2018 ACLS Annual Meeting

Philadelphia, PA
April 27, 2:00-3:00 pm
Ballroom CDE

Democracy and the Contemporary Mediascape

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Marwan M. Kraidy (moderator)
Anthony Shadid Chair in Global Media, Politics and Culture
University of Pennsylvania
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Scholarship prizes weighing evidence, reasoned argument, and respectful deliberation. Those same values have long been thought essential for democratic self-governance. While digital communications once seemed to reinforce democracy by allowing more voices to be heard, it is now apparent that these new technologies can sow invidious division and give rise to powerful corporations whose self-interest is not democratic. Within the academy, there is also the troubling question, when will the digital transformation of scholarship achieve its initial promise of promoting greater equality and diversity? We hope the discussion can put these concerns in perspective and consider the role of scholarship in this new discursive environment.

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Presenters

Tara McPherson is professor of cinema and media studies at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts and director of the Sidney Harman Academy for Polymathic Study. She is a core faculty member of the IMAP program, USC's practice based-PhD, and also an affiliated faculty member in the American studies and ethnicity department. Her research engages the cultural dimensions of media, including the intersection of gender, race, affect, and place. She has a particular interest in digital media. Here, her research focuses on the digital humanities, early software histories, gender, and race, as well as upon the development of new tools and paradigms for digital publishing, learning, and authorship.

She is author of *Feminist in a Software Lab: Difference + Design* (Harvard UP 2018) and *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Duke UP, 2003), which received the 2004 John G. Cawelti Award for the outstanding book published on American Culture, among other awards. She is coeditor of *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture* (Duke UP, 2003) and of *Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, The Arts + the Humanities* (U of California P, 2014), and editor of *Digital Youth, Innovation and the Unexpected*, part of the MacArthur Foundation series on Digital Media and Learning (MIT Press, 2008.) Her current book project examines the transformation of the radical right in the era of online platforms.

She is the founding editor of *Vectors*, a multimedia peer-reviewed journal affiliated with the Open Humanities Press, and was a founding editor of the MacArthur-supported *International Journal of Learning and Media* (MIT Press). She is a widely sought-out speaker on the digital humanities, digital scholarship, and feminist technology studies. McPherson was among the founding organizers of Race in Digital Space, a multi-year project supported by the Annenberg Center for Communication and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. She has frequently served as a juror for the Peabody Awards, the American Film Institute, the Independent Documentary Awards, and various film festivals, is a core board member of HASTAC, and is on the boards of several journals and other organizations. With major support from the Mellon Foundation and the NEH, she is currently working with colleagues from leading universities and with several academic presses, museums, scholarly societies, and archives to explore digital modes of scholarship for visual culture research. She is the lead PI on the authoring platform, Scalar, and for the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture, scalar.usc.edu.

Siva Vaidhyanathan is the Robertson Professor of Media Studies and director of the Center for Media and Citizenship at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy* (2018*), Intellectual Property: A Very Short Introduction* (2017), *The Googlization of Everything--and Why We Should Worry* (2011), *The Anarchist in the Library: How the Clash between Freedom and Control is Hacking the Real World and Crashing the System* (2004), *and Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of Intellectual Property and How it Threatens Creativity* (2001). He also coedited (with Carolyn Thomas) the collection, *Rewiring the Nation: The Place of Technology in American Studies* (2007). Vaidhyanathan has written for many periodicals, including *The New York Times* Op-Ed page, *Bloomberg View*, *American Scholar*, *Dissen*t, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Slate.com*, *BookForum*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *Esquire.com*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The New York Times Book Review,* and *The Nation*. He is a frequent contributor to public radio programs. He has appeared on news programs on BBC, CNN, NBC, CNBC, MSNBC, ABC, and on The Daily Show with Jon Stewart on Comedy Central. In 2016, he was portrayed in a play called Privacy at the Public Theatre in New York City. After five years as a professional journalist, he earned a PhD in American

studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Vaidhyanathan has also taught at Wesleyan University, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Columbia University, New York University, McMaster University, and the University of Amsterdam. He is a fellow at the New York Institute for the Humanities and a faculty associate of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. He was born and raised in Buffalo, New York and resides in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Marwan M. Kraidy is the Anthony Shadid Chair in Global Media, Politics and Culture, and founding director of the Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication (CARGC) at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, where he is also affiliated with the Middle East Center. An expert in global communication and a specialist in Arab media and politics, he also researches the relationship between culture and geopolitics, global media industries, theories of identity and modernity, and the political symbolism of the human body in the public sphere.

Kraidy's work is distinctive for its deep reliance on primary materials, theoretical grounding in a multilingual literature and a comparative approach across historical periods, geographical sites, cultural forms, and media platforms. Ongoing research focuses on war machines in the digital age (particularly Islamic State), speed, spectacle and security in global communication, and the rise and fall of Turkey in Arab public culture. He teaches courses on globalization, culture and revolution, the body in digital culture, contentious publics, and the geopolitics of popular culture.

Kraidy has published 10 books, penned 120 essays and chapters, won 50 awards for teaching and scholarship, delivered keynote addresses and named lectures worldwide, and advised universities, civil society organizations, foundations, and governments. Notable books include Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization (2005), and Reality Television and Arab Politics: Contention in Public Life (2010), supported by a fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and a grant from the United States Institute of Peace, and winner of three major prizes: the Diamond Anniversary Best Book Award and the Roderick P. Hart Outstanding Book Award in Political Communication, National Communication Association; and Best Book Award in Global Communication and Social Change, International Communication Association.

Kraidy's account of the Arab Spring, The Naked Blogger of Cairo: Creative Insurgency in the Arab World (2016), considers the uprisings through the human body as a physical, symbolic, and aesthetic locus of power and rebellion, and features an engrossing cast of characters—self-immolators, puppets, superheroes, poets, street artists, digital videographers, satirists, and of course, the naked blogger—who confronted scorned dictators. He crafted the book in Wassenaar, as a fellow of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NIAS) and of the American Council of Learned Societies (2014 ACLS/NEH International and Areas Studies Fellow), and revised it in Philadelphia as a fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). He published two more books in 2016: Global Media Studies (with Toby Miller) and American Studies Encounters the Middle East (with Alex Lubin).

In 2011, Kraidy was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship for his work in media and cultural studies. In 2016, Kraidy was named an Andrew Carnegie Fellow for his work on war machines in the age of global communication.

Additionally, Kraidy has been the Edward W. Said Chair of American Studies at the American University of Beirut, the Albert Bonnier Jr. Professor of Media Studies at Stockholm University, the visiting Chaire Dupront at the Sorbonne in Paris, and visiting professor at universities in China, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and the US. Previously he held appointments in international relations at American University in Washington, DC, and in critical-cultural studies at the University of North Dakota. A graduate of Notre Dame University, Lebanon, Kraidy's MA and PhD are from The Ohio University.