

DMNC Committee Report + Charge ideas for AY 26-27

Meeting dates/times:

- 9/24/25, 4pm
- 10/1/25, 11am
- 10/29/25, 4pm
- 11/19/25, 4pm
- 12/17/25, 1pm
- 1/29/26, 1pm
- 2/12/26, 1pm

Committee membership:

- Nick Tobier (co-chair)
- Craig Smith (co-chair)
- Michael Atzmon
- Gretchen Keppel-Aleks
- Brian Love
- Kim Saks
- Seda Saluk
- Niloofar Sarlati
- Melanie Tanielian (SACUA Liaison)
- Basit Zafar
- Margaret Peterman (undergraduate student member)
- Thandiwe-Kesi Robins (graduate student member)

Milestones:

- Fall 2025 DMN Speaker, Ruth Ben-Ghiat (NYU, Historian of Italian fascism) was joined by U of M colleagues, Karima Benoune, Ji Yeon Hong, and Ronald Suny.
 - This event could have been a bust when our speaker declined the invite to come to campus for fear of death threats (this was in the wake of the shooting of right-wing pundit Charlie Kirk). We acted with useful dispatch to assemble a hybrid format that was engaging and substantive. Ruth Ben-Ghiat gave a lecture via Zoom, and we then held an in-person panel discussion with three U-M faculty members that involved people in the audience.
 - Takeaways: use this format again—it was very engaging and allowed us to broaden our audience.

- (Formally) Invite/engage a class to be present and part of the lecture audience (Johannes von Moltke's/ Fascist Cinemas + Niloofar Sarlati's capstone seminar in Comp Lit student presence was wonderful to have as part of the attending.)
- Demat Bolat, Gretchen Kappel-Aleks (with an introduction and framing by SACUA chair Derek Peterson)
 - A fascinating discussion about threats to academic freedom abroad and in the U.S., It was lightly attended but we have a very engaged audience.
 - Takeaways: get the word out earlier. Reserve a space in August.
- Fall 2026 event planning: Michael Ignatieff

Please include any ideas you may have for continued or new work by this committee during the 26-27 academic year. This document will be shared with the committee chair ahead of the beginning of the Fall semester for further consideration.

- Identifying and contacting a speaker for Fall 2027 soon to ensure they can be scheduled.