INTRODUCTION

The CHCI-Mellon Crises of Democracy Global Humanities Institute (GHI) is a partnership formed by five universities: Trinity College Dublin, University of São Paulo, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Zagreb, and Columbia University.

In July 2019, the Crises of Democracy Global Humanities Institute commenced its second and most significant phase: a 9-day summer institute in Dubrovnik attended by a consortium of seasoned humanities scholars and international early career researchers. This group of 40 researchers at various career stages, representing over 30 disciplines and travelling from 5 continents, met in Croatia to examine threats to democracy through the prism of cultural trauma. The programme consisted of lectures, panels, practical skills workshops, film screenings, and early career researcher presentations.

One of the main objectives of the GHI was to create a living curriculum open to all. The Crises of Democracy Curriculum is based on our programme in Dubrovnik and has been designed by the GHI faculty:

Balázs Apor
Nebojša Blanuša
Angela Butler
Rosemary Byrne
Arlene Clemesha
Mary Cosgrove
Eileen Gillooly
Jennifer Edmond
Esther Hamburger
Marianne Hirsch
Stephanie McCurry
Sucheta Mahajan
Aditya Mukherjee
Mridula Mukherjee
Jane Ohlmeyer
Tomislav Pletenac
Bodh Prakash
Urmimala Sarkar Munsi
Bruce Shapiro

The Crises of Democracy Curriculum and Global Humanities Institute is supported by the Consortium for Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) and the A.W. Mellon Foundation.
THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN WORLD: AN HISTORICAL FRAME

Professor Mridula Mukherjee employs a long-term historical frame to understand the evolution of democracy in the modern world. The lecture highlights the key question that the GHI returns to: what is it in today’s world that is making populist and authoritarian approaches to government more popular than democracy? The reading list for this lecture, which includes Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World, The End of History and the Last Man, and The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies, introduces many of the key problems regarding identity, power structures, and oppression as well as raising issues of positive resistance, civil responsibilities, and transformative expression.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Mridula Mukherjee’s lecture here.

Reading list:

- Banaji, Jairus, “The Political Culture of Fascism.” In What the Nation Really Needs to Know.

Question:
What is it in today’s world that is making populist and authoritarian approaches to government more attractive than democratic ones?
DEFINING “DEMOCRACY”, “CRISIS”, AND “CULTURAL TRAUMA”

At the planning meeting for the GHI, which took place in Dublin in May 2018, the partners felt strongly that the terms we were working with—“democracy”, “crisis” and “cultural trauma”—needed to be discussed and defined at the beginning of our institute in Dubrovnik so that all researchers had a point of common reference. For this reason, on the second day of the GHI in Dubrovnik, a panel comprising of Professor Rosemary Byrne (NYU Abu Dhabi), Professor Mary Cosgrove (TCD), and Professor Aditya Mukherjee (Jawaharlal Nehru University) sought to examine the key terms relating to crises of democracy and cultural trauma.

Listen to a podcast of the Defining “Democracy”, “Crisis” and “Cultural Trauma” lecture here.

Reading list:


Questions:

What does it mean to speak of “democracy in crisis”?

Is there a difference between electoral outcomes that upset and those that subvert democratic life?

What is the tipping point into “crisis” and what are the different approaches we take when thinking about the health of democracy?
SELF-CARE AND ETHICAL PRACTICE FOR TRAUMA-FACING RESEARCHERS

Professor Bruce Shapiro, Executive Director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma at Columbia University, offers a workshop that covers practical ways to incorporate self-care and ethical practice for trauma-facing researchers. Professor Shapiro establishes a basic framework for understanding how direct and vicarious trauma exposure affect both the subjects of research and researchers. This workshop explores basic self-care strategies and advocated for peer support.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Bruce Shapiro’s workshop here.

Reading list:


Resources:

Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma Resources:
https://dartcenter.org/resources

Victims and Dealing with the Past: Media Guidelines:
https://victimsandthepast.org/outputs/media-training-workshops/

Trauma-informed Victim Interviewing:
LEADERS, CULTS, AND TRAUMA

Professor Nebojša Blanuša (University of Zagreb) and Professor Balázs Apor (Trinity College Dublin) examine the role of various carriers of influence—political, military and religious leaders—as potential sources of cultural trauma. Leaders are often described as the main characters in the narratives of cultural trauma, and can assume simultaneously, the status of villains as well as heroes. The panel explores such opposite imaginations, their dynamics and political effects, by using various examples, from the post-Yugoslav countries, Hungary, Russia to the United States. The speakers also address the cultic veneration of leaders (modern dictators) and the way such cults were developed and promoted with the aim of diminishing the impact of perceived historical traumas (collapse of empire, war, genocide, etc.)

Listen to a podcast of the Leaders, Cults, and Trauma panel here.

Reading list:


Question:

Can the creation of an illusion of crisis and repeated references to the collective trauma of a society help to build a cult following?
MATERIALISING MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES

Professor Urmimala Sarkar Munsi (Jawaharlal Nehru University) and Professor Esther Hamburger (University of São Paulo) explore how memories can be materialised in creative forms such as film and dance taking a devised performance, WALK by Maya Krishna Rao, and an 8” short poetic experimental film, Rough Stone (2009) by Julia Zakia, as their case studies.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Urmimala Sarkar Munsi and Professor Esther Hamburger’s workshop here.

Reading list:


Watch:


Maya Krishna Rao's Performance of "WALK" on January 28, 2013 after the Delhi gang rape of Jyoti Pandey on December 16, 2012: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msUvCWkCvQ

Maya Krishna Rao's Performance of “WALK” on 15 December, 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySjoUTUAwmU

Interview with Maya Krishna Rao in March 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ynE_RKjiao
RELIGIOUS POLARISATION, TERRORISM, AND XENOPHOBIA

Professor Urmimala Sarkar Munsi (Jawaharlal Nehru University) and Professor Arlene Clemesha (University of São Paulo) focus on the key challenges to democracy today through an analysis of religious polarisation, terrorism, and xenophobia. Professor Sarkar Munsi and Professor Clemesha use examples grounded in popular media, such as political cartoons, including reference to the Charlie Hebdo case and the popular Indian television serial on a Hindu god called Rama.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Urmimala Sarkar Munsi and Professor Arlene Clemesha’s panel here.

Reading list:


Questions:

What role can popular entertainment, such as television shows and cartoons, play in propagation of political ideology?

To what extent does the media influence politics and democracy?
ORAL HISTORIES

Professor Sucheta Mahajan (Jawaharlal Nehru University) holds a practical workshop which introduces methods of oral history practice with an emphasis on recovery of subaltern and marginalized voices. She outlines the approach she grew to adopt in her oral history work, namely the life story method. In this the interviewee gives a freewheeling account of her life beginning with early childhood, making the storyteller the subject of her story, rather than a mere respondent to set questionnaires. In this workshop Professor Mahajan considers topics such as the dialectic between remembering and forgetting, the concept of ‘bearing witness’, ‘silence as sanctuary’, the possibilities of transformation and empowerment.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Sucheta Mahajan’s workshop here.

Reading list:


Resources:

www.1947partitionarchive.org

Questions:

How reliable is memory as a resource to write history?
INSTITUTIONS’ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, VIOLENCE, AND RESISTANCE

A panel featuring Professor Stephanie McCurry (Columbia University), Professor Mary Cosgrove (Trinity College Dublin), and Professor Sucheta Mahajan (Jawaharlal Nehru University) addressing the use of violence to oppress the exercise of democratic rights and freedom to practise religious faith, and exploring positive strategies of resistance.

Professor Cosgrove focuses on far-right efforts to change significantly the parameters of Holocaust memory discourse in Germany today. Professor McCurry concentrates on one foundational moment in the crisis of democracy and cultural trauma in the U.S.: The violent suppression of African Americans’ civil and political rights by white supremacists groups—collectively identified as the Ku Klux Klan—in the immediate aftermath of the American Civil War. Professor Mahajan problematizes the characterisation of the widespread violence that accompanied the Partition of India in 1947. She proposes going beyond the paradigm of the Holocaust to alternative ways of understanding of societal violence, such as reparative remembering for the Irish troubles.

Listen to a podcast of the Institutions’ Roles and Responsibilities, Violence, and Resistance panel here.

Reading list:


Resources:


https://politicalbeauty.com/index.html

https://www.politicalbeauty.de/mahnmal.html
REFUGEES AND STATELESS LIVES: WHAT CAN ART DO?

A workshop led by Professor Marianne Hirsch (Columbia University) on the subject of refugees and statelessness, posing the question: what can art do? Responding to the current "refugee crisis" and its implications for the future of democracy, this session builds on writings about statelessness from the mid-twentieth century by Hannah Arendt and others. Looking in depth at several diasporic art projects that respond specifically to statelessness as a condition, Professor Hirsch discusses what participatory art projects can do in the face of the traumatic effects of nationalism and ethnocentrism, negation and dispossession.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Marianne Hirsch’s workshop here.

Reading list:


Question:

Can aesthetic encounters provide a new space for the creation of political community?

Watch:

https://vimeo.com/7527521


Mutu, Wangechi. The End of Carrying All. 2015: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0i_jCf_alA
A CASE STUDY: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Beginning in the multicultural town of Mostar, the Crises of Democracy GHI researchers visited the Partisan Memorial Cemetery and the iconic Old Bridge, Stari Most, which was rebuilt in 2004 following its destruction in 1993 during the war. From Mostar, the group travelled to Sarajevo, taking a tour of the city and learning about the history and culture of the old and new town. Among the places visited on the tour, they stopped at the site of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and learned about the National and University Library of Bosnia & Herzegovina which was set alight by the Bosnian Serb forces, burning over 2 million books, periodicals, and documents. The next day, the GHI researchers visited the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the victims of the 1995 genocide. The visit to the Memorial Centre and Cemetery, and the experiences from the previous day, immersed the researchers in an area that is attempting to recover from deep division and trauma.

The field trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina acted as a common case study for the international group of researchers. While it was one of the most challenging parts of the GHI, it was also one of the most rewarding.

Reading list:

- Šehović, Aida. “Što te nema?” (Why are you not here?)
  https://www.aidasehovic.com/stotenema
- Brezar, Aleksandar. “Bosnia is close to the edge. We need Europe’s help.” The Guardian. 29 May 2019.
A CASE STUDY: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Top left and right: The Partisan Memorial Cemetery, Mostar
Centre left: Stari Most/The Old Bridge at Mostar
Centre right: Srebenica–Potočari Memorial Centre
Bottom right: Srebrenica–Potočari Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide
A CASE STUDY: BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The following are questions that the Crises of Democracy GHI researchers kept as an analytical resource for our visit to the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide.

Questions:

- How does gender shape both the violence committed and the memory and memorialization of that violence?
- What are the legal and memorial implications of a radically gendered form of genocide, such as the one that was perpetrated in Srebrenica?
- What work does the Srebrenica monument do in coming to terms with this violent past?
- What do you experience being there?
- What do you learn and how?
- Do you think the memorial helps us learn about the massacre?
- How does the memorial transmit history?
- Does it do justice to the victims and their descendants, and to the extent of the crimes?
- Does it promote justice?
- People in Srebrenica experience constant lack in trying to remember the victims. There feel as somewhere outside is constant force that erase memory and even existence of the victims. What is the origin of that lack?
- How is this lack used by the official discourses of remembering the victims?
- How are the victims represented?
- Who took authority over representation of the victims?
- Is it possible to write about the genocide in such contested context of representation?

Resources:

Information about the genocide in Srebrenica: https://www.srebrenica-mappinggenocide.com/en/
Information on Srebrenica: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_nigij4SVI
Information on Yugoslavia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi5gAiM0d8A
IDENTITY, CULTURAL EXPRESSION, AND RESISTANCE

A panel comprised of Professor Aditya Mukherjee (Jawaharlal Nehru University), Professor Esther Hamburger (University of São Paulo), and Professor Bodh Prakash (Ambedkar University) which addresses identity, cultural expression, and strategies of resistance. The panel covers cinema, inclusive democratic processes, and the ways that cultural expression has been used to undermine the democratic process.

Listen to a podcast of the Identity, Cultural Expression and Resistance panel here.

Reading list:
- Mukherjee, Mridula. “Civil Liberties and Indian Nationalism”. In What the Nation Really Needs to Know.
- Patnaik, Prabhat, “Two Concepts of Nationalism.” In What the Nation Really Needs to Know.

Resources:
Manifesto of the IPWA:

Manto’s first letter to Uncle Sam:

Manto’s second letter to Uncle Sam:
http://mail.sarai.net/pipermail/reader-list_mail.sarai.net/2009-May/019418.html

GLOBALISATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND MEDIA

Professor Jennifer Edmond (Trinity College Dublin) examines the relationship between technology, globalisation, and democracy. From the time of Plato, technology has always been rightly characterised as a *pharmakon*, a drug-like supplement to our lives that can be beneficial or detrimental to the health of individuals and societies. Professor Edmond looks at how the underlying nature of some of the technologies driving social change today, such as AI, big data, and social media platforms, is different from what has come before, and how the unique characteristics of their design and function present threats to democracy that are different not just in degree, but in kind. Historic and contemporary examples will be viewed from the perspective of their transparency, scale, and inherent biases, so as to illustrate this difference and suggest strategies by which we might develop productive strategies for ethical and appropriate uses of them.

Listen to a podcast of Professor Edmond’s lecture [here](#).

**Reading list:**


**Watch**


**Question:**

Think about the ways that certain technologies affect how we:

- Create knowledge
- Know our world
- Form our identities
- Share cultural assets
- Form relationships
- Perceive the world
- Express power
POSITIVE RESISTANCE

A panel on strategies of positive resistance against inequality and undemocratic regimes featuring Borut Šeparovič (author, theatre-maker and choreographer), Professor Eileen Gillooly (Columbia University), and Professor Mridula Mukherjee (Jawaharlal Nehru University). The panel address various forms of positive resistance including acts of civil disobedience, the provision of educational opportunities to those who are or have been incarcerated, outreach programmes, and transformative art practices. Resistance often involves disobedience, in some form, that seeks to delegitimize the power of the oppressor.

Listen to a podcast of Borut Šeparovič, Professor Eileen Gillooly and Professor Mridula Mukherjee’s panel here.

Reading list:


Resources:

Columbia University’s Justice-in-Education Initiative:
http://justiceineducation.columbia.edu/

Columbia Courses Related to Mass Incarceration:
http://justiceineducation.columbia.edu/curriculum/columbia-courses-related-to-mass-incarceration/

Justice-in-Education Initiative Resources:
http://justiceineducation.columbia.edu/curriculum/resources/

Information on Borut Šeparovič’s work:
http://www.montazstroj.hr/en/borut-separovic/