The Chancellor Jackman Research Fellowships in the Humanities, 2022-2023
6-month awards

Tenured faculty at the University of Toronto, each receives a six-month leave from the normal teaching and administrative duties in order to undertake research (including travel) on the project proposed in their application. They are chosen for demonstrated excellence of their record of scholarship and the merit of the research proposal. Six-month fellows are invited to participate in the intellectual life of the JHI in the year following their fellowship, often by contributing a short talk to the JHI’s YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5LJxQpMXicyqM0okI8P76g

Dmitry Anastakis, FAS History and Rotman School of Management
Dmitry Anastakis (Ph.D, York University, 2001) is the L.R. Wilson/R.J. Currie Chair in Canadian Business History in the Department of History and at the Rotman School of Management. A scholar of postwar Canadian business and the economy, Professor Anastakis has published extensively on the history of the Canadian automotive industry, including two award-winning books on the subject. His current research projects include finishing a book about the Bricklin SV-1, a car produced in Canada in the 1970s, and is embarking on a major research project on postwar Canadian neoliberalism and free trade. Professor Anastakis is Chair of the Canadian Business History Association (CBHA/ACHA), oversees the Business History Reading Group at the University of Toronto, and is general editor of the Themes in Business and Society series from the University of Toronto Press. Professor Anastakis is a member of the College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists of the Royal Society of Canada, a Senior Fellow at Massey College, and a Senior Fellow at the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History. [image credit: Diana Tyszko]

Fellowship Project
“Neoliberalism and its Discontents: A Canadian History, 1945-2020”
Neoliberalism has been Canada’s dominant ideological, policy-framework and political, economic, and social reality for the last half-century. Neoliberalism’s defining elements—free trade, individualism, market fundamentalism, privatization, deregulation, and a weakening of the state—have profoundly reshaped Canadian discourse, governance, and society since the 1970s, and marked a departure from the Keynesian interventionist and social welfare approaches that dominated Canadian policy and culture from 1945 until the 1970s. This project seeks to historicize Canadian neoliberalism’s emergence, its ascendance, and the resistance that this ideology and its policies have engendered from its beginnings in the postwar period to the present, and within a transnational context. In so doing, the project aims to explain a fundamental transformation of Canadian life. Neoliberalism and its Discontents is much more than the intellectual history of an ideology and its spread; it is the story of how business, politics, work, governance, welfare, and discourse itself was transformed in postwar Canada from a Keynesian mode to a neoliberal model, much of it through the rhetoric and realities surrounding the debate and enactment of free trade. Above all, it seeks to understand how ordinary Canadians across the generations understood and engaged with abstract ideas of neoliberalism and free trade, and how these ideas came to shape, in very real ways, their lives, jobs, communities, nation, and the broader world in which they live.
Beth Coleman, UTM Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology
Beth Coleman (Ph.D. New York University, 2004) is an Associate Professor of Data & Cities at the University of Toronto, where she directs the City as Platform lab. Working in the disciplines of Science and Technology Studies and Black Studies, her research focuses on machine learning, urban data, and civic engagement. Professor Coleman is the author of Hello Avatar: Rise of the Networked Generation (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011) as well as many articles and several white papers. Her current monograph in progress is Hello Data: Rise of the Networked City (proposal under review, MIT Press).

Fellowship Project
“Thinking the Limits: AI Unbound”
In what way might it be productively disruptive to think through the “limits” of artificial intelligence (AI). Implicitly, one finds in the call for an ethical AI or an unbiased or fair AI a condition of a limit. Advanced automation may have a place in a post-industrial military industrial complex, but that should not be the in the form of a military “killer robot.” Algorithmic sorting can effectively produce types and categories, but that sorting should not reproduce a racist logic. And yet, the empirical difficulty of distinguishing the method and trajectory of the automated outcome—the black box state of current machine learning—broadly impacts the application of AI technology from the quotidian to the exceptional event. This research investigates the idea of a “limit” to AI across several critical paradigms, including AI and machine learning, black studies, philosophy of technology, and science and technology studies toward the goal of recalibrating AI from the reinscription of preconditioned harm (negative bias, etc.) toward potential liberatory functions (generative states of being and understanding). This project contributes to a Humanities critical engagement of AI by stepping from the framework of correction and toward the generative. This research asks, what if we looked at ethics as a mode of radical or decolonial AI?

Robert McGill, FAS English
Robert McGill (Ph.D. University of Toronto, 2006) is Professor of English, and Director of the MA program in English in the Field of Creative Writing. In 2018, he won the Robert Kroetsch Teaching Award from Canadian Creative Writers and Writing Programs. Professor McGill’s first novel, The Mysteries, was named one of the top five Canadian fiction books of 2004 by Quill & Quire. His second novel, Once We Had a Country, was named a book of the year in 2013 by reviewers in the National Post and the Montreal Gazette. He published The Treacherous Imagination: Intimacy, Ethics, and Autobiographical Fiction in 2013 and a second monograph, War Is Here: The Vietnam War and Canadian Literature, in 2017. Professor McGill’s newest novel, A Suitable Companion for the End of Your Life, will be published by Coach House Books in June 2022. He has published short fiction in The Atlantic, Hazlitt, The Journey Prize Anthology, Toronto Life, and journals including Descant, The Dublin Review, The Fiddlehead, and Grain. His nonfiction has appeared in the National Post, The Toronto Star, and The Walrus, as well as on CBC Radio One.
Fellowship Project
“Simple Creatures: Minimalist Living and Constrained Writing”

What does it mean to enact minimalism comprehensively and ethically? What are the particular possibilities and limitations of minimalism in fiction, especially when it involves not the conventions of “dirty realism” but authors adopting constraints analogous to the ones involved in the “simple living” and “voluntary simplicity” movements? I will address these questions in a novel focusing on a protagonist who, upon returning home after his final year at boarding school, seems a different person to his mother, a retired high-school teacher. The protagonist has decided to practise minimalism in every way he can: for instance, he has stopped shaving, largely stopped speaking, abandoned social media, and sold most of his belongings. He gives two reasons for these developments: first, he wants to do his part to fight climate change through sustainable living; second, he claims to have determined that one of his birth parents was a sasquatch and that he feels alienated from humanity’s wastefulness. His mother, who has raised him without divulging his birth parents’ identities, newly wrestles with the question of whether to reveal them, while she finds herself balking at his minimalism, especially in the face of financial and health-related constraints that have long forced her to make do with less. Meanwhile, through writing exercises using linguistic constraints, the protagonist begins to write a field guide to humanity for an imagined sasquatch readership. In telling this story, my novel will investigate the possibilities of minimalism for facilitating both responsible, sustainable living and literary innovation. My aim is for the novel to foster reconsiderations of simple living and to demonstrate the potential for minimalism as an approach to daily life and writing that emphasizes not just what can or must be dispensed with but also what can be valuably produced through carefully chosen constraints.

Srilata Raman, FAS Study of Religion
Srilata Raman (Ph.D. University of Tübingen, 1998) is Associate Professor of Hinduism. She is a textualist who works on medieval South Asian/South Indian religion, particularly the Śrīvaishāvā tradition and the theological developments within it between the 12th-14th centuries, devotionalism (bhakti), historiography, hagiography, colonial sainthood, subaltern religion, famine studies and modern Tamil literature. Her areas of interest are Tamil and Sanskrit intellectual formations from the late medieval to the early colonial period. She is the author of *Self-Surrender (Prapatti) to God in Śrīvaishnavism. Tamil Cats and Sanskrit Monkeys.* (Routledge, 2007) and *The Transformation of Tamil Religion: Ramalinga Swamigal and Modern Dravidian Sainthood.* (in press, Routledge, 2021). Her second book manuscript is on Ramalinga Swamigal, a 19th century poet-saint of the Tamil region whose writings can be located at the cusp of both premodern and early modern Tamil religion and, hence, is significant to the history of the transformation of Tamil religion in and through the colonial period.

Fellowship Project
“Dalit Vedanta”

It is the aim of this project, leading to a third book monograph, to retrieve a lost canon of Tamil religious literature which radically reshapes our understanding of South Indian religion in the 18th-20th centuries, by examining texts that shed light on caste mobility and non-elite assertion during and after the colonial period. Religious monastic institutions, called maṭams in the Tamil region, emerged widely after the middle of the second millennium CE and gradually became vast and
wealthy institutions, which in turn produced nearly all of the religious literature between the 14th and 19th centuries CE. By contrast, there were also maṭams headed by subaltern figures – the Dalit gurus – which produced philosophical and religious texts that expounded a form of Tamil religion known as the Tamil Śaivasiddānta that has had a long history stemming from the 7th century onwards in this region. These texts do not make their way into any canon of Tamil religious literature; nor do their authors find a place within the list of canonical authors of any known tradition. Yet they have been the main catalysts for bridging what is still assumed to be a clear-cut cleavage between the religion of elites and that of non-elites in the Tamil region between the 18th-early 20th centuries. This project will map the small religious establishments that produced these texts during this period in order to understand the institutional and textual basis of Dalit religious assertion in colonial South India.

James Retallack, FAS History
James Retallack (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 1983) is University Professor of History, focussing on Europe from 1770 to 1945. His research interests include German regional history, antisemitism, elections, and historiography. He is the author of thirteen monographs, the most recent of which is Red Saxony: Election Battles and the Spectre of Democracy in Germany, 1860-1918 (Oxford University Press, 2017). He has also published a volume of online documents and images on Bismarckian Germany for the German Historical Institute, Washington DC. He is General Editor of “Oxford Studies in Modern European History” and was inducted as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2011. He has held grants, fellowships, and research prizes from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Gerda Henkel Foundation, the SSHRC of Canada, and the Killam Program at the Canada Council for the Arts. In 2012-2013 he held a six-month Faculty Research Fellowship with the Jackman Humanities Institute, and we are delighted to welcome him back.

Fellowship Project
“August Bebel: Labour, Class, and Social Democracy in a Global Age, 1840-1913”
This project will support work on my biography of August Bebel (1840-1913), who began adult life as an apprentice turner making doorknobs and window-pulls from buffalo horn but rose to become leader of the largest and most powerful socialist party in the world before the First World War. In the coming year I will draft Chapter 3 on the 1870s, which was one of the fullest and most dramatic decades of Bebel’s career. In 1870, from the floor of the Reichstag, Bebel attacked Chancellor Otto von Bismarck—and Prussia itself—for launching a war against France and annexing Alsace and Lorraine. Almost a year later, he defended the Paris Commune in the same forum. The result? A spectacular trial for treason that dominated European headlines for weeks. The expected guilty verdict put Bebel under lock and key for more than two years. Although the term did not yet exist, Bebel was the first “political prisoner” of the new German Empire. During that time he read voraciously and learned the rudiments of Marxism. He drafted one of the best-sellers of the nineteenth century, Woman and Socialism. And he corresponded clandestinely with his wife Julie and others in the rapidly expanding German labour movement. The SPD became an outlawed party for twelve years, beginning in 1878 with passage of Bismarck’s Anti-Socialist Law. Soon Bebel was on the run again from gendarmes, spies, and local officials, all of whom were cheered on by an upper middle class (Bürgertum) that saw him as Germany’s own Robespierre.
Chapter 3 will introduce and integrate some of the most compelling themes in my book: war and violence, peacemaking and nation-building, state repression and “class justice”, the spectre of revolution, gender relations, and the dawn of modern mass politics in Germany.

My book is planned at roughly 400 printed pages for the trade market: it has the working title *August Bebel: A Life for Social Democracy* and a projected completion date of 2025. This fellowship will also provide me with time to supervise a local arrangements committee of graduate students to host an international conference in May 2023 on “Labour, Class, and Social Democracy in the Global Age of August Bebel (1840-1918)”. The year 2023 marks the 110th anniversary of August Bebel’s death and the 160th anniversary of the founding of Germany’s first labour party.

**Naomi Seidman, FAS Study of Religion and Diaspora & Transnational Studies**

Naomi Seidman is Chancellor Jackman Professor of the Arts. Her research interests include literature and secularization, translation studies, psychoanalysis, eastern European literature and culture, Orthodox Judaism, and religion and gender. She is the author of (most notably) *Faithful Renderings: Jewish—Christian Difference and the Politics of Difference* (Chicago, 2006), *The Marriage Plot, Or, How Jews Fell in Love with Love, and with Literature* (Stanford, 2016), and *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition* (Littman, 2019), which won a National Jewish Book Award in Women’s Studies. Professor Seidman has just completed a study of Freud and Jewish languages. She is the recipient of numerous research fellowships and awards, from such organizations as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

**Fellowship Project**

“Performing Orthodox Jewish Girlhood”

This book explores the performance culture of Bais Yaakov, an Orthodox girls’ school system founded in Poland in 1917 by Sarah Schenirer, a divorced seamstress with an eight-grade education who sought to teach girls Torah, an education previously restricted to boys. Bais Yaakov has been an international system since 1930, and after the devastating blow to its Polish heartland in the Holocaust, it quickly rebuilt itself and now thrives with more than 1300 schools in thirteen countries (not all of them called Bais Yaakov). Music, dance, and theatre were an important part of the school experience and its affiliated summer camps, youth movements, and women’s organizations from the start, serving as a marketing tool, cementing participants’ attachment to Orthodox Judaism, and expressing Schenirer’s own passion for theatre—she wrote at least six plays for Bais Yaakov performance that were distributed by the movement. This performance culture had no real counterpart among Orthodox boys, whose time, educational curriculum, and exposure to secular culture are more strictly policed, and whose ritual performances follow a more traditionally religious template. In this sense, Orthodox girls reap what Iris Parush has called “the benefits of marginality” within a patriarchal culture that sometimes leaves them to their own devices.