



# EXTRAPOLATION, INTERDISCIPLINARITY, AND LEARNING: THE SECOND ANNUAL CITY TECH SYMPOSIUM ON SCIENCE FICTION

Keynote Speaker: **Samuel R. Delany**

Wednesday, December 6, 2017 ■ 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

New York City College of Technology, 300 Jay St., Namm N119, Brooklyn, NY



## Extrapolation, Interdisciplinarity, and Learning

### The Second Annual City Tech Symposium on Science Fiction

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

New York City College of Technology,  
CUNY

Keynote Speaker: Samuel R. Delany

Organizing Committee: Jason W. Ellis and  
A. Lavelle Porter.

Hosted by the School of Arts and Sciences  
at the New York City College of  
Technology, CUNY.

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*Knowledge is indivisible. When people grow wise in one direction, they are sure to make it easier for themselves to grow wise in other directions as well. On the other hand, when they split up knowledge, concentrate on their own field, and scorn and ignore other fields, they grow less wise—even in their own field. How often people speak of art and science as though they were two entirely different things, with no interconnection. . . . That is all wrong. . . . If we go through the history of human advance, we find that there are many places where art and science intermingled and where an advance in one was impossible without an advance in the other.*

--Isaac Asimov, *A Roving Mind* (1983)

Over twenty years after C. P. Snow published *The Two Cultures*, the unparalleled writer, scientist, and educator Isaac Asimov defends the “interconnection” between the sciences and the arts. In fact, he demonstrates the importance of interdisciplinarity—both within STEM

fields as well as between STEM and the humanities—through his unsurpassed 500+ books ranging from Biblical scholarship to biochemistry, and science to science fiction. He shows how disciplines inform and strengthen one another to create greater knowledge and wisdom, which in turn leads to greater understanding and new insights. While significant strides have been made in promoting interdisciplinarity, Asimov’s defense continues to echo today.

This symposium examines SF in the spirit of Asimov’s defense by exploring interdisciplinarity through the lens of science fiction—a mediating ‘third culture’ (borrowing Snow’s term) that combines the sciences and the humanities to extrapolate new worlds while reflecting on our own. Together, we aim to uncover science fiction’s interdisciplinary roots as a literary form, lens for research, and pedagogical approach.

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#### Schedule

##### 9:00AM-9:15AM

Opening Remarks

Location: Namm 119

Justin Vazquez-Poritz, Dean of the School  
of Arts and Sciences, New York City  
College of Technology

Jason W. Ellis, New York City College of  
Technology

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##### 9:15AM-10:50AM

Session 1: Knowledge, Language, and  
Computing

Location: Namm 119

Moderator: Lucas Kwong

Aaron Barlow, “Crashing Discipline: How  
Philip K. Dick Expanded  
Conversation”

Jill Belli, "Composing Resistance: Writing and Revision in Science Fiction Texts"

Johannah Rodgers, "The Genealogy of an Image, or, What Does Literature (Not) Have To Do With the History of Computing?: Tracing the Sources and Reception of Gulliver's 'Knowledge Engine'"

Jessica Roman, "'Any direction might as well be forward': An examination of the Science, Technology, Linguistics and Philosophy of Ted Chiang's *The Story of Your Life*"

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**10:50AM-11:00AM**

Break

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**11:00AM-12:20PM**

Session 2: Exploring Boundaries and Possibilities

Location: Namm 119

Moderator: Sean Scanlan

Leigh Dara Gold, "Ursula K Le Guin's 'Schrödinger's Cat' as Interdisciplinary Gedankenexperiment"

Adam Heidebrink-Bruno, "Structural Violence of Late Capitalism and the Limiting of Radical Imagination"

Kimon Keramidas, "Science Fiction: Humanity, Technology, the Present, the Future"

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**12:20AM-1:30PM**

Lunch

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**1:30PM-2:20PM**

Session 3: An Epic Entanglement in the Glorious World of Science Fiction:

Panel Discussion About NEH-Funded "Cultural History of Digital Technology"

Location: Namm 119

Moderator: Patrick Corbett

Sandra Cheng, Anne Leonhardt, Satyanand Singh, and Peter Spillane

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**2:20PM-2:30PM**

Break

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**2:30PM-3:50PM**

Session 4: Science, Fiction, and Ethics

Location: Namm 119

Moderator: Aaron Barlow

Marleen S. Barr, "'You Never Would Believe Where the Keebler Cookies Come From . . . They're Baked In Magic Ovens, and There's No Factory': Ecological Plant-Based Urban Planning Makes Eleanor Cameron's *The Wonderful Flight To The Mushroom Planet* Real"

Anastasia Klimchynskaya, "Imaginative Possibility, Virtual Laboratories, and Communal Spaces: Science Fiction and the History of Experimental Science"

Sharon Packer, "Luke Cage Comics and Race-Based Unethical Medical Experiments"

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**3:50PM-4:00PM**

Break

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**4:00PM-5:00PM**

Keynote Address by Samuel R. Delany

Location: Namm 119

Introduction: Syed Ahmed, New York City College of Technology

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**5:00PM-5:15PM**

Break

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**5:15PM-6:00PM**

Oral History of the City Tech Science Fiction Collection, and Book Signing with Samuel R. Delany

Location: Atrium 543C, Library Archives,  
Enter the library on the fourth floor of the Atrium Building, walk up to the fifth floor inside the library, walk to the left past the stacks, and turn left again.

Keith Muchowski, College Archivist, New York City College of Technology  
Jason W. Ellis, New York City College of Technology

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### **Symposium Speakers**

**Syed Ahmed** is an Associate in Science (AS) in Liberal Arts and Sciences student at New York City College of Technology. He is currently enrolled in Professor Lavelle Porter's ENG 3403, One Major Writer: Samuel R. Delany class.

**Aaron Barlow** teaches English at New York City College of Technology and has written often on Philip K. Dick.

**Marleen S. Barr** is known for her pioneering work in feminist science fiction and teaches English at the City University of New York. She has won the Science Fiction Research Association Pilgrim Award for lifetime achievement in science fiction criticism. Barr is the author of *Alien to Femininity: Speculative Fiction and Feminist Theory*, *Lost in Space: Probing Feminist Science Fiction and Beyond*, *Feminist Fabulation: Space/Postmodern*

*Fiction*, and *Genre Fission: A New Discourse Practice for Cultural Studies*.

Barr has edited many anthologies and co-edited the science fiction issue of PMLA. She is the author of the novels *Oy Pioneer!* and *Oy Feminist Planets: A Fake Memoir*.

**Jill Belli**, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of English and Co-Director of the OpenLab, the college's open-source digital platform for teaching, learning, and collaborating. Jill teaches and researches utopian studies and science fiction, collaborates on a digital science fiction project, the *Futures Past Archive*, and serves on the Steering Committee and as the web developer for the Society for Utopian Studies. She is currently working on a book about happiness and well-being in education.

**Sandra Cheng** is an Assistant Professor of Art History at New York City College of Technology. Her research interests include seventeenth-century art and theory; the history of collecting, drawing and studio practice; history of monstrosity in the Renaissance and Baroque; comics and caricature; and women photographers of the early twentieth century. She is a Project Co-Director of the NEH-funded "Cultural History of Digital Technology" project.

**Patrick Corbett** is an Assistant Professor of English at New York City College of Technology, and director of Serious Change Through Play, a pedagogically-focused research group that encourages growth and learning through play across many domains. He had worked previously in diverse fields including textile manufacturing, information technology, healthcare policy research, and motion picture development before becoming a teacher and scholar of writing. His research focuses on the unseen activities and cultural dimensions found in the

everyday use of communications technologies.

**Samuel R. Delany** is an influential SF writer, recognized literary critic, and retired professor. Born in 1942 and raised in Harlem, he published his first novel, *The Jewels of Apor*, at the age of 20. His SF has won many of the field's highest accolades, including: Hugo for Best Short Story ("Aye, and Gomorrah...," 1967), Hugo and Nebula Awards ("Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones," 1968), and Nebula Award for Best Novel (*Babel-17*, 1966; and *The Einstein Intersection*, 1967). Delany's critical studies of SF, such as *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* and *Starboard Wine* continue to fuel debate. For *The Motion of Light in Water*, he won the Hugo for Best Nonfiction. Delany is also a retired professor. He has taught as a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, of English at SUNY Buffalo, and of English and Creative Writing at Temple University. Delany's considerable contributions to the SF field have been recognized by the Science Fiction Research Association's Pilgrim Award in 1985 and the J. Lloyd Eaton Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010. In 2013 he was named the 31<sup>st</sup> Damon Knight Memorial Grand Master of Science Fiction by the Science Fiction Writers of America. For his lifetime contributions to LGBTQ studies he received the Kessler Award in 1997 from the CLAGS Center for LGBTQ Studies, housed at the CUNY Graduate Center.

**Jason W. Ellis** is an Assistant Professor of English at New York City College of Technology, and a former Marion L. Brittain Fellow of Georgia Tech. He coedited *The Postnational Fantasy: Postcolonialism, Cosmopolitics and Science Fiction* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011). His

research interests include science fiction, digital technology, and LEGO. Read about his work at [dynamicsubspace.net](http://dynamicsubspace.net).

**Leigh Dara Gold** received her doctorate in German Literature in 2011 from New York University. She teaches Introduction to Poetry and English 1121 at New York City College of Technology, and Ancient Literature and Composition at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Her current research interests include science fiction's role in the classroom, research on Ursula K. Le Guin, and connections between dance, literature, and philosophy.

**Adam Heidebrink-Bruno** is a graduate student in Lehigh University's Literature and Social Justice program. He is particularly interested in how storytelling, broadly conceived, is used to mediate and influence real world events, including culture and politics. Adam's scholarship focuses on contemporary American fiction with an emphasis on science fiction.

**Kimon Keramidas** is associate director and clinical assistant professor in the Center for Experimental Humanities in New York University's Graduate School for Arts and Sciences. Kimon is a cultural historian whose research focuses on the study of media and technology through the lenses of political economy and sociology of culture. His most recent project was the exhibition *The Interface Experience: Forty Years of Personal Computing* which presented some of the most ubiquitous objects in the history of personal computing in tactile and interactive displays. Kimon's research and teaching considers digital tools not only as objects of study, but also as a means for performing research and scholarship. Kimon is active in the fields of digital humanities and interactive technology and pedagogy, and has helped found and is on the editorial

collective of The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy, and founded and is on the steering committee of New York City Digital Humanities. Read about his work at [kimonkeramidas.com](http://kimonkeramidas.com).

**Anastasia Klimchynskaya** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, where she's working on a dissertation on the emergence of science fiction in the 19th century. In particular, she situates the rise of the genre within the history of science, focusing on the way new scientific paradigms, modes of thought, and forms of knowledge gave rise to it, and on creating a theory of the genre based in that history. She has taught several courses on science fiction and the history of science, including "Living in a Science Fiction World," which used sci-fi to tackle contemporary sociopolitical, legal, and technological issues. Her other intellectual interests include exploring the mechanisms through which science fiction becomes science fact, the way science fiction can be used as a tool to develop law, policy, and research agendas, and the semiotics of science fiction.

**Lucas Kwong** is an assistant professor of English at New York City College of Technology, where he has recently served as the coordinator for the 2016 and 2017 Literary Arts Festival Writing Competitions. His scholarship on religion, the novel, and the fantastic includes the article "Dracula's Apologetics of Progress," published in a 2016 issue of *Victorian Literature and Culture*. His current research project examines how, through the fantastic fiction of the late Victorian period, authors such as Bram Stoker and Rudyard Kipling reimagined their era's fascination with religious difference.

**Anne Leonhardt** is an Associate Professor of Architecture at New York City College of Technology, and she is a registered architect in the State of New York. Her research, teaching, and design practice focus on the material and environmental interfaces between architectural design, form, and tectonics. Areas of expertise include associative computational design, building performance analysis, information modeling systems, fabrication, and sustainable materials and energy. She is the Project Director of the NEH-funded "Cultural History of Digital Technology" project.

**Keith Muchowski** is a librarian and professor at New York City College of Technology (CUNY). His areas of interest include nineteenth and twentieth century military history, the politics and culture of the Cold War, and the Roosevelt family.

**Sharon Packer, MD** is a physician and psychiatrist who is in private practice and is Assistant Clinical Professor at Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai. She is the author of several books that link science, psychiatry and the humanities, including *Neuroscience in Science Fiction Film*, *Cinema's Sinister Psychiatrists*, *Movies and the Modern Psyche*, *Superheroes & Superegos: the Minds behind the Masks*; *Dreams in Myth, Medicine & Movies*. She edited two multi-volume books on *Evil in American Popular Culture* and *Mental Illness in Popular Culture*. She writes regular articles on "Why Psychiatrists are Physicians First" for *Psychiatric Times*.

**A. Lavelle Porter** is an Assistant Professor of English at New York City College of Technology. He holds a B.A. in history from Morehouse College and a Ph.D. in English from the CUNY Graduate Center. His writing has appeared in venues such as *The GC Advocate*, *Callaloo*, *The New*

*Inquiry*, Poetry Foundation, and the African American Intellectual History Society. He is currently working on a book about representations of black higher education in popular culture.

**Johannah Rodgers** is a writer, visual artist, and educator whose work explores issues related to representation and communication practices across media. She is the author of *52worddrawings* (mimeograph, 2017), *Technology: A Reader for Writers* (Oxford University Press, 2014), the digital fiction project, *DNA* (The Brooklyn Rail, 2014), and *sentences* (Red Dust, 2007). Her visual works include the Excel Drawing Series and The How Much Project, which explores the intersection of aesthetics, civic literacy, and social action in relation to income inequality in the United States via digital and analog visualization tools. She teaches writing and literature courses at The City University of New York, where she is an associate professor in English at the New York City College of Technology. Read about her work at [johannahrogers.net](http://johannahrogers.net) or on Twitter @what\_is\_writing.

**Jessica Roman** is a Bachelor of Science in Applied Chemistry student at New York City College of Technology.

**Sean Scanlan** is an Associate Professor of English at New York City College of Technology, where he specializes in literary technologies and American and global literature. He is the founder and editor of the peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal *NANO: New American Notes Online*. And he recently published an article titled “Global Homesickness in William Gibson’s Blue Ant Trilogy” in a 2016 collection titled *The City after 9/11*.

**Satyanand Singh** is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at New York City College

of Technology. His research interests include Number Theory, Cryptography, Probability, and Algebra. His research appears in *The Electronic Journal of Combinatorics*, *The International Journal of Number Theory*, *CMJ*, and the *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology*. He is a Project Co-Director of the NEH-funded “Cultural History of Digital Technology” project.

**Peter Spellane**, Ph. D., is an associate professor and member of the Chemistry department at New York City College of Technology. Recent work with City Tech colleagues includes the design and launch of new courses in environmental science (NSF support) and of three NEH-funded projects that integrate humanities with education in science and technology, “Water and Work: The Ecology of Downtown Brooklyn,” “Along the Shore, Changing and Preserving the Landmarks of the Brooklyn’s Industrial Waterfront,” and “A Cultural History of Digital Technology.” His current work concerns the history and environmental legacy of chemicals production and petroleum refining in New York City in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.