

Between Hope and Critique

Thursday, April 27, 2006

3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Lincoln Room, Kellogg Hotel & Conference Center

This event is free but seating is limited.

Please RSVP to Julie Hagstrom at csue@msu.edu or (517) 353-8977 by April 25, 2006.

Speaker



Julie Ellison

Director, Imagining America
Professor, American Culture,
English, and Art and Design,
University of Michigan

Julie Ellison is the founding director of *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life*, a national

consortium of colleges and universities that fosters the public role of the arts, humanities, and design by working for structural change in higher education.

Ellison speaks widely on issues relating to public scholarship in the cultural disciplines. She also works with collaborators in South Africa on the relationship between cultural work and publicly engaged scholarship there. Ellison served for four years as Associate Vice President for Research at the University of Michigan. She received her Ph.D. in English from Yale.

Ellison has served on the Board of the Michigan Humanities Council and on the Michigan Task Force on Creativity, the Arts, and Cultural Education. Her third book, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*, was published in 1999. Ellison's current research interests include the new politics of cultural knowledge and organized efforts to link poetry with democratic values.

Abstract

Both on and off campus, animated networks in the humanities and arts are making the passion for social change central to the theory and practice of public engagement. Students and faculty in the cultural disciplines are committed to social agency in creative and humanistic practice. They bring a mix of passion and skepticism to this endeavor. The work of leaders in the "engaged imagination" movement—including Robin Kelley, George Sanchez, Sekou Sundiata, and Lani Guinier, among others—is defined by a love of ideas, a resolute pursuit of theory-building, and a willingness to weave critique and practice in ways that advance collaboration with community partners.

This complex approach involves a balance among hope and critique, theory and action. These artists and scholars display core commitments to "freedom dreams" (Kelley), "magical realism" (Guinier), "dream states" (Sundiata) and "dream[s] of a multiracial democracy" (Sanchez). Their focus on diverse creativity for the public good marks a historical moment in the imagination of social change. They—and we—are part of a growing community of people eager to exchange program models, test their rhetoric against skeptical listeners, foster translations across specialist vocabularies, and strengthen learning.

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