

2019 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

Communication Studies

Moderator: Suzanne Lindsey, Ph.D.

April 11, 2019, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
JAAC 5003

5:30-6:00 p.m.

A Political Suicide for Moral Resurrection: A Situational Analysis of MLK's Opposition to the Vietnam War

Ryan Bigelow

Faculty Advisor: Suzanne Lindsey, Ph. D

Before becoming one of the most respected American martyrs in history, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. faced a moral dilemma that in his words, “was destroying the soul of our nation.” The more Dr. King read about the Vietnam War, the more he felt cowardly and hypocritical because he and other activists preached for peace and tolerance, but had not spoken against wartime atrocities such as entire Vietnamese communities ravaged by napalm. Dr. King saw a common oppressor to marginalized African Americans and the imperially oppressed Vietnamese: the United States government. So what silenced one of the greatest rhetors of all time, an outspoken civil rights activist, from speaking sooner? This presentation provides a situational analysis of the array of alliances and motivations that influenced Dr. King’s public opinion on the Vietnam War and that eventually led to his controversial “Why I Am Opposed to the War in Vietnam” speech.

6:00-6:30 p.m.

A Crack in the Ceiling: A Dramatistic Analysis of an Artistic Protest

Laura Durr

Faculty Advisor: Suzanne Lindsey, Ph.D.

On the night of Tuesday, November 8, 2016, democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton gathered with her family, friends, and most dedicated supporters inside the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in Manhattan. The venue, built with glass from top to bottom, was the physical embodiment of a profound and recurring theme in Hillary’s campaign: the glass ceiling. Had Hillary won, something spectacular was planned. Confetti, iridescent and translucent, like glass, would have burst out of cannons and fluttered down from the Javits Center’s literal glass ceiling to signify the shattering of the metaphorical glass ceiling and emphasizing Hillary’s win as a win for all of womankind.

Bunny Burson, an artist whose work is known for reflecting the issues of politics, gender, and identity, was there that night. Although devastated by Hillary’s loss, she was determined to facilitate resilience through her artwork. She tracked down and transformed the leftover confetti into a powerful art installation that highlighted both the struggle, and the triumph, of women. Mimicking a giant snow globe, her installation featured Hillary’s confetti encapsulated by glass walls and in continuous freefall. It was a form a protest; a

message that validated the grief, acknowledged the strength, and persuaded the action of American minorities, especially women, to fight back to adversity and oppression.

6:30-7:00 p.m.

Where do we go from here? Inoculation Theory and the Commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr.

Malia Marcella

Faculty Advisor: Suzanne Lindsey, Ph.D.

51 years ago, on the 4th of this month, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. After his death, the Civil Rights movement slowed and eventually came to a halt as other prominent leaders passed. King led social and cultural change in the United States that is crucial to our identity as a country today. That being said, the ways in which we commemorate his life and death gives compelling insight to significant power structures at play. It is crucial to address the ways commemoration may be used to keep minority groups under the dominant group's control.

When we take a deeper look into the ways we commemorate and honor King, e.g. a national holiday, or streets and schools that hold his name, we are able to ask the bigger questions: Are we truly honoring King and his vision? Where do we currently stand as a nation? And in King's own words in a 1967 speech pleading for us to consider the unfinished, "Where do we go from here?"

We ultimately must question, deepen our understanding, and seek justice if we want to complete the work of King.

7:00-7:30 pm

The Feast of Fools: A Carnavalesque Analysis of the White House Correspondents' Dinner Tradition

Laura Durr

Faculty Advisor: Suzanne Lindsey, Ph.D.

Each year, for one night only, the kings and queens of United States politics are forced to take a seat, shut up, and fake smile, while the jesters of the media take off their dunce caps and take center stage to dethrone and defame America's "royalty" in front of the entire country at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. It is the ultimate role reversal — prestigious and powerful politicians are silenced and the typically ridiculed voices of news media steal the spotlight and crack unapologetically crude jokes at their expense.

The perseverance of these two opposing ideologies, the nobles and the nobodies, transcends all cultures and time periods. This phenomenon implores us to question the extent to which parody can serve as a functional tool to deconstruct societal norms of oppressive power and reconstruct a unified common body, as demonstrated by the White House Correspondents' Dinner tradition.