

Action Figures
Political Plots and Promises, Cultural Hopes and Horrors
across the American Century: 1916-2016

The Rothermere American Institute Interdisciplinary Summer Course
26 June - 3 July 2016

RAI



TIMETABLE

All morning sessions will begin at 10am. All afternoon sessions will begin at 2pm, unless indicated otherwise.

Sunday 26 th June	Monday 27 th June	Tuesday 28 th June	Wednesday 29 th June
<p>Sally Bayley Personal Terror: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes and Poetic Procreation. Dr Sally Bayley will lead a session using rare Plath poetry manuscripts in order to show Plath's undoing and overwriting of Hughes's best known poem, 'The Thought Fox' in the drafts of her poem, 'Burning the Letters' (1962). The session will uncover the metamorphic process of Plath's incendiary drafting drama: what is a form of lyrical revenge on Hughes's collection, <i>Hawk in the Rain</i> (1957).</p>	<p>Charlie Lee-Potter: Post 9-11 American Literature and Journalism This session will look at how novelists responded to 9/11. Novelists rehearsed their fictional responses to 9/11 by writing essays and fragments of prose for newspapers and magazines. According to Martin Amis, they were all 'playing for time', delaying the moment when they would have to register the catastrophe of 9/11 in their fiction. In their earliest responses, Ian McEwan, Martin Amis, Paul Auster, Richard Ford and Don DeLillo all reached, in one form or another, for the nostrum that 'love will overcome'. Unconvincing at the time and, finally, rejected by each of them in their novelistic responses some years later, the sentimentality that characterized their immediate responses set in train an anxiety over the adequacy of discourse that took years to shake off.</p>	<p>Sally Bayley: Robert Frost's 'Home Burial': The American Poem and Essay. Dr Sally Bayley will lead a discussion of the literary essay as a form of personal-political speak taking her lead from the Russian-American poet and essayist Joseph Brodsky. The session will focus around the form of the essay as a way of live address person to person, reflecting upon the essay as a choreographed piece of writing and thinking.</p>	<p>Ben Morgan: The Cultural Politics of Masculinity in Contemporary Popular Music This session will focus on the American popular music industry as it relates to issues of gender and sexuality. In particular, we will discuss representations of men in a variety of recent music videos made by commercially successful women artists such as Rihanna, Beyoncé and Pink.</p>
<p>Joanna Walsh The Uses of Nostalgia Writing is remembering, but what can a memory do? Drawing on the writings of Georges Perec, Deborah Levy, and Dubravka Ugrešić, this session will explore some practical strategies for the radical uses a writer can make of memory.</p>	<p>Ben Morgan: Spectacular Terror: American Film Documentaries Famously, September 11th was the most photographed event in world history. Looking at the national culture since 2001, this session will think about the relationship between violence and representation in the American public sphere.</p>	<p>Tom MacFaul – Frank O'Hara and The New York School of Art Frank O'Hara (1926-1966) wrote his greatest poems at the height of the Cold War, and within the 'Affluent Society' of Post-War New York; those poems reach out to a wider world, beyond the cosy complacencies of an insular United States, and imagine new world orders of sexual and racial freedom. Dr Tom MacFaul will explore these aspects of O'Hara's work, and of his artistic milieu.</p>	<p>Andrew Blades: AIDS Memoir and Film: Remembering Disease Andrew Blades will look at cultural representations of AIDS activism in America in the 1980s and 1990s, drawing on recently published recollections and memoirs in the works of writers Andrew Holleran and Sarah Schulman and the recent documentary films <i>How to Survive a Plague</i> (and <i>We Were Here</i>).</p>
	<p>Sally Bayley: War Journalism and Literature</p>	<p>Robert Frost's 'Home Burial': a performance</p>	<p>Garden play: Eugène Ionesco's <i>Rhinoceros</i></p>

Thursday 30 th June	Friday 1 st July	Saturday 2 nd July	Sunday 3 rd July
<p>Will May: American Songs of Anti-War Protest: Joan Baez, Joni Mitchell & others This session will focus on the American folk song. It will focus on the anti-war protest music of the 1960s, exploring how metaphors of action and inaction thread through the work of Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez and others.</p>	<p>Celeste-Marie Bernier: Beyond the Matter of Pain: the Body in Contemporary Art This session will introduce participants to the powerful relationships between the body, memory, and oral histories of storytelling practices in African American and Black British artmaking traditions. Professor Bernier will range across sculpture, mixed-media assemblage, performance art, painting, and digital installation to inspire conversations regarding the ways in which artists get ‘beyond the matter of pain’ not only to debate lives lived in loss but lives lived in creativity. As artist Jacob Lawrence tells us, “Struggle is a Beautiful Thing.”</p>	<p>Noreen Masud Blogging for Writers. Noreen Masud will lead a workshop on the use of literary blogging as a creative and critical stimulus. Blogging can ease writer’s block and help to hone complex ideas – but maintaining a blog can pose a challenge for perfectionists and procrastinators. This workshop will encourage participants to focus on the ‘shape’ and rhythm of their posts, and explore how writers can move between short-form and long-form composition.</p> <p>Matilda Bathurst: Literary and Artistic Journalism</p>	<p>WRITING SESSIONS:</p> <p>Michelle Madsen, Performance Poet & Journalist: How to Create and Perform a Writing Life.</p>
<p>Chris Parton: Race and Song: Kerr & Hammerstein’s In a workshop style session, Christopher Parton, a graduate student in music, will explore the characteristics, politics, and complexities of early Broadway songs. He will look at how even deceptively simple melodies can convey subtlety and honesty in a uniquely American way. Show Boat is an example of the refinement of the American Broadway style. The songs are commercial, catchy, tailored to American accents, influenced by a mixture of European and African-American styles. He will lead a compositional style workshop that will encourage participants to create melodies to suit a series of everyday American idioms.</p> <p>Performance: ‘Bob Dylan’s <i>Mr Tambourine Man</i> and America’s Whimsical Dream’</p>	<p>Michael Hrebeniak – Post-war Jazz, Poetry & Painting The aim of this session, which focuses upon the late-1950s US avant-garde, is to explore the consideration of writing, painting and jazz as cultural performance, and its implications for individual creativity and collective action alike. As such the session advances an avowedly interdisciplinary principle. I will suggest that an insight into ideas simultaneously arising across forms can call into consciousness attitudes, tendencies and meanings that shape a period. Such work might thus be seen as permitting entry to a sensory world otherwise hidden by the narrowing, muffled discourses of Cold War state.</p> <p>Dennis Harrison: American & British Jazz (at the Albion Beatnik Bookshop)</p>	<p>Suzie Hanna: Animating War exploration of World War I for returning soldiers inspired by the poetry of David Jones The compressed visual language of animated film, like poetry, can communicate extremes of human behavior and experience to powerful effect. Film maker Suzie Hanna will present current collaborative animation practice on the theme of War, including international, contemporary and rare archive material. The session will extend into a hands-on animation workshop entitled ‘Theatre of War’ which will engage students in creating a ‘living image’ inspired by war poetry.</p> <p>American Music Hall Songs: a Performance</p>	<p>Sally Bayley will discuss, in an interactive workshop, the process of writing memoir with narrative non-fiction in her latest book, <i>The Private Life of the Diary</i>.</p>



Mr Stephen Pickles

After reading English at New College, Oxford, Stephen Pickles spent ten years heading a pioneering translation program at a leading independent literary publishing house, chief highlight of which was bringing the work of Thomas Bernhard to the English reading public. He is currently an Editor with The Poetry Archive, the nation's pre-eminent repository of twentieth and twenty-first century poets reading their own work. As a writer he has published fictional sociology and edited a nostalgic tribute to Britain's most famous children's educational magazine, Look and Learn.
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Ms Matilda Bathurst

Matilda Bathurst is a journalist and copywriter based in London. After studying English Literature at Cambridge, she worked for the arts communications consultancy Bolton & Quinn Ltd, before moving to Paris to be the Editorial Assistant at the magazine *Some/Things*. She currently contributes to a number of publications including The Spectator, Apollo and The Independent on Sunday.
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Ms Joanna Walsh

Joanna Walsh is the author of *Vertigo*, *Hotel*, *Grow a Pair*, and *Fractals*. Her stories and essays are anthologised widely including in *Best European Fiction 2015*, *Best British Short Stories 2014 and 2015*, *Granta Magazine* and others. She edits at *Catapult.co* and *3:AM*, reviews for *The New Statesman*, *The Guardian*, and others, and is the founder of [@read_women](https://twitter.com/read_women).



Ms Jemima Hunt

Jemima Hunt is a journalist and novelist. She is the author of the books *The Late Arrival* and *Notes from Utopia*. She runs The Writers' Practice, a boutique literary agency and editorial consultancy based between Oxford and London. The Writers' Practice shapes stories into books for submission to publishers and secures publishing, television, and film deals. At the consultancy, alongside script editor and prize-winning novelist Jeremy Page, they provide manuscript and film script reports.

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Ms Noreen Masud

Noreen Masud is a D.Phil. candidate at the University of Oxford, Linacre College. Her D.Phil. is entitled 'The Aphoristic Aesthetic of Stevie Smith and H.D'. It will uncover the narrative and interpretative implications of an aphoristic aesthetic in Stevie Smith's writing, with reference to Hilda Doolittle (H.D)'s early poetry. She is supervised by Professor Laura Marcus and Dr Sally Bayley. She is organizing a comprehensive Stevie Smith Conference to be held on the eleventh of March.

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Ms Camille Ralphs

Camille Ralphs, formerly Senior Poetry Editor at The Missing Slate, is currently a postgraduate student at the University of Oxford. In April 2016, she appeared on BBC Radio 6 Music with Cerys Matthews to discuss her debut pamphlet, *Malkin*, which was published by The Emma Press in November 2015. *Malkin* has recently been shortlisted for the Saboteur Award for Best Poetry Pamphlet.

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Dr Marc Lafrance

Dr Marc Lafrance is an assistant professor of Sociology at Concordia University. He earned his Masters and Doctoral Degrees in Cultural Studies at the University of Oxford while receiving additional training at the British Institute of Psychoanalysis (London, England) and the École Normale Supérieure (Paris, France). He is the winner of two Commonwealth Scholarships and a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship. Lafrance also studies issues of body image and how they relate to men and masculinity, considering the politics of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity in popular culture
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Dr Andrew Blades

Dr Andrew Blades is a member of the Department of English at the University of Bristol. He researches the intersection between medicine and literature. Some of his research includes the monograph: *Reassessing American AIDS literature*, the poetry of Hart Crane, issues of poetic influence (particularly queer models of influence) and recent representations of the 1980s in British and American fiction. He is also currently co-editing a collection of essays, *Poetry and the Dictionary* (Liverpool University Press), which considers the relationship between poetry and lexicography. He also writes on music for *Slate* magazine, pens a music blog, and reviews plays for *The Stage*.
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Dr Charlie Lee-Potter

Dr Charlie Lee-Potter is a writer, journalist, broadcaster and academic. Her monograph on the evolution of the post-9/11 novel - *Writing the 9/11 Decade* - is being published by Bloomsbury later this year. She has presented many BBC Radio 4 news and arts programs, such as PM, The World at One and Open Book. She is a visiting Lecturer in English literature at the University of London. She writes and photographs a blog called Eggs On The Roof which can be found at <http://eggsontheroof.com>.
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Mr Chris Parton

Chris Parton is a recent graduate of Oxford and Bristol universities, where he read music. At Bristol he studied composition with John Pickard and Michael Ellison and in 2012 won the University's Symphony Orchestra Composition Prize for his 9-minute orchestral work Variations for Orchestra. He was a composition tutor at Mansfield College, Oxford from 2014-15 and has been actively involved in the Oxford music scene. Currently, he is working on an anthem for the Choir of Wadham College, Oxford in collaboration with the Oxford-based writer Leo Mercer. In September, Chris will be leaving Oxford to start a PhD in musicology at Princeton University.
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Dr Will May

Dr Will May is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Southampton. He completed his doctoral thesis at Balliol College, Oxford. He is a member of the Centre for Modern and Contemporary Writing (CMCW), and is committed to projects that use writing to bring different communities together. He helped devise Litmus, an initiative which paired creative writers with research scientists, and set up the F.T. Prince Memorial Lecture, an annual English lecture which celebrates the work of the poet F.T. Prince, a former Professor of English at Southampton. He has also edited the poems of Stevie Smith for Faber & Faber.
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Ms Michelle Madsen

Michelle Madsen is a poet and journalist. She founded the London branch of Hammer and Tongue, the UK's largest slam poetry network and has featured on stages in four continents. She has appeared on BBC 1, BBC Radio 4, the Bowery Poetry Cafe in NYC, Latitude, Hay-on-Wye, the Secret Garden Party, Bestival and Glastonbury. In 2013 she took her show *I'm Sorry I Haven't Haiku*, the world's first and possibly last ever poetry panel game, to the Edinburgh Festival, and has performed with poets including Kate Tempest, Buddy Wakefield, Tim Key and Simon Munnery. She has also written for publications including the Independent, the Guardian and Private Eye and interviewed many odd people like Tony Blair, Ronnie Wood and the president of Guinea. Michelle's debut collection of poetry, *Alternative BeachSports*, was published by Burning Eye Books in 2014.
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Dr Tom MacFaul

Dr Tom MacFaul is a lecturer in English at St Edmund Hall, Oxford. Tom's primary research interests are in Renaissance literature. His research is particularly focused on matters of gender, politics and social class, showing the effects of such ideological preoccupations on literary form. Tom has published three books: *Male Friendship in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, *Poetry and Paternity in Renaissance England: Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne and Jonson*; and *Problem Fathers in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*. His edition of *Tottel's Miscellany*, the most important anthology of early Tudor poets such as Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (co-edited with Amanda Holton) was published by Penguin in 2011. Tom has also recently completed another book, *Shakespeare and the Natural World*.
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Dr Sally Bayley

Dr Sally Bayley is a Teaching and Research Fellow at the RAI and Lecturer in English and Composition at University College and Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. She has published two books on Sylvia Plath, including *Eye Rhymes: Sylvia Plath's Art of the Visual*. In 2011 she co-edited a series of essays about Sylvia Plath: *Representing Sylvia Plath: New Essays on the Writer and Her Work*. In 2010 she completed a study of Emily Dickinson: *Home on the Horizon, America's Search for Space: from Emily Dickinson to Bob Dylan*. She has recently produced a film exploring the life and work of American poet, Hart Crane, with Suzie Hanna. Prior to this she has worked with Suzie Hanna and Tom Simmons on a film telling the story of the young artistic life of Sylvia Plath (*The Girl Who Would be God, 2007*) and a representation of the poetic tropes of poet Emily Dickinson, *Letter to the World* (2011). Sally Bayley has recently finished her newest novel, titled *The Private Life of the Diary: From Pepys to Tweets* (Unbound, 2016).
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Dr Michael Hrebeniak

Dr Michael Hrebeniak is College Lecturer in English and Director of Studies in English at Wolfson College, Cambridge. He has been Lecturer in Metropolitan Studies at NYU (London), Lecturer in Humanities and Jazz at the Royal Academy of Music, and a Fellow of Cranfield School of Management. His first book, *Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form*, was revised for paperback in 2008, and he is currently preparing a text on Eco-poetics and a psychogeographical account of Stourbridge Fair. In 2007 he co-organised the CRASSH conference, 'Passionate Natures - Ecology and the Imagination'. His academic career has co-existed alongside subterranean activities as saxophonist, jazz journalist, Guardian obituarist, editor of *Radical Poetics*, and producer of arts documentaries for Channel 4.
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Professor Suzie Hanna

Professor Suzie Hanna is Chair of Animation Education at Norwich University of the Arts. Her research interests include animation, poetry, puppetry and sound design. She has made numerous short films including *The Hart Crane*. She is now also creating a film responding to Stevie Smith's poetry and she has been commissioned to create an animation responding to the experience of war in poetry. She also contributes to journals, books and conferences, and projects including animated online international student collaborations and digital exhibitions of art and poetry on Europe's largest public HiDef screen. She works as a production consultant and as an international academic examiner, was a member of the AHRC Peer Review College from 2009-2014, is secretary on the Executive of NAHEMI, a member of ASIFA, and an active board member of Norwich Puppet Theatre.

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Professor Celeste-Marie Bernier

Professor Celeste-Marie Bernier is a Professor of African American Studies at the University of Nottingham, UK, and Associate Editor of the *Journal of American Studies*. She was awarded an Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellowship in support of her book, *Suffering and Sunset: World War I in the Art and Life of Horace Pippin*. She has also published: *African American Visual Arts: From Slavery to the Present* (2008) and "Characters of Blood:" *Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination*. She is currently working on two book projects: *Imaging Resistance: Representing The Body, Memory and History in Fifty Years of African American and Black British Visual Arts 1960-2010* and *Stick to the Skin: A History of Contemporary Art*.
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Dr Ben Morgan

Dr Ben Morgan is Lecturer in English Literature at St Catherine's College, Oxford. He is presently writing a book on Shakespeare for Princeton University Press, concerning Shakespeare and Ethics. He also maintains interests in modern and post-modern literature.

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