

Letters

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Public Scholarship in the Humanities

Interview by Tyler Bittner

The 2014/2015 Faculty Fellows Program at the Warren Center, “Public Scholarship in the Humanities,” is co-directed by Joel Harrington, Professor of History, and Holly Tucker, Professor of French and Professor of Biomedical Ethics and Society. The year-long interdisciplinary seminar will explore questions related to publicly engaged scholarship, examining what may be gained and what may be lost when scholars are asked to make their work more accessible to a broad general audience. How will the future of scholarly research in the humanities be impacted by this increasing emphasis on publicly engaged scholarship as well as by the turn to digital humanities and other forms of new media? *Letters* recently met with the co-directors to talk about these issues and the 2014/2015 Fellows Program.

Letters: How did this Fellows Program come together?

HARRINGTON: Thinking about the work that I do at Vanderbilt within a larger context has been an interest of mine for a long time. I knew that Holly was also interested in these issues—especially public digital projects—and one day we began brainstorming about a possible Warren Center Fellows Program.

TUCKER: Joel and I both were working on narrative non-fiction books that were intended for a general public readership. We spoke a lot together about our work and the challenges of writing for a general public audience while still keeping a deeply scholarly emphasis in our work. And from there, we started to ask larger questions, such as, “Who is our audience? How do we best reach them?” Once our books were published and reviewed

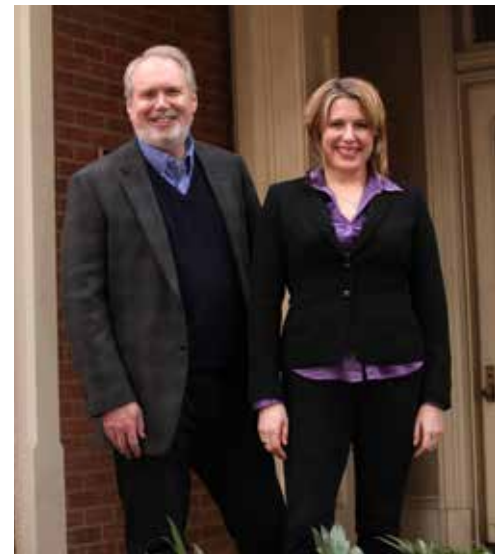
more widely, we each had opportunities to speak to a much broader group of people than we ever could have imagined. After this shared experience of engaging with an audience both inside and outside the academy, we were convinced of the importance of a Warren Center Fellows Program on the public humanities.

HARRINGTON: One of the things that we found out early on is that there are a lot of people talking about this across the country. And so we did learn from that discussion and set up a framework of questions for our own use.

Letters: How do you understand the term “public scholarship,” and how would you differentiate this from more traditional academic scholarship?

TUCKER: I think the term public scholarship is quite large, because it can encompass any number of things. Public scholarship can encompass writing for larger audiences in the form of trade books; it can also mean taking one’s academic research and putting it into the public domain to encourage new ways of understanding a question or to inform public policy; and it can also mean activism, going out into communities using what one knows through his or her research to help make a difference in some way. So I think Joel and I understand public humanities not as an already defined problematic, but one that we’re looking forward to exploring with the Warren Center Fellows over the coming year.

HARRINGTON: I have learned that there are lots of different definitions of public humanities and publicly engaged scholarship. Initially, I probably had a very naïve notion



Joel Harrington (left) and Holly Tucker

Inside

Public Scholarship in the Humanities	1–4
2015–2016 Graduate Student Fellowship Opportunities.....	4
Fall Symposium to Celebrate the 400th Anniversary of Part Two of <i>Don Quixote</i>	4
THATCamp 2014.....	4
Warren Center Hosts Andrew W. Mellon Foundation John E. Sawyer Seminar in 2015/16.....	5
2014 Southern Festival of Books	5
2014/2015 Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities Seminars	6–7
Vanderbilt Scholars Present at HASTAC Conference in Lima, Peru	7
One for the Books: In Touch with Literature ..	8–9
Author James McBride to Present the 2014 Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture	9
2014/2015 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows	10
2014/2015 Warren Center Faculty Fellows	11
Porterfield Receives Postdoctoral Fellowship at Queen’s University, Belfast	12

of what it means to be a humanist in the public sphere. One of the reasons we wanted to co-direct this Fellows Program was to find out what other people are doing in this area, how we can apply this to our own work, and how we can use our own work in ways that are more profitable for other people. Our group will also explore the significance of these changes for what we do as academics.

Letters: Collaborations are an integral part of the public humanities. With what sorts of individuals or institutions outside of the confines of the university do you think scholars can engage?

HARRINGTON: I think that it is interesting that you say that about the humanities because in talking with colleagues around the university who are *not* in the humanities, we are not generally perceived as involved in a collaborative endeavor. A lot of what we traditionally do as humanists is in fact conducted in solitude: reading, writing, researching. We do discuss things with colleagues and with students, but what I'm hoping for in this seminar is to learn from the experiences from my colleagues in the humanities who do work more collaboratively. The sciences, of course, have long worked in teams in their laboratories. I myself come from a background where it's more of a lone endeavor and think that is a perfectly appropriate approach for certain things that I do as a scholar, but I don't want all of my work to be limited in that way.

TUCKER: The public humanities in many ways are a reflection of a much longer process that began with interdisciplinary studies. People in very specific fields—whether language, literature, history, anthropology—started to recognize that there were certain similarities across those fields in terms of the questions we were asking and the research tools we were using. At the same time, however, we were engaging with questions very differently. And thanks to places like the Warren Center, which is a second home for people like Joel and me, we have an opportunity to sit around the table and engage with our colleagues from many different disciplines. Now we have humanists who are interested in seeing if they can continue that type of dialogue outside the small groups of faculty with whom they normally engage. I would also say that other things have come onto the scene like the digital humanities and social media, which can provide faculty members at universities with new types of platforms to interact with a larger audience. Furthermore, I think that we're learn-

ing a great deal from our colleagues who are engaged in humanistic inquiry outside of the ivory tower. We keep hearing that the humanities are facing demise, but there doesn't seem to be much evidence outside of academe that would signal this loss of interest in the humanities. Book sales of histories and biographies are always quite high. If we look at Neil deGrasse Tyson's work on *Cosmos*, he is showing us ways scientists can communicate the history and sociology of science. So we're seeing a lot of other people engaging humanistic discourse that are *not* professors and do not have the training that we have. And I think for many people engaged in public scholarship in the humanities, the first question is, "Why not us? Shouldn't we be out there engaging people with the knowledge that we have, engaging in productive ways with the larger population?"

Letters: Can you think of any specific institutions outside the university with which humanists might want to collaborate?

TUCKER: Let's look at some of the work of one of our Warren Center Fellows, Lisa Guenther. She is very interested in questions of prison, prison reform, and treatment of the incarcerated. As a philosopher, and as part of a philosophy discussion group with the REACH Coalition (Reciprocal Education And Community Healing on Tennessee's Death Row), she is examining these critical ethical questions, and she also is in the prisons, interacting with both the people who are incarcerated as well as the people who are responsible for them. So that is perhaps an unexpected place for a philosopher to be, but Lisa's work has been extraordinarily productive and demonstrates the ways in which the work of a philosopher is not only useful but indeed *necessary* for larger questions of incarceration.

HARRINGTON: Yes, that is a great example of publicly engaged scholarship. I also think this question of outside collaboration is one of the things we will explore in our seminar. That is, I think there are a variety of possibilities beyond those we immediately imagine. I'm in history and people think immediately of working with museums or in public education. This is appropriate, of course, but I also think we need to broaden our gaze. There are *all* types of people, not only in Nashville or in Tennessee, but across the globe who are engaged in public scholarship from whom we can learn and also imitate.

TUCKER: I work in the history and culture of early medical practices, and I've been

really surprised by the types of dialogues that I have been able to have with practicing physicians, for example. I have presented at grand rounds at medical schools—this would have been unthinkable twenty years ago for someone with a Ph.D. in French. In the course of my research, I have learned a lot about the significance of medical practices and how they've morphed and changed over three or four hundred years; engaging with physicians and learning about current practices is also very useful in terms of my understanding of older medical practices. It is also invigorating to have the opportunity to talk to medical practitioners about the history and origins of their own practices of which they may have little or no awareness. So I also see public humanities as an outgrowth of who we are as teachers.

Letters: How do these partnerships increase the potential for creative and engaging scholarship that also enhances the public good?

HARRINGTON: That is one of our central questions for the year. All of the faculty members at Vanderbilt University are trained in specific academic disciplines. We are hired in disciplines and we are promoted in disciplines. We talk and study across these boundaries, but we are still in many ways conceptually bound by them. And I think one of the things that we as a university need to do is to think about ways beyond traditional disciplinary scholarship as serving the interest of the university, and a part of that will involve how this sort of publicly engaged work is encouraged and evaluated within the university.

TUCKER: Public scholarship in the humanities is for me an opportunity to think about why we do what we do. As professors at a very privileged institution like Vanderbilt University, we engage regularly with extraordinary students and remarkable colleagues, but at the same time what does that mean if it's only in these few square miles of Nashville, Tennessee? Or if our work is only published in journals that specialists read? For me, these questions about public good relate as well to the fact that I am the first college-educated woman in my family and going to college was an extraordinary privilege. But it feels very odd to have had the privilege of all of these years of studying, research, and writing, and then to think that I'm the only one who gets to benefit from it. This goes against what I understand about educational inquiry and scholarship in a democratic society. So I think that humanistic inquiry is not something we do because we are part of a privileged

class of researchers, teachers and students, but it should be something deeply ingrained into the sense of public utility.

HARRINGTON: I agree with Holly and I also think that this works in both directions. In other words, the experiences that we and our colleagues have outside the university walls will in turn shape our scholarship and our teaching. Essentially, that is the heart of what we do: we are teachers. And if we think about this based on a broader context of experiences, it's certainly going to affect the way I teach—in a good way! And so this is something about which I want to be very clear: we're not just saying we want to share our bounty with the larger world, it's that the larger world has something for us and for our scholarship and teaching that we're not necessarily benefitting from as much as we should.

Letters: Have technological advances, such as digital humanities, changed the way modern scholars think about their research?

TUCKER: I think eventually we're going to stop talking about "digital humanities," and we're going to be talking about humanities more largely. The field of digital humanities, if we can call it a field, has become integrated in what we do with amazing speed. I taught a course on digital humanities for graduate students two years ago. If I were to teach it again, it would be an entirely different course because the technology is changing quickly, as is humanists' interest in it. My graduate students have become quickly adept at discovering, adopting, and using new digital tools—and it is helping them frame their questions differently than before. Some are using GIS for mapping strategies to think through how authors represent characters in space. Others are using more databases to analyze texts than would have been possible without digital tools. I think digital tools have had an absolutely huge impact in shaping our audiences and our questions. Newspapers and other sorts of information are being conveyed differently in the digital age. For example, I get the first bits of news of the day through my Twitter and RSS feeds, as opposed to *The New York Times* that's delivered to my front porch. It has been interesting to me to see my colleagues in the humanities beginning to understand that not only is social media such as Twitter or Facebook a place where we can connect up with colleagues, it is also a place where we can explore our scholarship and teaching. I have posted syllabi onto Twitter for courses

I'm thinking about teaching and have gotten valuable feedback from colleagues whom I would have never thought about being able to talk to about teaching before.

HARRINGTON: I would underscore what Holly has just said about digital humanities. These tools have so rapidly become assimilated to everything that we do in teaching and research that it is going to seem redundant to talk about "digital scholarship" or "digital humanities." I mean, we don't say "book scholarship" or "book humanities." In that sense, the medium is changing in some ways, but it is certainly adding far more to our scholarly research than it is taking away.

TUCKER: Joel, do you think eventually we'll see the idea of "public humanities" and "public scholarship" woven into what we do as humanists?

HARRINGTON: I hope we will. That's one of my personal goals. But I think what I would say is the same thing I would say about digital humanities, which is it's just the tip of the iceberg. We're just beginning to see the potential for this. I see both of these areas as natural extensions of what we do. That is, technologies that allow us to do what we do anyway, but I don't think it changes the fundamental mission that we have, or the fundamental goals we have as scholars. As a historian I'm reluctant to predict the future, except to say that I think technology will change some things, but not necessarily radically alter the essence of what we do as teachers and scholars.

TUCKER: And at the core, no matter what our tools, no matter who our audience may be, to engage in serious scholarship requires a deep level of specialization. You have to earn your credentials in your field to be able to pursue certain lines of inquiry or teaching in the university setting as we understand it right now. So I don't see specializations changing; I just see the tools we use and the public with which we engage changing.

HARRINGTON: But I also think that is one of the major challenges of public scholarship. How do you take this specialized experience, training, and scholarship and make it accessible to a wider public in a way that does not degrade the content or the overall thrust? I think Holly and I would argue that it's not a zero sum game. It's not a question of either you write or you speak to a broader audience and you have to keep your scholarship locked up behind in your office, *or* that you just do

your scholarship and you write an article that only a handful of people will read. I think that there is room for both.

TUCKER: Public scholarship can have substantial implications—political, economic, sociological, religious, for example. I think the challenge for many scholars is finding ways to be able to present their findings, which may or may not correspond with commonly held public beliefs at the time, in a way that is not divisive, but is informative and thoughtful.

HARRINGTON: Again, I think the public humanities part of what we're talking about is really just an extension of something we're already doing. As scholars, we are bilingual in the sense that we talk to experts, and we talk to students who are new to a subject. And what we're talking about is really expanding that audience beyond the students in the classroom to a larger public. So it's something that *all* scholars who teach have experience doing, but maybe not in a larger form.

TUCKER: I think that writing for an educated general audience is one of the hardest things I have to do because I can't hide behind the jargon of my field. I can't shorthand things. And it also requires me to make some really important decisions about what I'm going to keep in and what I'm going to leave out. So writing clearly and in an engaging way is really very difficult for me. What about you, Joel?

HARRINGTON: I think the actual writing of my most recent book, which was for a general public, was much harder than my previous books in the sense that I felt I could not take my audience for granted to the degree that one can when writing for an academic audience. In our respective academic fields, we all have to read certain books and any stylistic flair is considered a bonus. In our academic writing, we know that other people have also read many of the same books. Whereas if you're writing for a general audience, that reader can put the book down at any point: before buying it, after getting it from the library, whatever. And if you want that person to read the whole book, you have to write in a consistently clear and engaging way.

Letters: The Warren Center Fellows will meet weekly over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year to consider issues related to public scholarship. What outcomes might you expect as a result of the Fellows Program's deliberations?

HARRINGTON: That is hard to say because we haven't met as a group yet to begin planning. We see this as a group endeavor, and Holly and I will be serving more as facilitators than as co-directors. I do personally hope that something develops from our program that will be of practical use to my colleagues at Vanderbilt and beyond. I hope for myself that I learn of some practical ways to be more engaged in public scholarship. I also would

hope that we have a rich discussion about the evolving idea of public scholarship and how this will affect the way that we conduct our scholarship and teaching in the future.

TUCKER: I'm really excited about this Fellows Program because each member of the group is bringing a different type of approach to their work, such as digital humanities, trade publications, activist research, the public

arts, service learning, oral history, and so on. Each Fellow is bringing in their own experiences with public humanities, which gets back to our core questions. What is it? Why do it? What are the benefits of engaging more publicly? What do we lose, if anything? How does that type of public engagement reshape the questions we ask and, when we reshape the questions we ask, how will we be reshaping our answers?

2015–2016 Graduate Student Fellowship Opportunities

The Warren Center will sponsor an interdisciplinary year-long Graduate Student Fellows Program for the 2015–2016 academic year. Vanderbilt University graduate students in the traditional humanities departments or those whose work is of a humanistic nature are invited to apply for the seven dissertation-completion fellowships. The fellowship provides a stipend as well as a modest research fund. Students are not allowed to hold any other form of

employment during the term of the fellowship and are expected to complete and defend their dissertations before the start of the next academic year.

Graduate Student Fellows meet in weekly seminars at the Warren Center, giving presentations from their work and discussing texts of common interest. The Warren Center will also arrange for a number of visiting speakers during the year to provide opportunities for discussion of issues pertinent to

scholarly life, such as the art of writing, successful strategies for publication, funding opportunities, grant writing, and workshops on delivering academic presentations. Each Graduate Student Fellow will give a public lecture in the spring semester. Fellows will also be expected to be active participants in the life of the Warren Center during their fellowship year. Further information is available on the Warren Center's website.

Fall Symposium to Celebrate the 400th Anniversary of Part Two of *Don Quixote*

In 1605, at the age of fifty-eight, Miguel de Cervantes published *Don Quixote*. He would earn critical and popular recognition for his writing skills for the first time in his career. The misadventures of an anachronistic knight errant and his genial squire struck a chord with readers. The enormous success of the novel led Cervantes, ten years later, to publish a long-awaited sequel. The year 2005

marked the 400th anniversary of Part One, and the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities joined in the celebration with a symposium held in the fall of 2004. The Warren Center likewise will commemorate the anniversary of Part Two. Funded by a Vanderbilt University Research Scholars Grant, the Center will host a symposium on *Don Quixote*, Thursday through Saturday, November 6–8,

2014. The invited speakers are Professors J. A. G. Ardila (University of Edinburgh), Chad Gasta (Iowa State University), and Hilaire Kallendorf (Texas A&M University), distinguished scholars of early modern Spanish literature and culture. The three talks will be complemented by a roundtable discussion and other “quixotic” events. Please see our website for more details about the program.

THATCamp 2014

THATCamp 2014 will be held October 24–25 at the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy. THATCamp (The Humanities and Technology Camp) is an international program designed to promote interest in and to develop skills related to digital humanities. Referred to as an “unconference” due to its flexible scheduling, THATCamp serves as a resource to those both within and outside of the academic community. A wide variety of people including

faculty members, curators, librarians, graduate and undergraduate students, journalists, bloggers, and others use the knowledge they gain from THATCamp to enhance their own projects. Examples of sessions might include: TEI (Text Encoding Initiative), digital archiving, video games, 3D modeling, Twitter, tools for beginners, securing funding for digital humanities projects, Omeka, and Neatline. One of the speakers will be Dr. Alex Gil, digital scholarship coordinator for the

Humanities and History Division at Columbia University Libraries.

Hosted by the Warren Center, the Center for Second Language Studies, the Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries, the Vanderbilt Institute for Digital Learning and the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise & Public Policy, this event is free and open to the public; registration is required. For more information, or to register, visit vanderbiltuniversity2014.thatcamp.org.

Warren Center Hosts Andrew W. Mellon Foundation John E. Sawyer Seminar in 2015/16

Vanderbilt University faculty members Samira Sheikh (Associate Professor of History), Tony K. Stewart (Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Chair in Humanities, Religious Studies), and David J. Wasserstein (Eugene Greener, Jr. Professor of Jewish Studies, History) will be co-directing an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar at the Warren Center on the theme “When the Fringe Dwarfs the Center: Vernacular Islam beyond the Arab World.” In addition to the three seminar co-directors, the seminar will consist of additional Vanderbilt University faculty members, two Vanderbilt University graduate students, and one Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow from an institution other than Vanderbilt, all of whom will be chosen through a competitive application process.

The seminar co-directors submitted a successful application to the Mellon Foundation to underwrite the timely study. Each has key expertise in areas related to the topic. Tony K. Stewart has worked extensively on the relationship of Hindus and Muslims in South Asia in the early modern period. He is currently preparing a monograph on the narratives of fictional Sufi *pirs* in Bengal that were written in a Persian-inflected Bengali language called Musalmani Bangla. David J. Wasserstein, who has written extensively on Islam in Iberia and its connections to the Jewish

communities of the Islamic world, has more recently focused on the Arab Spring and its non-Arab analogues. Samira Sheikh has written on the early modern multi-religious histories of western India. She is currently working on a book on Mughal approaches to non-Muslims set against the backdrop of the trade connections of communities and polities in the Indian Ocean.

Most Muslims live far from the symbolic Arab center and do not speak Arabic. The myriad forms of vernacular Islam often develop in uneasy relationship to the projected authority of the Arab center, and to those who propose that Islam is singular, exceptional, and inherently transnational. How and why these tensions develop will be the focus of the seminar. The seminar co-directors have identified three critical interlocking factors that should allow the seminar participants to trace more effectively the historical trajectories that have encouraged successful vernacularization: adaptation by the many and varied languages of Islam, the changing nature of authority in Islam, and the expanding material environments of Islam. Each of these three will be the focus of a six-week module, with each building on the previous one. The series will culminate in a fourth and final module that should serve as a pragmatic test case by tracing the histories of these three interrelated factors into

the current growing tensions in the fringe that parallel in significant ways, but also diverge from, the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. The decision to tease out the key threads of expanding linguistic variation, the changing nature of political authority, and the oft-neglected importance of material culture in the practices of Islam should enable better understandings of the new developments across the Islamic world that have caught many people by surprise. The three threads identified here, wound together, reflect that Islam is varied, that its variety comes both from within and from contact with the world outside, and that such contact continues in the post-colonial period to affect and help shape political and cultural change in the world of Islam. The strategy should provide a reasonable and systematic framework by which vernacular forms of Islam can be fruitfully compared.

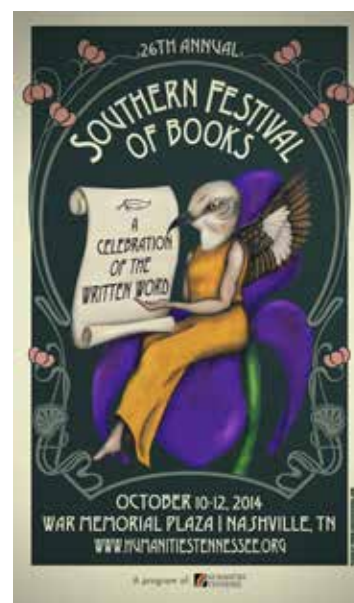
Scholars selected for participation will be appointed as Warren Center Fellows for the 2015/2016 year. Fellows will receive individual research funds for participation in the program. Funds will also be available to the seminar to host an array of visiting speakers during the year that the seminar is meeting as well as a follow-up program in the fall of 2016 that will be planned by members of the seminar. More information about the application process for the Sawyer Seminar is available on our website.

2014 Southern Festival of Books

Standing Together: The Humanities and the Experience of War is a theme that will be explored during the 2014 Southern Festival of Books to be held October 10–12 in downtown Nashville. As part of its continuing partnership with Humanities Tennessee, the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities is co-sponsoring a series of speakers related to this theme. The program is also part of a special initiative designed by the National Endowment for the Humanities to provide opportunities for discussions and deepened understandings of the experiences of men and women, as well as their family members, who are deeply affected by war across a range of times and places.

To date, speakers include Phil Klay (*Redeployment: Short Stories*) and Kevin Powers (*The Yellow Birds* and the forthcoming book of poetry, *Letter Composed During a Lull in the Fighting*).

One of the first book festivals of its kind, Humanities Tennessee’s Southern Festival of Books has inspired hundreds of similar festivals throughout the nation and the world. Each year the Festival brings to Nashville approximately 200 of the nation’s and region’s most prominent authors. Every author on the program takes part in a session, either a solo reading or a panel discussion, followed by a book signing.



2014/2015 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.

18th-/19th-Century Colloquium: The colloquium brings together faculty, graduate students, and visiting scholars to explore ground-breaking scholarship on the arts, cultures, and histories of the 18th- and 19th-centuries. While loosely focused around British culture, the group also invites scholars from other linguistic and geographic fields to share work and join in the discussion. Seminar coordinators: Rachel Teukolsky (English) rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu, Scott Juengel (English) scott.j.juengel@vanderbilt.edu, and Humberto Garcia (English) humberto.garcia@vanderbilt.edu.

Brazilian Studies Reading Group: This seminar provides a forum for topics related to contemporary Brazil. Discussion will center on the broad theme of “Citizenship and the Nation.” The group will facilitate interdisciplinary dialogues based on pre-circulated readings, consider works-in-progress by graduate students and faculty, and invite recognized scholars to present new work. Topics will include traditional power structures and the political system, social movements, income inequity and “social apartheid,” race, and access to education and healthcare. Seminar coordinators: Fernanda Bretones Lane (history) f.bretones@vanderbilt.edu, Daniel O’Maley (anthropology) dan.omaley@vanderbilt.edu, and Laura Sellers (political science) laura.m.sellers@vanderbilt.edu.

Circum-Atlantic Studies Seminar: This group reads and treats scholarship that is interdisciplinary in nature, focuses on at least two of the following regions—Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America—and treats some aspect of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and/or postcolonialism. Seminar coordinators: Celso Castilho (history) celso.t.castilho@vanderbilt.edu and Jane Landers (history) jane.landiers@vanderbilt.edu.

Digital Humanities Discussion Group: The Digital Humanities seminar brings together colleagues from across the university who are interested in issues related to this area of study. The seminar participants will explore theories, practices, and methodologies of DH and explore ways to best support this type of work on our campus. Seminar coordinators: Lynn Ramey (French) lynn.ramey@vanderbilt.edu and Mona Frederick (Warren Center) mona.frederick@vanderbilt.edu.

Early Modern Enlightenment: This seminar will examine the period of intellectual history designated as the Enlightenment. The multidisciplinary seminar isolates three categories for investigation: law, violence, and epistemology. These areas of inquiry demonstrate that the so-called Enlightenment was sufficiently multifarious to provide legitimate grounds for isolating rival, competing, and incompatible Enlightenments. Meetings will place visiting scholars with Vanderbilt faculty and graduate students, and they will center on the question of how the Enlightenment has been subjected to repeated celebration, vilification, and contestation in academic circles. Seminar coordinators: León Guerrero (Spanish & Portuguese) leon.guerrero.ayala@vanderbilt.edu, Drew Martin (religion) drew.martin@vanderbilt.edu, and Chance Woods (English) chance.b.woods@vanderbilt.edu.

Film Theory & Visual Culture Seminar: This seminar aims to foster dialogue among faculty and graduate students across campus working in film, visual culture, art history, literature, and cultural studies interested in theories of the image, philosophies 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 Fay (film studies and English) jennifer.m.fay@vanderbilt.edu, Lutz Koepnick (German and cinema and media arts) lutz.koepnick@vanderbilt.edu, and James McFarland (German) james.mcfarland@vanderbilt.edu.

Gender and Sexuality Seminar: This seminar provides an interdisciplinary forum for the development of critical perspectives on gender and sexuality. The seminar examines how gender and sexuality shape human experience within and across cultures, in different time periods, and as part of social practice. Participants will choose the format with an aim toward balancing new scholarship by graduate students and established scholars, as well as exploring topics of particular interest to the group. Seminar coordinator: Katherine Crawford (women’s and gender studies) katherine.b.crawford@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,

including 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 publications in the field, or the work of a visiting scholar. Seminar coordinators: Bill Caferro (history) william.p.caferro@vanderbilt.edu and Leah Marcus (English) l.marcus@vanderbilt.edu.

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

Literature and Law Seminar: This reading group will meet to discuss current approaches, new 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 literature, the application of literary methods to legal texts, the challenges of constructing “characters” appropriate to literary and legal settings, and the revitalization of law through reference to humanistic texts and approaches. Seminar coordinator: Robert Barsky (French and Italian) robert.barsky@vanderbilt.edu.

Material Culture in Context. This seminar explores objects and materiality from multiple perspectives. It will examine the meaning attached to objects by the people who made and used them, partially through looking at the contexts (cultural, social, historical, spatial) in which objects appear. Participants will also explore how objects are transferred through space and time. This seminar should be of particular interest to specialists in archaeology, anthropology, sociology, history, and history of art, as well as cultural and media

studies, and philosophy. Seminar coordinators: Beth Conklin (anthropology) beth.a.conklin@vanderbilt.edu and Mireille Lee (history of art) mireille.lee@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 important nation bordering the United States. The group brings together faculty and graduate students from history, political science, literature, sociology, art, anthropology, music, and Latin American studies. At monthly meetings the group will discuss works-in-progress authored by members and invited scholars from beyond Vanderbilt. Seminar coordinators: Helena Simonett (Latin American Studies) helena.simonett@vanderbilt.edu and Edward Wright-Rios (history) edward.wright-rios@vanderbilt.edu.

A People's History of Nashville: How have social movements created the Nashville that we live in today? This seminar invites those engaged in current social movements to gather and learn

the history of the working and dispossessed classes of the city, and to reflect on how recovering the memory of past social struggle might inform future strategies. The seminar will host monthly meetings and visits to neighborhoods and landmarks, seeking respectful collaborations with scholars and organizations across the city that are pursuing similar projects. Seminar coordinators: Tristan Call (anthropology) tristan.p.call@vanderbilt.edu and Austin Sauerbrei (community development and action) austin.b.sauerbrei@vanderbilt.edu.

Race, Gender and Kinship: Over six meetings during the fall semester, this seminar will read and discuss *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* by Thomas Piketty. This seminar will analyze the relation of economic factors to the formation of self-identity and will look at ways in which human capital, colonization, and traditional norms of family and marriage contribute to the concentration of wealth and to vast economic disparity. This interdisciplinary conversation will focus on intersections of economic narratives of personal liberty with critical race, feminist, and

queer theories. Seminar coordinators: Darla Migan (philosophy) darla.migan@vanderbilt.edu and Kirsten Mendoza (English) kirsten.n.mendoza@vanderbilt.edu.

Religion and Culture in Late Antiquity. Late Antiquity is a term used by scholars to describe a historical period which includes both the end of classical civilizations and the first centuries of medieval societies in the Mediterranean, Africa, Europe and the Near East. The seminar's geographic definition of "Late Antiquity" will focus primarily on the cultures and societies of the Mediterranean world, but can also be broadly construed. Participation from ancient historians, medievalists, and scholars of Asia or other areas of research that may have overlapping interests is welcomed. The seminar will meet once per month for a discussion of current research by Vanderbilt faculty or Ph.D. students. Readings will be pre-circulated. Seminar coordinators: Mark Ellison (religion) mark.d.ellison@vanderbilt.edu, Robin Jensen (history of art) robin.jensen@vanderbilt.edu, and David Michelson (divinity) david.a.michelson@vanderbilt.edu.

Scholars Present at HASTAC Conference in Peru

A group of eight Vanderbilt representatives traveled to Lima, Peru, to participate in the 2014 HASTAC Conference held April 24–27. HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science, and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) is an international alliance dedicated to fostering engaged learning in an increasingly digitized global society.

At the conference, a Friday morning panel featured Vanderbilt HASTAC mentors Jay Clayton (William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English and Director of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy), Mona Frederick (Executive Director, Warren Center), and Todd Hughes (Director of Instructional Technologies at the Center for Second Language Studies) and graduate student scholars Danielle Picard (Department of History) and Steven Wenz, (Department of Spanish and Portuguese) on a panel entitled "The Development of a Global Scholar in the HASTAC Mentorship Experience at Vanderbilt University." Each HASTAC scholar at Vanderbilt is sponsored by, and collaborates with, a mentor affiliated with a particular center or department on campus. As the presenters described at the HASTAC conference, this unique format has produced excellent results. The Vanderbilt program allows col-

laborative mentoring relationships to energize, empower, and support the academic growth of HASTAC scholars, and it also invigorates a network of communication among scholars interested in digital technology at Vanderbilt. Moreover, because HASTAC scholars are paired with mentors in centers or departments outside their home department, it



allows them to adopt new skills and consider additional areas for scholarship within more interdisciplinary and exploratory contexts.

On Saturday, the 2013–2014 Vanderbilt HASTAC graduate student scholars presented another panel, this time addressing their common interests in digital pedagogy. The panel, "Teaching Digitally, Thinking Critically: Digital Pedagogy and the Humanities Classroom," included Picard and Wenz, who were joined by Vivian Finch (Department of German), and Bradley Daugherty (Graduate Department of Religion). They addressed questions regarding the roles of

technology in the classroom, taking into account educational and theoretical issues, such as the potential of technology to introduce students to language, history, and culture in ways that traditional pedagogies do not. The presentations also considered practical issues of accessibility and equitability, as well as the potential for technology to meet institutional requirements.

Each presenter addressed these issues through the lens of a particular pedagogy he or she was currently developing for the classroom. Daugherty presented "There and Back Again: A Journey into MOOC Production and its Lessons for Undergraduate Teaching"; Finch's talk was entitled "Adventures in #twitterfiction: Student Generated Digital Storytelling and the Foreign Language Classroom"; Picard addressed "Digital History with Omeka: Scaffolding Primary Source Skills and Cultural Understanding in a Bioethics Classroom"; and Wenz spoke on "Fostering Global Awareness through Google Earth: Examples in Spanish and Portuguese."

Both panels were extremely well received, demonstrated by the lively conversations they sparked both at the conference itself and online (view some of these by searching Twitter for #VandyDH or #HASTAC2014).

One for the Books: In Touch with Literature

Edward H. Friedman

—I don't read for amusement, I read for enlightenment.

Joyce Carol Oates

The study of literature has changed dramatically in recent decades. New doors have opened, innovative approaches employed, broader parameters created, and seemingly unlimited contexts explored. For those of us who attended college in the 1960s, the impact of what was called the New Criticism (later “North American New Criticism,” to distinguish this methodology from newer and more radical ventures) could still be felt. The New Critics, particularly influential from the 1930s onward, insisted on close readings, and they were brilliant in defining internal relationships, patterns of imagery, thematic elements, ambiguities, tensions, etc. For the most part, these scholars of literature—and, most notably, of poetry—insisted on the primacy of the text. They devised the terms “the intentional fallacy” and “the affective fallacy” to address, respectively, a lack of interest in what was on an author’s mind and how individual readers processed the material. At the center was the text, containing the clues to its interpretation and the elaboration of its unified structure. The distinction between *inside* and *outside* was clear, and it was the inside that

lates, often interdisciplinary and often esoteric. It looked back to classical rhetoric and poetics and forward to new ways of framing texts, observing reality, and juxtaposing life and art. Theory became a type of lingua franca that could unite scholars and areas of investigation that previously had been separated. Signs were no longer purely literary signs. Texts were no longer solely fictional works and no longer bound to traditional categories. Procedures, goals, and analytical strategies were broadening, and consequently the object of study became more varied and, to an extent, more elusive. By bringing disciplines more closely in touch—rather than mutually exclusive—theory forged diverse associations and points of contact. And, conspicuously, theory became—and inspired us to become—more self-conscious, more aware of the analytical and critical process. Structuralism and its aftermath expanded the playing field and increased multifold the options for critics. Word and world more visibly became one as interrelations grew. As analytical possibilities increased—exploded, one might submit—a crucial factor became pronouncedly less significant: the need for

directions. Some teachers of literature still hold the fictional text as special, opposed to nonfiction, and even sacrosanct, while others eschew granting a privileged status to works designated as fiction. It is exciting to observe how departments of literature treat their own discipline. Literature courses are placed alongside courses in linguistics, media studies, creative writing, popular culture, theory, and pre-professional preparation (such as language courses related to medicine, law, and business). An English major will not necessarily have studied Shakespeare or Milton, and a Spanish major may not have read Calderón, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, or Vargas Llosa, because there are many alternatives to fit the purpose and the tastes of the student. It is commendable that a student can choose not only among a rich array of selections in literature but in other branches of the field at large. Most departments have sets of requirements intended to provide an ample, if not comprehensive, sampling of offerings.

I have come to admire the breadth and refashioning of the literature industry, as it were. It seems quite reasonable for our pedagogy to reflect—and to reflect upon—a con-

When *texts* and *theory* dropped the qualifier of “literary,” the far-reaching label of cultural studies ascended as a logical result of the paradigm shifts.

mattered. This formalist technique produced dazzling and erudite commentaries. The presupposition that there were correct (and thus incorrect) analyses could lead to rather fierce battles on the playing field of criticism, or at least to a certain intellectual rigidity and inflexibility. I recall having had superb classes in literature as an undergraduate, but I do not specifically recall professors explaining how they arrived at their conclusions or tendering advice and instructions on how to emulate their understanding and ingenuity. There was a sort of “secret society” feel about the literary enterprise and about the literary establishment. When I was in graduate school in the early 1970s, I could perceive a change in the scheme of things.

Literary theory developed rapidly as structuralism and poststructuralism made their impact. Theory, dropping the “literary,” encompassed a wide range of aims and postu-

commentary to be all-inclusive, definitive, correct, that is, a recognition that knowledge is partial, confusing, frequently deceptive, and subject to modification. It could be said that deconstruction served to deconstruct operative notions of the interpretation of texts by underscoring the elasticity and the evasiveness of language. The very concept of *meaning* was scrutinized. The objectives and the protocols of the critical act move, stated reductively, from a search for exact answers to commentaries on the imprecision of such a task. Infinite new doors were unlocked, and a new—or maybe not-so-new—rhetoric replaced the standards of the distant and recent past.

When *texts* and *theory* dropped the qualifier of “literary,” the far-reaching label of cultural studies ascended as a logical result of the paradigm shifts. Literature as an object of study traded formalism as an end in itself for close readings as starting points for innumerable groupings and

stantly changing world. As it turns out, the escalating focus on self-consciousness in theory and criticism blends beautifully with my concentration on self-referentiality in literature and drama. Cervantes undoubtedly anticipates Derrida, for example, and postmodern narrative likewise adds insights into *Don Quixote*. Just as a spurious sequel to the chronicle of his exploits animates Don Quixote to keep going in the “legitimate” second part, theoretical dialogues and polemics animate us to seek new avenues of access to the works that most appeal to us and to others that may have eluded us. What we do in departments of language and literature—and in the humanities as a whole—is, among other things, to foster critical thinking and respect for multiperspectivism, multiculturalism, and diversity. I love the fact that we each can “do our thing” amid those whose emphases and lines of attack may be decidedly different. In their classes and their interaction

with professors, students can experience, compare, and contrast what the Spaniards refer to as “cada loco con su tema” (every crazy person with his/her topic).

I am one of those bookish types who view literature as distinct from other forms of writing. I believe that the creator of fiction has unique and artistic ideas to put forth. I believe that commentators of literature can benefit from extremely close readings as the first stage of the critical process and that “literature people” should take advantage of the tools of their trade, so that they will be deemed as well-rounded specialists and avoid being seen as lesser-trained historians, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and so forth. They would, then, have disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary credentials. Students of literature can learn the “mechanics” of analysis, such as the identification of rhetorical figures and tropes, types of verses, levels of narrative reliability and point of view, and the sign systems of staged performances, as they move into conceptual and ideological considerations. It could be argued that literature is perforce about aspects of reality (what Aristotle calls *mimesis*) and about itself. It is an analogue and a counterpoint of the real, on several counts. It offers a microcosm that the reader can appreciate in its own right and that can be applied to other signifying entities; at times, the microcosm may seem to become the macrocosm.

At Vanderbilt and at most colleges and universities, those of us in the field of literature have the opportunity to teach students whose pursuits are all over the map. We have double

majors whose second area can be in the sciences or the social sciences. We have the raw material and the means to engage them, and we know that the study of literature can complement the learning process and that it can be, in Horace’s phrase, *dulce et utile*, entertaining and useful. Although the boom in theory and the widespread embracing of cultural studies—not to mention the pragmatic strain of academic thinking—have modified the manner in which we approach literature and, to be sure, the acquisition of knowledge in general, there is still a place for a “back-to-basics” principle. Public endorsement of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) should create allies, not adversaries, for the humanities, whose practitioners have to reexamine the premises and foundations of their teaching and research. Reconfigure, regroup, postmodernize, globalize, digitize, and the like. It is all good. The digital humanities may preserve and save the humanities disciplines, individually and collectively. Let us not forget, however, the treasures contained in the “soft” sciences, the “human sciences.” In education, everything is of the essence. Everything counts. Nothing is frivolous, because the more we know, the better we can live in society, thrive in our careers, and serve others. Literature can make us feel and think more deeply, and there is nothing inconsequential or “of secondary import” about that.

I cringe when I see ad campaigns of technical colleges that promote programs of study built around only what one needs to know in order to secure a given job. This is a viable and

practical path, of course, and there is a key target audience for these schools, but it is the suggestion that it is somehow *better* to ignore the extraneous Other—read the liberal arts—that riles me. So does the same sensibility when it invades research universities by attempting to redefine priorities and to reshape the curriculum, to dispense with features of a broad liberal arts education. This model is hardly archaic, nor is the cultured (multi-cultured) citizen. Every instructor in every course should be motivated to shake up our students’ ways of perceiving some facet of life and/or art. Literature, for its part, can illuminate us and, as the heart of dialogue, the fictional text can help us—expressed in the simplest terms—to think about thinking. I feel especially honored to be associated with the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, which in its quarter-century of activities has opened its doors to colleagues in many disciplines and with an enormous range of interests, hypotheses, methodologies, opinions, and attitudes. The Center has changed with the times, but productive discourse and good will have remained among its staples. Despite pressures that “stem” from internal and external sources, I find that Vanderbilt students, graduate and undergraduate, whatever their academic choices, understand the value of the humanities. As long as that remains the case, we are in luck.

Edward Friedman is Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Spanish and Professor of Comparative Literature. He currently serves as director of the Warren Center.

Author James McBride to Present the 2014 Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

The 2014 Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture, “*The Good Lord Bird: Faith and American Slavery*,” will be presented by author, musician, and screenwriter James McBride on Thursday, October 2, 2014, at 4:10 p.m. in the Sarratt Cinema. McBride received the 2013 National Book Award for Fiction for *The Good Lord Bird*, a fictionalized account of a young boy born into slavery who becomes involved with John Brown’s abolitionist crusade. In addition to his lecture, McBride’s Good Lord Bird Band will perform nineteenth-century U.S. gospel music. A reception and book signing will follow the event.

A native New Yorker, McBride studied composition at The Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio and received his master’s



James McBride

degree in journalism from Columbia University in New York. He holds several honorary doctorates and is currently a Distinguished Writer in Residence at New York University. His many works include the memoir *The*

Color of Water, which remained for two years on the *New York Times* bestseller list. He is also a former staff writer for *The Boston Globe*, *People Magazine* and *The Washington Post*. In his role as a musician, McBride has toured as a saxophonist with jazz legend Jimmy Scott, among others, and has written music and lyrics for a variety of performers.

The Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George D. 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 annually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.

2014/2015 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows

JESSICA K. BURCH is a doctoral candidate in history and this year's American Studies Fellow. Her dissertation, "Soap and Hope': Direct Sales and the Cultures of Work and Capitalism in Postwar America," explores the history of direct sales as a window into the changing nature of work and ideas about work in advanced capitalism. Bringing attention to the evolution of direct sales across the twentieth century, to the resurgence of such work after 1970, she shows that the low-pay, casual, "feminized" work of direct sales prefigured what many have come to see as the hallmarks of a post-industrial or "post-Fordist" economy. Drawing on a variety of sources, she offers a textured historical account of the making of postmodern labor. A cultural and intellectual history as much as an economic one, the dissertation posits direct sales as a key site through which to think through the ways changes in the economy reconfigured the boundaries among work, class, and selfhood in post-1945 America.

ADAM B. BURGOS is a doctoral candidate in the department of philosophy and this year's George J. Graham Jr. Fellow. His dissertation, "Political Resistance and the Constitution of Equality," focuses on the conceptual framework of equality within political philosophy and its relationship to resistance. Looking to both the history of political thought in the modern period as well as to contemporary theorists, he analyzes several different ways that philosophers have articulated theories of social and political equality. In doing so, he highlights how the state's attempts to achieve equality often rely on resistance carried out by the community upon whom that equality is being imposed.

KATHLEEN R. DEGUZMAN is a doctoral candidate in English and this year's Elizabeth Fleming Fellow. Her dissertation, "Creole Radicalisms: The Anglophone Caribbean, Victorian Britain, and the Poetics of Entanglement," delves into longstanding yet overlooked cultural and historical intimacies between two societies at opposite ends of the Atlantic. She argues that writers from both places often promoted similar modes of quotidian yet radical thought within the practices of respectability, women's finance, architectural critique, and fictionality. Reading across the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries, as well as several genres, her project examines unconventional means of living and imagining alternative realities. By bringing together an assortment of anglophone Caribbean and Victorian writing, her dissertation offers a re-entanglement of colonial histories and perspectives.

DANIEL L. MCAULEY, a doctoral candidate in French studies, is the Warren Center's Visiting Graduate Student Fellow from Queen's University, Belfast. His dissertation, "Lexical Innovation Among Young Speakers in the *Banlieues*: Social Group, Ethnicity, Language and Identity" is a corpus-based linguistic study of word-formation processes in the speech of the multi-ethnic youth peer groups of metropolitan France. It draws on recorded speech from Paris and Marseille, sites of longstanding and perpetually renewed language contact, and cradles of innovation in the lexis, to tackle sociolinguistic and broader social questions relating to the overarching issue of identity and its expression through language.

LUIS MENÉNDEZ ANTUÑA is a doctoral candidate in religious studies, with an emphasis on the New Testament and early Christianity. Born and educated in Spain, he has been awarded a Fulbright scholarship, an HTI-Luce fellowship, and other grants. He has taught at Loyola College in Maryland, in Alcalá de Henares (Spain), and at Saint Louis University in Madrid. His dissertation focuses on Revelation 17-18 and seeks to explore the sexualized nature of the imagery, with attention to the emancipatory potential of the Apocalypse.

CARLY A. RUSH is a doctoral candidate in sociology. Her dissertation, "Outsiders Within: Cochlear Implants, Oralism, and the Deaf Community," draws upon a multiyear ethnography of Gallaudet University—the only liberal arts college specifically designed for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students—to understand how the increasing diversity of the student body aids in the redefinition of what it means to be Deaf in the United States. She focuses on the experiences of individuals she calls "outsiders within," those who possess some but not all of the characteristics of the old guard Deaf community (e.g., hearing loss and/or fluency in American Sign

Language) while also embodying aspects that are antithetical to established Deaf identities (e.g., oral communication and/or cochlear implants). Through this investigation, she expands our understanding of how categories are used to create communities, which actors are central to these communities, and how communities adapt to social change.

AMY G. TAN is a doctoral candidate in history. Her dissertation, "The Author-Minister: Print, Parish, and the Pastoral Vocation in Early Stuart England," examines the intersection of pastoral ministry and print authorship in the early seventeenth century. Focusing in particular on the wide-ranging corpus of moderate non-conformist minister Richard Bernard, her dissertation demonstrates that ecclesiastical pressures, parish experiences, and other factors related to the ministerial vocation could strongly influence the timing and contents of not only polemical, but also devotional, publications. In addition, becoming active as a published author could alter aspects of a minister's work within his parish and among his colleagues. The project also highlights ways that ministers could employ print to send simultaneous but sometimes very different messages to readers or hearers at various levels of society.

BRENDAN J. M. WEAVER is a doctoral candidate in anthropology specializing in historical anthropology and archaeology of labor and the African diaspora of the Andes. His dissertation is entitled "'Fruit of the Vine, Work of Human Hands': An Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Labor on the Jesuit Wine Haciendas of Nasca, Peru." It explores the daily lived experience of workers and residents, the majority of whom were enslaved and of Sub-Saharan African origin, on estates owned by the Society of Jesus on the Peruvian coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Weaver's project is the first to archaeologically focus on the diaspora in what is today the Republic of Peru. By following daily praxis in both productive and domestic contexts, the dissertation asserts that enslaved Afro-Andean laborers engaged with the oppressive structures of hacienda life, but developed strategies and found discreet and material ways of self-expression, in response to hegemonic structures.

2014/2015 Warren Center Faculty Fellows

Public Scholarship in the Humanities.

MARSHALL C. EAKIN is Professor of History and Faculty Director of the Ingram Scholarship Program. A specialist in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Brazilian history, his early work concentrated on the history of technology, industrialization, and social change resulting in two monographs: *British Enterprise in Brazil* (Duke, 1989), and *Tropical Capitalism: The Industrialization of Belo Horizonte, Brazil* (Palgrave, 2001). Over the last decade, his focus has shifted to nationalism and nation-building, and he is currently completing a book tentatively titled, “One People, One Nation: Brazilian Identity in the Twentieth Century.” Eakin has also written two books for general audiences: *Brazil: The Once and Future Country* (St. Martin’s, 1997), and *The History of Latin America: Collision of Cultures* (Palgrave, 2007).

LISA GUENTHER is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives* (2013) and *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction* (2006), as well as journal articles and blog posts on phenomenology, feminism, and prison issues. She is a founding member of REACH Coalition, an organization for reciprocal education based on Tennessee’s death row, and Tennessee Students and Educators for Social Justice, an activist group that organizes around issues of capital punishment and mass incarceration.

AIMI HAMRAIE is Assistant Professor of Medicine, Health, & Society. Hamraie is a feminist historian and philosopher of science whose research focuses on the relationship between design, built environments, and users’ bodies. They are the author of numerous journal articles and their current book project, “Building Access: Universal Design, Technology, and Epistemological Activism,” uses critical disability and feminist lenses to explore the historical, political, and critical contributions made to science and technology by disability-accessible design. Hamraie engages in public scholarship and critical design projects as methods of academic research, maker cultures, and theory-building.

JOEL F. HARRINGTON is Professor of History and Chair of the Department; he is also the Jacques Voegli Fellow at the Warren Center. He is a scholar of early modern Germany (ca. 1500–1800), with particular inter-

est in social, legal, and religious questions. His most recent book is *The Faithful Executioner: Life and Death, Honor and Shame in the Sixteenth Century* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2013), which has been translated into ten languages. He also recently authored *The Unwanted Child: The Fate of Foundlings, Orphans, and Juvenile Criminals in Early Modern Germany* (University of Chicago Press, 2009). His current projects include a biography of the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart.

IFEOMA KIDDOE NWANKWO is Associate Professor of English and Founding Director of Voices from Our America, an international public humanities project. A specialist in Inter-American relations, her recent publications include *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (University of Pennsylvania, 2005); “More than McKay and Guillén: The Caribbean in Bontemps’ and Hughes’ *The Poetry of the Negro* (1949) (in *Publishing Blackness*, edited by George B. Hutchinson and John Young, 2012). Nwankwo co-edited *Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World* (University of Michigan, 2010) with Mamadou Diouf. Her current book project centers on connections and confrontations among U.S. Jim Crow, Latin American racial democracy, transnational Black consciousness, and British humanism in Panamanian West Indian literature, oral narratives, non-fiction, music, and digital media.

LARA STEIN PARDO is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Anthropology and the 2014–2015 William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow at the Warren Center. Her book manuscript, “Artists, Aesthetics, and Migrations: Contemporary Visual Arts and Caribbean Diaspora in Miami, Florida,” is an ethnographic study analyzing the historic and contemporary relationships between Miami and the Caribbean, and how artists’ works reflect and produce these connections by engaging the landscape, rethinking migrations, building practices based on diasporic legacies, and intervening in archives. As a cultural anthropologist and visual artist, her work also includes endeavors such as the Mapping Arts Project. This project maps cities through places where artists have lived and worked historically and thereby activates hidden histories in contemporary life.

LYNN RAMEY is Associate Professor of French. She specializes in medieval French lit-

erature and film studies. Ramey is the author of *Christian, Saracen and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Routledge, 2001) and *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages* (Florida, 2014), and co-editor with Tison Pugh of *Race, Class and Gender in “Medieval” Cinema* (Palgrave, 2007). She is currently working with re-creations of medieval literature and culture in video games. She is co-director of the Warren Center working group on Digital Humanities.

DANIEL J. SHARFSTEIN is Professor of Law. His research focuses on American legal history, property law, and the United States after Reconstruction. He is the author of several articles as well as a book, *The Invisible Line: Three American Families and the Secret Journey from Black to White* (Penguin, 2011), which explores the color line in the South through the multigenerational narratives of three families who started out as people of color and assimilated into white communities. He is currently writing a book on the Nez Perce War of 1877 and the legacies of Reconstruction in the American West.

PAUL H. STOB is Assistant Professor of Communication Studies. His research and teaching focus on the intersection of rhetoric and intellectual culture, with particular emphasis on the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in the United States. He is the author of *William James and the Art of Popular Statement* (Michigan State University Press, 2013) as well as numerous articles and book chapters. He is currently working on a book tentatively titled “Knowledge, Power, and the People: Intellectual Populism in American Thought and Culture, 1875-1915,” which explores the work of various intellectuals who tried to resist the institutionalization of knowledge.

HOLLY TUCKER is Professor of French and Professor of Biomedical Ethics & Society and the Spence and Rebecca Webb Wilson Fellow at the Warren Center. Her scholarship and teaching focus on medicine and literature, early history of medicine, and early-modern French culture and history. Tucker is author of *Blood Work: A Tale of Medicine & Murder in the Scientific Revolution* (W.W. Norton, 2011) and *Pregnant Fictions: Childbirth & the Fairy Tale in Early-Modern France* (Wayne State UP, 2003). Her next book on early medical forensics (“City of Light, City of Poison”) is forthcoming with W.W. Norton.

Porterfield Receives Postdoctoral Fellowship at Queen's University, Belfast

As part of the Warren Center's continued partnership with Queen's University in Belfast, Aubrey Porterfield will be a 2014/2015 Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow at their Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities. A recent Ph.D. graduate from the Vanderbilt English Department and a member of the 2013–2014 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows Program, Porterfield will revise and expand her book project, "Modernism's Choreographies of Stillness: The Unmaking of Race in Jean Toomer and Ito Sei." She will also have the opportunity to engage with the other fellows at the Institute and to participate in the interdisciplinary activities hosted by the program over the year.

"As a Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow, I will draw on formative experiences I have had as a Graduate Fellow at the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in order to contribute to ongoing projects at the Institute," Porterfield said. "I plan to organize forums for discussion among postgraduate students from different disciplines and, perhaps, organize a cross-disciplinary conference around the Institute's theme of 'Creativity in Imagined and Material Worlds.'"

Porterfield is the second Vanderbilt postdoctoral scholar to hold this fellowship. In 2013–2014, Michael Alijewicz was the Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow at Queen's. During the year he revised and expanded his book project, "Nothing is but What is Not: Subjunctive Aesthetics in Early Modern England."

"I was able to do research in the early modern colonial archives on the plantation in Northern Ireland, submit two articles for consideration, and attend the European Shakespeare Association Conference in Paris," Alijewicz said. "That conference will produce a special issue of Shakespeare on architecture, in which I am planning on publishing an article on *Macbeth*."

For the past several years, Queen's University has sent one of their top doctoral students to participate in the Warren Center's



Aubrey Porterfield

Graduate Student Fellows Program. This year's visiting Graduate Student Fellow at the Warren Center is Daniel McAuley. He is a member of Queen's School of Modern Languages (French) and will be completing his dissertation entitled "Lexical Innovation in the *Banlieues*: Social Group, Ethnicity, Language and Identity."

Created in 2012, The Institute for Collaborative Research in the Humanities at Queen's is directed by John Thompson, Professor of English. The Institute provides strategic leadership at Queen's to support and enhance world-class interdisciplinary research in the humanities at all levels, from postgraduate training and early career research to the development of large-scale collaborative research projects. It encourages and promotes cross-school, cross-faculty and inter-institutional collaboration that leads to high-quality research outputs with significant impact on society.

Queen's University is one of Vanderbilt University's strategic international partners and the two universities have a very successful history of collaboration. Support for this 2014/2015 Postdoctoral Fellowship is provided by the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities with assistance from the Department of English and the Vanderbilt International Office.

THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

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Letters is the semiannual newsletter of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University, VU Station B #351534, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, 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 website at www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center.

Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and named the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities 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 appropriate, natural sciences. Members of the Vanderbilt 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.

Photos: James McBride, Aubrey Porterfield and Anne Rayner.

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