“Encountering Visual Phenomena: A Conversation”

The RWS Landmark Lecture series invites prominent scholars in Rhetoric and Writing Studies to discuss current research and pedagogy in our field. This year’s lecture examines the power and possibility of visual rhetoric.

Pictures and images seem to hold a lot of power. People tear down statues of discredited leaders, deface political signs, and circulate photographs of atrocities. Iconoclasm goes beyond smashing idols, becoming a general desire to control images and their effects. Much early scholarship on visual rhetoric started from that wide-spread assumption of powerful pictures. It “read” visual images, interpreted their possible meanings, and ascribed them significant persuasive effect. In their discussion, Professors Haskins and Olson move in a different direction—beyond pictures themselves—to track how we encounter visual phenomena, what they actually do, and why we experience them as powerful. Along the way, they will talk about citizenship, commemoration, protest, and social change as thoroughly visual and thoroughly rhetorical matters.

A brief question and answer session will follow their discussion.

Panelists:

Ekaterina Haskins is Professor of Rhetoric at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Her research contributes to three distinct yet related areas of scholarship: the history of rhetoric, public memory, and rhetorics of display. She is the author of Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle (2004; paperback 2009) and Popular Memories: Commemoration, Participatory Culture, and Democratic Citizenship (2015) and has published numerous articles and book chapters on the history of rhetoric, public memory, and visual culture.

Christa Olson is Associate Professor of Composition & Rhetoric at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is the author of Constitutive Visions: Indigeneity and Commonplaces of National Identity in Republican Ecuador. Her publications address hemispheric rhetorics, historiographic methods, visual culture, and theories of nationalism and the public. She also regularly writes for the online news photo and media image analysis site Reading the Pictures.

Please join us at Scripps Cottage!

March 2, 2017 from 3:30-5:00

Light refreshments will be provided.