SESSION 2D

COMMUNICATING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY LANGUAGE:
ZEN LITERACY, PERFORMANCE POETRY, TECHNOLOGY, AND MORTALITY (AN HONORS INTERDISCIPLINARY PANEL)

Session Moderator: Julie Villegas, English
231 MGH
3:30 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

"After All This Becomes Lit": Becoming and Performativity in Contemporary English-Language Native Poetry

Dandi Meng, Senior, English (Creative Writing)
Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program
Mentor: Dian Million, American Indian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle

Contemporary Native poetry often takes colonial history as its subject matter in an attempt to unsettle accepted narratives about Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples, but sometimes it must do so in the language of the settlers. In this project, I focus on three English-language poems—“Simple Four Part Directions for Making Indian Lit” by Gordon D. Henry, “Lean Cuisine” by Sherman Alexie, and “The Devil’s Language” by Marilyn Dumont—written by Indigenous North American poets who actively rework conventions of the “enemy’s language” to make poetry viable for participation in decolonizing processes. I argue that one way in which we can understand these Native poems to be subversive in their use of a non-Native language is by reading them not only as describing and reiterating facts but also as making “counter-texts” and enacting their own histories and epistemologies—that is, as texts that are in the process of becoming. I engage with the theoretical apparatuses of “becoming” proposed by the three different poems in conjunction with J.L. Austin’s formulation of performativity in order to highlight the world-making potentials of poetic language. Through this analysis, I explore the ways in which poetry can be mobilized to repurpose the settlers’ language and, in turn, interrogate the textual basis of colonial realities.

POSTER SESSION 4
Commons East, Easel 79
4:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Indigeneity in Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles:
Legacies of Métissage and Colonial Rule

Iman Farah, Junior, International Studies
Mary Gates Scholar
Mentor: Dian Million, American Indian Studies, University of Washington, Seattle

The word “indigenous” continues to evoke discussion and scholarship throughout the ages as a highly culturally and politically loaded term that has gained global importance. The Islands of Mauritius, Réunion and the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean are fascinating examples of the changing uses of the notion of “indigeneity” because although there are no known “indigenous people” that resided on the land, there is still a distinct hierarchy of privilege that continues to reinforce colonial ideals of indigeneity onto those of Creole or African backgrounds. How do Creole peoples view themselves? Do they see Creole identities as “more indigenous” than Indian or White settlers? How does their relationship to a complex Métissage (mixed heritage) relate to global discourse of indigeneity? In this paper, I plan to use the above island nations to explore notions of indigeneity in a global context and to understand how many residents define themselves within this framework. I argue that the indigenous-settler binary is deeply rooted in colonial discourses and that it has not simply disappeared but evolved through the legacy of Creole people (Métissage) and the complex relationship that they have with France, their former colonizer.