

# Hope and Despair

*How and Why*

*We Map out the  
Future*

20-  
24.10.25

Humanities  
& Public Life  
Conference



## Introduction

Welcome to the **Dawson College Humanities & Public Life Conference**. The conference is an annual event that introduces CEGEP students to the ambiance, culture, and discovery of academic conferences. We provide bridges between great ideas, new research, and exciting debates, as well as showcasing how the questions we tackle in the humanities are relevant to concrete, real-world situations. This year, the conference is taking place from October 20 to October 24, 2025, and the theme is **Hope and Despair: How and Why We Map out the Future**.

We have encouraged a vast array of contributors. We have invited those in literature to talk about science fiction and fantasy. How have the marginalized attempted to envision a better future? We will discuss aboriginal visionary fiction and Afrofuturism. We will explore Francophone science fiction.

Political theorists have contributed ideas about theories of history, change and development. What is the new geopolitical landscape that Canada must cope with? How are Eastern Europeans mapping out their European Union futures? How has Russia come to terms with the end of its dominance over Eastern Europe? How does Vladimir Putin see the future of Russia?

Philosophers, linguists and psychologists will have ideas about the mind and critical thinking. How do people map out the future using the tools that they have? From the perspective of economics, does rational choice theory still have currency? How are conspiracy theories put together and how do they gain traction? Religions have their own visions of the future. What link is there between religion and mental health?

We have also invited speakers who can address how we deal with the future. The strong trend over the last 20 years towards meditation, yoga and mindfulness points to a huge market in anxiety relief. We are hosting sessions that can help students navigate our new epoch of disruption.

Finally, we have asked students to participate in the conference in two important ways. We have asked them to contribute creative work that outlines their visions, hopes and worries about the future. Come to our panel in which short stories, poems, music and visual art will be awarded with prize money for English, Music, Visual Arts and French. Added to the award panel, we have asked students to lead their own panel. We have chosen 3 students to outline their vision of the future in terms of technology and social media. We are looking forward to their visionary and critical work!

We hope you feel enriched and challenged with the conference speakers. Join us for the Wine & Cheese at the end of the week, to wrap up the event and congratulate speakers and continue our discussions in an informal setting!

Monday

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21.10.25

Tuesday

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Wednesday

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Friday

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25.10.25



20.10.25

8:30 am

John Hunting

# Media, Mediation and Time Consciousness

Situated between a future that is not yet and a past that is no longer, the present is often experienced as a significant turning point, if not crisis. The idea of “breaking news” gets at this idea that what is current has broken ties with the past. Oddly however the present itself is always in the process of both passing and becoming something new. This process involves a hanging on to what we must assume is on going; the present in short is mediated by our assumptions and expectations. It is also however the site of suffering. Media, we might say, writes large this process of mediating our vulnerability, understanding and goals, be they for change or to preserve the status quo.

**John Hunting** is a Humanities teacher at Dawson College with research interests in ethics, media witnessing and the aesthetics of photography. John has a PhD in Communications from McGill University, a MFA in Philosophy from the University of Ottawa and a BFA from Concordia.

# Monday



## Rational Hope

Alt feels to many, for good reasons, that we are living through especially bleak times. Is catastrophic climate change still avoidable? Can liberal democracy, the form of government that guarantees our most basic freedoms, survive in the 21st century? Will the rise of AI cause a massive loss of job opportunities? The list goes on. The question is, how can we keep our hope rationally, that is, for good and compelling reasons. This talk will explore ways for each of the components of Humanities contributes to this task. First, Knowledge and critical thinking: let us examine the reasons that lead us into despair and consider the flaws in them, weakening their hold on us. Second, World Views: we will consider what we can learn from comparing our situation with past world views which held that “the end of the world” is near. Finally, Ethics: given that hope is scarce and despair is common, what can we be morally expected to do about this?

**Oran Magal** teaches Humanities and Philosophy at Dawson College and McGill University

## The Transformation of the International System of Cooperation: Roadmaps for Global Citizens

Jennifer will discuss how changes in geopolitics and the nature of today's security threats are transforming the system of international cooperation that was built up after the Second World War. She will touch on how these shifts shape issues such as conflict, migration, development and global health - as well as what they mean for how today's 'global citizens' can still make a difference and what kind of role Canada might play in a shifting international landscape.

**Jennifer M. Welsh** is the Canada 150 Research Chair in Global Governance and Security at McGill University, and the Director of the Max Bell School of Public Policy. She was previously Chair in International Relations at the European University Institute and Professor in International Relations at the University of Oxford, where she co-founded the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict. From 2013-2016, she served as Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, on the Responsibility to Protect. She currently sits as a member of the IDP Protection Expert Group, based in UNHCR.

Jennifer's research has focused on contemporary challenges in global governance, conflict management, and Canadian foreign policy, including humanitarian action, collective responses to genocide and war crimes, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and forced displacement. While at McGill, Jennifer has led several collaborative research projects with Canadian and international scholars, built a vibrant community of faculty and students interested in global affairs and Canada's role in the world, and co-directed a Canada-wide research network on Women, Peace, and Security. She has frequently provided input into policy initiatives for the Canadian government and the United Nations, as well as for international NGOs. She is also a leading public intellectual in Canada, through her CBC Massey Lectures (published as *The Return of History: Conflict, Migration and Geopolitics in the 21st Century*), her op-ed writing for Canadian newspapers, and her role as co-host of the bilingual podcast, *Tour de Table*. Jennifer co-chairs the Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect and the Committee on Security Studies for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her research and policy engagement have been recognized through her election as Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and as International Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Jennifer has a BA from the University of Saskatchewan in Political Science, and a M.Phil. and D.Phil. from the University of Oxford, where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar.

# Preparing for National & Geopolitical Emergencies: A Roadmap

My name is **Benoit**, and I am a survivor. I began working at a fairly young age, around eleven or twelve years old, due to my father's illness. As a young man, I felt a responsibility to support my mother during those hard times. I went door to door collecting empty bottles to earn money for our family. At the age of seventeen, I became a father myself, and that is when the true survival began. I had to work and provide for my family's well-being, providing them with whatever means I had at the time.

Over the years, I've acquired a large amount of knowledge and understanding on the subject of survival. This information was built through personal experience, learning how to navigate difficult situations. Today, I am financially stable, not because I desire a rich or glamorous life, but because I never want to go back to living under constant stress again. My mission is to help and educate others to become self-reliant, by using the tools available to them. The most powerful tool we possess is our mind and I encourage people to develop their knowledge across a wide range of subjects to be better equipped during uncertainty.

We live in a time where people are becoming increasingly dependent on technology, specifically Artificial intelligence. While it's a useful tool, people have started to rely on it for nearly everything. We must consider the consequences of a power outage or a cyberattack because in such cases, most people who lack practical skills and independence will face serious challenges. It is essential to be self-reliant and learn how to function without technology.

I want to help people find peace of mind through preparation because stress often comes from avoiding action. In 2012, I purchased 300 acres of land and built a fully autonomous base. It includes fruit trees, a lake for fishing, a forest for hunting, land to raise small farm animals and many other amenities.

My goal is to prepare the next generation to face any crisis or challenges with resilience. I believe, humbly, that I am among one of the most knowledgeable and prepared people in Canada when it comes to survival.

## Topics covered:

How to prepare properly:

- Where to find drinking water, how to purify and filter it
- Cooking food without electricity
- Preserving food without refrigeration
- Heating water without electricity
- Heating: 5 alternative methods
- Lighting without power
- Securing your home and protecting yourself
- Perimeter security
- Essential supplies to store
- Choosing the right options for long-term food storage
- The 4 types of useful generators
- The 50 must-have items in case of emergency
- The importance of wood fire
- Emergency first aid



## Aspirational Iconography: The EU Flag and the Hopeful Future in Europe

Protesters, government officials, and political parties in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have prominently displayed the European Union flag over the last decade. Waving the EU flag is strange not only because these countries are not members but also because the flag began its life as a banal bureaucratic marker of EU institutions. Now, however, it is an emotionally charged symbol of European identity that political actors in these countries use to assert both their national and European identities. In doing so, they express an aspiration for a future where they are official members of the EU and where they are defined by their European-ness rather than their Soviet-era past. I trace how the EU flag's prominence in the 2004-2007 EU enlargements first transformed it from a banal marker to an emotionally charged symbol. Now flying the EU flag together with national ones is an emotional assertion of national identity in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, with the EU flag transformed into a complementary rather than competing symbolic resource for nation-building. Most importantly, the flag has become a potent anti-Russian geopolitical symbol in response to an increasingly authoritarian and aggressive Russia. By flying the EU flag alongside their national ones, Georgians, Moldovans, and Ukrainians not only declared themselves to be fully European but have also insisted that their "peripheral" societies would actively map out a European future for themselves. [This talk is based on a forthcoming article co-authored with Juliet Johnson in the *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, titled "Aspirational Iconography: The European Union Flag as an Extraterritorial Political Symbol."]

**Benjamin Forest** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, and an Associate Member in Political Science at McGill University, Quebec, Canada. He is also a member of Quebec's Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship (CSDC) and the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC). He has been at McGill University since 2006, after eight years at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. His work focuses on the geographical nature of identity and political communities, particularly the use of spatial concepts like compactness, contiguity, boundary, place, region, heritage, and memory to create and maintain national, racial, and ethnic distinctions. This work includes a long-standing engagement with ideas of both symbolic and political representation.

## Borders, Boundaries and Indigenous Territorial Claims: Mapping Alberta and Quebec Separatism

My presentation compares and contrasts Alberta and Quebec separatist movements from the perspective of Indigenous territorial claims. How do maps and mapping play a role in separatist movements? What kind of legal concepts and territorial principles do separatists appeal to when making territorial claims? What are the implications of Indigenous treaty and land rights for separatism? How do the principles of Indigenous mapping play a role in countering separatist narratives?

**Michelle Braiden** is a professor at Dawson College and has been teaching courses in philosophy, political theory and environmental ethics for the past 20 years. She also has a PhD in Geography from McGill University and wrote her PhD dissertation on international boundary disputes and Indigenous territorial disputes.



21.10.25

8:30 am

Alexandra Bandina

## Does Economics Clash with Ethics? A Study of Sweatshops in Developing Countries

Sweatshops in developing countries present a vivid case study of how hope and despair are intertwined in mapping out the future of global labor. On one hand, they provide jobs and opportunities where alternatives may be scarce; on the other, they embody exploitation and inequality. This presentation draws on economic insights to argue that the root ethical challenge lies not simply in low wages or poor conditions, but in the concentration of power. When monopoly forces—whether through licensure, protectionism, boycotts, trade unions, or price controls—restrict choice and opportunity, despair flourishes. By contrast, more open and competitive systems can foster hope by enabling individuals and communities to shape their futures. The session will explore how reframing sweatshop debates through this lens allows us to move beyond polarized moral judgments, toward understanding the conditions under which economic structures either sustain oppression or create pathways for dignity and development.

**Alexandra Bandina** is a Dawson College graduate and a current student at Concordia University's John Molson School of Business, where she is majoring in Finance.

# Tuesday



## Our obligations to the past and future: Edmund Burke's Social Contract

Unlike other social contract theorists like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, who all presented the contract as fundamentally between citizens and the state, the Irish political thinker Edmund Burke argued that society ought to be properly understood as a contract between the dead, the living, and those yet to come. Burke framed this as part of a wider defense of established hierarchies, leading him to be massively influential within conservative political thought. However, his contract theory can also be understood in line with other strains of ideological thought, notably environmentalism and left-liberalism. This talk aims to explain Burke's social contract, identify reasonable and unreasonable objections to it, and conclude with an assessment that it ought to be taken seriously by people of all political persuasions who care about the future.

**Donal Gill** teaches in the department of political science at Dawson College. He has a PhD from Concordia University and has published on the history of political thought, contemporary Canadian Politics, and Canada-US relations.

## Documentary Film Screening: Shining Light: A Vietnamese Canadian Legacy



It's late April 1975 and the Communist North Vietnamese army has entered the city and thousands are desperate to flee. Mui is nine months pregnant with Anh and they are on the roof of the American embassy. Her husband and two year old son are also there hoping to escape on a helicopter.

When the last US Marine Chopper lifts off, they are still stranded on the roof. What transpires over the next three weeks is an improbable and remarkable sequence of events. The family escapes on the Truong Xuan, the last Cargo ship to leave Saigon; Anh's birth on that boat two days later as it begins to sink; a Danish freighter, the Clara Maersk that comes to their rescue; a British Royal Air Force helicopter that also comes to their rescue; a refugee camp in Hong Kong where they meet Canadian immigration officers; and lastly their emigration to Canada.

50 years later - mother, daughter and other key protagonists connected to their story, including the helicopter crewman and the Canadian immigration officer meet in Montreal to reconstruct how it happened and who they've become today. Anh calls it "bringing together all the pieces of her survival puzzle - a reconciliation of the past and present".

**Robbie Hart** has been producing and directing award winning, international documentaries since 1986. He has over 65 documentary films to his credit and has directed throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the United States and the Caribbean. He has also made several highly acclaimed films in his hometown of Montreal, Québec as well as others across Canada. Robbie's camera has focused on a wide range of subject matter ranging from politics, human rights, international relations and the developing world, to arts, culture and sports. Each film revealing universal narratives, personal storylines and engaging characters who strive to empower themselves, and their community.

Documentary series, feature docs, short docs, festival distinctions, theatrical releases and international distribution have all played a role in the remarkable 39 year history of the company he founded, ADOBE PRODUCTIONS INTERNATIONAL.



## Looking to the Past for a more Hopeful Future: Philosophy to the Rescue

The observation that we live in an age of political, social and cultural uncertainty and anxiety is palpably self evident. We are feeling anxious about the rapid changes in our societies and our educational institutions. Our contemporary discussions about these changes are, of course, very different from those in the 18th century, yet there are important shared interests and concerns. Especially noteworthy is the discussion about the importance of truth, autonomy and freedom at institutions such as universities and colleges. Regrettably, philosophy is not front and center in our contemporary discussions as it was in the 18th century. The aim of this paper is to take a small step towards remedying this by examining some famous debates between Johann Fichte and Friedrich Schiller in the 1780's about philosophy, art and education. Could an 18th century poet and playwright artist and a philosopher have some answers for us for building a more hopeful future?

**Susan-Judith Hoffman** teaches philosophy at Dawson College and McGill. Her interests include Ancient Greek philosophy and German Romanticism.

## Imagining Otherwise: Hope, Resistance, and Reclamation in Visionary Fiction

What kinds of futures emerge when we centre story, memory, and community instead of conquest, control, and extraction in the “final frontier” of science fiction? This presentation explores Visionary Fiction—speculative fiction rooted in real-world resistance and radical hope—as a powerful way to map possible futures in the face of climate crisis, cultural erasure, and systemic injustice. Drawing on my Visionary Fiction class, I'll share how students engaged with Indigenous- and Afro-futurist fiction to reflect on themes of resurgence, language, dreaming, and survival. We'll look at how storytelling becomes a form of activism, how ethical world-making reshapes power, and how “rehearsing” the future by reimagining it helps us navigate despair. I'll include student writing and a short interactive exercise to spark collective imagining.

A settler immigrant who spent her childhood in Louisiana and young adulthood in France, **Pauline Morel** teaches English at Dawson College, where she time-travels through Southern swamps, borderlands, and post-apocalyptic dreamscapes with her students. She's passionate about stories that resist, remember, and reimagine. A former coordinator of ALC's Literature Profile and the First Peoples Journeys program, she now brings her passion for Visionary Fiction to New School and beyond.



# One Day, We'll All Be Buddhas (or, There's Nothing Wrong With You)

This presentation explores a central tenet of the Tibetan Buddhist worldview: the belief that all beings possess an innate potential to awaken to their true nature as Buddhas. No matter how flawed or conflicted we may feel, each of us, without exception, contains the seed of enlightenment. This perspective offers a powerful counterpoint to cultural narratives of lack, original sin, or inherent brokenness.

In a time of increasing polarization and anxiety, the Tibetan conviction that we are all future Buddhas offers a radically hopeful orientation. I will suggest that this view can enrich our lives, whether or not we take this proposition literally. The presentation will invite reflection on the implications of seeing ourselves and others as unfolding expressions of awakened potential.

To ground these ideas, I'll propose simple meditative exercises that offer a direct experience of this worldview. Perhaps we'll discover that Buddhahood isn't so far in the future after all.

**Daniel Goldsmith** has been teaching in the humanities department since 2009, where his courses deal with questions of self-identity, compassionate action, and enlightened consciousness. His courses draw on his formal education (BA and MA from McGill University), as well as the nearly 2 years he spent in India learning about yoga and meditation. He is also a Certified Core Energetics Practitioner (CCEP), and believes deeply that education needs to be as much about the body as it does the mind.



22.10.25

8:30 am

Brian Redekopp

## This Just In: Maybe There's Hope

In a frenzied media landscape saturated with negativity, it can feel like a dystopian hellscape is just around the corner, if not here already. But do we give media ecosystems too much power in shaping our sense of the future? In this talk we'll explore (1) the extent to which our sense of the future is shaped by the media we're exposed to, (2) how accurately the negativity of the news reflects the negativity of the world, and (3) ways to adjust our media intake to provide a more accurately grounded perspective on tomorrow (and maybe even a little optimism).

**Brian Redekopp** holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from McGill and has been teaching philosophy and humanities courses at Dawson since 2011. Currently facilitator of the Society and Technology profile in Social Science, he is broadly interested in how to help students develop a more critical and empowered understanding of the technology shaping their lives, communication technologies in particular.

# Wednesday



# What is Ikigai?



What is Ikigai? A Japanese word combining IKI meaning “life” or “alive,” and GAI, which signifies “value,” “worth,” or “benefit”. The term suggests finding joy and purpose in life, all the while being financially sustainable.

In this interactive session, you’ll explore (and find!) the activity that combines what drives you, what the world needs, what you can be paid for, and what you’re good at.

Through self-reflection exercises and group discussions, you’ll gain clarity on your goals, passions, and career path.

Whether you’re uncertain about your future or simply looking to align your studies with your deeper interests, this workshop will guide you toward a more fulfilling and purposeful life ahead.

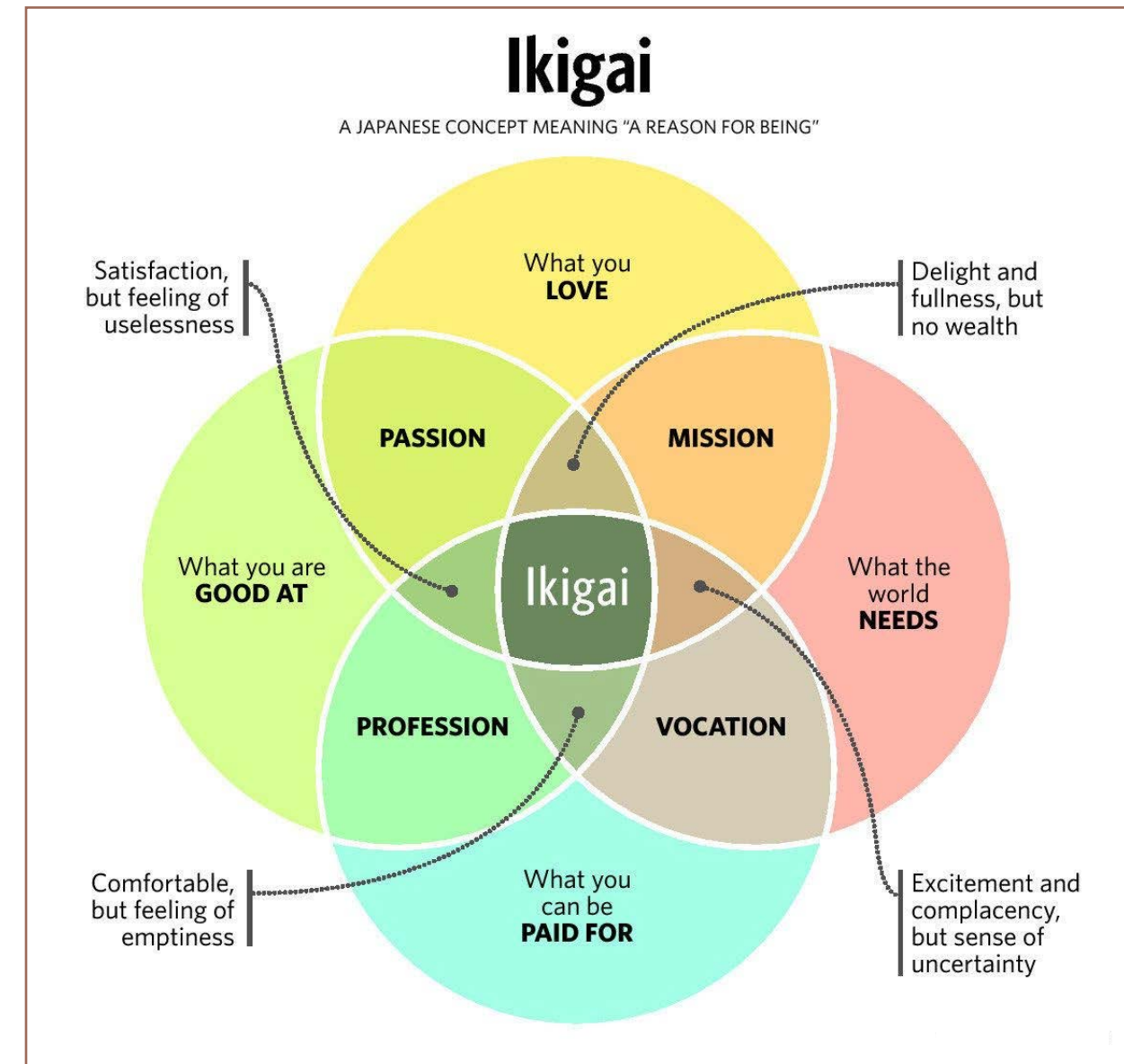
Embrace the journey of self-discovery and leave with insights to navigate your personal and professional aspirations. Find the crossroads between passion, mission, vocation, and profession to help you discover your unique purpose, so that you can truly do what you love, and love what you do.

With a strong passion and interest for health, **Carina** devoted her studies to conventional and allopathic medicine, with a BSc in Microbiology & Immunology at McGill University; including studies in the Faculty of Pharmacology in Montpellier, France.

Her main intentions and questions have always revolved around finding the optimal conditions to reestablish health and to maintain health. Through her yoga studies and practices, Carina now teaches Yoga Therapy and creates a bridge between human Physiology and Yoga Philosophy.

With extensive training and over 20 years experience, Carina now offers private consultations to address particular health needs of each individual; and facilitates Anatomy, Physiology, Stress Management and other aspects Yoga Therapeutics via Teacher Training Programs.

The passion and curiosity continue, and fuel her ongoing quest to share the essentials of health, and how to make it accessible, efficient, and sustainable.





## A CC4C Talk and Workshop: What Would it Take to Effectively Resist War?

The Creative Collective for Change was founded in fall 2022 by two Dawson teachers and a small group of their students, who were seeking to find meaningful ways to respond to their growing sense of anxiety and disempowerment in the face of our deepening societal crises. We turned towards the power of nonviolent resistance: a uniquely human activity that can not only bring real change but also enable us to speak our truths and support our individual and collective agency. In this talk and workshop, we will introduce you to the rich history of anti-war activism and engage you in designing your own creative action that will put those supporting militarism and war on the defensive.

**A Note to Faculty:** During this workshop, CC4C teachers and students will work with groups of your students to design their own dilemma action. If you are inspired, we invite you to further develop these projects with your students or create new ones linked to the specific focus of your class and participate in our fall Design Dilemma Challenge. The winning submissions will be presented to the Dawson Community via our CC4C Instagram at @cc4change. For more information, contact Kim or Pat.

**Pat Romano** is a long-time member of the Humanities faculty at Dawson College. Her academic background is in political science, with a particular interest in war and peace issues, nonviolent forms of resistance and gender issues. As a teacher, she has long sought strategies to tackle deep human problems without leaving her students more discouraged and overwhelmed.

**Kim Simard** is at once a teacher, artist and community activist. Currently teaching at Dawson in Cinema/Communications, she has worked and volunteered all over the world and is committed to using art as a tool for community development and empowerment. Her work with the Creative Collective for Change is simple:

1. encourage the use of creativity in a world that desperately needs more and
2. to learn from those involved how to inspire positive change collectively.

### The Exhibit

This fall's CC4C's Creative Change Maker Exhibit and Gala will be held in collaboration with the HPL Conference.

Each spring, the Creative Collective for Change makes a call for submissions to the Creative Change Makers Award. We are seeking to discover the voices of some of the artistic activists within our student community, who make work that challenges and presents alternatives to the violence and harmful narratives we see in the world today. This year's exhibit will highlight some inspiring works that answered our call in a profound way. With themes ranging from harm done through waste and greed to a call for increased indigenous voices in media, each project is a reminder that despair will not engulf us if we use creativity to inspire change.

With the help of the Dawson Foundation, we offer cash prizes of \$100 to our 3 winning entries. You are invited to join us at our gala, where we will meet the finalists and present the awards. Stay tuned for further details.

## How History Can Light Up the Future

Ken will give a slideshow presentation called *How History Can Light Up the Future*. For this, he will draw on two books. The first is his recently published *Shadows of Tyranny: Defending Democracy in an Age of Dictatorship*. The book warns that if history doesn't repeat itself, it certainly extrapolates and often it rhymes. An audacious work of nonfiction, *Shadows of Tyranny* shows how the current resurgence of authoritarianism in the United States recalls Europe in the 1930s. Ken will also draw on his work-in-progress, *Canadian Defiance: Ben Franklin's Invaders Meet the Ghosts of Montreal*. It looks back at American invasions of the 18th and 19th centuries, celebrates the emergence of Canadian literary culture, and argues that a MAGA-style uprising could never take root in Canada.

**Ken McGoogan** has published seventeen books, among them several best-sellers. He has won the Pierre Berton Award for History, the Writers' Trust Biography Prize, the Canadian Authors' Association History Award, the UBC Medal for Canadian Biography, and an American Christopher Award for "a work of artistic excellence that affirms the highest values of the human spirit." Born in Montreal, Ken grew up in a francophone resort town on the north shore.

Before turning mainly to books, Ken worked as a journalist for two decades (Toronto Star, Montreal Star, Calgary Herald). He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ryerson and an MFA in creative writing from University of British Columbia. Ken has served as chair of the Public Lending Right Commission and is a fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and The Explorers' Club. He has taught writing in the MFA program at University of King's College in Halifax and the University of Toronto (School of Continuing Studies). He sails with Adventure Canada as a resource historian.

More at [www.kenmcgoogan.com](http://www.kenmcgoogan.com).

## Projecting Futures: Hope, Despair, and the Cinematic Imagination

This presentation explores how cinema functions as a cultural map for imagining the future, oscillating between visions of hope and despair. By analyzing key films—*Children of Men*, *Black Panther*, and *Her*—we examine how filmmakers use narrative, aesthetics, and emotional tone to construct imagined futures that reflect societal anxieties, desires, and possibilities. Drawing on concepts like José Esteban Muñoz's "utopia as method" and Afrofuturism, the talk highlights how cinema offers not only speculative storytelling but also affective blueprints for how we live with the uncertainty of what lies ahead. Through this lens, we consider: What emotional futures do films prepare us for—and who gets to imagine them?



## Why Putin's Reign Will Last

Many people think that, if you were to remove Putin from power, relations with Russia could conceivably go back to normalcy. This is a highly desirable outcome for the Western countries, including Canada, and therefore, we would have a great incentive to try to remove Putin from power.

In this talk, I will explain why I think that this assumption is flawed and that Putin's departure would ultimately not change much. I will be exploring the three main avenues to remove Putin from power: the overthrow of his regime from the outside through war, its overthrow from the inside through revolution, or the death – whether natural or not – of the dictator.

Drawing on rational deterrence theory, historical aspects of Russian politics since the Middle Ages, and sociological studies of Russia from the 1990s to the present, I will argue that these approaches are insufficient for the changes we desire, and thus, Putin's reign is likely to last.

**Balthazar Stengelin** is a PhD candidate in Public Administration at ENAP Montreal, where he researches the formulation and processes of Canadian Arctic policy. He is also a researcher and a coordinator for a university research group on Russian disinformation. He holds a Master of Arts from Carleton University in European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, where he studied the narratives that the Kremlin employs to frame its Arctic policy.

## CC4C's Creative Change Maker Gala

This fall's CC4C's Creative Change Maker Exhibit and Gala will be held in collaboration with the HPL Conference. Each spring, the Creative Collective for Change makes a call for submissions to the Creative Change Makers Award. We are seeking to discover the voices of some of the artistic activists within our student community, who make work that challenges and presents alternatives to the violence and harmful narratives we see in the world today. This year's exhibit will highlight some inspiring works that answered our call in a profound way. With themes ranging from harm done through waste and greed to a call for increased indigenous voices in media, each project is a reminder that despair will not engulf us if we use creativity to inspire change.

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## Shakespeare and the Manosphere: How a 17th century playwright's work can map both present and past.

How could Shakespeare be in any way relevant in the 21st century? At first glance, it might seem a difficult query to answer since times appear to have radically changed from then to now. Yet, despite the overwhelming social, political, economic, and technological changes that have rocked the last four centuries, when reading much of The Bard's work, we do not only hear echos of the past but persistently resonate themes that hold weight and relevance today. Measure for Measure, written during James I reign of England, Wales, and Scotland, is a literary anchor when mapping past and present. The experience of the principal character Isabella is found 16 centuries earlier in the nascent stages of Christianity when reading early Christian texts like Tertullian's On the Veiling of Virgins, to four centuries later in the 21st century's #MeToo movement disclosures. The rhetoric and tactics of the Manosphere (a grouping of men's rights activists, pick up artists, men going their own way, and incels) in social media and online forums, is displayed through the words and actions of several male characters (and plot points) in Measure for Measure (whilst finding their roots in that period of early Christianity sixteen centuries prior to the Bard's birth). Thus, why is Shakespeare relevant? Perhaps not every play still has resonance today. But some still remain as critical literary anchor points in a mapping of history, ontology, human relationships, discourse human rights and more both in our more distant past as well as our present-day circumstances.

**Diana Rice** has an BA in History, and International Relations (focus colonial north america) with an MA in the History and Philosophy of Religion (thesis focus medieval mystics & gender presentation in male vs female authored text) started at Dawson College in September 2012. Rice began managing the Dawson College Peace Centre in 2016, changing the Centre's direction to focus on justice issues, from food security to environmental racism. Rice has been published and presented at conferences about peace, environmental sustainability, environmental racism, and the Dawson College Living Campus Initiative. Her work has had a significant impact on the Dawson College campus and beyond including helping to launch the Transboundary Water In-Cooperative Network . In 2019, Rice joined the Stakeholders Advisory Board, for the Institute for Research and

# Thursday



Education on Race Relations project, Communities United for Racial Equality. In 2025, she realized her 10 year dream of expanding free meal services to students at Dawson, allowing for students and community members to eat healthy free breakfast or lunch four days a week. Her most recent research work returns to her academic roots of history, religion, textual evaluation, and gender & queer studies which she hopes to continue to pursue alongside her sustainability & justice endeavours.

## Mapping Out Success for New Ideas & Entrepreneurs

All large and dominant firms have started small. They had to find their way to greatness by building and mapping out their strategies to success. In so doing, they had to face powerful barriers and debilitating odds. The entrepreneurs who succeed are able to map out a path that would make their firms distinctive and prevent the powerful from destroying them. How do they do it? Using small research results I will describe the path of three Montreal firms and use that to propose a conceptualisation of how the small should map a strategy that has chances of success.

**Taïeb Hafsi** is an Emeritus professor at HEC Montreal. He has been elected fellow of the Royal society of Canada in 2018. He holds an MS degree from the Sloan school at MIT Massachusetts and a doctorate in business administration from the Harvard business school.

Taïeb Hafsi's research work has generally focused on managing in situations of complexity, when cause-effect relationships are unknown and uncertainty overwhelming. Over the span of his career, he studied decision-making in large complex organizations, including diversified firms, state-owned ones, and national governments. More recent work has dealt with such issues as: organizational leadership, strategy and emotions, business social behavior, governance and strategy, strategic transformation, the role of entrepreneurs in dealing with complexity, strategy in non profit organizations, strategy in emerging economies (in particular in Asia and Africa).

## Uncovering the Psychological, Social, and Cultural Foundations of Conspiracy Thinking

During periods of social upheaval and uncertainty, conspiracy theories can appear as a convincing way for people to make sense of their surroundings. Drawing on insights from psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, this talk will examine why these theories gain popularity when people are scared or unsure, and how they can provide a sense of control, belonging, and hope, particularly for those who feel excluded or powerless. Based on recent research, we will examine the psychological needs that conspiracy theories fulfill, including a desire for control and a sense of identity, as well as the cognitive biases that make these theories appear plausible. We will also examine the social and cultural factors that drive their spread. By illustrating how conspiracy theories shape visions of the future, sometimes grim, other times hopeful, this talk encourages students to consider how different communities interpret the unknown. It will also address implications for fostering critical thinking, societal trust, and social cohesion in an age of widespread misinformation.

**Dr. Stéphane Gaskin** holds a PhD in Psychology from McGill University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in behavioral neuroscience at the University of California, San Diego. He is a psychology professor at Dawson College and authored “Behavioral Neuroscience: Fundamentals and Beyond” (SAGE Publishing). Currently, he is writing on the psychology of conspiracy theories for Guilford Press. His research focuses on the psychological, social, and cultural roots of belief in conspiracy theories. Over the past two years, he has taught a course on this subject at Dawson College. His work combines psychology, critical thinking, and cultural analysis to examine how and why conspiracy theories flourish, especially during times of uncertainty and change.

## Religion and Mental Health: A Canadian Case Study

How does religion shape mental health outcomes in contemporary Canada? This talk explores the complex relationship between faith, spirituality, and psychological well-being within a diverse, pluralistic society. Drawing on recent Canadian case studies, we will examine how religious participation can foster resilience, social support, and a sense of meaning—factors often associated with hope and recovery. At the same time, we will consider cases where religious beliefs and community pressures may deepen feelings of despair or stigma, particularly around issues such as depression, anxiety, or identity. By situating religion within Canada's multicultural and secularizing context, the presentation highlights how individuals and communities navigate the future of mental health through spiritual practices, institutional support, or disengagement from faith traditions. The session invites students to critically reflect on the double-edged role of religion in shaping hope and despair, and what this means for mapping out future approaches to mental health.

**Justin Muthaih** is a Dawson College graduate and currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University. His research focuses on the intersections of religion, culture, and mental health, with particular attention to how diverse communities in Canada navigate questions of meaning, resilience, and psychological well-being.



## Touchstones for Future Conversations

To make art or present your art in a different place than where you live, whether it is visual, written or a performance, you are creating a touchstone for future conversation. You share your talent and ideas on art and social codes. In art, the maps of the future are partly experiments with unknown or many possible responses. For my presentation, I will be speaking about a residency I did in June 2026 in Similkameen Valley in British Columbia. I plotted out several different drawing ideas to describe or chart my observations. I will also have an audience participation segment, where people can draw, mark and record their impression. The future becomes richer or wider with new observations of the cultural landscape.

**Natalie Olanick** teaches in the Fine Arts Department at Dawson College. In her art practice she paints, writes and curates. She has participated in national and international exhibitions. She has been a member and on the board of Mercer Union and articule. She has also participated in the Writers in the Disciplines (WID) in 2018. A couple of recent group exhibitions she participated in, were at Galerie LaRoche/Joncas, summer 2022- *La guerre ça sert à quoi? Absolument rien... (Résistances)* / *War, What Is It Good For, Absolutely Nothing. (Resistance)* 2023-40x 40 , Gallery 1313 in Toronto

## Hope in Stories for Children— Even When Talking About Despair

Hope is an essential ingredient in stories for children—even when talking about despair. The best children's literature does not sugarcoat topics such as death, war, climate change or social injustice, but it does present them in a dose that young readers can digest and in a manner that helps them make sense of difficult realities. Protagonists in kids lit are almost never completely helpless, either; one way or another, they are agents of change. In this talk, children's author Andrew Katz will discuss how he balanced hope and despair in his latest picture book, *Jackie's Drawing*, which begins with a "rusty haze" falling over a city, forcing everyone to shelter inside and separating a young girl from the natural world that inspires her creativity. Participants will also be invited to reflect on a tough subject and how they might present it to children through a story.

**Andrew Katz** is a bilingual writer and storyteller based in Montreal. After graduating from medical school at McGill in 1999, he went on to complete his Masters in English and Creative Writing at Concordia and began teaching English and Creative Writing at Dawson College in 2006. In 2013 he received the Dawson College Director General's Award for Teaching. His publications for children include *How To Catch A Bear Who Loves To Read* (2018), *I Just Want To Be Super!* (2020), *A Starlit Trip To The Library* (2022), *Little Hearts in the Snow* (2025) and *Jackie's Drawing* (2025).

You can discover more about his work on his website at [andrewkatzbooks.ca](http://andrewkatzbooks.ca)



24.10.25

Friday

8:30 am

## Student Awards Panel: Creative Visions of the Future

For the conference, students at Dawson have been invited to submit creative work that addresses the conference theme. They have attempted to express their interpretations of hope and despair through music, literature & the visual arts. Our panel of teachers will discuss the students' work; the students will explore their work and prizes of 100\$ will be handed out for each category of work: Visual Arts, Music, English and French.



## Seeing the Unseen: Afrofuturism and Prototyping Beloved Community

Mainstream science fiction often creates alien civilizations or peculiar circumstances as a stage to explore the human condition and societal shortcomings. But the African Diaspora in the Americas has had no need to create fictional dystopias and hellscape as day-to-day reality provided more than enough material: dehumanization, exploitation, alienation. Afrofuturism is a recent term for a subgenre of Black speculative art which goes back in time to when descendants of Africa began creating art on this continent. Those who survived the Middle Passage and transatlantic slavery immediately commenced creating forms of resistance and on building a more just world for their descendants, even in cases when they knew they themselves would not live to see their seeds bear fruit. Subverting the tropes of science fiction, horror and mysticism with the often-hidden histories of the Americas, Black artists have mined lived experiences to create settings in which they explore ways to create futures inclusive and respective of all peoples. Transforming past and present challenges and successes, Afrofuturists demonstrate a “weird hope” -- hope that transcends reason – in working towards and achieving stronger and healthier communities. This presentation will introduce attendees to Afrofuturism plus another key ‘rehumanization’ technology from the African diaspora.

**Christopher McMullen** is an adjunct professor in Dawson’s Humanities Department and at Concordia University’s Department of Management. For twenty years he has taught courses on conflict resolution, self-development, change management, and interpersonal skills. He began at Dawson teaching applied ethics in New School using anime and most recently developed a world views course built around Afrofuturism. Christopher has worked as a consultant on issues around human rights, diversity, inclusion, conflict and reconciliation in the United States, Canada, and India. He co-facilitated a group of victim-survivors at a peace centre in Ireland, helping them successfully launch reconciliatory dialogues between them and former combatants involved in The Troubles. When not researching new topics, Christopher enjoys consuming multiple arts (movies and music especially) and making photographs.

## Mapping Memory Through Textile Art: The Arpillera No Me Olviden

How do we map history without memory? No Me Olviden (Forget Me Not) Arpillera is a collective textile artwork that commemorates the thousands of victims of Chile’s dictatorship and honours those lost to state violence. Created collaboratively across communities in Montreal and internationally throughout five countries, the arpillera weaves together memory, solidarity, and hope. In this presentation, members of La Colectiva Crear Poder Popular will explore how participatory textile art functions as a practice of critical pedagogy, a method of historical repair, and a way of mapping collective memory. The arpillera becomes a map—not of territory, but of remembrance—demonstrating how art and solidarity can counter denialism while nurturing hope. Through images, stories, and reflections from the project, the presentation invites students to consider how creative practices can reconnect past, present, and future, showing that acts of memory are also acts of imagining more just futures.

**La Colectiva Crear Poder Popular** is a Montreal-based feminist collective of Chilean women in the diaspora. Through collaborative textile art, they engage communities in remembering victims of dictatorship, building solidarity, and envisioning transformative futures. The members of La Colectiva are Carolina Echeverría, Denise A. Olivares, Sarabeth Triviño and Gisela Frias.

## Science-fiction francophone : une littérature négligée

Dans son essai *Language of the night*, Ursula K LeGuin réfléchit, entre autres, aux traditions liées à la science-fiction dans différentes littératures nationales occidentales. Dans cet essai, une phrase fait sursauter: LeGuin note une absence de tradition forte en science-fiction dans les littérature francophones. Il existe pourtant une littérature de science fiction en français (De Bergerac, Voltaire, Sand, Verne, Boule, etc.), et son apport est important, même si souvent perçu comme un peu en marge du canon littéraire. La présentation sera en deux parties: d'abord un bref tour d'horizon, un état des lieux de la science fiction dans le canon littéraire classique, puis une réflexion sur les défis entourant la création de telles oeuvres dans le contexte actuel, où réfléchir à l'avenir est souvent une expérience périlleuse et anxiogène, où la réalité ressemble parfois aux dystopies même les plus audacieuses du dernier siècle.

**Marc-André Lévesque** was born in Ottawa in 1990 and teaches French here at Dawson. He also pursues a parallel life as a poet, participating in poetry festivals and open mic readings. His poetry has won one prize so far (Prix de poésie des cégepiens 2024, Tricératopcanon) and he sometimes reads his poems on the national radio. He is currently working on a cozy science-fiction novel.

## Wine & Cheese The Economics & Humanities Panel on Homo Economicus

3F43 The CoLab

Join us for the Wine & Cheese to wrap up the week and congratulate speakers. We will continue our discussions with the Humanities & Economics Panel in an informal setting!

"What are you going to do when you graduate?" "Get a job." What is your single most important goal for living your best life?" "To do well for myself financially!" A stereotype of college and university students has taken shape in which young people are assumed to be mostly materialistic in imagining their futures. But is this stereotype true? In the past, many philosophers, psychologists, economists, historians, and other scholars of human behavior assumed that humans were fundamentally economic creatures. This view held that humans rationally pursued their own interests by acquiring resources in exchange for labour in most areas of their lives, and, on a profound level, most people's outlook and behaviors regarding the future were governed by a cost-benefit analysis, either intuitive or systematic. In other words, what matters for your future self is how much you get relative to how much you give. Rather than as thinking creatures, humans, it was said, could be better conceived of as Homo Economicus – Economic Man.

This perspective has recently come under challenges from multiple fields. In cognitive psychology and some areas of philosophy, focus has shifted to the ways in which humans are driven by deep emotional forces - even when trying to shape future outcomes. In behavioral economics, scholars have started to unearth the irrationality underlying much of economic decision-making. And historians have begun engaging more seriously with non-economic theories of why humans behave the way they do. Some of these perspectives are critical and point to a dark future of irrational fears and inflamed passions as the forces driving human behaviours. Others are more optimistic, and illuminate how human social and emotional interconnection has always been the key to human flourishing. Finally, economists have refined rational-choice theory to take into account these changes.

But the question still remains - when we imagine a future, and take steps to shape it, are we primarily driven by material concerns? Or are there other dreams we include?



# Visuals for the conference by Sacha Santerre

**Sacha Santerre**, a Dawson alumni, is the artist who brought not only the poster, but also the schedule and this entire document to life. This is his second year in a row creating the visuals for the conference.



You can find more of his work on [Noland.work](http://Noland.work)

