

# Augustana College

## FALL SYMPOSIUM DAY

Saturday, October 17, 2020

# WHAT IS TRUTH?

## SYMPOSIUM DAY SCHEDULE

10-11 a.m.	Featured presenter: Rev. Lenny Duncan Session I
11:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m.	Featured alumni speaker: Theodore Teros, J.D., Class of 2012 Session II
12:20-1:20 p.m.	Featured presenter: Dr. William Tsutsui Session III
1:30-2:30 p.m.	Augie Reads featured presenter: Julie Otsuka Session IV
On demand	Pre-recorded breakout sessions

All sessions, materials and discussions can be accessed via Moodle. Keynote sessions will be recorded for later viewing. You can access the Symposium Day Moodle hub using this [link](#).

### SESSION I 10-11 a.m.



#### LIVE KEYNOTE

#### Truth to Power: A Black Pastor's Calling Amid White Christian Supremacy

Rev. Lenny Duncan

**Rev. Lenny Duncan** from Vancouver, Wash., is the pastor of the Jubilee Collective, a community organized around the idea that Jesus is anti-racist and loves queer, trans and two-spirited people, too. He is the author of "United States of Grace: A Memoir of Homelessness, Addiction, Incarceration, and Hope" and "Dear Church."

Prophetic voices speak truth to power. Lutheran pastor Lenny Duncan has done that among Christians in the United States, especially among ELCA Lutherans—the church body with which Augustana is affiliated and that Rev. Duncan calls “the whitest denomination in the U.S.” How can white Christianity repent of its supremacy? How can systems of domination within our country be unmasked and dismantled? On which side—truth or power—are people of faith? Rev. Duncan will respond to such questions in his interview with Dr. Michelle Wolff, assistant professor of religion, and certainly ask some hard questions of his own. Dr. Jason Mahn, professor of religion and director of the Presidential Center for Faith and Learning, will introduce Rev. Duncan and Dr. Wolff.

## SESSION II 11:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m.



### LIVE ALUMNI KEYNOTE

#### How America's Adversarial Legal System Values Truth: Lessons For Our 'Post-Truth' Politics

Theodore Teros, J.D.,  
Class of 2012

**Theodore Teros** is an associate at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP in New York City. Originally from Rock Island, he earned his juris doctor at the University of Virginia School of Law in 2017. His law firm has been honored by the New York State Bar Association for its pro bono work, and he is currently on a pro bono externship.

This talk will explore the law's relationship to truth and the competing values often present in our legal system. Drawing on the structure of the American adversarial legal system, Teros will explore how this system maintains a commitment to truth in the face of warring advocates and present a few normative takeaways from the system for reforming our broken politics. Dr. Deke Gould, continuing lecturer in philosophy, will introduce Teros.

## SESSION III 12:20-1:20 p.m.



### LIVE KEYNOTE

#### Godzilla and Japan: Hiroshima, Fukushima, COVID-19

Dr. William Tsutsui

**Dr. William Tsutsui** is Edwin O. Reischauer Distinguished Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages & Civilizations at Harvard University. He is an award-winning scholar and teacher who speaks on Japanese economic and environmental history, Japanese popular culture (especially the Godzilla movies), Japanese-American identity and issues in higher education.

Since Godzilla's first appearance almost 70 years ago in the classic *Gojira* (1954), the King of the Monsters has become a cinematic icon and a globally recognized symbol of Japan. But what can a giant, fire-breathing movie monster tell us about Japanese culture and Japan's national experience from defeat in 1945 through the global pandemic of 2020? This talk will explore how the 32 Godzilla films can help us understand Japan's resilience in the face of disasters; Japanese attitudes toward science and authority; and the ways we all address our fears of invisible threats, radioactive or viral. Dr. Elizabeth Lawrence, assistant professor of history, will introduce Dr. Tsutsui.

*This special talk is sponsored by the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission and the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies.*

## SESSION IV 1:30-2:30 p.m.



### LIVE AUGIE READS KEYNOTE

#### A conversation with Julie Otsuka

Julie Otsuka

Photo credit: ©Robert Bessoir

**Julie Otsuka** is the author of "When the Emperor Was Divine," winner of the 2003 American Library Association Alex Award, and "The Buddha in the Attic," winner of the 2012 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. "The Buddha in the Attic" was an international bestseller and winner of the prestigious Prix Femina étranger 2012 and the Albatros Literaturpreis 2013. She currently is working on her next novel, "The Swimmers."

Julie Otsuka is the author of the 2020 Augie Reads selection, "When the Emperor Was Divine." The 2003 novel tells the story of a Japanese-American family sent to an internment camp during World War II. Augustana faculty chose the book because of its powerful narrative and exploration of an often-forgotten, painful experience during the war. The text also lends itself to analysis from many disciplinary perspectives. Otsuka will participate in an interdisciplinary conversation with Augustana scholars Dr. Umme Al-Wazedi, associate professor of English; Dr. Brian Leech, associate professor of history; and Dr. Breanna Nickel, teaching fellow of religion, that focuses on the book's literary themes, historical context and religious references.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS [On demand via Moodle](#)

### **Righting This Wrong: How the 'Les Miserables' Musical Handles the Concepts of Truth, Justice, and Redemption**

Kyle King, English and political science

*"Les Miserables" is one of the most successful and longest running shows ever, but what can the musical tell the audience about how we perceive justice and truth? Many characters have vastly different interpretations of righteousness, and this presentation will attempt to dig deep into their motivations. In addition, from composer Claude-Michel Schönberg's music, the audience can maintain certain leitmotifs that stand for a certain mood, which enhances the morals described by the show.*

### **The Native Truth: Perspectives on Augustana's Land**

Madeline Young, anthropology; Maria Wood, Spanish and history

*This session will explore the history of the land that Augustana is built on, discuss with students what they know about the land and ask experts about the real story. We will look at the history of the college itself, the Indigenous peoples that once occupied the land, and what it means to be at Augustana today. In addition to this, we will explore what the term "truth" means in relation to history.*

### **Follow the White Rabbit**

Dr. David Schwartz, multimedia journalism and mass communication

*As a news scholar who has published work about "fake news," Dr. Schwartz this past summer became obsessed with how the "Q" conspiracy theory spread through mainstream and social media. Falsely promoted as helping the masses wake up to "truth," "Q" or "QAnon" exposed vulnerabilities on both the production and consumption sides of news and information. This session will explore how "Q" went mainstream by promoting itself as the gatekeeper of truth, and what we can do to protect ourselves from falling down the rabbit hole.*

### **Guardians of Truth: Curious to Become One? You Have Already Started Your Journey; You Just Haven't Realized It Yet**

Dr. Hyeong-Gyu Choi, business administration

*With the prevalence of the internet, smartphones and social media, we now live in an era that necessitates human beings to instill critical thinking skills to distinguish truth from misinformation. Just as our society and humanity have been protected by many forerunners in history, our digital era calls for Guardians of Truths who can protect and uphold truths. This session will discuss the devastating effects of misinformation and the convergence between the paths of Guardians of Truth and college education.*

### **Mathematics and Certainty**

Dr. Tom Bengtson, mathematics and computer science

*Mathematical statements are sometimes viewed as certainly and eternally true. However, this view is problematic. For example, we will explore in what sense triangles exist.*

### **Truth is Sticky and Full; A Dangerous Safe-Haven**

Dr. Rebecca Wee, English/creative writing  
Cassandra Karn, Blake Traylor, English; Michael Aumuller, Anna Young, elementary education; Alli Kestler, French; Isabela Oliveira, Moreen Akomea-Ampeh, chemistry; Audrianna Schneider, geology; Ashley Zarinana, sociology, social welfare; Cade Elliot, teaching chemistry; Ryan Hurdle, theatre arts; Nadia Castillo, communication studies; Marcus Atnip, business administration - management; McKenzie Hennessy, Patricia Plachno, communication sciences and disorders.

*Students from Writing Poetry will read poems—their own and by others—on the subject of truth, which is, as one put it, "sticky and full; a dangerous safe-haven."*

### **Truthful Conversations Among Latinx Students Navigating the Liberal Arts College: Sense of Belonging at the Intersection of Academic Demands and Financial Struggles**

Dr. Fredy Rodriguez, sociology and anthropology; Nadia Castillo, sociology and communication studies; Mayra Arevalo, sociology; Jessica Freile, psychology

*This research project strived to understand the experiences of Latinx students at predominantly white institutions, like Augustana. We studied the experiences and strategies in meeting academic demands, integrating themselves into the larger campus community, and working with their mentors, professors and other academic staff. Along with this, there was a focus on elements such as identity, sense of belonging, involvement in campus life, and how relationships with others at the college shape students' experience.*

### **What is 'Truth' in Science?**

Dr. Kelsey Arkle, geology

*If nothing can truly be "proven" in science, does that mean there are no universal scientific "truths"? And if there are no universal truths, does that mean we cannot trust science? In an age of "alternative facts," armchair science and rampant (and often deliberate) scientific misinformation, we explore the ways in which scientists and non-scientists assess scientific claims, seek out reliable evidence and critically evaluate information.*

Symposium Day is coordinated by the Symposium Committee (Ashley Allen, Dr. Kelsey Arkle, Dr. Hyeong-Gyu Choi, Dr. Mike Egan, Tia Fuhr, Dr. Rupa Gordon, Dr. Deke Gould, Lauren Palmer, Dr. Sangeetha Rayapati, Dr. Jeff Renaud, Seth Rohr, Keri Rursch, Dr. Jessica Schultz, Nick Teng, Alex Washington, Claudia Vallejo, Mary Windeknecht) and supported by the Institute for Leadership and Service.