



SPRING 2019

# TOWNSEND

CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES UC BERKELEY

EXHIBITION *Livia Stein* BOOK CHATS *Joyce Carol Oates; Bob Dylan's Poetics* UNA'S LECTURE *Maggie Nelson*





**TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES**

University of California, Berkeley  
 220 Stephens Hall  
 Berkeley, CA 94720-2340

(510) 643-9670  
 townsendcenter@berkeley.edu

[townsendcenter.berkeley.edu](http://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu)

**FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

- Anthony J. Cascardi, Dean, Arts & Humanities
- Raúl Coronado, Ethnic Studies
- Philip Kan Gotanda, Theater, Dance & Performance Studies
- Dorothy Hale, English
- Andrew Jones, East Asian Languages & Cultures
- Niklaus Largier, German and Comparative Literature
- Maria Mavroudi, History, Near Eastern Studies, and Classics
- Myra Melford, Music
- Andrew Shanken, Architecture
- Barbara Spackman, Comparative Literature and Italian
- Leti Volpp, Law
- Alexander von Rospatt, South & Southeast Asian Studies
- Kristen Whissel, Film & Media

**STAFF**

- DIRECTOR  
 Timothy Hampton, Professor of Comparative Literature & French
- ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
 Rebecca Egger
- DIRECTOR, ART OF WRITING  
 Ramona Naddaff
- PROGRAM MANAGER  
 Colleen Barroso
- FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR  
 Diane Soper
- WEB & PUBLICATIONS  
 Eric Kotila
- PROGRAM ASSOCIATE  
 Alex Brostoff

**CONTENTS**

Director's Letter ..... p. 3  
 Una's Lecture ..... p. 4  
 Inside Dope ..... p. 5  
 Berkeley Book Chats ..... p. 6  
 Artist Livia Stein ..... p. 7  
 Spring Deadlines ..... back cover

COVER IMAGES (clockwise from top left): *Gone Fishing* (painting detail), Livia Stein; Joyce Carol Oates, Eric Kotila; Maggie Nelson, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Campanile in Storm Clouds, Eric Kotila; Bob Dylan, Rex Features.

IMAGE CREDITS: Bench by Strawberry Creek, Campanile through Magnolias, Eric Kotila, pp. 2-3; Maggie Nelson, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, p. 4; John Paulas, Eric Kotila, p. 5; *Gone Fishing* (painting), Livia Stein, p. 7.



# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

THE GREAT ECONOMIST Adam Smith opens his 1759 book, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, by reflecting on the limits of the individual. None of us can experience the pain of another, he says. So long as we ourselves are living free from suffering, we can never truly know what “our brother upon the rack” is feeling. “It is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations,” he notes. Smith goes on to develop a theory of sympathy whereby, through the power of the imagination, humans can bind themselves to each other in community. For Smith, moral action and imagination are linked.

In the past few months, I have found myself drawn repeatedly to Smith’s powerful defense of the imagination. We live in a time when the bonds of community have become frayed. We are confronted by the extraordinary spectacles of suffering and by acts that elicit outrage: the breaking apart of families on the southern border, the vicious campaigns to disenfranchise voters, the scandalous behavior of the social media giants, the horrific violence against writers and intellectuals around the globe, the terrible natural disasters. These events are all different from each other; some are political, some are social, some are ecological. But they all test, in different ways, our relationships to our fellows — to those, in Smith’s words, who are “upon the rack.”

Smith would understand the current crisis as a challenge to the imagination. The failure of imagination — the failure of those in power to imagine the pain they are inflicting on others — resonates in important ways with how we think about education. Traditionally it has fallen to the

humanities to study the development of the imagination. In the face of journalistic scoops and scraps, of tweets and twits, it is through the patient and humane exercise of the imagination that community can be repaired. And while the deep, patient work of the humanities scholar or the small-group exchanges in the seminar room obviously

cannot “solve” the effects of the violent events unfolding around us, the work of the humanities creates a climate within which the cultivation of judgment, solidarity, and empathy can be fostered.

One of the great privileges of working in the humanities community at Berkeley is the opportunity to witness the many conversations through which the imagination is cultivated — from Townsend

Working Groups, to our Fellows program, to our new Honors Thesis Workshop. The current moment imposes on us the duty to expand and deepen our conversations. If you have an idea for an event or a speaker who can push the dialogue forward, please consider requesting support through our Conference & Lecture Grant program. And feel free to come to the Center to join the conversations already under way.

**Timothy Hampton**

Aldo Scaglione and Marie M. Burns Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and French



## UNA'S LECTURE

## Maggie Nelson

## Una's Lecture

5 PM Wednesday, February 27, 2019  
Maude Fife Room, 315 Wheeler Hall

Conversation on Values & the  
Concept of Freedom

5 PM Thursday, February 28, 2019  
Geballe Room, 220 Stephens Hall

POET, CRITIC, and nonfiction writer **Maggie Nelson** is the 2018–19 Una's Lecturer. Formerly the director of the creative writing program at California Institute of the Arts, she is professor of English at the University of Southern California.

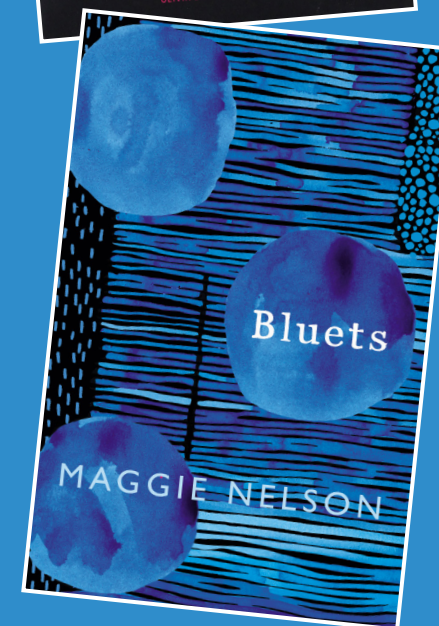
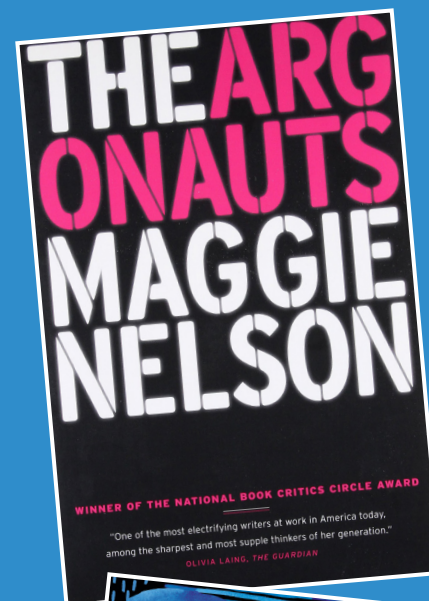
With its award of a 2016 fellowship, the MacArthur Foundation hailed Nelson as

a writer forging a new mode of nonfiction that transcends the divide between the personal and the intellectual and renders pressing issues of our time into portraits of day-to-day lived experience. [...] Her empathetic and open-ended way of thinking — her willingness to change her mind and even embrace qualities of two seemingly incompatible positions — offers a powerful example for how very different people can think and live together.

Nelson's books include *The Red Parts: Autobiography of a Trial*, which explores the aftermath of the 1969 murder of Nelson's aunt and the trial, held decades later, of a suspect in the case; *The Art of Cruelty*, an examination of violence as an aesthetic device in avant-garde art and culture; and four collections of poetry.



A genre-defying writer, Nelson engages ambitiously with a variety of literary forms and intellectual perspectives. *The Argonauts*, her chronicle of motherhood, sexuality, and love, which won the 2015 National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism, is praised by the *New Yorker* as a work that “combines — like a number of other masterpieces of American autobiography — memoir, literary analysis, humor, and reporting with vivid instances of both the familiar and the strange.”



Similarly, the book *Bluets*, which consists of a numbered series of what Nelson terms “propositions,” reads simultaneously like a single lyrical essay and a collection of 240 short prose-poems.

Nelson is currently at work on a book exploring the idea of “freedom” in a variety of contemporary discourses and contexts, including sexual freedom, drug discourse, climate reckoning, and the art world.

## PhD Career Development

Inside Dope:  
Life as a Humanist

April 26 2019

TO SHOWCASE THE VARIETY of lives and livelihoods pursued by humanities PhDs, the Townsend Center and Graduate Division bring to campus a group of Berkeley PhD alumni working in a range of careers to lead small group discussions with current and recently-graduated doctoral students. These discussions give students the opportunity to learn about various career experiences and gain valuable insight into their own paths.



The third annual *Inside Dope* is led by **John Paulas**, former director of fellowships at the Townsend Center and founder of PhD Matters Ltd. While at the Townsend Center, Paulas saw the need for guidance to assist

doctoral students pursuing work in diverse careers and sectors, and he created his firm in response.

Previous *Inside Dope* panelists have represented a broad spectrum of career fields, including consulting, arts and culture entrepreneurship, tech, government agencies, writing and editing, non-profit management, academic administration, university fundraising, and high school teaching.

Applications for *Inside Dope* are available in the early Spring 2019 semester. The workshop is open to UC Berkeley doctoral students and recent PhD graduates.









NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

## TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

University of California, Berkeley

220 Stephens Hall

Berkeley, CA 94720-2340

[townsendcenter.berkeley.edu](http://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu)

HG-09

To unsubscribe from this *Newsletter*, please email  
[townsendcenter@berkeley.edu](mailto:townsendcenter@berkeley.edu) or call (510) 643-9670.

### Event

#### THE POLITICS OF TRUTH: A WAY FORWARD

Arlie Hochschild & Thomas Laqueur in Conversation

5 pm, February 7, 2019

Geballe Room, 220 Stephens Hall



#### Arlie Hochschild

(Sociology) and

#### Thomas Laqueur

(History) discuss the contributions that academic scholars can make to the public

understanding of truth and its relation to politics. Their talk kicks off the new series *Public University*, *Public Values*, which explores how faculty can use their work to address the question of values in public life.

### SPRING 2019 DEADLINES

January 18, 2019

[Public Speaking for Graduate Students](#)

February 8, 2019

[Conference & Lecture Grants](#)

March 22, 2019

[Daniel E Koshland Jr Art of Teaching Writing Fellowships](#)

May 3, 2019

[Conference & Lecture Grants](#)

May 7, 2019

[Working Groups](#)

[townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/deadlines](http://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/deadlines)