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2017 Vanier College Humanities Symposium will explore “Silence”



Montreal, January 26, 2017. In an era bombarded with noise of all kinds, the Humanities Department at Vanier College has chosen to explore the theme of “Silence” during the 6th annual Humanities Symposium. From January 30th to February 3rd, 2017, artists, scholars, philosophers and others will explore the meaning and presence of silence in its many different forms in our society.

“Silence opens itself to a broad range of interpretation and analyses. Silence is the necessary absence of interference that allows creativity to breathe, whether in the arts or sciences. As well, it is a place where political tyrants rule and social actors become voiceless,” says principal organizer Jeff Sims of the Vanier Humanities Department.

The Symposium is an opportunity for students hear and think about complex issues and ideas that are new to them. In a society often dominated by the oversimplification of issues, the Symposium allows students to discover and explore history and political realities from a variety of new points of view.

Some of the highlights of the week include the following presenters.

Rebecca Thomas, first Aboriginal Poet Laureate for the City of Halifax, will deliver the **Keynote Address, 1490 Who?**, describing her concern with the M’ikmaq tradition that has been - and continues to be - *silenced* by colonial redactors and its political actors. “History didn’t start in 1492 – we have been here 12,000 years and that’s incredible,” she says. The address will take place on Wednesday, February 1st at 10 am.

In *Silence, Community and Awakening*, **Brian Schroeder**, Zen priest and comparative philosopher at Rochester University, New York (<http://www.rochester.edu/>), will reflect on the relation between silence, the formation of community in the hyper-technologized world, and awakening, that is, coming to a fuller realization of who we are as individuals and in relation to others. Monday, January 30, 12-1:30 PM

In his presentation *The Other Side of Silence*, **Thomas Lamarre**, from McGill University, will look at silence as it relates to film theory and explore how to imagine silence as actively generating possibilities other than silencing. Tuesday, January 31, 8:30-10 AM.

In her talk, *Divine Darkness: the theology and practice of silence in Christian tradition*, **Sara Terreault**, from Concordia University, will explore the significance of ancient theological traditions of silence for our contemporary culture, saturated in social media and often shaped by a need to say too much too often.: This talk Tuesday, January 31, 10-11:30 PM.

Naftali Cohn, author and Professor of Religion, Concordia University (<http://www.concordia.ca/>), will present *A Place for Silence in a Culture of Talking? Hints of Quiet in Ancient Jewish Ritual*, in which he explores the tension in early Jewish tradition between silence and vocal noise, and the role of silence in expressing obedience and devotion to the divine and in attaining spiritual and intellectual heights. Tuesday, January 31, 2:30 – 4 PM

In the 20th century, modern artists like John Cage, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter explored the meaning of silence in a world too filled with sound. In his talk *The ‘Soundness’ of Silence*, **Gary Eberle**, author and former Chair of the English Department at Aquinas College, Michigan, will explore the sound and the ‘soundness’ of silence. Thursday, February 2nd 12 -1:30 PM

Karin Bauer, author and former Chair of German Studies and Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, McGill University, will present *Articulating Silence – Writing Sensory Deprivation: Ulrike Meinhof's Letters from Prison*, which offer insights into the bio-political struggle waged between prisoners and the state. Friday, February 3, 10-11:30 AM.

Other speakers will consider such topics as how actors and performers use their voices and silence to connect emotionally to what they are utter (Shannon Holmes: *The Energy of Silence*); and analyze the role of silence in 20th century composed music, (Marlene Eberhart: *"Silence" and Composition in 20th C. Music*). In *Silencing Hunger*, Pota Kanavaros will examine how extreme poverty silences billions of people on the planet. As well, David D'Andrea (*Power, Discourse and Silence*) will highlight what is ignored or forgotten when postmodernism dominates intellectuals; and Stephen Hawkins will argue that different sensations of nothingness shape our conception of our existential predicament and ourselves (*Dark Nights and Eternal Silence: Sensory Metaphors for the Experience of Nothingness*).

See the detailed program. All presentations take place in the Auditorium, A-103. Open to the public.

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