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Winter 2020

Expressions, Winter 2020

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EXPRESSIONS

Winter 2020



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Josh Coleman

By: Sabrina Lim



San José State University's Department of English and Comparative Literature is pleased to announce one of its newest Assistant Professors: Dr. Josh Coleman. Dr. Coleman joins us from the University of Pennsylvania where he received his M.A. in English Literature and his Ph.D. in Literacy, Culture, and International Education. This South Carolina native's research is focused primarily on queer literature with an emphasis on young adult and children's literature.

His interest in English studies began at a young age when he developed an intense love for reading. "Books provided me so much solace. . . what I found in books was a mode to find myself," he says of his childhood. One of the most impactful books he has read is *Orlando: A Biography* by Virginia Woolf, which was given to him by his tenth grade English teacher. It chronicles the story

of a poet who undergoes a sex change and lives for centuries, encountering famous historical figures along the way. Dr. Coleman speculates that this teacher was one of the first who ever saw him for the queer individual that he is. Through a simple book recommendation, she provided a mechanism for him to begin exploring his own identity. Now, years later, Dr. Coleman carries that same philosophy, and passion for teaching and representation, with him into any class he teaches.

One of his most notable teaching jobs took him over 4,000 miles away from South Carolina to Angers, a city in the west of France. During this year-long Fulbright Scholarship position, he taught English to tenth grade special needs students. In Angers, he continued to examine the value of representation, and question how education

works. Dr. Coleman credits this experience with being pivotal to his growth, as he was able to expand his worldview beyond America's deep south, where he spent much of his life. His favorite thing about France was, easily, the croissants. As a self-proclaimed carb-oholic, Dr. Coleman favored a particular almond croissant. He described it as being a little bit under-baked, with almond incorporated into the dough, and powdered sugar dusted on top.

Also among his favorite things is the work of young adult literature author Adam Silvera. Silvera, who wrote *They Both Die at the End*, is a favorite of Dr. Coleman because of the way he flips traditional stories of queer protagonists on its head. For example, a queer character being alive at the end of the novel was an impossibility in western literature for hundreds of years. "[Silvera] does this really brilliant thing about taking these tropes and using sci-fi fantasy to rearticulate them and challenge them." Dr. Coleman says, "And even in his depiction of *They Both Die at the End*, they still got to be in love, they still got to be queer, they still got to be all of those things, and death also occurred." Another piece of queer young adult

literature that comes highly recommended by our new faculty member is Benjamin Alire Sáenz's *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*.

Since Santa Clara County's shelter-in-place mandate began, Dr. Coleman has spent his time rediscovering his love for yoga and running. He hopes to adopt a dog sometime soon. Until then, however, he will continue working his way around San José's eateries and sampling peach-flavored items that remind him of home. He is excited to get back to the vibrancy of campus one day, and we are excited to have him as part of our faculty.

“Books provided me so much solace...what I found in books was a mode to find myself”



**Welcome,
Josh!**





Erica Eva Colmenares

By: Sheila Larson

Dr. Erica Eva Colmenares joins the College of Humanities and the Arts as an Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies Teacher Preparation, where she is also the coordinator for the program. Dr. Colmenares earned her Bachelor of Science and teacher certification from Vanderbilt University. She then began her teaching career and went on to receive a Master of Education from Harvard University and a Doctor of Education in Curriculum Studies & Teacher Education from Columbia University. Dr. Colmenares continued teaching and supervising student teachers throughout her master and doctoral studies because she didn't want to be "a professor in education with very little teaching experience."

Dr. Colmenares comes to San José State from Chico State where she taught for two years; however, she has been teaching elementary students since 2004 and says that teaching is her passion. "The students are the reason I do what I do. They bring me joy and purpose." When not teaching, Dr. Colmenares finds fulfillment in mentoring: "Mentorship is a really big part of the work that I do. Mentoring students,

particularly first-generation students, Latinx students, or other students of color, is really important to me. The fact that this is a very diverse campus is something that was hugely influential in my desire to come here."

Dr. Colmenares is Venezuelan. Growing up in Venezuela influenced her sense of social justice and equity because at that time, the country was transitioning from a capitalist system to one with more socialist leanings. She witnessed first-hand, for example, the different emphases between the two in regards to justice, equality, and equity. "That was really influential for me—to see the conversations that were happening—and to witness the theoretical and practical underpinnings animating each."

Dr. Colmenares left Venezuela to attend Vanderbilt University and was surprised to find that these conversations were not happening there or at Harvard, but she found them at Columbia. In her doctoral work, she was able to connect her teaching with her passion for social justice and she found her calling—social justice-oriented teacher education. Dr. Colmenares feels that "Social

justice is key, especially in our teacher education programs. I take that to mean following an anti-racist approach and making sure that we help student teachers see that the way forward is to enact anti-racist educational practices.”

As the Liberal Studies Program Coordinator & Advisor, Dr. Colmenares says that part of her job is to “continue to build teacher preparation pipelines,” so that SJSU can offer various undergraduate pathways into teaching. Her classes embrace social justice by addressing narratives that are often excluded from the mainstream; they talk instead about narratives that are typically marginalized or excluded, such as settler-colonialism, ableism, white supremacy, and neoliberalism, to name a few.

Dr. Colmenares believes that teaching for social justice is not just an add-on to her students’ education, but that “it’s meant to become part of their world view as teachers.” She feels that it is “an important core to who I am as a teacher” and she hopes to instill this same passion for teaching and social justice in her students.

**“The students
are the reason
I do what I do.
They bring
me joy and
purpose.”**

**Welcome,
Erica!**

Scott Jarvie

By: Jacqueline Mendoza



Join the College of Humanities and the Arts in welcoming Dr. Scott Jarvie to the Department of English, where he joins us as an Assistant Professor of Literature. Dr. Jarvie majored in English at the University of Notre Dame and continued on to earn his M.Ed. in Secondary English Education. He later earned his Ph.D. in Curriculum, Instruction, & Teacher Education at Michigan State University. Dr. Jarvie has extensive experience as a teacher and writer; he has several publications, has taught at the K-12 and university level, and was an assistant editor for Research in the Teaching of English.

Dr. Jarvie has always had a lifelong love for reading and English literature, but it wasn't until he was at university that he thought about teaching as a career path. He says, "I had a professor who taught a course on American Fiction since 1945, more contemporary literature, that I absolutely loved. It changed my perspective about the value of reading

and literature, and helped me think about my world and who I was in it." Dr. Jarvie became a teacher to extend his process of learning through English literature and to help students express themselves in the same way he did.

Fall 2020 was Dr. Jarvie's first semester at SJSU, teaching undergraduate students in Modern English Grammar and a seminar in English Education. For the Modern English

"...there are a lot of problems with teaching the same texts in schools every year"

Grammar course, he says, "I framed [this] course to focus on critical and cultural conversations around grammar, asking what the role a teacher plays in correcting students' grammar, and how that can be helpful or harmful for people who don't speak white mainstream English or who are bilingual." Dr. Jarvie believes there are a lot of problems

with teaching the same texts in schools every year, and advocates for the use of non-traditional forms of writing in the classroom. He is interested in "the dynamic ways people are composing and writing online in their day-to-day lives."

Dr. Jarvie's unique and modern

approach to English teaching and literature is perfectly shown through one of his recent publications, “You gotta believe in something, something, something: Evoking literacy lives as nostalgia for the future,” where he turns to Frank Ocean’s mixtape “Nostalgia, Ultra” for inspiration. This nontraditional form of inquiry helps students today connect with research about English teaching and literature.

Dr. Jarvie is a Dallas, Texas native who began working on the Texas-Mexico border at the start of his career, where he gained a love for Spanish while teaching multilingual students who were non-native English speakers. This experience is one reason that Scott wanted to teach at SJSU.

“Teachers have been so important in the formation of my career and my life, and working at SJSU will give me the opportunity to do that for students from diverse backgrounds.” Dr. Jarvie states that working with a diverse population, like the one at SJSU, is important to him because he wants to inspire as many students as possible, the same way he was inspired by his professors.

Welcome, Scott!



Kohar Scott

By: Sheila Larson

Kohar Scott may not be new to SJSU, but she now has a new title: Assistant Professor. Scott has been teaching classes as an Adjunct Professor in the Industrial Design Program for the Department of Design at SJSU since 2015. She recently completed a M.A. in Design specializing in Materials and Manufacturing curriculum at San Francisco State University and is looking forward to sharing this new insight with her students. She confirms, “I’m inspired by materials and manufacturing processes and that’s what I’m really excited to bring into my curriculum work at San José State.”

Scott started college as an English major at UCLA with the intention of becoming a teacher, but when she saw what her twin sister was doing at art school, she switched majors and schools. She graduated with a B.S. in Industrial and Product Design from the well-regarded ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, CA. The change made sense: she spent her childhood taking things apart and putting them back together in her home; doors were a

special fascination.

After college, Scott worked as a designer for Mattel, M-Audio, and several consultancies, before starting her own design consultancy, KOHAR Industrial Design. During this time, she designed a product from conception to package design, which she says was “pretty exciting,” but concedes was a rare occurrence in this field. She enjoyed the challenge of working in pro-audio and

“...Industrial design is a balance between technical and creative”

consumer electronics and is especially proud of her work at M-Audio. She feels she was privileged to be there during a ground-breaking time in the audio field—the transition from analog to digital.

An industrial designer by trade, Scott specializes in CMF design (color, materials, finish). Sue Magnusen was introduced to her at her first job, and their involvement in CMF projects from automotive show cars to consumer electronics inspired Scott to pursue this specialization. When asked if design is art, Scott feels that industrial design is a balance between technical and creative,

that it is a “marriage of both.”

“We navigate the priorities of the end-user, client, manufacturer, and the environment. In the end, it’s often our job as industrial designers to create something that solves a problem and/or produces an emotional response for the user, all the while considering technical constraints such as materials, budget, and manufacturing. The result is a process-driven workflow of creativity driven by lots of technical details.”

Scott was born on the east coast, but she grew up in Cupertino. She is happy to have come full circle back to her initial interest of teaching and particularly at San José State. “I went to a private design school. It was competitive and exclusive, so I really love the fact that I can give back through teaching at a culturally diverse state school that’s accessible to more people and that has more to offer than just design.”

Scott’s best advice to students is to pick up a copy of *The Win Without Pitching Manifesto* by Blair Enns. “This book really gives you language to think about your career as you start out because it’s important to have confidence in your value and your skills...there’s a lot

of really great language in that book that will help a new student to understand their value in design.” Her final words are a call to action: “And show up! Always show up, no matter what! That’s really important!” Those are important words for us all.



Congratulations, Kohar!



Raha Shojaei

By: Jacqueline Mendoza

Please welcome Raha Shojaei to the College of Humanities and the Arts. She has joined the Department of Film and Theatre as an assistant professor of Radio, TV, and Film. Shojaei received her Bachelor's degree in Cinema Editing from Art University of Tehran, and later received her Master's in Sound Design from Savannah College of Art and Design. Shojaei obtained extensive skills in audio production and postproduction in the Iranian Film and TV Industry by working on a large number of projects that include short films, documentaries, animated short stories, TV advertisements, and full-length feature films for more than five years.

Shojaei was the very first Iranian woman to work as a sound designer. Shojaei is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the interdisciplinary Fine Art Program at Texas Tech University and her research focuses on the female voice in film, particularly the female voice in New Iranian Cinema.

Shojaei has always had a passion for storytelling and wanted to go into a field that emphasized creativity. She was very creative growing up and studied mathematics in high school but applied to university for Cinema Editing. It was her time there where she learned that many schools don't completely focus on sound design. She notes, "When you

Welcome, Raha!

go into Film Editing you learn about sound and I found how important sound is in the world of Film Editing. I learned most sound design skills while working in the industry and not in school.” It was her passion for sound design that led her to pursue school in the United States.

Shojaei believes that although universities often have a Department of Film where film editing and film making is taught, they don’t encourage students to learn enough about sound design, which is a “very important part of film production.” She believes that SJSU has a lot of potential to improve their Department of Film and Theatre through sound design that other universities don’t have and wants to be an influence in the success of SJSU students.

Shojaei is a first-generation student and is impressed by SJSU’s diversity. She says, “I like

that there are a lot of people here that are also first-generation students. I feel very connected to SJSU in this sense.” Shojaei’s experiences as a first-generation student who isn’t afraid to break barriers in her industry influences her teaching. She hopes to be a champion for SJSU students and their future.



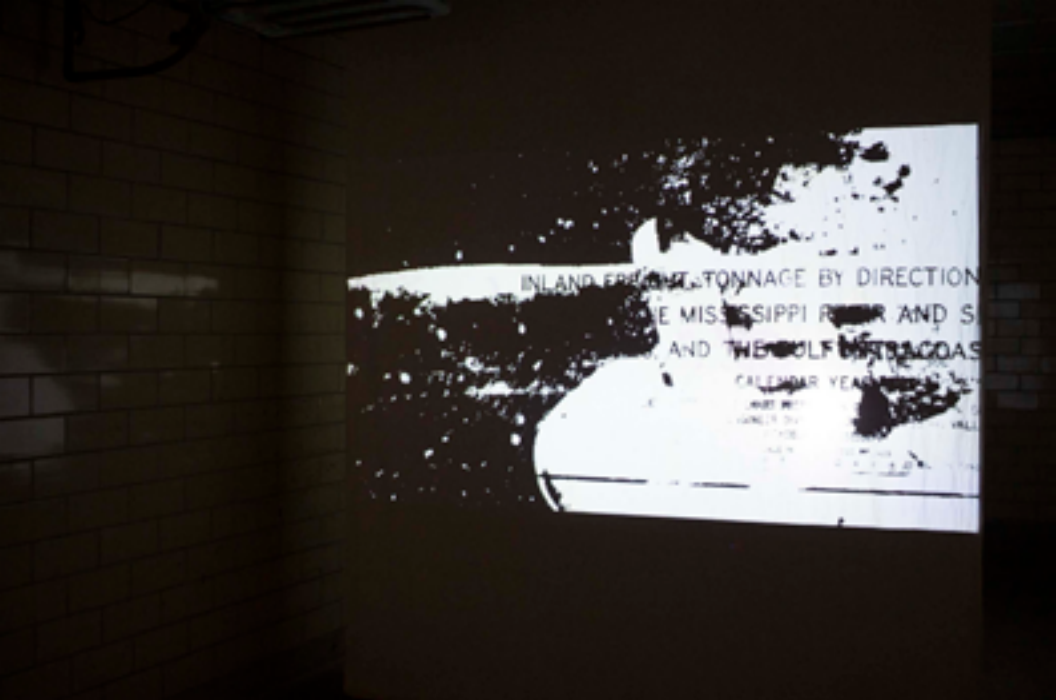
Chelsea Thompto is a transdisciplinary artist and educator working at the intersections of art, trans studies, and technology. She serves on the Board of Directors for the New Media Caucus and on the Editorial Board of *Media-N: Journal of the New Media Caucus*. She received her M.F.A and M.A. in 4-D Art and an M.A. in Gender and Women's Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Chelsea Thompto is currently an assistant professor at San José State University, with the Department of Art and Art History.

Thompto was born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa, a city right beside the Mississippi

River—that played a distinct role in developing Thompto's project *Productive Bodies*. The multifaceted piece questions the relationship between technology and the human body. In the creation of *Productive Bodies*, Thompto hoped to set up a situation that challenged people to think critically about an issue without leading to a single conclusion. The project combines various mediums, including video, computer code, 3-D modeling, and digital fabrication. These mediums all work to bring her project to life. For instance, the computer code mixed each element to produce unpredictable results throughout her exhibition. The project's unpredictability relates to Thompto's interest with the

Chelsea Thompto

By: Christian Jimenez



Mississippi River and how it is forever changing.

Another project that Thompto has produced, *Transmaterial Body*, is about how people can visualize bodies and how technology can expand physical limits. To Thompto, the idea in *Transmaterial Body* was to see what would happen if she made her own physical body have a more digital presence. The meshing of technology and body led Thompto to incorporate a self-developed web server where people can connect to and see a live tracking of Thompto's heart rate—a mediation between tech and real life. Thompto believes injecting non-human

infrastructures with human qualities causes exciting things to occur.

Thompto has various inspirations behind her work with *Productive Bodies* and *Transmaterial Body*, the first being a poet and theorist named Micha Cardenas, who works with trans people's poetics in the digital realm. Micha Cardenas's influence is noticeable in Thompto's work, mainly how Thompto studies the connections between the human body and technology. An additional influence on Thompto's work is an Argentinian fiction writer, Jorge Luis Borges. Borges' non-linear, short storytelling method was

intriguing to Thompto, an aspect that has worked its way into her projects.

Amidst the uncertainty of the current time we live in, Thompto is still excited and grateful to have become an SJSU faculty member. Because Thompto's work is mostly technologically based, adapting to remote teaching has gone well and has led to new ideas from her students' work and her own. Thompto looks forward to her future at SJSU and when the school community will be able to reunite once again inside the beauty of art galleries.

Welcome,
Chelsea!



Angela Wu

By: Sara Garcia



Join the College of Humanities and the Arts in welcoming Angela Wu to the Department of Design, as an Assistant Professor in the Animation/Illustration program (ANI). Wu is an alumni here at San José State University (SJSU), where she earned her Masters of Arts in Animation/Illustration. Wu's interests include animation, illustration, and experimenting with creative technologies such as Unity and Blender.

“My colleagues and my students are what make the job really fun.”

Wu earned her Bachelor of Arts in English at UC Berkeley. As a grad student, she came to SJSU, where she took

several classes in art, design, and animation before finally deciding on the ANI program. While teaching at SJSU as a grad student, to her surprise, she found that she enjoyed it due to the students and

professors here at SJSU. “I owe a lot to my SJSU professors, who basically taught me everything I know about being an artist and being a teacher. I liked it so much I decided to keep on for as long as they had a job for me.”

Wu has worked on a variety of projects, such as stories, games, and illustrations. Her latest project, *The Grimwood*, is a

multiplayer card game and an accomplishment that she's very proud of. Wu says this was the "most complicated thing I'd ever done." Her project took a lot of time: making the game and art, playtesting and revising, running a Kickstarter campaign, and finally getting it up on Amazon. The project made her realize there is so much more to being an independent artist than just making the art.

Being an alumni, Wu is excited to be back in her community and working here at SJSU. "My colleagues and my students are what make the job really fun." She looks forward to working at SJSU by "building more interdisciplinary connections because so many people working at SJSU seem awesome." Wu teaches drawing and animation classes in the ANI program. "I get to teach what I practice and practice what I teach."

Going online has presented its challenges, "the students and colleagues of the ANI program have really come together to work through it as a community. A person couldn't ask for a better group to go through a pandemic with."

When she's not teaching, she's drawing, learning, watching the latest animation (her favorite is

Coraline), and playing video and tabletop games, such as *Last of Us 2* and D&D.



Welcome, Angela!