

2018 Liberal Arts & Sciences Interdisciplinary Conference

Enlightenment 2.0 -What's Old is New Again



**OCT. 12/13, 2018
HUMBER NORTH CAMPUS**

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12
Seventh Semester Room (LX 101)

Delegate Registration
4:30 – 5:00 PM

Keynote Address by Professor Joseph Heath
5:00 – 6:00 PM

Reception
6:00 – 7:00 PM



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13

**Breakfast and Registration
in the Seventh Semester Room (LX 101)**

8:30 – 9:25 AM

**PART ONE: EDUCATING, INFORMING, AND THE
ENLIGHTENMENT IN PRACTICE**

9:30 – 11:00 AM

**I. ARTS, MUSIC AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT
(Rm. B204)**

Moderator: Maria-Lucia Di Placito

- **Stefan Sunandan Honisch (Independent Scholar, Musician, Educator): "Digital Dexterity: Reinventing the Virtuoso Pianist."**

This paper explores how contemporary webcasts reimagine the virtuosic body in international piano competitions. Charting a sensory turn towards new media, I examine the audiovisual reinvention of pianistic virtuosity through the digital dexterity of competition webcasts. Digital representations of the competitive sphere, I argue, throw the normative sensory hierarchies of music performance and reception into interpretive chaos by undoing the ready association of virtuosity with exceptional ability. Using a Disability Studies framework, my analysis shows how recognizable pianistic identity and the musically novel jostle for primacy, zooming in on the reception of two blind pianists who participated in the 2009 Cliburn International Piano Competition: Nobuyuki Tsujii (who ultimately shared the top prize), and Tamas Erdi. The spectacle of disabled and non-disabled bodies in competitive music performance is heightened by digitized webs of meaning that redraw the borders between the sensory contingencies of live performance and the abstract contemplation of musical texts. Situating these case studies against the emergence of webcasts as a significant new platform for bringing competitions to global audiences, I demonstrate how digitized musical spaces often perpetuate familiar, yet contradictory rhetorical moves in the reception of virtuoso pianists; on one hand, the fascinated language of transcendent musical ability, and, on the other, a respectable distaste for visual and sonic display. The dissonance between these modes of reception brings to the surface deep questions about how newly emerged media participate in the sustenance, negotiation, and reinvention of a virtuosic past.

- **Kimberly Strong-Knight (Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies, Durham College): “Music and the Spoken Word: A Jumping Off Point for Dialogue”**

Interpreting the Enlightenment continues to take on many variations. In light of this, a more modern way of understanding it is to define it as “a movement in thought, rather than a closed historical period” (Outram 1995). Philosophers of the period, and beyond, have surmised this movement in thought is still “influencing the present...is still incomplete (Outram 1995). In 1784 Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher wrote about human reason as being the guide of human conduct. “Have courage to use our own reason – that is the motto of Enlightenment” (Kramnick 1995). The great thinkers and philosophers of enlightenment wrote, commented, and analyzed; religion, politics, humanity, morals, crime and punishment, and among other issues, society and the arts. It provided new media and social institutions where the exchange; debate; discussion; diffusion; of ideas was encouraged and welcomed. A “new public sphere” is how Jürgen Habermas described the changing nature of the times (Outram 1995). Today we have embraced the notion of “public sphere” and use it for exactly the same purpose; exchanging; debating; discussing; diffusing; ideas that reflect the nature of our time. The use of new media platforms like the internet, and social institutions present new art forms like slam poetry, and musical genres that provide social commentary on issues and ideas of today. Like the writers and philosophers of the Enlightenment, the creators of these art forms have the courage to use their own reason and continue to influence the present.

- **Michael Sloane (Professor, School of Language and Liberal Studies, Fanshawe College): “Sign o’ the Times: Enlightening 21st Century Album Artwork”**

This paper explores the spirit of our age through an analysis of album artwork. Through a discussion of visual, semiotic, and rhetorical features of an array of album artwork from the 2000s, a number of themes emerge that offer insight into the zeitgeist. For instance, this paper turns to the selfie intimacy of Adele’s 25; the transparency of Kanye West’s Yeezus; the “woke” ethos of Kendrick Lamar’s To Pimp a Butterfly; the feminism of Björk’s Vulnicura; and the sanctified technophilia of Oneohtrix Point Never’s Age Of. To understand the milieu, it is important to enlighten what is enlightening about the silent stories rarely told about the commodity surfaces rarely touched. Indeed, capitalism’s accelerated cultural production and consumption fuels and is fuelled by phenomena like the paradoxical pressure of pleasure, the addiction of instant gratification, the ubiquity of binge entertainment, the ideology of enjoyment, and the mutation of carpe diem, to name a few. And so little time is spent on the contemplation of cultural work—instead, other corporations and institutions curate and critique that which is deemed “good” and, often, individuals consume seemingly expendable artifacts accordingly. To push back against trends of “self-incurred immaturity,” or “the inability to make use of one’s own understanding without the guidance of another,” to borrow from Immanuel Kant, it is important to continue the work of the Enlightenment rather than just read the present as perfect progress.

II: EDUCATION, JOURNALISM, PRACTICE AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT (Rm. B205)

Moderator: Alena Papayanis

- **Brett Reynolds (Professor, LAS, Humber College) and Jeff Brown (Professor, Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies, George Brown College): “Enlightenment Humanism and Respect for ESL Students”**

Every year, thousands of English as a second language (ESL) students attend Canadian post-secondary institutions in preparatory and mainstream programs. There they face many challenges beyond language proficiency, often involving the attitudes of their teachers, peers, and other institutional stakeholders. An intuitively appealing response is for these stakeholder groups to take and promote an attitude of compassion towards ESL students, but we argue that this is misguided. Compassion is an attitude taken by those with a real or perceived position of power relative to the other. The plight of ESL students, however, is deeply enmeshed with their position in Canada, their institutions, and their classrooms, a position often characterized by deficits. Foregrounding compassion in this context would only entrench that position and emphasize deficit thinking. We argue, rather, that the most liberating attitude towards ESL students is respect paired with a critical praxis. We see this respect for ESL students as grounded in and constructively informed by the classic Enlightenment humanism ideal of respect for the autonomy and agency of the individual. This Enlightenment ideal complements – rather than conflicts with – the core insights of critical praxis, and it can indeed serve as a guide for contemporary post-secondary educators. To this end, we conclude by examining practical implementations of this perspective, including the general application of the principles of universal design for learning and the specific example of respectful responses to perceived plagiarism.

- **Alyssa Ferns (Professor, Criminal Justice, School of Social and Community Services, Humber College) and Doug Thomson (Professor, Criminal Justice, School of Social and Community Services, Humber College) and Natalie Millar, Robert Gonzales, Nicholas Gopaul, and Jahdana Thomas (Students): “Podcasting for Pathways”**

Podcasts have become a popular form of entertainment and education with 41% of Canadians reporting listening to them on a regular basis (The Canadian Podcast, 2017). Moreover, Pignato (2010) and Popova & Edirisingha (2010) both concluded that the use of podcasts to supplement education and learning in schools is quite effective. Podcasts have been shown to increase students’ motivation, learning and overall engagement (Pignato, 2010). Due to the emergence of pathway students (i.e., community and justice diploma, protection, security, and investigations diploma, and police foundations program diploma) transferring into the Bachelor of Social Science (Criminal Justice) there has been a recognition that there are some gaps in

the skills and knowledge. This is notably important to address as the pathway students will enter into the 3rd year of the degree (compared to the 2nd year) as of Fall 2018. Therefore, the creation of podcasts is one innovative way in which faculty are hoping to support incoming pathway students. These podcasts discuss a range of topics (i.e., crim theories, current crime issues, etc.) and each is approx. five minutes to give the student a general understanding on the topic ahead of entering the course or weekly class on the topic. Their overall purpose is to fill the gaps that some pathway students have identified when moving from the diploma to the degree, in order to improve overall academic success.

- **Alyssa Ferns (Professor, Criminal Justice, School of Social and Community Services, Humber College) and Doug Thomson (Professor, Criminal Justice, School of Social and Community Services, Humber College) and Marilyn Cresswell (Professor, Program Coordinator, Advertising and Account Management, Humber College) and Natalie Millar, Robert Gonzales, Nicholas Gopaul, and Jahdana Thomas (Students) – Interdisciplinary Research Project Taking Place Within the Bachelor of Social Science and Bachelor of Creative Advertising: “Ubuntu: A Cookbook Project To Build Connectedness and Community”**

Transitioning into college can be overwhelming for some students (i.e., new social environments, first time away from home, etc.), and these stressors could amplify if students do not feel connected with their Humber peers/community as a result of barriers (i.e., not spending time on campus, long commutes, no on-campus bar, etc.). Ribera, Miller and Dumford (2017) found that the inability to foster positive peer or faculty relationships in the first year of college leads to lower rates of retention and negatively affects students’ overall success. In order to address these challenges, a group cookbook assignment will take place within the Bachelor of Social Science and the Bachelor of Advertising to foster a sense of belonging and community. The sharing of family recipes, bonding over food, and speaking of one’s identity within a family/culture has shown to create this sense of belonging (Hancock, 2001; Schermuly & Forbes-Mewett, 2016). Furthermore, an effective way of increasing a positive sense of community for students is through diverse interactions or by focusing on the diversity of students (Ribera et al., 2017). First-year students across 4 courses (Experimental group: 2 courses with the cookbook; Control group: 2 courses without the cookbook) will be assessed on their levels of peer and Humber connectedness at three time-points in their first year. We hypothesize that those who take part in the cookbook will have higher levels of connectedness. It is believed that this will enhance social cohesion and lead to favourable outcomes (i.e., levels of happiness, stronger/broader peer-networks, etc.).

III. CULTURE AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT (Rm. B206)

Moderator: Michael Wells

- **Dan Rowe (Professor and Program Coordinator, Bachelor of Journalism, Humber College) and Katelyn Huras (Journalism Student and Research Intern, Humber College): “Who is Shaping the Debate About the Future of Journalism in Canada”**

The challenges and changes precipitated by a series of digital developments that the business and practice of journalism has had to confront in the last two decades has resulted in a growing debate about the future of journalism. This debate has taken a variety of forms including publications in the academic and popular press, presentations to government committees and other policy bodies, public panel discussions and conferences hosted by journalism schools and other groups, and the establishment of foundations and other institutions designed to navigate the future of the field. A grounded theory approach will be used to better understand which voices and perspectives have been emphasized in this important debate. This will help answer key research questions about the boundaries of the public debate about the future of Canadian journalism; which voices and perspectives, if any, have been excluded from this debate; and what the shape of this debate may mean for the future of journalism in Canada.

- **David D. Miller (Professor, English Department, Humber College): “The Letterkenny Problem: Indigenous Erasure and Reclamation in Canadian Pop Culture”**

The first season of CraveTV's sitcom *Letterkenny* (2016) ends with the previously divided white folks of the fictional Ontario town finding common ground in their shared hatred of the “Natives” from the nearby reserve; together, they proceed to beat the First Nations characters from the town, banning them from Letterkenny, creating eventual economic hardship through isolation. In stark contrast, the final episode of the first season of the Aboriginal People's Television Network's (APTN) *Mohawk Girls* (2014) is centred around a Mohawk women's fraught decision to bring her white boyfriend to a fundraiser in her home community of Kahnawake. She is called a traitor and the couple is menacingly surrounded by a mob of angry Haudenosaunee who essentially chase him from the town (though without violence). This paper presents an analytical contrast of the representation of Indigenous characters in these two popular, similarly produced, twenty-two minute Americanstyle sitcoms, while at the same time exploring traditional stereotypical representation of Indigenous people in North American popular culture and how these stereotypical representations reinforce and abet the process of erasure. Given that the primary Indigenous characters in both programs are women, there is a particular focus on representation of Indigenous women and female sexuality in popular culture. The paper argues that *Letterkenny*, with its regressive presentation of In-

Indigenous people and relationships, reinforces traditional stereotypes while representing the fantasy of a white-nationalist Canadian society in which its First Nations inhabitants bend to their subordinate role within it. *Mohawk Girls*, on the other hand—despite its adherence to a glossy Hollywood-style production and storytelling approach—presents fully developed, often contradictory, Indigenous characters grappling with the complexities of contemporary identity for Indigenous people in Canada. Their representation defies expectations and resists stereotypes and the show provides little in the way of definitive conclusions despite the traditional expectations and constraints of the format. As such, it represents an unsettling and decolonization both of Indigenous pop culture representation and the very media format in which it is presented.

- **Erik Mortensen (Professor, GAS, Humber College) and Alex Ufkes (Professor, GAS, Humber College): “Refraction of Enlightenment - Contemporary Culture's Engagement With Enlightenment Ideas and Ideals”**

This presentation will examine how contemporary culture engages with ideas and ideals put forward by Enlightenment thinkers. In particular, it will focus on how different political and social movements on both the right and left of the political spectrum have mobilized themselves appealing to reason, science, and equity. This presentation will offer a comparative view of the historical contexts around these terms and ideas, and how they have shifted overtime and been misunderstood, misapplied, and abused. It will also interrogate if these ideas were ever truly feasible as they were originally conceived. Most of the Enlightenment figures bridged the disciplines of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences in their work and writing. As time has passed more knowledge and rigid disciplinary distinctions have arisen. In an aim to embody the spirit of Enlightenment thinkers this presentation is a paired talk with one presenter coming from a Humanities scholarly background, and the other coming from a Science scholarly background.

**PART TWO: ENLIGHTEN ME –
THOUGHTS AND THEORIES
11:10 AM – 12:40 PM**

**I. TECHNOLOGY, HUMANITY, AND IDENTITY:
THE ENLIGHTENMENT REVISITED
(Rm. B204)**

Moderator: Michael Evans

- **Alcibiades Malapi-Nelson (Professor, LAS, Humber College): “Humanity 2.0: Higher Education and Religion”**

Emergent and Convergent Technologies are transforming the landscape of scientific research in ways that unapologetically promise the fundamental alteration of the human condition. Nanotechnology and nanoscience, biology and biotechnology, information science and information technology, cognitive science, artificial intelligence and robotics... all these fields are opening up new avenues of empirical and theoretical exploration that are progressively but fundamentally questioning what it means to be a human being – with its moral and legal implications. Departing from my 2017 book¹ on the decline of classical cybernetics and its resurrection within the above mentioned disruptive technologies, I will attempt to articulate this time the possible implications of this upcoming “humanity 2.0” for both religion and higher education. Unlike the popular current narrative, mostly critical of this admittedly controversial techno-scientific agenda, my position does not attach doom to these disruptive innovations. It also negates the idea that technology is neutral. Instead, it embraces them by means of recasting the question regarding the “human project” upon a shifted metaphysical framework – from a traditional, precautionary stance to a bolder proactionary one.

- **Goran Matic (Instructor at the School of Media Studies and Information Technology, Humber College): “Beyond the Dialectic of Romanticism and Enlightenment: Information and Identity in the Age of McLuhan”**

Goran Matic will be presenting with his poet friend, Joel Phillip Jacobson, as a co-author and collaborator.

The evolving dialectic between the Enlightenment and Romanticism movements has created a foundational historical moment – one that has powerfully shaped modernity, and our experience of the world. Although each historical movement has emphasized a valid portion of human experience, in this paper we argue that a new, re-integrative approach must be created; one capable of bridging gaps between these

historical polarities in a unified and generative manner. Key influences are the accelerating technology adoption, organizational co-evolution and global information propagation trends – that incrementally change how we perceive ourselves, our active identities and our affective roles in the world. In an environment where McLuhan’s ‘medium’ threatens to overwhelm the information processing capabilities acquired over the 100,000 years of the homo-sapiens-sapiens evolution, one might wonder whether the “Conway’s Law” (Conway, 1968) – might also be working in reverse. We argue that the confluence of these dynamic forces creates an evolving dialectic that gives rise to a need for unifying them in our modern experience – so that we might celebrate the deeply feeling, ‘irrational’ aspects of human nature while actively developing new forms of rational practices at the root of the Enlightenment tradition; such as applied ethics and engaged civic life. Perhaps by doing so, we might be able to effectively temper our experience against the fragmentary forces of postmodernity and the disillusionment of ‘liquid modernity’, to arrive at a new experience of self – one capable of building a thriving and resilient world for many generations to come, where the ancient is new again.

- **Chris Chalmers (Professor, School of Language & Liberal Studies, Fanshawe College): “Understanding Animals, Understanding Ourselves”**

Understanding the relationship between humans and animals has been approached by both the sciences and humanities, and since the enlightenment, two polar opposite positions having emerged. First, animals have been described as mechanistic and sterile, largely divorced from the rich emotional lives of humans. This is contrasted with the second position, holding an anthropomorphised view where animals and humans share emotions and have an essential similarity. The emergence of evolution as a field of research has brought much to bear on this debate, but it is only relatively recent scientific advancements in genetics and evolution that have brought about a more robust picture of both the similarities and the differences between humans and non-human animals. We are moving toward a new understanding that is forcing us to pay attention to the rich emotional lives of animals, but also ensuring that we refrain from anthropomorphizing them inappropriately. Our scientific advancements are now catching up with our philosophical questions about the relationship between ourselves and our domesticated animals. This area of study is vital, not only for understanding our relationship to our beloved pets, but also in order to understand our relationship to ourselves and our own emotions. Learning about who our pets are, is in fact a key to a fuller understanding of who we are as humans.

II. LANGUAGE AND STORIES: THE ENLIGHTENMENT QUESTIONED (Rm. B205)

Moderator: Erik Mortensen

- **Adam Langridge (Professor, Humber College): “Do We Really Want Another Enlightenment”**

The model of reason used during the Enlightenment presupposed the existence of universal principles of thought and action. It was further presupposed that these principles could inform a socio-political program. Guided by reason, we would create a utopia. Overlooked by Enlightenment thinkers and those guided by Enlightenment ideology was the possibility that one may be mistaking their cultural or personal values as universal. The effect was a pernicious form of paternalism that resounded from the Enlightenment period to the present. The words “Enlightenment”, “universal values” and “reason” connote “colonialism”, “slavery”, “imperialism”, and, in Canada, “residential schools.” This paper argues that definitively responding to questions about universals is needed before endorsing another Enlightenment: Are there universal principles of thought and action? If there are such, should they be used to inform a socio-political program? Finally, how do we keep from confusing cultural and personal values with universal values? The paper will attempt to formulate the questions in the right way, rather than provide detailed and definitive answers.

- **Melanie J. Fishbane (MA, Professor, English, Humber College): “Revisiting Between the River and the Poplar Bluffs – L. M. Montgomery’s Nostalgic Reminiscences of Prince Albert”**

Montgomery’s life writing often reimagines her history, rewriting it based on what I call “nostalgic romanticism;” focusing on the dramatic and emotional elements of time and place, a longing for what one cannot have, and what never was. Montgomery’s return to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan when she was in her 50s was one of these instances. When Montgomery was fifteen years old, she lived with her father’s family in Prince Albert. When she returned in 1930, she records how “homesick” she is for the city she once knew. In both instances, Montgomery’s impressions were influenced by her close connections, and later clouded by the “ghosts” of her father and an old boyfriend, Will Pritchard, who had both died. This paper explores how Montgomery’s return to Prince Albert was an opportunity for her to nostalgically romanticize her history and life choices.

- **Michael Wells (PhD, Professor, English, Humber College): “At the Drop of a Hat: The Rise of Sentimental Fiction in an Age of Reason”**

In what became one of the most beloved moments in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (and arguably one of the most beloved moments in all of eighteenth-century noveldom), a relatively secondary character named Trim upstages Walter Shandy, supreme lover and champion of enlightenment reason, in what can best be described as a kind eighteenth-century memorializing showdown that highlights the contemporary discussion about the seemingly adversarial cognitive processes of reason and emotion. Learning of the death of his eldest son Bobby Shandy, Walter looks to the learning of the ancients, and to the rational philosophy of his day for answers. What Walter finds pales in comparison to the extemporaneous emotional response of the unlearned Trim. Trim is able to express pure and unreasoned emotion at a time of great existential crisis: he exhibits moral sentiment by accessing what is represented by Sterne as a kind of universal sympathy from within which trumps any kind of planned and rational discourse on mortality (or so says the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* who readers quickly learn to take with a grain of salt). This scene is sometime credited with setting into motion the trope of “the man of feeling”, a sometimes parodic figure that appears in a number of novels throughout the mid-to-late eighteenth century. Even during the period itself, these popular depictions of weeping soldiers and overly emotional male protagonists seemed like an embarrassing side trip in the otherwise evolutionary “rise of the novel”; however, readers in the eighteenth century gravitated towards such depictions of moral sympathy, and seemed to find something worthy of their examination. What is sometimes lost in our understanding of this admiration for a kind of universal feeling is that novels such as Sterne’s were fictionalizations of a set of ideas that had already been explored (and were continuing to be explored) in the work of moral philosophers such as Locke, Hume and Smith. While we often see these thinkers as champions of an enlightenment emphasis on reason and system, each of these philosophers also struggled with the role of emotion in human behaviour and understanding. Novels like Sterne’s offer a useful way to explore how the relationship of sentiment and reason were being examined outside of philosophical discourse. Returning to more closely assess the depiction of sentiment in a number of novels from the enlightenment can teach us a lot about popular understanding of and reaction to enlightenment philosophical assumptions.

III. RE-EXAMINING THE DOMINANCE OF ENLIGHTENMENT THINKING (Rm. B206)

Moderator: Jonathan Salem-Wiseman

- **Ze'ev Perelmuter (Professor, LAS, Humber College): “The Enlightenment and the Emperor’s New Clothes”**

Without a doubt, Immanuel Kant has been the most influential thinker of the German Enlightenment. But Kant’s ethical theory is as counter intuitive as it is influential. Some scholars are likely to disagree with the latter claim. However, Kant’s own words speak for themselves. On Kant’s account, only duties and motives should count in moral decision making, as opposed to consequences. And if we only properly use reason, we must all reach similar conclusions. But more often than not, our actions are guided by their presumed consequences, and two perfectly rational people often reach contradictory conclusions. In fact, Kant’s insistence to not grant exceptions (the famous case of allowing murder in order to fulfil the obligation of never-lying) may suggest a label of moral fundamentalism. Why, then, Kant’s ethics has been and still is one of the most influential, researched and taught moral theories? How can it be that ideas and arguments that go against practice and common sense alike have been largely cultivated for so long? The reason is, I shall argue, that Kant’s ethics fits exceptionally well the religious-cultural fundamentals of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Facts aside, it strongly justifies our faith in the authority of reason. A brief comparison of Kant with Mill (an offspring of the age of Enlightenment) will show that like many other ideologies, faith in reason may lead to contradictory conclusions: liberal on the one hand, and radical, on the other.

- **Glenn Barenthin (Professor, Guelph-Humber): “The Rational Dog and Its Emotional Tales”**

The title of the conference *Enlightenment 2.0: What’s old is new again* implies that the spirit of the Enlightenment had somehow vanished and we are now witnessing its resurrection. This however does not seem to be the case. As Steven Pinker so clearly shows Enlightenment thinking has never been much of a crowd-pleaser (Pinker 2018). These thinkers encouraged the use of reason and science as the tools necessary to help us negotiate our way through the world. They encouraged us to challenge dogma, non-negotiable traditions and gut-feelings as a way of attaining a better world. This Enlightenment tradition did not flow smoothly to the rest of the world but has been consistently frustrated by all walks of life, including the academy. This is no different today as it was in the 18th century. For instance, Psychologist Jonathan Haidt and others who endorse the social intuitionist model invite us to believe that we spend too much time worshipping reason and that morality is akin to language, built from the parts of the brain that are quick, effortless and generally accurate (Haidt 2001). This paper will argue that if we consider how we managed to make life a little less unjust for more people we will find that it was accomplished through a long and slow process of argumentation and reason, the guiding principles of the Enlightenment.

- **Paul Corey (Professor, LAS, Humber College): “Steven Pinker, The Evangelist: Unenlightened Thoughts about *Enlightenment Now*”**

In *Enlightenment Now*, Steven Pinker defines “faith” as believing in something without good reason (30). In place of religious faith, Pinker insists we should believe in the Enlightenment, or his specific version of it, which he claims *is* based on good reasons. Armed with mountains of data, Pinker argues that the Enlightenment project, unlike religion, has led to an unprecedented improvement in the human condition over the past two centuries – more health, more happiness, more knowledge, more human rights, more quality of life, and more peace. This paper will claim that Pinker’s belief in the Enlightenment is, ironically, a “faith” by his own definition, since so much of his argument is based on wishful thinking and willful blindness rather than good reasons. Pinker is a secular evangelist who seeks to convert us into true believers, ignoring or dismissing whatever contradicts his sanitized version of the Enlightenment. The choice for Pinker is simple: either you are on the side of the Enlightenment which leads to knowledge and human flourishing, or you adopt some form of counter-Enlightenment, which leads to ignorance and brutality. Pinker’s dualism is symptomatic of the polarization currently raging in Western democracies, between an “enlightened” liberal class of secular, cosmopolitan elites, and a growing demographic of citizens who feel excluded and alienated from this liberal class and who are expressing their resentment through right-wing populism, religious fundamentalism, and senseless violence. My paper will conclude by outlining an approach that is removed from Pinker’s dualism, one that acknowledges the gains of modernity, the importance of science, and the ethical imperative of human rights, but at the same time is not simply dismissive of so-called “unenlightened” forms of community, politics, religion, myth, narrative, ritual, and philosophy. I will argue on behalf of a revived liberal arts education that examines pre-modern cultural achievements to see if they can teach us anything essential about human flourishing that was lost in modernity, and whether they can be incorporated into a post-Enlightenment age.

LUNCH IN THE HUMBER ROOM

12:45 – 1:55 PM

PART THREE: TECH AND MEDIA ENLIGHTENED

2:00 – 3:00 PM

I. ARE WE FREE TO REASON?: A DEBATE ON FREE-WILL AND MATERIALISM (RM. B204)

Moderator: Jonathan Salem-Wiseman

- **Doug Wright (Professor LAS, Humber College) and Lee Kuhnle (Professor LAS, Humber College): “A Debate on Free Will and Determinism”**

The explosion of science in the 17th and 18th centuries led to a division between those who saw this as leading necessarily and directly to a materialism that would force us to rethink our most basic ethical and political commitments, and those who saw the Enlightenment as clarifying and supporting humanistic values. As evolutionary psychology, neurology, and behavioural economics have progressed in the last 30 years or so, we have found ourselves dividing up in much the same manner. Popular works by contemporary scholars such as Daniel Kahneman, Jonathan Haidt, Dan Ariely, and Robert Sapolsky have promulgated an image of “the self” as a largely ineffectual narrative illusion cast up by an unconscious mind at work. They have suggested that rationality is all but unattainable for humans, since all or our attempts at “reasoning” are distorted by ineliminable cognitive error. And they have left precious little room in their depictions of decision-making for any meaningful sense of free will and agency. Is this “new materialism” an accurate portrait of human nature? If so, how might we navigate the moral and political consequences of accepting it? Are humanistic philosophical commitments compatible with what we are coming to learn about how our minds work?

II. DIGITAL DILEMMAS AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA (Rm. B205)

Moderator: Michelle Jordan

- **Matthew Harris (Professor LAS, Humber College): “Technological Distraction in the Classroom: What Do Students Think?”**

Students in the contemporary college classroom are increasingly arriving with their own forms of personal technology: phones, tablets and laptops. This technology is ostensibly to enrich learning in the classroom, but research has repeatedly shown that these forms of personal technology can impede learning. While professors may have their own strategies to deal with this situation ranging from banning personal technology to implementing it in the learning process, it is not always clear how students feel about these strategies. To help answer this question, focus groups were held in summer 2017 - through the aid of the Humber Innovation Fund - to determine students' attitudes toward personal technology, distraction and learning. This paper will present some of the preliminary results from the focus groups, and suggest some possible strategies to maximize learning in the technology-enriched classroom.

- **Bernie Monette (M.Ed., Professor, Program Coordinator, Web Development, School of Media Studies and Information Technology, Humber College): “How to Know What’s What in the World of Wikileaks and Fake News”**

There was a time when we could easily point to a document and know that this document is a primary, genuine, source. These documents were housed in libraries and guarded by librarians. When you saw these documents – they smelled funny, were often stained with some foul matter, and might have pencil marks and other notations. The document itself carried its own provenance and you could read it with the supreme pleasure of knowing it was genuine. Today we face different challenges. The immense amount of information we have to sift through to get to the news. Is it any wonder that people are willing to live in an information echo chamber called Facebook? Wikileaks regularly releases archives with millions of individual records. Exact digital copies lose that certainty paper used to give. No more coffee rings on treasured documents. No more librarian-guardians asking us what do we think we are doing? We are on our own. What are we to do? How do we make sense of information in the digital age? How do we take steps to insure that our information is genuine regardless of who calls it fake or true? What are the techniques we can use both technical and not that can help us make sense of digital information? What is the role of critical thinking in this world?

III. INFLUENCERS, EXPERTS, AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT (Rm. B206)

Moderator: Carla Ionescu

- **Naeema Farooqi (Professor and Business Manager, School of Media Studies and Information Technology, Humber College): “Follow and Swipe Right: The Literatures of Modern Enlightenment”**

The popularity and penetration of social media through its various platform such as Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. is changing the landscape of literature reading. People, specifically youth are more than ever before willing to subscribe and follow social media influencers instead of reading a classic book. However, the quotes culture of the written words of past literary figures are much valued if accompanied by a relevant photograph(s) that drive the message home. The visual culture in partnership with the spoken word is overtaking the written word culture and is calling for an abridged new culture where influencers reign supreme. This paper attempts to explore the juxtaposition of Social Media platforms and the role of influencers in this crosshair of literature and popular modern enlightenment. Drawing upon work done by cultural historians such as William Gibson and Richard Powers to present-day researchers of social media, this paper draws attention to the media consumption patterns on enlightenment and knowledge.

- **Maria Amuchastegui (Professor, Guelph-Humber): "The ethics of crowdsourced knowledge: the case of online health reviews"**

In 2015, the public interest group ProPublica raised questions about the validity of the information in [online health reviews](#). These reviews are anonymous and therefore unverifiable, and they tend to emphasize the politeness of the office staff, as opposed to patient outcomes or clinical skills. Nevertheless, search algorithms rely partly on reviews to decide which providers should appear first in search results. In his 2017 book *The Death of Expertise*, Tom Nichols describes how laypeople are increasingly rejecting the counsel of experts, turning their backs on centuries of established knowledge. Nichols blames this on a narcissistic culture in which all opinions are held to be equal, even those that are factually incorrect. It is a trend, he argues, that can have dire consequences for public health and even for democracy. On the one hand, it makes sense for people to spend as much time researching health providers as they do, say, restaurants. Whereas Big Data has led to information asymmetry in some areas—Google knows infinitely more about you than you know about Google—it has also changed the balance of power between doctors and patients, making information about health, and health providers, more widely available. On the other hand, doctors are not Uber drivers. Laypeople may be qualified to comment on the service provided by a waiter, but likely don't have the expertise to rate the clinical skills of their health provider. Moreover, while it's beneficial for patients to have access to health information, the Internet famously disseminates disinformation. This raises issues of data validity, algorithmic fairness, and societal consequences.

PART THREE: MUSIC AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

3:10 – 3:40 PM

I. REINVENTING MUSIC

(Rm. B205)

Moderator: Alexander Shvarts

- **Andrew Scott (Associate Dean, School of Creative & Performing Arts, Humber College): “Prince as modern day Duke Ellington? Bandleading and the blues in the MTV era.”**

This paper is about Prince’s performance on the Arsenio Hall Show of the "Mutiny" (a song sometimes featured in his repertoire that he wrote for the band The Family).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMps1ue_024

For this paper, I will do a critical and musicological reading of the performance, but I'll try to make the point that it is the qualities that are visible in this performance (band leading, arranging, conducting, the emphasis on dance and audience participation) that Miles Davis connected with when, in his autobiography, wrote that Prince could "be the new Duke Ellington of our time if he just keeps at it." Obviously Ellington was a sacrosanct figure in jazz when, in 1990, Davis published those words and this assessment of Prince to be on the level of Ellington was used as further evidence that Davis had, for such critics as Stanley Crouch, fallen from grace (<http://readinglists.nottingham.ac.uk/items/EDF315D1-FFC2-4B93-6E8B-40A1A53CC67A.html>).

In this paper, I want to revisit Davis's comments and link them to a key late-career Prince performance that evidences many of the qualities that made Ellington an important figure and that Davis may have seen in Prince's musical and performative output.

**APRES EVENT IN THE HUMBER ROOM (TRIBUTE TO
OUR FORMER CHAIR AND COLLEAGUE JEOFF BULL)**

3:45 – 5:00 PM