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Wendy Hui Kyong Chun is the new Canada 150 Chair in New Media at SFU.

MEDIA RELEASE

New SFU Canada 150 Chair to focus on building digital democracy

March 29, 2018

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(Prof. Chun can be available for interviews in Ottawa later today and from Boston over the long weekend)

Photos: <http://at.sfu.ca/QKoMeg>

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New SFU Canada 150 Chair to focus on building digital democracy

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, professor of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University, will join Simon Fraser University as a prestigious Canada 150 Research Chair. She is one of 24 chairs named to the program and will hold the Chair in New Media. Chun is one of a dozen new chairs attending the announcement today in Ottawa.

The chairs program was created in celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary, and provides Canadian post-secondary institutions with a one-time investment to attract top-tier, internationally-based scholars and researchers to Canada. The Chair in New Media is the **second Canada 150 Chair** for SFU.

Chun's research investigates the rise of computers as networked media, spanning fields from new media studies to digital humanities. She combines her past studies in systems design engineering and English literature for her current work on digital media. At SFU, she will work across disciplines to integrate research in the humanities and data sciences that addresses questions of equality and justice.

That work will include a focus on creating methods to address abusive language online by generating counter speech and creating methods of engagement, and developing alternative network models. Chun says a rethink of the bases for digital connection is central to combating the spread of fake news.

"Working with many centres of excellence at SFU in areas such as big data, engaging communities and civil society, we hope to develop the coalitions necessary to produce innovative approaches to digital democracy," she says.

"Starting from the premise that conflict and dissent—but not hate speech or abuse, which is justly forbidden online—is a key part of any democratic process, the group will focus on developing algorithms to determine how to create effective counter speech."

Chun, a Guggenheim Fellow, has also been a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the American

Academy of Berlin, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard and a Wriston Fellow at Brown University. She has also been a member of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study and most recently, a visiting associate professor in the History of Science department at Harvard University.

Chun earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Waterloo and completed her graduate degrees at Princeton University.

She is currently writing a book entitled *Discriminating Data: Individuals, Neighbourhoods, Proxies*, which investigates the centrality of race, gender, class and sexuality to big data network analytics, and bridges her work in the humanities and data science. Among issues explored is how to build "desegregated" search engines and collaborative filters that acknowledge opposition and indifference as ties.

She is also author of *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (MIT) 2016, which explores the rise of social media and transformation of the Internet; *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (MIT 2011) and *Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (MIT 2006).

Chun, whose family came to Canada as South Korean immigrants in 1970, is happy to be returning to the country. "This chair will be an invaluable opportunity to pursue my research—to build those bridges between the humanities, STEM, arts and social sciences—in order to prototype different types of networking technologies," she says. "Coming back to Canada to help buttress academia is one of my highest priorities."

Chun is SFU's second Canada 150 Chair. In December 2017, mathematician Caroline Colijn, from London's Imperial College, was among the first four chairs introduced. She holds the chair in Mathematics for Infection, Evolution and Public Health.

Joy Johnson, SFU's vice-president, research and international, is thrilled about the announcement of SFU's second Canada 150 Research Chair: "We are honoured to have professor Chun join SFU as a Canada 150 Chair. Her expertise in digital media, digital humanities and data sciences strongly aligns with the university's strategic research plan. SFU aims to accelerate data-intensive research to deliver breakthroughs across the full spectrum of science and social sciences."

Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, made the announcement today and said: "It is a privilege to celebrate our new Canada 150 Research Chairs whose contributions to research will help support a stronger economy and a growing middle class. Their arrival also represents a brain gain for our country; a country that is earning its reputation for being open, diverse and welcoming to the scientists and strivers of the world."

Fast facts:

- The Canada 150 Chairs program is supported by a \$117.6 million investment.
- The SFU chairs will each receive funding support of \$350,000 per year over seven years.
- The Canada 150 Chairs program aims to enhance the country's reputation as a global centre for science, research and innovation excellence.

Learn more:

<http://www.canada150.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/home-accueil-eng.aspx>

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded more than 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 150,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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