**GSA General Assembly Meeting Agenda**

**Wednesday October 26, 2016**

**GPSCY Senate Chambers, 6:30 PM**

Meeting started at 6:42PM.

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes are approved.

1. Approval of Agenda

Agenda is approved.

1. Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming Discussion with Beverly Gage

Nick Vincent: We welcome Beverly Gage, Professor of History. Wendy Xiao: Beverly is a Professor of History and the chair of the FAS Senate last year. Beverly and I are on the Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming – to come up with guiding principles on renaming, but not to decide or vote on the renaming of a particular building. We plan to draft a report to be forwarded to President Salovey.

Beverly Gage: I am a member of CEPR. Unfortunately, our chair, John Witt, cannot be here tonight. The goal here tonight is to solicit your input, to answer any questions you might have, and also to get your experience of Yale, in light of the events last year, in terms of its historical symbols. I chaired the FAS Senate last year, which was new, and we discussed some of the issues related to not renaming Calhoun College at the end of last academic year. I am also a political historian. We have 6 faculty members on the committee, and 5 of them are historians. We also think about the particular, long history of Yale, particularly why buildings are named what they are, in relation to the history of the persons after whom the buildings are named. The committee is not to come up with any names, but to produce a useful intellectual framework for both current controversies and for the future. So we have been looking at naming questions that have come up, especially at other universities (e.g., Princeton, Harvard, UNC). The committee is working relatively quickly, and we aim to produce a report at the end of this semester. I would encourage your feedback.

Alexandru Georgescu (Physics): the decision was not expected and counter-intuitive. “Master” has less connection to slavery than “Calhoun.” Beverly Gage: many people have suggested this, that last year’s decisions were not as consistent as they could be, and it is precisely the aim of the committee to come up with consistent principles. Master arises from the historical term headmaster. Fabian Schrey: Could you elaborate on where you are at the moment? For example, is any principle on the table? Beverly Gage: We have been reading a lot of materials, and we have been meeting as a committee, though we have not drafted a report. One question to collect feedback: what circumstances/elements are important in renaming decisions? One element is the social circumstances, and also how we consider the historical persons (e.g., Calhoun) in their social contexts. Also, we also need to look at the historical contexts of the time when the buildings are named. So we need to consider both contemporary factors and historical circumstances.

Toomas Laarits: Can you tell us about the history of renaming at Yale? Is there a precedent for renaming? Beverly Gage: names (donors) come up all the time. For example, we just renamed Commons to Schwarzman Center. There is a conversation about history and historical legacy – the problematic legacy of Calhoun. We are really drilling down on this question of renaming on political, social, and historical values. Wendy Xiao: to give a little bit of historical context, Calhoun was renamed in the 1930s, a period of Northern romanticizing of the antebellum south. There was also a push to recruit more Southern students, so people thought it would be a good choice to name the college after Calhoun, both a Yale alum and a prominent Southern statesman. Beverly Gage: there is also the issue of flexibility, and not to be locked into every decision of the past, and not necessarily having a cascade of renaming discussions. That is really the challenge – balancing this flexibility and principle-production.

Sarah Zager: how do you think of the longevity of the decision, because it is grounded in current political circumstances? Beverly Gage: on the one hand, our charge as a committee is to come up with high-brow, long-lasting principles to be applied at Yale and elsewhere. On the other hand, we are humbled by this aim, to think that this will affect future generations. So we approach the question with a lot of humility, balancing flexibility and a historical tradition. Chris Geissler: one comment: I, and others, belong to the school of thought that the name of the building should be based on the thoughts and opinions of current and former users of the building. One question: voices should have some kind of weight. How have you thought about soliciting voices in a helpful manner? Beverly Gage: we have heard a lot about the social meaning of the names. How people interact in a dining hall, in a college, in an auditorium, is different. We are doing a lot of alumni outreach, including everything that went to the President’s Office last year. We also have a website, and work with affinity group alumni network as well as general alumni network. There are also three alumni on the committee. If you Google the committee’s name, a website where you can submit information and comments should come up. There will also be a written public record of what people’s opinions are after this. A lot of feedback was collected last year, but there were questions of diversity of opinions, and this year, our committee’s website has a function of recording a written opinion. This body (GSA) could also formulate an opinion.

Katie Oltman: the group is approaching this from an abstract, principled way. But there is also the reality, practical considerations: for example, donors have said that they would not give money if the name is changed. Alicia Steinmetz: First, are there any models of renaming principles at other universities? Second, will you release any draft before coming up with a final version? Beverly Gage: with respect to donors, that is a question but we are not allowed anywhere near—donors are separate from what we’re doing. There are many historians on the committee, so its work is meant to be a real intellectual exercise. When the report goes to the President’s Office, they may think more about these questions. As for other universities, we have brought in people from/been in contact with University of Richmond, Harvard, Princeton, UNC, etc. Mostly, places have come into a set of local questions and controversies, and they each have different processes and outcomes. At the University of Texas, many of the questions were concerned with confederate artifacts, with ongoing questions about the Civil War. At Princeton, the issue was about Woodrow Wilson, and they decided to keep his name because of the significance of W. Wilson to Princeton as an institution. They also would like to come up with a naming policy (e.g., what donors can and cannot ask for). We have not talked about the draft process.

Laura Brown: two argumentative nodes. 1. Current sensitivity of students, faculty, and staff who feel strongly about this. 2. Tradition and opinions of those who have been here before. The middle ground seems to be to display objects in museum displays. Do you think this is effective? Beverly Gage: I do not think that these two groups are always exclusive. From talking to Calhoun students and staff, many want the name of the College to change. When we talk to alums, not all of them are in opposition to changing the name of the College. There is also a diversity of alum opinions that do not always match up with socio-economic data or age. Of course, there is a non-erasure question about maintaining certain memories, etc. Wendy Xiao: many undergraduates identify with their college and it’s important to keep in mind that there are generations of Yale undergrads bound by the name of the college.

Beverly Gage: there are many creative models. At Texas, they moved some of the confederate statues from the outside to indoor space as display exhibits. Georgetown in the 1830s (1838?) sold enslaved people, owned by Jesuits, into Louisiana and harsh slavery. Two buildings on campus were named after the president/administrator responsible for this sale. In the end, they renamed both buildings. The first was renamed after the first person on the bill of sale. The second was named after a free black woman who opened a school near Georgetown’s campus. Connor William: I do not envy the task of the committee. There is the immediate question of what Calhoun had done in the 19th century. Then there is the issue with Morse College. Are there principles that take into account the magnitude? Beverly Gage: Two extremes: we could say that we do not rename anything, or we could say that we will rename every building named after people we do not like. Wall Street Journal had an editorial about Yale having to rename Yale. There is no magic formula. But: what is the person’s primary legacy? Morse was a great scientific mind but also a believer of racism and slavery. That is one of the central questions we consider, and we want to approach them with humility. Some day, people will look at our decisions and produce judgment on them. Wendy Xiao: we also hope to see the people in their own times, and how people in their time viewed them.

Kate Philips: you mentioned the Texas confederate sculpture. Is there any contact between CEPR and the Committee on Art in Public Spaces? Beverly Gage: they are two different committees: our charge is more limited. But of course, we have to think about names in relation to the artistic environment in which they are displayed. We are an autonomous committee though. Emilio Salazar: the committee was convened after the decision not to rename Calhoun. What if the committee comes up with a principle according to which Calhoun should have been renamed? Beverly Gage: this committee was created in July. Peter Salovey was surprised by the reactions to the naming decisions, and mentioned that the questions were not totally settled. I think people would not have joined the committee if they had no influence. People’s relation to these questions changed with recent events (e.g., the freshman address, protests in October and November, discussions about the renaming decisions in the spring semester). It is a good faith effort on part of everyone. Emilio Salazar: is the university still open about the question of master and Calhoun. Beverly Gage: Peter Salovey said that the administration would deal with Calhoun after the committee’s work is done.

Lily Zeng: would the university do surveys? Given the final decision, we (I and some other students) felt that it was made in favor of donors. Beverly Gage: we have heard from a lot of people emphasizing the significance of process. We can probably assume that structurally, these questions will probably remain with the Office of the President. But we have reached out to faculty, staff, students, though we are not the final decision-makers. Alexandru Georgescu: it was interesting to hear that many people felt a sense of nostalgia with antebellum south. Beverly Gage: one example: at UNC, there was a building named after a NC governor who had been a head of KKK. Many people said that this was a problem and they should not keep honoring them. When they looked at history, the university found out that the building was named after that man precisely to honor his leadership in KKK, so they obviously decided to rename the building. But for Calhoun, there was little archival record about why the college was named Calhoun, and we looked to nostalgia with antebellum South as a historical obsession (e.g., Gone with the Wind).

Joey Schmitt: would renaming decisions differ if there were a donor who gave a lot of money Beverly Gage: donor questions do get interesting. At Vanderbilt, there was a Confederate Hall donated by United Daughters of the Confederacy. Court actually ruled that Vanderbilt had to give back all the money if they renamed the building. Alums raised money to rename it. Wendy Xiao: the Rhodes Scholarship Foundation/Trust was also named after a man who pretty much enslaved an entire continent, but there are legal obstacles for renaming.

Jacob Derechin: the most efficient way to prevent renaming issues is to name places correctly in the first place. A lot of people do not seem to like Franklin College. Beverly Gage: technically we are not tasked to make any particular decisions. Also, several of the historians on the committee are experts in slavery and memories of slavery and the Civil War. We are trying to look at the totality of history and why we want to look at them in their contexts. Nick Vincent: I know that this committee has been doing a lot of work. Will there be a short, distilled summary or infographic for a longer report, so people will not just make up their minds without reading the long report? Beverly Gage: Interesting idea; will consider it. If you have ideas about principles, processes, etc., you can email me, Wendy, or John Witt. There is a phone hotline that you can call, where your comments will be transcribed. This can happen for you as individuals, or as a body.

1. Departmental Meeting Preparation Discussion

Jenn Sun: a little overview about departmental meetings. Goal is to inform students about what GSA is doing currently and what our focus is, as well as any updates from the university. It also serves as a liaison between GSA and its constituents. Each active rep has 100 dollars, and you can pool the money together or use it separately. You need to sign up for the meeting two weeks in advance and schedule a p-card pickup. I will then get in touch with you and give you instructions to write a report. Sign up is from late November to end of March. You also need to send a report to the Secretary.

Jenn Sun: you need to advertise the meeting very well and send the invitations to all your constituents. Please also gather topics of discussions from them. The meeting should last about 45 minutes. There is a list of questions to solicit feedback from your constituents (to be used as a guide). You can talk to Nick if you have further questions.

Nick Vincent: there are not many responsibilities as a GSA rep, but this is one of them. It is very helpful to hear what each department’s concerns and issues. The summarized notes are also very important because the summer steering committee goes through all of them. So please take this responsibility seriously. You will get all of this information in an email.

Wendy Xiao: once I used the Caseus cheese truck, which was not costly and very effective. Jenn Sun: Alcohol is okay, but no hard liquor.

1. External Meeting Updates
   1. Center for Teaching and Learning

Nick Vincent: I met with Scott Strobel and Jenny Frederick, the CTL director. They would like to come to one of our meetings and see what graduate students want out of CTL. One of their big projects has to do with TF feedback. One of the problems they are having is that there are 68,000 course evaluations each semester, but no one will read 68K evaluations. They are trying to instate a numeric rating for faculty and TFs. When presented to FAS Senate, the reaction was a kind of horror to reducing faculty and students to numbers. Jacob Derechin: Rate my Professor already does this as an external website. Wendy Xiao: but students are not *required* to take rate my professor surveys. Nick Vincent: I will keep you updated on this: Yale College Faculty will vote on this. CTL has also instituted mandatory training for new teachers. Toomas Laarits: it was long (8 hours). Nick Vincent: the numeric value reform would also force students to rate their TFs, and would give CTL information as to teacher improvement with training.

Alexandru Georgescu: A case study has shown that being rated by students as a good/bad teacher might not correspond to whether the teachers are in fact good/bad. Sarah Zager: my courses have all been evaluated on excellent/good/average, etc. Rachel Love: we really should bring Jenny Frederick in, in part to see why some evaluations are already on a quasi-numeric scale, but others are not. Nick Vincent: I will try to book them for one of the next meetings.

* 1. Yale Health/ Mental Health and Counseling

Nick Vincent: We were supposed to meet with Dr. Genecin yesterday, but the meeting was cancelled because Dr. Genecin had an emergency (his wife had a car accident; she is okay).

* 1. President Salovey

Nick Vincent: Will Culligan and I will have our annual meeting with Peter Salovey. It is a very broad-view meeting, but email me if you have any burning concerns.

Nick Vincent: also, there is also a push for the corporation to be more transparent. Will and I had a meeting with Donna Dubinsky earlier this semester about this, so hopefully the corporation will take some of our suggestions.

1. Rep picture

Rep picture is taken.

1. Concerns from the Floor

Carly Cox: There have been a lot of workshops about where to go from graduate school. They did an event SciPhD, which is not just for scientists but costs $2000 dollars. OCS is asking for a donation of $150 dollars, and this can free up some of their funds for other events.

Nick Vincent: this is in line with some of our previous sponsorships. Jenn Sun: we have $1,250 in budget for sponsorship. Carly Cox: this event is open to everyone. Emilio Salazar: do we use up the sponsorship budget? Nick Vincent: no. Bill Ruff: we sponsored mental health and De-Stress Fest last year. Katie Oltman: we always ask OCS to host these types of events.

Vote by acclamation to sponsor SciPhD ($150 dollars).

1. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.