

PEMBROKE CENTER  
*for Teaching and Research on Women*



2019-20  
**A YEAR IN**  
review



BROWN  
Pembroke Center

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR

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**Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg**  
Director, Pembroke Center  
Professor, Italian Studies and  
Comparative Literature

The 2019-20 academic year has been extraordinary at Brown and around the world. At the Pembroke Center, we began the year celebrating the 50th anniversary of Brown's Open Curriculum and the interdisciplinarity, risk-taking and collaboration that characterizes our research and teaching. By March, we were confronting the COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic changes it wrought, and we moved into summer just as a powerful national and international reckoning with systemic racial injustice began to unfold.

As people all over the world experience the pandemic and explosive racial tensions, there have been myriad efforts to understand — or promulgate a particular interpretation of — these phenomena. This has underscored how the Pembroke Center's intellectual mission helps us think in a critical manner about enduring questions and the problems we face today.

At the Pembroke Center, we do many things: we teach, undertake and stimulate research, curate archives, publish a journal and create public programs and events. These activities constitute one organic program pertaining to the study of difference (gender, sexuality, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, class and more) in multiple disciplines and contexts. We explore what underpins categories and definitions of difference, challenging accepted notions and making use of the tools, perspectives and methods of a wide range of fields in order to think about problems in a way that is both fresh and productive. Over the course of the 2019-20 academic year, our research, teaching and programming have addressed major questions that are of both intellectual and immediate concern.

For example, in the Pembroke Center's Fall Weekend panel, three undergraduate students double-concentrating in disciplines ranging from gender and sexuality studies to the Program in Liberal Medical Education, discussed their global

development work aimed at helping women and girls in India, Jordan and the U.S. In the course of the conversation, a Black student panelist researching Black maternal mortality pointed out that she was many times more likely than her white co-panelist to die in childbirth, describing racial discrepancies in medical care that we have all seen manifested in the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color.

In early winter, when the Pembroke Center announced that the papers of Hortense J. Spillers, given to the Feminist Theory Archive in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project, were available, the demand for use of the collection was immediate and exceptionally high. Researchers and members of the public were eager to access scholarship that, as my colleague Kevin Quashie describes it, “works to understand Black consciousness ... consciousness as a feature of the human, how the human experiences their aliveness, their being human.” We are honored to house Spillers' papers and the growing community of collections by Black feminist thinkers in the archive, and to help preserve and provide access to this essential scholarship.

In the spring, anthropologist David Scott highlighted in a Pembroke Seminar lecture that New World slavery was not only a historical catastrophe but a moral evil, a wrong that may in fact be irreparable, and asked what an effort to repair that history should be or could look like. In a separate lecture, historian (and founding director of the Pembroke Center) Joan Wallach Scott argued that the demand for reparations, which includes material compensation, is best understood as a critique of the conventional writing of American history, an example of a critical politics that takes aim at the way history represents the past. Such questions about how history is rendered and understood, and what the legacy of slavery is, figure squarely in the public debate about systemic racial injustice and public memorials.

The Pembroke Center's research and teaching mission also helps us understand how identity, biology and culture complicate American politics. In the May 2020 issue of *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Ann duCille's essay “‘Can't You See I'm White?': Reading between the Sight Lines of Racial Difference” explored how



the gender and race of presidential candidates such as senators Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren made them “different” from the typical roster of white male presidential candidates. Thus characterized, they were subjected to unprecedented debates about how race, ancestry, authenticity and Americanness is defined and who gets to create those definitions.

The Pembroke Center’s events, lectures and publications reach out to the public, impacting broader conversations, and the public reaches back and informs our work. In March, the Pembroke Center Archives staff began collecting first-person accounts of experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic that share what it is like to be, for instance, a playwright in New York, a medical professional, a teacher, a member of a tight-knit religious community, or a native of Wuhan, China, during this time. At the end of May, a second initiative to record accounts of people who attended racial justice protests was launched. These collections of qualitative accounts help create a record of our exceptional moment in history, are useful to researchers, and provide an outlet and sense of community in a time when we are isolated from one another.

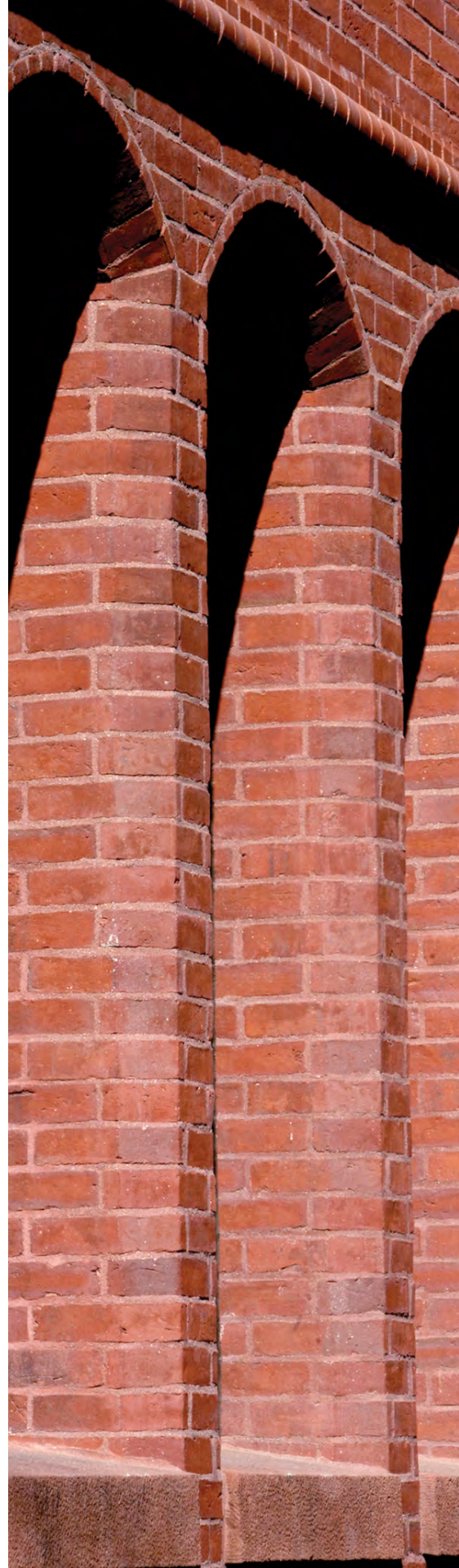
Despite the dispersal of the community that the pandemic has caused, Pembroke Center faculty worked very hard to adjust teaching to support our students and continue to advance research, and staff sustained our operations and programming by working remotely. I have been deeply impressed by the ability of our students to do exceptional work while confronting uncertainty and stress. Sebastián Niculescu ’20, for example, a Pembroke Seminar Undergraduate Fellow, completed an honors thesis that asked what critique means for the work of trans people of color. Her thesis director described the research as offering a significant contribution to that nascent field of study, and she encouraged Niculescu to submit it to a top-tier journal. Our graduating gender and sexuality studies concentrators wrote remarkable theses and capstones on subjects ranging from the treatment of Irish suffragettes in the early 20th century to the perception of queer Muslims in the West.

Further, to support graduate students whose summer research and teaching plans were impacted by the pandemic, the Pembroke Center hosted five summer proctorships that provided financial support and professional development opportunities to doctoral candidates. In order to sustain conversations about pressing issues, as well as a sense of community, I chose to continue the Pembroke Seminar, under the name “Free In Direct Discourse,” beyond the traditional end of the academic year. This allowed participants from all over the world to join in by videoconference. While that connection was wonderful, I remain deeply concerned about the effect of the pandemic on our international scholars, including undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows as well as young faculty. These scholars are important members of the Pembroke Center community, and their uncertain access to libraries, resources, teaching positions and more is very troubling.

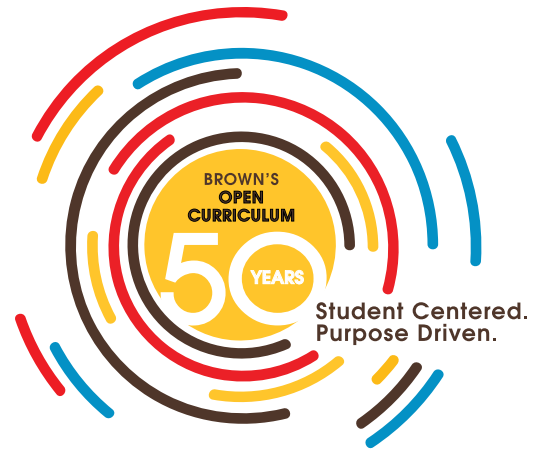
Despite the challenges we have faced and continue to face, as I look back on this year I am struck by the depth and breadth of the conversations, scholarship and research that flourished at the Pembroke Center, and by the strength of our extended community. I am pleased to share that work with you in this report.



Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg  
*Director, Pembroke Center*  
*Professor, Italian Studies and Comparative Literature*



# BROWN'S OPEN CURRICULUM AT 50 YEARS



In 1969, when Brown established the Open Curriculum, it changed the nature of undergraduate liberal education by fostering interdisciplinary intellectual work and emphasizing that inquiry into *how* we know and *how* we think is no less important than *what* we know. That shift, and that commitment, made Brown a natural home for the Pembroke Center, founded 12 years later in 1981. The Pembroke Center embodied the ethic of the Open Curriculum from the very start, supporting scholars from across the disciplines who represented numerous theoretical perspectives and interests, and encouraging theoretical inquiry into the underpinnings of categories and definitions of difference, rather than taking accepted concepts for granted.

The openness of the Pembroke Center's multidisciplinary approach embodies Brown's emphasis on integrative scholarship. Using the tools, perspectives and methodologies from different disciplines allows the center to interrogate from many angles how gender, sexuality, race, religion, class and difference in all its forms shape human experience. Further, the center has an abiding interest in the questions raised by difference and in the way that knowledge is produced. A multidisciplinary approach gives researchers greater flexibility and agility in addressing how a topic at hand is or has been discursively framed, whereas a single vantage point can limit the kinds of questions that can be asked.

In recent years, faculty and researchers have employed a broad range of theoretical approaches. Central concerns include transnational feminism and critical race

theory, among many others. In turn, scholars working in the creative arts, in medicine and brain science, in politics and policy and in other fields make use of the Pembroke Center's research, programming and seed grants to uncover how difference figures in their fields. Faculty from a range of departments have worked with the Pembroke Center to explore how migration intersects with politics and national identity; to examine how indigenous storytelling differs from other theatrical genres; and to improve ways of working with LGBTQ populations seeking medical care.

In any classroom where a Pembroke Center or gender and sexuality studies program (GNSS) course is being taught, there are almost as many disciplines represented as there are students. Many GNSS concentrators choose to pursue a second concentration, and doctoral candidates in the GNSS Graduate Certificate Program

hail from across the University. The Pembroke Seminar's faculty fellows, postdoctoral fellows and graduate and undergraduate fellows, as well as its additional participants, also come from across the University. In the 2019-20 Pembroke Seminar, "The Question of Critique," 20 disciplines, ranging from visual art to computer science, were represented by participants and fellows.

While the title and focus of the Pembroke Seminar changes each year, the attention to questions of difference and to the production of knowledge make the Pembroke research agenda a feminist theoretical enterprise regardless of the particular topic of study. And it is the Pembroke Center's ability to see virtually all topics as open to feminist inquiry that has kept both its research and, indeed, feminism itself so vital.

# RESEARCH

## RESEARCH PEMBROKE SEMINAR

The Pembroke Seminar is a singular institution at Brown and beyond. Convened by a prominent Brown faculty member, the yearlong seminar brings together postdoctoral fellows, faculty fellows, graduate and undergraduate fellows, and visiting scholars in an interdisciplinary and transgenerational learning community.

The 2019-20 Pembroke Seminar, “The Question of Critique,” was led by Pembroke Center Director Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg and addressed essential questions about the practice of critical humanities in the current academic and political climate.

Noting that, over the past two decades and in a broad range of disciplines, what may be described as a sense of exhaustion or fatigue with “theory” and other forms of critical work in the humanities has arisen, Stewart-Steinberg examined the roots of that exhaustion, and the methods or attitudes thinkers like Bruno Latour and Rita Felski proposed to replace traditional forms of critique.

Latour in 2004 wondered, for example, why critique had run out of steam and proposed that those same critical paradigms prevalent in the humanities had become fodder for critics of climate change. He in that context proposed a (re)newed relation to our objects of study, by engaging them not as “matters of fact” but “matters of concern.” Concern, care or curation toward our objects of critique have found resonance also in literary and cultural studies, opening the way to a greater engagement with affect, restoration and reparation.

Felski identified in post-structuralist criticism of deconstruction, psychoanalysis, (post)-Marxism, feminist, postcolonial and queer



“I joined the Pembroke Seminar because it represented so much of why I came to Brown: a space of intense and encouraging energy around critical theory, sharing perspectives across disciplines, where [individuals with] different intellectual backgrounds could meet, compare discourses, and challenge each other. I joined because I understood that single disciplines can start to feel cloistered and self-evident, and I didn’t want to take for granted what I was doing academically and why.

The community was welcoming and challenging as expected — I found myself coming to better understand the adjacent discourses and patterns of cross-pollination that surrounded the philosophy and theory I was most interested in. Being around the caliber of discussion that I found at the Pembroke Seminar was a rare and special opportunity, especially as an undergraduate. I learned an immense amount from being in a room of scholars from all stages of their lives and careers. Most of all I was challenged with questions around method and how certain problems and investigations are selected as worthy of study.”

— Leo Stevenson ’20, Pembroke Seminar Undergraduate Fellow, Philosophy and English



theory a “misplaced paranoia” and advocated a return to description: if the hermeneutics of suspicion digs deep underground, post-critique advocates “surface reading” or “distant reading,” among other practices.

“The Question of Critique” explored how these new endeavors and demands have played themselves out in literary and cultural studies, theories of sexuality and race, science studies or historiography — to name only a few of

these domains. What does it mean to speak of “limits” of critique: can critique be limited, and if so: how and why? To what extent do critical practices coincide with reading and/or writing practices? Are any of these and other possible questions of method bound to be discipline-specific? How do their political impact and stakes coincide or diverge?

Throughout the year, Pembroke Seminar fellows, participants and guest speakers

interrogated the forms and work of critique, mapping out the impact of the idea of post-critique as well as offering interpretations of the function and future of critique. Scholars addressed how critique manifests in and affects ecological destruction and the future of higher education, feminist approaches to literature, art history, race theory, pedagogical debates, political institutions, capitalist production, the writing of history, forms of citizenship and more.

“Readings and conversations in the seminar infused my work with perspectives from different disciplines, and these references and ideas have woven their way into my recent writing and research, as well as my teaching.”

—Leah Pires, Nancy L. Buc '65 Postdoctoral Fellow, Art History



“What I really appreciate about the Pembroke Center and the Pembroke Seminar especially is that we have this space every week where faculty and young and older scholars get together in a learning community. I don’t think there is enough of that in the humanities. Going forward, I’d like to institutionalize that wherever I go.”

—Dominik Zechner

Artemis A.W. and Martha Sharp Joukowsky Postdoctoral Fellow, German



## FREE IN DIRECT DISCOURSE

At the conclusion of the traditional academic year in early May, Pembroke Center Director Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg initiated a series of seminars entitled “Free In Direct Discourse” (a play on words and a reference to a type of third-person narration that slips in and out of a character’s consciousness) that continued the Pembroke Seminar’s intellectual pursuit into the summer. In the spring, after the University shifted to remote operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the high level of engagement in the Pembroke Seminars conducted via Zoom, and the ability for geographically distant scholars to join in, made it clear that there was a unique opportunity to expand the discourse and foster a continued

sense of community. In addition to those who had participated in the Pembroke Seminars during the academic year, alumnae/i friends and scholars — including historian (and Pembroke Center founding director) Joan Wallach Scott and poet and philosopher Denise Riley — joined the conversation, discussing issues ranging from Italian colonialism to the future of the university, antidemocratic politics and political branding. Participants engaged with readings by Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, Harry Frankfurt, Wendy Brown, Friedrich Nietzsche and others. Poet and critical theorist Fred Moten presented research, as did Pembroke Center postdoctoral fellows Dominik Zechner and Nasrin Olla.

“The seminar provided an encouraging form of intellectual community. It was wonderful that Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg decided to extend the seminar into the summer, because this gave us an opportunity to continue to think and read together at a moment where intellectual life faces many challenges.”

— Nasrin Olla, Shauna M. Stark ’76, P’10  
Postdoctoral Fellow, English



## PEMBROKE SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS 2019-20

### FACULTY FELLOWS

Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *Chesler-Mallow Senior Faculty Research Fellow Professor of Italian Studies and Comparative Literature*

Leticia Alvarado, *Assistant Professor of American Studies*

Susan Bernstein, *Professor of Comparative Literature and German Studies*

Mark Cladis, *Brooke Russell Astor Professor of Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies*

Gerhard Richter, *Professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature*

Ellen Rooney, *Professor of Modern Culture and Media and English*

### POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Nasrin Olla, Shauna M. Stark ’76, P’10  
*Postdoctoral Fellow, English*

Leah Pires, Nancy L. Buc ’65  
*Postdoctoral Fellow, Art History*

Dominik Zechner, Artemis A.W. and Martha Sharp Joukowsky  
*Postdoctoral Fellow, German*

### GRADUATE FELLOWS

Sara Colantuono, *Italian Studies*

Morris Karp, *Italian Studies*

Soomin Kim, *English*

Stephen Marsh, *English*

### INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE FELLOWS

Christopher J. Lee, *English*

Eleanor Rowe, *English*

### UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS

Eliza Edwards-Levin ’20, *Nonfiction Writing, Social Analysis and Research*

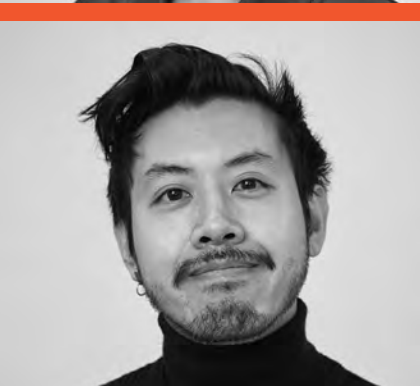
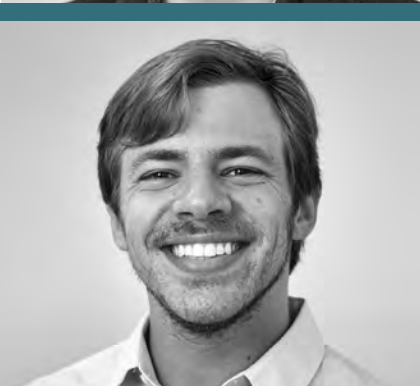
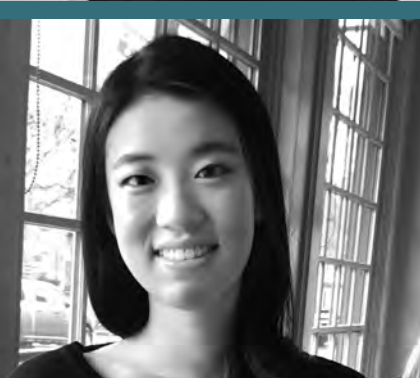
Alejandra Mena ’20, *Comparative Literature*

Sebastián Niculescu ’20, *Ethnic Studies, Sculpture (RISD)*

Olivia Kan-Sperling ’20, *Modern Culture and Media, Computer Science*

Leo Stevenson ’20, *Philosophy, English*





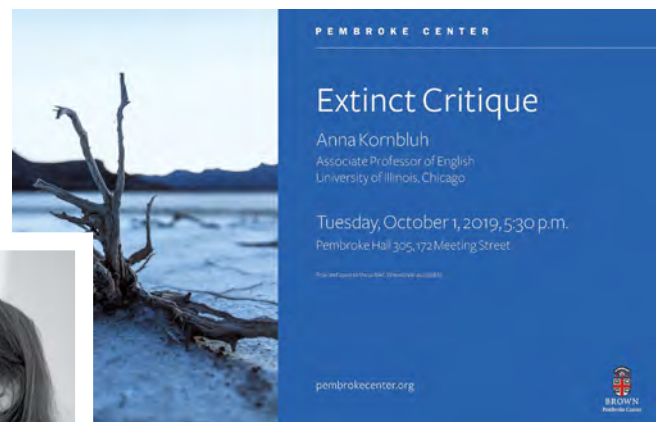
# PEMBROKE CENTER EVENTS

## PEMBROKE SEMINAR EVENT

October 1, 2019 | Extinct Critique

**Anna Kornbluh**, Associate Professor of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago

At a time when politicians advocate for the dismantling of the university and the climate crisis is sending young people into the streets to protest en masse, Kornbluh explored what habits of mind and modes of analysis can help us assess our current moment. Situating the scholarly turn away from critique within these environmental and institutional contexts, Kornbluh advocated for a critical approach that is affirmative and synthetic.



## PEMBROKE SEMINAR EVENT

November 12, 2019 | Defective Institutions: or, Critique

**Jacques Lezra**, Professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of California, Riverside

Lezra asserted that the task of political philosophy today — at a time when representative democracy is in crisis — is not to critique actually-existing institutions or political concepts with the aim of producing new and stronger institutions or new and stronger, more coherent political concepts. He argued that the task of critique in political philosophy is to produce defective political concepts and roughly-corresponding defective institutions. According to Lezra, a fully and radically differentiated democratic society stands on the defectiveness of its institutions.

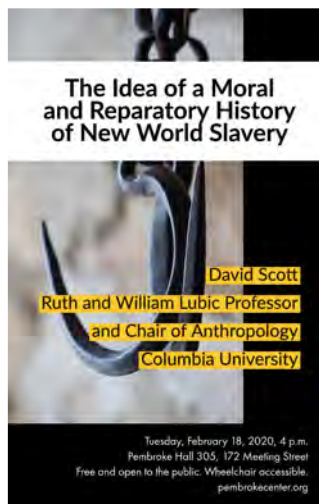


## PEMBROKE SEMINAR EVENT

February 18, 2020 | The Idea of a Moral and Reparatory History of New World Slavery

**David Scott**, the Ruth and William Lubic Professor of Anthropology in the Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University

Scott discussed the contemporary critical-conceptual problem of New World slavery, asking: What is the conceptual story of the past of New World slavery that ought to command our critical attention in the present conjuncture, and why *this* story and not some other? He offered the provisional answer that, in this problem-space, the story of New World slavery ought to be reoriented by a moral, and more specifically a reparatory, history of the past in the present. Such a moral and reparatory history as Scott commends embraces the idea that New World slavery was not only a historical catastrophe but a moral evil, a wrong which may in fact be irreparable.





## PEMBROKE SEMINAR EVENT

April 1, 2020 | **The Movements for Reparations for Slavery in the U.S.: A critical rewriting of history**

**Joan Wallach Scott**, the founding director of the Pembroke Center and Professor Emerita at the School of Social Science in the Institute for Advanced Study

Scott joined the Pembroke Seminar via Zoom to give a lecture that reviewed the long history of demands for reparations, arguing that, although material compensation is certainly part of the effort, the demand for reparations is best understood as a critique of the conventional writing of American history. It is an example of a critical politics that takes its aim at the way history represents the past. Scott referred to *The New York Times*' 1619 Project, and some of the controversy around the way that series approaches the history of the slave trade.

## FREE IN DIRECT DISCOURSE EVENT

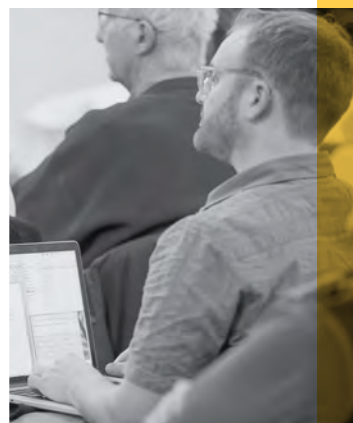
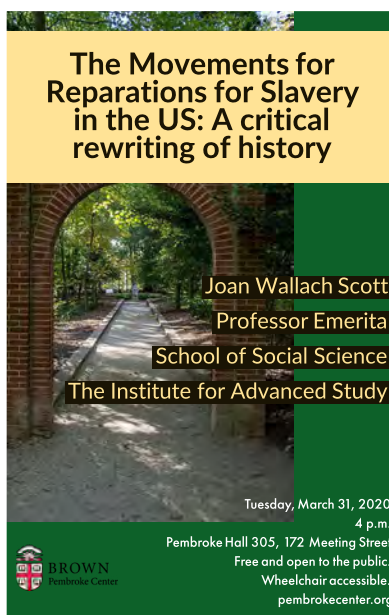
May 6, 2020

**Fred Moten**, Professor in the Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts at New York University

Moten joined the summer session of the Pembroke Seminar, known as Free In Direct Discourse, by Zoom. He argued that "the function of criticism is not to critique but to accompany," in a talk that encompassed literature, criticism, music and political theory, and advanced a new way of thinking about the Pembroke Seminar's central, yearlong question.

## CANCELED

Traditionally, the culminating event of the Pembroke Seminar is a research roundtable, organized by the Pembroke Center postdoctoral fellows, that brings to Brown scholars and artists whose work interrogates the central question of each year's seminar. Unfortunately, the pandemic led to the cancellation of the roundtable on "The Question of Critique," which Nasrin Olla, Leah Pires and Dominik Zechner had worked hard to arrange.



**September 13, 2019 | Motherhood: In History, In Data, and In the Academy**

Emily Oster, professor of economics and international and public affairs at Brown, and Sarah Knott, associate professor of history and gender studies at Indiana University, discussed ways of understanding motherhood, approaching the phenomenon from the vantage points of different disciplines. Oster, the author of “Crib-sheet: A Data-Driven Guide to Better, More Relaxed Parenting, From Birth to Preschool,” discussed how she combed through hundreds of studies on a variety of parenting issues to determine which common recommendations were supported by data. Knott, the author of “Mother is a Verb: An Unconventional History,” examined how maternity has changed over time and cultures, blending memoir and history to craft a new kind of historical interpretation. The discussion was moderated by Seth Rockman, associate professor of history at Brown.

**Pembroke Associates Event | September 18, 2019 | Cribsheet: A Data-Driven Guide to Better, More Relaxed Parenting**

Emily Oster, professor of economics and international and public affairs at Brown, and Jessica Grose '04, lead editor of parenting at *The New York Times*, together held a conversation and book signing at District Hall Boston. The Pembroke Center Associates and the Brown Women's Network of Boston co-sponsored the event.

**Pembroke Center Archives Event and Exhibition | September 19, 2019 | Faith Wilding: Seen and Heard**

Faith Wilding, artist, member of the 1972 Womanhouse project in Los Angeles, Pembroke Center visiting scholar, and professor emeritus at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, read from her monograph “Faith Wilding's Fearful Symmetries.” A simultaneous exhibition of Wilding's work, “On Research: Art, Activism and the Archive,” curated by Anna Steinberg '19, a visual art concentrator and longtime assistant of Wilding's, was on view in the Pembroke Hall lobby. Part of the Shauna M. Stark '76, P'10 Out of the Archives Lecture Series.

**Pembroke Associates Event | October 7, 2019 | Women Working for Women**

The Pembroke Associates, the Brown Women's Network of New York and the Women's Leadership Council hosted an event featuring Brown alumnae who are making an impact by supporting and expanding opportunities for women and girls. The panel featured **Sharon**

**Cohen '89**, founder and CEO of Figure Skating in Harlem; **Lorine Pendleton '91**, angel investor and public speaker; and **Tara Shirazian '99, M.D. '03**, president and founder of Saving Mothers. It was moderated by **Sharon Fay '82**, co-head of equities, AllianceBernstein, and took place at the offices of AllianceBernstein LP in New York City.

**Pembroke Associates Event | October 19, 2019 | Film Screening of “Period. End of Sentence.” and Panel on Women's Development: Solving Big Problems through Global Approaches**

At this Family/Fall Alumni Weekend event, three undergraduate students working on women's development discussed their efforts to improve conditions for girls and women in India, Jordan, Cuba and the U.S. **Pamela Reeves '87, P'22**, a senior fellow in international and public affairs at the Watson Institute, moderated the discussion. The event kicked off with a screening of “Period. End of Sentence.” the 2018 Oscar-winning documentary focusing on menstrual equity in India executive-produced by **Charlotte Silverman '22**, followed by a discussion with Silverman, **Zahra Asghar '20**, who researches water and sanitation provision in the Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan, and **Ella Satish '20**, who is assessing the Cuban maternal and child healthcare program with an eye toward improving Black maternal care in the U.S. The panel discussed the students' projects and the work of Reeves, an expert on developing gender strategies to achieve entrepreneurial, business and public purpose results. It was sponsored by the Pembroke Center and the Pembroke Center Associates, the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, the Nelson Center for Entrepreneurship and the Women's Leadership Council.

**October 21, 2019 | At an intersection, in person, on time: reading effects**

**Ellen Rooney**, the Royce Family Professor of Teaching Excellence and professor of English and modern culture and media at Brown, gave the 2019 **Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06, P'09 Lecture in Gender Sexuality Studies**. Rooney considered the relations between contemporary debates about reading and form and feminist critique.

**Black Feminist Theory Event | October 29, 2019 | Kimberly Juanita Brown: Cartographies of the Ocular**  
**Kimberly Juanita Brown**, the Elizabeth C.

Small Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies and chair of gender studies at Mount Holyoke College, gave the research lecture “Cartographies of the Ocular.” Brown's research engages the visual as a way to negotiate the parameters of race, gender and belonging. Her examination extends from the way visual and literary representations of Black women's bodies foreground the body's vulnerability and slavery's inherent violence, to images of the dead, published in *The New York Times*, from four overlapping geographies: South Africa, Rwanda, Sudan and Haiti. The talk was part of the Pembroke Center's Black Feminist Theory Project lecture series.

**November 15, 2019 | The Question of Primitive Accumulation: Perspectives on capitalism's origins**

The concept of primitive accumulation, the process by which modes of production including feudalism and chattel slavery are transformed into the capitalist mode of production, was for Marx the origin narrative of capitalism. In this conference, participants brought forth a range of perspectives on capitalism's origins. **Jordy Rosenberg**, professor of English at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, spoke to sexual difference; **Brenna Bhandar**, senior lecturer in the School of Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, discussed notions of private property as grounded in race; **Tony Bogue**, director of Brown's Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, discussed “free labor” and capitalism at its origins as sustained by slavery; and **Arlen Austin**, PhD candidate in the Department of Modern Culture and Media, discussed Italian-feminist conceptions of “originary accumulation” as they apply to the participatory demands of contemporary media.

**November 19, 2019 | Decolonizing Trans/Gender Studies? Queer-Feminist Pedagogy in Times of the Rise of the Far Right**

Alyosxa Tudor, visiting scholar in gender studies at Brown and associate professor at the Centre for Gender Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, argued that a decolonial perspective on “gender” means conceptualizing it as always already trans. Tudor's object of investigation is “gender” as a category and “gender studies” as a field of knowledge. In order to discuss what decolonizing Western trans/gender studies could mean, Tudor aims to bring different strands together that have been held apart so far: resistance against global



attacks on gender studies, resistance against transphobic feminism, and the “decolonizing the curriculum” movement in the U.K. Tudor explored the potential and challenges of the task of decolonizing trans/gender studies in Europe and the Global North, asking: How can we combine these ideas with decolonial and trans/gender approaches in the U.S.? What happens to the field of gender studies if we conceptualize it with a central focus on decolonial and transnational perspectives?

**Pembroke Center Archives Event | November 22, 2019 | A Conversation with Silvia Federici**

The Pembroke Center hosted a conversation with Silvia Federici, Italian-American scholar and activist; co-founder of the International Feminist Collective; and organizer with the International Wages for Housework campaign. Federici is professor emerita of social sciences at Hofstra University where her research areas included colonialism, globalization and academic freedom in Africa. Federici discussed her life and work as evidenced through her archival papers, which she donated to the Pembroke Center’s Feminist Theory Archive in 2018.

**February 11, 2020 | Plays on Gendered and Sexual Citizenship**

Clare Hemmings, professor of feminist theory in the Department of Gender Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, introduced a new body of work — fiction — that explored how gender and sexuality are (and have become) central to citizenship. Hemmings sketched out a range of real and imagined theatrical scenes, drawing on family stories, contradictory memories and social histories to depict gendered and sexual encounters. She seeks to cast gendered and sexual politics and practices precisely as scenes that variously hyperbolize, repeat, engage or even transform the histories we inherit.

**Postponed:** Lyndsey Stonebridge, professor of humanities and human rights at the University of Birmingham, U.K., was scheduled to travel overseas to the Pembroke Center for a lecture on March 17, 2020, a trip which had to be canceled due to travel restrictions and the University’s own accelerated transition to remote learning at that time. Stonebridge had planned to speak about the June 2017 fire that killed 72 people at Grenfell Tower, part of a housing complex in West London. Grenfell residents had warned their local council

repeatedly that renovations to the tower had rendered it unsafe, but they were ignored. Stonebridge planned to discuss the tragedy as a failure of politics, governance and citizenship as well as a failure of resonance and meaning. The theory and practice of residents’ active political critique, she argues, should grab the attention of those attempting to navigate the degraded conditions of contemporary democratic politics. The Pembroke Center hopes to reschedule her lecture.

**Postponed:** A Black Feminist Theory Project Lecture featuring **Oneka LaBennett**, associate professor of American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, originally scheduled for early April, was postponed due to the pandemic. LaBennett researches culture and Black girlhood; race, gender and popular culture; urban anthropology; migration and the African diaspora; and the global Caribbean. She is a pioneer in the ethnographic study of Black girlhood and author of the article “Beyoncé and Her Husband’: Representing Infidelity and Kinship in Black Marriage” featured in *differences* 29.2.

**Postponed:** The Pembroke Center Archives events “**More Than Skinned Knees: The Many Meanings of Tomboys,**” a cross-institution exhibit with the Providence Public Library, and “**Hortense J. Spillers: A Life Recorded,**” were postponed until April 2021 and September 2021, respectively, because of the pandemic.



Among the scholars who participated in the Pembroke Center’s public programming were (clockwise from top right) Ella Satish ’20, Visiting Scholar in Gender Studies Alyosha Tudor, Professor of Economics and International Affairs Emily Oster, and Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice Director Anthony Bogues.

# RESEARCH AND TEACHING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

## 2019-20

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The Pembroke Center's Postdoctoral Research Fellowship program is vital to the Pembroke Center's teaching and research mission as well as its community. Each year, three scholars working in different disciplines come together for yearlong residential fellowships at the Pembroke Center, where they participate in the Pembroke Seminar, teach one undergraduate course and pursue individual research. Undergraduate students benefit from the cutting-edge courses postdoctoral fellows offer, and discourse at the Pembroke Center is deepened by the fellows' projects and perspectives, as well as by the programming they create. Postdoctoral fellows further develop their teaching skills and work within a welcoming, collaborative, interdisciplinary and intergenerational group of scholars. At the same time, fellows can take advantage of the many resources at the Pembroke Center and the University as they advance their research projects.



### Nasrin Olla

*Shauna M. Stark '76, P'10 Postdoctoral Fellow  
Ph.D. English, Literature from Cornell  
University, 2019*

Nasrin Olla's research, publications and teaching converge at the intersection of Caribbean and Afro-diasporic literature, Black radical thought, and affect theory. In her work, she studies how novelists, poets and theorists from the African diaspora offer compelling "critiques of transparency" in their fiction and criticism.

Olla's dissertation, "Reaching for Opacity: Contemporary Afro-Diasporic Literature," contends that Afro-diasporic writers use strategies to claim the right to opacity — as opposed to "transparency" — as a means to redefine identity and create a basis for ethical relations. During the act of reading, opacity

can present itself as a moment that causes the reader to pause and linger with a passage that does not make immediate sense or lead to a lucid interpretation. One way to think about opacity, Olla says, is to think about resisting the act of “recognition,” because recognition is often an attempt to “fix” another person, in a way that does not allow that person to be singular, unique or fully human. “For a life to be human,” Olla says, “it needs to claim an ability to be not fully known.”

This concern is particularly applicable to writers in the African diaspora, because the white gaze can make the Black individual hypervisible. Writers like Toni Morrison, Olla says, work to make sure that Black life is not reducible to what the white gaze sees, and Morrison’s central project is in fact turning away from the white gaze.

At the Pembroke Center, Olla developed her dissertation into a book manuscript, a project which she said was supported by her participation in the Pembroke Seminar.

“My research has benefited greatly from sharing my writing with the Pembroke Seminar, where participants asked critical questions and made helpful suggestions,” Olla said. “I am currently making two kinds of revisions to the project — the first is to include more visual art and the second is to engage more directly with criticism around neoliberalism in our contemporary era.”

Working at the Pembroke Center also enabled Olla to directly interact with writers who are the subject of her research, including Claudia Rankine, whose lecture at the Cogut Institute Olla attended, and Fred Moten and David Scott, who both were guest lecturers at the Pembroke Seminar.

Olla also found a key collaborator at Brown in Associate Professor of German Studies Kristina Mendicino. Together, Olla and Mendicino planned a conference via Brown’s Humanities Initiative titled, “Ex-action: On Inoperativity, Desoeuvrement, and Other Breaks from Work.” This workshop, which had to be canceled because of the pandemic, was going to focus on scholarly discourses on “the inoperative” across the humanities. In political theory, scholars have invoked the term to describe political acts of refusal. In continental philosophy, the figure of Bartleby — whose only words are “I prefer not to” — has been taken as an embodiment

of the inoperative stance. In Black studies and Afro-diasporic thought, the inoperative has been addressed through attention to the aesthetics of wandering, waiting and quietude. Olla and Mendicino had arranged to bring together scholars from across a diverse range of disciplines whose work addresses that which no longer or not yet operates according to the orders of intentionality, productivity and work, but instead breaks from those structures.

In the spring, Nasrin taught the course “Poetics of the World: The Making and Unmaking of the African Diaspora,” which examined the genre of Afro-diasporic literature and delved into themes of opacity, entanglement, identity, race, gender and sexuality. Olla was deeply impressed with her students’ engagement with the course even as it moved onto the Zoom videoconferencing platform.



### Leah Pires

Nancy L. Buc '65 Postdoctoral Fellow  
Ph.D. Art History, Columbia University, 2019

Leah Pires’ research focuses on 20th-century art and theory, with a specialization in American visual culture since 1960 as it relates to theories of identity and difference. In her year at the Pembroke Center, Pires developed a book that developed from her dissertation. The book, “Finessing the Frame: Louise Lawler’s Pictures,” examines the social, political and theoretical horizons of the circa 1980s “Pictures Generation” artists, who were so named for their novel approach to photography, film and mass media. Pictures Generation artists probed the politics of representation by mining and recasting images and texts from pop culture

and underscored the importance of subjectivity, desire and positioning, arguing that critique could not be understood to emanate from an abstract, universal position. They also thought that critique as a tactic must come from *within* power structures themselves. Rather than be overtly oppositional, Lawler and others explored the possibility of exerting critical resistance to social conservatism and free market values from a marginal position, using a double agent-like approach that calls to mind figures like Mata Hari.

Pires focused on art and politics in New York between 1976 and 1985, looking in particular at how the seeds of intersectional identity politics were sown by women artists in that era. Throughout the year, Pires participated in Pembroke Seminar discussions about the form, function and possible “limits” of critique as she revised her book manuscript and completed a journal article, “Finesse: Louise Lawler’s Sleight of Hand.”

“Readings and conversations in the seminar infused my work with perspectives from different disciplines,” Pires said, “and these references and ideas have woven their way into my recent writing and research, as well as my teaching.”

In the spring, Pires taught the course “Masquerade as Critique,” asking students to reconsider critique, which is most often figured as an act that reveals a reality that was previously hidden, as though one were pulling back a curtain or lifting a veil. Pires and her students probed whether the activities of unveiling, stripping and laying bare could be viewed as male prerogatives, and developed an alternate genealogy of critique informed by feminist and queer person of color perspectives, examining masquerade, mimicry, code-switching and appropriation — tactics of resistance and survival that are often developed from the margins. Pires invited Sebastián Niculescu, a Pembroke Seminar Undergraduate Fellow, to give a guest lecture in her course, and her class visited the Feminist Theory Archives, where they looked at selections from the Linda Williams Archive, the Kate Bornstein Papers, the magazine *On Our Backs* and the zine collection.

When Brown shifted to remote learning in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pires



involved her students in discussions about their particular circumstances and the best way to meet their needs, and they collaborated to make the transition to remote learning as smooth as possible.

The pandemic caused the postponement of a conference at Princeton University at which Pires was going to present, as well as the cancelation of a spring research roundtable traditionally hosted by the postdoctoral fellows. Amidst the uncertainty and scheduling changes wrought by the pandemic, Pires developed a second book project — an edited anthology of the German feminist art magazine *Eau de Cologne* — and wrote an essay for a book that will accompany an upcoming retrospective of Lucy McKenzie's work at the Museum Brandhorst in Germany. She was commissioned to write an essay for a book accompanying B. Ingrid Olson's exhibition at the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard in 2021, and presented new research on art of the 1980s and the politics of representation at a conference at the Tate Liverpool called "Keith Haring: Art and Activism in 1980s New York" and on a panel called "Postmodern Margins" at the College Art Association Annual Conference.



**Dominik Zechner**

*Artemis A.W. and Martha Sharp Joukowsky*  
Postdoctoral Fellow  
*Ph.D. in German, New York University, 2019*

Dominik Zechner came to the Pembroke Center from New York University, where he completed his Ph.D. in German in 2019. His dissertation, "The Survival of Literature: Kafka and the Problem of Finitude," explored how an element of survival often interfered with Kafka's attempts to frame a narrative of perishing.

At the Pembroke Center, Zechner worked on a book project called "Modern Scenes of Instruction: A Critique of Education." In it, he aims to conceptualize the experience of teaching and learning as a key dimension of modern literature and a decisive facet of social interaction. Zechner analyzes the pedagogical relations taking place within institutions depicted in literature to examine power differentials in academia, teacher-student relations and advising and the ethics of mentorship. The project crosses disciplines including literary studies, educational studies, psychoanalysis and trauma studies, sociology, political thought and philosophy and aims to help rethink the pedagogical imperative in the humanities and academia in general.

In the fall, Dominik taught the course "Scenes of Instruction: Pedagogy, Punishment, Perversion," which investigates the classroom as a site in which authority oscillates and irritation, pressure or trauma can be part of learning. Drawing on feminist texts by Shoshana Felman, bell hooks and Jane Gallop and comparing that work to today's narratives around the #MeToo movement and Title IX, the course asked what kind of drive is behind learning and examines critical discourse on campus rape culture and the question of consent. Dominik's students found themselves engaging with a serious, timely topic while asking and endeavoring to answer fundamental questions like: What does it mean to be in college? What is a student?

What needs to happen for instruction to take place? Teaching the course, Zechner said, helped him clarify the thesis of his book and refine its outline. In the spring, Zechner taught an independent study on the topic of death and obsession.

Over the course of the year, Zechner published two scholarly articles on poetics and literary theory, completed two others and edited a collected volume on the writings of philosopher Walter Benjamin, which is under review with a major press. He participated in conferences at Reed College and New York University, and was scheduled to present at the conference "Ex-action: On Inoperativity, Desoeuvrement, and Other Breaks from Work" at Brown, organized by Nasrin Olla, before the pandemic caused its cancellation.

Although the pandemic disrupted that conference and forced the cancellation of a research roundtable and a conference on Romantic Philology that colleagues in the German Department had organized, Zechner said he felt he made good use of his year at the Pembroke Center.

"I am glad I got the chance to work with these brilliant writers and teachers, I enjoyed our conversations throughout the year, and I'm grateful for the feedback I received on my work," Zechner said. "I am certain that I'll keep sharing my work and collaborating with Brown's community of humanities scholars in the years to come."



# SUPPORTING STUDENT RESEARCH

The Pembroke Center awarded grants, fellowships, and prizes to undergraduate and graduate students working in 10 disciplines on projects ranging from restorative justice for gender-based violence in New Zealand to the hierarchies of paid and unpaid care labor in the U.S.

## GRADUATE STUDENT PRIZES

### Marie J. Langlois Dissertation Prize

**Virginia Thomas**, an American studies scholar, won the Marie J. Langlois Dissertation Prize for her dissertation in American studies titled “Dark Trees: Regional Archives of Familial Intimacy, Lynching Violence, and Racial Reproduction in the U.S. South.” Using archival scrapbooks and family albums, Thomas explored how souvenir images of lynchings, alongside images of family trees and private photos, show how lynching shapes racial, gendered and sexual politics in the American South.

### Steinhaus/Zisson Pembroke Center Research Grant

The Pembroke Center awarded Steinhaus/Zisson research grants to six outstanding graduate students. The grants are for research on any topic related to the work of the Pembroke Center, with preference given to research on women’s education, health, community activism, philanthropy and economic status, and women’s rights and well-being in the U.S. and in developing countries around the world.



Virginia Thomas



**Felicia Denaud**, a graduate student in the Department of Africana Studies, worked on the manuscript “At the Vanishing Point of the Word: Blackness and the Unnameable War.” Felicia analyzed the Black experience of war, asking questions about the relationship between Blackness, empire and war-making and how this entanglement continue to structure the terms of individual lives on a global scale.



**Warren Harding**, a graduate student in the Department of Africana Studies, used his Steinhaus/Zisson grant to research how Black Caribbean migrant women writers used their creative expression to expand the sense of belonging across the African and Caribbean diasporas between the 1970s and 1990s. His project, titled “Bearing Witness, Holding Space: Black Caribbean Migrant Women and the Literacies of Belonging,” involved fieldwork in Canada, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and the U.S.



**Nell Lake**, a graduate student in the Department of American Studies, conducted fieldwork at the annual assembly of the National Domestic Workers Alliance in order to examine social hierarchies of women’s paid and unpaid care labor in the U.S. Her manuscript, “Mother. Nurse. Housewife. Maid.: The Enduring Moral Politics of ‘Women’s Work’ in America,” extends work Lake did as a journalist — before entering her Ph.D. program three years ago — to chronicle the struggles of family caregivers.



**Kristen Maye**, a graduate student in the Department of Africana Studies, used her Steinhaus/Zisson grant to reexamine Black studies. Her project, “Black Studies Toward a Poetics of Black Critique,” probes the boundaries between Black studies as a formal university enterprise, and a more unruly, lively and idiosyncratic repertoire of critical activities. While Black studies became institutionalized in 1968, Maye argues, the lives and work of Black women writers, thinkers and others, often outside of the academy, gave and continue to give the field its urgency.



In light of the fact that violence against women is not always regarded as a significant legal problem, **Esha Sraboni**, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, investigated how Bangladeshi women frame their experiences of violence, and how these understandings shape their decisions to seek legal recourse. Her project, “Making Meaning of Gendered Violence and the Law: Global Discourses and Local Realities in Bangladesh,” will include interviews with women, policymakers, activists, non-government organization officials and academics as well as state and non-state legal authorities, contributing to scholarship on how concepts of violence against women and justice are understood.



**Ieva Zumbyte**, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, undertook the project “Tracing the Quality of Public Childcare Services in Urban Settlements,” which focuses on the social, economic and political conditions that explain governance practices in public childcare provision in cities in India. Specifically, she is interested in how public childcare is organized in cities and why some neighborhoods have better public childcare than others. Her Steinhaus/Zisson grant will support research in Chennai, India.

## UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH GRANTS AND PRIZES

### Ruth Simmons Prize

**Sebastián Niculescu '20**, won the Ruth Simmons Prize in Gender and Women's Studies for her honors thesis "Ábreme: Performing Trans of Color Critique." Written for her ethnic studies concentration in the American studies department, "Ábreme" ("open up" or "let me in" in Spanish) melds Latin American decolonial and Black feminist scholarship in a work that examines trans pop and street performers and proposes new ways of understanding trans realities. Leticia Alvarado, assistant professor of American studies, wrote that "Ábreme" is an elaboration of, and significant contribution to, the nascent field of trans of color critique."

### Joan Wallach Scott Prize

#### Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship

Development studies concentrator **Tabitha Payne '20** won the Joan Wallach Scott Prize and the Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship for her honors thesis and documentary film project "Queer Histories of the Khmer Rouge Regime: Surviving Sex/Gender and Genocide." In her work, Payne argues that under the Khmer Rouge's genocidal trans-homophobic state (1975-79), queer Cambodians found spaces for relationality under the mandated "men's" and "women's" dormitories, eating groups and work units. Focusing on the stories of three trans men who found love and friendship in the same commune, she embeds queer survivors' narratives into the long arc of Cambodian history.

### Helen Terry MacLeod Research Grant

#### Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship

With the help of a research grant and a travel fellowship, **Camila Pelsinger '20**, an international relations and cognitive neuroscience concentrator, examined community-based responses to gender-based violence in New Zealand and the U.S. Her thesis, "Restorative responses to gender-based

violence in the United States and New Zealand," contributes to the ongoing debate about the use of restorative justice for a wider range of offences. An in-depth analysis of New Zealand's state-funded restorative justice program response to sexual violence, Project Restore, and transformative justice organizations in the U.S., reveals the theories and practices guiding these programs. Specifically, this research examines the ways in which community-based accountability programs responding to sexual violence in New Zealand and the U.S. are addressing the flaws in existing state adversarial systems. The research will reveal the conditions that gave rise to the design of community-based accountability programs and how they operate given their state and regional contexts. Pelsinger's research will hopefully unearth policy changes that might allow for restorative programs to emerge elsewhere around the world. In addition, it is her hope that this thesis will be useful for organizers and victim-survivor advocates who are looking for ways to address gender-based violence in ways that center the needs of survivors and do not replicate violence or harm.

### Barbara Anton Community Research Grant

Public health concentrator **Scarlett Bergam '20**, '21 MPH, produced an honors thesis, "'They should be taught self-respect, self-confidence and self-love': The impact of education and conflicting social pressures on the sexual behaviors of South African Adolescents Living With HIV," that explored the gap between sexual health education and practice in South African adolescents living with HIV. Of all new HIV infections in South Africa, 75% occur in adolescent females. Adolescents living with HIV are at an increased risk for pregnancy, STIs and transmitting HIV to sexual partners. Through in-depth interview analysis of adolescents, Scarlett has found that there are conflicting pressures at play that lead this population of adolescents to make risky sexual decisions: partner and peer pressure, a lack of support in the home, a history of gender-based violence and societal gender norms.

### Linda Pei Undergraduate Research Grant

A concentrator in Latin American and Caribbean studies and the Program in Liberal Medical Education, **Ella J. Satish '20** analyzed the structure and design of the Cuban maternal and childcare program as a model for improving care outcomes and reducing disparities in health care for Black mothers in the U.S. "El Programa de Atención Materno-Infantil: The Cuban Maternal Health System as a Model for Care of Black Mothers in the United States" extends a growing body of scholarship that evaluates the Cuban health care system as a model to improve aspects of the current American system, including research done by U.S. social workers in Cuba during the creation of the Affordable Care Act. It analyzes elements of the socialist program for implementation in the U.S., specifically: a focus on primary care and preventative medicine, collaboration between different sectors of the medical community and holistic support for patients.

#### Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship

Development studies and economics concentrator **Mohammed-Reda Semlani '20** investigates the economic, environmental and social impacts of the Argan oil market on Indigenous North African (Amazigh) women and their communities in Morocco. His thesis, "The economic impact of the Argan tree on the local communities in southwestern Morocco," looks into how Morocco's rural Southwest has benefited from the world's growing demand for Argan oil, which comes from the country's endemic Argan tree. Reda's thesis identifies the extent to which the commercialization of the Argan plant has allowed local Amazigh female-workers in the industry to gain financial independence as well as an improved quality of life, and the significance this has had on the gender roles of communities in the region. Another critical area of study in his research is the effect of regional environmental damage, caused by the steadily high demand of Argan oil, on the livelihood of Amazigh women and their relationship with the plant.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The Pembroke Center was pleased to host five Graduate School 2020 Summer Proctorships. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted many graduate students' research, teaching and study plans in 2019-20, and perhaps beyond, and the proctorships were designed to provide additional summer stipend support as well as professional development opportunities and experience that may be particularly valuable for broad career pathways.

**Arlen Austin**, a fifth-year doctoral candidate in the Department of Modern Culture and Media, was the Scholarship and Archival Work Proctor at the Pembroke Center Archives. Austin has worked with the archives since his first year at Brown, when he won a Steinhaus/Zisson Research Grant to research Marxist-feminist movements in the U.S. and Italy. In subsequent years, he co-organized a Pembroke Center-hosted conference on the politics of reproductive labor and worked with scholars including Silvia Federici, whose archives he helped catalog and transfer to the Feminist Theory Archive, and Leopoldina Fortunati, who recently committed her papers to Pembroke. Over the summer, Austin helped build critically important relationships between the Pembroke Center and the scholars whose work populates the archives.

**Felicia Denaud**, the summer 2020 Graduate Proctor for the Black Feminist Theory Project, is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in Africana studies. Her research explores the relationship between political authority, knowledge production and resistance/rebellion/revolution in the context of the modern African diaspora. Denaud, who won a 2019-20 Steinhaus/Zisson Research Grant from the Pembroke Center for her research on Black women's reproductive labor in the context of empire and war-making, describes the Pembroke Center's Feminist

Theory Archive as an institutional home for "the memory work that underwrites Black feminist creation." She worked directly with scholars who give their papers to the archive in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project.

**Christina J. Gilligan**, a third-year doctoral candidate in English, was a Graduate Proctor for *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, which is supported by and located within the Pembroke Center. Gilligan, who helped prepare forthcoming issues for publication, is developing a dissertation project that centers on how Victorian novelists take up "the problematic of differences" in their bodies of work — the way social forms of race, gender and class interact with one another and with literary forms to create different social arrangements. An experienced law review editor, Gilligan's work with *differences* enabled her to immerse herself in the theoretical debates pertinent to her own project and learn more about the publication process in scholarly journals.

**Michelle Rada**, an eighth-year doctoral candidate in English, was a Graduate Proctor for *differences* during the summer of 2020. She took on the responsibilities of a senior assistant editor, and drew on her previous experience editing *differences* as well as the journals *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* and *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*. Her dissertation,

"Form and Dysfunction: Modernism at the Limits of Precision," explores the crisis in 20th-century hermeneutics between functionalist and psychoanalytic models of theorizing aesthetics and the production of meaning. The proctorship provided Rada with additional experience useful in her job search, both in her fields of research — feminist studies, critical theory and literary criticism — and in scholarly editing, the two avenues she is currently pursuing.

**Emily Simon** is a fifth-year doctoral candidate in English whose dissertation focuses on modern and contemporary feminist experimental poetry. As a Graduate Proctor for *differences*, Simon applied and built on the editorial and publishing skills she developed working for *Boston Review* magazine, the literary magazine *Post Road* and the journal *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*. Because the feminist and critical praxis that sustains *differences* is fundamental to her research, Simon was able to immerse herself in theoretical conversations that may inform her dissertation and gained additional experience with the operations of an academic journal, work she may pursue or intersect with post-graduation.



# FACULTY RESEARCH

The Pembroke Center supported four interdisciplinary collaborative research projects through its seed grant program in 2019-20.

## **“Spirit Sounds: Religion and Spirituality in Black American Music — A Symposium,”**

took place over two days in October, and involved Brown and visiting faculty in creating a focused scholarly discussion about the position of religion and spirituality in Black American music.

While musicians, critics and listeners have often asserted the centrality of religion and spirituality in Black American music, discursive reticence among humanities scholars often limits discussion of the subject beyond this acknowledgement. The symposium encouraged discussion of questions possibly underlying this reticence: Do the humanities have a secular bias that does not sit well with questions of belief or faith? Is religion understood as a personal, private matter with no proper place in public-sphere discussion? Is the lack of substantive discussion an outcome of a drive to preserve, protect and mark off a sphere of cultural experience and solidarity from the white gaze?

Scholars and participants included specialists in the genres of jazz, gospel, blues, soul, funk and hip hop, who discussed the evolving history of the Black church; the rhetoric of “spirituality” vs. “religion” among musicians; double-consciousness and the duality of “public” vs. “church” musical selves; musical practices that originate in church music and can be found

across genres; the prime value given to affective transfer and audience participation in Black music traditions; and the threshold between secular and sacred in African American discourses about music. It was organized by Dana Gooley, professor of music, and Charrise Barron, postdoctoral research associate in religious studies, Africana studies and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America.

## **“HOME, FOR NOW: An Indigenous New Play Development and Workshop Performance Project.”**

This is a yearlong new play development project that was intended to culminate in a public performance of the titular play, written by Brown undergraduate student Danielle Emerson '22, who is a member of the Dine' tribal nation. That performance was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of the project is to develop a contemporary Indigenous play script and performance informed by Indigenous knowledge production, Dine' practices and aesthetics and Indigenous theater dramaturgy. Directed by Sarah dAngelo, professor of theatre arts and performance studies at Brown, the project involved faculty and students from Africana studies, Rites and Reason Theatre and American studies and a writer from University of Central Oklahoma.

Two 2019-20 seed grant projects explored migration. The first,

**“Patterns and Trajectories of Migrations/  
People and Objects: A Non-Imperial  
Approach to Restitution,”**

centered on four collaborative, interdisciplinary workshops, looking at two trajectories of migration — of objects and of people — which are usually studied separately by scholars from different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

The project examined flows of migrants as one inevitable offshoot of the destruction of colonized worlds and the extraction of its “best pieces” of art. While the millions of objects taken from colonized lands are now handled by museums, archives and libraries according to modern principles and procedures of classification, migrants are also categorized and classified in ways ranging from “undocumented”

to “asylum seekers” to “illegals.” The project recognizes the institutional discourse of salvation and preservation, applied to art and objects, as one of the founding principles of imperialism. Directed by Ariella Azoulay, professor of comparative literature and modern culture and media, it involves faculty in archaeology, modern Greek studies and history, as well as law scholars and practitioners and collaborators abroad.

The second migration-centered seed grant project,

**“Migration Studies Initiative: An  
Interdisciplinary Conversation on Migration  
Research in Theory and Practice,”**

brings together interdisciplinary humanities scholars from across campus to consider the topic of migration from a person-centered perspective. With the aim of moving beyond the two opposed discursive frameworks that

reduce all migrants to a threat, on the one hand, and a symbol of universal right to freedom of movement, on the other, the project is gathering faculty, postdoctoral fellows and graduate students for monthly workshops and meetings and includes a yearlong speaker series consisting of two fall and two spring lectures for the campus community that highlights the work of scholars external to Brown who conduct narrative and person-centered migration research. Directed by Kevin Escudero, professor of American studies, and Andrea Flores, professor of education, it also involves faculty in English, sociology and other areas.



Brown faculty and researchers representing more than a dozen disciplines worked collaboratively on the four projects awarded seed grants by Pembroke Center in 2019-20. Among them were those pictured here: Ariella Azoulay (Modern Culture and Media and Comparative Literature), Charrise Barron (Africana Studies and Music), Sarah d'Angelo (Theatre Arts and Performance Studies), Kevin Escudero (American Studies), and Dana Gooley (Music).

# GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM

Housed at the Pembroke Center, the Gender and Sexuality Studies program (GNSS) encourages undergraduate and graduate students to examine the complex ways that “differences” — sexual and gender differences as well as differences that are fundamental to the categories of race and ethnicity, nationality, class, religion and more — are produced culturally, politically and epistemologically. In keeping with the Pembroke Center’s interdisciplinary inquiry, students are asked to consider what constitutes foundational knowledge in a given discipline, and how that knowledge is produced. Through an undergraduate concentration and a graduate certificate, the GNSS program incentivizes a broader perspective on questions of how categories of difference are formed and understood, as well as dialogue across the curriculum and across campus. For undergraduates, GNSS supports a concentration, courses, research grants and honors thesis prizes. The program offers graduate students research grants, a dissertation prize, fellowships for participating in the Pembroke Seminar and a graduate certificate.



## Undergraduate Program

GNSS is an interdisciplinary concentration that examines the construction of gender and sexuality in social, cultural, political, economic or scientific contexts. For some undergraduates, gender is the question that animates their scholarship and leads them to choose the GNSS concentration; for others, a personal exploration, or one class, spurs them to continue inquiring how gender and sexuality inform other disciplines and topics. Each concentrator focuses on a well-defined topic or question and works closely with a concentration advisor to develop a program that investigates this focus area rigorously. Many GNSS concentrators choose to double-concentrate, which means they complete a second concentration in addition to GNSS. All concentrators take the GNSS Senior Seminar, which functions as an interdisciplinary working group as students contribute project- or discipline-specific questions and readings as they write their capstones or theses. In the 2019-20 academic year, GNSS concentrators in the Senior Seminar examined how gender and sexuality manifest in politics, art, literature, religion and protest movements.

## Graduate Program

The GNSS Graduate Certificate Program enables graduate students enrolled in Ph.D. programs at Brown to develop methodological and theoretical expertise as well as professional credentials in the interdisciplinary field of gender and sexuality studies. While fulfilling the requirements of their degree-granting department, doctoral candidates take four GNSS courses including “Method, Evidence, Critique: Gender and Sexuality Studies across the Disciplines,” teach or proctor a related course, and conduct original research relevant to gender and sexuality studies. The credential they earn expands the number and kinds of courses they can teach in the future. Importantly, the certificate program also fosters a community of scholars dedicated to the study of the intersections of gender and sexuality and other related methodologies, such as critical race studies, legal theory and psychoanalytic theory.

In the 2019-20 academic year, 13 doctoral candidates — working in anthropology, American studies, comparative literature, sociology, Italian studies, philosophy, English, religious studies and public health as their primary fields of study — were part of the GNSS Graduate Certificate Program.



## 2019-2020 Gender and Sexuality Studies Senior Capstone Presentations

### Quincy Confoy '20

Gender and Sexuality Studies, Theatre Arts and Performance Studies

*Woman First, Dissident Second: Hunger Striking, Force Feeding, and The Gendered Treatment of Irish and British Suffragette Bodies in the Early 1900s*

### Payton Gannon '20

Gender and Sexuality Studies, Political Science

*From Coverture to Casey: The Constitutionality of the Regulation of Women's Bodies*

### Laura Jaramillo '20

Gender and Sexuality Studies, Visual Arts  
(Brown/RISD dual-degree program)

*First · Blood*

### Kayli Wren '20

Gender and Sexuality Studies, English Non-Fiction Writing

*David Wojnarowicz's Disruption of Abjection from the Body and the Body Politic*

### Zenab Youssef '20

Gender and Sexuality Studies, Middle Eastern Studies

*Queer Muslim Subjectivities in the West: Nothing to Reconcile?*

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES PROGRAM COURSES

As an interdisciplinary program, GNSS offers opportunities for undergraduate and graduate study that range across scholarly fields, geographies, contexts, genres and time periods. In addition to the Pembroke Seminar, the GNSS Senior Seminar, independent study opportunities and a broad X-list of relevant courses offered across campus, in 2019-20 the program offered courses that explored gender and sexuality as rendered in film, manifested in classroom dynamics and technology, and formed in response to or in spite of transnational social forces, among many other topics. GNSS also offered its first Wintersession course in 2020, “Bodies Out of Bounds,” led by Gail Cohee, director of the Sarah Doyle Center for Women and Gender and associate dean of the College.

### Bodies Out of Bounds

What happens to bodies — and the world around them — when they refuse to stay within “normal” boundaries? Against the backdrop of fiction written over the past four decades, and within the context of contemporary theory and film, this course looks at what is considered normal in various locations and by whom. When are bodies we would consider “normal” somehow not suitable? How are bodies constructed/deconstructed/reconstructed? The course directs participants to think about bodies in terms of gender, especially gender as it intersects with other markers of identity, including race, gender identity and expression, dis/ability and hybridity.

### Introduction to Gender and Sexuality Studies

This course explores the interdisciplinary fields of gender and sexuality studies, considering the relation between formations of gender and those of sexuality across a range of historical and disciplinary contexts. Discussion includes considering how both sexuality and gender are shaped in relation to race and ethnicity, economic inequality and the postcolonial legacy.

### Latin American Horror

Latin American horror film is often overlooked within the world of film studies. This course delves into the dark and intriguing world of the Latin American horror film genre. It includes the study of Latin American horror cinema considering works across time periods, national contexts and directors. This course asks the following questions: How does the genre express individual and national anxieties in the cultural, social, political and economic realms? To what degree does horror film serve as a social barometer that explores, negotiates and at times reifies social anxieties about difference, identity, sexuality, normativity, repression, technology, the environment, etc.?

## Technologies of/and the Body: Mediated Visions

The relationship between body and machinery, technology and biology, is often thought in terms of the mechanical doll, the animated robot and other hybrid figures. Science fiction films for example offer double visions of the gendered body: women are masters/slaves of the technology and still symbolic bodies of biological surviving of the human species. This course explores mediated visions in films and other media of different kinds spanning a bridge between science fiction films and performance art. The course includes the study of theoretical texts on the problem of the merging of technology and body.

## Scenes of Instruction: Pedagogy, Punishment, Perversion

This course investigates the interrelation between pedagogy, sexuality and violence. It seeks to investigate the classroom as a site of violent interaction and a potentially sexualized space. Appraising the erotic dimension of the production and transmission of knowledge, the course will critically trace a discourse of the utmost actuality and relevance: from campus rape culture — via the prominent question of consent — through current debates around Title IX, the connection between learning and sex marks a highly problematic dimension of our academic environments deserving of scholarly attentiveness and critical scrutiny.

## Transnational Sexualities

The goal of this course is to explore the formation of both normative and non-normative sexualities within the intertwining of local, national and global social contexts. Using historical and cross-cultural research on gender and sexuality, the course explores how social forces such as global capitalism, citizenship, nationalism, human rights, securitization, neoliberalism, settle colonialism, tourism, mass media and migration shape and produce desires, sexual identities, sexual labor, sexual practices, bodies and genders.

## Speech and Silence, Trust and Fear: A Feminist Philosophical Inquiry into Sex Equality

This seminar examines problems that arise in marriage from the failures of couples to speak to each other, and when they do, from their failures to speak openly, honestly and from a position of social equality. This course examines from a metaphysical and moral perspective the agency in men and women as it is reflected in what couples say and think. It looks at whether marriages fail when women consciously choose or unconsciously fall into oppressive, subordinate postures and examines whether men take advantage of these postures. Class materials are primarily novels and films, supplemented with philosophical, sociological and legal essays.

## Masquerade as Critique

Critique is most often figured as an act that reveals a reality that was previously hidden, as though one were pulling back a curtain or lifting a veil. But, as the critic Craig Owens points out, “in a culture in which visibility is always on the side of the male, invisibility on the side of the female ... are not the activities of unveiling, stripping, laying bare ... unmistakably male prerogatives?” This seminar develops an alternate genealogy of critique informed by feminist and queer person of color perspectives. It eschews the modernist drive toward transparency, instead examining masquerade, mimicry, code-switching, duplicity, fugitivity, passing and appropriation.

## Poetics of the World: The Making and Unmaking of the African Diaspora

This course critically engages with the meaning and making of African diaspora literature by examining a range of novels, poetry and memoirs, as well as theoretical texts. Part of the work of this course is to examine the genre of Afro-diasporic literature. What does it mean to belong to a diaspora? How do writers from across the diaspora communicate with one another? What unexpected models of sociality

and community does this literature produce? How do writers engage with one another across national boundaries? Discussions delve into themes of opacity, entanglement, identity, race, gender and sexuality.

## Method, Evidence, Critique: Gender and Sexuality Studies across the Disciplines

Gender and sexuality studies is by its very nature transdisciplinary. Can we speak of a single methodology that ties gender and sexuality studies together? How might scholars work on gender and/or sexuality while respecting disciplinary boundaries and training? The course starts with the premise that studies in gender and sexuality are tied together by critique that questions foundational assumptions and takes account of its own position within a given field of knowledge. Through the study of canonical theoretical texts alongside disciplinary studies characterized by a feminist and/or queer focus, this course investigates how critique operates and how standards of evidence are marshaled in particular disciplines.

## A Gender Perspective on Women and Enterprise

A distinctive pattern of economic inequality marks the female population of every nation, each with the same mechanisms standing behind the disadvantages. Everywhere, the barriers to women's economic engagement reach beyond work and salary to encompass property ownership, capital, credit and markets. When considered as a whole, these barriers constitute economic exclusion, not just economic inequality. To date, policy, scholarship and activism on the economic status of women have tended to focus on inequality in the formal workplace, but the full pattern is much more visible when women-owned businesses are examined.



*“When it comes to students working on thesis or capstone projects in different areas — on the suffrage movement, on women’s right to choose, on Islam and queer rights — having the gender and sexuality studies background means that the way that you even speak about these questions is different. The program opens up a lot of potential in research and thinking.”*

**—Jeremy Lehn**

**Director, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program  
Interim Associate Director of the Pembroke Center**

# BLACK FEMINIST THEORY PROJECT

Envisioned as a locus of intellectual collaboration across disciplines, the Pembroke Center's Black Feminist Theory Project takes a multifaceted approach to enhancing the visibility and accessibility of Black feminist discourse. In addition to a lecture series, plans for hosting visiting scholars, and related programming, the Black Feminist Theory Project strives to build and make accessible an archive documenting Black feminist scholars' work and lives.

## Lecture series

On October 29, 2019, **Kimberly Juanita Brown**, the Elizabeth C. Small Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies and chair of gender studies at Mount Holyoke College, gave the research lecture "Cartographies of the Ocular" as part of the Black Feminist Theory Project. Brown spoke about the way visual and literary representations of Black women's bodies foreground the body's vulnerability and slavery's inherent violence, paying particular attention to photojournalism. She

discussed how people are racially configured in newspaper photographs, describing a "public imaginary that has aligned [Blackness] with suffering." In her research, Brown said, she "tried to locate something that was refusing Black people the space not to be violated ... the space between life and death that Black people constantly negotiate." Her lecture encompassed the critical commentary and the artistic practices of figures including Franz Fanon, James Baldwin, Susan Sontag, Toni

Morrison, Michael S. Harper, John Berger and John Coltrane.

A planned Black Feminist Theory Project Lecture by **Oneka LaBennett**, who researches culture and Black girlhood; race, gender and popular culture; urban anthropology; migration and the African diaspora; and the global Caribbean was postponed due to the pandemic, and the Pembroke Center hopes to reschedule it in the coming year.





“I can’t speak for everyone, but I suspect that for some of us, especially those of my vintage who are old enough to remember a time when there was little or nothing of a Black female past — few records, few figures, no archive — it’s history that motivates us to contribute our papers to an archive, a desire both to preserve the past and to record the process of recovering it. We hope that Pembroke’s Feminist Theory Archive will become *the* nationally known repository of Black feminist thought and theory as more and more scholars who helped define the field donate their papers in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project.”

— Ann duCille  
Professor of English, Emerita, at Wesleyan University  
and Visiting Scholar in Gender Studies at the Pembroke Center

## Archives development

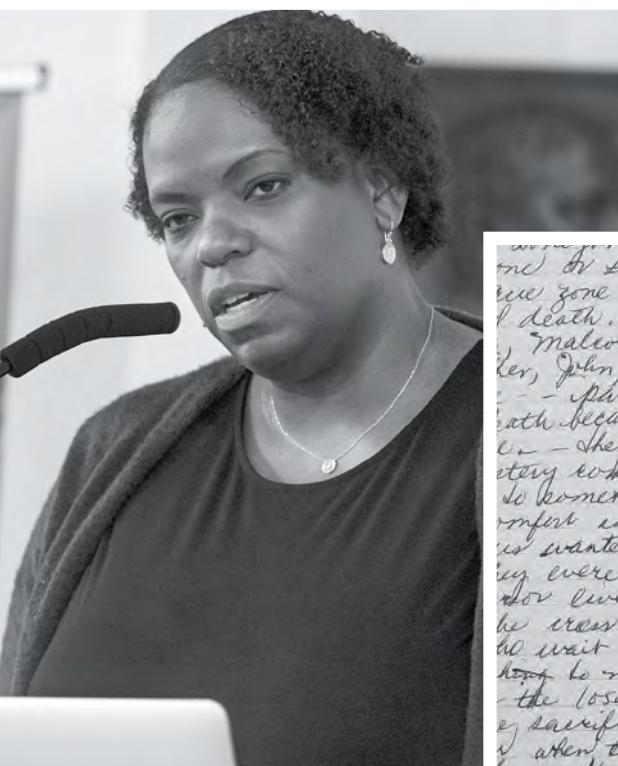
The Pembroke Center is working with Black feminist scholars to increase the number of Brown special collections that center Black feminist theory, intersectional theory and transnational feminist theory. Scholars who choose to give their papers to the Feminist Theory Archive in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project create a community of collections that represent an array of Black feminist analytics and an essential resource for researchers and the public.

In fall 2019, Hortense J. Spillers, one of the most significant Black feminist scholars of the late 20th century, contributed her papers to the Pembroke Center Archives. Spillers has been a critical voice in feminist theory, as well as in American, African American and Caribbean literary and historical, cultural and philosophical studies, since the 1970s, and her work is indispensable to scholars of race theory, history, literary criticism, the legacy of slavery and questions of class, gender and sexuality. Spillers' papers reside

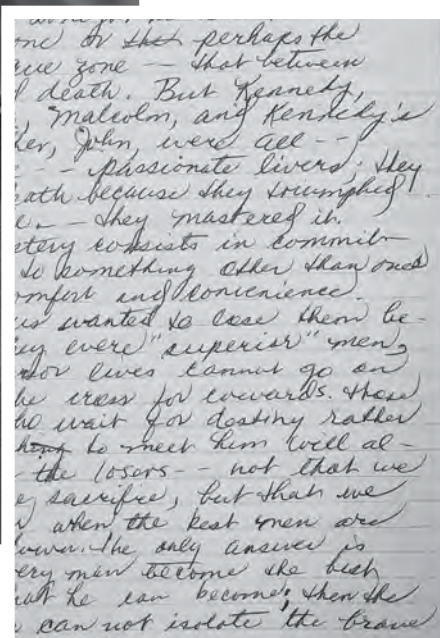
alongside the collections of scholars who have given their papers to the Feminist Theory Archive in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project. Among those scholars are Ann duCille, whose scholarship pertains to African American literary and cultural studies and investigates how popular culture and brand marketing influence perceptions and practices; Christina Sharpe, a Black feminist theorist whose work encompasses racism, feminism and slavery; and Cheryl Wall, who was a foremost scholar of African American literature, Zora Neale Hurston and women of the Harlem Renaissance. Other scholars, including African American studies and theater studies expert Daphne Brooks, Mireille Miller-Young — whose research focuses on race, gender and sexuality in U.S. history, popular culture and the sex industries — and Hazel Carby, author of "Imperial Intimacies," have committed to donating their collections to the archive in the name of the Black Feminist Theory Project.

## Scholars in Residence

Since the Black Feminist Theory Project was founded in 2016, it has been anchored by rotating distinguished professorships/affiliated scholars in residence, including Ann duCille, professor of English, emerita, at Wesleyan University and visiting scholar in gender studies at Brown, and Aneeka A. Henderson, assistant professor of sexuality, women's and gender studies at Amherst College. Currently, the Pembroke Center is developing a program that will enable an emerging Black feminist scholar to join the Pembroke Center as a co-curator of the Black Feminist Theory Project. The scholar would receive faculty mentorship as well as cross-training in the curatorial field by Mary Murphy, the Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist; teach one undergraduate course; and participate in the Pembroke Seminar. This approach would address the underrepresentation of Black scholars in the curatorial field and create new opportunities to promote Black feminist teaching and research at the Pembroke Center and across campus.



The BFTP centers Black feminist perspectives through lectures and events as well as through archival resources. Kimberly Juanita Brown (left) spoke at the Pembroke in October 2019. Hortense J. Spillers gave her papers to the project in the fall of 2019.



Hortense J. Spillers



# PEMBROKE CENTER ARCHIVES

For nearly 40 years, the Pembroke Center through its archives has preserved and made accessible primary resources about women, gender and sexuality. In the 2019-20 academic year, the Pembroke Center Archives continued to combine its dynamic curatorial efforts with instructional services and public humanities work to:

- improve researchers' ability to access scholarship by and about women and non-binary people through the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive and the Feminist Theory Archive;
- build a community of scholarly collections by Black feminist theorists within the Feminist Theory Archive;
- preserve a wide array of individual first-person accounts, via the Pembroke Center Oral History Project, that make the broad sweep of history personal;
- introduce audiences to materials and voices that support research and scholarship across many disciplines;
- and significantly increase women's representation in the John Hay Library's named special collections.

Among the highlights of the first half of the 2019-20 academic year were the Shauna M. Stark '76, P'10 Out of the Archives Lecture Series reading and exhibition by Faith Wilding, and a public conversation with Italian-American scholar and activist Silvia Federici (see the Events section). Wilding discussed her early years on a puritanical Christian commune in Paraguay and her experiences in the first feminist art programs in the U.S., at Fresno State College and CalArts, as well as her art-making and teaching. Federici, who launched the International Feminist Collective in 1972 and went on to teach in Nigeria and co-found the Committee for Academic Freedom for Africa, discussed her life and work with Arlen Austin, a Ph.D. candidate in Brown's Department of Modern Culture and Media, and Emily Callaci, associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The late fall also saw the arrival of the papers of Hortense J. Spillers, one of the most significant Black feminist scholars of the late 20th century. Included are diaries; unpublished writing, including fiction and poetry; correspondence with prominent scholars; drafts of her talks, articles and books as well as syllabi, lecture notes, scholarly journals, and rare print materials. Demand for use of this important collection has been extraordinary, and the papers have been used by scholars working in American studies, English, Africana studies, gender and sexuality studies and many other disciplines.

Throughout the year, The Pembroke Center Archives staff provided research services and instructional sessions. In addition to helping researchers find materials to support scholarship on a wide array of subjects — ranging from women's athletics at Brown

and Title IX, to race and the environment, to consciousness-raising and the history of the Sarah Doyle Women's Center — they taught undergraduate and graduate students about conducting archival research, curatorial work as a profession and the theoretical concept of “the archive.”

In the spring, when the COVID-19 pandemic caused the University to shift to remote operations, the archives staff continued to support researchers and build collections while undertaking two new oral history initiatives: one focused on the experience of life during the pandemic, and another responding to the global protests against systemic racial injustice. Members of the extended Brown community contributed first-person accounts that give texture and depth to these history-making times and create a record of the personal experiences and perspectives of women and non-binary individuals.



*“Hortense J. Spillers has been a foundational figure and a critical voice in feminist theory, as well as American, African American and Caribbean literary and historical, cultural and philosophical studies since the 1970s. From early essays like ‘Interstices: A Small Drama of Words,’ to landmark interventions such as ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,’ Spillers’ scholarship has played — and continues to play — a major role in how we theorize race, class, gender and sexuality, how we read history and write literature and criticism, and how we understand the long reach of slavery and its legacies.*

*—Ann duCille, Professor of English, Emerita, at Wesleyan University and Visiting Scholar in Gender Studies at the Pembroke Center*



## COLLECTIONS AND ACCESSIONS

Though two robust and ever-growing research collections—the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive, which documents the history of women at Brown University and in the state of Rhode Island, and the Feminist Theory Archive, which documents the lives and scholarship of notable feminist theorists and scholars of difference in the academy — the Pembroke Center Archives ensures that special collections by and about women are included in the University's library system and are available to researchers the world over.

This year, both research collections grew substantially, adding papers, records and items of enduring value — including the papers of the late Cheryl Wall, a foremost scholar of African American literature, Zora Neale Hurston and women of the Harlem Renaissance, and a quilt created by the Womxn Project, composed of many fabric petitions contributed by Rhode Islanders who supported passage of the RI Reproductive Privacy Act of 2019, which enshrined the right to abortion at the state level.

### Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive

The Womxn Project quilt and related records  
Kate Bornstein '69 digital records  
Coyote RI records/Bella Robinson papers  
Pembroke Club of Southern California records  
Sarah Doyle Center records  
Gloria Winston '48 alumni file  
Senturia, Margaret Ellickson '61 letters  
Brown Alumnae Club of Kent County records  
Brown University Women's Athletics Ephemera  
Dawn Clements '86 papers  
Helen F. Cserr papers  
Peg Ogden '53 papers

### Feminist Theory Archive

Lauren Berlant additional papers  
Marianosa Dalla Costa print material  
Silvia Federici additional papers  
Alison M. Jaggar papers  
Ellen Chesler papers  
Zillah Eisenstein additional papers  
Felicity Nussbaum papers  
Hortense J. Spillers papers  
Faith Wilding theory papers  
m/f journal; rare print material  
Tani Barlow additional papers  
Jane Flax papers



Dorothy Ko papers  
Denise Riley papers  
Society for Women in Philosophy addenda records

### Farnham and FTA collections (known as "Bridge collections")

Anne Fausto-Sterling additional papers  
Lousie Lamphere additional papers  
Jean Howard '70 additional papers  
Catherine Lutz papers  
Karen Newman additional papers  
Joan Wallach Scott papers

## PEMBROKE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Pembroke Center Oral History Project — which records the experiences of women, transgender and gender non-binary members of Brown University and Pembroke College, the coordinate women's college for Brown that fully merged with the University in 1971, through digitized interviews, transcripts, biographies and photographs — this year addressed two historic events: the COVID-19 pandemic and the national and global protests against systemic racial injustice. In March, as the virus swept across the world and to the shores of Rhode Island, the Pembroke Center

Archives was strategically positioned to lead in the documentation of the global pandemic as it affected Brown, all while centering women's experiences through oral history. In late May, the Pembroke Center Archives used the well-established technical infrastructure of the Pembroke Center Oral History Project to capture memories from people who attended protests in the wake of the death of George Floyd and many other people of color at the hands of law enforcement.

Usage rates of the Pembroke Center Oral History Project, which were strong previous to

COVID-19, doubled. For the month of April, more than 1,100 unique users — 77.5% that were first-time visitors — visited the project's website and listened to COVID-19 and other interviews. Anecdotal evidence indicates the users comprise students, faculty and the general public who are using the interviews for research, homework assignments and solace during this period of increased isolation. Sociology faculty at Brown and the University of California, Santa Barbara, announced plans to redesign qualitative methods courses to incorporate the project's oral histories.



"The pandemic is forcing us to innovate. If you are teaching qualitative methods, check out this archive created by 'Oral History Project' @ PembrokeCenter. It is first-person accounts of the COVID pandemic ... 15 interviews w more coming. But there's MORE! On this page, you can search topics like racism, segregation, athletics, gender expectations, fashion, etc. and students can find topics and interviews that interest them."

— Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve  
Associate Professor of Sociology at Brown

The Pembroke Center Archives provide access to rare resources and correspondence from scholars like Hortense J. Spillers and Tani Barlow, and research services including instructional sessions for students like those in the spring 2020 course "Archival Interventions."





“Thank you so very much for having me on this important project. And thank you for doing this incredibly important historical work. Archivists and historians, many, many, many years from now, are going to thank you profusely for documenting this experience as systematically as you are.”

— Johanna Fernández, Brown University Class of 1993, professor, author, NYC radio host

## ORAL HISTORIES AVAILABLE OR FORTHCOMING FOR RESEARCH

### COVID-19 Interviews

Yukti Agarwal '24  
Shira Buchsbaum '19\*  
Mariah Calagione '93\*  
Rachel Cassidy, faculty\*  
Finch Collins '21  
Johanna Fernández '93  
Sarah Fox '89  
Mary Gannon '17\*  
Katherine Goldman, staff  
Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve, faculty  
Shibei Guo '20  
Hunter Hargraves [class year unknown]  
Samantha Kiernan '19  
Resa Lewiss '92  
Noa Mintz '22  
Mary Murphy and Amanda Knox, staff

Sara Caitlin Potter '98\*  
Ingrid Rodiv '76\*  
Manya Rubinstein '01\*  
Heidi Sasseville, staff\*  
Teena Shetty '95, '00 MD\*  
Feven Teklu, staff  
Virginia Thomas '20\*  
Emily Tunkel '19  
Erika Undeland '21\*  
Shuyan Wang '20

### COVID-19 and 2020 Protests

Jennifer Currier, staff\*  
Kimberly Dan '06\*  
Marlene Gerber Fried '72\*  
Candace Heald '74\*  
Soyoon Kim '19\*

Alba Málaga [class year unknown]\*  
Sara Matthiesen '15\*  
Beatrice McGeoch '97\*  
Lynn Nottage '86 and Ruby Gerber '20  
Karina Wang '21\*

### General Interviews

Wendy Edwards  
Diane Straker  
Clarice LaVerne Thompson  
Rita Ann Chao '69  
Ido Jamar (formerly Judith Fitzhugh) '69  
Rita Duarte Marinho '79  
Karen Romer  
Clarice Laverne Thompson  
Lorraine Adler Rosen '45  
Donna Zaccaro '83

\*Indicates a completed interview that is forthcoming but not yet available to stream online.



# *differences:* A JOURNAL OF FEMINIST CULTURAL STUDIES

For 30 years, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* has sought and promoted critical work by scholars unafraid to challenge dogma, think in unexpected ways and encourage debate. Focusing on work that begins with questions rather than conclusions, the journal complements and connects the many parts of the center's intellectual mission.

*differences* elevates the work of Pembroke Center scholars like Azeen A. Khan, the 2015-16 Nancy L. Buc Postdoctoral Fellow, whose essay on Derrida was featured in the May 2020 open issue, and Kenneth Berger, a graduate fellow in the 2015-16 Pembroke Seminar "Fatigue" who wrote about the aesthetics of refusal in the same issue. The journal also expands the Pembroke Center's network of scholars and creates dialogue between the scholarship it publishes and the center's public programming and research. Kimberly Juanita Brown, who wrote about patriarchy in the issue "-30- The End of the Story," gave a

lecture in fall 2019 on her research into visual and literary representations of Black women's bodies as part of the Black Feminist Theory Project. Peter Szendy, David Herlihy University Professor of Comparative Literature, who is convener of the 2020-21 Pembroke Seminar "Narrating Debt," edited a forthcoming special issue directly related to that topic, with essays that examine the intertwining of debt and narration from the perspectives of continental philosophy, international law, the history of slavery, comparative literature, feminist critique and more.

Additionally, *differences* has long worked with theorists and critics whose papers make meaningful contributions to the Feminist Theory Archive, including Ann duCille, Professor of English, Emerita, at Wesleyan University and a visiting scholar in gender studies at the Pembroke Center. An advocate for building a repository of Black feminist thought in addition to being a distinguished

scholar, duCille has been critical to developing the Black Feminist Theory Project and the Feminist Theory Archive. She edited a special issue of *differences*, titled "Black Marriage," that included work by Hortense J. Spillers, who has been both an influential scholar to the Pembroke Center community and a participant in events such as the 2018-19 research roundtable "Unlearning Imperial Rights, Decolonizing Institutions."

Through proctorships, *differences* also provides valuable opportunities and support to graduate students, exposing them to new research in theoretical debates and to the process of editing and publishing a scholarly journal. In summer 2020, three doctoral candidates from the Department of English whose research and funding were impacted by COVID-19 gained experience that will prove useful to them in their future careers, whether in academic research or scholarly editing.





### 30.3

## 30- The End of the Story

Thangam Ravindranathan, “The Rise of the Sea and the Novel”

Samia Vasa, “2020: A Reading Appeal”

Amber Jamilla Musser, “Toward Mythic Feminist Theorizing: Simone Leigh and the Power of the Vessel”

Jean-Thomas Tremblay, “Feminist Breathing”

Grace Lavery, “The King’s Two Anuses: Trans Feminism and Free Speech”

Kimberly Juanita Brown, “The End of the Story: Patriarchy”

The last thing one needs in politically challenging times is the already known. This 30th anniversary issue of *differences* takes as its title the mark -30- that American journalists have traditionally used to indicate the end of a story. While one might debate whether or not the story of critical feminism itself has come to an end, there is no question that much has changed in the field over the last 30 years.

Struck by the unfortunate predictability of so much of the critical work being produced, the editors invited contributors to reflect on which critical preoccupations have happily or unhappily expired over the years and which ones one might like to see go — or not. Displacements that disorder the well-worn paths of thought take many forms and varied objects and have often been the inadvertent — as well as the intended — end of feminist interventions.

### 31.1

## Open issue

Kenneth Berger, “Cinema against Communication: Spectacle, Anxiety, and the Aesthetics of Refusal”

Ashley T. Sheldon, “The Abject Genealogies of Kenneth Halliwell (and Joe Orton)”

Shannan L. Hayes, “Wanting More”

Ariane Cruz, “Copying Cosby: Pornmimicries of Race, Sexuality, and Gender”

Azeen Khan, “Aneconomy, Indirection, Undecidability: Derrida’s ‘Principled’ Critique of the Death Drive”

Ann duCille, “‘Can’t You See I’m White?’: Reading between the Sight Lines of Racial Difference”

### 31.2

## Open issue

Nell Wasserstrom, “After All: Traces of the Literary in Freud’s Moses and Monotheism (a Historical Novel)”

Andrew Kingston, “Death and Fairy Tale: Queer Autothanatography in Claude Vivier”

Matthew Gannon, “The Aesthetic Death Drive of Modernism”

Andrew Ragni, “Anality in the Colonial Archive: Sigmund Freud and Roger Casement”

Jake Silver, “Cruising the Jerusalem Light Rail”

# PEMBROKE CENTER ASSOCIATES

The Pembroke Center Associates are Brown University alumnae/i parents and friends who support the Pembroke Center and its scholars; develop programs that complement the academic mission of the center; and lend their talents — as advisors, mentors, strategists and more — to the broader Pembroke Center community.

Over the years, the Pembroke Center Associates have generously shared their stories with the Pembroke Center Oral History Project; helped preserve and promote the history of Pembroke College; mentored and engaged with undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows; and stimulated an enormous amount of research through grant, prize and internship programs as well as through student and faculty fellowships that enrich the intellectual vitality of the center.

The Pembroke Center Associates have initiated major campaigns in support of endowments and initiatives that now constitute core programs of the Pembroke Center, in addition to creating an intergenerational community, and a network, that carry the inquiry at the heart of the center's mission into the world and back again. To paraphrase Elizabeth Weed, who directed the Pembroke Center from 2000-10, without the Pembroke Center Associates, there would be no Pembroke Center.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-20 academic year, a number of spring events were postponed, but the Pembroke Associates presented three thought-provoking fall events on topics including motherhood and data-based decision-making, expanding opportunities for women and girls and multidisciplinary efforts by undergraduates to solve big problems in global development. (Please see the Events section for full descriptions.)

Because the 2020 Commencement will now take place in 2021, a Commencement Forum focused on the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment and women's suffrage with the working title "Free to Vote?: Perspectives on Women and Essential Democratic Rights," was put on hold, but the Pembroke Center launched a website that shares virtual events and resources focused on universal suffrage and contains voting and U.S. Census information.

In May, to safeguard the health and well-being of our community, the Pembroke Center for the first time conducted a Pembroke Associates Council meeting by videoconference. Happily, the meeting was well-attended, and two undergraduate recipients of Pembroke Center research grants were able to present their research to the group. Ella Satish '20, who was part of the Family/Fall Alumni Weekend event on women's development and a 2019-20 Linda Pei Undergraduate Research Grant recipient, presented her research on Black maternal health. Camilla Pelsinger '20, a 2020 Rhodes Scholarship winner and the recipient of a 2019-20 Helen Terry MacLeod Research Grant and an Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship, discussed her research into how restorative justice programs address gender-based violence in the U.S. and New Zealand.

The use of videoconferencing for Pembroke Center programming also made it possible for several members of the Council to join the Free In Direct Discourse webinars, the summer sessions of the Pembroke Seminar.

# GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Gifts to the Pembroke Center — through the Associates or through endowed and legacy gifts—are essential to our success. The Pembroke Center plays an important role in preparing future scholars, writers, teachers and artists to address urgent issues relating to women, gender and sexuality. Your support ensures that the Pembroke Center can continue to be a place on campus devoted to critical inquiry about social systems, power and inequality.

## **Pembroke Center Associates:**

With an annual gift to the Pembroke Center Associates, you join a vibrant community of people who care about how gender and sexuality shape the world around us. The Pembroke Center Associates directly support the center's mission by funding interdisciplinary research programs, enhancing undergraduate and graduate education and preserving and promoting women's history through the Pembroke Center Archives.

### **How to join the Associates**

Make your gift online: [gifts.brown.edu/Pembroke](https://gifts.brown.edu/Pembroke)

Call 401-863-1162 to make a credit card gift by phone

Mail a check to the Pembroke Center Associates, Box 1958, Brown University,  
Providence, RI 02912

For information about other ways to give, including stock/appreciated securities and IRA charitable distributions, please call 401-863-1162 or email [Pembroke\\_Associates@brown.edu](mailto:Pembroke_Associates@brown.edu)

## **Endowed Funds:**

We are currently raising funds to strengthen and enhance our postdoctoral fellowship program. Thanks to the generosity of our community, generations of postdoctoral fellows have benefited from their time at the Pembroke Center. To learn more about how you can support these young scholars, please contact Darcy Pinkerton, development officer ([darcy\\_pinkerton@brown.edu](mailto:darcy_pinkerton@brown.edu) or 401-863-1162). There are opportunities to support this program at all levels, including through legacy gifts.

## **Legacy Gifts:**

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Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, Director of the Pembroke Center, 2019-20 Chesler-Mallow Senior Faculty Research Fellow, Professor of Italian Studies and Comparative Literature

### Visiting Scholars in Gender Studies

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Faith Wilding, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Performance, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

### Senior Fellows in Gender Studies

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Elizabeth Weed, Ph.D. Brown University, French Studies, Director of the Pembroke Center 2000-10

### Visiting Faculty

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Nancy Duke Lewis Chair

Bonnie Honig, Professor of Modern Culture and Media and Political Science

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Brown University  
172 Meeting Street  
Providence, RI 02912  
[pembrokecenter.org](http://pembrokecenter.org)