

LOWELL HUMANITIES SERIES



LOWELL HUMANITIES SERIES

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Fall 2013 - Spring 2014

LOWELL HUMANITIES SERIES

FALL 2013 PROGRAMS

September 25, 2013

James Wood: Why? Fiction and the Biggest Question

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

James Wood has been a staff writer and book critic at *The New Yorker* since 2007. He was the chief literary critic at the *Guardian*, in London, from 1992 to 1995, and a senior editor at *The New Republic* from 1995 to 2007. His critical essays have been collected in two volumes, *The Broken Estate: Essays on Literature and Belief* (1999) and *The Irresponsible Self: On Laughter and the Novel* (2004), which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He is also the author of a novel, *The Book Against God* (2003), and a study of technique in the novel, *How Fiction Works* (2008). He lives in Boston, and teaches at Harvard University, where he is Professor of the Practice of Literary Criticism.



October 9, 2013

Paul Tough: *How Children Succeed*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

Paul Tough is the author, most recently, of *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character*. His first book, *Whatever It Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*, was published in 2008. Tough is a contributing writer to the *New York Times Magazine*, where he has written extensively about education, parenting, poverty, and politics, including cover stories on character education, the achievement gap, and the Obama administration's poverty policies. His writing has also appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Slate*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Geist*, and on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. He has worked as an editor at the *New York Times Magazine* and *Harper's Magazine* and as a reporter and producer for the public-radio program "This American Life." He was the founding editor of *Open Letters*, an online magazine.



This event is presented in partnership with the Winston Center for Leadership and Ethics.

October 24, 2013

Bill McKibben: *350: The Most Important Number in the World*

McGuinn 121

7:00 p.m.

Bill McKibben is one of America's best known environmentalists. As a bestselling author, he has written books that, over the last quarter century, have shaped public perception—and public action—on climate change, alternative energy, and the need for more localized economies. McKibben is the founder of 350.org, the first big global grassroots climate change initiative. McKibben's seminal books include *The End of Nature*, widely seen as the first book on climate change for a general audience, and *Deep Economy*, a bold challenge to move beyond "growth" as the paramount economic ideal and to pursue prosperity in a more local direction—an idea that is the cornerstone of much sustainability discourse today.



This event is presented in partnership with the Winston Center for Leadership and Ethics.

October 30, 2013

Heather Nathans: *Seeing Ourselves Through Others' Eyes: Struggling with Stereotypes on the Nineteenth-Century American Stage*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

Heather S. Nathans is Professor and Chair, Department of Drama and Dance, Tufts University. She is the editor for the University of Iowa Press's award-winning series, *Studies in Theatre History and Culture* and co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of American Drama* with Oxford University Press. Her publications include: *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson; Slavery and Sentiment on the American Stage, 1787-1861; Shakespearean Educations: Power, Citizenship, and Performance* (co-editor and contributing author); and the forthcoming *Hideous Characters and Beautiful Pagans: Performing Jewish Identity on the Antebellum American Stage*. She has authored numerous journal articles, book chapters, and book reviews, and served as a guest editor for multiple issues of *The Journal of American Drama and Theatre* and *The New England Theatre Journal*. Nathans has held over twenty-five research fellowships including ones from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Folger Shakespeare Library with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University, the American Jewish Archives, and the Mellon Foundation. She is an elected member of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society. Nathans is also the President of the American Society for Theatre Research.



November 6, 2013

Paul Elie: *Technician of the Sacred: J.S. Bach*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

Paul Elie is a senior fellow at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. His first book, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*, received the PEN/Martha Albrand Prize and was a National Book Critics Circle award finalist in 2003.

In *Reinventing Bach*, his remarkable second book, Elie tells the electrifying story of how musicians of genius have made Bach's music new in our time, at once restoring Bach as a universally revered composer and revolutionizing the ways that music figures in our lives.



SPRING 2014 PROGRAMS

February 20, 2014

Poetry Days presents Tracy K. Smith

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

Tracy K. Smith's most recent collection of poetry, *Life on Mars* (Graywolf, 2011), won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize and was selected as a New York Times Notable Book. The collection draws on sources as disparate as Arthur C. Clarke and David Bowie, and is in part an elegiac tribute to her late father, an engineer who worked on the Hubble Telescope. *Duende* (2007), her second book, won the 2006 James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets and an Essence Literary Award. *The Body's Question* (2003), her first book, was the winner of the 2002 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. Smith was the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Writers Award in 2004 and a Whiting Award in 2005.



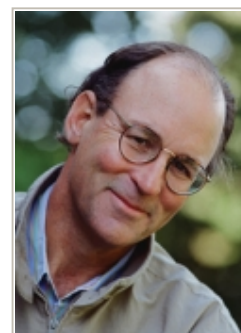
March 12, 2014*

Tracy Kidder: *Another Set of Eyes*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

Over his long and prolific career, Tracy Kidder's writing has been celebrated for its insight, compassion, and literary elegance. *The Soul of a New Machine*—an early look into the world of high-tech corporate America—earned him a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award in 1982. Other works include *The Road to Yuba City*, *House, Among Schoolchildren*, *Old Friends*, *Home Town*, *My Detachment*, *Strength in What Remains*, and the influential *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (2003), the story of a single-minded physician bent on improving the health of some of the poorest people on the planet. His latest, *Good Prose*, is an inspiring book about writing and the record of a warm and productive literary friendship. It is a succinct, authoritative, and entertaining arbiter of standards in contemporary writing, offering guidance for the professional writer and the beginner alike.



**This event was rescheduled due to weather. This is the new date.*

March 19, 2014

Michael Bérubé: *Bioethics: Too Important to be Left to Bioethicists*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

Michael Bérubé is the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor and Director of the Institute for the Arts and Humanities at Pennsylvania State University, where he teaches cultural studies and American literature. He is the author of several books on cultural studies, disability rights, liberal politics, and debates in higher education, and since 2004 has been a blogger on these and other topics. He has served as the president of the Modern Language Association, and on the National Council of the American Association of University Professors, and he now sits on the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure.



March 26, 2014

George Packer: *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

George Packer is a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and the author, most recently, of *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*, a *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the National Book Award for nonfiction in 2013. He has published three other works of nonfiction: *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, which received several prizes and was named one of the ten best books of 2005 by *The New York Times Book Review*; *Interesting Times: Writings from a Turbulent Decade*, a collection of articles; *The Village of Waiting*, a memoir of his years in the Peace Corps in Togo, West Africa; and *Blood of the Liberals*, a three-generation family and political history, which won the 2001 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. He is also the author of two novels, *The Half Man* and *Central Square*, and a play, *Betrayed*, which ran five months Off Broadway in 2008 and won the Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play. He is the editor of *The Fight Is for Democracy: Winning the War of Ideas in America and the World*, and of a two-volume edition of George Orwell's essays. Packer's *New Yorker* articles have won three Overseas Press Club awards. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and a Holtzbrinck Fellow at the American Academy in Berlin.



April 1, 2014

Zadie Smith: *Miss Adele Amidst the Corsets*

Gasson 100

7:00 p.m.

A distinguished novelist, short story writer, and essayist, Zadie Smith is one of the most acclaimed young writers working today. Her first novel, *White Teeth*, was the winner of The Whitbread First Novel Award, The Guardian First Book Award, The James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction, and The Commonwealth Writers' First Book Award. Her second novel, *The Autograph Man*, won The Jewish Quarterly Wingate Literary Prize. Her third, *On Beauty*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and won The Commonwealth Writers' Best Book Award (Eurasia Section) and the Orange Prize for Fiction. Her most recent novel, *NW*, published in 2012, has been shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize and the Women's Prize for Fiction. Smith, who divides her time between her native London and New York, where she is a professor of creative writing at NYU, will read from a new story entitled, "Miss Adele Amidst the Corsets."



(Edwidge Danticat, who was originally scheduled on April 1, was obliged by unforeseen circumstances to cancel. Ms. Smith very graciously took her place at Ms. Danticat's request.)

April 9, 2014

Emma Donoghue: *Slippery Characters: Writing Historical Fiction in the Information Age*

Fulton 511

7:00 p.m.

Born in Dublin in 1969 and now living with her family in Canada, Emma Donoghue is the award-winning author of the novels *Room*, *The Sealed Letter*, *Landing*, *Life Mask*, *Slammerkin*, *Hood* and *Stir-fry*; short-story collections *Astray*, *Three and a Half Deaths*, *Touchy Subjects*, *The Woman Who Gave Birth to Rabbits*, and *Kissing the Witch*; and literary history including *Inseparable*, *We Are Michael Field*, and *Passions Between Women*, as well as two literary history anthologies that span the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. *Frog Music*, her new novel, will be published in Spring 2014.



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