



THE HOUSTON SEMINAR
FALL 2020



THE HOUSTON SEMINAR

The Houston Seminar was founded in 1977 for the purpose of stimulating learning and cultural awareness. Each spring and fall the nonprofit group offers lectures and study tours focused on varied topics that may include art, architecture, literature, music, theater, history, politics, philosophy, psychology, religion, the natural environment, and current trends and events.



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A Note To Our Patrons

COVID-19 has altered the patterns of our lives in so many previously unimagined ways. Simple pleasures such as coming together to experience shared learning have become unthinkable in today's environment. But our need to explore and discover has not been diminished. So stay home, stay safe, stay engaged. Zoom with us this fall as we continue to dive deep into literature, craft, politics, culture, and music.

New to Zoom?

Visit **HoustonSeminar.org** to learn more and to register online for courses.

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SEPTEMBER

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OCTOBER

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NOVEMBER

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DECEMBER

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Toni Morrison: “The Pieces She Is...”

THREE WEDNESDAYS, SEPTEMBER 16, 23, AND 30, 12:00–1:30 P.M.

Zoom invitations will be emailed to subscribers.



In her acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in Literature, Toni Morrison said it is an elemental truth that “We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.” She thought of writing partly as a living thing, but mostly as agency—as an act with consequences. Through her novels, Ms. Morrison widened the sensibilities of readers by giving voice to African-American characters and context for their stories, which had never before been told.

DEBORAH D.E.E.P. MOUTON, Houston’s poet laureate emeritus, will begin the course with Ms. Morrison’s first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and follow her evolution as a writer through *Sula* (1973) and *Beloved* (1987). Deborah D.E.E.P. Mouton is an internationally known poet, educator, activist, and author of *Newsworthy* (Bloomsday Literary, 2019). As executive director of VIP Arts Houston, Ms. Mouton seeks to build bridges that amplify the voices of artists around the nation. She wrote the libretto for *Marian’s Song*, a Houston Grand Opera commission that premiered in March 2020. The three novels for this series will be read in the order mentioned above.

Sophie Glenn
Rebel Rebel, 2017



Steven Young Lee
Gourd Vase with Bats and Clouds, 2019



Rachel Keding
Garden Tools, 2016



Kest Schwartzman
Falcon Mask for a Mink, Mink Mask for a Chicken, and Chicken Mask for a Mole, 2018

Look Again: Craft Explained and Explored

TWO TUESDAYS, OCTOBER 6 AND 13, 5:00–6:30 P.M.

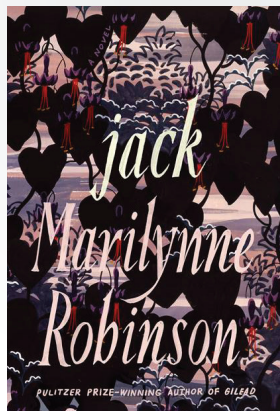
Zoom invitations will be emailed to subscribers.



What is craft? Is it art? Is it a style? Does it matter?

In his first lecture, **PERRY ALLEN PRICE** will offer up founding concepts and characteristics that define craft. In the second session, he will present a hands-on exploration of work by the resident artists at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC). In addition, he will walk us through two exhibitions at HCCC that explore the myriad ways contemporary craft artists continue to merge traditional processes and materials with novel and innovative approaches. *Meta-Formation* presents the persistence of blacksmithing as a means of both functional craft and expressive making, while *Breaking Tradition* explores the possibilities for subversion of the decorative arts by today’s craftspeople.

Perry Price joined HCCC as executive director in 2016. Before coming to Houston, he was director of education at the American Craft Council in Minneapolis and curator of exhibitions and collections at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, MA. Founded in 2001, HCCC educates people about the process, product, and history of craft. It is one of a few such venues in the U.S. dedicated to a broad look at craft through exhibitions, classes, tours, and an open-studio artist-in-residence program.



Jack: the Fourth Gilead Novel

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 12:00–1:30 P.M.

Zoom invitations will be emailed to subscribers.



Marilynne Robinson returns to the familiar territory of Gilead with her latest novel, *Jack*. This is the story of John Ames Boughton set in segregated America of the 1950s. Much like Robinson's Gilead trilogy, *Jack* is about the dilemmas and promise of American history—about the ongoing legacy of the Civil War and the enduring effects of both racial inequality and deep-rooted religious belief. Her novels are rare things with long gaps between: "I've taken my time," she observed, "but I really don't want to write bad stuff. I would rather be tastefully silent." **TERRENCE DOODY** will provide a much-awaited sequel to his spring 2020 Marilynne Robinson lecture series.

Terrence Doody is professor emeritus at Rice University. He joined the Rice faculty in 1970 and taught courses on modernism, the novel, and contemporary literature in the department of English. During his tenure at Rice, he received the prestigious George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching eight times and was named the Allison Sarofim Distinguished Teaching Professor.

Elections: The Before and The After

FOUR THURSDAYS, OCTOBER 15, 22, AND 29, NOVEMBER 5, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Zoom invitations will be emailed to subscribers.



OCTOBER 15: Media and Political Campaigns in the Digital Age

Today's political candidates face myriad challenges in getting their messages out, from bypassing traditional news media gatekeepers to dealing with misinformation and cyberattacks. Professor **LINDITA CAMAJ** will discuss how candidates and media figures construct and transmit political messages, including how news, misinformation campaigns, advertising, and entertainment media are shaping political perceptions, emotions, and behaviors in the 2020 presidential election.

OCTOBER 22: Analyzing the Voters

What causes people to vote in the way they do? What drives their choices? Why do some people decide not to vote at all? Based on her extensive research, Professor **LYN RAGSDALE** will illuminate the characteristics of American voters as we approach this hard-fought and consequential election.

OCTOBER 29: The U.S. Congressional Landscape

With the election fast approaching, Professor **SEAN THERIAULT** will address these key questions: How will the presidential race affect congressional races? Who's up and who's down? Who's likely to win and who will probably go down in defeat? What will the results mean for the nation's future?

NOVEMBER 5: The Texas Redistricting Battle

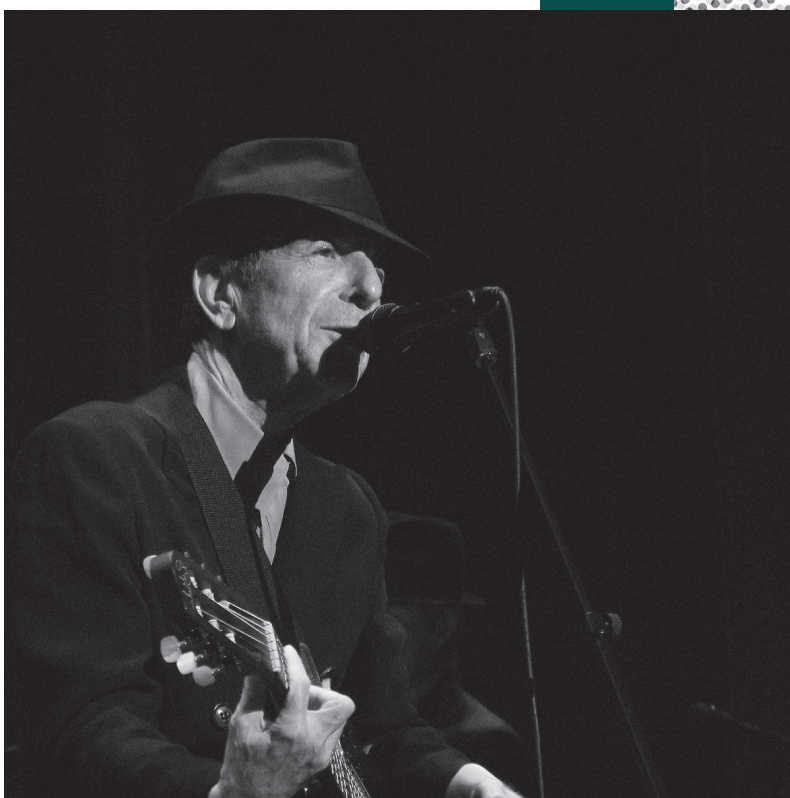
Voters have spoken, new census numbers are coming, and battles over redistricting will soon begin. Texas will probably add two or three new congressional districts, so the old maps will need to be substantially modified. A continuing shift of population toward the "big four" urban areas of Texas will drive further changes. Will the state's recent history of aggressive partisan gerrymandering continue in 2021, or will more bipartisan or nonpartisan maps be drawn? Professor **RICHARD MURRAY** will discuss the future of Texas politics.

Lindita Camaj is an associate professor in the Jack J. Valenti School of Communication at the University of Houston. She researches individual and societal factors that determine the impact of mass media on how we perceive and engage with the political world. Her published work has appeared in journals focusing on mass media, technology, politics, international communication, and journalism.

Lyn Ragsdale is the Radoslav A. Tsanoff Professor of Public Affairs and professor of political science at Rice University. She has written five books and numerous articles on the American presidency and electoral behavior. Her most recent book, *The American Nonvoter*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2017.

Sean Theriault, a Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, has received numerous teaching awards and is the author of several books on congressional decision making.

Richard Murray is the Bob Lanier Professor of Public Policy at the University of Houston. He has worked on redistricting since 1971, when he served as an expert witness for a group of Black plaintiffs challenging the Texas State Senate plan. He knows the ins and outs of both drawing and attacking redistricting plans and can provide a candid look at the process from both sides.



Emissaries from the *Tower of Song*: The Timeless Songs of Leonard Cohen

TWO TUESDAYS, DECEMBER 1 AND 8, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Zoom invitations will be emailed to subscribers.



LEONARD COHEN (1934–2016), Canadian poet, novelist, songwriter, and singer, wrote and performed some of the most memorable songs of the last fifty years, songs that bridge their author's ancient longing with the affliction and joy of daily existence. Imbued with entrancing imagery, Mr. Cohen's lyrics remain vital and enigmatic in their naked humanity. Leonard Cohen lived through song and poetry, humbled and redeemed by the great themes of life: love, loss, death, politics, sexuality, faith. This intimate, universal poet composed a set of astonishing songs with deft fragility and strength. The two-part seminar led by **CARLOS JIMÉNEZ** examines in detail a few of Leonard Cohen's most celebrated songs, from the flawless "Suzanne" to the epic "Hallelujah," from the magnanimous "If It Be Your Will" to the transcendent "Happens to the Heart," songs that have already secured the poet/singer a high place in the *Tower of Song*.

Carlos Jiménez is an award-winning architect, a professor at Rice University School of Architecture, and principal of Carlos Jiménez Studio.

The Border is Everywhere: Analysis of a National Obsession

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Zoom invitations will be emailed to subscribers.

From the Lone Ranger to children in cages and makeshift camps of asylum seekers, the U.S.-Mexico border has been a powerful site of inhumanity, curiosity, entertainment, and racism. Border policies have shocked some people in the nation, but many have applauded them in the name of “law and order.” In this session, journalist, essayist, and cultural critic, **MICHELLE GARCÍA** dissects the policy groundwork that gave rise to the recent border crisis, while making connections between border politics, culture, and national identity.

Michelle García is a journalist and essayist and recent Soros Equality Fellow with Open Society Foundations. In 2019, she completed the prestigious Dobie Paisano writer’s residency, while roaming a 200-acre ranch in her native Texas. Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, CNN, and numerous other publications. She is the director and producer of the PBS documentary, *Against Mexico: The Making of Heroes and Enemies*.

Enrollment: You may enroll online, and by mail, email, or phone. Once registration is complete, a confirmation of enrollment, including a link to join the webinar, will be sent to your email.

Discounts: Teachers and students with a school I.D. at an accredited institution may attend classes for a discounted fee. Please call the registrar to enroll.

Refunds: You will receive a partial refund if you cancel at least two weeks before a course begins; a 20 percent cancellation fee will be charged. If your enrollment has caused others to be turned away from a limited-enrollment class, no refund will be issued unless your place can be filled. Refund policies for courses involving travel will differ.

Gift certificates: These are available for a single session, a specific course, or a dollar amount, which the recipient may apply toward any course(s). Notification will be mailed to the donor and the designated recipient. Please call for more information, or send request and payment with this form.

For further information, email registrar@houstonseminar.org, telephone 713-666-9000, or consult www.houstonseminar.org.



The Houston Seminar
P.O. Box 22764, Houston, TX 77227-2764

PLEASE ENROLL ME/US IN THE FOLLOWING COURSES:

Course List and Reservation Form

TONI MORRISON: “THE PIECES SHE IS...” THREE WEDNESDAYS, SEPTEMBER 16, 23, AND 30, 12:00–1:30 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 per session
LOOK AGAIN: CRAFT EXPLAINED AND EXPLORED TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6 AND 13, 5:00–6:30 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 per session
JACK: THE FOURTH GILEAD NOVEL TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 12:00–1:30 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 per session
ELECTIONS: THE BEFORE AND THE AFTER FOUR THURSDAYS, OCTOBER 15, 22, AND 29, NOVEMBER 5, 6:30–8:00 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20
EMISSARIES FROM <i>THE TOWER OF SONG</i>: THE TIMELESS SONGS OF LEONARD COHEN TWO TUESDAYS, DECEMBER 1 AND 8, 6:30–8:00 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20 per session
THE BORDER IS EVERYWHERE: ANALYSIS OF A NATIONAL OBSESSION MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 6:30–8:00 P.M.	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20

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(VERY IMPORTANT)

Providing an email address allows us to send zoom invitations, registration receipts, course reminders, and notices of change or supplemental information. We do not share or sell email addresses or any other enrollment information.

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SCHEDULE AND ENROLLMENT FORM

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Look Again: Craft Explained and Explored

Elections: The Before and The After

Jack: The Fourth Gilead Novel

Emissaries from the *Tower of Song*:
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