



CELEBRATING ER&M CLASS OF 2021!

PROGRAM

EMCEE PROF. ALBERT LAGUNA

1:00-1:10
WELCOME

1:10-2:10
SENIOR THESIS PRESENTATIONS
(MARIKO, ANANYA, GIANNA, HENRY, JOAN, GABRIELLA,
CAROLYN, LILLIAN, KEVIN, IRENE)

2:10
GROUP ZOOM PHOTO

2:11-2:30
FACULTY HONORING SENIORS
(SLIDESHOW)

2:30-3:00
FINAL REMARKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
(PROFS. ZAREENA GREWAL &
ALICIA SCHMIDT CAMACHO)



CONGRATULATIONS

JOAN AGOH	ZORA MONTAS
VALENTINA AMATE PEREZ	MAYA RAIFORD CHOEN
LAKSHMI AMIN	ESTHER REYES
KRISTA NAOMI ARELLANO	MARISSA RIVERA
GIANNA BAEZ	MARIKO ROOKS
GABRIELLA BLAT	HENRY ROSAS IBARRA
KEVIN CHEN	CAROLYN SACCO
DANIELLE COLLINS	KATHRYN SCHMECHEL
MEGHANLATA GUPTA	VY TRAN
LILLIAN HUA	IRENE VÁZQUEZ
TYLER JANSEN	ALONDRA VÁZQUEZ LÓPEZ
ANANYA KUMAR-BANERJEE	MELINDA WANG
TAHJ P. LAKEY	JACCARANDA
LARISSA MARTINEZ	WOLDEMARIAM
CONTRERAS	





JOAN AGOH

“In a brilliantly conceived thesis, Joan listens to the conversations between Kenyan-American artist Wangechi Mutu's work and the writings of black feminist theorists. Joan does so in order to remap the political geographies of black feminism, urging us to see how black feminism calls for idioms that transcend the received language of the nation-state. I was very honored to be apart of your journey, Joan. Congratulations!”

Professor Rod Ferguson



VALENTINA AMATE PEREZ

“Valentina, I am so incredibly proud of the way you honored yourself and your own truths in each page of your thesis. You know it took a tremendous amount of bravery and honesty to set out on your thesis journey, but I know that it also took brilliance. My wish for you is that you are able to feel and understand that, too. You are far more bold, creative, and capable than you know. It has been my privilege and honor to be your cheerleader -- and I don't plan to stop anytime soon.”

Professor Talya Zemach-Bersin



LAKSHMI AMIN

“Lakshmi is a brilliant, thoughtful, kind, gracious and remarkably generous student and person. She has been an absolute pleasure to have in classes. Her thesis is a beautiful palimpsestic account of three generations of South Asian diasporic women navigating caste, gender, and the problems of inheritance. Fantastic project and an incredible person. Congratulations!”

Professor Leah Mirakhor



KRISTA NAOMI ARELLANO

“A brilliant scholar of community, memory, and migrant aspirations, Krista's year-long ER&M thesis provides a unique and thoroughly original analysis of the linked communities of Watsonville, California, and Gómez Farías, Michoacán, Mexico, places stitched together by decades of labor and cultural and religious migrations. Her project will excite and inform readers in those places and elsewhere, and it deserves an audience well beyond the academy. Krista brings "local" actors in small-town California into hemispheric and very human focus. She shows how Watsonville residents understood their changing social worlds over time and across generations. And she provides a convincing explanation of why distant places divided by political borders must be understood together (her essay argues that "Watsonville es Gómez") through careful research, interdisciplinary analysis, and deep familiarity with the lives of working-class migrants and their families. Krista's essay is an outstanding example of transnational, ethical, and careful research, and it should be celebrated as a model of ER&M scholarship.”

Professor Stephen Pitti



GIANNA BAEZ

“I have had the great pleasure of working and learning from Gianna since her sophomore year, in the seminar on Baldwin and now in Autocriticism, where she has produced once again a beautiful and moving piece of writing on art, family, and inheritance. Gianna is a remarkable student and person—eager, engaged, warm, thoughtful, curious. Her thesis considers Caribbean diasporic female subjectivity via a genre bending form of analysis—taking together literary production, criticism, and autobiography. This is an excellent, nuanced project, showing insightful readings, analysis—and most of all taking on the task of “demanding the impossible” in capturing the conditions of diaspora, belonging, and home-making. Gianna has shown remarkable growth over the last several years and it has been a pleasure to know her, work with her, and see her shine. Congratulations!”

Professor Leah Mirakhor



GABRIELLA BLATT

“One of the great pleasures of my time at Yale has been my front-row seat to Gabriella’s growth as a scholar. Her thesis, “Still Laughing: Indigenous Media Beyond Settler Representation,” is a beautifully written study of Indigenous meme culture on Instagram that drills deep down to understand not only the layered levels of meaning that these memes produce, but also to question the often-invoked solution that “good representation” in media will somehow lead to liberation for people of color in the United States. From Baby Yoda memes to “gas station art,” Gabriella insists on the complexity and pleasures of the cultural production and consumption that fill our quotidian lives and structure relationality. It’s been a blast watching her pair this sophisticated analysis of humor with her own comic practice (mastery of the meme form!). Congratulations on graduating and thank you for all you’ve done to make Yale a better place for your classmates. I wish you the very best!”

Professor Albert Laguna





KEVIN CHEN

“Kevin Chen's beautifully-written and conceptually brilliant discussion of the Nisei citizen during World War II as a "martial-alien" powerfully demonstrates the contradictions of the Japanese American soldier as simultaneously the embodiment of loyalty and duty to the nation as well as the racial threat that must be contained. His truly interdisciplinary essay makes use of an impressive array of legal, literary, and visual sources to demonstrate the ways in which the battlefield and the home front in the form of incarceration camps or work farms compelled Nisei to perform gendered acts of bodily sacrifice and loyalty but never fulfilling the promise of national inclusion. His willingness and bravery to ask big questions and then work hard to find answers has led to an astonishingly original and exceptional thesis.”

Professor Mary Lui



DANIELLE COLLINS

“You drew up and then repeatedly re-drew a project whose immense intellectual ambitions were constantly challenged by the constraints of this pandemic year. You had to change your archival and oral history plans at every turn, and yet you kept your shoulder to the wheel; you worked terrifically hard; you consistently reappeared in my Zoom office hours with renewed focus, an improved blueprint, a better idea. And you developed an engaging and impressive senior essay. Your can-do spirit will serve you as well as your very sharp intellect. Congratulations! It’s been my pleasure to serve as your advisor.”

Professor Matt Jacobson



MEGHANLATA GUPTA

“As it usually happens with these brilliant Yale students, the mentors become the mentees. Meghan you have been an amazing mentor to me and I am forever grateful to the ancestors for making our paths cross. You are an outstanding knowledge seeker and also a gifted knowledge sharer, generous and thoughtful, always ready to make the circle bigger and share what you have learned with everyone.”

Professor Claudia Valeggia



LILLIAN HUA

“A fierce scholar and activist on the rights of migrants in the US and around the globe, Lillian Hua brings her sharp intellect and strong moral compass to interrogate the limits of the law to bring about justice. Her final paper and senior essay focusing on decades-long efforts of Japanese Peruvians who had been forcibly deported and incarcerated in the U.S. during World War II to seek legal redress, combined her passions for international human rights law and Asian American history. The project not only highlighted the limits of legal redress to right historic wrongs but also critiqued the narrow frameworks of nation and citizenship that have conferred rights to Japanese Americans while obscuring the struggles of Japanese Peruvians who were rendered stateless. I know you will go on to do amazing things and never settle for just legal redress in the quest for social justice.”

Professor Mary Lui



TYLER JANSEN

“Who teaches themselves the tenets of Critical Race Theory in a few short weeks? Tyler Jansen. Who reads legal cases and precedents on migrant and refugee admissions policy with great care and perception? Tyler Jansen. Who shares their insights about texts and the work they can do for our collective understanding of power and freedom. Tyler Jansen. Well done!”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang



ANANYA KUMAR-BANERJEE

“Ananya is a passionate individual who cares about social justice, thinks about the dignity and courage of migrants in borderlands, and studies the plight of families and lives harshly separated by international boundaries. Drawing inspiration from her own family stories, and then conducting diligent research, Ananya prepared a wonderfully written, deeply caring, and amazingly wise senior essay on narratives of border crossing and the militarization of borders in Bengal, South Asia. Her insights were terrific and her ethics admirable. I learned from her work and the way she went about it. She was always open to new materials and new ideas, but steadfast in her commitment to writing unflinchingly about the struggles, but also the joys and hopes, of migrants, border crossers, and others who seek to transcend the cruelty inflicted by the territorial anxieties of nation-states on citizens in borderlands.”

Professor Shivi Sivaramakrishnan



TAHJ P. LAKEY

“Questions, questions, questions. Whether in the large lecture hall, around the table in the seminar room, or from a box on Zoom, the questions you brought to our discussions expanded our consciousness and helped us reflect on our assumptions. Your abiding interest in frameworks of reparations and Black autonomy produced ambitious capstone projects in both ER&M and Education Studies. Your love of texts, and of ideas, was always infectious. Great things await...”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang



LARISSA MARTINEZ CONTRERAS

“Larissa, it has been a tremendous honor and privilege to see how much you’ve grown as during your time at Yale, and to see your resilience, care toward others, and your drive towards an otherwise world. Informed by the work of Third World feminists, undocumented activists, and imaginative abolitionist writing, your final ER&M project beautifully experimented with poetic form and embedded a reflexive critical eye in autobiographical accounting. Thank you for the spirit of collectivity and care that you brought to and beyond the classroom. I am so excited for your future and the map that you will make for yourself moving forward. Felicidades y abrazos!”

Professor Maryam Parhizkar

ZORA MONTAS

“I still remember your wonderful formulation that Black women rappers are examples of what Hortense Spillers's sapphires in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe." It's such a brilliant formulation of how pop culture can contain models of the racial, gender and sexual alternatives that we need, and by putting black women rappers in conversation with black feminist theory, you were really advancing the conversation, perhaps in ways that you don't even know.”

Professor Rod Ferguson



MAYA RAIFORD COHEN

“A scholar/activist from the East Bay who came across country to make all of us better thinkers, and more empathetic in our commitments. Your brilliant senior essay on representations of Black precarity, imagination and resistance in gentrifying California is a model of interdisciplinary scholarship. Your work beyond campus, supporting the Black and Brown Student Union in CT & engaging community organizers in Waterbury demonstrates how the practices of ethnic studies matter in our broader worlds. We are grateful.”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang



ESTHER REYES

“Esther, your Yale journey has been an eventful one. In documenting and reflecting on your educational experiences and the communities that you have formed and found along the way, especially in the context of Spring 2019, you have created a meaningful record of what it means to be a student of color at Yale in time of multiple upheavals and disorientations. Congratulations on crossing the finish line despite it all! It has been wonderful to witness your resilience, commitment, and clarity. Best of luck in your future endeavors!”

Professor Quan Tran



MARISSA RIVERA

“In diving deep into the history of your neighborhood in Houston, you provide a layered analysis of how its complex histories intersect with the contemporary forces of gentrification. By focusing on public art in your neighborhood and the logics of commercialization, land use, and urbanization, you ask us to consider who the beneficiaries are when words like "improvement" are deployed in the service of "bettering" the lives of people of color in major urban centers. This project has presented you with many challenges but your work engaging with them on various levels has been nothing short of inspiring. Felicidades!”

Professor Albert Laguna



MARIKO ROOKS

“Mariko Rooks is simply and complicatedly excellent. She is one of the best, if not the very best, undergraduate student i've had the pleasure of working with over my some forty years teaching at Cornell, Columbia, Princeton, and now Yale. Her precise language in our discussions mirrored her deep erudition and wide reading, and her senior thesis is a model of originality and provocation, a brilliant (and I use that word sparingly) study of the African slave traffic and its contemporary afterlives. I feel honored to have been a part of her education.”

Professor Gary Okihiro



HENRY ROSAS IBARRA

“Henry has shown himself to be a tireless, creative, and thoroughly committed scholar-activist in the best tradition of Ethnic Studies, a researcher who brings new and old tools to his work, and a writer who consistently amplifies the voices, and dignifies the perspectives, of Latinx residents of his home state of Arizona (Que Viva Arizona!). A sharp critic of the immigration regime, a vivid chronicler of community struggles, a hardworking student of social movements, and an intellectual who'll inspire nightmares in the Arpaios and Huppenthals and Brewers of the region, Henry's excellent senior thesis capped his distinguished career as an ER&M student ... and hints at just some of the important leadership and service he'll provide in the future.”

Professor Stephen Pitti



CAROLYN SACCO

“Sometimes a question answered only leads to new questions. Such was the case in Carolyn's senior thesis, and its steady unpacking of the racial politics of Baltimore, in all of its complexity, over the last decade. As in seminar, your comfort with questions, with uncertainty, and with the insights that might still be produced were a model of committed ethnic studies scholarship. Congratulations!”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang



KATHRYN SCHMECHEL

“Go to the Yale Libraries Online Exhibitions. Scroll through Kathryn's stunning exhibition on the Black Panthers, Yale and New Haven, and the May Day 1970 protests. Appreciate her careful attention to the archive and her immersion in the practices and imaginaries of social movements. Learn from a top-flight scholar and researcher who always exhibited extraordinary kindness and care with everyone in class. Share the link with a friend. Kathryn: So grateful for it all!”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang



VY TRAN

“Vy: Lead organizer at Students for Educational Justice in New Haven. Artist. Newsletter spin doctor. Stalwart of the Anti-Racist Teaching & Learning Collective. Thoughtful and empathetic scholar. Bestie to so many of us. You've left our campus and community better for your presence and your ideas and your grace. Thank you.”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang



IRENE VÁZQUEZ

“Irene is a writer, thinker, and critic extraordinaire--grappling with and remaking what is possible at the intersections of genre, art, politics and scholarly criticism. Her thesis brilliantly formulates Politicopoetics as a conceptual, theoretical, and relational method of reading, writing and analysis to imagine and demand a vision for Black futures, liberation, and mobilities. Irene has only grown as an impassioned poet, critic and person since sophomore year in public writing, integral to the collective formed there. Her work toward reshaping and reimagining collective futures has just begun. A great thrill and joy to learn from her work. It has been a pleasure to work with her. Congratulations!”

Professor Leah Mirakhor



ALONDRA VÁZQUEZ LÓPEZ

“Alondra Vázquez López is an artist of extraordinary perception and power. In pencil, acrylic paints, and brilliant media, she can transmit whole worlds. It is a rare privilege to work with a scholar who can see so much. In prose as in painting, she is a generous interpreter of the invisibilized. She has dedicated her talents as a writer, analyst, and artist to the cause of migrant justice. A true scholar, she anchors her inquiry in the traditions of testimonio and witnessing that underwrite the fields of ethnicity, race, and migration. Alondra has reserves of wisdom drawn from carrying the stories entrusted to her; her scholarship emerges from the struggle to find the language for all she and her interlocutors have to say. I am grateful for Alondra’s ethical imagination and delighted for all that lies in store for her.”

Professor Alicia Schmidt Camacho



MELINDA WANG

“From a summer community organizing fellowship in New York to a brilliant exploration of Asian diasporic “hyperpop,” you've modeled so many of the practices that breathe life into ethnic studies. Thank you for your careful reading, for the ways you listened and acted as an organizer, and for the new insights you produced about politics of popular music. Superb!”

Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang

JACCARANDA WOLDEMARIAM

Jackie was one of the first students I had the pleasure of working with during my first semester at Yale. Jackie was a remarkably poised, thoughtful, erudite and humble freshman. She was and continues to be a beautiful writer, a close listener, and incredibly warm person. Jackie exudes a rare combination of quietness and intense presence. Her thesis on Ethiopian diasporic narratives examines forms of belonging, feminisms, and motherhood outside traditional boundaries and helps locate how these categories are framed by war, persecution and dislocation. It is work that is deeply personal and written with great care. Congratulations--so excited to see and hear about your next steps!

Professor Leah Mirakhor