

Department of English Seminar

The Trump Presidency from an American Studies Perspective

Dorothy Wang, Visiting Professor in the Department of English

Respondents:

Agnes Kang, Associate Professor in the Department of English

Preet Hiradhar, Assistant Professor in the Department of English

Date: December 6, 2018, Thursday

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Location: LBY G06

Language: English

Abstract:

For many people outside of the United States, the election and presidency of Donald J. Trump may seem incongruous, especially coming on the heels of the two-term presidency of the country's first black president, Barack Obama.

One cannot understand the Trump presidency merely by listening to media soundbites and/or seeing it in isolation.

In the talk, I will analyze Trump's presidency using the methodologies of American Studies—an interdisciplinary field that looks critically at U.S. society, history, and culture with multiple lenses, both macro and micro (historical, rhetorical, literary analytical, legal, visual, aural, among others), and through various media. I will also bring in the critical methodology of close reading (practical criticism), so essential to the field of English literary studies.

We welcome a lively conversation!

Dorothy Wang is a Professor in Williams College's American Studies Program and a Faculty Affiliate in the Department of English. Her book *Thinking Its Presence: Form, Race, and Subjectivity in Contemporary Asian American Poetry* (Stanford University Press, 2013) received the Association for Asian American Studies' award for best book of literary criticism in 2016 and was chosen for *The New Yorker's* list of "The Books We Loved in 2016." The first national conference on race and creative writing in the United States was named after *Thinking Its Presence* and was convened in 2014, 2015, and 2017.

Wang also conceived of and co-founded the "Race and Poetry and Poetics in the UK" (RAPAPUK) research initiative, based in the UK, which held its second conference, "Race and Poetry and Poetics in the UK: Legacies of Colonialism," at Cambridge University in October, 2018. During the academic year 2017–18, Wang was an ACLS Frederick Burkhardt Fellow at the CUNY Graduate Center's Department of English.

Wang holds a Ph.D. from the Department of English at U.C.-Berkeley and a Masters of Public Affairs, specializing in international affairs, from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs (Princeton University); she previously worked at *Newsweek* magazine as a researcher/reporter and has held internships at *Foreign Affairs* magazine and the U.S. State Department.

Preet Hiradhar is Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Lingnan University in Hong Kong. She researches interactions between language, technology, and cultures in digital and literary contexts. She is the co-author of *Critical Reading and Writing in the Digital Age* (2016) and is currently working on cultural representations and diasporic identities in online environments.

M. Agnes Kang is a Visiting Associate Professor in the Department of English at Lingnan University. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on areas of discourse and identity, including multimodal discourse analysis and gender identity. Her articles have appeared in *Language & Communication*, *Discourse and Society*, and *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, among others, and she has contributed chapters to several volumes, including *Beyond Yellow English: Toward a Linguistic Anthropology of Asian Pacific America* (Angela Reyes and Adrienne Lo, eds.). Some of her publications can be downloaded from: <http://hku-hk.academia.edu/AgnesKang>.

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