

# THE CONNECT

A Center for Critical Race Studies Newsletter



## Festive Fellows!

### Slamming Bones and Other "Re-creational" Holiday Traditions

**DR. JONATHAN CHISM**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CRITICAL RACE STUDIES  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

Beyond reflecting on cultural and religious themes during the holidays, I have always enjoyed playing games such as Pictionary, Scattergories, Taboo, and Spades. Furthermore, in my hometown in Arkansas, the holidays are not the holidays without a competitive game of dominoes. Yes,



Dr. Chism is not ashamed of his capacity to "slam bones" and to reign on the throne as the king of the domino table. Inasmuch as I am passionate about reading, writing, and studying, I have not disconnected from holiday games and traditions. I am unapologetic about playing dominoes and cards with siblings, uncles, aunties, cousins, etc.

Playing games with family during the holidays is sacred time, not wasted time. The prolific and respected African American scholar, **W.E.B. Du Bois** expounds, "...for what is true amusement, true diversion, but the re-creation of energy which we may sacrifice to noble ends, to higher ideals, while without proper amusement we waste or dissipate our mightiest powers?" Du Bois is essentially saying that "amusement" enables us to "re-create" the energy that we need to pursue serious tasks such as being change agents. Be intentional about having fun, laughing, and relaxing. Such recreational activities are indispensable to "re-creating" the energy for the work that lies ahead. Seize and enjoy your break!

### Baking with Dr. Barbieri

Looking for a holiday dessert? Check out Dr. Nina Barbieri's delicious pecan pie recipe!

**Lana Neal's Pecan Pie**

(In honor of my very dear friend, who recently passed away)

#### Ingredients



- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 unbaked pie crust (10 inch) | 1/8 teaspoon salt                        |
| 4 eggs                        | 1 teaspoon vanilla                       |
| 1 cup light brown sugar       | 1 cup pecans, chopped                    |
| 1 1/2 cup light corn syrup    | 2 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon melted butter |

#### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
2. Beat eggs until well blended
3. Add sugar, salt, & corn syrup and stir until well blended
4. Stir in cooled butter & vanilla
5. Spread pecans into pie shell
6. Pour in mixture
7. Place pie in oven & reduce temperature to 325 degrees
8. Bake 50-60 minutes



## CULTURAL SOVEREIGNTY: POETRY AS A TOOL FOR DISRUPTION

**DR. STALINA VILLAREAL**  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

As part of **National Native American Heritage Month**, the literary organization Inprint and the UHD's English Department invited the acclaimed poet **Joy Harjo of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation** to present her poetry on campus on November 14.

During the event, Harjo explained something that she also writes in her book *An American Sunrise*: "Until the passage of the Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, it was illegal for Native citizens to practice our cultures. This included the making and sharing of songs and stories. Songs and stories in one culture are poetry and prose in another. They are intrinsic to cultural sovereignty. To write or create as a Native person was essentially illegal." This is an example of how the United States has a racist history, yet the fact that Harjo was the U.S. Poet Laureate from 2019 to 2022 shows progress. In an interview with NPR, Harjo said, "If my work does nothing else, when I get to the end of my life, I want Native peoples to be seen as human beings."

Harjo's powerful poetry musically lures into depths of consciousness, memory, history, and social justice. Her poem "Break My Heart" uses personification and hyperbole to tell the truth: "History will always find you, wrap you/In its thousand arms" (lines 19-20). Indeed, these words help visualize what would be otherwise hard to grasp in abstraction. During the Q&A of her poetry reading, Harjo argued that poetry lures people in with small words, as opposed to academic writing, which uses large words. In an [interview with Poets.org](#), she expressed, "Poetry is a tool for disruption and creation and is necessary for generations of humans to know who they are and who they are becoming in a wave of history. Without poetry, we lose our way."



Joy Harjo (Photo Credit: artsinstark.com)

# TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SCIENCE:

## REFLECTIONS ON REPRESENTATION IN CANCER RESEARCH

**DR. ADRIANA VISBAL**

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF CELL AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY**

I recently attended the **Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists** in Anaheim, California where I was able to interact with scientists and STEM students from across the nation. As I attended scientific and professional development talks with over 3,000 individuals that have been historically excluded from science, I could not help but feel conflicted. I was excited to see such diverse representation and such clear examples of inclusive spaces including ASL interpreters in every room. At the same time, every talk reminded me how far we are from true representation in the biomedical field and highlighted growing health disparities in my field of study, cancer research.



Genomic studies aimed to understand cancer susceptibility genes (inherited changes in the genome that increase the likelihood of certain individuals of acquiring cancer) are based almost entirely on samples from individuals of European ancestry. These data are then used to develop testing criteria, to develop treatments, and to determine

who is eligible for state-of-the-art cancer drugs. This has led to severe health disparities in cancer survival.

The National Institutes of Health, in response to a call made in the last year of president Obama's presidency, launched the **All of Us Research Program** ([allofus.nih.gov](http://allofus.nih.gov)) as an attempt to begin solving this issue. They recently released the **first truly diverse genomic dataset** and I had the opportunity to present some of my work involving this dataset that is truly representative of the US population. Using this diverse genomic dataset, my collaborators and I are studying the prevalence of breast cancer susceptibility genes among the Latina population. While the work is just starting, we are excited to be part of a new goal: **inclusive, representative, and participatory science.**

# SPRING 2023 COURSE OFFERINGS

CHECK OUT THESE COURSES CCRS FELLOWS ARE OFFERING NEXT SPRING! WE OFFER COURSES ACROSS DISCIPLINES, INCLUDING CRITICAL RACE STUDIES, PSYCHOLOGY, ENGLISH, AND MORE!

## INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL RACE THEORY

CRS  
1301

Students will interrogate the intersection of race and racial difference with gender, sexuality, class, and other social categories. By the conclusion of the class, students will have a deeper understanding of Critical Race Theory and its impact on the social, political and intellectual experiences guiding daily life.

Prof. Nina Barbieri,  
Ph.D.  
F2F, MW 11:30-12:45PM

Prof. Kristin Anderson,  
Ph.D.  
F2F, TR 1-2:15PM

## SPECIAL TOPICS: AFRO-LATINX LITERATURE

CRS  
4390

A study of Afro Latinx literature and its cultural traditions. Students will study literary works of fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction in relation to their historical, linguistic, political, regional, gendered, and cultural contexts. Texts will be selected from a diverse group of authors and literary movements. Topics and themes may include the literary performance of identity and culture, aesthetic mediation of racialization, struggle and protest, and artistic activism.

Prof. Stalina  
Villarreal, Ph.D.  
Online Synchronous,  
TR 11:30-12:45PM

## PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN OF COLOR

PSY  
4322

Students will study the major theories and issues involved in the psychological development of women of color. There is a strong focus on Critical Race Theory as a foundation for understanding the intersections of gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, and economics as they impact women's lives.

Prof. Antoinette  
Wilson, Ph.D.  
Hybrid, M 2:30-  
3:45PM

## SEMINAR IN FILM STUDIES: CINEMATIC MOODS

ENG  
4327

An intensive study of an elusive subject. Readings centralize scholarship on film moods, but also includes material on human moods, audience moods, national moods, racial moods, and counter moods. Cinematic case studies will come from the United States and will probably be selected from 1940s and 1950s classic film noir, 1960s and 1970s independent Black film, 1970s and 1980s slasher / body horror, and 21st century experimental Black and Brown queer and trans\* film.

Prof. Chuck  
Jackson, Ph.D.  
F2F, TR 10-  
11:15AM

Find more information on registration at [uhd.edu/registrar](http://uhd.edu/registrar).

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

## A MESSAGE FOR OUR FALL 2022 GRADUATES

### DR. JONATHAN CHISM

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR CRITICAL RACE STUDIES  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

"I've learned  
that people will  
forget what you  
said, people will  
forget what you  
did, but people  
will never forget  
how you made  
them feel."  
Maya Angelou



We are so proud of our graduating seniors, who have reached the culmination of countless hours of academic work both inside and outside of the classroom. The truth is that many of our graduates will undoubtedly forget most of the content from our lectures, regardless of how hard they studied or crammed or the quality of our presentations. Honestly, students may not be cognizant of their professors' accomplishments outside of teaching, particularly in the areas of service and scholarship, borne of hours of labor and toil. Angelou reminds us that the ultimate lesson that sticks with students relates to how we make them **feel**.

We hope that graduating seniors feel loved, respected, and valued. We hope that our interactions inside and outside the classroom have encouraged them to share their perspectives and voices. We hope that they feel that their presence matters and develop confidence that they can **make a difference** in this world.

On behalf of the Fellows of the Center for Critical Race Studies, congratulations on reaching this momentous milestone, and we look forward to witnessing all of your continued accomplishments!



**Dr. Kristin Anderson**  
*Professor of Psychology*

**Dr. Nina Barbieri**  
*Associate Professor of  
Criminal Justice*

**Dr. Jonathan Chism**  
*Assistant Professor of History*

**Dr. Sucheta Choudhuri**  
*Associate Professor of English*

**Dr. Felicia L. Harris**  
*Associate Professor of  
Communication Studies*

**Dr. Chuck Jackson**  
*Professor of English*

**Dr. Vida Robertson**  
*Associate Professor of  
English and Humanities*

**Dr. David Ryden**  
*Professor of History*

**Dr. Stalina Villarreal**  
*Assistant Professor of English*

**Dr. Adriana Visbal**  
*Assistant Professor of  
Natural Sciences*

**Dr. Antoinette Wilson**  
*Assistant Professor of  
Psychology*

#### LET'S CONNECT

If you have resources, stories, or inspiration you would like to share with the CCRS community, please e-mail [CCRS@uhd.edu](mailto:CCRS@uhd.edu).

