

# ACTIVIST HUMANITIES IN THE WORLD

13 – 15 MARCH 2014

In partnership with the *School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS); University of Virginia; Ertegun House, University of Oxford*; and *The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH)*. Supported by the *British Council*.



A conference on the relationship between humanities and social change, across a wide range of national and cultural contexts, will bring together academics, artists, and audiences for three days of presentation and conversation. Guiding themes include artistic expression and political struggle, academic reflection and social responsibility, faith and society, and the circulation of texts, images and bodies at the start of the twenty first century. Part of the [Humanities and the Public Good](#) series.

## THURSDAY 13 MARCH | EVENTS AT SOAS

Location to be confirmed, please check [www.soas.ac.uk](http://www.soas.ac.uk) for more information.

**19:00-19:30** | Reception

**19:30-20:30** | Ahdaf Soueif, chaired by Marina Warner

**20:30-21:30** | Gargi Sen, short films

**21:30-22:00** | Music from the Middle East

## FRIDAY 14 MARCH

**Events taking place at SOAS in London** (Locations tbc please check [www.soas.ac.uk](http://www.soas.ac.uk) for more information)

**09:00-11:00** | Translation as Radicalisation (publishers and translators)

**11:00-13:00** | Humanities and Activism

**Events taking place at TORCH in Oxford**

**TIME TBC** | The Humanities in the 21st Century | A conference for graduates hosted by Ertegun House.

More details will be available shortly. Please check [www.torch.ox.ac.uk](http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk) for more information.

# THE ACTIVIST HUMANITIES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

## AHDAF SOUEIF, PAUL SMITH & ROBIN KELLEY IN CONVERSATION

17:00-18:30 | Pichette Auditorium, Pembroke College

Ahdaf Soueif, the Booker prize nominated Egyptian novelist and political and cultural commentator, will be in conversation with Robin Kelley, the Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA who has written extensively on social movements, the African diaspora and radical change, and Paul Smith, the Director of the British Council in the US whose previous postings include Egypt, India, Burma, Nigeria and Bangladesh.

*To guarantee a seat please register (remaining seats will be available on the day on a first come, first served basis.) Go to <http://bit.ly/1fPPDDI> to register.*

## SATURDAY 15 MARCH

*To guarantee a seat please register (remaining seats will be available on the day on a first come, first served basis.) Go to <http://bit.ly/1esu7UG> to register for the whole day.*

**9.15 - 10.45** | Panel 1: Social practice and subversive action  
*Seminar Room, Radcliffe Humanities, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

This panel looks at the ways that Humanities scholars have engaged with social movements and policy on social issues in different cultural and national contexts. In particular the speakers will look at social change in India, Nigeria, Tunisia and China, but with a view to opening up discussion.

**Chair:** Professor Robin Kelley (UCLA)

**Speakers:** Dr Brinda Bose (University of Delhi), Professor Lai Olurode (University of Lagos), Professor Lu Andong (Nanjing University), Professor Amel Grami (University of Manouba)

**10.45 - 11.15** | Tea

*Research Common Room, Radcliffe Humanities, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

**11.15 - 12.45** | Panel 2: Migration and translation  
*Seminar Room, Radcliffe Humanities, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

Migration and translation interact and exert pressure on one another. Migrants require translators; translation enables the migration of ideas. Our panel will explore the questions that arise from a variety of perspectives. Dr David Chirico (1 Pump Court) will discuss the role of translation in UK asylum interviews and court hearings. Professor Mona Baker (Manchester) will explore the extent to which volunteer translation done by individuals for collectives connected with the Egyptian Revolution supports or undermines the prefigurative agendas of these collectives, ie the degree to which it actualizes their political ideals, and will extend the definition of prefiguration to encompass textual, visual and aesthetic practices, principally in online media. Dr Cosima Bruno (SOAS) will look at questions of language and translation in Macau poetry which bears the residue of 400 years of migration from Europe, from the region of the Pear River Delta, and from the recent flows of immigration, foreign investors, tourists, media, and technology.

**Chair:** Dr Matthew Reynolds

**Speakers:** Professor Mona Baker (University of Manchester), Dr Cosima Bruno (SOAS), Dr David Chirico (1 Pump Court)

**12.45 - 13.45** | Lunch

*Ertegun House, 37a St Giles, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

**13:45 - 15.15** | Panel 3: Religion and secularism

*Ertegun House, 37a St Giles, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

Despite occasional claims we live in an age of post-religion and the dominance of the secular, debate about religion and secularism continues to mark our time. The two colour ways of understanding and managing public life, whether we are dealing with societies where religion dominates or others where a secular modernity was thought to have ended the polemic. Our panel will explore the pair of concepts and their intersections from a variety of angles. Dr Humeira Iqtidar (Kings College, London) tackles “Tolerance in Times of War” by exploring the tensions and contradictions engendered by the official discourse of tolerance in Pakistan, where emphasis has been on 'educating' the masses into tolerance sponsored by successive governments, both military and civilian. Dr Prasanta Chakravarty (University of Delhi, India) will be speaking on the idea of Indian notion of constitutional secularism and how community and ethical bond formation thwarts such legal ideas of modernity, and the implications of all of this for the humanities in his paper, "Icons, Death, Sampradaya: The National Popular and the Ascendancy of the Ethical Left". Professor Bruce Robbins (Columbia University, New York) pushes debate into the latest resurgence of interest in an argument for religion in public space with a paper on “Reflections on enchantment and post-secularism”.

**Chair:** Dr Mohamed-Salah Omri (University of Oxford)

**Speakers:** Professor Bruce Robbins (Columbia University), Dr Humeira Iqtidar (King’s College London), Professor Prasanta Chakravaty (University of Dehli)

**15.15 - 15.30** | Tea

*Ertegun House, 37a St Giles, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

**15.30 - 16.00** | Looking back and looking ahead: closing discussion and round-up

*Ertegun House, 37a St Giles, Woodstock Road, Oxford*

**Chair:** Professor Michael Levenson (University of Virginia)

Visit [www.torch.ox.ac.uk/activist-humanities](http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/activist-humanities) for more information about this event

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