

**TO: ROBERT POWELL, CHAIR
BERKELEY DIVISION OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE**

FROM: Jan de Vries, Chair, Faculty Research Lecture Committee

Re: Nominations of Martin Meyerson Berkeley Faculty Research Lecturers for 2018

The Faculty Research Lecture Committee met on March 14, 2017 to consider nominations from many disciplines at the University. Our charge was to find two distinguished scholars whose research has opened up new fields or made distinctive and original contributions to existing fields. We looked as well for candidates who are nationally and internationally recognized, who represent research that crosses the disciplines at Berkeley, and who have established our reputation for excellence throughout the world. In addition, we considered the ability of the candidates to present a lively lecture to a broad audience.

The committee unanimously recommends that the 2018 Martin Meyerson Faculty Research Lectures be delivered by William Dietrich, of the Department of Earth and Planetary Science and Victoria Kahn, of the departments of English and Comparative Literature. Our committee selected them from a very strong field of nominees and presents them to you for approval with great enthusiasm.

William Dietrich is an internationally recognized and widely respected geomorphologist who has made fundamental contributions to the understanding of landscape processes and evolution in a wide variety of settings: sediment transport in rivers, river morphology, landslide and debris flows, landscape evolution, critical-zone observatories, and last but not least, the geomorphology of Mars.

Dietrich has brought the field of geomorphology to a new level of quantitative rigor, through theoretical advances, field observations - in particular at the Eel River Critical Zone Observatory which he developed in northern California- as well as experiments in the laboratory, for which he established a large flume at Berkeley for controlled experiments on meander formation. His greatest research contributions have focused on erosional and hydrologic processes occurring in headwater drainage basins, as most clearly summarized in his influential paper "*Geomorphic transport laws for predicting landscape form and dynamics*" (published in AGU Monograph 135).

Dietrich has provided the field of geomorphology with new tools, in particular as co-founder of the National Center for Airborne Laser Mapping, which uses Airborne Laser Altimetry (LIDAR) to make high-resolution maps of ground topography, even in areas with heavy vegetation. Notably, he has been the principal geomorphologist on the NASA/JPL Mars exploration program with the Curiosity rover, for which his expertise has been invaluable to interpret landscape features that have been formed, respectively, by flowing water during the planet's early history, and more recently, wind.

Dietrich has received many honors and awards. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and recipient of the Arthur Holmes Union Medal - the highest medal of the European Geosciences Union- and the Horton Medal of the American Geophysical Union (AGU), recognizing major research contributions in the field of Hydrology. In addition, he is a fellow of the AGU and the Geological Society of America, and has received two awards from the British Geomorphological Research Group.

Victoria Kahn is a renowned scholar of early modern culture. With an initial specialization in English literature of the renaissance, Kahn has expanded her comparative reach to Italian, French, and Latin traditions while also working across disciplinary boundaries to address legal and political theory as well as modern philosophy and textual poetics. Her scholarly range is extraordinary as is the depth of her erudition.

She is the author of four substantial monographs as well as five edited or coedited volumes. Her books are considered magisterial in their reassessment of early political and philosophical thought in relationship to literary culture and have carved out a distinctive perspective on Renaissance studies that resonates with contemporary concerns.

Among her recent books, *Wayward Contracts* is Kahn's reinterpretation of the English Civil War and Restoration in terms of the birth of a modern political subject. For this, she draws upon the rise of contract theory in the seventeenth century to describe the nature of political obligation and to reflect upon "states of feeling" and the passions. Though her argument is animated by Milton and Hobbes, the book also extends to many continental thinkers. Most recently, *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts* signals Kahn's bold ambition to move toward a critique of "political theology" by affirming the secular values of liberalism, democratic politics, rational argument, and critical thinking. Kahn undertakes her defense of the 'long Enlightenment'--from Machiavelli to Freud--by examining the debates among twentieth-century German thinkers (from Schmitt and Strauss to Benjamin, Kantorowicz, and Arendt) about politics and religion, debates that often centered on rival interpretations of the rise of secularism in the early modern period. *The Future of Illusion* is considered a mighty endeavor, both for its strong defense of secularism against religious traditions and for its multidisciplinary focus.

Kahn's broad recognition as a scholar is evidenced by her numerous fellowships from the Guggenheim and Fulbright Foundations and the NEH. She was invited most recently to deliver the Faber Lecture at Princeton and the Camden Lecture at Rice. She co-directed a seminar at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C. and taught in summer at the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell; she also taught at Bogazici University in Istanbul. For her command of early modern materials and twentieth-century philosophy and critical thought, Kahn is in demand from political and cultural theorists as well as literary critics.