



# **The 1619 Project: Governing Narratives**

## **ZZ Packer Study Group Outline**

**The study group will meet five times in the Fall 2020 semester. Meeting dates are October 7, 14, 21, 28, and November 4. All meetings will take place from 4 p.m.-5:30 p.m. on Zoom.**

### **Course Description**

Whether one perceives the traditional American origin story as a founding myth, an exercise in tautology, or the gospel truth, those who govern the narrative often govern the nation. To challenge this dynamic, journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones proposed to widen the frame beyond the 1776 date of American Independence to that of 1619—the date that Americans first brought captive Africans onto American soil, thereby inaugurating a slavocracy alongside the colony’s putative democracy. The result of this frame-shifting resulted in a 100-page ground-breaking spread in the August 18, 2019 edition of the New York Times Magazine that quickly became famous for its deft cross-pollination of several forms—political journalism, the historical essay, cultural criticism, and artistic artifact.

The essays and methodology of the 1619 Project will serve as starting point for this Watson Institute study group to explore how certain political, historical and sociological narratives inform an American ethos and construct an American identity—sometimes at the expense of competing narratives. While the readings will include studies in politics, policy, governance, history, sociology, culture and literature, the underlying theme will be narrative itself.

### **Structure:**

- Readings will include studies in politics, policy, governance, history, sociology, culture and literature, the underlying theme will be narrative itself.
- Students should come to class having read each essay, alongside the accompanying excerpts (each no more than 2 pages). Please attend all guest lectures and events.