Plenary Session Speaker Biographies

Christopher L. Eisgruber ’83

Christopher L. Eisgruber has served as Princeton University’s 20th president since July 2013. He is the Laurance S. Rockefeller Professor of Public Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School and the University Center for Human Values. Before becoming president, he served as Princeton’s provost from 2004-2013 and as director of Princeton’s Program in Law and Public Affairs from 2001-2004. A renowned constitutional scholar, he is the author of The Next Justice: Repairing the Supreme Court Appointments Process (Princeton 2007), Religious Freedom and the Constitution (co-authored with Lawrence G. Sager, Harvard 2007), and Constitutional Self-Government (Harvard 2001), as well as numerous articles in books and academic journals. In 2014, he was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Before joining the Princeton faculty in 2001, he clerked for Judge Patrick Higginbotham of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and for Justice John Paul Stevens of the United States Supreme Court, and then served on the faculty of the New York University School of Law for eleven years. Eisgruber received an A.B. magna cum laude in Physics from Princeton, an M. Litt. in Politics from Oxford University, and a J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School. His wife, Lori Martin, is a distinguished securities litigator with the law firm WilmerHale, and his son, Danny, attends Princeton High School.

Eddie S. Glaude Jr. *97

Professor Eddie Glaude's research interests include American pragmatism, specifically the work of John Dewey, and African American religious history and its place in American public life. He is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including the 2002 Modern Language Association William Sanders Scarborough Prize for his book Exodus! Professor Glaude's work also includes African-American Religious Thought: An Anthology, (2004) co-edited with Cornel West.
Ruha Benjamin

Professor Ruha Benjamin specializes in the interdisciplinary study of science, medicine, and biotechnology; race-ethnicity and gender; health and biopolitics; and the sociology of knowledge. She is the author of *People’s Science: Bodies and Rights on the Stem Cell Frontier* (Stanford University Press 2013), which examines the tension between innovation and equity in the context of state investment in stem cell research and against the backdrop of medical experimentation on subordinate social groups. Her current project, *Provincializing Science: Mapping and Marketing ‘Difference’ After the Genome*, explores the uptake of genomics in South Africa, India, and the United States with a focus on how and why racial-ethnic and caste categories are incorporated in research on health disparities. Taken together, this body of work addresses debates about how science shapes the social world and how the public can and should engage science.

Benjamin received her BA in sociology and anthropology from Spelman College, MA and PhD in sociology from UC Berkeley, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA’s Institute for Society and Genetics. Prior to joining Princeton University, she was on the faculty of Boston University and a visiting fellow at Harvard Kennedy School’s Science, Technology, and Society program. She has been awarded fellowships and grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine among others.

Naomi Murakawa


Murakawa received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Yale University in 2005. Her dissertation entitled “Electing to Punish: Congress, Race, and the American Criminal Justice State” was awarded: departmental distinction from Yale University (2005); best dissertation prize from the Law and Society Association (2006); and best dissertation award from the Race, Ethnicity and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association (2006).
Kinoi Nishikawa

Kinoi Nishikawa specializes in African American literature and modern print culture. He earned his A.B. in English from Dartmouth College and his Ph.D. in Literature from Duke University. From 2010-2012 he was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of African American Studies at Northwestern University. His work has been supported by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

His first book manuscript, Reading the Street, outlines the material history and cultural reception of African American pulp fiction in the post-civil rights era. His major work in progress considers the important yet overlooked role book design (e.g., typography, paper quality, cover art) has played in shaping modern African American literature. His essays and articles elaborate on these long-term interests with specific case studies of black book and periodical history. Published writing includes a piece on the first African American men’s magazine (Book History 15 [2012]), and forthcoming work includes individual essays on graphic novels by Donald Goines and Chester Himes.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor’s research concerns include race and public policy especially concerning housing. She is also interested in social movements and Black politics in the United States. Dr. Taylor is currently working on a manuscript about the federal government's promotion of single-family homeownership in Black communities after the urban rebellions of the 1960s. She examines the consequences of the federal government's turn to market-based solutions in its low-income housing programs in Chicago and Detroit in the 1970s and the contradictions and consequences of public-private partnerships in American housing policies. Dr. Taylor’s research has been supported, in part, by a multiyear Northwestern University Presidential Fellowship, the Ford Foundation, and the Lannan Foundation.

Dr. Taylor was the Chancellor’s Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2013-2014. Taylor received her PhD from the Department of African American Studies at Northwestern University in 2013.
Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison is the Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Humanities, Emerita at Princeton University.

Ms. Morrison has degrees from Howard and Cornell Universities. She was appointed the Robert F. Goheen Professor at Princeton University spring 1989, a post she held until 2006. Among the universities where she has held teaching positions are Yale, Bard College and Rutgers. The New York State Board of Regents appointed her to the Albert Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities at the State University of New York at Albany in 1984. In 1988 she was the Obert C. Tanner Lecturer at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Jeannette K. Watson Distinguished Professor at Syracuse University. In 1990 she delivered the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Massey Lectures at Harvard University. In 1994 she held the International Cordorcet Chair at the Ecole Normale Superieure and College de France.

Her ten major novels, The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved, Jazz, Paradise, Love, A Mercy and Home have received extensive critical acclaim. She received the National Book Critics Award in 1978 for Song of Solomon and the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for Beloved. Both novels were chosen as the main selections for the Book of the Month Club in 1977 and 1987 respectively. In 2006 Beloved was chosen by the New York Times Book Review as the best work of American fiction published in the last quarter-century. Ms. Morrison and Slade Morrison co-authored the children’s books The Tortoise or The Hare, Little Cloud and Lady Wind, Peeny Butter Fudge, Remember, the Who’s Got Game? Series, The Book of Mean People and The Big Box. Her books of essays include Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination; the edited collection Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality; and the co-edited collection Birth of a Nation’hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O.J. Simpson Case.


In 1994 Toni Morrison introduced into Princeton University’s creative arts curriculum a new seminar program, the Princeton Atelier. The Atelier program brings professional artists to campus for intensive collaborative work with students and faculty. Collaborating Atelier artists select a project they want to explore in the company of students before developing it for the professional art world. Former Atelier guest artists include Gabriel García
Márquez, Yo-Yo Ma, Peter Sellars, Bernice Johnson Reagan, Allegra Kent, Maria Tucci, Anonymous 4 among many others.

In fall 2006 Ms. Morrison was the guest curator at the Musée du Louvre in its "Grand Invité" program where she curated a month-long series of events across the arts on the theme of "The Foreigner's Home."

Ms. Morrison has received honorary degrees from Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Sarah Lawrence, Oberlin, Dartmouth, Yale, Georgetown, Colombia, Brown, University of Michigan, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Université Paris 7-Denis Diderot, Oxford, and the Université Paris Sorbonne-Paris IV. She was also the first recipient of the Washington College Literary Award in 1987 and was a New York State Governor’s Arts Awardee in 1986.

Other prestigious awards include: the Presidential Medal of Freedom, 2012; the Officier dans l'Ordre de la Légion d'honneur, Paris, 2010; Carl Sandburg Literary Award, 2010; Lifetime Achievement Prize, Norman Mailer Writers Colony, 2009; 2008 PEN/Borders Literary Service Award; 2007 Radcliffe Institute Medal, the Du Bois Medal, 2005; the 2000 National Humanities Medal; the 2000 Library of Congress Bicentennial Living Legend award; the 1996 National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters; Rhetgium Julii Prize for Literature, 1994; the Condorcet Medal, Paris, 1994; Pearl Buck Award, 1994; Commandeur dans l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Paris, 1993; the Modern Language Association of America Commonwealth Award in Literature, 1989; Sara Lee Corporation Front Runner Award in the Arts, 1989; Anisfield Wolf Book Award in Race Relations, 1988; the Cleveland Arts Prize in Literature in 1978; and the Distinguished Writer Award of 1978 from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was a senior editor at Random House for twenty years.

Toni Morrison is a trustee of the New York Public Library, a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is a member of the American Philosophical Society and the Author’s Guild where she served on the Guild Council and as Foundation Treasurer. She served on the NEA National Council of the Arts for six years.

In 1993 Ms. Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.
Melanie Lawson ’76

Award-winning journalist Melanie Lawson is a proud Houstonian and a product of Houston schools.

Journalism has always been in Melanie’s blood. She started first as a full-time general assignments reporter at Channel 13, then went on to become co-anchor of Live at 5 and Channel 13’s midday show, Eyewitness News at 11am. Melanie also hosts a weekly Community Affairs program called “Crossroads”, focusing on issues and events around our city.

Melanie has had a varied and exhilarating career at Channel 13. She has covered virtually every city, state and national election during her career. She has traveled to Cuba, Panama, Africa and Australia, among other places. She's won numerous awards for her reporting, including two Emmys. Melanie has interviewed a wide range of notables, including three U.S. Presidents, the Dalai Lama, poet Maya Angelou, Grammy Award winners Destiny’s Child, former heavyweight champion George Foreman, director Spike Lee, legendary journalists Barbara Walters and Robin Roberts, evangelists Joel and Victoria Osteen, Hall of Famer Magic Johnson and actors Betty White and Denzel Washington.

But Melanie’s favorite stories are those about Houston’s rich, multi-ethnic community - especially stories about children and those quietly working to make a difference in their lives.

Melanie's involvement in the Houston community is far-reaching. She has served on the boards of numerous community organizations, including the Houston Ballet, the Houston Museum of African American Culture, SHAPE Community Center, the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Volunteer Houston, and the Houston Association of Black Journalists. She also belongs to the Houston Chapter of the Links Incorporated, Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and American Leadership Forum.

Melanie has also been honored as the YWCA’s “Outstanding Women of the Year”, a “Women of Distinction” by the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation, and a “Lifetime Achievement Award” by both the Houston Association of Black Journalists, and Women in Film and Television.

Melanie received her undergraduate degree in Politics from Princeton University and a joint degree in Law and Journalism from Columbia University. She worked at a Wall Street law firm for three years before returning to Houston, and is admitted to both the Texas and New York State Bars.

Last, but certainly not least, she is a proud member of the church founded by her parents, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church.
John W. Rogers Jr. ’80

John W. Rogers, Jr. is Founder, Chairman, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Investment Officer of Ariel Investments. Headquartered in Chicago, the firm offers six no-load mutual funds for individual investors and defined contribution plans as well as separately managed accounts for institutions and high net worth individuals.

After working for 2½ years as a stockbroker at William Blair & Company, LLC, John founded Ariel Investments in 1983 to focus on undervalued small and medium-sized companies. Patience served as the cornerstone of a disciplined approach that still drives the firm today.

John’s passion for investing started when he was 12 years old when his father bought him stocks, instead of toys, for every birthday and Christmas. His interest grew while majoring in Economics at Princeton University. In addition to following stocks as a college student, John also played basketball under Hall of Fame coach Pete Carril. He was captain of Princeton’s Varsity Basketball Team his senior year. There, Carril’s courtside lessons on teamwork profoundly shaped his views of entrepreneurship and investing.

Early in his career, John’s investment expertise brought him to the forefront of media attention, including being selected as Co-Mutual Fund Manager of the Year by Sylvia Porter’s Personal Finance magazine as well as an All-Star Mutual Fund Manager by USA TODAY. Furthermore, he has been highlighted alongside legendary investors Warren Buffett, Sir John Templeton and Ben Graham in the distinguished book: The World’s 99 Greatest Investors by Magnus Angenfelt. Today, he is regularly featured and quoted in a wide variety of broadcast and print publications and is a contributing columnist to Forbes.

Beyond Ariel, John currently serves as a board member of Exelon Corporation and McDonald’s Corporation. Additionally, he is a trustee of both the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the University of Chicago, where he chairs the board of the University of Chicago Laboratory School. John is also a director of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights.

In 2008, John was awarded Princeton University’s highest honor, the Woodrow Wilson Award, presented each year to the alumni whose career embodies a commitment to national service. Following the election of President Barack Obama, he served as co-chair for the Presidential Inaugural Committee 2009. From 2010 to 2013, he was Chair of the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Capability. Today, he chairs the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Capability for Young Americans.
Craig Robinson ’83

Craig Robinson, AB Princeton University, MBA Univ. of Chicago GSB, is now a college basketball analyst for ESPN. Prior to joining ESPN Craig was the Head Coach of Oregon State University’s Men’s Basketball team. In his six seasons Robinson became the fourth winningest coach in OSU history. Prior to OSU, he led Brown University to their best two-year record in history and was named Ivy League Coach of the Year. He is also the author of NY Times Bestseller, “A Game of Character”. Craig and his wife Kelly, have three boys and a girl, Leslie, PU ’18.