



2016 Events Summary

Made possible through the National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant

Total number of programs: 56

Total attendance: 4,239

January 24

Raconteur Radio performance of "Gaslight"

Members of the Raconteur Radio theatre troupe put on a rousing performance of the classic play, *Gaslight*. The audience members were delighted that the performance had not been cancelled due to snow and enjoyed the live entertainment after being snowbound the day before. Raconteur Radio shows are performed in the style of old time radio programs with the addition of lights and sound effects to further enhance the experience.

Attendance: 30

January 26

"Heads and Tales: Portraits with Legends" Opening Reception

This exhibit of portraits and an award-winning children's book by local curator and artist Gillett Good Griffin drew a crowd of 85 of many of the artist's old friends and colleagues. The reception featured snacks and drinks, along with remarks by Jeff Nathanson, Arts Council of Princeton Director, and show curator Andor Carius. Co-sponsored with the Arts Council of Princeton. The show ran through March 31, 2016. [PHOTOS](#)

Attendance: 85

February 18

When the Durufles Came to Town

Lyn Ransom spoke about the 1971 performance of the Requiem by the 20th century French composer Maurice Durufle that was performed in Trinity Cathedral in Trenton

and conducted by the composer himself. This piece is one of the significant Requiems, as powerful and popular as those of Faure, Mozart, and Brahms. At the talk, key musicians from the 1971 performance shared their experiences including Nancianne Parella, formerly Associate Director of Princeton High School Choirs, and Bob Parrish, formerly of Trenton State College. The audience learned about this important performance from the experiences of those who were there.

Attendance: 45

February 21

Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church Verse Speaking Choir

For this event, Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church Verse Speaking Choir performed "Listen, Lord: The Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church's 175 Years in the Fight for Freedom." The audience learned about the history of Civil Rights and the Witherspoon Street church through spoken word and songs. This moving and informative performance received a standing ovation. Part of the Witherspoon-Jackson Stories Project with the Arts Council of Princeton. [PHOTOS](#)

Attendance: 65

2015-2016 Spotlight on the Humanities: Public Policy in America (cont'd)

February 7

"Lead Parenting" with Anne-Marie Slaughter and Andrew Moravcsik

The Community Room buzzed with conversation among the attendees at the presentation, "Lead Parenting: A Conversation about Families, Fathers and Caregiving in America," featuring Anne-Marie Slaughter and Andrew Moravcsik. In this special Sunday edition of the series, the couple discussed the ways that they were able to negotiate being a dual-career couple and raising a family at the same time, with Andrew taking the lead parent role while Anne-Marie's career demanded most of her time. Both advocate for placing a higher value on caregiving and allowing individuals to make the decisions that work best for their careers and families. The audience asked insightful questions of the couple and the library was fortunate to host this important conversation. [PHOTOS](#)

Attendance: 75

March 23

"We the People: History and the Many Sides of U.S. Identity in the Age of Human Rights" with Christopher Fisher

Dr. Fisher's presentation examined the nation's bicentennial celebration in 1976. He argued that the celebrations revealed ambivalence towards the idea of a national

identity. Dr. Fisher posed questions to the audience throughout the presentation, emphasizing that "History is the conversation, it's the interpretation..." and drawing them into the conversation. The discussion that followed showed that the audience was very engaged in the material and Dr. Fisher welcomed their input.

Attendance: 25

April 21

"Democracy for Realists" with Christopher Achen

In his presentation, Christopher Achen discussed the argument of his book, co-authored with Larry Bartels, that voters mostly choose parties and candidates based on social identities and partisan loyalties, not political issues, and therefore don't control public policy overall. The audience was very much engaged in the conversation and questions often focused on the upcoming elections.

Attendance: 30

May 6

"Freedom of Speech: Mightier than the Sword" with David Shipler

In his presentation, David Shipler discussed how there are two different realms of permissible speech: speech permitted by the First Amendment as well as the speech considered culturally permissible. He cited book challenges in schools as a discussion point where the limits of free speech are culturally defined; for example, some schools have been challenged for assigning certain books because parents find some content objectionable.

Attendance: 20

April 20

Person Place Thing with Randy Cohen and Warren Zanes

This installment of Randy Cohen's Person Place Thing show featured musician, scholar, and author of the recent "Petty: The Biography," Warren Zanes. This was a music-filled edition of the radio show, featuring music by Warren Zanes and two other musicians.

[PHOTOS](#)

Attendance: 30

April 21

Poem in Your Pocket Day

This April was the twentieth anniversary of National Poetry Month and the library recognized this with a monthly poetry gathering and a poetry book launch. A prominent book display featuring our poetry collection was set up on the first floor to encourage people to pick up a new book. New for us this year was "Poem in your Pocket" day on

April 21. Staff and patrons were encouraged to pick up a button (“Ask me about my poem!”) and carry a poem in their pocket to share with friends, family, and colleagues.

May 3

Author Talk: Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul with Eddie Glaude

Eddie Glaude, Chair of the Department for African American Studies at Princeton University, spoke on his recent book *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul*. He argued that the nation is suffering a “crisis of imagination” in that we cannot see beyond ourselves to imagine a better world free of today’s constraints. He also spoke of how white lives are valued more than others, what he calls the “value gap.” The audience was very interested in these topics and engaged in a deep discussion afterwards.

Attendance: 65

Special Programming Series: History of Science

Check out the [reading list](#) and [program guide](#)
[View photos from the series](#)

During March and April, the library offered a series of events exploring the history of science. The events garnered a lot of interest and enthusiasm from our community. A recommended readings list was created, as well as a program guide that included an introductory essay, “When Science Meets History” written for us by Jennifer M. Rampling from Princeton University’s History of Science department.

March 3

Film Screening: “Particle Fever” + Discussion with Chris Tully

The first event to the History of Science series drew an interested and engaged audience to see this film and hear an update from Dr. Tully on the work being done at the CERN Large Hadron Collider facility since the time the movie was made.

Attendance: 50

March 8

Freeman Dyson in conversation with Nima Arkani-Hamed

The headline event for this series, this unique event packed the Community Room, the cafe, and the overflow area with members of the community eager to hear the conversation. Arkani-Hamed, theoretical physicist at the Institute for Advanced Study, conversed with Dyson about his career, thoughts on new scientific discoveries, and more. The audience was highly engaged and asked excellent questions.

Attendance: 200

March 10

Author Talk: The Brief Life and Exciting Times of Vulcan – the Planet that Wasn't There with Thomas Levenson

Speaking on a less studied aspect of one of our local heroes, author Thomas Levenson spoke on his book *The Hunt for Vulcan...And How Einstein Destroyed a Planet, Discovered Relativity, and Deciphered the Universe*. Levenson is a professor of science writing at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Attendance: 60

March 20

Storytime and activities with Laurie Wallmark on *Ada Lovelace and the Thinking Machine*

Author Laurie Wallmark read her children's book *Ada Byron Lovelace and the Thinking Machine*, an illustrated biography of Ada Lovelace, to an audience of about 15 children and their parents. More than 100 years before the invention of the electronic computer, Byron followed her creativity in science and math to become the world's first computer programmer. This story serves as an inspiration for children to be fearless in pursuing their passions. Attendance: 15

March 23

Book Discussion: Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* with Angela Creager

Angela Creager, the Thomas M. Siebel Professor in the History of Science and the Director of Graduate Studies for History of Science at Princeton University, led a discussion of the book that is considered the paradigmatic history of science text. Originally published in 1962, the book is still widely read by specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Attendance: 22

March 30

Author talk: *Surprise Encounters with Artists and Scientists, Whales and Other Living Things* with Scott McVay

In a rousing rendition of many stories from his *Surprise Encounters with Artists and Scientists, Whales, and Other Living Things*, McVay entertained the sizeable crowd during this presentation. McVay focused on his amusing and enlightening encounters with explorers and scientists throughout his professional and personal life.

Attendance: 55

April 13

Book Discussion: Brenda Maddox's *Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA* with Kathryn Maxson

Kathryn, a Ph.D. candidate in the Program in History of Science at Princeton University, led a discussion of Maddox's book that examines the largely unknown story of the life and work of Rosalind Franklin whose data and photography of DNA led to James Watson and Francis Crick's discoveries. Attendance: 11

April 24

Lecture: Mercer Magic and the Story of America's First Sports Car

Local historian Clifford Zink presented on the history of the Raceabout, long considered America's first sports car and a shining example of local entrepreneurship and innovation. The Mercer Automobile Company was a flourishing local industry in the early 20th century. Two Mercer Raceabouts from the 1920s parked outside the library, drawing much attention to themselves and the talk.

Attendance: 50

Democracy Fellowship (October 2015-April 2016)

A group of six Princeton High School students took part in a 7-month fellowship program focusing on the religious freedom clause of the First Amendment. Carol Golden, a lawyer and community leader, and Hannah Schmidl planned and led the sessions. Each meeting engaged the students with both both historical and contemporary questions about the first amendment's religious freedom clause. We invited several speakers to meet with the students, including Angela Groves, a Princeton graduate and current NYU law student; Ed Barocas, Legal Director of the ACLU of New Jersey; and Janice Rael, Founder and President of the Delaware Valley Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Additionally, the students were able to attend a lecture with Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor at Rutgers University. The experience culminated with a public event on April 15. This included a screening of the film "The Lord is Not on Trial Here Today," followed by a student-led discussion about certain First Amendment cases discussed during the meetings. Ed Barocas, Legal Director of the ACLU of New Jersey, also took part in the discussion.

Attendance: 15

June 8, 2016

Khalil Gibran Muhammad

Scholar and public intellectual Khalil Gibran Muhammad spoke to the community about his book *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*. Moderator Rhinold Lamar Ponder interviewed Dr. Muhammad about writing a book on this important and timely topic. The program drew a large audience who asked insightful questions. Co-sponsored with Not in Our Town Princeton, Princeton Human Services Commission, with additional support from the Arts Council of Princeton, the Campaign to End the New Jim Crow, the Coalition for Peace Action, Corner House, Labyrinth Books, the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Princeton Family YMCA, Princeton Police Department, and YWCA Princeton. [PHOTOS](#)
Attendance: 195

Summer Documentaries Series

Series attendance: 506

July 7

Jaco: The Film

July 12

Very Semiserious: A Partially Thorough Portrait of New Yorker Cartoonists

July 19

Heart of a Dog

July 26

Above and Below

August 2

Art House

August 9

Noma: My Perfect Storm

August 16

Troublemakers: The Story of Land Art

August 23

Iris

July 24

Harp Music Around the World

This concert celebrated the diversity of folk music around the world with three performers: Kathleen Loughnane from Ireland, demonstrating Irish harp music from the Celtic tradition; Meric Donuk from Turkey, exploring jazz-folk fusion; and Nicolas Carter from Minnesota, demonstrating Paraguayan harp techniques. Co-sponsored by the Somerset Harp Festival.

Attendance: 115

September: Wilderness Month

For these programs highlighting Wilderness Month, the attendees enjoyed both a discussion of these classic nature-related readings and the opportunity to spend some time outside in local green spaces. Both discussion leaders led lovely walks and integrated local information into the discussions of the readings.

September 10

David LaMotte on Gary Snyder's "The Practice of the Wild"
Offsite at St Michael's Preserve, Hopewell
Attendance: 6

September 24

Liz Cutler on Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire"
Offsite at Institute Woods, Princeton
Attendance: 6

Hispanic Heritage Month Mercado: Festival Cultural Latino

This gathering brought together Princetonians for a celebration of Latino music, dance, food, and crafts. Co-sponsored by the library, the Arts Council of Princeton, Princeton Human Services Commission, and Mi Pueblo Lindo. [PHOTOS](#)

September 11

Festival Cultural Latino on Hinds Plaza
Attendance: 450

Poets at the Library
A collaboration with US1 Poets and Delaware Valley Poets Cooperative

June 13, 2016

Featuring Vijay Seshadri
Attendance: 53

September 12

Featuring Maxine Susman and Keith O'Shaughnessy
Attendance: 40

October 24

Featuring Jean Hollander and Judy Michaels
Attendance: 60

November 14

Featuring Arlene Weiner and Ellen Foos
Attendance: 45

December 12

Featuring Kathe Palka and Abena Busia
Attendance: 25

Civic Engagement Series

This well-attended series leading up to and culminating with the elections night program drew large and engaged audiences. We provided a space for people to come and learn about the elections from non-media outlets. Each of the programs provided the community with up-to-date information about the elections and provided time for audience questions and discussion.

September 13

Author Talk with James Campbell on *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America*
Attendance: 72

September 15

Deciphering the Election and the Polls: A Conversation between Sam Wang and Landon Jones
Attendance: 160

September 27

Civic engagement: Voter Registration Day with League of Women Voters of Princeton Area
Attendance: 95

October 4

Whitney Quesenbery: "Democracy is a Design Problem"

Attendance: 35

November 8

Elections watching + Ingrid Reed and Christopher Fisher commentary

Attendance: 200

**Racial Literacy Series
Collaboration with Not in Our Town Princeton**

In the spring of this year, Not In Our Town saw a tweet from Ruha Benjamin, "Who decides what 21st Century Skills all students & citizens need? And why isn't Racial Literacy up there with media and tech literacy? Most educational institutions are not equipping students to understand, much less intervene in, a world structured by racial vision and division. Without language to make sense of the world we've inherited and unwittingly reproduce, we graduate young people who cannot read their reality. Racial literacy is not about acquiring the words to have a "conversation on race" which too often stay at the level of anecdote and sentiment. Racial literacy is developing an historical & sociological toolkit to understand how we got here and how it could've been/ CAN BE otherwise."

NIOT rose to the challenge and worked with Ruha Benjamin, Assistant Professor in African American Studies at Princeton University, to develop a 5 part course on Racial Literacy. The basic course was two presentations/guided discussions with Ruha Benjamin and then screenings in three parts of the film "Race: The Power of an Illusion." The response from the community was overwhelming, with each of the lectures and screenings filled to capacity.

October 18

Ruha Benjamin: "Race Unplugged: Moving Beyond Sound Bites of Pundits, Politicians, and Pop Culture"

Attendance: 190

November 1

Ruha Benjamin: "Reading Reality: Developing Racial Literacy for the 21st Century"

Attendance: 230

October 25 (175), November 1 (230), November 15 (162) - total 567

"Race: The Power of an Illusion" screenings at Garden Theatre

Recordings of the lectures are available on the [library's vimeo page](#).

Spotlight on the Humanities 2016-2017: Religion in American Life

September 28

Judith Weisenfeld: “Black Gods, Prophets, and Utopian Visions: Religion and Racial Identity in early 20th Century America”

Princeton University Professor Judith Weisenfeld explored the intersections of religion and racial identity among black migrants from the South and immigrants from the Caribbean who encountered one another in the northern cities of the early twentieth century Great Migration. She focused on groups like the Moorish Science Temple, Father Divine’s Peace Mission movement, and the Nation of Islam, all of which emerged in the context of urbanization, migration, and immigration, and promoted alternative understandings of black racial identity and collective history to the dominant narratives provided by mainstream black Protestant churches and in broader American society.

Attendance: 35

October 19

Andrew Murphy: “The Legacy of Religious Liberty from William Penn to the 21st Century”

Andrew R. Murphy, political science professor at Rutgers, explored the historical legacy and contemporary politics of religious liberty in the United States in the wake of “religious liberty bills” that permit business owners to deny services to same sex couples or transgender individuals based on religious objections. He highlighted the history of William Penn, who envisioned his colony as a “holy experiment” for religious toleration and talked about how contemporary politics of religious liberty both builds on and departs from that legacy.

Attendance: 15

November 16

Mary Segers: “Religious Freedom: Its Use and Abuse”

Mary Segers, professor of political science at Rutgers, discussed religious liberty as a fundamental right in the American constitutional framework and today’s complicated array of questions about religious liberty. This included issues like contraceptive coverage in the Affordable Care Act and the denial of states to permit religious believers to refuse service to gay couples who wish to legally marry.

Attendance: 5

December 7

Hussein Rashid: "Muslims in America: 500 Years of History"

Hussein Rashid examined the long history of Muslims in America, the first arriving as early as the Columbus expedition. The audience learned that between 25-30% of slaves brought to the Americas were Muslims, and that different waves of immigration to America have included Muslims. Rashid's excellent presentation was met with many questions and discussion from the audience.

Attendance: 20

October 23**Raconteur Radio presents Jekyll & Hyde**

Performed in the style of an old radio play, Raconteur Radio performed Jekyll & Hyde with just three performers playing multiple roles. The audience was entertained by the style of the program and the great acting.

Attendance: 50

October 25**Screening: "The Pursuit: 50 Years in the Fight for LGBT Rights" and Judy Jarvis talkback**

For LGBT History month, we screened WHY?Y's recent documentary highlighting the history of LGBT rights in the Philadelphia area. The audience was interested to learn the local history of this issue and Judy, director of Princeton University's LGBT Center, was a wonderful moderator.

Attendance: 20

November 16**Author talk with Annette Gordon-Reed and Peter Onuf on *Most Blessed of the Patriarchs: Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination***

These two distinguished scholars and authors spoke on their new co-authored book about the life of Thomas Jefferson. Their focus in this new examination of Jefferson's life was on how he saw himself and how he fit into the cultural context of his own time. The presenters were wonderful and the audience was engaged with the topic.

Attendance: 55

November 28**Post Elections Panel with Stan Katz, Sam Wang, Ruth Mandel, and Charles Stile**

On Monday, November 28, this group of experts led the community in a discussion of the election. With Stan Katz moderating, Sam Wang addressed the question of how polling predictions were flawed in predicting a Clinton win, while Charles Stile provided his expertise on Chris Christie's role in the election. Ruth Mandel offered comments on Hillary Clinton's historic run for President. The audience asked a variety of questions of

the group during the Q&A and it was clear that people were hungry for an opportunity to continue discussing the election. All the panelists fielded questions and provided thoughtful, in-depth answers. [PHOTOS](#)

Attendance: 150

December 13

Author Talk - *Blood at the Root: A Racial Cleansing in America*

On Tuesday, December 13, Patrick Phillips, acclaimed poet and professor at Drew University spoke about his first work of nonfiction: *Blood at the Root: A Racial Cleansing in America*. [Blood at the Root](#) has been widely declared as one of the Best Books of 2016 (listed by the NYT, Boston Globe, Amazon, Guardian, Library Journal, Publisher's Weekly to name a few) and has also been shortlisted for numerous prestigious prizes. Phillips writes with a poet's sensibility to language -- sparing and arresting. The depth of his historical research into the events that led to the racial 'cleansing' of Forsythe County, Georgia in the early 1900s to the integration marches of 1987 and onwards is extraordinary. That he brought to light names, faces, and histories that had been essentially erased from history was both moving and inspiring to all. Phillips was joined in conversation by Debbie Vermaat, a relative of the woman whose death in the book sparks the violence and the rest of the saga in Forsyth County. [PHOTOS](#)

Attendance: 67