● ONE IS NOT BORN A WOMAN, ONE BECOMES ONE – Simone de Beauvoir ● A THING IS NOT NECESSARILY TRUE BECAUSE A MAN DIES FOR IT – Oscar Wilde ● I DO NOT WISH WOMEN TO HAVE POWER OVER MEN; BUT OVER THEMSELVES – Mary Wollstonecraft ● GOD IS THEREFORE UNKNOWABLE. THIS IS THE FUNDAMENTAL PREMISE OF THE BIBLE – Leo Strauss ● AN EYE FOR AN EYE LEAVES THE WHOLE WORLD BLIND – Mahatma Gandhi ● ALL GOVERNMENTS ARE IN EQUAL MEASURE GOOD AND EVIL. THE BEST IDEAL IS ANARCHY – Leo Tolstoy ● IF I CAN'T DANCE, IT'S NOT MY REVOLUTION – Emma Goldman ● YOU MUST HAVE CHAOS WITHIN YOU TO GIVE BIRTH TO A DANCING STAR -- Friedrich Nietzsche ● I AM NOT AFRAID OF DEATH. I JUST DON'T WANT TO BE THERE WHEN IT HAPPENS – Woody Allen ● ETHICS IS NOTHING OTHER THAN REVERENCE FOR LIFE – Albert Schweitzer ● KNOWLEDGE IS POWER – Francis Bacon ● AN ANT ON THE MOVE DOES MORE THAN A DOZING OX – Lao Tzu ● NOTHING IS SO DIFFICULT AS NOT DECEIVING ONESELF – Ludwig Wittgenstein ● WE MUST NEVER BE AFRAID TO GO TOO FAR, FOR TRUTH LIES BEYOND – Marcel Proust ● THERE IS NO DARKNESS BUT IGNORANCE – William Shakespeare ● EVERYTHING WE HEAR IS AN OPINION NOT A FACT, EVERYTHING WE SEE IS A PERSPECTIVE NOT A TRUTH – Marcus Aurelius ● I HAVE FORGOT MY UMBRELLA – Friedrich Nietzsche ● A HUMAN BEING IS A DECIDING BEING – Viktor Frankl ● NATIONS ARE BORN IN THE HEARTS OF POETS AND DIE IN THE HANDS OF POLITICIANS – Muhammad Iqbal ● THERE IS NO OBSERVABLE THING KNOWN AS ENERGY ANYWHERE -- Abdulkarim Soroush ● NOTHING WE USE OR HEAR OR TOUCH CAN BE EXPRESSED IN WORDS THAT EQUAL WHAT IS GIVEN BY THE SENSES – Hanna Arendt ● AGE CONSIDERS; YOUTH VENTURES – Rabindranath Tagore ● HOW QUICK COME THE REASONS FOR APPROVING WHAT WE LIKE! – Jane Austen ● WHO IS MORE FOOLISH, THE CHILD AFRAID OF THE DARK OR THE MAN AFRAID OF THE LIGHT? – Maurice Freehill ● BELIEVE THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING THE TRUTH. DOUBT THOSE WHO FIND IT – André Gide ●

Wednesday, February 1st

1:30 – 3:00

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DR. SIMON BLACKBURN

Professor of Philosophy, Cambridge and UNC Chapel Hill

"The Humanities in a Scientific Age"

Anyone calling themselves a philosopher gets used to raised eyebrows and scepticism about the value of their work. By contrast the value of science is unchallenged and usually regarded as unchallengeable. Why is this? Clearly people want longer and healthier lives, which scientific medicine promises. But they also want better, more fulfilling, flourishing lives, which medicine does not promise. People are fascinated by scientific speculations about how we have evolved, but much less good at understanding what we are like now, or how our histories and cultures shape us. My lecture argues for a redress of the balance.



Professor Simon Blackburn is Distinguished Research Professor in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge, England and UNC, Chapel Hill. In addition to his many contributions to academic philosophical debate, he is known for making philosophy accessible to a wider audience. His work focuses principally on philosophical ethics, philosophy of the mind and the history of philosophy. He has appeared in numerous television interviews, and has been a frequent guest on BBC radio and television in England. He was the Edna J. Koury Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as well as a Fellow and Tutor at Pembroke College, Oxford. Simon Blackburn is the author of *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (1994) as well as the editor of one of the longest standing British philosophical journals – *Mind* – between 1984 - 90. His books are: *Reason and Prediction*, 1973, *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* 1984, *Essays in Quasi-Realism* 1993, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1994, *Ruling Passions* 1998, *Think* 1999, *Being Good: A Short Introduction* 2001, *Lust* 2004, *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed* 2005, *Plato's "Republic"* (2006), *How to Read Hume* (2008), *The Big Questions: Philosophy* 2009, *Practical Tortoise Raising and other Philosophical Essays* 2010.

3:30 – 5:00 - JC LITTLE  Animator and Film Director, Montréal

(The Animated Woman) "How To Be Animated"

This presentation will take the audience on a journey of how to be "animated". The artistic medium of animation has always been a way to go beyond expression, identifying and exaggerating emotional states. It's easy to get lost in the rush of today's world, to become numb to the multitude of exchanges played out between humans in everyday real life and in social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. The lecture will focus on getting in touch with one's emotional states and expressing oneself IRL and in SM - it will use animation, stories, drawings, audience participation and humour to identify and illustrate.

Thursday, February 2nd

8:30 – 10:00 – DR. CARMELA CUCUZZELLA  **Concordia University, Université de Montréal**

“Design Thinking and the Precautionary Principle: Conceptualizing and Judging Sustainability”

In the prevalent demand for a sustainable development, the main objective of this paper is to highlight the limits of current evaluation practices for sustainability, the relevance of the precautionary principle as a complement to address some of these limits. This paper will also contextualize current forms of sustainability evaluation tools (which are primarily preventive) within design thinking in order to articulate and highlight their limited perspective and application for design for sustainability.

With the increasing international emphasis on standard evaluation tools or methods for addressing concerns related to sustainability, there are serious concerns that these may present increasing tensions between design exploration and critique. A reflective distance is necessary, otherwise society may fall into a mode where the authoritative presence and strict reliance on predictive tools will be the driving force of our future instead of the responsible intentions of designers.

10:00 – 11:30 - PAUL DOLDEN  **Canadian Composer, Montréal**

“Adopting Musical Technologies”

What does the phrase “musical performance” mean when so much of today’s musical composition and consumption is mediated through a labyrinth of facilitating technologies? Before the advent of dominant musical technologies in, especially, the 20th century, there was a visceral relationship between musical composition and the composer, as well as between the musical performance and the audience. Increasingly, however, technology has played a more dominant role in both composition and consumption. The 21st century has only exacerbated this relatively recent trend and questions concerning our human involvement inevitably arise: what is happening to both composition and consumption in an age where these technologies are dominant, and, where learning and playing an instrument no longer seems necessary? When does technology expand, enhance and facilitate the art form, and when does it appear to destroy the human element and experience of our modern musical compositions?

12:00 – 1:30 – DR. NATHAN LOEWEN  **Vanier College**

“International Development and Religions Nexus”

Consideration of the role of religion within the field of development studies has been minimal over the past six decades. Yet, religious belief is a common human characteristic with eighty percent of the world’s population professing religious faith, including 2.1 billion Christians, 1.3 billion Muslims, 950 million Hindus, 400 million Buddhists and 13 million Jews. The sacred texts of each of the world’s major religions exhort believers on how to live a righteous life, including responding to poverty and assisting those with less. The majority of those holding religious faith reside in developing countries. As religious identity is integral to a community’s culture, exclusion of religious consideration will limit successful development interventions and therefore it is necessary to conflate examination of religion and development to enhance efforts aimed at improving the lives of the poor. A focus on the intersection between religion and development is long overdue and this presentation will consider some of the issues at-hand in the nexus where development and religion meet.

4:00 – 6:00 – DR. LUKE JERZYKIEWICZ  **Vanier College**

“Language, Ethics and the Brain”

Do we learn right and wrong from our parents, or are moral ideas something we are simply born with? In fact, neither. Researchers attempting to understand human moral reasoning have recently begun to pay closer attention to their colleagues’ work in linguistics. There, the ongoing effort to unravel the structure of human language has led to exciting insights into the workings of the mind/brain. In this talk, I’ll explain how using those same insights has helped advance the study of ethics and human moral competence.

Friday, February 3rd

8:30 – 10:00 – DR. ERIC LOZOWY  Faculty Dean of Science and General Studies, Vanier College

“Laïcité and the Politics of Interculturalism”

One of the fundamental tenets of the policy of interculturalism adopted by the Quebec Government is the idea that all citizens of diverse origins should contribute to the edification of a society that is conceived as a collective project founded on a set of shared values. These values, which are defined by the government and which are supposed to reflect a consensus amongst the population, include the separation of political and religious powers. Although the majority of the population would certainly agree that State and Church must remain completely separate as ruling bodies, there are still heated debates on how the principle of secularism, or laïcité, should be applied in various areas of public life. One question that remains particularly controversial is the place of religion in education. Indeed, there are polarized opinions on how religion should be taught in public institutions, especially since the creation of the new Ethics and Religious Culture program and the debates surrounding reasonable accommodations. This paper will focus on curriculum and pedagogy at the college level, more specifically in the discipline of Humanities, and will bring forward different positions on the issue of how religion and matters of faith should be discussed in the classroom in a context where teachers are committed to developing intercultural awareness in their students.

10:00 – 11:30 – DR. BRIAN ABOUD  Vanier College

“Getting to Know You, Abu Samra: immigration, encounter and imagining in early-20th-century Montreal and Quebec”

What happens, at the level of knowing, when immigrants enter a country, settle and stay? The knowledge or knowing dimension of human migration is fascinating. It has to do, in part, with the ideas and imaginings about ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ that get formed and formulated in and through the fact of encounter between groups - understood to be distinct in national, ethnic, “racial” or cultural terms - that were hitherto separated by geographical distance. This exposé examines the knowledge dimension of encounter in and through migration focusing on the context of early-twentieth-century Montreal and Quebec. Specifically, it looks at how the French-Canadian and English-Canadian segments of the Montreal and Quebec populations imagined and conceived of a particular group of immigrant newcomers, namely “the Syrians”. Drawing on a range of documentary materials of the period, the exposé presents the predominant ideas and beliefs about Syrians/Arabs that were in circulation in Quebec when French- and English-Canadian groups (both dominant in varying terms) and Syrian/Arab immigrants encountered each other directly for the first time as fellow residents, workers and entrepreneurs in Montreal and as actual and potential fellow members of national communities in Quebec and Canada.

12:00 – 1:30 – DR. MARTHA BERNSTEIN  Vanier College

“The Deconstruction of Medicine: Health, Philosophy, and Science”

Western medicine evolved slowly, beginning with superstition, rituals and attempts to explain how man’s health was affected by the environment and society in which he lived. This paper investigates the “Deconstruction” of medicine into its’ basic tripartite division: Health, philosophy and science. It examines ideas about how people in different eras attempted to explain and resolve their health problems through philosophy, religion and art. Through the centuries, medicine paralleled the evolution and progress of knowledge resulting in its re emergence as a science. We will “Deconstruct” its fascinating journey in order to better understand the epistemology of evidence-based medicine.

Friday, February 3rd

1:30 – 3:00 – JOLIANE ALLAIRE  Vanier College

“Drama, Social Change and the Humanities: Popular Theatre”

PLEASE NOTE: This Workshop is held in the THEATRE: B323-325

The important characteristics of popular theatre include its aspirations to make theatre with community members using a democratic and inclusive process. Throughout such process, the aim is to gather people to express their individuality as well as their commonality in order to gain consciousness of their reality and that of others. Popular theatre practitioners hope to engage community members in bettering elements of their environment. Using the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed, originally written by Augusto Boal as well as Theatre for the Living, written by David Diamond, I am developing a practice that use theatre as a teaching technique in a higher educational setting. The goals of these techniques are to democratized theatre and improve the participant’s self-understanding using everyday life events to address a topic that affects them. These techniques allow the participants to explore their hopes and fears in a safe environment allowed by playing. The creative space can be filled with deep emotions and be interpreted by others through their own understanding, without having to reveal the exact situation. This advantage of the theatre of the oppressed can be very democratic, because it is accessible to all who wants to be involved, regardless of their situation.

1:30 – 3:00 - MICHAEL MACKENZIE, FILM DIRECTOR  Vanier College

FILM - “Adam’s Wall”

In Montreal’s Mile End, Adam Levy, a Jewish teenager, falls in love with Yasmine Gibran, a Lebanese girl. On his way to audition for music school, Adam meets Yasmine, who is participating in a student protest. When the demonstration gets out of hand, they are thrown together in the rush to evacuate the school. He might have missed his audition, but instead he’s met the girl of his dreams! Adam, handsome and shy, and Yasmine, exquisite and passionate, are instantly drawn to one another.

Their love grows, but complications arise. Adam fears that his orthodox Rabbi grandfather, who he’s lived with since his parents were killed in Israel, will stop at nothing to end his relationship with “the Arab girl”. The renewed conflict in the Middle East feels closer and closer to home, as Yasmine’s life dives into a tailspin when she learns that her mother has gone missing in bombed Beirut. The young lovers’ fight to stay together proves more difficult by the day. The deeper they fall for each other, the more their families feel betrayed.

4:00 – 6:00 – CLOSING CEREMONY – Auditorium A-103



WINE AND CHEESE FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

