

SAC

SOCIETY FOR THE
ANTHROPOLOGY OF
CONSCIOUSNESS

38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 22-25, 2018
PALO ALTO, CA

SOFIA UNIVERSITY



altered states, sound,
and healing

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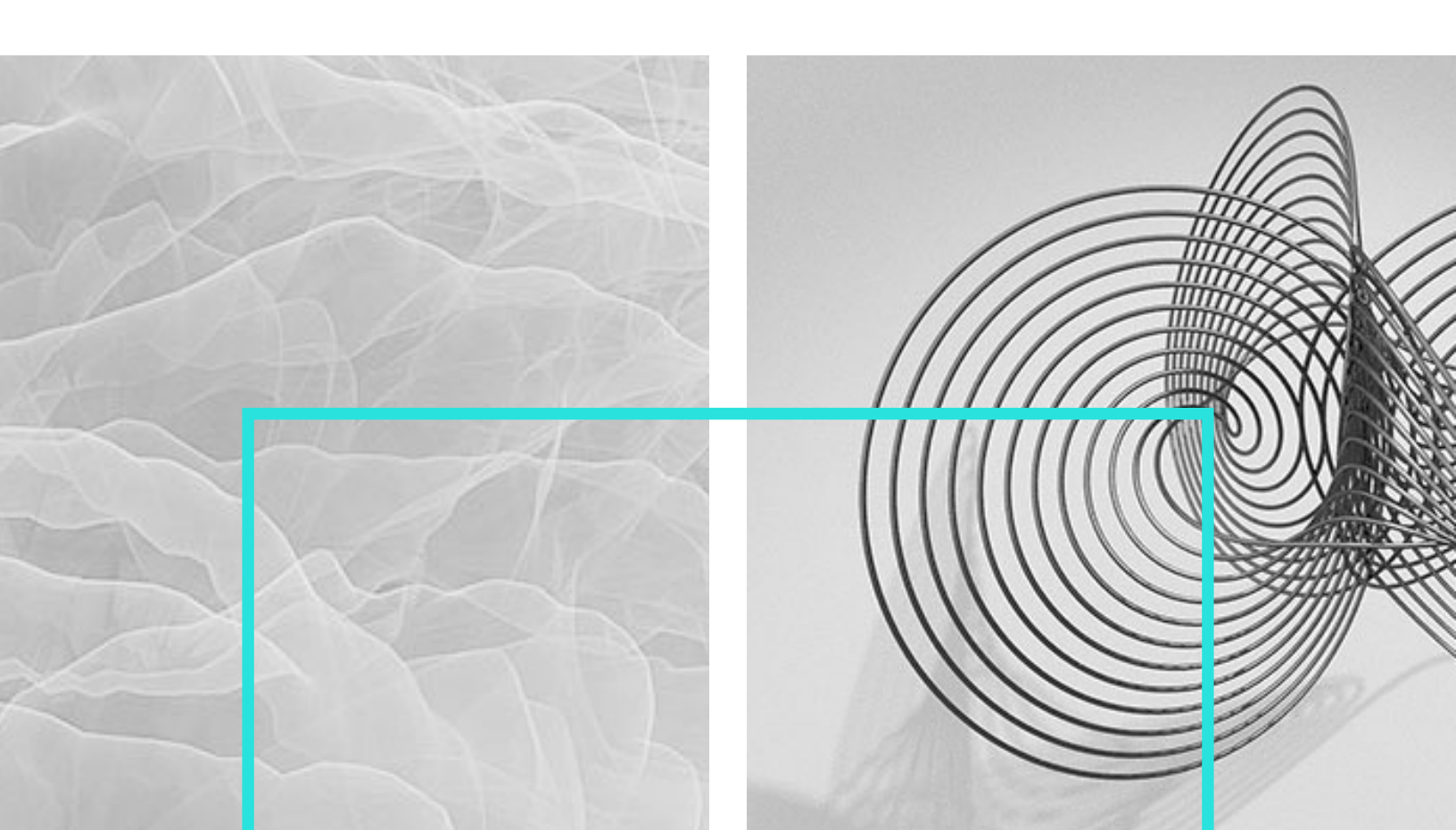
nicole torres gary moore

LOCATION

The conference will be held at Sofia University, 1069 E Meadow Cir,
Palo Alto, CA 94303

All panels will be in the main hall room/ hall, which can be found at
conference center.

Dinah's Hotel is our designated conference hotel, with two restaurants
on site for evening gatherings and group dialogues.



president's welcome

Greetings and welcome to the 38th Annual Spring Conference of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness (SAC). I am extremely pleased by your participation in what is most assuredly going to be an informative and inspiring gathering.

The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness is an inter and transdisciplinary organization dedicated to the study of consciousness phenomena in cultures around the world. We reflect on how consciousness and human transformation can be made relevant to the challenges of our age.

The SAC community is inclusive, integrating cross-cultural, experimental, experiential, and theoretical approaches to consciousness. Our community of practice is unique in that many members are also practitioners, resulting in a deep pool of tacit, pragmatic wisdom to share. Our guests and participants this year include scholars, artists, students and performers. We are honored to have Dr. Jeffery Martin as our keynote speaker this year.

Many dedicated people have come together to make this conference possible. I wish to acknowledge program and site coordinator

Sean Hinton for the long hours of work in organizing this year's conference. I also extend my gratitude to the board members of SAC for their service and support, especially in this time of organizational renewal.

We invite you to forge new connections, new collaborative efforts, and new friendships over these next days. If you are new to SAC, please consider becoming a member. If you are already a member, thank you. Consider increasing your involvement with SAC as we continue to explore the ways in which consciousness and human transformation can assist in meeting the many challenges of our age.

On behalf of the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness I welcome you and look forward to meeting and reconnecting with all of you!

Sincerely,

Bryan Rill
President
Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

SAC 2018 DISTINGUISHED KEYNOTE

DR. JEFFERY MARTIN

Dr. Jeffery A. Martin is a founder of the Transformative Technology space, serial entrepreneur and social scientist who researches personal transformation and the states of greatest human well-being. He spent the last 10 years conducting the largest international study on persistent non-symbolic experience (PNSE), which includes the types of consciousness commonly known as: enlightenment, nonduality, the peace that passeth understanding, unitive experience, and hundreds of others. More recently, he has used this research to make systems available to help people obtain profound psychological benefits in a rapid, secular, reliable, and safe way.



The Finders Course facilitates the remarkable wellbeing and other profound psychological benefits that have been historically associated primarily with states such as enlightenment, persistent mystical states, and nonduality – without it taking years and having to follow religious or spiritual dogma.

The Finders Course is the first universally effective course that helps people transition to Ongoing and Persistent Non-Symbolic Experience rapidly, safely, and reliably. The course is 100% secular and built on data from the world's largest scientific research project in this area, which included over 1,200 participants on 6 continents. Our research showed that using the Finders Course, 73% of people got there in 4 months or less. And, only 1% of people who took the program failed to experience it at all.

Through the Finders Course, we provide the most effective technologies for creating permanent positive shifts in peace of mind, mental balance, life satisfaction and happiness. From ancient practices to cutting edge science, our programs help you to assemble a personalized program to reach your goals. In our courses, online platforms and mobile tools, you'll find a community of like minded adventurers on the same journey.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MARCH 22

12:00 PM Registration Opens

1:00-2:00 Opening Ceremonies and Welcome

1:00- 1:30 **Welcome:** Sean Hinton & Bryan Rill

1:30-2:00 **KHALSA: Gong meditation and Sound healing using Tibetan bowls**
Karambir Singh, Sofia University

2:00- 2:15 BREAK

2:15 - 3:30 Workshop



Nancy Grace: *Dreamwork of Jeremy Taylor and Montague Ullman*

3:45-5:00 Challenges to the Status Quo

Session Chair: **Marilyn Schlitz**

Ismail L. Ali, JD, MAPS Policy & Advocacy Counsel: *Psychedelic consciousness as crucial piece of culturally challenging oppression in all of its forms*

Schlitz, Marilyn, Sofia University: *The Nature of Truth Construction in Science: The Case of Parapsychology and the Skeptic/Proponent Debate*

Sascha Goluboff, Washington and Lee University: *Writing as Healing: Altered States of Consciousness at the Crossroads between Ethnography and Fiction*

5:00-5:15 BREAK

5:15 – 6:15 Roundtable Dialogue: Rejuvenation in a time of crisis

Community sharing of restorative practices. All are welcome.



FRIDAY, MARCH 23

8:30- 9:00 Coffee & Tea Social

9:00- 10:30 Tricksters and Healing
Session Chair: **Bryan Rill**

Denise Lombardi, Université de Lorraine (France): *Walking in the footsteps of the inner animal during a contemporary shamanic practice in Europe*

Joshesph Zamaria: *Positive and persisting after effects related to the consumption of psilocybin may be useful for psychological healing and growth*

Kaitlyn Gardner, Washington and Lee University: *Americanized production of modern mythology through the lens of suicide a modern trickster myth*

Abou Farman Farmaian, New School for Social Research: *Synaesthetics is a way of talking about senses that exceed the senses*

10:30 - 10:45 BREAK

10:45 – 12:15 Cultural Views: South American Perspective of Psychedelics
Session Chair: **Paola Andrea Sanchez Castañeda**

Fernando José Ciello: *Of spirits, mediums, energies, and meanings: studying mental health in Southern Brazil*

Paola Andrea Sanchez Castañeda: *Ethnogenesis communal healing in the re-indigenization process of the Muisca community from Bogota, Colombia*

Alfonso Matas: *Nature or Culture; Santo Daime's Ritual Preparation of Ayahuasca*

12 :15 - 1:45 LUNCH

FRIDAY, MARCH 23

1:45 – 3:15 Cultural Disposition and Science of Psychedelics

Session Chair: **Richard Knowles**

Richard Knowles, Sophia University: *Microdosing Practices Amongst Indigenous Peoples East and West*

Joshua Falcon, Florida International University: *Entheogens and new ethical dispositions based on the experience of interconnection*

Jordon Shoshower, Yale University: *Confronting science and psychedelics: an anthropological account of modern psychedelic research design*

3:15- 4:00 Traditional Healing in Western Cultures

Session Chair: **Patricia Savant**

Rosie Lynch: *The transnational community of Ashtanga Yoga practitioners issues of authority and tradition*

Patricia Savant: *Shamandome, Shamanic interventions in healing emotional, psychological and physical distress*

Scott Teitsworth: *Krishna in the Sky with Diamonds: The Bhagavad Gita's guided psychedelic (soma) trip.*

Brian Landrum: *LLMSW community based Auricular Acupuncture and didgeridoo sound therapy*

4:00 – 4:15 BREAK

4:15 Experiential Workshop

Richard Knowles, Sofia University: *Shinto chanting and music that is specially mixed to have different effects on consciousness*

6:00 SAC Business Meeting

Open meeting to meet the Board, ask questions and learn about SAC. All are welcome.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24

8:30- 9:00 Coffee & Tea Social

9:00- 10:00 Visioning Circle: Part I

*A co-creative re-visioning of SAC. **All are welcome.** Facilitated by Bryan Rill*

10:00 - 10:15 BREAK

10:15 – 12:15 Film: Michaela Koller

[Descending With Angels](#) by [Christian Suhr](#), 2013

The crossroads of Muslim exorcism and psychiatric medicine, comparing two systems which share a view of healing as faith in an external non-human agency—God or biomedicine

12:00 – 12:30 El Sayed ei-Aswad: *Spirits and Bodies: Transformative Power of Healing Rituals in Muslim Societies*

12:30 2:00 LUNCH

2:00 – 3:30 Invited Panel: Comparing spiritual adepts: anomalous religious experience across Thailand, China, Ghana and the US.

Session Chair: Josh Brahinsky

Felicity Aulino Stanford University Anthropology

John Dulin Stanford University Anthropology

Emily Ng Stanford University Anthropology

Rachel E. Smith Stanford University Anthropology

3:30 – 3:45 BREAK

3:45 – 4:45 Invited Panel: Transpersonal Approaches to Aging and Dying

Session Chair: Sean Hinton

Marilyn Schlitz, Sofia University: *A Naturalistic Approach to Grateful Aging*

Dorote Lucci, Sofia University: *Reducing Death Anxiety through VR*

Sean Hinton: *Transpersonal, Psychedelic Perspectives, in America About Death*

SATURDAY, MARCH 24

5:00 – 6:00 Wisdom Council: Entheogens Q&A

Open sharing of SAC wisdom around the topic of entheogens. All are welcome to bring questions for the council.

5:00 – 6:00 Visioning Circle: Part II

Continuing the dialogue on our future from 5:00 into dinner at Dinah's Hotel. For those interested in being part of SAC's future and leadership.

6:00 - 7:30 Dinner and Leisure time to network

7:30 PM KEYNOTE

Jeffery Martin, Sofia University: The Finders Course

8:30 CLOSING PARTY

An evening of celebration. Location to be announced at conference.

SUNDAY, MARCH 25

9:00 AM Action Planning Council

Volunteer attendance for those interested in being the change. Facilitated by Bryan Rill

Have a Safe Journey Home!



presentation abstracts

Ismail L. Ali, JD, MAPS Policy & Advocacy Counsel

Psychedelic consciousness as crucial piece of culturally challenging oppression in all of its forms

Ismail is Policy & Advocacy Counsel for the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), where he advocates to eliminate barriers to psychedelic therapy and research, develops and implements legal and policy strategy, and coordinates support for clinical research in Latin America. Ismail is licensed to practice law in the state of California and also serves as Vice-Chair of the Students for Sensible Drug Policy Board of Directors.

Ismail earned his J.D. at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law in 2016, after receiving his Bachelor's in Philosophy from California State University, Fresno, in 2012 where he also studied writing and Spanish-language literature. As a law student, Ismail served as co-lead of Berkeley Law's chapter of Students for Sensible Drug Policy and worked for the ACLU of Northern California's Criminal Justice and Drug Policy Project, and the International Human Rights Law Clinic at Berkeley Law. To first support his work at MAPS, Ismail received Berkeley Law's Public Interest Fellowship.

Ismail believes that psychedelic consciousness is a crucial piece of challenging oppression in all of its forms, and that legal access to psychedelics is an essential part of a progressive drug policy paradigm. He hopes to help develop and advocate for just, equitable, and creative alternatives to the failed war on drugs.

Felicity Aulino, Stanford University Anthropology

Felicity Aulino is the Thailand field researcher for the Spiritual Curiosity Project. Her previous research focused on care for the elderly – particularly in relation to caregiver subjectivity. In an upcoming book on the topic (*Providing for Others: A Critical Phenomenology of Care in an Aging Thailand*, Cornell University Press), she traces particular sets of emotional and practical ways of being with people, and their specific historical lineages, to show an inseparable link between forms of social organization and forms of care. Felicity received a PhD in Anthropology from Harvard University and a MPH in Health Behavior and Health Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health. When not at Stanford, she is a Five-College Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Global Health Studies based in the Department of Anthropology at UMass Amherst.

Josh Brahinsky, Stanford University Anthropology

Comparing spiritual adepts: anomalous religious experience across Thailand, China, Ghana and the US.

Josh Brahinsky is currently conducting fieldwork in California. He is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. His studies have led him from a small town in central New Jersey to an undergraduate program at Oberlin College and then a PhD at UCSC's History of Consciousness Department. Working between multiple disciplines, he now explores the ways people form themselves, co-create each other, and face and build power. He organizes unions and studies how evangelicals organize themselves. In particular, he has been spending time among Pentecostal missionary trainees as they learn to teach the skills of evangelism, trance, prayer, and community. This has led him to explore sensory cultivation, affect and the globalization of capitalist modernity. He is currently working on a monograph titled *Gods Bodies: Pentecostals, Capitalism and the Art of Immediacy*. Here at Stanford he hopes to contribute to the evolution of something akin to a comparative vision of psychologically informed anthropology.

This panel focuses on anomalous religious experience across Thailand, China, Ghana, Vanuatu and the US. Through 4-8 hour interviews and ethnography, we have been comparing spiritual adepts across these sites. The question is simple: How does local theory of mind affect the kinds, frequencies and analysis of spiritual experience? We look at rural and urban samples of charismatic evangelicals and indigenous spiritual practitioners across all sites.

Paola Andrea Sanchez Castañeda, Florida International University

Ethnogenesis communal healing in the re-indigenization process of the Muisca community from Bogota, Colombia

In the wake of cultural obliteration, sacred places and rituals have become essential elements of communal healing in the re-indigenization process of the Muisca community from Bogota, Colombia. For over five centuries, the Muisca have faced direct colonial aggression against their traditional belief systems and sacred practices that have been historically demonized and driven to the brink of extinction. In spite of such circumstances, however, the Muisca community has thrived to the present day, and since the turn of the twentieth century, has begun to undergo a process of re-indigenization in an attempt to revitalize their traditional identity and practices. These efforts aimed at re-indigenization have been referred to by some scholars as ethnogenesis, and many indigenous groups throughout Latin America have adopted such a stance not only to challenge their historically coerced identities, but also as a way to reinterpret history, actively engage in returning to traditional practices and beliefs, demand cultural and spiritual liberties, and regain their proper rights to sacred lands. In this context, entheogens and sacred plants such as tobacco, cannabis, the borrachero tree, and ayahuasca

have come to play an integral role in urban Muisca rituals and have come to be used as forms of ideological resistance, memory revitalization, and catalysts for the creation of new meanings of their collective identity. As such, entheogenic rituals have become key to the Muisca's struggle for the re-appropriation of their rightful territories in the urban environment they are now a part of. This work, based on an ethnographic case study, seeks to examine how entheogenic rituals in sacred places have come to mend the social fabric of the Muisca community in these places where the human and the sacred find one another in an attempt to reconstruct an identity and rewrite the historical memory of a community that disappeared from the social imaginary.

Fernando José Ciello

Of spirits, energies, and meanings: studying mental health in Southern Brazil

This presentation discusses part of my fieldwork regarding the relations between mental health and religious practices in an outpatient clinic in a major city in Southern Brazil. One of the ethnographic experiences within this research took place in a "Mediumistic Meeting", with a small group of mediums, that would gather every week for a session of channeling and consulting with spirits. Sitting on a variety of spiritualistic points of view most of the mediums share, nonetheless, a strong Kardecist understanding of the chosmos and of human life. According to this perspective each of us have a spirit that has been going through endless evolution and that is capable of free choice for doing good or evil. Within each material life lies the possibility of doing better than what we have done before, but because not always humans are capable of that the chosmological outcome is a universe populated with entire worlds, planets and different entities (including us) in a great number of degrees in the one evolution line. Because mediumistic power allows communication with and also generate slight changes in the "spiritual world", the group seeks to provide support and relief to spirits (incarnated or not). For the cases of the patients evil spirits would be the main cause to mental diseases and the talking ability of some of the mediums would hopefully both help the evil spirits by directing them into other realms (for treatment and healing) and the patients by separating them from bad energies and influences. Communications would be then, in turn, opportunities in which the mediums would seek to understand messages and ways to better assist people. I propose here to discuss this ethnographical experience and offer insights in the understanding of a context that lives together with spirits and draws understanding of "our world" from seeing and talking with spirits from "other worlds".

John Dulin, Stanford University Anthropology

John Dulin completed his PhD in Social Anthropology at University of California, San Diego in 2016. Currently, he is a postdoctoral fellow in Anthropology at Stanford University, where he works on the Spiritual Curiosity Project. He recently spent nine months in Ghana asking practitioners of the traditional Ghanaian religion about their experience with local deities,

which included possessions, visions, dreams, and hearing the gods speak to them with their ears. In addition, he interviewed charismatic Christians about similar experiences with their Christian spiritual world. Currently, he is trying to understand major resonances and differences between how each group experiences the supernatural other. Before he began this project, he spent 20 months in Ethiopia studying how Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Pentecostal Christians coexist on a daily basis, and how a social milieu of interreligious coexistence sometimes escalates to violent conflict.

El Sayed ei-Aswad

Spirits and Bodies: Transformative Power of Healing Rituals in Muslim Societies

Despite the spread of Western medicine worldwide and despite the view of Orthodox Islamists and Salafists of healing rituals as un-Islamic innovation (*bid'a*), the traditional healing rituals and exorcism are still practiced in Muslim societies especially among folk people. This study examines cultural and social factors surrounding traditional healing rituals such as saintly visitation, religious incantation (*ruqiyyah*), bodily remembrance of God (*dhikr/zikr*), and exorcism-spirit cult (*zar*) among others that are used by Muslim communities in Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates for treating problems of sickness, altered states of mind and spirit possession. The paper seeks to explicate not only the debate and different views people have concerning the causes of illness including physical, social, psychic and spiritual elements, but also the most common and acceptable rituals for treating them. Rather than being seen as events as such, healing rituals are viewed as processes, using Victor Turner's terminology, in which patients, healers and participants experience divergent forms of transitional phases.

Joshua Falcon

Entheogens and new ethical dispositions based on the experience of interconnection

Joshua Falcon is a PhD student in the Global and Sociocultural Studies program at Florida International University. Has BA in philosophy and an MA in religious studies, and his current anthropological research focuses on alternate states of consciousness, particularly those associated with entheogens.

While entheogens and the active principles derived from them have been the subject of endless debate in the United States for over half a century, current scientific research has begun to erode prejudices against them in providing promising results which may settle controversies over entheogens indefinitely. Although entheogens have remained illegal for over four decades, and notwithstanding the regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms set against all practices involving their consumption or application, the use of entheogens has nevertheless flourished in American society and continues to permeate throughout its subcultures today. The most commonly known entheogens—also referred to as the classic psychedelics—have steadily been integrated into American culture at large, the effect of which has spawned an array of unique forms of entheogenic practices. In these contemporary settings, the phenomenology of entheogenic experiences has been described by users in myriad ways, including in religious,

spiritual, philosophical, and secular terms. Given this context, it can be observed in experience reports that entheogenic experiences reliably provoke liminal, meaning-making spaces and thereby serve as catalysts for individuals to potentially undergo positive transformations through the generation of new meaning in their lives. The new meaning generated during or after entheogenic experiences can also influence a change in an individual's fundamental philosophical commitments—what William James referred to as “live options”—which may also include regenerated or newfound ethical commitments. It is in this vein that this investigation will argue that discourses on entheogens over time support this notion and that entheogenic experiences have the potential to influence new ethical dispositions based on an experience of interconnection.

Nancy Grace, PhD

Dreamwork of Jeremy Taylor and Montague Ullman

Nancy Grace began teaching about dreams almost 30 years ago, and has brought dreamwork to universities, corporations, retreat centers, churches, and therapy centers. She has trained extensively in group dreamwork with Jeremy Taylor, as well as with Montague Ullman and others. She is a co-founder of the Cummington Community Dream Center in western Massachusetts, and has served on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. Nancy has Master's degrees in Depth Psychology and in Arts and Consciousness, and is also a musician and artist. She has published on connections between dreaming and music, a topic she continues to research.

Sascha Goluboff, Washington and Lee University

Writing as Healing: Altered States of Consciousness at the Crossroads between Ethnography and Fiction

Sascha Goluboff is Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Her work, which explores the intersections between ethnography and fiction, focuses on emotion in a variety of geographical and historical contexts. From investigating practices of mourning in Azerbaijan to analyzing the racial uncertainties of homeplace in Antebellum Virginia, she views emotion as a story -- a narrative told about self and society, as well as a discourse about interpersonal connections.

In this paper, I argue that engaging in the interconnections between ethnography and fiction can bring forth healing for both the anthropologist and the people she studies. Edith Turner once referred to the humanistic anthropologist as “a healer,” concerned with what parts of the social body “need to be touched in healing” (2007:112). This is especially the case with ethnographers of African American communities, which are deeply rooted in silenced histories

of formerly enslaved persons (Trouillot 1995:27). Richard Price prioritizes the ability to embrace both memory and event in African American research because “history depends in part on the imagination, just as collective memory depends in part on past event” (2006:135). Since ethnography can slide so easily here into fiction, the ethnographer should “consider an array of alternative outcomes, including even those that only ‘might have been’” (Handler and Segal 1984:21). In particular, I will discuss writing *Home Place*, an historical fiction novel, based on archival and oral histories of several enslaved ancestors of current members of an African American Methodist church in rural Virginia. The act of writing fiction brought me into a realm of personal healing. By taking on perspectives of multiple point-of-view characters, I entered into an altered state of consciousness (ASC) (Kearney 2011), tapping into what R. D. Walshe calls the “creative source that lies behind the everyday mind” (1990:21). I will detail how the steps of achieving ASC – similar to that of trance-like states induced by hypnosis, meditation, or hallucinogenic drug use (Tart 1983) – connected me to my higher self, tracing out paths for personal and professional growth within the plot twists of the novel. Additionally, the novel produced therapeutic conversations among congregants and between congregants and local whites. Therefore, I believe that the interface between fiction and ethnography can be an extremely fruitful modern application of this traditional healing element for both ethnographers and the communities in which they work.

Sean Hinton, PhD, Faculty at Capella University Department of Psychology
Transpersonal, Psychedelic Perspectives, in America about Death

Sean studied depth psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute. He received a Ph.D. in Transpersonal Psychology from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology Palo Alto CA, and an MBA from the Graziadio School of Business and Management Pepperdine University Malibu, California. Sean has researched extraordinary experience that related to the phenomena of the numinous as well as imaginal realms. Interests include philosophy, consciousness studies, neurobiology, psychedelic research, and writing poetry. He is a volunteer sitter for psychedelic research and a member of MAPS.

Psychedelics and the culture that emerged with the wider use of these psycho-active plants and compound has had an impact on the way western culture and North America in particular envision the transition of death. This talk will highlight some of the origins of the new beliefs embraced by many.

Richard Knowles, PhD, Sofia University

Microdosing Practices Amongst Indigenous Peoples East and West

Richard Knowles is faculty at Sofia University, and teaches classes on psychology and consciousness, including a recent course on entheogens. He also employed at MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies). Richard has a BA in cultural anthropology, and has interests in ethnobotanicals used both historically and currently. He has research interests in consciousness studies, anomalous experiences, altered states of consciousness, unitive experiences, and entheogens. He is also a licensed psychologist and provides psychotherapy to individuals in the Bay Area.

Abstract Although the practice colloquially known as “microdosing” of entheogens has gained popularity in modern times, there is evidence that indigenous peoples have, for time immemorial, used a wide variety of dosing levels of these substances, including sub-perceptual doses at the microdosing level. This paper will explore these practices amongst the Aztecs as reported in the 16 th century text known as the Florentine Codex, authored by the Spanish Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún, while specifically focusing on the 11 th book of the text, sub-titled “Earthly Things”. The practice of microdosing amrita or “nectar of immortality” amongst religious traditions in the East (such as with Hindus, Sikhs, Theravada Buddhists, Mahayana Buddhists, and Dzogchen Buddhists)

Michaela Koller

Descending With Angels by Christian Suhr (Film)

The film explores crossroads of Muslim exorcism and psychiatric medicine, comparing two systems which share a view of healing as faith in an external non-human agency—God or biomedicine.

A Palestinian refugee living in Aarhus, Denmark has been committed to psychiatric treatment after possession by evil spirits, known as jinn, caused him to destroy the interior of a mosque, crash several cars, and insult numerous people. His possession has already been treated with Quranic incantations so he sees no need for further treatment, but psychiatrists believe medication is needed. This film explores the crossroads of Muslim exorcism and psychiatric medicine, comparing two systems of treatment which, despite vast differences, share a view of healing as faith in an external non-human agency—God or biomedicine.

Brian S. Landrum, LLMSW; ADS, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

LLMSW community based Auricular Acupuncture and didgeridoo sound therapy

Brian received his master's in social work from Grand Valley State University in 2015. He studied cultural anthropology, religions, and borderland studies as an undergraduate at the University of Texas at El Paso. He is recognized as a communicable disease and HIV/AIDS prevention specialist and is currently seeking full licensure and Board Certification through the Michigan Certification Board for Addiction Professionals.

This presentation will focus on his work as part of a team that facilitates an Intensive Outpatient Program that provides group and individual therapy. He participates in community based Auricular Acupuncture and didgeridoo sound therapy as an addiction recovery support.

Denise Lombardi, PhD in religious anthropology at École Pratique des Hautes Études Paris

Walking in the footsteps of the inner animal during a contemporary shamanic practice in Europe.

The aim of this proposition is to present some ideas regarding the topic of "Shamanism as a path of transformation" focusing on the practice concerning the animal embodiment. This analysis is part of my PHD in religious anthropology at École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris (France) and is now proceeding further during my post-doctoral research for the project "Altermental" sponsored by Université de Lorraine de Nancy (France) about the relationship between conventional and unconventional psychotherapies. Differently from common practice, the investigation focuses more on the "native point of view", the European participants, rather than on the shamans' point of view and it is aimed at understanding how the audience can achieve a particular kind of ecstatic perception and how they integrate such perception in a personal way of healing. During the research the contemporary shamanic activities have evidenced common elements: the importance of the hypnagogic trip through the beat of the drum, an uninterrupted reverberation between the internal and external nature and a peculiar condition based on the reflexivity of the subject during the practices. The shamanic practices are usually delivered under the form of intensive seminars ranging from forty-eight hours to one week for small groups of fifteen to twenty participants. The members are allowed to remain anonymous but they are constantly involved in a collective process of emotions sharing. The group learns how to get in touch with the entities belonging to the upper or to the lower world shaped by the shamanic cosmology. In order to achieve the surreal trip, it is essential to follow the drumbeat that induces a particular state of mental relaxation. Neither the participants nor the shaman take psychotropic substances, notwithstanding they reach a sort of altered state of consciousness through special techniques as the embodiment of their inner animal called the totemic animal. We have observed that the shamanic trip is accurately codified and even if people can find their totemic animal, such a visionary practice is not enough. For the healing process to be completed it is way more important to become the animal and to incorporate it through dance and bodily movements. The embodiment of the animal's entity is the principle that allows participants to accomplish with the shamanic journey.

Rosie Lynch, BS Cultural Anthropology and Interdisciplinary Religion
Future Generations University
Chanting in (Dis)unison in the World of Yoga Practitioners

To chant, or not to chant? That is the question many yogis (yoga practitioners) ask themselves when undertaking the study and practice of yoga. Certain yoga traditions, such as Ashtanga yoga, position ritual Sanskrit chanting as a central component of dailyasana (postural yoga) practice. The opening and closing prayer in Ashtanga yoga functions as a unifying ritual between student and teacher, yogis practicing alongside one another in a shared place, and individual yogis practicing on their own across both time and space. It is a daily act of dedication to their practice, to their teacher, and to the teachers who preceded him or her in a traditional lineage system. At the same time, yogis from other schools of thought—and even some within the Ashtanga tradition—voice discomfort about the role of Sanskrit chanting as an expression of yoga's alterity and where it employs them in the imagined world of yoga practitioners. This paper examines the significance of Sanskrit chanting to yogis and how this aspect of yoga practice inspires polarized reactions amongst yogis approaching their mats from different yogic traditions and sociocultural identities. It draws upon a research thesis produced in 2016 on discursive practices of the Ashtanga yoga community regarding authority and tradition, and is grounded in participant observation research conducted in Mysore, India (the global hub of Ashtanga yoga study) during 2014 and ethnographic interviews conducted with teachers and practitioners of various yoga studios in northwestern Virginia between 2014 and 2016.

Alfonso Matas, PhD, Student School of International and Public Affairs
Nature or Culture; Santo Daime's Ritual Preparation of Ayahuasca

Members of the Amazonian-based Santo Daime church consider the ceremonial and drawn-out preparation of ayahuasca - otherwise known as the *feitio* - to be its most important and sacred ritual. In their imaginary, the daime - as church members refer to ayahuasca - firmly embodies ideas of nature deeply infused with religio-magico powers. This belief holds its roots in the activities practiced by forest mestizo vegetalistas for whom the wilderness functions as the sole reservoir of the plants needed in the preparation of the ayahuasca brew. The Santo Daime church has adopted this discourse wholesale, thereby posing as a natural steward of Mother Nature aimed at protecting its most precious resources. I aim at exploring how the representation of the *feitio* as a discrete, singular, nature event is a constructed imaginary. The origins of this culture/nature binary can be traced back to the Portuguese colonial experience in Brazil in the year 1500 CE.

Emily Ng, Department of Anthropology, Stanford University.

Emily's interests pivot around themes of madness and transformation, religiosity, and conceptions of time and the person in contemporary China. Her doctoral research, based at the University of California, Berkeley, addressed spirit mediumship, psychiatry, and post-Mao cosmologies in rural Henan province, and the significance of spiritual-psychiatric affliction and healing amid labor outmigration and histories of anti-colonial struggle. Currently, she is part of the Spiritual Curiosity Project, exploring intimate engagements with the divine and demonic among charismatic Christians and Buddhist cultivators in Shanghai and Henan. She has also worked with those who have experienced mania and depression in Shenzhen.

Joshua Falcon, Florida International University

Entheogenic the potential cultural influence and new ethical dispositions based on the experience of interconnection

Joshua Falcon is a PhD student of Anthropology in the department of Global and Sociocultural Studies at Florida International University. With a background in philosophy and a master's degree in religious studies, his research broadly focuses on the ethical dimensions of drug use, including topics such as religious freedom, cognitive liberty, and the relationship between psychedelic experiences and changes in values--particularly moral and ethical commitments

While entheogens and the active principles derived from them have been the subject of endless debate in the United States for over half a century, current scientific research has begun to erode prejudices against them in providing promising results which may settle controversies over entheogens indefinitely. Although entheogens have remained illegal for over four decades, and notwithstanding the regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms set against all practices involving their consumption or application, the use of entheogens has nevertheless flourished in American society and continues to permeate throughout its subcultures today. The most commonly known entheogens—also referred to as the classic psychedelics—have steadily been integrated into American culture at large, the effect of which has spawned an array of unique forms of entheogenic practices. In these contemporary settings, the phenomenology of entheogenic experiences has been described by users in myriad ways, including in religious, spiritual, philosophical, and secular terms. Given this context, it can be observed in experience reports that entheogenic experiences reliably provoke liminal, meaning-making spaces and thereby serve as catalysts for individuals to potentially undergo positive transformations through the generation of new meaning in their lives. The new meaning generated during or after entheogenic experiences can also influence a change in an individual's fundamental philosophical commitments—what William James referred to as “live options”—which may also include regenerated or newfound ethical commitments. It is in this vein that this investigation will argue that discourses on entheogens over time support this notion and that entheogenic experiences have the potential to influence new ethical dispositions based on an experience of interconnection.

Patricia Savant, PhD

Shamandome, Shamanic interventions in healing emotional, psychological and physical distress

Patricia Savant has a long-standing interest in alternative states of consciousness and the healing arts including clinical psychology, meditation, energy psychology and shamanism. She holds a BS in biology and chemistry, an MS in psychophysiology and a PhD in counseling psychology and behavioral medicine.

For the past 15 years, she has been a core contributor to Shamandome, a camp devoted to sharing the power of shamanic interventions in healing emotional, psychological and physical distress. Workshops and personal shamanic sessions are provided to the over 70,000 participants of Burning Man each year. Shamandome incorporates a variety of shamanic techniques in the sessions, derived from many parts of the world. A radical form of urban shamanism, it cultivates the development of shamanic states of consciousness for all who show an interest in learning. Dr. Savant has also worked with shamans in South America and Siberia and conducts workshops and ceremony throughout North America.

Karambir Singh, doctoral student, Sofia University

KHALSA: Gong meditation and Sound healing using Tibetan bowls

Sound healing using Tibetan bowls has been clinically proven to stimulate the relaxation response, increase alpha and theta activity in the brain, and activate the Hypothalamic-Adrenal-Pituitary Axis which regulates much of the body's hormones and neurotransmitters. In addition, sound can provide psychological benefits such as mental freshness and inward focused attention (Hess, 2009). Gong meditation (also known as gong bath) builds upon this by creating a rich harmonic soundscape which distracts the human ego, creating a space for the vastness of the greater human experience to take the focus. Gong meditation is the focus of an upcoming dissertation which will be designed to study its use as a possible adjunct treatment for anxiety. The range of experiences is varied and may include vivid dreams, astral travel, altered states, or deep dreamless sleep, but these are just suggestions and participants should not feel limited to the items described. Using mindfulness meditation to precede gong meditation may invite one or more Gestalt-like vignettes (Khalsa, 201x) which might include any of the experience types described or something else entirely. Each individual's experience will be unique and personal and no one should have an expectation that they should have any particular experience. Mindfulness meditation invites participants to simply be with whatever experience may arise. A gong meditation may begin with a brief introduction and then transitions into a gentle blessing to bring the energy in the space into motion before moving through a variety of sound vignettes followed by a gentle return to the present moment, 60 minutes later.

Marilyn Schlitz, PhD, Sofia University

*The Nature of Truth Construction in Science: The Case of Parapsychology and the Skeptic/
Proponent Debate*

How do you know what you know? What informs what you believe is true? Are there effective ways to discern fact from fiction in our information rich world? Where do subjective and objective ways of knowing shape our experience of reality--and how do they interact?

In this presentation, I will consider these questions by examining the nature of truth construction in controversial science. In particular, the talk will focus on the skeptic/proponent debate in parapsychology, exploring different perspectives on the nature of the evidence to support or refute psi phenomena (information transfer that ostensibly reaches beyond the known senses). The focus will be on a series of online, controlled studies of precognition (knowledge of the the future). I will consider the strengths and limitations of applying science to direct personal experiences.

By addressing this subject area, we will consider some of the fundamental assumptions of western science and the nature of the skeptic/proponent debate as it relates to how we know what is "true." We will consider the nature of objectivity, replication, and materialism. Topics such as precognition provide a unique opportunity to explore these assumptions and the strengths and limits of science as it is applied to non-ordinary human experiences.

Jordan Sloshower, MD, MSc, Yale University

*Confronting science and psychedelics: an anthropological account of modern psychedelic
research design*

Jordan Sloshower is conducting research on the therapeutic aspects of psychedelic substances and psychedelic-assisted therapies. He also has a Masters in medical anthropology.

Psychedelic science is inherently an interdisciplinary activity that brings ancient wisdom about psychoactive plants into modern clinical and scientific contexts. Attempting to bridge these two worlds and their inherent discrepancies is naturally fraught with philosophical and methodological conflicts. This presentation will describe the fascinating, complex, and arduous process of initiating a therapeutic trial with psilocybin at a major American academic institution. Using the perspectives of medical anthropology and science and technology studies, as well as personal experience, it will describe this process from conception through trial design, funding acquisition, ethical review, and implementation. Each of these stages was uniquely shaped and constrained not only by questions of science, but also by historical, political, and philosophical contexts. For instance, current drug laws influenced the kinds of funding that were available for this research, as well as the scientific objectives and methods employed. In particular, the political aim to reschedule psilocybin via the US Drug Enforcement Agency imposes scientific

imperatives to standardize treatment protocols and isolate drugs (from their contexts) as the variable of interest. This presentation will highlight how such methodological requirements bring principles and dogmas of psychedelic and biomedical sciences in direct confrontation. The lack of an “evidence base” for specific aspects of “set” and “setting” challenges underlying assumptions of psychedelic therapy, while the need to control variables problematizes the incorporation of complementary and traditional healing practices, such as music and psychotherapy. Resulting disputes are played out amongst members of the research team, funding agencies, and ethics board members, demonstrating how the research process and subsequent knowledge production was shaped and constrained idiosyncratically by beliefs, biases, relationships, and precedents.

Rachel E. Smith, Stanford University Anthropology

Rachel E. Smith is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. She recently conducted fieldwork in Vanuatu, in the southwest Pacific. She conducted interviews and ethnographic research in Port Vila (Vanuatu’s capital), and a rural location in Tonga Island, with Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, and New Covenant Church – a new charismatic church with a distinctly Ni-Vanuatu identity. She also carried out fieldwork with a rural village in south Pentecost island that is known for historically resisting Christianity and maintaining many aspects of local indigenous beliefs and practices, or ‘kastom’. Rachel obtained a PhD in Social Anthropology at University of Manchester, UK, in May 2016. Her PhD thesis was based on sixteen months’ ethnographic fieldwork in central Vanuatu, a rural community with a high degree of engagement in New Zealand and Australia’s Pacific seasonal worker programs. The thesis examined Li-Lamenu people’s moral reasoning about their motivations for working overseas, and the intended and unintended consequences in terms of socio-economic change.

Scott Teitsworth

Krishna in the Sky with Diamonds: The Bhagavad Gita's guided psychedelic (soma) trip.

Scott Teitsworth is a lifelong student of Indian philosophy and modern science under the tutelage of Nitya Chaitanya Yati, himself a disciple of Nataraja Guru. An editor of books written by these gurus, he and his wife host the Portland branch of the Narayana Gurukula, where they have taught classes on the Bhagavad Gita and Indian philosophy since the 1970s. He lives in Portland, Oregon. In India he has lectured at CMS College in Coimbatore and taught classes at several other locations, invariably finding his unorthodox take on it to be both challenging and appreciated.

The Bhagavad Gita is the ancient world’s greatest textbook on the integration of the psychedelic experience with everyday life, including adequate preparation to optimize the experience.

Together we will explore the general outlines of its contribution in this regard—generally ignored by all commentaries, ancient and modern—and focus on the chapter detailing the guided psychedelic (soma) trip. The Gita’s relevance to our present day predicaments will also be made clear, as time permits.

Joseph Zamaria

Positive and persisting after effects related to the consumption of psilocybin may be useful for psychological healing and growth

This study is an examination of the positive and persisting psychological and behavioral aftereffects in eight individuals who reported consumption of psilocybin-containing mushrooms. Mushrooms containing psilocybin have been used for healing and spiritual purposes for thousands of years, and the therapeutic applications of psilocybin were scientifically examined beginning in the mid-20th century. Research from this era suggested that psilocybin was indicated as an effective adjunct to psychotherapy for conditions such as depression, anxiety, chemical dependency, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Recent research at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine demonstrated that participants who consumed psilocybin reported having profoundly meaningful experiences, and that these participants experienced persisting and positive changes to their mood, attitude, and behavior at 1-month and 14-month follow up. However, there has not yet been ample research examining the mechanism of the connection between participants’ experience with psilocybin and the existence of these positive and persisting aftereffects. This study employed a phenomenological approach, using an unstructured interview to gain an understanding of participants’ description of this mechanism. Eight adults were interviewed who reported using psilocybin in the past. A within- case analysis and cross-case analysis were conducted on the data, producing 11 themes within three categories: Set (which included the themes of Preliminary Anxiety and Substantial Preparation); Experience of Psilocybin Effect (which included the themes of Profound Shift in Attention, Unity Consciousness, Increased Introspection, Positive Emotional State, and Transcendental Experience); and Persisting Aftereffects (which included the themes of Short Term Reduction in Anxiety, Persisting Insight, Assistance with Psychological Distress, and Inspired Behavioral Change). Participants maintained insights gained during their experience of psilocybin far beyond the course of the substance. This research suggests that the positive and persisting aftereffects related to the consumption of psilocybin may be useful for psychological healing and growth, and that these aftereffects should continue to be studied.

