

JOHN W. BESSAI, PhD

Scholar • Educator • Media Practitioner

Canadian Studies | Media Studies | Political Theory | Public Institutions

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ACADEMIC PROFILE

John W. Bessai researches how public institutions govern through policy, administrative forms, media, records, interfaces, and public memory. Current projects examine the settler welfare state, public code, counter-policy, migration and refugee memory, borders and sovereignty, environmental governance, human rights education, and digital infrastructure in Canada and transnational settings. His teaching connects Community Economic and Social Development, Canadian Studies, media and cultural studies, political theory, history, and digital humanities. Documentary, television, museum, and interactive-media production since the 1990s informs his research-creation, teaching, and public scholarship.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Canadian Studies; Community Economic and Social Development; public institutions and policy; media and cultural studies; political theory and public administration; Indigenous-settler relations and sovereignty; environmental governance; human rights education; migration and refugee memory; digital humanities; documentary and interactive media; public memory and knowledge translation.

EDUCATION

Trent University - Peterborough, ON

PhD, Canadian Studies | 2024

Dissertation: Art as a Public Service: The National Film Board of Canada's Role in Shaping Democratic Dialogues and Societal Transformation.

Supervisor: Dr. Heather Nicol.

York University - Toronto, ON

MA, Political Science | 1988

Thesis: Vietnam's Definition of Regional Order in Indochina.

Supervisor: Dr. Paul Evans.

Carleton University - Ottawa, ON

BA, History (First Class Honours) | 1985

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Algoma University - Sault Ste. Marie, ON

Assistant Professor, Community Economic and Social Development (CLTA), Faculty of Cross-Cultural Studies | 2026-2027

Teaches Community Economic and Social Development courses in social economy, global-local relations, advocacy, policy, public storytelling, and applied research.

Selected courses: CESD 2106; CESD 3016; CESD 3456; CESD 2096; CESD 3907/4907.

University College of the North (UCN) - Thompson, MB

Assistant Professor | 2024-2025

Designed and taught undergraduate history and Indigenous studies courses with emphasis on Canadian state formation, settler colonialism, Indigenous sovereignty, northern contexts, and public memory.

Integrated archival sources, film, and community perspectives into courses on Canadian, United States, northern, and Indigenous histories.

Selected courses: HIS 1001; HIS 2200; HIS 2450; ANS 2300.

Okanagan College - Kelowna, BC

Professor | 2024-2025

Delivered lectures and seminars connecting Canadian politics, public administration, human rights, environmental policy, and applied analysis.

Used film, case studies, policy materials, and digital storytelling to connect theory, governance, and civic engagement.

Selected courses: POLI/CRIM 220; POLI 101; POLI 111; POLI 204; POLI 219.

Centennial College - Toronto, ON

Instructor | 2011-2024

Taught core and advanced production and theory courses in media and film programs; supervised documentary and digital media projects from proposal through delivery.

Selected courses: Integrated Media; Documentary Film Production; Advanced Digital Media.

Trent University - Peterborough, ON

Graduate Teaching Assistant and Academic Assistant | 2015-2024

Facilitated tutorials and seminars; guest lectured; coordinated assignments; mentored students on research, writing, and media-based projects across Canadian Studies, Cultural Studies, Environmental Studies, and Media Studies.

Provided detailed feedback on analytical writing and research design; supported interdisciplinary course delivery in large and small classes.

Selected courses: Conflicted Canada; Canada: Images and Realities; Gender, Race and Popular Culture; Contemporary Feminisms; Intro to World Literature; Virtual Worlds; Television Studies; Media Studies; Circumpolar World; Climate and Environmental Communication; Environmental History; Animals and Society; Introduction to Public Speaking (selected).

Humber College - Toronto, ON

Instructor | 2023

Supervised advanced student capstone projects in multiplatform storytelling; emphasized industry-facing storytelling strategies and cross-platform production planning.

Selected courses: Business of Multiplatform Storytelling; Thesis Course Director (Multiplatform Storytelling).

Niagara College - Welland, ON

Instructor | 2007-2011

Taught foundational courses at the intersection of politics and media; introduced documentary practice as public communication and civic engagement.

Selected courses: World Politics and History; Documentary Film Production.

TEACHING PRACTICE

Courses combine policy documents, archival sources, film, interactive media, mapping, structured discussion, scaffolded writing, and applied research. Assignments include policy briefs, research memos, presentations, zines, media projects, and community-facing work. Transparent assessment and multiple forms of participation support accessible learning. Course content addresses Indigenous sovereignty, colonial governance, environmental responsibility, labour, human rights, and public communication.

PUBLICATIONS

Book Manuscript in Progress

Bessai, J. W. Counter-Policy in Canada: Public Code, Art as a Public Service, and the Settler Welfare State: Experiential Archives and Institutional Learning in Canadian Public Life. Single-author scholarly monograph in progress. Proposal and sample chapters submitted to McGill-Queen's University Press in March 2026.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles - Forthcoming

Bessai, J. W. (forthcoming). Storytelling, technology, and justice: The National Film Board of Canada's role in human rights education. *Human Rights Education Review*.

Bessai, J. W. (forthcoming). Countering distorted pasts: Interactive documentary as public service in far-right history wars. *Práticas da História*.

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles - Published

Bessai, J. W. (2026). Capital's media, digital command, and the fate of public communication: Reflections on David Harvey's *The Story of Capital*. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 24(1), 225-243. <https://doi.org/10.31269/m4s7t679>

Bessai, J. W. (2026). Exposing the digital gaze: The NFBC and vernacular media in contemporary Canadian storytelling. *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature*, 50(1), 31-41. <https://doi.org/10.17951/lsmll.2026.50.1.31-41>

Bessai, J. W. (2026). Art as a public service in the Canadian aporetic condition: The NFB, stylisation of experience, and national identity. *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 38(1), 107-125. <https://doi.org/10.3828/bjcs.2026.7>

Bessai, J. (2026). Digital genre fiction at the National Film Board of Canada: Civic storyworlds, Indigenous Futurisms, and environmental memory. *Literature, Critique, and Empire Today*, 61(1), 49-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/30333962251414774>

Bessai, J. (2026). The toxic in public discourse: Art, media, and digital spaces. *Culture and Dialogue*, 14(1), 25-44. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24683949-12340153>

Bessai, J. W. (2026). From documentary to digital: The role of the National Film Board of Canada in transnational knowledge transfer, twentieth-twenty-first century. *Hungarian Historical Review*, 15(1), 116-145. <https://doi.org/10.38145/2026.1.116>

Bessai, J. (2025). Art as a catalyst for global citizenship: The National Film Board of Canada's approach to societal challenges. *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 21(1/2), 94-108. <https://doi.org/10.5130/pjmis.v21i1-2.9636>

Bessai, J. W. (2025). Populist style, nationalist affect, and the aporetic condition: Rhetorical realignment in Canada's 2025 election. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 46(6), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2025.2565772>

Bessai, J. W. (2025). Algorithmic realities and the Canadian aporetic condition: Digital counterpublics and epistemological justice. *Alma Mater - Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Kulturforschungen*, 2(3), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.29329/almamater.2025.1360.2>

Bessai, J. W. (2025). Digital flames: Public storytelling, climate, and reconciliation at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). *University of Bucharest Review: Literary and Cultural Studies Series*, 15(1), 29-38. <https://doi.org/10.31178/UBR.15.1.3>

Bessai, J. W. (2025). The aporetic condition in Canadian public policy: Cultural resurgence and ecological transition. *Études canadiennes / Canadian Studies*, 99, 93-103. <https://doi.org/10.4000/15g1r>

Bessai, J. W. (2024). Interdisciplinary dialogues: Media arts in humanities scholarship: The National Film Board of Canada as an interdisciplinary infrastructure. *Scaffold: Journal of the Institute of Comparative Studies in Literature, Arts and Culture*, 1(2), 5-11. <https://ojs.library.carleton.ca/index.php/J-ICSLAC/article/view/4885>

Invited Review Essay - Forthcoming

Bessai, J. W. (forthcoming). The politics of intersectionality: Representation, movements, institutions and the political economy of inequality. *International Political Science Abstracts*, Trends in International Political Science. Invited review essay.

Scholarly Book Chapters - Accepted / Forthcoming

Bessai, J. W. Writing in the aporetic age: Reclaiming voice and complexity in the post-chatbot classroom. Accepted for *Human Writing in the College Classroom: Post-Chatbot Approaches*. Routledge.

Bessai, J. W. (forthcoming, 2026). Breathing the settler order: Toxic sensorium, poetics, and the state in Canada. In M. Prabir (Ed.), *Bodies That Breathe: The Politics of Air, Health, and Survival (Earth and Us, Vol. 1)*. Sturges and McGregor.

Bessai, J. W. (forthcoming). Sensing the aporia: Environmental crises and the toxic sensorium in Canadian visual media. In *Sensing and Resisting Environmental Crises Through Visual Culture*. University of Exeter Press. <https://doi.org/10.47788/FVJB4763>

Bessai, J. W. (2026). Digital storytelling and democracy: The National Film Board of Canada as a counterpublic institution. In P. Jonsson Severson & E. Ricknell (Eds.), *Everyday Democracy: Building Resilience Against Polarization and Radicalization* (pp. 163-179). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783112231791-008>

Accepted / Commissioned Work in Progress

Bessai, J. W. Who makes public history? Teaching Women of Change through the documentary production archive. Accepted for the Films for the Feminist Classroom special feature, *Urgent Histories: Teaching the Contemporary Moment Through Film and Documentary*.

Bessai, J. W. Occupied ground: Ipperwash, environmental postmemory, and the state archive in Canada. Chapter provisionally accepted for *Nature Remembers: War, Trauma, and Environmental Postmemory in Contemporary Anglophone Literature and Culture*; manuscript in development.

Bessai, J. W. Canada's critical minerals strategy and the Ring of Fire: Sub-imperial green extractivism in the world economy. Invited contribution in development for *Uneven Geographies of the Global Green Transition: Power, Finance, Trade, and Environmental Politics between the Global North and South*, edited by Günseli Durmaz and Şeyda Güdek-Gölçek. Routledge.

Peer-Reviewed Book Chapters - Published

Bessai, J. W. (2026). Sustainability as strategic narrative: The Canadian aporetic condition and global environmental governance. In S. Güdek-Gölçek, G. Durmaz, & A. Inan-Simsek (Eds.), *Critical Approach to Sustainability Discourse and Action in International Relations* (pp. 349-376). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-1707-6.ch011>

Public Scholarship

Bessai, J. W. (2026, August 5). Environmental rule and administrative form: The Indian Act and the Canadian aporetic condition. NiCHE, The Otter. <https://niche-canada.org/2026/08/05/environmental-rule-and-administrative-form-the-indian-act-and-the-canadian-aporetic-condition/>

Bessai, J. W. (2026, July 6). Kichi Zibi as public code: Heritage, jurisdiction, and the Ottawa River. NiCHE, The Otter. <https://niche-canada.org/2026/07/06/kichi-zibi-as-public-code-heritage-jurisdiction-and-the-ottawa-river/>

Bessai, J. W. (2026, May 19). Reservoir modernity: Lake Diefenbaker and the Great Acceleration on the Prairies. *Active History / NiCHE*. <https://activehistory.ca/blog/2026/05/19/reservoir-modernity-lake-diefenbaker-and-the-great-acceleration-on-the-prairies/>

Bessai, J. W. (2026, May 4; updated June 8). Shared air, shared water: Environmental resistance across Canadian sites under Canada-U.S. strain. NiCHE, The Otter. <https://niche-canada.org/2026/05/04/shared-air-shared-water-environmental-resistance-across-canadian-sites-under-canada-u-s-strain/>

Bessai, J. W. (2026, January 19). Reading the city through countermonuments of ecology: From Mistaseni to Floodlines. NiCHE, The Otter. <https://niche-canada.org/2026/01/19/reading-the-city-through-countermonuments-of-ecology-from-mistaseni-to-floodlines/>

Bessai, J. (2025, December 5). Playing inside the grid: Bear 71, Do Not Track, and life under observation. NiCHE, The Otter. <https://niche-canada.org/2025/12/05/playing-inside-the-grid-bear-71-do-not-track-and-life-under-observation/>

Book Reviews

Bessai, J. W. (2025). Review of *Philosophizing the Americas*, edited by J. A. Carter & H. A. Estévez. H-Net Reviews. <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=60974>

Bessai, J. W. (2024). Review of *Sitting Bull and the Paradox of Lakota Nationhood*, by G. C. Anderson. H-Net Reviews. <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=60297>

Bessai, J. W. (2017, Fall). Review of *The Margaret Atwood Effect: Essays on Atwood's Works and Influence*. *Waterfront Magazine*.

FELLOWSHIPS AND RESEARCH RESIDENCIES

Blinken OSA Archivum - Budapest, Hungary

Visegrad Scholarship at OSA | May-June 2026

Research topic: Helsinki's Afterlives: Compliance Infrastructures from CSCE to OSCE (1980s-1990s) and Their Contemporary Relevance. Conducted archival research on Helsinki-era human rights monitoring, civil-society documentation, verification practices, OSCE processes, RFE/RL research, and public accountability infrastructures.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, INVITED TALKS, AND PUBLIC LECTURES

2026 - Confirmed Forthcoming Presentations

- COMHUM 2026 - Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland - September 9, 2026. Paper: Practicing Civic Adjudication: A MacIntyrean Model of Ethics in a Parameterized Game-Engine Micro-Prototype.
- Spatial Humanities SH26 - University of Minho, Braga, Portugal - September 24, 2026. Paper: Public Code as Spatial Governance: AI, Geotechnologies, and the Canadian Aporetic Condition.

2026 - Presented

- Interrogating Canadian Identities / Interroger les identités canadiennes - York University, Toronto, ON - August 11-13, 2026. Panel chair and presenter. Paper: Public Code and the Canadian Aporetic Condition: Interrogating Identity Across Canadian Public Institutions.
- Revolutions and Reflections: A Conference for Editing and Recovery Practitioners - Center for Digital Editing & eLaboratories, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA / hybrid - August 8-9, 2026. Co-presented with Sandra Creighton. Paper: Reflective Recovery: Archival Storytelling, Digital Editing, and Public Memory in The Ward - Radical History.
- INCSA / NCSA 2026: Revolution, Revelation, Reconciliation / Revolución, Revelación, Reconciliación - Washington, DC / online - July 23, 2026. Paper: From Deed to Duty: The Rupert's Land Transfer as a Counter-Policy Template.
- International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies (IAICS), 31st International Conference - University of Toledo, Toledo, OH / online - July 21-24, 2026. Paper: Intercultural Communication as Public Code: Migration, Interface, and the Digital State in Canada.
- Autothéorie et autosociobiographie dans les littératures du Canada - University of Passau, Germany / online - July 18, 2026. Paper: Documentary Autotheory and the Canadian Aporetic Condition: The Shimmering Beast and Project Grizzly.
- Centre for Historical Studies Annual Conference 2026: Play - University of Northampton, UK / online - July 15, 2026. Paper: Playing Displacement: Historical Memory, Reflective Mechanics, and Urban Erasure in The Ward - Radical History.
- Transatlantic Studies Association, 24th Annual Conference - College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA - July 13-15, 2026. Paper: Public Code and Democratic Learning in the North Atlantic: Canadian Statecraft, Institutional Obligation, and the Transatlantic Public Sphere.
- Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE) 2026 Conference - Sciences Po and University of Bordeaux, France - July 1-4, 2026. Paper: Counter-Policy in the Settler State: The State as Social Relation Across Extraction, Property, and Data Infrastructures in Canada.
- Capitalism, Crisis, and Global Reordering - Alternate Routes / Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milan, Italy - June 23-24, 2026. Paper: AI Regimes and Crisis Capitalism: Canada's Sub-Imperial Settler Order in Global Reordering.
- Navigating Afro-Knowledges: Exploring Practices and Theories in Digital Diaspora Studies - University of Bremen, Forum am Domshof, Bremen, Germany - June 19, 2026. Co-presented with Sandra Creighton. Paper: Navigating Afro-Knowledges in The Ward: A Playable Radical History for Afro-Canadian Counter-Memory.
- AFEC 50th Anniversary Congress - Avignon Université, Avignon, France - June 10-12, 2026. Paper: Experimental Public Service Media in Canada: The NFBC as a Laboratory of Cultural Innovation.
- International Festival of Media (#IFM2026): Yet-To-Be-Known - Online - June 9-12, 2026. Paper/video presentation: Public Power, Settler Order, and the National Film Board of Canada.
- Re-Defining Open Social Scholarship in an Age of Generative Intelligence - INKE / CSDH-SCHN / DHSI, Université de Montréal, Montreal, QC - June 4-5, 2026. Paper: The Canadian Aporetic Condition as Open Scholarship Theory: Public Code, Generative AI, and the Governance of the Knowledge Commons.
- Visegrad Lecture Series - Blinken OSA Archivum, Budapest, Hungary - June 3, 2026. Lecture: Public Code after Helsinki: Public Evidence and the Reconstruction of Common Security in Dystopian Times.
- Canadian Sociological Association Annual Conference - Virtual - June 3, 2026. Paper: Counter-Policy as Social Theory: Public Code and the Canadian Aporetic Condition.
- Canadian Society for Digital Humanities / Société canadienne des humanités numériques Annual Conference - Université de Montréal, Montreal, QC - June 2026. Program committee member and conference participant.
- Cultural Studies Association, 24th Annual Conference: Oppositions - Online - May 28-30, 2026. Paper: Aporetic Oppositions: Public Code, Security, and Digital State Storytelling at the National Film Board of Canada.
- Association of Canadian Studies in Ireland, 22nd Biennial Conference: Canadian Crossings and Belongings / Entrecroisements et Appartenances au Canada - LexIcon Library and Cultural Centre, Dún Laoghaire, Dublin, Ireland - May 7-9, 2026. Paper: Governing Through Aporia: State Theory, Public Code, and the Problem of Belonging in Canada.
- Influencer Diplomacy Symposium - Influencer Ethnography Research Lab (IERLab), Curtin University, Online - April 24, 2026. Paper: From Public Service to Creatorly Diplomacy: Public Code and Influencer Logics in Canadian Cultural Institutions.
- 60th Annual Comparative World Literature Conference: Legacies: Nostalgia, Adaptation, and Reimaginings - California State University, Long Beach, CA, USA (Hybrid/Zoom) - April 24, 2026. Paper: Legacy Systems, Living Texts: Platform Succession and the Afterlives of NFB Interactive Storytelling.
- 2026 International Remote ISC at SC State: Beyond Borders - South Carolina State University, Online - March 27, 2026. Paper: Aporetic Care Borderwork: Social Reproduction, Feminist State Theory, and Civic Standing.
- Two Days of Canada Conference: Two Days of Canadian Sovereignty - Brock University, St. Catharines, ON - March 26, 2026. Paper: Sovereignty Under Pressure: Counter-Policy and the Canadian Aporetic Condition.
- Ninetieth Anniversary Remote-Only Conference of International Commission Scholars - Online - March 26, 2026. Paper: Constitutional Memory and Representative Legitimacy in Canada.
- Everyday Resistance: Thinking, Making, and Living in the Material World - Virtual edition, University of Brighton - March 25, 2026. Paper: Resistance in Aporia: Sensorial Memory and the Canadian Condition in NFBC Storytelling.
- 8th Annual HEX Conference: Histories of Experience in Society: Frictions, Margins, Ruptures - Tampere University, Tampere, Finland - March 9-11, 2026. Paper (March 11): Frictions of the Settler Order: Aporetic Experience, Art as Public Service, and Counterpolicy in Canada.
- Northeast MLA 57th Annual Convention - Pittsburgh, PA, USA - March 6, 2026. Paper: Arbor Alma: Aporetic Storytelling for Renewal.

Southern Conference on African American Studies, Inc. (SCAASI) 47th Annual Conference - Montgomery, AL, USA - February 7, 2026. Co-presented with Sandra Creighton. Paper: Radical History: The Ward (Playable Memory, Black Survival, and Urban Belonging).

Interdisciplinary Conference in Arts and Sciences (ICAS) 26: Home: Belonging, Identity, and Displacement - Southern Regional College, Newry Campus, Newry, Northern Ireland, UK - January 29, 2026. Paper: Home and Native Land? Aporetic Belonging, Settler Order, and Public Storytelling in Canada.

2025

Why Does Labour Matter? / Quelle est la valeur du travail? - Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal, QC - November 14-15, 2025. Paper: Labour, Art, and the Canadian Aporia: The NFBC and the Digital Mediation of Working-Class Struggles.

The 10th Annual International Conference on Ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding - Mercy University, Bronx Campus, Bronx, NY, USA - November 13, 2025. Paper: Counterpublic Memory and the Identity Logic of Conflict: Public Storytelling, Aporetic Belonging, and the National Film Board of Canada.

Canadian Science and Technology Historical Association (CSTHA-AHSTC) Biennial Conference: Nations and Nationalism in Science and Technology - York University, Toronto, ON - November 9, 2025. Paper: Memory Machines and Democratic Contradictions: The NFBC's Digital Histories as Public Pedagogy.

History of Education Society (HES) 65th Annual Meeting - Providence, RI, USA - November 6, 2025. Paper: Animating Dissent: The National Film Board of Canada and the Educational Politics of Challenge for Change and Digital Futures.

Peace History Society Biennial Conference: Peace Across the Ages - Berry College, Mount Berry, GA, USA - November 7, 2025. Paper: Unquiet Archives: Public Memory and the Aporetic Sensorium in NFBC Digital Storytelling.

The 13th International Conference Synergies in Communication (SiC 2025) - Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania (hybrid) - October 30-31, 2025. Paper: Teaching Attention: NFBC Digital Storytelling as Academic and Digital Literacy Infrastructure.

Association of Canadian Studies in Ireland (ACSI) 2025 Online Symposium: Canada in a Changing World - Online - October 24, 2025. Paper: Art as a Public Service in a Changing World: Civic Memory, Decolonizing Practice, and the NFBC Template.

Populism: Here and Beyond - Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON - October 23, 2025. Paper: The Canadian Aporetic Condition and Populism: Contradictions in Political Identity and Governance.

Heroes in Contemporary Popular Culture - McGill University and Concordia University, Montreal, QC - October 21-23, 2025. Paper: Heroes in the Aporia: Reimagining Heroism through Canadian Cultural Narratives.

Conflict, Democratic Backsliding, and Diaspora Politics in Canada - Centre for International Policy Studies, University of Ottawa - Online - October 21, 2025. Paper: Digital Storytelling, Diaspora Politics, and the Canadian Aporia.

Universities Art Association of Canada / Association d'art des universités du Canada Conference - York University, Toronto, ON - October 17, 2025. Paper: Archives of Absence: The Monument and the Aporetic Sensorium.

The 11th International Tartu Conference on Canadian Studies: Water - University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia - October 11, 2025. Paper: Liquid Aporias: Water, Memory, and Public Storytelling in Canada.

Washington University, Charles F. Knight Executive Education & Conference Center, St. Louis, MO, USA - October 10, 2025. Paper: Decolonizing Imperial Memory: The National Film Board of Canada and the Afterlives of Britishness.

The Epistolary Research Network (TERN) 2025 Conference - Online - October 3-4, 2025. Paper: Letters in the Code: Epistolary Memory and the Material Aesthetics of Digital Public Storytelling.

Transforming Nations and Identities in a Global World after 1945 - University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK - October 2-3, 2025. Paper: Between Story and State: The National Film Board of Canada and the Aporia of Identity after Empire.

Southern New Hampshire University Conference: The Past, Present, and Future of the Human Environment - Online September 25-26, 2025. Paper: Reclaiming the Toxic Sublime: Environmental Witnessing and the Aporia of Canadian Public Memory.

HORIZONTE Netzwerktagung zum 10jährigen Jubiläum der KWG - Universität Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany - September 19, 2025. Paper: Carrier-Bag Storyworlds: Interactive Public-Media Narratives as Pragmatic Futures for a Warming Planet.

Northern Great Plains History Conference - Minnesota State University, Mankato, MN, USA - September 19, 2025. Paper: Treaty 5 at 150: NFBC Memory, Prairie Sovereignty, and the Aporia of Canadian Public Media.

Frontiers before Borders - Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland - July 12, 2025. Paper: Imagined Frontiers, Institutional Power: The NFBC and the Canadian Aporetic Condition.

International Political Science Association (IPSA) World Congress - Seoul, South Korea - July 16, 2025. Paper: Articulating the Canadian Aporia: Visual Storytelling and Public Engagement through the National Film Board of Canada.

International Political Science Association (IPSA) World Congress - Seoul, South Korea - July 15, 2025. Discussant: Transnational Activism, State-Embedded Surveillance, and Social Rights: New Approaches to Public Space and Movement.

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) Biennial Conference - University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA - July 9, 2025. Paper: Decolonizing the Atmosphere: Analyzing Environmental Justice through the Lens of NFBC's Productions.

Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE) 2025 Conference - Virtual - July 1, 2025. Paper: Colonial Aporias: Race, Capital, and the State in the Cultural Economy of Canada.

World History Association (WHA) 34th Annual Meeting - Louisville, KY, USA - June 26, 2025. Paper: Digital Territories and Cultural Sovereignty: The National Film Board of Canada's Interactive Media as Sites of Protest and Resistance.

Britain and the World Annual Conference (BATW 2025) - Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool, UK - June 25-27, 2025. Paper: Navigating Imperial Contradictions: The Canadian Aporetic Condition and the National Film Board of Canada.

7th International Language and Territory Colloquium - University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON - June 24, 2025. Paper: Articulating the 'Canadian Style' through the National Film Board of Canada's Multimedia Narratives.

American Political Science Association (APSA) Teaching & Learning Symposium: Approaches to Human Rights Pedagogy APSA Headquarters, Washington, DC, USA - June 19-21, 2025. Paper: Digital Storytelling and the Public Good.

C-CHANGE 2025: Climate Change and Public Engagement - Concordia University, Montreal, QC and online - June 19, 2025. Paper: Witnessing the Vanishing: Digital Storytelling, Ecological Grief, and the Aporetic Archive.

The Twelfth International Hockey Conference - Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, MB - June 18, 2025. Paper: The Puck and the Nation: Hockey as a Reflection of Canadian State-Building and Cultural Identity.

Canadian Sociological Association - Open Virtual Session: Sociology of Development - Online - June 13, 2025. Paper: Art and Development: Examining the Role of the NFBC in Fostering Global Discourse.

International Festival of Media (IFM) - Online - June 11, 2025. Paper: Echoes of the Canadian Aporia: NFBC's Media Resonances and the Democratic Public Sphere.

NOMOS 2025 - Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic - June 7, 2025. Paper: Sovereignty's Cultural Double Bind: Law, Public Media, and the Aporetic Condition in Canada.

Reporting News in a Disbelieving Age - Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON - June 5-6, 2025. Research presentation: Media as Public Service: Rethinking Credibility through Collaborative Discourse.

Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) Annual Conference - Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON - June 5, 2025. Paper: Reframing Canadian Identity: The NFBC's Role in Public Discourse and Democratic Engagement.

Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA) Annual Conference - Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON - June 5, 2025. Paper: Reframing Togetherness: The Canadian Aporia in NFBC Storytelling.

Teaching in a Time of Crisis - University of London History Lab - Online - June 4, 2025. Workshop presentation: Navigating Crisis through the Canadian Aporia: Pedagogical Innovations Using NFBC Media.

Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID) Annual Conference - Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON - June 3-7, 2025. Paper: Decolonizing Narratives: Exploring the Canadian Aporetic Condition in International Development.

Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) Annual Conference - George Brown College, Toronto, ON - June 2, 2025. Paper: Art as a Public Service: Bridging Sociology and Community Engagement.

Canadian Society for Digital Humanities (CSDH) Annual Conference - Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON - June 1, 2025. Paper: Advancing Togetherness through Digital Storytelling: The Canadian Aporetic Condition in Digital Humanities.

Canadian Association for Work and Labour Studies (CAWLS) 11th Annual Conference - McMaster University, Hamilton, ON May 29, 2025. Paper: Resilience through Art: Labour, Identity, and Social Reproduction in National Film Board of Canada Narratives.

Living With Water: An Online Seminar Series - Online - May 23, 2025. Paper: Fragile Currents: Water, Art, and the Canadian Aporia in NFBC's Environmental Documentaries.

Rethinking Fables in the Age of the Environmental Crisis - University of Kent, Canterbury, UK - May 23, 2025. Paper: Digital Fables and the Canadian Aporia: The NFBC's Role in Mediating Human-Nature Relations.

LACUNY Institute 2025 - City College of New York - May 21, 2025. Paper: Counter-Archives and the Aporetic Condition: Preserving Public Memory through Canadian Digital Storytelling.

Imagined Geographies Conference - University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK - May 20, 2025. Paper: Digital Landscapes in Canadian Cultural Imaginaries: Decolonization and Shaping Spatial Perceptions through Media.

Narrative Matters 2025 - Paris, France - May 14, 2025. Paper: Disparate Narrative Worlds: Environmental Justice and Indigenous Knowledge in NFBC's Interactive Storytelling and Films.

12th IASA World Congress: Visual Americas - Hacettepe University, Ankara, Türkiye (online) - May 14, 2025. Paper: Reframing Canadian Identity through Digital Visual Narratives: The NFBC's Contribution to Public Engagement.

Decolonising Cultural Heritage - University for Foreigners of Siena, Siena, Italy - May 5-7, 2025. Paper: Silenced Narratives: Decolonising the National Film Board of Canada's Role in Shaping Public Memory.

British Association for Canadian Studies (BACS) 50th Anniversary Conference - University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK - April 24-26, 2025. Paper: Art as a Public Service: Shaping Canadian Identity through Visual Storytelling.

Decolonizing Affluent Society (WEHC pre-conference) - Online - March 25-26, 2025. Paper: Reframing Affluence and Inequality through the Lens of the Canadian Aporetic Condition.

Seventh Annual HEX Conference - Tampere University, Tampere, Finland - March 11, 2025. Paper: Navigating the Canadian Aporia: The Historical Experience of Digital Storytelling in Shaping National Identity.

15th Annual African, African American and Diaspora Studies Interdisciplinary Conference - James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, USA - February 12-14, 2025. Paper: Digital Territories: The NFBC's Interactive Projects as Sites of Land Reclamation and Cultural Freedom.

2024

Global New Voices 2024 Conference (Association for Art History) - London, England - November 7, 2024. Paper: Challenging Historical Narratives: Environmental Memory through Visual and Material Culture.

Northeast Conference on British Studies - Amherst College, Amherst, MA, USA - October 19, 2024. Paper: Truth and Reconciliation through Artistic Narratives: The NFBC's Role in Addressing Colonial Legacies in Canada.

Territory, Tension, and Taboo: Canada in Crisis - University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany - October 11, 2024. Paper: Digital Interventions: Art and Democracy in Times of Crisis.

26th Annual SFSU Cine Colloquium Grad Conference - San Francisco, CA, USA - October 5, 2024. Paper: Navigating the Digital Threshold: NFBC's Role in Shaping Canadian Cultural Narratives.

The Scholarly In-Between: Interface Conference - Carleton University, Ottawa, ON - May 2, 2024. Paper: Interdisciplinary Dialogues: Media Arts in Humanities Scholarship.

Making Style Work Conference - Yale University, New Haven, CT, USA - April 13, 2024. Paper: Interpreting Survival through Style: The National Film Board of Canada's Artistic Contributions to Public Discourse.

Michael Gordon Memorial History Graduate Conference - University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, USA - March 30, 2024. Paper: Narratives of Resilience: The National Film Board of Canada's Role in Societal Change during Crises.

Humanities Graduate Student Symposium: Narratives of Identity - Brock University, St. Catharines, ON - February 10, 2024. Paper: Exploring Identity Narratives through the National Film Board of Canada's Digital Projects.

2014

Media Ecology Association, 15th Annual Convention - Ryerson University, Toronto, ON - June 19, 2014. Paper: Fighting in the Trenches: Reflections from a Weary TV Producer.

RESEARCH-CREATION AND MEDIA PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE

Green Heroes (2007-2015)

Producer, Director, Writer. Television series (12 episodes) with 45 webisodes; multiplatform environmental campaign supported by the Canada Media Fund. Featured Robert Bateman, Farley Mowat, David Suzuki, and Jane Goodall. Broadcasters included TVOntario, Sun TV, and Saskatchewan Communications Network.

From Field to Studio: The Art of Paul Kane (2003-2015)

Producer, Director, Writer. Visions From the Wilderness (2002) documentary film; museum installation at the Daphne Cockwell Gallery dedicated to First Peoples art and culture; and interactive exhibit examining Paul Kane's art and its cultural afterlives. Produced with the Royal Ontario Museum, Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, HBC History Foundation, and multiple broadcasters.

Arbor Alma (2008)

Producer, Director, Writer. Short research-creation film exploring environmental memory and public-facing storytelling. Bravo! Television Network.

Museum Maestros (2007)

Producer, Director, Writer. Documentary profiling curators and artists behind major museum exhibitions. Broadcasters included Bravo!, Knowledge Network, Saskatchewan Communications Network, Access Alberta, and Canadian Learning Television.

Buffy Sainte-Marie: A Multimedia Life (2006)

Producer, Writer. Documentary on Buffy Sainte-Marie's life and career, including her impact on Indigenous activism and music. Broadcasters included Bravo!, CTV, APTN, Knowledge Network, and Saskatchewan Communications Network.

C. W. Jefferys: Picturing Canada (2005)

Producer, Director, Writer. Documentary examining Jefferys' influence on Canadian historical imagery. Broadcasters included Bravo!, Knowledge Network, Saskatchewan Communications Network, and Access Alberta.

Women of Change (1999)

Producer, Writer. Documentary highlighting the contributions of Canadian women in social movements and public service. Broadcasters included Vision Television, CLT, Access Alberta, Knowledge Network, and Saskatchewan Communications Network.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Trent University - Peterborough, ON

Doctoral Researcher, Canadian Studies | 2015-2024

Examined media and communications in Canadian society and the intersections of art, technology, community, public institutions, and societal transformation.

Conducted interdisciplinary research spanning Indigenous studies, media arts, public policy, environmental humanities, and social change.

York University - Toronto, ON

Graduate Researcher, Political Science | 1986-1988

Examined Vietnam-China relations after the Second Indochinese War and Canadian foreign policy in the Americas.

Policy and Regulatory Research

Selected themes | Ongoing

National Film Board of Canada as a state-embedded cultural institution where federal policy frameworks, funding mandates, and public engagement practices converge.

Canadian media and communications history, democratic participation, regulatory environments, climate and environmental governance, labour, human rights, and reconciliation frameworks.

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

Board Member-at-Large, Canadian Studies Network (CSN) | 2025-Present. Contributes to governance, strategic planning, and initiatives supporting interdisciplinary scholarship and advocacy in Canadian Studies.

Program Committee Member, Canadian Society for Digital Humanities / Société canadienne des humanités numériques (CSDH/SCHN) | 2025-Present. Supports conference planning and program development.

Member, Frost Centre Advisory Group - Trent University | 2018-2019.

Member-at-Large, Frost Centre Students Association - Trent University | 2015-2023.

Representative, Graduate Students' Association - Trent University | 2015-2016.

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Reconciliation: Learning from the Land - Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Manitoulin Island

Participant | 2023

Participated in land-based experiential learning guided by Elders and Knowledge Keepers, including tipi construction, star knowledge sharing, birch bark canoe crafting, quillwork, and firekeeper ceremonies.

Deepened understanding of Indigenous land stewardship, cultural traditions, and reconciliation through hands-on learning.

Community Outreach and Consultation - Selected

Conducted community outreach and consultation on land use and economic development issues related to the Toronto Island Airport expansion.

Participated in meetings and joint actions with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation addressing environmental concerns, Indigenous land stewardship, and socio-economic impacts of urban expansion on traditional territories.
Collaborated with Indigenous scholars, activists, and artists in research and media project development.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Translates scholarship on media, democracy, public institutions, environmental governance, and cultural memory into accessible presentations, policy-oriented talks, public essays, and public-facing media.
Produced documentary and interactive projects, including Green Heroes and the Paul Kane interactive exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum, translating complex issues of environmental justice, art, and colonial history for broad audiences.
Designed community-engaged assignments in courses on Canadian politics, human rights, environmental policy, and media; student outputs included digital stories, interactive timelines, podcasts, zines, and public briefing notes.
Collaborated with Indigenous artists, activists, and community partners to foreground First Voice perspectives and lived experiences of structural inequality and environmental harm.

HONOURS, AWARDS, AND GRANTS

Visegrad Scholarship at OSA, Blinken OSA Archivum (2026)
Leslie Frost Graduate Scholarship, Trent University (2024, 2018)
Canada Media Fund, Development Investment (2024)
Ian and Lorraine Logan Graduate Award, Trent University (2024)
Chief Keith Knott Bursary, Trent University (2023)
Catharine Parr Traill Bursary, Trent University (2023)
W and J Hamlind Award, Trent University (2022)
Errol Hanbidge Bursary, Trent University (2021)
Symons Trust, Trent University (2020)
Jean Evelyn Graves Scholarship, Trent University (2018)
Harley Richards Cummings Scholarship, Trent University (2016)
Mary Northway Award, Trent University (2015)
Planet in Focus Festival (2013)
NAPTE Digital Hot List (2011)
Planet in Focus Festival (2010)
Digital Hot List, Banff Media Festival (2010)
Juno Award - Nominated (2009)
Content 360 Degrees, MIPTV Media - Shortlisted (2009)
Bravo!FACT, Bravo (2009)
Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival - Nominated (2008)
Production Investment, Green Heroes, Canada Media Fund, Bell Broadcast and New Media (2007-2015)
WorldFest Houston - Gold Award (2006)
Production Grant, Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund (2006)
Global Visions Film Festival, Edmonton (2005)
Production Grant, HBC History Foundation (2004)
Interactive Project Lab, Canadian Film Centre (2003)
Planet in Focus Festival (2003)
WorldFest Houston - Gold Award in the Arts/Cultural category (2002)
50th Columbus International Film & Video Festival - Bronze, The Humanities (2002)
20th Festival International du Film sur l'Art, Montréal (2002)
Artist in the Workplace, Ontario Arts Council (1999)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS

Quoted in KelownaNow News, "BC Conservatives have been accused of dodging journalists. Are they paranoid, or does the media just no longer matter?" (October 11, 2024). Commentary on media avoidance strategies in political campaigns and their democratic implications.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

International Political Science Association (IPSA)
Canadian Political Science Association (CPSA)
Canadian Studies Network (CSN) - Board member
Canadian Society for Digital Humanities (CSDH/SCHN) - program committee member
Writers Guild of Canada
University Art Association of Canada (UAAC)
Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID)
Canadian Sociological Association (CSA)

NOT-FOR-PROFIT MEDIA PRODUCTION - SELECTED

Produced and directed training and education videos for non-profit agencies in the community health sector addressing determinants of health.

Produced and directed training and education videos for locals of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and the Workers' Health and Safety Centre.

Produced and directed the 25th anniversary of Greenpeace International broadcast video.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Board Member, Harbourfront Community Centre

Board Member, Arcadia Artist Co-op

Board Member, Bathurst Quay Neighbourhood Association

Contributor, Harbourfront Parks Steering Committee (City of Toronto)

Advisor, Toronto Museum project (professional advisory capacity)

Coach, Youth House League Hockey, Bill Bolton Arena (Toronto)

LANGUAGES

English - Native. French - Reading knowledge; developing oral proficiency; working toward B2.

REFERENCES

Dr. Heather Nicol - Director, Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies; Director, School for the Study of Canada; Professor, School of the Environment, Trent University | heathernicol@trentu.ca | 705-748-1011 ext. 6024

Dr. Suzanne Bailey - Professor of English Literature and Associate Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Graduate Studies / Faculty of Arts and Science, Trent University | sjbailey@trentu.ca | +1 705-748-1011 ext. 6093

Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer - Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North; Professor, School for the Study of Canada, Trent University | 705-748-1011 ext. 7390

Dr. Joshua Synenko - Teaching Supervisor, Department of Cultural Studies, Trent University | joshuasynenko@trentu.ca | 705-748-1011 ext. 6164

Dr. Ayla Kilic - Chair and Professor, Department of Political Science, Okanagan College | akilic@okanagan.bc.ca | +1 250-762-5445

Dr. Greg Stott - Associate Professor of History, Faculty of Arts, Business and Science, University College of the North | gstott@ucn.ca | 204-677-6450

Dr. J. Keith Hyde - Associate Professor, English and Social Science, Faculty of Arts, Business and Science, University College of the North | khyde@ucn.ca | 204-627-8670