

# **Society of Fellows Weekend Seminar**

October 4–6, 2024

Stony Point Center, Stony Point, NY

## **Transgression As Power: Breaking the Rules for Change**

The transgression that challenges conventional boundaries, hierarchies, and norms can pave the way for new avenues of exploration and understanding. In a time when “breaking the rules” has been romanticized in popular culture, what does it mean to be truly transgressive, and what are the risks and rewards of such behavior? How is this power articulated in imaginative, historical, scientific, political, social, and cultural discourses? What are its implications across fields such as arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences? How can we harness this power to envision a transformative future for our world? We invite you to join us in exploring the theme of transgressive power with your insights and inspirations.

### **Faculty Co-Leaders**

Marcella Szablewicz, PhD, Communication and Media Studies, NYC

Ying Wang, PhD, Modern Languages and Cultures, NYC

### **Faculty Advisor**

Emilio Fernández, PhD, Mathematics, Pleasantville

### **Friday, October 4**

- 2:15 p.m. Assemble at Bus, New York Campus  
(Frankfort Street by One Pace Plaza)
- 2:30 p.m. Bus departs New York Campus
- 3:15 p.m. Assemble at Bus, Pleasantville Campus  
(Goldstein Fitness Center)
- 3:30 p.m. Bus departs Pleasantville Campus

4:00–5:30 p.m. Check-in and Free Time

Stony Point Center

17 Cricketown Rd, Stony Point, NY 10980

6:00–7:00 p.m. Dinner

7:15–8:30 p.m. **Introductions/Icebreakers: Interpreting Transgression**

Ying Wang & Marcella Szablewicz

8:45–10:00 p.m. **Evening Campfire and S'mores!**

\*Please leave your cell phones and devices in your room\*

**Scary Stories: Digital Disconnection and FOMO in the Age of Social Media**

## **Saturday, October 7**

7:00–8:00 a.m. Meditation Space Reserved for Yoga

8:00–9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:30–11:50 a.m. **Morning Session: Pushing Against Constraints**

Emilio Fernández, Moderator

**Let's Transgress our assumptions: How much mathematics do you think you know? We will learn by playing a fun game!** Emilio Fernández, PhD, Associate Professor, Mathematics

**"Writing as Transgression: Reflections on Nineteenth-Century French Women Writers"**, Ying Wang, PhD, Associate Professor, Modern Languages and Cultures

Women's literary production in 19th-century France stands as a bold transgression against the gender constraints and systemic oppression of a patriarchal society. The women writers of this era were both prolific and invaluable contributors to literary history, yet their status as authors was persistently questioned and ridiculed due to the prevailing patriarchal ideology. In this presentation, let us transcend the boundaries of time and

space to explore the challenges of being a woman and a woman writer during this period, and uncover how 'transgression' served as a source of power.

**"The Political Power of Transgressive Fun"**, Marcella Szablewicz, PhD, Associate Professor, Communication and Media Studies

Fun means different things to different people and cultures. For some, fun is a sanctioned part of everyday life, one that offers a needed escape from the pressures of work and home. For others, the imperative to *have fun* at a given moment is alienating, as the "fun" that is being condoned reinforces an ideology that is at odds with one's lived experience. And then there are cultures and circumstances in which fun is viewed as—at best—frivolous, or—at worst—dangerous. In addressing the multitude of cultural understandings and lived experiences of fun, this talk will examine some of the ways in which the embrace or rejection of "fun" can be viewed as a transgressive political act.

**12:00–1:00 p.m. Lunch**

**1:30–4:30 p.m. Afternoon Session: Creating and Crossing Boundaries**

Ying Wang and Marcella Szablewicz, Moderators

**"Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom"**, Brandyn Heppard, PhD, Assistant Professor, Philosophy and Religious Studies

This presentation will explore the legacies of liberatory educators bell hooks and Paulo Freire. In hooks' 1994 text, *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks places herself in dialogue with Freire's call for education as the practice of freedom in order to imagine how this might look within the academy. Now, thirty years after the original publication of *Teaching to Transgress*, we will revisit hooks' text in order to help guide us in the project of imagining transgression as power and breaking the rules for change.

**“Unseen Chains: Human Trafficking and the Failures of Justice in the Courtroom”**, Cathryn Lavery, PhD – Chair, Criminal Justice and Security

Transgressions in the courts against human trafficking survivors often stem from a lack of understanding about the complexities of their trauma, leading to re-victimization during legal proceedings. Survivors are sometimes treated as criminals, especially when they are coerced into illegal activities, rather than being recognized as victims in need of protection and support. Additionally, systemic biases and inadequate legal representation can result in unjust sentencing or dismissal of critical evidence, further perpetuating their exploitation within the justice system.

**~ 10 Minute Break ~**

**“The Transgressive Power of Bears”**, Matthew Breay Bolton, PhD, Professor, Political Science

We often think that humans are the only beings that can exercise political power. But in my research in the Adirondacks mountains of New York State, I have found that bears unsettle this confidence in our own importance. Bears transgress our regulations and boundaries and become a source of conflict between people. Indigenous environmental thinkers offer alternative ways of thinking about power and sovereignty that could help us to live better with other large carnivores – and other people too.

**“The Mathematics of Gerrymandering (no Math required!)”**, Lisa Fastenberg PhD , Associate Professor and Chair, Mathematics

Partisan gerrymandering is the act of dividing an area into election districts in a way that gives one political party an unfair advantage.

While the term is used frequently, it is extremely difficult to pin down what gerrymandering actually is. How do we determine when an electoral map is gerrymandered? Is there any way to measure ‘unfair’?

We will discuss why previous attempts to use mathematics to identify gerrymandering have been insufficient, and new approaches that can begin to answer these important questions.

4:30–6:00 p.m. Free Time

6:00–7:00 p.m. Dinner

## **Evening Session: Embodied Resistance**

7:30–8:30 p.m. **"Trans\*gressing: the performance tactics of Lia García (La Novia Sirena)"**, Cynthia Delgado, PhD, Assistant Professor, Women's and Gender Studies

For this presentation, we will be thinking alongside the performance tactics of transfeminist activist and artist Lia García (La Novia Sirena). Reading closely her piece "Una alumna Más" (2018), we will consider how her praxis – at the intersection of performance, activism and pedagogy – requires different forms of transgression, contending with politics and aesthetics of gender and sexuality both discursively and materially.

8:45–10:00 p.m. **Film screening & Discussion: *Out of Reach: Undocumented Immigrants and Reproductive Rights*** (runtime 45 min)

## **Sunday, October 8**

7:00–8:00 a.m. Meditation Space Reserved for Yoga

8:00–9:00 a.m. Breakfast and Check-out

## **Morning Session:**

9:30–10:15 a.m. **"Everyday Practices of Transgressing Religious Boundaries,"** Judi Pajo, PhD, Associate Professor, Sociology & Anthropology

Transgressing perceived boundaries between the humanities and social sciences, this theologian-turned-ethnologist offers a glimpse into everyday conversations about religion, faith, and tradition, across cultural boundaries. Questions of religious difference have been of interest to anthropologists since the nineteenth century, and to theologians for much longer than that. In the twenty-first century, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and others forms of religious hatred and violence have made such questions urgent (yet again) across Western societies. While high-ranking religious leaders continue to hold high-level talks across faith traditions, students will be guided to doing the ground-level work of documenting everyday interreligious and intrareligious dialogues taking place in local communities.

10:15–10:45 a.m. **Concluding Remarks**, Ying Wang and Marcella Szablewicz

11:00 a.m. Assemble at Bus, Stony Point Center

Bus Departs Stony Point Center

11:15 a.m.

12:00–1:30 p.m. Picnic and/or Hiking, Croton Point Park

1:45 p.m. Assemble at Bus, Croton Point Park

**2:00 p.m. Departure Bus back to NYC and Pleasantville Campuses**

2:15 p.m. Approximate Arrival in Pleasantville

3:15 p.m. Approximate Arrival in NYC