

SEMINAR NO. 3 OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH: A CURRICULUM FOR
STUDIES INTO DARKNESS

PERVASIVE AND PERSONAL: OBSERVATIONS ON FREE SPEECH ONLINE



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019
6:30-8:30 PM

Vera List Center for Art and Politics
The New School
Theresa Lang Community and Student Center
55 W. 13th Street, 2nd floor, New York City

VERA LIST CENTER FOR ART AND POLITICS

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics is a research center and a public forum for art, culture, and politics. It was established at The New School in 1992—a time of rousing debates about freedom of speech, identity politics, and society’s investment in the arts. A pioneer in the field, the center is a nonprofit that serves a critical mission: to foster a vibrant and diverse community of artists, scholars, and policy makers who take creative, intellectual, and political risks to bring about positive change.

We champion the arts as expressions of the political moments from which they emerge, and consider the intersection between art and politics the space where new forms of civic engagement must be developed. We are the only university-based institution committed exclusively to leading public research on this intersection. Through public programs and classes, prizes and fellowships, publications and exhibitions that probe some of the pressing issues of our time, we curate and support new roles for the arts and artists in advancing social justice.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: A CURRICULUM FOR STUDIES INTO DARKNESS

Pervasive and Personal, Observations on Free Speech Online is the third seminar in a year-long examination of *Freedom of Speech*. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees four specific freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and protest, and freedom of religion. With Indian artist Amar Kanwar’s film *Such a Morning* (2017) as a point of departure, the seminar series imagines these four freedoms enshrined in the U.S. Constitution as points on the compass rose, which can be overlaid with intersectional thinking from artists, Indigenous peoples, feminists, and innumerable other perspectives, to question current circumstances, and to confront the inequities and uncertainties in our times, especially as they pertain to freedom of speech.

PROGRAM NOTES. SEMINAR 3

«PERVASIVE AND PERSONAL»

Technology has linked much of the world, but in its ubiquity, it also has deeply personal qualities. It has helped us build relationships and has become a part of our daily lives, something we carry in our pockets wherever we go. This duality of tech and particularly the Internet—its ability to be vast yet intimate—has enabled people to express themselves in unique ways, but also brought with it some serious challenges. Where open channels into each other's lives exist, the spread of harassment, abuse and vitriol can be equally pervasive and personal.

In this next installment of the Vera List Center's *Freedom of Speech: A Curriculum for Studies into Darkness* series, seminar participants will turn from considerations of freedom of speech in a U.S. context (a particular focus of Seminar 1) to how freedom of expression is exercised—and curtailed—in our complex online sphere. By observing the ability of women to safely speak out online, we will bring to the fore the contradictions of the Internet, a seemingly borderless space that is used by people living within borders, a tool that has equalizing potential but is constructed through the hegemony that is Silicon Valley.

The focus will be on women, since increasingly research and testimony are showing what many women have long known, that the Internet is not an equal space. The online landscape bears more risks for women than for men, and gets riskier depending on other aspects of her identity, such as race or religion, or whether she works as a journalist or in another public facing job. As a result of the scale of this type of abuse, some women have resorted to self-censorship or have disengaged from online platforms altogether. More often than not, self-censorship is a direct consequence of such attacks. However, at times, can it also be a proactive form of resilience? Women, civil society, and activists have responded to the challenges in ingenious and alternative ways of community building and solidarity—shared by many minorities.

In an era where technology is quickly becoming everything, the consequences for women being unable to access the Internet safely and securely, without facing misogynist abuse, cannot be overstated. Technology, and the Internet specifically, is not neutral, and how tech is built and managed has a direct impact on women's right to freedom of expression as well as equality in society as a whole.

PARTICIPANTS. SEMINAR 3

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Deborah Brown, Global Policy Advocacy lead, Association for Progressive Communications

Molly Crabapple, artist and writer

Julia Farrington, Associate Arts Producer, Index on Censorship; member, International Arts Rights Advisors

Shawné Michaelain Holloway, artist

Nancy Schwartzman, documentary filmmaker, *Roll Red Roll*

Moderator

Judy Taing, Head of Gender & Sexuality, ARTICLE 19

CREDITS

The seminar series *Freedom of Speech. A Curriculum for Studies into Darkness* is organized by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics as part of the center's 2018–2020 curatorial focus *If Art Is Politics*. It is directed by Carin Kuoni, Director/Chief Curator, Vera List Center, and Laura Raicovich with assistance by Gabriela López Dena. Partner organizations for the seminars are ARTICLE 19; the National Coalition Against Censorship; New York Peace Institute; and Weeksville Heritage Center.

This seminar is co-presented in partnership with ARTICLE 19.

Cover image: Molly Crabapple, *Untitled*, 2015. Photo courtesy, the artist and Vice magazine.

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES. SEMINAR 3

Deborah Brown is global policy advocacy lead for the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a global non-governmental organization and network of members in 72 countries, which works at the intersection of human rights and technology to advance social justice, women's rights and sustainable development. She focuses on internet rights advocacy and fostering good internet governance in UN processes to advance international norms and hold governments to account. Previously, Brown worked at Access Now, the United Nations Foundation, and the National Democratic Institute. She received her master's degree from Georgetown University and her bachelor's degree from Barnard College, Columbia University.

Molly Crabapple is an artist and writer in New York. She is the author of two books, *Drawing Blood* and *Brothers of the Gun*, (with Marwan Hisham), which was longlisted for a National Book Award. Her reportage has been published in the *New York Times*, *New York Review of Books*, *The Paris Review*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Guardian*, *Rolling Stone*, and elsewhere. She has been the recipient of a Yale Poynter Fellowship, a Front Page Award, and shortlisted for a Frontline Print Journalism Award. Her art is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the United States Library of Congress, D.C., and the New-York Historical Society. She is the Spring 2019 Artist in Residence at NYU's Hagop Kevorkian Center.

Julia Farrington is a freelance arts producer and consultant, and an impact producer for documentary films. Since 2005, she has specialized in artistic freedom, working at the intersection between arts, politics, and social justice. She was Head of Arts at Index on Censorship (2009 – 2014) and since 2014 has continued to work as Associate Arts Producer with Index in a freelance capacity, on her pioneering work on censorship and self-censorship in the arts in UK. She worked for Belarus Free Theatre (2014 – 2016) as their head of campaigns. She currently works with Kayd Somali Arts and Culture on the London-based Somali Week Festival, leading on a program of transition and capacity building. She is also working as Impact Producer on *Even When I Fall*, a documentary telling the story of Circus, Nepal's first and only circus, founded by survivors of child trafficking into corrupt Indian circuses. She has worked internationally with artists and organisations in Myanmar, Belarus,

Ethiopia, Turkey, and Somaliland, promoting artistic freedom.

Shawné Michaelain Holloway is a new media artist using sound, video, and performance to shape the rhetorics of technology and sexuality into tools for exposing structures of power. She has spoken and exhibited work internationally in spaces like The New Museum (New York), Sorbus Galleria (Helsinki, Finland), The Kitchen (New York), the Institute of Contemporary Arts (London, England), and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (Chicago). Currently, Holloway teaches in the New Arts Journalism department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Nancy Schwartzman is a documentary film director, producer, and media strategist who uses storytelling and technology to create safer communities for women and girls. Her debut feature documentary, *Roll Red Roll* goes beyond the headlines of the notorious Steubenville, Ohio high school sexual assault case to uncover the social-media fueled “boys will be boys” culture that let it happen. *Roll Red Roll* premiered in 2018 at the Tribeca Film Festival and Hot Docs, won 6 feature film awards and will broadcast as the Season Opener on *PBS’s POV* and the *BBC* in 2019. She is working with national partners to launch an impact campaign to engage men and boys in the prevention of sexual violence. Her first film, *The Line*, a short documentary examining consent was used by the White House for a campaign around sexuality, and her follow-up film, *XOXOSMS*, was on *PBS/POV* and *BBC* exploring love between two teenagers, bridged by technology. A globally recognized human rights activist, Schwartzman served on Vice President Biden’s Advisory Council for Violence Against Women. Schwartzman is a tech founder, and created the White House award-winning mobile app Circle of 6 designed to reduce sexual violence among America’s youth and college students. Circle of 6 is used by over 350,000 people in 36 countries. The app is now open source and being adapted for women journalists working in Mexico. She has presented her work at the White House, the United Nations, TEDxSheffield, Good Pitch, DOCNYC, and more. You can find her @fancynancynyc.

Judy Taing joined ARTICLE 19 in 2011 and leads the international portfolio on sex, sexuality, and gender rights. She developed and spearheads ARTICLE 19’s cross-cutting gender strategy, “The Mx Method,” ensuring that intersectionality and equity are at the

forefront of the organization's global strategy, operations, and internal processes. She specializes in countering religious intolerance and hate speech, protection of human rights defenders and environmental activists, access to information, and is currently focused on combating technology-related violence against women. She has regional expertise in Southeast Asia and has designed and led large-scale projects in Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Prior to joining ARTICLE 19, she worked in the Office of the Co-Investigating Judges at the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials in Cambodia and was key in determining victim participation to the proceedings and establishing the evidence base for the crime of forcible population transfer. Taing holds an MSc Human Rights from the London School of Economics and a BA in Political Science and Development from the University of California Berkeley.

SUGGESTED READINGS. SEMINAR 3

Each seminar is accompanied by Suggested Readings listed on the Vera List Center website as well as a key takeaways of the seminar proceedings, full video documentation, and the program booklet. For a complete listing of all reading suggestions please visit www.veralistcenter.org.

UN HRC: Protecting Rights Online Requires States to Address Violence Against Women in Digital Contexts. Article 19:
<https://bit.ly/2swEd7K>

“Safety of Female Journalists Online (#SOFJO).” History | OSCE:
<https://bit.ly/2ATB9XQ>

“Toxic Twitter - A Toxic Place for Women.” <https://bit.ly/2HUfn7D>

“The Girl Who Seized The Internet” Molly Crabapple. The New York Times: <https://nyti.ms/2Dh9Vw3>

SUMMARIES OF PREVIOUS SEMINARS

SUMMARY. SEMINAR I “Mapping the Territory” November 11, 2018

Participants

Mark Bray, political organizer, writer and historian

Abou Farman, Ass. Professor, Anthropology, The New School

Amar Kanwar, artist and filmmaker

Carin Kuoni, director/chief curator, Vera List Center for Art and Politics

Mendi and Keith Obadike, artists; Vera List Center board members

Vanessa Place, artist, writer and criminal appellate attorney

Laura Raicovich, independent writer and curator

Svetlana Mintcheva, Director of Programs, National Coalition Against Censorship; moderator

This seminar sought to map the sprawling territory of what freedom of speech might mean today within the context of Amar Kanwar’s film *Such a Morning* (2017). Svetlana kicked off the discussion by framing the “value” of free speech, particularly given the uneven distribution of/unequal access to these rights, and the limits on government power that free speech in the US is meant to define. Mark opened the conversation beyond the relationship between government and the populous by questioning the right of speech in relation to harm and fascism. He questioned whether “deplatforming” is really a curtailment of free speech or rather an assertion of a particular politics and values of liberation. Mendi and Keith brought the conversation into the realm of the control of data and speech, particularly in the context of race realities in the US both in history and in the present, including the particularly disturbing right to vote as a free speech issue being impinged upon in such a way to make it look like a data error (see voter suppression in Georgia 2018 Governor’s race). Abou spoke to darkness or silence as a place of power and the determination to remove oneself from violence in the “security of darkness” (Arendt). He also discussed the importance of using people as shelter, as in people with certain privileges protecting others. Amar asked some important questions of the group including questioning how we might identify our own blind spots; how we

might retreat to reconfigure or reconstitute seemingly irresolvable conflicts; how might we question the “good guy/bad guy” duality; how might we prepare for the resolution of the fundamental questions so we are ready for the next. Vanessa finally brought us into the contentious territory of advocating for speech that is criminal and allowing the ugliness of humanity a space to exist, meaning that supporting the right to differ might come at the expense of justice and equality.

The discussion then centered on the friction between harm and safety, and the reality that freedom of speech for one person might impinge upon or curtail another’s access to those rights. This aspect of the conversation is certainly ripe for deeper exploration.

SUMMARY. SEMINAR 2
“Feminist Manifestos”
December 3, 2018

Participants

Becca Albee, visual artist and musician

Chiara Bottici, Associate Professor of Philosophy, The New School for Social Research

Silvia Federici, philosopher, scholar, writer and activist from the radical autonomist Marxist tradition

A.L. Steiner, visual artist, teacher, collaborator and co-founder of Ridykeulous and Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.)

Gabriela López Dena, Vera List Center Graduate Student Fellow, Art & Social Justice; moderator

At each pronouncement, speech is embodied by a particular individual at a specific moment in a specific site which all bring forth their own histories, that was the gist of the second seminar. Throughout the day across The New School campus, women, men and others [?], students, faculty and staff were reciting from historical and contemporary manifestos demanding equality for women. Selected by Vera List Center Graduate Student Fellow Gabriela López Dena, they ranged from Olympe de Gouges' *Declaration of Women's Rights* from 1791 to artist Mierle Ukeles Laderman's *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* to the Zapatista Women's welcome greeting to the first Indigenous Women's Gathering in 2018 and Nayéléni's *Women's Declaration on Food Sovereignty*, and were read in places where they mattered most: elevators, cafeterias, dormitories, classrooms, or the foyer to the university president's offices. In some cases, crowds began to gather around the person reading; in others, the student masses simply washed by the speaker, seemingly oblivious to their calls.

In the evening, we gathered for an exchange with some of those who had read the manifestos as well as artist and musician Becca Albee, philosophers Chiara Bottici and Silvia Federici, and artist A.L. Steiner, a co-founder of Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), moderated by Gabriela López Dena. Each of them began their presentation by reading a manifesto. Becca started us off by offering her own version of a land acknowledgment: for several minutes she read the names of hundreds of women to whom a 1978

textbook by the Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers had been dedicated. The dedication acknowledged the work of those on who the book had been built, and the jump to labor relations and questions of visibility came easily: *Wages for Housework* from 1978, presented by Silvia, positions wages as a capitalist instrument to render invisible non-waged work, i.e. the labor at the time predominantly still performed by women in the privacy of the home, today relevant for the conditions of the gig-economy. Becca's installation *Prismatera* where text only becomes legible in a certain light provided a useful foil to ask the question of visibility: Which conditions need to be met to make something invisible visible, or heard?

Chiara picked up that question in her reading of the current version of the anarchy-feminist manifesto, arrived at through a trans-individual process of assembling fragments of other manifestos and continuously re-articulating its stated goals through a collective, aggregational online process that she's currently developing. Her call to defy a system that oppresses women by acting as if one were in control of it raised issues of privilege: who can afford to question a system that they are part of? How does academia relate to politics, theory to practice (or activism)? What agency do we have in a system that we are ourselves implicated in? A.L. Steiner, who had read Valie Export's *Women's Art as Manifesto* from 1972, reminded people that reality is a social construction with men as its engineers and that the notion of freedom itself was a conservative construct.

As we considered the uncomfortable contradictions we inhabit and our invariable complicity in systems of power, some called to embrace such experiences of discomfort, to hold contradictions within us, to stay in a moment of suspension from usefulness, and that being political means to continuously engage in the labor of disentangling these conflicts and examining the blind spots. The slow work of "borderless feminism" (Spivak) could mean, some posited, that we need to embrace concepts of mobility and flux and embrace the multiplicity of historical times that are present at each moment and part of every identity and speech act.

Where does this leave us for Seminar 3? A recognition that the individual voice can amount to a chorus of related articulations, that every pronouncement is something else at another moment, that history reverberates in all pronouncements, and that resistance is still personal.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

ARTICLE 19 works for a world where all people everywhere can freely express themselves and actively engage in public life without fear of discrimination. They do this by working on two interlocking freedoms which set the foundation for all their work:

1. *The Freedom to Speak* concerns everyone's right to express and disseminate opinions, ideas and information through any means, as well as to disagree with and question power-holders.
2. *The Freedom to Know* concerns the right to demand and receive information from power-holders, for transparency, good governance and sustainable development.

When either of these freedoms comes under threat as a result of power-holders failing to adequately protect them, **ARTICLE 19**, with one voice, speaks through courts of law, through global and regional organisations, and through civil society wherever they are present.

National Coalition Against Censorship promotes freedom of thought, inquiry and expression, and opposes censorship in all its forms. The Coalition formed in response to the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Miller v. California*, which narrowed First Amendment protections for sexual expression and in turn, opened the door to obscenity prosecutions. Over 40 years, as an alliance of more than 50 national non-profits, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor, and civil liberties groups, the Coalition has engaged in direct advocacy and education to support First Amendment principles. NCAC is unique in that they are national in scope but often local in their approach, and they work with community members to resolve censorship controversies without the need for litigation.

New York Peace Institute provides conflict resolution services in the form of mediation, conflict coaching, restorative processes, group facilitation, and skills training. Our programs are a resource to thousands of New Yorkers facing conflict each year— whether it is between parents working out a custody agreement, a noise dispute between neighbors, diverting a misdemeanor case from court, or a conflict between a parent and school regarding a student with special needs. Our services foster listening, empathy, and communication among our clients and help them develop their own creative solutions. As the city's largest civilian peace force, our mission is to build peace and prevent violence in New York City and beyond.

We also provide vital communication and conflict management skills training to a broad range of organizations, including city agencies, non-profits, labor unions, and schools. We employ a creative, learn-by-doing approach in our trainings, drawing upon theater, visual arts, music, and kinesthetic activities

Weeksville Heritage Center is a multidisciplinary museum dedicated to preserving the history of the 19th century African American community of Weeksville, Brooklyn - one of America's many free black communities.

Our mission is to document, preserve and interpret the history of free African American communities in Weeksville, Brooklyn and beyond and to create and inspire innovative, contemporary uses of African American history through education, the arts, and civic engagement. Using a contemporary lens, we activate this unique history through the presentation of innovative, vanguard and experimental programs.

VERA LIST CENTER BOARD

The Advisory Board of the Vera List Center for Art and Politics is an integral part of the New School community. Members provide counsel to the Vera List Center, develop expertise on ways to support the academic enterprise, offer insight and guidance on programs, provide significant financial support, and serve as links to the communities in which they live and work.

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PERVASIVE AND PERSONAL IS THE THIRD IN A SERIES OF SEMINARS DEDICATED TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH. OTHER SEMINARS INCLUDE:

**SEMINAR 1: MAPPING THE TERRITORY
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2018**

PARTNER ORGANIZATION: THE NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

**SEMINAR 2: FEMINIST MANIFESTOS
MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2018**

**SEMINAR 3: PERVASIVE AND PERSONAL: OBSERVATIONS ON
FREE SPEECH ONLINE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019**

PARTNER ORGANIZATION: ARTICLE 19

**SEMINAR 4: TRANSLATION, COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGES
MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2019**

**SEMINAR 5: SEDITIOUS SPEECH
SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2019**

PARTNER ORGANIZATION: WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER

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**SEMINAR 6: FEET ON THE GROUND
MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2019**

PARTNER ORGANIZATION: NEW YORK PEACE INSTITUTE

For information on related classes, please visit: www.newschool.edu.

This event has been videotaped and will be made available on www.veralistcenter.org.

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