

## 2018 Conference Participant Bios: "Pop Culture in/as Speculative Resistance"

### Wayne State University, Feb 16-18

**Saladin Ahmed** was born in Detroit. His 2012 fantasy novel *Throne of the Crescent Moon* received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Library Journal*, was nominated for the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award, and won the Locus Award for Best First Novel. His essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *the Boston Globe*, *BuzzFeed*, and *Salon*. He is currently writing *Black Bolt* for Marvel Comics and *Abbott* for Boom! Studios.

**Kevin Ball** is a Ph.D candidate at Wayne State University. His research interests encompass AfroFuturism, cinema, and video game studies. His work has appeared in *Film Criticism* and *The Journal of Transformative Works and Culture*.

**Andre Batts**, born May 4, 1966, grew up on the west side of Detroit. Andre had a love for comic books such as Dr. Strange, the X-men and the Avengers. He was a self-taught artist, who learned to draw by looking at the images that were in the comics that he had been reading. Over time, Andre started realizing that there wasn't enough African American representation in comic books, yet African Americans, including himself, were spending a lot of money on comics. Andre also realized that a lot of comic book stories stemmed from ancient African Myths and Spirituality. The Myths were watered down to fit characters such as Superman, the X-men and others in the Marvel, D.C. Universes. So, Andre, being heavily influenced by the books he read in his 20's and 30's as well as the music he listened to in the mid 80's and early 90's (Reggae and conscious Hip Hop) began writing and eventually developed his own likeness into an African American character he called Dreadlocks. He released his first *Dreadlocks* title in 1996 and has been rolling them out ever since.

**Courtney Bliss** is currently a Ph. D. student in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University. Her Master of Arts is in Popular Culture from Bowling Green State University. Her research interests include fandom, comic books, disability, Deaf Culture, the ways they intersect with each other, the portrayal of disability in the media, and the portrayal of Deaf Culture in the media. Her master's thesis, "Reframing Normal: The Inclusion of Deaf Culture in the X-Men Comic Books", looks at the ways Deaf Culture has been included in the portrayal of mutants since 1963.

**Ronald E. Brown** currently works at the Department of Political Science, Wayne State University. Ronald does research in Human Rights, Conflict Processes and International Relations. Their most recent publication is "Race, Religion, and Anti-Poverty Policy Attitudes" from *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* volume 55, issue 2, published in 2016.

**Ching-In Chen** is the author of *The Heart's Traffic* and *recombinant*. They are a Kundiman, Lambda and Callaloo Fellow and a member of the Macondo and Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundations writing communities. Chen is also the co-editor of *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities*. Their work has appeared in *The Best American Experimental Writing*, *The &NOW Awards 3: The Best Innovative Writing*, and *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*. They currently teach creative writing, literature and writing at Sam Houston State University, where they are poetry editor of the *Texas Review*.

**Lauren Corneliussen** is the founder of Trans Stellar Film Festival, a Detroit-based film festival for queer filmmakers. Currently a senior at Oakland University with a major in Cinema Studies, they are also the former Vice President of the Oakland University Board Game Design Club. They are a tabletop enthusiast and hobby board game designer. Lauren is dedicated to promoting queer inclusivity in all media, particularly in fantasy and sci-fi communities.

**Rachelle Cruz** is Part-time Faculty at Orange Coast College where she teaches English Composition and Critical Thinking, and a Lecturer in Creative Writing (with a focus in poetry and comics) at the University of California, Riverside. She is the editor and author of *Experiencing Comics: A Guide to Reading, Discussing and Making Comics* (Cognella, 2018); author of *God's Will for Monsters* (Inlandia, 2017); and co-editor with Melissa Sipin-Gabon of *Kuwento: Lost Things - An Anthology of New Filipino Myths*. She has received fellowships from Kundiman, PEN Center USA Emerging Voices, and PAWA Manuel G. Flores.

**Diana DePasquale** is an instructor in the Ethnic Studies department and Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies program within the School of Cultural and Critical Studies at Bowling Green State University. Diana's dissertation is on piracy culture and downloading television content as an act of political resistance. If you want to talk to her about that, or about what you're watching on TV, that would be cool with her.

**Jonathan Flatley** was trained at Duke's Graduate Program in Literature from 1990-1996, where he worked with Fredric Jameson and Eve Sedgwick. His research and teaching are committed to a comparative approach to the experience of modernity, focusing on the African American, American and Russian cultural traditions. Art's capacity to both represent and create collective affective experiences has been a constant focus of his work. These concerns can be seen in his first book, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Harvard, 2008), which considers modernism's relationship to the experiences of modernity through its preoccupation with loss. His second book, *Like Andy Warhol* (University of Chicago, 2017)

examines Warhol's "liking" and the queer utopian impulses animating it. Professor Flatley is now working on a book about black engagement with the ideas and example of Vladimir Lenin.

**Radhika Gajjala** (PhD, University of Pittsburgh, 1998) is Professor of Media and Communication (joint appointed faculty in American Culture Studies) at Bowling Green State University. She has published books on *Cyberculture and the Subaltern* (Lexington Press, 2012) and *Cyberselves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women* was published by Altamire in 2004. She has co-edited collections on *Cyberfeminism 2.0* (2012), *Global Media Culture and Identity* (2011), *South Asian Technospaces* (2008) and *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice* (2008). She is also a member of the Fembot Collective and FemTechnet (participating in the DOCC 2013 nodal teaching project) and is co-editor (with Carol Stabile) of *ADA: Journal of Gender, New Media and Technology*.

**Sean C. Hill** is Vice President of Student Engagement at Lewis & Clark Community College in Godfrey, IL, where he also holds tenured faculty status in psychology. He received his PhD from Loyola University Chicago in research methodology/human development. His research interest is best described as the theoretical unification of the mélange of social, psychological, and scientific concepts and theories floating around in his head, which often focuses on race, identity, chaos, complexity, physics, and Jungian perspectives. He especially enjoys applying these frameworks to films and anime.

**Sheena C. Howard** is Associate Professor of Communication at Rider University. Howard is an award-winning author, including a 2014 Eisner Award winner for her first book, *Black Comics: Politics of Race and Representation* (2013). She is also the author of *Black Queer Identity Matrix* (2014), *Critical Articulations of Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation* (2014) and *Encyclopedia of Black Comics* (2017). In 2016, Howard wrote, produced and directed her first film, *Remixing Colorblind* which examines how higher education shapes our perceptions of race. Howard has appeared on NPR (National Public Radio), The Washington Post, ABC, The New York Times and PBS as well as other networks and documentaries as an expert on popular culture, race, politics and sexual identity negotiation. She also has bylines in *The Huffington Post*, *the Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Curve*.

**Brian Jansen** is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Calgary, and Instructor of English and Media Studies at Red Deer College in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. His Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-funded dissertation explores questions of ethics and agency in popular American media. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, *Jeunesse: Young People, Cultures, Texts*, and the *Journal of the Short Story in English*.

**Mary Karcher** recently earned her PhD in Rhetoric and Composition with an emphasis on Computers and Composition from Wayne State University. Her dissertation was entitled, "Memes, ARGs and Viral Videos: Spreadable Media as Composition Pedagogy". In her 8+ years of teaching experience, she has taught a variety of composition courses, as well as several literature courses. Her research interests include new media, composition pedagogy, Participatory Culture, Game theory and Fan studies.

**Chera Kee** is an Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies in the English Department at Wayne State University. She received her BA in Mass Communications and Asian Studies from Oklahoma City University. She has an AM from Harvard in Regional Studies—East Asia and an MA from USC in Critical Studies (Film). She earned her Ph.D. in Critical Studies from USC in 2011. Her essay on the zombie's Haitian roots appears in the book *the Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human* (Rutgers, 2011); her article on using zombies as stand-ins for bodies of color, "Good Girls Don't Date Dead Boys: Toying with Miscegenation in Zombie Films," appears in the December 2014 issue of the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, and her book, *Not Your Average Zombie: Rehumanizing the Undead from Voodoo to Zombie Walks* was published in 2017 by University of Texas Press.

**Hector J. Kilgoe** is a doctoral student in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include Black nationalism, formations of Black identity, and the role of religious leaders and organizations in protest movements

**Dr. Amy Latawiec** is a Lecturer in the Rhetoric and Composition program at Wayne State University. Her research areas include dispositions and cognition, knowledge transfer (specifically in at-risk populations), Basic Writing theory and pedagogy, and writing program assessment. Amy has developed basic writing curriculum for Wayne State and is actively engaged in innovative curricular revisions in an effort to enhance writing instruction and assessment. In addition to her commitment to researching and teaching writing, she enjoys reading indie comics and watching pro wrestling. Recently, she has developed an interest in feminist activism in social media spaces.

**Sean Levenson** studies early modern literature. He has a B.A. in English from West Virginia State University and an M.A. in English from East Tennessee State University. He is currently working towards the PhD in English at Wayne State University. His dissertation focuses on representations of scholars in early modern plays. In his research, he draws on an eclectic mix of critical approaches, including feminism, queer theory, cultural materialism, and character study.

**Chelsea Liddy** is the founder/coordinator of ComiqueCon: Celebrating Women in Comics, a one-day festival celebrating the contributions of female comic creators.

**Dan Merritt** is co-owner, with wife Katie, of Green Brain Comics which they bought in 1999. Green Brain Comics was selected Best Comic Store in the Detroit area multiple times by *Corp! Magazine*, *Hour Magazine*, *Metro Times*, and *Detroit News*. Dan is a co-founder of Kids Read Comics (KRC); a not-for-profit organization formed to promote comics and graphic novels as learning and teaching tools for youth. Kids Read Comics has hosted free annual convention style events at libraries throughout Michigan since 2008. He is also the chair of the East Dearborn Downtown Development Authority and works closely with the City of Dearborn to promote local business, events, and community projects.

**Kelly Roy Polasek** is a doctoral student in the Literary and Cultural Studies program of the English Department at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her research focuses on 20th and 21st century American literature with a special concentration on war literature. She is the Managing Editor for *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* and Co-President of the Wayne State University Visual Culture Student Group

**Erick Raven** is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in English at the University of Texas at Arlington. He currently holds an M.Ed from Texas Christian University and has been an educator in the United States and South Korea. He is interested in writing about the social impact of various forms of popular culture including music, comic books, film, etc. on East Asian societies, particularly South Korea, Japan, and China. After graduating he plans to return to South Korea and teach at a college or university.

**Sean Renkert** is a doctoral student at Wayne State University, where he is studying early modern English literature with a special focus on drama. His research interests include post-humanism, object-oriented ontology, and philosophical approaches to literature.

**Michael Shumway** is a PhD candidate and Rumble fellow at Wayne State University. His dissertation project, entitled "Urbanization and the Power of Popular Culture: Rethinking What It Means to be Foreign in Early Modern English Literature," examines how English authors explored the various consequences of England's increasingly permeable borders. By eschewing larger colonial narratives of self/other and English racial, ethnic, and cultural purity, he argues that these texts establish a definition of foreignness based not on place of birth but rather one's utility and ability to adapt to life in the nation's diversifying urban centers.

**Nina Teal** is a student at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan who is pursuing a master's degree in English, specifically Rhetoric and Composition Studies. She has a passion for Korean and Japanese pop culture which led her to the fields of visual, cultural and post-colonial rhetorics. In utilizing a rhetorical lens, she is able to gain new views and merge the fields of English and Asian Studies. In her free time, Nina enjoys writing creative fiction, reading manga and hanging out with friends at her local Starbucks.

**Sarah Urdiales** is a graduate student at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work and UT Health Science Center School of Public Health in Houston, Texas. Her interests include migration studies, mental illness and trauma, as well as labelling of marginalized persons for political reasons. Her first foray into Marvel Comics was through Captain America and her favorite series is Matt Fraction/David Aja's *Hawkeye*.

**Lisa Ze Winters** is an associate professor of African American Studies and English at Wayne State University, the reviews editor of *Criticism* (Wayne State University Press), and the faculty coordinator of the English Honors Program. Her book *The Mulatta Concubine: Terror, Intimacy, Freedom, and Desire in the Black Transatlantic* was published by University of Georgia Press in 2016.

**Matt Yockey** is an Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies at the University of Toledo. His 2014 monograph on the *Batman* television series was published by Wayne State University Press and last year saw the release of his edited anthology *Make Ours Marvel: Media Convergence and a Comics Universe*, published by the University of Texas Press.