

# Clarkson University

## Spring 2024 David A. Walsh '67 Arts & Sciences Seminar Series

Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 12pm

Room: Snell 212



### On Keywords: Love and Angst among Indonesian Youth

Since the early 2000s, a set of new terms and phrases dealing with affective subjectivity have become trendy within Indonesia's growing middle class. These forms proliferate in the stories young people tell about their romantic relationships, as well as circulating widely in life-coaching seminars, the sermons of hip Muslim preachers, and on the book spines of best-selling self-help paperbacks in urban bookstores. Although some of these terms have long existed in Indonesian, they have taken on new prominence; others are borrowed from English but have been assigned rather different meanings. This paper explores several of the most interesting of these keywords: *galau* (a state of [particularly adolescent] confusion; angst), *move on* (especially, to leave a relationship behind), and *hijrah* (to move on to greater piety). The paper examines in particular the prominence and function of these newly popularized terms in discourses surrounding youth sociability and sexuality. Strikingly, these affective phrases have been pressed into service by ultra-conservative Islamist preachers like Felix Siau and used to fan the flames of moral panic over youth immorality. Richards and Rudnyckj's (2009) notion of an "economy of affect" highlights the role of emotion in the practices through which people transform themselves into modern individuals capable of self-effectuation. In Indonesia, to be modern, young, and middle class is to be capable of new modes of emotional expression and affective flexibility, but such expressivity is viewed by many as threatening long held models of personhood.



**Dr. Nancy Smith-Hefner, Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, Boston University,** is a linguistic anthropologist and specialist of religion and gender in Southeast Asia. Her early research included projects on language, identity, and gender socialization in Java, Indonesia, as well as identity and moral education among Cambodian refugees in United States. Her current research is focused on gender and sexuality among Muslim Javanese youth.



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](mailto: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.