

F O R W A R D >>>>>>>>> F E S T

RESOURCE GUIDE

June 2021

A YEAR OF
FORWARD
THINKING



A Y E A R O F
F O R W A R D
T H I N K I N G



»»»»»»»» What Is A Year of Forward Thinking? »»»»»»»»

A Year of Forward Thinking spanned the 2020–21 academic year, engaging the entire Princeton University community — alumni, students, faculty, staff and friends — in a global conversation about pioneering solutions for today’s challenges.

forwardthinking.princeton.edu

F O R W A R D >>>>>>>>>> F E S T

What Is Forward Fest?

Forward Fest is a monthly online series of discussions with Princeton faculty, students, staff, alumni and other interested thinkers who will explore, engage and develop bold thinking for the future.

How to Use This Resource Guide

Binge as background reading to prepare for the Forward Fest discussions, follow along during the programming and use the information to fuel conversations with Princetonians and others about ideas that merit Thinking Forward together.

forwardthinking.princeton.edu/festival

FORWARD

THINKERS



Allison Carruth

Professor of American Studies
and the High Meadows
Environmental Institute



Céline Gounder '97

Internist, Infectious Disease
Specialist, Epidemiologist, CEO of
Just Human Productions, Host of
“Epidemic” and “American
Diagnosis” podcasts



Eric Gregory

Professor of Religion;
Chair, Humanities Council;
Director, Program in Humanistic
Studies; Director, Stewart
Seminars in Religion



Laurence Ralph

Professor of Anthropology;
Co-Director, Center on
Transnational Policing



Morgan Smith '21

Young Alumni Trustee;
Forward Fest Moderator

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021

4:00 PM – 5:15 PM EDT

Thinking Forward: Bringing Themes Together

forwardthinking.princeton.edu/forwardthinkers

THINKING FORWARD: BRINGING THEMES TOGETHER

Over the course of A Year of Forward Thinking, Princeton researchers and alumni alike have shared the ideas that are driving innovation, challenging conventional wisdom and transforming their respective fields. The final installment of Forward Fest, “[Thinking Forward: Bringing Themes Together](#),” revisits topics featured over the past nine months in order to discuss how they intersect in the University’s interdisciplinary ecosystem. The diversity of expertise among faculty, staff, alumni and students, unfettered by artificial departmental barriers, leads to creative and collaborative problem-solving. How has the 2020 election and subsequent change in administration impacted the nation’s public health response? What does humanistic inquiry bring to our understanding of environmental policy? Princeton’s approach to teaching and research brings together scientists and humanists, engineers and social scientists, in a multitude of ways to answer these questions and serve humanity.

“The low barrier to collaboration from the humanities to the sciences and engineering is incredibly powerful at Princeton because the University is a family essentially.”

– BRYAN GRENFELL, Kathryn Briger and Sarah Fenton
Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
and Public Affairs

FORWARD

THINKING

What is next for... public health and the state of our Union?

At the beginning of A Year of Forward Thinking, the world was reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines were still months away from development. The virus, and the U.S. government's response to it, became significant election-year issues as Americans went to the polls in November. Even as the number of COVID-19 cases is now trending in a positive direction, there remain deep divisions regarding the worst health crisis in more than 100 years. What lessons have we learned in the last year? Are we now better prepared for the next deadly pandemic, or has the politicization of public health left us even more vulnerable?

Céline Gounder '97

Céline Gounder '97 served on the Biden-Harris Transition COVID-19 Advisory Board and works as an infectious disease specialist at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue and a clinical assistant professor of medicine at NYU Grossman School of Medicine. An epidemiologist, journalist, filmmaker and medical analyst for CNN, she's written for The New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Washington Post and many other publications. Gounder founded Just Human Productions in 2017, using storytelling to build community and collaboration around issues of health disparity. She hosts and produces two podcasts about public health: "Epidemic" and "American Diagnosis." "[Science and health] get to be pretty complicated to explain in three minutes on television," she said. "But in a podcast, you can get into that science so that people understand the bigger picture, and they have a better understanding of some of these news headlines."



Photo courtesy of Céline Gounder

» I'm just hopeful that as we live through this, that the importance of that kind of preparedness is recognized, and that we do start to reinvest in public health systems and into preparedness of all kinds.»

FORWARD

THINKING

What is next for... social justice?

The videotaped murder of George Floyd, the protests and violence that followed, and the conviction of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin raised awareness — and temperatures — as the nation wrestled with its notions of justice and equality. Floyd's killing at the hands of police was one of several incidents that galvanized the Black Lives Matter movement, forcing citizens, communities and institutions to examine racism in their own histories and rededicate themselves to "liberty and justice for all." After a year of protests and civil action, is Martin Luther King Jr.'s arc of the moral universe bending in the right direction? Where have we seen true progress and what injustices still need to be addressed?

Laurence Ralph

Laurence Ralph is an anthropologist who writes about police abuse, mass incarceration, the criminalization of the drug trade, disability and premature death for urban residents of color. "Each of my projects, in its own way, uses experiences of violence, debilitating injury, and/or death to examine the stereotypes and prejudices embedded in narratives about inner-city violence," said Ralph, who is a professor of anthropology and co-director of the Center on Transnational Policing (CTP), a collaborative research hub that he co-founded with Aisha Beliso-De Jesús, professor of American studies. CTP brings scholars together to understand policing in the U.S. and internationally. Ralph received a 2021 Guggenheim Fellowship and his latest book, "The Torture Letters: Reckoning with Police Violence" — which became an animated short film he directed — explores a decades-long scandal in which 125 African Americans were brutally tortured while in Chicago police custody.

» What's happening now, to me, is so inspiring because it is primarily about a collective assertion of dignity on behalf of the most vulnerable. And when we start from that premise, I think that we have a good opportunity to provide equity in our systems of justice. »



Photo: Sameer A. Khan / Fotobuddy

FORWARD

THINKING

What do we owe one another as we think forward?

A convergence of crises demonstrated the fragility of our world and forced citizens and governments to contemplate issues of equity and ethics while reconsidering the social contract for a new era. Historic injustices, the climate crisis and COVID-19 economic and health disparities laid bare inconvenient truths long overlooked. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy, said, “In the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future. And we are all mortal.” What lessons can we gain from the study of philosophy, religion and the arts to help us understand what we owe one another in the service of humanity?

Eric Gregory

Eric Gregory is a professor of religion and chair of the Humanities Council. He is also director of the Program in Humanistic Studies and the Stewart Seminars in Religion, and sits on the executive committee of the University Center for Human Values. His interests include religious and philosophical ethics, theology, political theory, law and religion and the role of religion in public life. “Reading and arguing about works of literature or philosophy, especially when historically or culturally distant, allow us to read ourselves and take creative responsibility for those deepest commitments which give shape to our lives,” Gregory said. He is the author of “Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship,” and a forthcoming book tentatively titled, “The In-Gathering of Strangers: Global Justice and Political Theology,” which examines secular and religious perspectives on global justice.

» The humanities expose us — often with brutal honesty — to vocabularies and insights adequate to the complexity of human experience, especially for an age marked by stubborn violence and tempted by reductive simplicity. »



Photo: Mark Czajkowski, Office of Communications

FORWARD

THINKING

The next chapter: How do we tell stories that inspire?

Facts might be stubborn things, but they can be manipulated, misunderstood and, lacking context, easily forgotten. A powerful story, on the other hand, can make a lasting impression that inspires people to act — for good or ill. The climate crisis is a prime example of a global challenge in search of a stronger narrative. “We need to reach people in ways that go beyond the science,” said [Tom Barron '74](#), an acclaimed author and environmental activist. “The atmosphere, the oceans, the forests: All of those are going to be saved only if we understand that the Earth itself is a great story, a story that includes us. We need to tell that story in a much more compelling and inspiring way.”

Allison Carruth

Allison Carruth is an author and multimedia storyteller who cultivates narratives that illuminate urgent environmental crises, re-imagining the boundaries between the arts, humanities and sciences. A professor of American studies and the High Meadows Environmental Institute, she recently established the [Princeton Environmental Media Lab](#), a space that will apply new and established media to science communication and storytelling experiments: “My hope is that the Environmental Media Lab will support students, artists, journalists, community leaders and others in communicating diverse knowledge about pressing environmental problems and in imagining more just and livable futures.” Carruth is currently completing “Novel Ecologies,” a book that argues that a new environmental imagination has developed out of confrontations between engineering, ecology and sustainability in the United States.

»» What keeps me up at night increasingly is the power of disinformation to discredit academic research and stymie action around urgent social and environmental problems. »»



Photo courtesy of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles

FORWARD

THINKER

Morgan Smith '21

Morgan Smith '21 is a Young Alumni Trustee. A recent graduate with a concentration in the School of Public and International Affairs and a certificate in African American studies, Smith was the first Black president of Whig-Clio. Her other campus activities included being a student worker with the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students; a member of Black Arts Company: Dance; a cohort leader for the Vote100 effort; a member of the Campus Life Leadership Council, the Princeton Association of Black Women and the SPIA Student Advisory Committee; and a barista with Coffee Club. In the summer of 2019, she served as an ombudsman/legal intern for Children's National Hospital in Washington D.C.; in the summer of 2020, she was a judicial intern for Chief Magistrate Judge Cheryl Pollak '75 at the Eastern District Court of New York. Post-Princeton, she will be a Project 55 Fellow with Chicago Volunteer Legal Services as a child representative coordinator.

» During a time of such upheaval, there is also an opportunity to do better. »



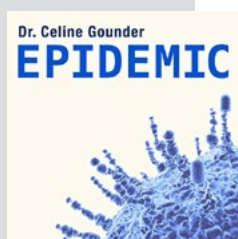
READ, WATCH AND LISTEN



Photo: Barron Bixler



Photo: Denise Applewhite, Office of Communications



5 QUESTIONS WITH ALLISON CARRUTH:

The American studies professor explains the power of story to catalyze action, her plans to establish an environmental media lab at Princeton and what “forward thinking” means to her.

CREATIVE ECOLOGIES: STORYTELLING AND ENVIRONMENTALISM:

Allison Carruth discusses her humanities class, which explores “how contemporary American writers, artists and media makers take up ideas from the environmental sciences and address pressing environmental challenges.”

“EPIDEMIC” PODCAST: Céline Gounder interviews some of the world’s leading infectious disease and public health experts in a weekly podcast about the science, public health and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

“WE ROAR” Q&A: Céline Gounder answers viewer questions and discusses the twists and turns of the COVID-19 crisis with host Margaret Koval *83 from the Office of Communications.

JUST HUMAN PRODUCTIONS STORY ARCHIVE:

Céline Gounder and her colleagues discuss the latest developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, from vaccines to media misinformation.

LAURENCE RALPH DISCUSSES THE INSPIRATION BEHIND HIS POWERFUL SHORT ‘THE TORTURE LETTERS’:

In a Q&A with Animation Magazine, Laurence Ralph discusses the short film that he directed based on a decade of research into racism and police brutality in Chicago.

“RACE AND DEMOCRACY” PODCAST:

Laurence Ralph explains the intent behind his work and the challenge of writing about the “spectacle of torture” in this podcast from the University of Texas Center for the Study of Race and Democracy.

NO SURRENDER: In the midst of COVID-19 and the George Floyd protests, Laurence Ralph reflects on his own upbringing to express the vulnerability of the Black community in America.

IN BIDEN’S CATHOLIC FAITH, AN ASCENDANT LIBERAL CHRISTIANITY:

Following the January 2021 inauguration, Eric Gregory and other scholars of religion spoke to Elizabeth Dias of The New York Times about how faith guides President Joe Biden.

GOOD SAMARITANS OF THE ENTIRE WORLD: HUMANITARIAN ETHICS AND WHAT WE OWE TO WHOM:

In a special public lecture at the Center of Theological Inquiry, Eric Gregory asks what we owe strangers in the modern age and how our answers to that question mold our national identity.

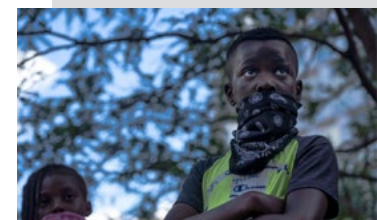


Photo: Kerem Yücel / AFP via Getty Images



Photo: Doug Mills/The New York Times



Photo: Denise Applewhite, Office of Communications

THINKING FORWARD, THINKING BIG

Nine of Princeton's faculty members sat down for a new video series that explores the innovative ideas that are inspiring them to pursue paradigm-shifting research. "There are entire classes of problems that we've just given up on as impossible — that suddenly might be things that can be solved," said Andrew Houck '00, professor of electrical and computer engineering who is studying how quantum science can transform computing technology. Members of the faculty — from engineers to astrophysicists to classics scholars — shared their excitement about the breakthroughs that have made a brighter future feel tantalizingly possible. [Watch a preview and start the series.](#)



JESSE JENKINS
assistant professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering and the Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment

Is it too late to turn back the clock on climate change?



JESSICA METCALF
associate professor of ecology, evolutionary biology and public affairs

Can we predict and stop the next pandemic?



DAN-EL PADILLA PERALTA '06
associate professor of classics

How can the classics become more inclusive?



OLGA RUSSAKOVSKY
assistant professor of computer science

How can we ensure artificial intelligence includes diverse perspectives?



CLIFF BRANGWYNNE
June K. Wu '92 Professor of Chemical and Biological Engineering and director of the Princeton Bioengineering Initiative

Available June 17



JO DUNKLEY
professor of physics and astrophysical sciences

Available June 24



CHIKA OKEKE-AGULU
professor of art and archaeology and African American studies

Available July 1



ANDREW HOUCK '00
professor of electrical and computer engineering

Available July 8



ERIC GREGORY
professor of religion; chair, Humanities Council; director, Program in Humanistic Studies; director, Stewart Seminars in Religion

Available July 15

A YEAR OF FORWARD THINKING



Thank you for joining us for this final session of Forward Fest. This monthly series of online discussions with Princeton faculty, students, staff, alumni and other forward thinkers has focused on ways to explore, engage, and develop bold thinking for the future.

What Are YOU Thinking Forward?

Share it now.

forward@princeton.edu

[#PrincetonForward](https://twitter.com/PrincetonForward)

For more information, visit

forwardthinking.princeton.edu/festival

forwardthinking.princeton.edu