

HSS

2023–2024

NEW FACES

We are pleased to introduce the new faculty, postdocs, and students arriving in the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences for the 2023–2024 academic year. Please join us in welcoming them to HSS!

PROFESSORIAL FACULTY



HANNAH DRUCKENMILLER

*Assistant Professor
of Economics;
William H. Hurt Scholar*

Druckenmiller is an environmental economist. Her research aims to provide empirically based estimates for the environmental benefits and economic costs associated with natural resource protection. Her research has involved quantifying the flood mitigation value of natural lands, developing new approaches for accounting for ecosystem services in climate policy, and identifying cost-effective climate adaptation solutions. She holds a PhD in agricultural and resource economics from UC Berkeley and a BS in Earth systems from Stanford University. Druckenmiller spent the last two years as a fellow at Resources for the Future.

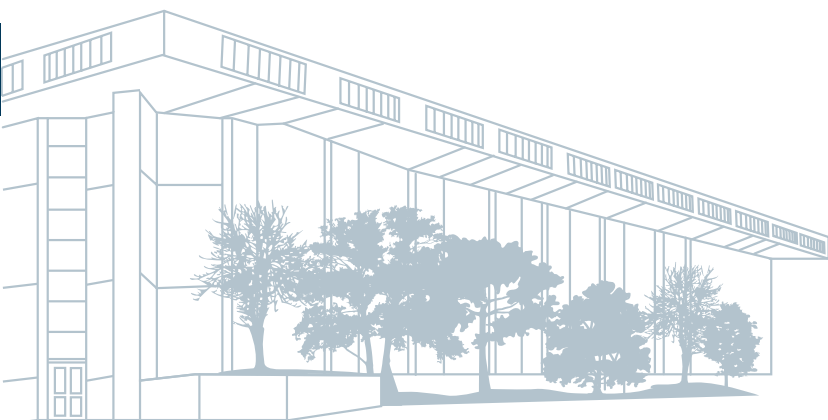


AXEL NIEMEYER

*Assistant Professor
of Economics*

Niemeyer's research is focused on mechanism design, a subfield of economic theory.

The goal is to find mechanisms—such as rules for allocating goods or making collective decisions—that lead to desirable outcomes even if the participating agents, who have their own set of goals and information, behave strategically. Niemeyer's recent work is concerned with mechanism design in settings where monetary transfers cannot be used. Before joining Caltech, he completed a PhD in economics at the University of Bonn.



LECTURERS AND VISITORS



NICOLE BAKER

Lecturer in Music

Baker holds a PhD in musicology and an MFA in vocal performance from UCLA. She spent nearly 25 years on the musicology faculty at Cal State Fullerton, where she taught a wide variety of music history classes and seminars and led the performance ensemble, Collegium Musicum. Baker is currently a faculty member at the Pasadena Conservatory of Music, the traditional choir director at St. Philip the Apostle Church in Pasadena, and the artistic director for Jouyssance Early Music Ensemble.



F. DOUGLAS BROWN

Lecturer in Poetry

Brown is the author of two poetry collections: *ICON* (Writ Large Press, 2018) and *Zero to Three* (University of Georgia, 2014), for which he received the 2013 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. He also co-authored the poetry chapbook *Begotten* (URB Books, 2016) with poet Geoffrey Davis. An educator for over 25 years, Brown currently teaches African American poetry and African American studies at Loyola High School of Los Angeles. He has an MFA in poetry from Antioch University and an MA in literature from San Francisco State University.



THOMAS F. ICARD

Moore Distinguished Scholar

Icard is a professor of philosophy at Stanford University, where he also holds affiliated faculty positions with the Stanford Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and the Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence. He received a PhD in philosophy and symbolic systems from Stanford and his research interests include cognitive science, formal philosophy, and logic. Icard, who will visit HSS in the spring term, has a forthcoming book, titled *Resource Rationality*, under commission with Cambridge University Press (Elements in Decision Theory and Philosophy).



JORDAN NELSON

Lecturer in Music

Nelson holds a Master of Music degree and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree, both in composition, from USC and a BA in music from Yale University. As a composer whose musical projects are often driven by collaboration, his recent projects include a work for a string quartet commissioned by the Viano Quartet, a piece for classical guitar and electronics written for and in collaboration with Jack Cimo, and a new electronic music project. Nelson currently teaches at the Colburn School Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles and previously served on the faculty of the West Chester University Wells School of Music, the USC Thornton School of Music, and Yale University.

POSTDOCS



CONG CAO

Postdoctoral Instructor in Science, Society, and Public Policy

Cao comes to Caltech from the Norwegian University of

Science and Technology, where she recently completed a PhD in economics. She is interested in the application of machine learning and artificial intelligence to environmental and health economics, and how the latest advances in biotechnology inform economic analysis. While at Caltech, she will collaborate with faculty in the Center for Science, Society, and Public Policy (CSSPP), which is part of The Ronald and Maxine Linde Institute of Economic and Management Sciences.



EUGENE CHUA

Ahmanson Postdoctoral Instructor in Philosophy of Science

Chua is a philosopher of physics and science. He is especially

interested in how thermodynamic concepts (such as equilibrium, temperature, and entropy) get extended past their original domain of applicability, and whether justifications from the original domain are transferrable to these new domains. Chua holds a PhD in philosophy from UC San Diego. During his year with HSS, Chua will teach the undergraduate courses Knowledge and Reality (Hum/PI 41) and Philosophy of Space and Time (HPS/PI 124).



OZAN GURCAN

Postdoctoral Instructor in Science, Society, and Public Policy

After completing a PhD in ethics and public affairs at

Carleton University, Gurcan spent the past two years as a policy analyst for the Public Health Agency of Canada. His research focuses on questions of moral and political philosophy as they relate to the use of genetic technologies. He is particularly interested in the development of a normative framework to help citizens and policymakers think through the ethical dimensions of genetic discrimination. Gurcan will collaborate with CSSPP faculty and teach an undergraduate course on Bioethics (PI/HPS 183).



E. BENNETT JONES

Postdoctoral Instructor in American History

Jones is a historian of science who studies the intersections between American natural

history, settler colonialism, and Indigenous sovereignty through the lens of microhistory. She holds a PhD in American history from Northwestern University, and she spent the last academic year as the Dibner Research Fellow in the History of Science and Technology at The Huntington, where she worked on her current book project, titled *'The Indians Say': Settler Colonialism and the Scientific Study of North America, 1722 to 1848*.



BEATRICE MAGISTRO

Postdoctoral Scholar in Computational Social Science

Magistro, who earned a PhD in political science from the

University of Washington, joined HSS to collaborate with Professor Alvarez. Her interdisciplinary research merges the realms of political economy and political behavior to illuminate the intricacies of policy preferences in the face of different socioeconomic shocks and address the inherent limitations of standard political economy theories of self-interest. Magistro will present the CSSPP Seminar on October 12, 2023.



ANNA STIELAU

Weisman Postdoctoral Instructor in Visual Culture

Stielau recently completed a PhD in media, culture, and communication at New York

University. Her research focuses on race, visual culture, and the politics of time on the African continent and in its art worlds. She has a particular interest in the relationship between entrenched colonialism and artistic convention in South Africa, and her writing has appeared in publications including *Art Africa*, *Artthrob*, and *The Postcolonialist*. This year, Stielau will teach undergraduate courses on Seeing Race (Hum/VC 49) and Visual Activism (VC 132).

GRADUATE STUDENTS



CHENXUAN AN

Social Sciences Graduate Student

An's research interests include experimental economics, behavioral game theory, algorithmic game theory, revealed preference theory, neuroeconomics, market design, and political economy. He received a BA in mathematics and economics from the City University of New York. With an interest in algebraic topology and stochastic calculus, An enjoys forming economic theories and solving problems.



RUMI KHAN

Social Sciences Graduate Student

Khan holds a BA in social studies and mathematics from Harvard University and an MA in China studies from the Yenching Academy of Peking University. His research interests include economic history, historical political economy, and microeconomic theory. Khan is interested in studying the past using econometric analyses that are grounded and motivated in economic theory, with a focus on the economic history of Asia, the role of religion and philosophy in history, and the importance of gender.



YI-CHUANG LIN

Social and Decision Neuroscience Graduate Student

Lin is interested in the neural and computational mechanisms of human learning and decision-making. She received an MS in brain and mind sciences (cognitive neuroscience) and a BS in physics at the National Taiwan University in Taiwan. For her master's thesis project, Lin investigated how decision-making enhances neural representations in the hippocampus during spatial navigation using fMRI methodology.



NOAH OKADA

Social and Decision Neuroscience Graduate Student

Okada completed dual bachelor's degrees in neuroscience and behavioral biology (BS) and computer science (BA) from Emory University earlier this year and spent the summer as a research assistant in the Mobbs lab. With research interests at the intersection of computer science and cognitive neuroscience, Okada is interested in leveraging advances in AI/machine learning and VR technologies to develop tools that help characterize the circuits that mediate emotional and cognitive processes.



GUILLAUME WEGMUELLER

Social Sciences Graduate Student

Wegmueller is interested in economic history and political and behavioral economics. He holds a BA in international relations with a major in international economics from the University of Geneva in Switzerland, as well as an MA in international economics from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. Wegmueller's master's dissertation studied the spread of the printing press in 15th-century Europe and he is currently co-authoring an article on this topic.

STAFF



JOANNA POON

Humanities Administrative Coordinator

Poon joined HSS as the new humanities administrative coordinator this summer. She spent the last six years with ExchangeRight, a real estate investment firm in Pasadena, as their office manager. She earned her BA (with honors) from San Francisco State University and has several years of experience as an event coordinator, which will be useful in her handling of humanities and division-wide events. In her new role on the second floor of Dabney, Poon will support several humanities faculty members, manage the humanities teaching schedule and catalog entries, administer student prizes, and oversee Dabney reservations, among other activities.