Sacred Ecology: Landscape Transformations for Ritual Practice

An Interview with John W. Janusek, Tracy G. Miller, and Betsey A. Robinson, Co-directors

The 2011/2012 Faculty Fellows Program at the Warren Center, “Sacred Ecology: Landscape Transformations for Ritual Practice,” is co-directed by John W. Janusek, associate professor of anthropology, Tracy G. Miller, associate professor of history of art and associate professor of Asian studies, and Betsey A. Robinson, associate professor of history of art and associate professor of classical studies. The year-long interdisciplinary seminar will explore the manifold experiences of complex ritual sites around the world and across all periods of history. Sacred ecology refers to the human experience of divinity in relation to the natural environment, real or represented. Landscape is construed not simply as scenery, but as a cultural complex in which the natural world and human practice, conceptual and material, are dynamically linked and constantly interacting. This year’s program draws scholars from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, classical studies, history of art, Asian studies, history, Latin American studies, and English.

LETTERS: How did this Fellows Program come together?

MILLER: For the past eight years, John Janusek and I have been talking about where and how our work overlaps. I have been thinking about the potential of working with students on sacred sites in Asia, China specifically, and about how that would impact my research. John has been bringing students to do fieldwork with him in Bolivia for years. Together, they have been looking at sacred places and sacred landscapes. His approach is methodologically different from mine because he comes from an anthropological background, but he deals with the same kinds of issues that I do. How do people interact with landscape? How does it inspire them to create buildings? How do they integrate building structures into the landscape? How do they modify landscape for their own desires and interests in interacting with the divinities that reside at that site? From these discussions we thought it would be productive to bring together colleagues with a shared interest in this topic and to look at it through varied methodological approaches.

JANUSEK: Tracy and I both work with sites and subjects that deal with the distant past—Tracy through the lens of art history and myself through anthropological archaeology—so we’ve already begun to look at the resonance of this topic. We hope that bringing together scholars from different disciplines will help us to develop new perspectives on this topic.

ROBINSON: And then I came along! I joined the faculty at Vanderbilt in 2008. I am an art historian who specializes in archaeology and architectural history, but I have research interests in landscape studies and cultural geography. Because of our shared background in art history at the University of Pennsylvania, I have known Tracy for awhile, and was also already aware...
of John’s work before I arrived on campus. At Vanderbilt, I was looking for ways of engaging with others who were interested in architecture and landscape, so I was thrilled when conversations with Tracy and John sprouted up around issues like sacred ecologies and ritual practices. I eventually co-authored an article in *Natural History* about our initial exploration of this intersection in the context of sacred landscapes.

**LETTERS:** How does the topic of the Fellows Program relate to current interest and activities in sustainability and other studies of the environment?

**JANUSEK:** Well, as we are speaking, it is rain- ing heavily outside, and we recently marked the one year anniversary of the massive flood that hit Nashville. That event was a reminder of the sheer scale of contemporary urbanism and of the transformations of nature that, to a great degree, produced the weather patterns responsible for the rain, and the altered drainage systems that produced the flooding. We have to move away from the idea that nature is a passive, inert backdrop to be exploited and moved toward a middle ground that understands nature as an integral and dynamic aspect of human history. In many ways, the aims of our group this year is to find that middle ground.

**LETTERS:** How does the topic of the Fellows Program relate to current interest and activities in sustainability and other studies of the environment?

**ROBINSON:** I think “sustainability” is a term of its own. It is what we, or at least a few of us, are thinking about each year. One project always leads into another, whether graphically and temporally or geographically, thematically, or methodologically used when approaching landscape as something modified by the rapid desacralization of these constructed landscapes. The creation and legacy of sacred spaces is often not just on a physical but also on the ways people think and write about those places.

**LETTERS:** What, to you, constitutes these various sacred sites or landscapes that are geographic and temporally separated?

**ROBINSON:** When I think about each of the Fellows’ research, one project always leads into another, whether geographically, thematically, or temporally. There is definitely synergy amongst the work that we all are doing: this group’s shared work forms a dynamic matrix for co-exploration.
2011/2012 Warren Center Faculty Fellows
Sacred Ecology: Landscape Transformations for Ritual Practice

ROBERT E. CAMPANY is professor of Asian studies and religious studies specializing in the history of Chinese religion and culture, and methods for the cross-cultural study of religions and cultures. He is co-editor of Early Medieval China: Sources and Studies (forthcoming, 2012) and author of many articles and four books, most recently Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracles and Their Influence on Early Medieval China (forthcoming, 2012). His current projects include a book on dreams and their interpretation in medieval China as well as a book, tentatively titled “Spirits,” for the Dimensions of Asian Spirituality Series of the University of Hawai’i Press.

LEO C. COLEMAN is assistant professor in the Department of Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University. A cultural anthropologist, Coleman’s research focuses on technology, urban experience, and politics in India and, comparatively, in Britain and the United States. He is completing a book about the electrification of Delhi, India and the privatization of public utilities there. In addition, he is the author of several articles and book chapters, and the editor of Food Ethnographies: Encounters (Berg Publishers, 2011). His current project is “Sacred Ecology in the Global City,” examining how religious uses of urban space contribute to novel understandings of nature and community. He is the 2011/2012 William Vaughn Visiting Fellow at the Warren Center.

WILLIAM R. FOWLER, associate professor of anthropology, is an anthropologist and ethnohistorian specializing in pre-Columbian and colonial Nahua societies of Mexico and Central America. His special topics of research interest include urbanism, colonialism, and political economy. He has published a number of books and monographs and many journal articles in a wide range of topics in Mesoamerican studies, and he is founding editor of the international journal Ancient Mexico.

JOHN W. JANUSEK is associate professor of anthro- pology and an archaeologist who specializes in the South American Andes. His current research focuses on the origins of urbanism in relation to human diversity, ritual practice, and past experiences of nature. He is author of Identity and Power in the Ancient Andes (Routledge, 2004), Ancient Tiwanaku (Cambridge, 2008), and founder of the Ancient City and Ancient Landscape (Cambridge). This year, Janusek is the Spencer Wilson Fellow, and he will co-direct the Warren Center Fellows Program.

JANE G. LANDERS is Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of History and will be acting di- rector of the Center for Latin American Studies this year. She is the author of numerous books, book chapters, and articles on the history of Ameri- cans in the Iberian Atlantic World, the most re- cent being Atlantic Coasts in the Age of Revolutions (Cambridge, Mass., 2010). She directs the Etrus- can and Secular Sources for Slave Societies digi- tal preservation project (http://www.vanderbilt. edu/co/links.php) and has consulted on a vari- ety of archaeological projects, documentary films, and museum exhibits. She is currently working on two monographs—one an enslaved Mandingo and his various Atlantic lives and another on runaway slave communities around the Iberian Atlantic.

TRACY G. MILLER is associate professor of history of art and associate professor and acting direct- or of the Asian Studies Program. A specialist in the ritual architecture of medieval China, her first book, The Divine Nature of Power: Chinese Ritual Architecture at the Sacred Site of Jingsi (Harvard Uni- versity Asia Center, 2007), addressed the way in which specific temple forms and their placement within the landscape affected the understanding of the identities of divine worshipped within them. Her interests include the ritual architecture of Asia broadly defined, conceptions and percep- tions of “nature,” the integration of man-made and natural worlds, and Chinese representations of landscape in both two and three dimensions. This year, Miller is the Rebecca Webb Wilson Visiting Fellow, and she will co-direct the Warren Center Fellows Program.

ROGER E. MOORE is senior lecturer of English and director of the Undergraduate Writing Pro- gram. His current research examines the effects of the dissolution of the monasteries on the English literary imagination through the eighteenth cen- tury. The author of articles on Chaucer, Sidney, and Malouf, he has most recently published “The Hidden History of Northanger Abbey: Jane Austen and the Dissolution of the Monasteries” in Religion and Literature (Spring 2011).

BETSEY A. ROBINSON is associate professor of history of art and classical studies. Her main fields of interest are Greek and Roman archaeology, art, architecture, urbanism, and landscape architec- ture. Her book, Histories of Power: A Corinthisan House in Three Millennia, was published in July 2011, and she remains interested in the cultural landscape of the potter’s sprigs to orientate the design. She is currently pursuing a com- parative study of landscape, monuments, politics, and rituals at Delphi and the Theban Valley of the Muses, both in central Greece, in the Hel- lenistic and Roman Imperial periods. This year, Robinson is the Jacque Vogeli Fellow, and she will co-direct the Warren Center Fellows Program.

HELENA SIMONETT is assistant professor of Latin American studies and adjunct assistant pro- fessor at the Blair School of Music, also serves as associate director of the Center for Latin American Studies. Her research on Mexican popular music and its transnational diffusion resulted in the pub- lication of a number of articles and two books: Bandas: Mexican Musical Life across Borders (Wes- leyan University Press, 2001) and En Sinuas del Aire: Historia de la música de banda (Sociedad Histórica de Mazatlán, México, 2004). She recently edited a volume on the accordion traditions in the Ameri- cans (University of Illinois Press, forthcoming). Her current research focuses on the musical life of an indigenous community in Sinuas, northwestern Mexico.

BRONWEN L. WICKKISER, assistant professor of classical studies, specializes in Greek-Roman religion and medicine, especially healing cults. She has authored numerous articles, book chap- ters, and a 2008 monograph Athénèse, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-Century Greece (Johns Hopkins) and co-edited a 2009 volume on Greek religion. Currently she is working on the book, “The World’s First Thespians and the Changing Landscape of Greek Ritual,” that explores the functions of unusual round buildings (tholoi) in several of Greece’s most popular sanctuaries, with particular interest in the aesthetics of these spaces and the role of music therapy for the physical body and the body politic.

Environmental and Human Rights Activist Van Jones to Present Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

Van Jones, a senior fellow at the Cen- ter for American Progress and a senior policy advisor at Green for All, will present this year’s Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture at 4:30 p.m. on Wednes- day, October 19 in Sarratt Cinema. Jones also holds a joint appointment at Princeton Univer- sity as a distinguished visiting fellow in both the Center for African American Studies and in the Program in Science, Technology and Environ- mental Policy at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. His talk is entitled “Rebuild the American Dream: Green Jobs and Beyond.” Jones’ presentation will con- tribute to the Sustainability Project, a year-long series of courses and programming spearheaded by Vanderbilt’s Program in American Studies. Jones is the founder of the Oakland, Cal- ifornia-based Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and of Green for All, an NGO dedicated to “building an inclusive green economy strong enough to lift people out of poverty.” In 2008, Jones published the influential volume The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix our Two Biggest Problems.

In 2008, Time magazine named Jones one of its “Heroes of the Environment.” He served as an environmental advisor to the White House in 2009. Jones currently serves on the boards of several organizations, including Demos, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Rob- ert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, and the Campaign for America’s Future. A Tennessee native, Jones is a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Martin and Yale Uni- versity Law School.

The Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore E. Nash, Sr., and Mrs. George Renfro, all of Asheville, North Carolina. The lecture honors Harry C. Howard Jr. (B.A., 1951) and allows the Warren Center to bring an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt an- nually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.
Polar Probing: Sculpture by Gabriel Warren
October 13–December 8, 2011

T he Vanderbilt Fine Arts Galleries will present a number of works by artist Gabriel Warren October 13 through December 8, 2011. Warren’s works in this exhibit are layered with meaning and references to the condition of the planet and are based on his close observations of the behavior of ice in its many forms. The show will also include an outdoor sculpture installation adjacent to Cohen Mezzanine. Warren’s works in this exhibit are layered with meaning and references to the condition of the planet and are based on his close observations of the behavior of ice in its many forms. Warren’s works approach the monumental scale and the complexity of the geological forces that produce the history of the planet.

DIANA E. BELLONBY, Elizabeth E. Fleming Fellow, earned her Bachelor of Arts degree at Dartmouth College before coming to Vanderbilt, where she studies Victorian and modernist literature as a doctoral candidate in English. She focuses on theories of aesthetics, visual culture, and gender and sexuality. Her dissertation, “Magic Portraits: Visual Culture, Ekphrasis, and the Novel, 1850-1930,” explores the relationships among new visual media, popular fiction, and British aesthetics through the lens of magic-portrait stories, a subgenre famously exemplified by Oscar Wilde’s “The Picture of Dorian Gray.” Constructing a gender-bending genealogy from Charles Dickens’s Bleak House to Virginia Woolf’s Orlando, Bellonby argues that the formal strategies used in popular magic-portrait stories shaped both British aestheticism and early twentieth-century avant-garde avant-garde.

WILLIAM L. BISHOP, a summa cum laude graduate of Emory University, is a doctoral candidate in history. His research focuses on U.S. relations with sub-Saharan Africa during the Cold War era, and his dissertation, “Diplomacy in Black and White: America and the Search for Zimbabwean Independence, 1965-1980,” examines how Cold War exigencies, domestic politics, and changing conceptions of “race” affected U.S. policy toward the African colony of Rhodesia (modern-day Zimbabwe) between 1965 and 1980. He has conducted archival research in Zambia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and his research has been supported by such organizations as the Society of Historical AFRICAN American Foreign Relations (HAFAR), the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, and the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

MATTHEW E. DUQUÉS, American Studies Fellow, is a doctoral candidate in English. His research focuses on postwar American literature and culture with an emphasis on set- tler colonialism, enlightenment philosophy, and critical race and gender theory. In his dissertation, “To a Certain Degree: Northern American and Russian Transnational Audiences,” examines the impact of Milosz, a poet and Nobel Prize winner, by looking at his four transnational audiences: Western intellectuals, Central and Eastern European political exiles, Polish dissidents, and American readers of poetry. Using Milosz as his case study, he argues that intellectual products are capable of bridging cultures and fostering connections between them.

JOANNA M. MAJURSKA, George J. Graham Jr. Fellow, is a doctoral candidate in history. She earned her Master of Arts degree in international relations from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland. Her dissertation, “Making Sense of Cezar Milosz: A Twentieth Century Intellectuals’ Dialogue” examines the impact of Milosz, a poet and Nobel Prize winner, by looking at his four transnational audiences: Western intellectuals, Central and Eastern European political exiles, Polish dissidents, and American readers of poetry. Using Milosz as his case study, he argues that intellectual products are capable of bridging cultures and fostering connections between them.

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Millennium Advances: Theory, Interdisciplinarity, and the Humanities

Edward H. Friedman

I

in the past—not necessarily the good old days, not necessarily inferior times—the privileging of one or another set of texts in other disciplines was, in many ways, more pat and more predictable than it is today. Stated a bit differently, the frames through which we studied texts were narrower, more stable, and less likely to be, as it were, deconstructed. When “boom” in theory began in the 1960s—not that theory had been missing before that, of course—it caused us to be generally more skeptical, more disintermediate. It even transformed some theorists into superheroes. Analogous to movie actors whose names appear above the title, certain theorists and critics seemed to have more clout than the authors and works about which they were commenting. Tellingly, literary theory became theory (and, one might say, Theory with a capi-

tal t). Arguably, the change is most strikingly marked by a greater self-consciousness of the critical act per se. Scholars analyze texts along with the mechanisms through which the analy-

ses take place. It appears that some critics want to be more “scientific,” others want to be more self-reflexive, or, paradoxically, both. Height-

ened interest in theory leads to a more compre-

hensive interdisciplinarity and thus to what may be called theoretical interconnections. It would not need to be novel that the concept of “the Humanities,” the lingua franca of the humanities and the

entire system or even the prioritized element.

likely than not, would not have occurred a few
to the subjects and objects under scrutiny. In

in the 1960s—not that theory had been miss-

cal baby from the bathwater, and unites past

universities exist, and how this question

to the subjects and objects under scrutiny. In

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2011/2012 Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities Seminars

The following is a list of seminars and reading groups that will be hosted by the Warren Center in the fall semester. For more detailed information please contact the seminar coordinators or the Warren Center.

Art of Narrative Workshop: The purpose of this workshop is to gather together writers interested in the art of narrative non-fiction and in particular, in the possibilities of bringing together scholar-ship and narrative non-fiction techniques. The group will meet to workshop members’ writings, read and discuss works of narrative non-fiction and pieces dealing with craft, and invite visiting speakers known for their narrative non-fiction to address the group and the larger campus community. Seminar coordinator: Paul Kramer (history), paul.kramer@vanderbilt.edu.

Circum-Atlantic Studies Seminar: This group reads and teaches scholarship that is interdisciplin-ary in nature, focuses on least two of the fol-lowing regions – Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America – and reads some aspect of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colon-i-ism, and/or postcolonialism. Seminar coordi-nators: Calvo Castillo (history), calvo.castillo@vanderbilt.edu and Jane Landers (history), jane.landers@vanderbilt.edu.

Digital Humanities Discussion Group: Digital humanities projects are rich new additions to the intellectual life of humanities scholars. If you are currently working on a digital humanities project or hope to do so in the near future, please join this discussion group to share your projects, read and discuss new tools and innovations in this area. The direction of the group will be determined by the interests of those who participate. Seminar coordinators: Lynn Ra-my (English), lynn.ramy@vanderbilt.edu and Mona Frederick (Warren Center), mona.freder-ick@vanderbilt.edu.

Film Theory & Visual Culture Seminar: This seminar aims to bring together faculty and graduate students across campus working in film, visual culture, art history, literature, and cultural studies interested in theories of the image, philosophy of perception, aesthetic and critical theory, media histories, and the history of vision. The group will meet monthly to discuss readings, share work, and engage the research of invited scholars. Seminar coordinators: Jennifer Fry (Film Stud-ies and English), jenniferf.fry@vanderbilt.edu, James McFarland (German), james.mcfarland@vanderbilt.edu, and Paul Young (Film Studies and English), paul.d.young@vanderbilt.edu.

Food Politics Seminar: This graduate-led seminar aims to continue a transdisciplinary conversation about the political, economic, ecological, cultural, spiritual, and nutritional dimensions of foods, agricultural practices, and consumption habits. Each month will include a meeting focused on a discussion of selected readings, as well as a second meeting oriented toward praxis, engaging with the principles discussed through shared physical or community activities. Seminar coordinators: Tristan Call (anthropology), tristan.p.call@vanderbilt.edu and Wade Archer (Divinity School), wade.w.archer@vanderbilt.edu.

Group for Pre-modern Cultural Studies: The purpose of the group is to serve as a forum for those with interests in pre-modern studies, includ-ing not only history but language and literature, chiefly, though not exclusively, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, as well as music, art, and culture. The group meets monthly to discuss ongoing research by a faculty member, recent publica-tions in the field, or the work of a visiting scholar. Seminar coordinators: Leah Mac (English), leahs.maccus@vanderbilt.edu and Bill Calero (history), william.p.calero@vanderbilt.edu.

Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life: The Warren Center and the Ameri-can Studies Program co-sponsor this group to provide opportunities for exchange among faculty members and graduate students who are interested in or who are currently involved in proj-ects that engage public scholarship. Vanderbilt is a member of the national organization, “Imagining America,” a consortium of colleges and universi-ties committed to public scholarship in the arts, humanities, and design. Seminar coordinators: Teresa Goodell (American Studies), teresa.goodell@vanderbilt.edu and Mona Frederick (Warren Center), mona.frederick@vanderbilt.edu.

Latinx Studies: Seminar: This graduate led-seminar seeks to ex-plore the visual and print culture of the twentieth century with respect to various national, regional, and transnational traditions, including but not limited to literature and the arts from Europe and the Americas. Meetings will provide those interested in the twentieth century literature and culture with a formal group setting in which to workshop their writing, read and discuss the work of their colleagues and mentors, and engage with recent developments in relevant scholarship/modemism, postmodernism, postcolonial studies, film studies, American studies, identity studies, philo-sophy, etc. Seminar coordinators: Andy Hines (English), andrew.hines@vanderbilt.edu and Aud-brey Porterfield (English), audrey.porterfield@vanderbilt.edu.

Literature and Law Seminar: This reading group will meet to discuss current approaches to lega-l challenges, and new possibilities that are offered to legal and literary scholars when they use insights from both fields to illuminate their work. The seminar welcomes anyone interested in the many topics now addressed in this field, including the use of obscenity laws to regulate creative work, the representation of law in literature, law as litera-ture, the application of literary methods to legal texts, the challenges of constructing “chambers” appropriate to literary and legal settings, and the revitalization of law through reference to human-ists texts and approaches. Seminar coordinator: Robert Bardsley (French), robert.bardsley@vanderbilt.edu.

Mexican Studies Seminar: The goal of this group is to raise the profile of research related to Mexico on the Vanderbilt campus and support members’ individual scholarly endeavors regarding this im-portant nation bordering the United States. The group brings together faculty and graduate stu-dents from history, political science, literature, sociology, art, anthropology, music, and Latin American studies. At monthly meetings the group will discuss work-in-progress authored by mem-bers and invited scholars from beyond Vanderbilt. Seminar coordinator: Helana Simonett (Latin American Studies), helena.simonett@vanderbilt.edu.

Science Studies Seminar: This interdisciplinary group is comprised of faculty from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities with a shared interest in the history and sociol-ogy of scientific thought and practice, issues of scientific methodology and its application across disciplines, and the social functions of scientific knowledge. Seminar coordinator: Dahlia Porter (English), dahlia.porter@vanderbilt.edu.

The Heart of the Matter: This graduate-led seminar will explore the intersections of social ethics and sociology as they relate to classism, racism, and sexism. Through incorporating social justice frameworks, this seminar provides a platform for social ethics and sociologists to engage each other in discussions of social inequality, theo-ries that explain it, and how to apply knowledge to construct more equitable societies. Semi-nar coordinators: Christopher Ringer (sociology), christopher.d.ringer@vanderbilt.edu and Nakia Collins (sociology), nakia.collins@vanderbilt.edu.

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

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Warren Center Staff Change

We have had several staff changes dur-ing the last few months. The Warren Center said a sad farewell to Activities Coordinator Polly Case who has moved to the position of Educational Coordinator in the Department of Psychology and Human Development at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College. While we miss her greatly at the Warren Center, we wish her well in her new position.

Kate Ratter moved from the Administra-tive Assistant post at the Warren Center to the Activities Coordinator position. Those of you who have worked with Kate previously know that she is a gifted administrator who contrib-utes intellectual vitality and responsively good cheer to the life of the Warren Center. We are fortunate indeed to have her stepping into the Activities Coordinator role.

Our newest staff member is Administrative Assistant Allison Thompson. Allison started with us last February, one of the busiest times of the year at the Warren Center. She came into her new office at the Center prepared from her very first day to successfully take on whatever challenges awaited. Allison’s many talents and capabilities are a perfect fit for the Warren Cen-ter and we are extremely happy that she is now part of our staff.

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

Warren Center Staff

Eduard H. Friedmann, Director
Marte C. Frederiksen, Executive Director
Kay C. James, Activities Coordinator and Outreach editor
Allison J. Thompson, Administrative Assistant

Letters is the semiannual newsletter of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University, 611 11th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37235-1534. (615) 343-6060, Fax (615) 343-2248.

For a listing of Warren Center programs and activities, please contact the above address or visit our Web site at www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center.

Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the Col-lege of Arts and Science in 1987 and renamed the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humani-ties in 1989 in honor of Robert Penn Warren, Vanderbilt alumnus class of 1925, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and, when appro-priate, natural sciences. Members of the Vander-bilt community representing a wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center’s programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.
Warren Center Hosts Andrew W. Mellon Foundation John E. Sawyer Seminar in 2012/2013

Vanderbilt University faculty members Richard Blackett (Andrew Jackson Professor of History), Teresa A. Goddu (Associate Professor of English and Director of the American Studies Program), and Jane G. Landers (Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of History) will be co-directing an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar at the Warren Center on the theme “The Age of Emancipation: Black Freedom in the Atlantic World” during the 2012/2013 academic year. The project will coincide with the sesquicentennial of the U.S. Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863).

The seminar co-directors submitted a successful application to the Mellon Foundation to underwrite the timely study. Each of the seminar directors has key expertise in areas related to the topic of study. Professor Blackett works on the transatlantic abolitionist movement and its efforts to bring about emancipation in the U.S. He is currently writing a book on the ways slaves influenced the debate over the future of slavery in the U.S. by escaping. Professor Goddu specializes in nineteenth-century American literature and culture with a focus on race and slavery. She is completing a book about the broad range of print, material, and visual culture produced by the U.S. anti-slavery movement, paying particular attention to the print and visual productions of former slaves. Professor Landers specializes in African resistance and marronage in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean. She is the author of *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolution* (Harvard, 2010), which traces a diverse group of African-born and African-descended individuals who gained freedom by participating in the major revolutions of their era.

During its weekly meetings, the seminar will focus on the freedom movements that resisted and reshaped slavery. The goal of this seminar will be to produce a global perspective on the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation by locating it within a broader age of emancipation that occurred in the Atlantic World in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through the comparative study of Atlantic World freedom movements, seminar participants will produce a nuanced account of the various types of emancipations and the cultural technologies that enabled them. By tracing the continuities and discontinuities among types and forms of emancipations in different Atlantic regions and by exploring the intersection of different disciplinary approaches to the topic, the seminar’s deliberations will provide a comprehensive understanding of how the search for liberty evolved and expanded in the Atlantic World and how it left complex legacies that still persist. Emancipation was never a single event but rather a continuous process that influenced slavery’s very structures.

In addition to the three seminar co-directors, the seminar will consist of six Vanderbilt University faculty members, two Vanderbilt University graduate students, and one Andrew W. Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow from an institution other than Vanderbilt. Scholars selected for participation will also be appointed as Warren Center Fellows for 2012/2013 year. Fellows will receive individual research funds for participation in the program. Funds will also be available to the seminar to host an array of visiting speakers during the year that the seminar is meeting as well as a workshop in the fall of 2013 that will be planned by members of the seminar. More information about the application process for the Sawyer Seminar is available on our website: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center/