AES WELCOMES FOUR NEW FACULTY MEMBERS

Submitted by Olivia J Hernandez on February 1, 2017 - 3:40pm

La TaSha Levy
Assistant Professor
African American Studies

Vincent Schleitwiler
Acting Assistant Professor
Asian American Studies

Jeannie Shinozuka
Acting Assistant Professor
Asian American Studies

Brukab Sisay
Lecturer
African American Studies

AES New Faculty

On October 12th, the AES department hosted a reception for its new faculty at the UW Faculty Club. These new faculty members provide valuable perspectives across the fields of African-American, Asian-American, Chicano/Latino and Comparative Ethnic Studies. They also provide interdisciplinary perspectives that will prove to be incredibly helpful in widening the breadth of course offerings for AES students.

- TaSha Levy, an Assistant Professor, will be teaching courses in African American studies. A first generation college graduate, Levy received her BA from the University of Virginia and her MPS from Cornell University before achieving her PhD in African American Studies from Northwestern University in 2013. At Northwestern, she also worked as a graduate assistant for Multicultural Student Affairs. As a professor at UW, she looks forward to teaching African American history in Winter Quarter 2017 as well as courses in Black Aesthetics and #BlackLivesMatter in Media during Spring Quarter 2017. Levy is currently working on a book project concerning Black Republicans and their own work to advocate for civil rights. “My extensive training in Black Studies,” she notes, “offers a perspective I hope to share and expand as a faculty member in AES. I’m excited about collaborative efforts to cultivate intellectual innovation, student advocacy, mentorship and scholar activism.”

- Vincent Schleitwiler, an Acting Assistant Professor, is seeing his own career trajectory come full circle with his work in the UW AES Department. Schleitwiler received his PhD in English from the University of
Washington in 2008 and has since held positions at Williams College and the University of Southern California where he taught in both Ethnic Studies and Africana Studies. He also served as a Scholar-in-Residence at the Center for Art + Thought, an organization that tries to bring together artists, scholars and writers and explores experiences and perspectives of the Filipino diaspora. While he was a graduate student at UW, Schleitwiler worked with many in the UW English department and served as a teaching assistant for both Sherman Alexie and Professor Emeritus Steve Sumida. He also knew both Sumida and Professor Emeritus Gail Nomura from his time as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan and has been happy to continue working with them at UW. To the department's delight, he has taken over Sumida's course in Asian American theater and, in the future, will be teaching courses on Hawaii's literatures and on comparative ethnic literature. Schleitwiler considers the comparative ethnic literature class to be an “institution” that has been taught by some of the best faculty (both past and present) in the department. Schleitwiler has a book coming out in January 2017 titled Strange Fruit of the Black Pacific: Imperialism's Racial Justice and Its Fugitives. The book explores the connections between African American and Japanese and Filipino Americans under imperial rule. As Shleitwiler notes, “That kind of comparative work is at the heart of what I do.”

- Jeannie Shinozuka, an Acting Assistant Professor, will be teaching courses in Asian American studies in AES this year. Shinozuka, who received her PhD in History from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities in 2009, is currently working on a book project titled American Biotic Borders: Constituting Race through Transnational Public Health and Agriculture, 1880-1950. This work examines the interrelationship between plant, insect and human bodies and focuses in particular on how they co-constitute each other. Shinozuka's interdisciplinary work is based on extensive archival research. Although she was initially trained as a historian of medicine and medical science, Shinozuka has also had training in Asian American studies which has helped her to engage different methodologies in her research related to race and the environment. As a Mellon post-doctoral fellow at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, she taught a graduate level course on race and the environment which she is planning to adapt and teach in AES this year. Shinozuka is looking forward to connecting with a community of students who are environmentally conscious and motivated, particularly in a biodiverse space like the Seattle area.

- As a new lecturer in AES, Brukab Sisay is looking forward to returning to the UW community that helped him develop an interest in African Studies in the first place. A 2011 graduate of the UW AES department, Sisay is now a PhD student in African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of California Berkeley. Sisay grew up in Seattle and recently moved back home to focus on his PhD work, which examines the place of African immigrants within African American studies. About his return to Seattle, Sisay has this to say: “Part of training in AES was thinking a lot about making your work meaningful for your community, so I wanted to take some time to work in the community.” When the lecturer position opened in AES, Sisay jumped at the opportunity not just to further engage in his academic work, but also to return to a department that he values. “It's surreal to be teaching the classes that I took as an undergrad,” Sisay observes, “and to be able to continue the legacy of incredible work that's been done here by faculty and now to bring in my own perspective and my own work.” Sisay taught the Introduction to African American studies course in Fall Quarter 2016 and will be teaching courses on civil rights and hip hop in future quarters. Sisay is also involved in campus mentorship programs for black students.