

Clarkson University

Spring 2022 David A. Walsh '67 Arts & Sciences Seminar Series

Wednesday, March 23rd at 12pm

Room: SN212

via Zoom: <https://clarkson.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMod-qqrj8pHdEN9X7QVHNJxSwK9X4Xz8Y->

Could a Robot Feel Pain? Race, Technology, and the Political Problem of Personhood

In this lecture, Sylvester A. Johnson interprets the work of Ibn Rushd ("Averroës"), the twelfth-century Islamic scholar of Andalusia who achieved renown as the 'father' of secularism, in order to elucidate and heuristically challenge Ibn Rushd's theory of the intellect as a power of the soul. Johnson relates Rushd's distinction between sensing and knowing to Achille Mbembe's interpretation of race and technology in order to examine contemporary, sensory-driven AI technology (particularly brain-computer-interface architectures) as a uniquely generative problem of interest for humanists and technical experts alike. Of central importance is the sensation of pain, as it constitutes a phenomenon of embodiment, a category of human experience, and a political problem that has been implicated in histories of racial domination. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet



Dr. Sylvester Johnson

Sylvester A. Johnson is Assistant Vice Provost for the Humanities and Executive Director of the "Tech for Humanity" initiative advancing human-centered approaches to technology at Virginia Tech. He is the founding director of Virginia Tech's Center for Humanities, which is supporting human-centered research and humanistic approaches to the guidance of technology. He is a Professor in the Department of Religion and Culture and a design-team affiliate faculty member in Virginia Tech's socio-technical, transdisciplinary Calhoun Discovery Program. In addition to co-facilitating a national working group on religion and US empire, he co-leads a project at Virginia Tech, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, to develop ethically designed, public-interest Artificial Intelligence that can benefit an innovation-driven society. Get the full bio Here: <https://liberalarts.vt.edu/departments-and-schools/departments-and-schools/faculty/sylvester-johnson.html>



The Arts & Sciences Seminar Series is a weekly colloquium series that has been supported by the School of Arts & Sciences Advisory Council at Clarkson University especially through generous gifts from David A. Walsh '67. Please contact ansseminar@clarkson.edu

SA&S 300: Arts and Sciences Seminar is a one credit course intended to foster an interdisciplinary outlook in undergraduates majoring in the School of Arts and Sciences.