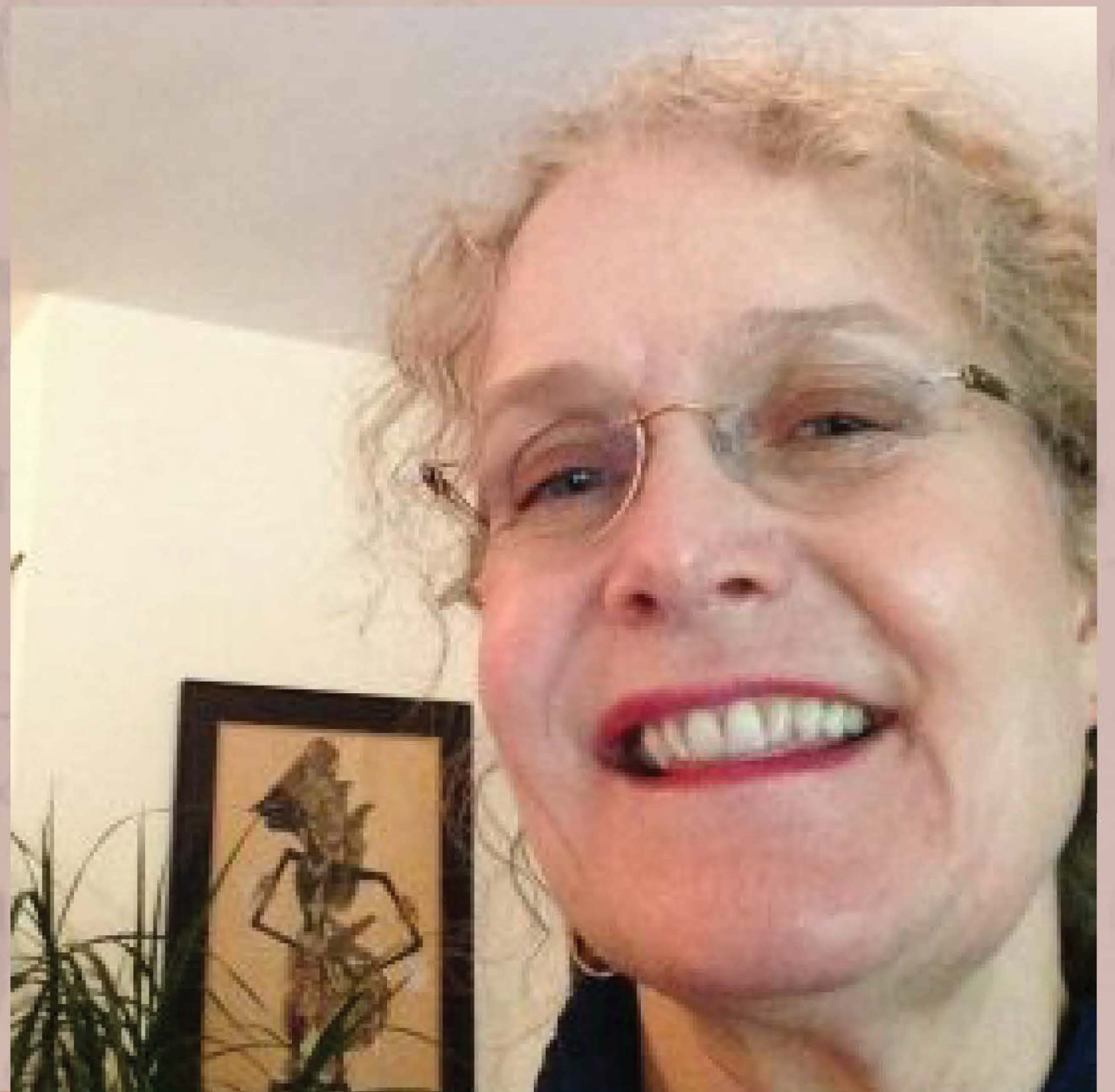


# PAST AND PRESENT OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

A RESEARCH WORKSHOP  
AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

1737 CAMBRIDGE ST.  
CGIS KNAPFEL K262  
BOWIE-VERNON ROOM  
**11.25 5PM-7PM**



**NANCY K.  
FLORIDA**

PROFESSOR,  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## ABSTRACT

Shortly before his death in December 1873, the renowned Javanese court poet R. Ng. Ronggowarsita composed a short work of social criticism and Islamic ethics that is among the most celebrated of Javanese literary texts. *Serat Kalatidha* (The Time of Darkness) reflects upon the avenues that remain open to the ethical subject in what Ronggowarsita calls the "time of madness," the time of darkness and error that marked his dismal present in high colonial Java. Most celebrated as a prophecy, the poem is, in part, a critical rereading of an early nineteenth-century prophetic reflection on the Javanese past. My talk explores the troubled context in which the author wrote this twelve-stanza (108-line) poem and how its text forms both a critical commentary on the state of the poet's current-day society and a pensive reflection on the ethical imperatives of Islam. In the course of this exploration, I reveal how Ronggowarsita's poem forms a prophecy, not as a foretelling of an already determined future, but rather as a work that moves along prophetic time to provoke in his readers a productive intimacy with both pasts and futures.

## BIO

Professor Nancy K. Florida is a historian of colonial Java and postcolonial Indonesia who is dedicated to a dialogic engagement with Indonesian subjects, living and dead. To help make this possible, Professor Nancy K. Florida has spent a great many years of her life excavating the forgotten writings of a variety of Javanese men and women, writings that had hitherto lain unread, secreted away in the manuscript archives of Java.

## LIVING IN A TIME OF MADNESS: LAST DAYS OF JAVA'S LAST PROPHETIC POET

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