

Diversity & Democracy

CIVIC LEARNING FOR SHARED FUTURES

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Colgate University (Photo by Timothy D. Sofranko)

FEATURED TOPIC

This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* explores how the arts and humanities can enhance students' capacities for democratic participation within diverse and globally interconnected local and national communities.

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

- 02 | Creative, Humanistic, and Pragmatic: Liberal Education in America
- 05 | Full Participation and the Arts, Culture, and Humanities
- 08 | The Case for Civic Imagination in Undergraduate Arts Education
- 10 | Who Teaches Democracy? The Role of Humanities Councils and Community Colleges

Democratic Capacities and the Arts and Humanities

Langston Hughes pointed toward the unfulfilled promise of the United States' most treasured legacy when he wrote, "Democracy will not come / Today, this year / Nor ever / Through compromise and fear." Like many artistic reflections on human experience within the American experiment, Hughes's poetry often challenges the status quo while gesturing toward the possibility of something greater. But when faculty, staff, and students read and create works like these, how do they participate in the task of realizing that greater vision? How does engagement with the arts and humanities push them not only to critique, but also to create a thriving democracy? And how can these fields help students build the capacities necessary to succeed in these tasks, particularly in today's diverse and interconnected world?

The recent report *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (published by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement and available on AAC&U's website) suggests some possible answers. Through its key recommendations for higher education, the report delineates specific steps colleges and universities can take to help ensure that American democracy flourishes. These include (1) fostering a civic ethos across campuses and cultures; (2) making civic literacy a core expectation for all students; (3) practicing civic inquiry across all fields of study; and (4) advancing civic action through transformative partnerships at home and abroad (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement 2012, 31–33). These are critical areas of focus for all disciplines and sectors of higher education. They are also areas in which the arts and humanities have played a vital role—a role that they can and must continue to strengthen.

This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* explores how the arts and humanities can enhance students' capacities for democratic participation within diverse and globally interconnected local and national communities. Through visionary thinking and on-the-ground examples, contributing authors illustrate these fields' value in engaging students in imaginative questions of what it means to be human. They also argue for these fields' tremendous—and too often unrealized—creative potential when applied to solving shared civic problems. In their capacities to represent but also improve the human condition, the arts and humanities can help students build their own capacities for democratic action.

Indeed, the practice of democracy is arguably both an art in itself and a measure of humanity. This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* invites readers to reflect on time-tested values and new pedagogies in the arts and humanities that help students, faculty, and staff engage in this practice in a diverse and interconnected world.

—Kathryn Peltier Campbell, editor of *Diversity & Democracy*

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[THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES]

Creative, Humanistic, and Pragmatic: Liberal Education in America

■ MICHAEL S. ROTH, president, Wesleyan University

The news about the American education system has been bleak of late—from elementary schools that seem “designed to fail” to for-profit universities that are scooping up borrowed tuition dollars without providing graduates much hope of gainful employment. It’s no surprise, then, that the American public has grown increasingly suspicious of educators and their institutions. College programs that were once widely respected are now criticized for raising tuition, despite the fact that they are giving significant financial aid and satisfying demands for increasingly costly support services. The growing lack of confidence in American education mirrors the general crisis of confidence in the future, with pundits capitalizing on this market niche for their cultivated pessimism.

The anti-intellectual pessimists often chide our educational system to become more practical, but their notion of “practicality” is rooted in the old economy (and in maintaining its traditional inequalities). If heeded, their calls for pragmatism are likely to lead to the opposite: men and women who are trained for yesterday’s problems and yesterday’s jobs, who have not reflected on their own lives in ways that allow them to tap into their capacities for innovation. Indeed, calls for “practicality” are really calls for conformity, for conventional thinking that will impoverish our economic, cultural, and personal lives.

The search for a neatly useful undergraduate education defined in these terms is a critical mistake that often neglects a deep American tradition of humanistic learning and artistic practice.

This tradition has been integral to our success as a nation and has enriched the lives of generations of students by enhancing their capacities for shaping themselves and reinventing the world they will inhabit. Since this country’s founding, education has been closely tied to individual freedom and to hope for a collective future—to the ability to think for oneself and to contribute to society by unleashing one’s creative potential. Cultivating these abilities can undermine entrenched inequality, and unleashing this potential through a liberal education that includes engagement with the arts and humanities as well as the social and natural sciences is the most broadly pragmatic thing we can do.

Liberal Education’s Deep American Roots

When I began my freshman year at Wesleyan University more than thirty-five years ago, I had only the vaguest notion of what a liberal education was. My father and my grandfather were furriers, and my mother had wanted to make a career out of singing with a big band before deciding to start a family. Giving their children access to a college education was for them part of the American dream, even if they had little understanding of what happened on campus. How much things have changed! More than thirty-five years later, I serve as president of the same institution where I first stumbled into courses like Intro to Philosophy and Art History 101. Many undergraduates now behave like consumers, arriving on campuses with specific demands and plans for their eight semesters. Parents want their children’s

education to be immediately useful, and with a dramatically shrinking job market, undergrads themselves are often eager to follow a narrow path that they imagine will lead to that coveted first job. A broad liberal education, providing significant opportunities to explore oneself and the world, is increasingly seen as a luxury for the entitled, one that is scarcely affordable in a hyper-competitive world. This is especially true for those studying the arts and humanities, who are often made to feel that they are disconnected from the economic realities of the real world.

And yet, a broad, self-critical, and pragmatic education has been and remains essential for our well-being as individuals and as members of a society that aspires to be democratic. Thomas Jefferson recognized this in the early days of American democracy when he saw the health of the republic as dependent on the education of its citizens. In founding the University of Virginia, he emphasized that the university would *not* prescribe a course of study directing graduates to “the specific vocations to which they are destined” (Jefferson [1823] 2002, 294). Jefferson had a broad view of educational purpose for the individual and society, a view that has continued to inform our approach to college despite calls for more vocationally tailored training. As he wrote to John Adams in 1823: “We shall have our follies without doubt.... But ours will be the follies of enthusiasm, not of bigotry.... Bigotry is the disease of ignorance, of morbid minds; enthusiasm of the free and buoyant. Education and free discussion are the antidotes of both” (Jefferson [1823] 1995, 53). Jefferson knew that a liberally educated citizenry is better able to recognize and overcome our distance from, and our strangeness to, one another. We learn to recognize that people and ideas that at first seem foreign may indeed have much to teach us.

In recent years, educational institutions have been expanding their borders, literally and figuratively. Where elite



Wesleyan University (Photo by Bill Burkhart)

American schools once sought homogeneous student bodies as the basis for cooperative learning, today almost all highly selective universities seek to mold diverse campus communities. Indeed, we want our students to become adept at crossing borders, and skillful and generous in helping others do the same. This is not solely a matter of demographics, and many colleges now adopt programs (like those influenced by the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Making Excellence Inclusive initiative) that aim to leverage diversity as an educational asset. Some schools might take their commitment to diversity for granted, but it is important to reflect on and assess how one’s institutional inclusiveness can become most effective. With hindsight, Jefferson’s blind spots are easy enough to see. For example, while he wanted to secure public funding for education as a means of combating entrenched economic inequality, he was for the most part unaware of how his own racism corrupted his educational vision. We must continually check for our own blind spots to build a more robust and dynamic inclusiveness by recognizing whom and what we are excluding.

In a similar spirit of inclusiveness, Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that colleges “serve us when they aim not to drill, but

to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame” ([1837] 1981, 51–52). Liberal education teaches us to open ourselves to the world’s “various genius” and to ignite our own, and perhaps someone else’s, imagination. At its best, education develops the capacities for seeing possibilities and for relishing the world across borders we might otherwise not have dared cross. Education must lead us beyond these borders if it is to be more than training for roles already allocated to us by the powers that be.

American Pragmatism

In the early nineteenth century, Jane Addams and John Dewey took up the cause of liberal learning precisely because it fit so well with the pragmatic ethos that linked inquiry, innovation, and self-discovery. Rejecting a view of education as narrow training, pragmatists embraced a capacious practicality energized by a vision of broad, flexible education.

Jane Addams’s notion of “affectionate interpretation” is a deep resource for understanding how we can overcome our visceral defense against points of view different from our own ([1896] 2003). For Addams, compassion, memory, and

fidelity are key aspects of understanding in a context of community. Generosity, as she saw it, is not just a moral quality, but an educational virtue. John Dewey, a great supporter of Addams, famously wrote that “Philosophy recovers itself...when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men” (1917). Thus the arts and humanities, as well as the natural and social sciences, should turn us toward the world, not away from it into cloistered campuses. The pragmatists explored how liberal learning provides a context for hope, how education depends on and reinforces confidence in the future. As Dewey put it, to discover “what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness” (1916). Rather than starting with a predetermined outcome for what one must do, liberal education helps one make this discovery, and secure those opportunities.

As educators, we have all seen how students making discoveries about themselves can take up the challenges of their communities. Whether this means bringing philosophy out of the classroom and into downtown Scranton or connecting the arts and humanities to underserved communities in Syracuse, students and teachers are applying their liberal learning to engage the issues around them. At Wesleyan, I have seen Shining Hope for Communities, an organization founded by students, build an elementary school for girls in Kibera, Kenya, one of the largest slums in Africa. The organization went on to develop the Johanna Justin-Jinnich Community Health Clinic adjacent to the school, and is now creating clean water and sanitation facilities. Much closer to home, the Wesleyan family has been instrumental in creating health services, a children’s museum, and community development projects in Middletown, Connecticut. Through projects like these, liberal arts

graduates became social entrepreneurs by building on a broad educational base.

Now More than Ever

All over the world, educators and students look to American higher education as a place to develop human potential. Governments and foundations creating liberal arts institutions in Asia and Africa hope to nurture platforms of innovation and communities of engaged citizens. International students competing for admission to American universities see our educational system as offering *opportunity*. We must demonstrate to our own citizens that this is indeed the case.

The young men and women who are creating free schools and clean water in Kenya or educational services right here at home are using their broadly based education to *engage* specific and important issues out in the world. They are pragmatists steeped in liberal learning. Organizations like the Association of American Colleges and Universities see a recession—economic and civic—as the best time to invest in America’s future. By embracing civic learning and partnerships that strengthen communities, we can do the hard work of restoring *confidence*, opening opportunity, and building engagement—all core responsibilities of liberal education.

The demands for education that is “useful” have gotten louder, and threats to liberal education, especially in the arts and humanities—from government regulators, the business sector, and even within the university—are indeed profound. We live in an age of seismic technological change and instantaneous information dissemination; we work in an era of increasing American diversity and global interconnectedness. In our time, it is more crucial than ever that we not abandon the creative, humanistic foundations of education in favor of narrow, technical forms of teaching intended to give quick, utilitarian results. Those results are no substitute for the practice

of inquiry, critique, and experience that enhances students’ ability to appreciate and understand the world around them—and to innovatively respond to it. A reflexive, pragmatic liberal education is our best hope of preparing students to shape change and not just be victims of it.

The mission of schools focused on liberal learning should be, in Richard Rorty’s words, “to incite doubt and stimulate imagination, thereby challenging the prevailing consensus” (1999, 118). Through doubt, imagination, and hard work, students “realize they can reshape themselves” and their society. Liberal education matters because by challenging the prevailing consensus, it promises to be relevant to our professional, personal, and political lives. The free inquiry and experimentation of a reflexive, pragmatic education help us think for ourselves, take responsibility for our beliefs and actions, and be better acquainted with own desires and hopes. Liberal education, including deep engagement with the arts and humanities, increases our capacity to understand the world and contribute to it by reshaping ourselves. ☐

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[THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES]

Full Participation and the Arts, Culture, and Humanities

■ **SUSAN STURM**, George M. Jaffin professor of law and social responsibility and director of the Center for Institutional and Social Change, Columbia University

At a time of growing inequality and shrinking confidence in our country's ability to address the complex problems facing our communities, higher education institutions are key to building societal capacity for meeting these challenges. Their stated missions emphasize the goals of increasing mobility and diversity, building knowledge to improve society, and cultivating leadership to put that knowledge into practice. As place-based institutions, colleges and universities can leverage significant social, economic, and cultural capital to improve access and success for underresourced groups. They can also build diverse multigenerational, multidisciplinary, and multisector learning communities whose combined research, teaching, and engagement cultivates the knowledge and leadership necessary to address difficult problems (Sturm and Cantor 2011).

For decades, higher education institutions have pursued a variety of programs intended to realize these transformational aims. Yet many institutions are not yet meeting their stated commitments. Most colleges and universities have worked to increase diversity and participation among students, faculty, and staff, and many have implemented community engagement and service-learning initiatives to inculcate citizenship values and connect with communities. Still, diversity, access, and civic engagement programs are often pursued piecemeal and peripherally, without being conceptualized or coordinated across systems in the integrated way necessary for broad impact. Too often, an institution's attempts to "diversify" are insufficiently linked in

concept and practice with its public mission of leveraging intellectual capital to address underserved communities' most pressing problems (Sturm et al. 2011).

What would it take for higher education to successfully meet these complex challenges? A critical step would be developing concepts that bring people and projects together to pursue shared and interdependent visions and goals

Building the infrastructure for full participation will require institutions to integrate publicly engaged scholarship, diversity programs, and student success initiatives with each other and with their core values and priorities.

(Kania and Kramer 2011). A group of scholars and activists has embraced the overarching idea of "full participation," developed in my earlier work (2006), as a framework for integrating these interdependent projects for collective impact (Sturm et al. 2011). This article introduces full participation, describes how it is being enacted within a national organization and a specific university–community setting, and explores the particular roles of arts, culture, and humanities as vehicles for advancing it.

Full Participation Framework

Full participation is an affirmative value focused on creating settings that enable people—whatever their identities, backgrounds, or institutional positions—to thrive, realize their capabilities, engage meaningfully in institutional life, and enable others to do the same. This concept offers a holistic framework for (1) connecting diverse people and

projects around a shared vision for increasing people's capacities to succeed and thrive, and (2) mobilizing change at multiple levels and leverage points so that this vision can be implemented, sustained, and continually renewed. It emerges through a process that links projects, people, resources, practices, and networks, and then undertakes to build these values and practices into the hardwiring of institutions (Ganz 2010; Kania and Kramer 2011). It covers the continuum of decisions and practices affecting who joins institutions, whether they feel respected and valued, how their work is conducted and supported, and what kinds of activities count as important (Sturm et al. 2011).

Full participation emphasizes that institutional settings profoundly shape people's ability to succeed and thrive. Although articulated in affirmative terms, full participation evokes inquiry about who is—and is not—included in the prevailing definitions and practices of the academy and its community partners. Because full participation is constrained by "cultural dynamics that reproduce patterns of underparticipation and exclusion," it cannot be achieved "without examining... multi-level decisions, cultural norms, and underlying structures" (256-57). The full participation framework articulates the processes involved in this examination and suggests focusing initiatives on groups and communities that are not flourishing within existing institutional arrangements (Sturm 2006).

Building the infrastructure for full participation will require institutions to integrate publicly engaged scholar-

ship, diversity programs, and student success initiatives with each other and with their core values and priorities. This kind of transformation will require institutions and their partners to co-create spaces, relationships, and practices that support sustained progress. To achieve integration and innovation, they will need to develop an understanding of how individual practices and programs relate to a larger system (Sturm et al. 2011; Saltmarsh and Hartley 2011). They will need to engage a wide range of stakeholders in designing institutions that enable people of different backgrounds to enter, thrive, and contribute to advancing similar goals in local and global communities.

Operationalizing Full Participation

Syracuse University (SU) is currently undertaking a set of partnerships and initiatives that exemplifies full participation in action. Through its collaboration with Columbia Law School's Center for Institutional and Social Change and Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, SU is identifying what it means to exercise "institutional citizenship": to build higher education institutions that enable people from all communities, backgrounds, and identities to participate fully and to build collective knowledge and capacity for solving sticky public problems (Sturm 2006). This action research project uses collaborative inquiry to advance three linked goals: (1) increasing access, success, and full participation in higher education for underserved groups and communities; (2) building higher education's capacity to address urgent challenges facing these communities; and (3) prompting the institutional reimagination needed to achieve these goals.

SU has embraced this ambitious vision under the umbrella of "Scholarship in Action." SU has embarked on a series of long-term projects to co-create knowledge and

action in partnership with communities in and around the city, and thus to build collective capacity for addressing pressing public problems—local, regional, and global. At the heart of this activity is a strategy of creating new leadership roles that span disciplines and institutions and combine diverse knowledge, stakeholders, resources, and capabilities (Sturm 2010). SU equips "organizational catalysts"—including faculty, students, community members, and administrators—to connect and mobilize the resources and activities of many different systems (Sturm 2006). For example, faculty members receive institutional support for taking on collaborative leadership roles in long-term university–community partnerships to transform schools and neighborhoods, and for linking this leadership to their teaching and scholarship. In addition, new hybrid roles enable people with deep roots in their communities to connect and mobilize knowledge and action both inside and outside the university.

The Near Westside Initiative (NWSI) offers one powerful illustration. SU joined with foundations, businesses, not-for-profits, state and city governments, and residents in creating the NWSI, a nonprofit organization focused on transforming a neighborhood that represents the ninth poorest census tract in the country. This deeply democratic partnership gains momentum for community-wide change through multidisciplinary projects that focus on environmental sustainability, use the arts and culture to revitalize social spaces, and build community capacity for social entrepreneurship. The NWSI has become a space where students and faculty collaborate closely with practitioners and community members, engaging in reciprocal teaching and learning to address concrete concerns. For example, sculptor Marion Wilson (who is also director of community initiatives in the visual arts in SU's School of Education) teaches a series

of classes through which art, design, and architecture students have collaborated with communities to transform a crack house into "a multi-purpose community incubator for the arts" (Cantor, Englot, and Higgins, forthcoming). That space has emerged as a new hub for ongoing community–university collaboration.

Participants in these initiatives are working with the Center for Institutional and Social Change to identify key strategies for building an architecture of inclusion. These strategies include

- **a shared vision for institutional citizenship at SU**, articulated centrally and infused and elaborated in a diverse range of collaborative projects across the SU ecosystem;
- **the development of multiple and linked physical spaces** that bring community members together with SU innovators to engage in collective problem solving and community revitalization;
- **the multiplication of strategically placed hub organizations** that combine SU and community resources to serve as "incubators for innovation"—ongoing initiatives bringing together diverse stakeholders in projects aimed at solving community problems and building community capacity (such as the NWSI);
- **the cultivation of coalitions of multifaceted transformative leaders** poised to connect their efforts (such as the NWSI board of directors, Say Yes to Education, Partnership for a Better Education, and the Campus–Community Entrepreneurship Initiative);
- **an emerging set of incentives, strategies, tools, and curricula** for combining the efforts of students, faculty, community members, and change leaders to produce concrete impact in schools and communities while generating significant learning and research that can be applied broadly.

Arts, Culture, and Humanities as Drivers

Projects in the arts, culture, and humanities can play a significant role in advancing full participation if they enable all stakeholders to thrive, succeed, and realize their capabilities. These fields can be powerful vehicles for connecting, educating, inspiring, and sustaining students, faculty, and community members so they have the capacity and commitment to continue their difficult and important work. They are also essential parts of multipronged strategies for advancing goals defined by and with communities. When infused with full participation principles, architectural redesign, photography, sculpture, and theater projects place students and faculty in direct and coequal collaborations with diverse community members, and place community narratives at the center of learning and knowledge development.

One strategy SU is using to create broader impact in and through these fields involves collaborating with a national intermediary. Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA), a national consortium of over eighty colleges and universities committed to public scholarship and practice in the arts, humanities, and design (for which SU is currently the host institution), shares SU's vision of full participation. Through projects, research, publications, and conferences on the value of public scholarship and practice, IA is building a movement focused on the institutional and structural change needed to put its vision into practice (www.imaginingamerica.org).

IA has recently undertaken a national project aimed at "Sustaining and Scaling Full Participation at the Intersection of Public Engagement and Diversity." This collaborative research-in-action project, facilitated by the Center for Institutional and Social Change (www.changecenter.org), is developing strategies and tools to build the architecture



Syracuse University (Photo by Chuck Wainright)

for integrating diversity initiatives and public scholarship. It is also working to influence institutional and public policy and practice by developing indicators of these efforts' collective impact.

Arts, culture, and humanities projects embody the integration of *knowing* (developing new ideas, strategies, tools, capacities, and understandings to tackle tough problems), *doing* (designing, building, creating, researching, and collaborating to bring these ideas to life), and *being* (redefining roles to make this kind of work visible, central, and core to stakeholders' identities). These projects exemplify how the full participation framework can both require and inspire the integration of diversity and public engagement. When made integral to institutions' hardwiring, full participation will allow higher education to fulfill its public mission while building the knowledge and leadership needed to revitalize communities and democratic institutions. ☐

Editor's note: To learn more about the full participation framework for diversity and community engagement, visit www.fullparticipation.net.

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[THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES]

The Case for Civic Imagination in Undergraduate Arts Education

■ KATE COLLINS, doctoral student in art education at the Ohio State University

What if we spoke to students about *why* we make art as much as *how* we make art? What if arts programs concerned themselves with fostering socially and personally responsible citizen artists as much as skilled and talented craftsmen and women? What if arts faculty exposed students to applied arts in and with communities, schools, prisons, and hospitals—and what if we emphasized that success doesn't have to mean leaving where you come from?

As an arts educator, I have been considering these questions with increasing urgency for ten years. My interest in the intersection of arts and civic engagement was initially triggered by my discovery of the Animating Democracy Initiative (ADI) back in 2002 (<http://animatingdemocracy.org>). While small shifts in undergraduate arts education have occurred since then, widespread change would involve nothing short of a paradigm shift toward developing civic imagination as a critical skill for student artists.

Defining Civic Imagination

What exactly is civic imagination? More pertinent, what does the concept of civic imagination offer the realm of arts and arts education? In search of answers and inspiration, I looked to the artists and educators who depict civic imagination as central to their work.

An important description of the arts' potential offered by ADI provides resonant clues about what civic imagination might be and what it can offer. ADI does not use the specific terminology of civic imagination, but its writers eloquently remind us that

The arts in general can express difficult ideas through metaphor; transcend the obvious to imagine solutions; communicate beyond the limits of language; serve as a herald to raise awareness about an issue; gather diverse publics for interaction at a common physical site; and transcend established social and political boundaries. (Schaffer-Bacon, Yuen, and Korza 1999, 23)

Perhaps then, for arts educators, *cultivating civic imagination* involves an intentional effort to foster and employ these abilities in arts students for the sake of the public good.

Inspired and Inspiring Examples

The idea of cultivating civic imagination in the arts is exemplified in practice by the work of Sojourn Theatre Artistic Director and ADI participating artist Michael Rohd. Rohd's company is currently collaborating with a New York-based ensemble theater company called the TEAM (Theater of the Emerging American Moment) on a major undertaking named *Town Hall Nation: A National Act of Civic Imagination* (<http://www.townhallnation.org>). The project uses theater as a vehicle "to respond to the paucity of opportunities for ideologically diverse people to make democracy function together" (Town Hall Nation 2011), positioning cultivation of civic imagination as a priority not only for artists, but for the public at large.

In the midst of a polarizing presidential election, Sojourn Theatre and the TEAM are convinced of theater's capacity to contribute something mean-

ingful to public discourse. They have initiated a nationwide effort to expand the conversation by encouraging others to create their own theatrical works with the same goals. Many other professional artists and arts companies are engaged in similar dynamic arts-based civic dialogue initiatives. One can't help but wonder, what if we presented artistic endeavors like these to arts students as aspirational models along with Broadway and the film industry, museums and galleries?

Max Stephenson, public policy scholar and professor at Virginia Tech, writing with graduate student Katherine Fox Lanham, makes clear that others beyond the arts recognize the importance of artists' civic imagination. Describing their research in a struggling region, Stephenson and Fox Lanham say,

The Dan River region of Virginia has witnessed a rapid collapse of its traditional economic base. . . . and suffers deep racial and socioeconomic divides which contribute to a dearth of civic dialogue among its citizens and communities. . . . The artists of this region represent an underutilized asset for changing this status quo, for quickening the public's imagination about its potential collective future. (2007, 83)

Stephenson and Fox Lanham's observations underscore the value of cultivating civic imagination among artists: "If artists are to play a role in the dynamics of such processes they must first understand their potential to do so. And that requires that they reflect on their concept of the aesthetic and embrace its public character" (2007, 91).

Expanding a Pivotal Role

The idea of artists as catalysts or provocateurs in society is not new, nor is the notion that artists play important roles in the civic realm: shaping history; molding cities, towns, and nations.

The powerful role of music during the Civil Rights Movement and the critical awareness inspired by visual and performing artists at the height of the AIDS epidemic exemplify the profound civic impact the arts have had in the United States over many decades. The history of connections between the arts and the civic realm is long and rich, and it continues today. But this connection remains largely underexplored in undergraduate arts education. It is vital that we change this.

Fortunately, a few innovative colleges and universities around the nation are instituting unique undergraduate degree programs, minors, and centers that lay the foundation for cultivating civic imagination among students (see box for notable examples). A sprinkling of colleges and universities are offering individual undergraduate courses that show great promise, but the greater concentration of these efforts to date remains at the graduate level.

I first attempted to develop an arts-based civic engagement course in 2004 at Arizona State University, an effort I resurrected in 2008 and 2009 at Bowling Green State University. My course, called the Citizen Artist, was designed primarily for undergraduates. Students from each iteration have contacted me after graduation to communicate how significant the course was in shaping their views of the arts and, for some, their career paths. These student responses have confirmed for me the importance of integrating civic learning with arts education at the undergraduate level, where arts programs play a pivotal role in shaping students' notions of what it means to be an artist. Cultivating civic imagination at this stage can have a profound impact.

Many assert that the creation of art, in and of itself, is a civic act (Schaffer-Bacon, Yuen, and Korza 1999, 23). But unless and until undergraduate arts



Students in Kate Collins's Citizen Artist course at Bowling Green State University rehearse for a 2009 performance with Libbey High School students from Toledo, Ohio. (Photo by Mark Gardner)

educators become more intentional in fostering this awareness for their students—in cultivating their civic imaginations and arming them with the skills and knowledge to act on their new capacities—the tremendous civic potential of the arts and artists will remain underrealized. While not every university can or should start a comprehensive program, courses that address the civic and social impact of the arts are vital. And while not every student will become a socially engaged artist, every student should be challenged to expand his or her notions of what it means to be an artist and an engaged citizen of the world. Fostering civic imagination is a powerful means to do just that. □

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Leaders in Cultivating Civic Imagination

An increasing number of colleges and universities are institutionalizing opportunities for students to cultivate civic imagination. The following are only a few leaders in this area:

- California College of the Arts, BFA in Community Arts: <http://www.cca.edu/academics/community-arts>
- Xavier University in New Orleans, minor in Community Arts: <http://www.xula.edu/art/community+arts/students/>
- The University of Oregon, minor in Community Arts: <http://aad.uoregon.edu/programs/degrees/undergraduate/community-arts-minor>
- Columbia College in Chicago, Center for Community Arts Partnerships: <http://www.colum.edu/ccap/>

—Kate Collins

[THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES]

Who Teaches Democracy? The Role of Humanities Councils and Community Colleges

■ **SHELLEY CRISP**, executive director of the North Carolina Humanities Council

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand
singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or
at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of
the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else...

(Whitman 1860)

An object lesson in the intersection of diversity and democracy, Walt Whitman's catalog of working Americans celebrates industry, commerce, craftsmanship, travel, trade, home, journeys—the days and nights of a populace not just engaged, but joyfully enrapt in their tasks. The voices harmonize as the spirit of an industrious country filled with individualism—“Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else...”—the musicality of the whole greater than its parts. In 1860, the year the poem was first published in *Leaves of Grass*, the Pike's Peak Gold Rush was on; the first oil well in the United States was drilled; the Fresnel lens cast light nineteen miles out into the Graveyard of the Atlantic from Cape Lookout, North Carolina. Whitman's anthem contains no hint of enslaved people, abolitionists, John Brown and Harpers Ferry, Abraham Lincoln, the impending Civil War, or the calamity of the Pemberton Mill. Still, each of his workers is an emblem of shared enterprise, of democracy, of America's story: *E pluribus*

unum, diversity and democracy, the essence of the “American Experiment.”

Any assessment of this experiment in any period of the country's history must address the role of education. Well before Whitman's time, Thomas Jefferson and others prescribed universal education as a necessity for the survival of the new nation. The imperative is no less important now. In his 2010 work *Educating Democracy: Alexis de Tocqueville and Leadership in America*, Brian Danoff proposes that “education is the most important task of the democratic leader,” who “educate[s his] fellow citizens so that they are more fit for democratic self-rule” (3). But who teaches democracy?

A Collaborative Project

The 1965 legislation creating the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the State Humanities Councils offers one response: “Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts and the humanities, designed to

make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants....The arts and the humanities reflect the high place accorded by the American people to the nation's rich cultural heritage and to the fostering of mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all persons and groups.” The arts and humanities will support, then, “an orderly continuation of free society, and provide models of excellence to the American people.” Affording “wisdom and vision” continues to be the work of State Humanities Councils and their partners across the country.

Within a few years of its inception, one way the North Carolina Humanities Council pursued this mission was by issuing a call for proposals addressing “Traditions in Transition.” The issues invoked are familiar: “autonomous individuals and social order...individual rights and the public good...equality and meritocracy...freedom of inquiry...freedom and authority...government by consent of the governed and toleration of and even encouragement of dissent” (Martin 1976). One of the funded projects, incorporating nine of the state's community college campuses, engaged in a “Reassessment of the American Experiment” through scholar-led public forums. The forums explored “The Idea of America: The Philosophy and Vision of the Founders of the American Republic”; queried “The American Reality: To What Extent Have the Idea and the Vision Been Realized?”; and sought to provide “An American Agenda for the Beginning of Her Third Century.” They asked, what successes, what failures have there been? In the case of the latter, what resolve is there to address them?

In the intervening years, the Humanities Council has continued to support North Carolina's community colleges in holding forums with parallel themes. These projects have addressed topics as far-ranging as the US

Constitution's bicentennial, the decline of agricultural society, and the haunted past and threatened future of Appalachian culture. Most recently, the Humanities Council supported "The Fight for Education Equality: A First-Hand Account," a panel hosted by Central Piedmont Community College in conjunction with the exhibitions *Courage: The Vision to End Segregation, the Guts to Fight for It* and *Para Todos Los Niños*. As ideas in action, these forums share the foundational wisdom, as expressed by de Tocqueville himself in *Democracy in America*, that "nothing is more fertile in prodigies than the art of being free; but there is nothing more arduous than the apprenticeship of liberty" (1899).

Renewing the American Experiment

Most recently, an NEH-funded grant "Bridging Cultures to Form a Nation: Difference, Community, and Democratic Thinking" supports the Association of American Colleges and Universities and The Democracy Commitment as they collaborate with community college faculty and State Humanities Councils. The project aims to incorporate "themes of difference, community, and democratic thinking into humanities courses, and...guide faculty and curriculum development" (Musil 2011). The project and the partnership will revisit, extend, reimagine, and hopefully renew investment in the prominent role community colleges have served, as North Carolina's Community College System mission states, in "develop[ing] a globally and multi-culturally competent workforce, and improv[ing] the lives and well-being of individuals."

As the nation engages with constant change in the nature of its work, its demographics, and its educational missions, the arts and humanities continue as a resource at the cutting edge of democracy. Again, North Carolina provides a case in point. An article in the *Raleigh News and Observer* describes the

recent influx of Haitians to a small rural town (Locke 2012). Much as the laborers in Whitman's song, these workers are seeking a place to establish a community, a church, a life, and a livelihood that "belongs to him or her and to none else." As is often the case, says Professor Jim Johnson from the University of North Carolina's Kenan Flagler School of Business, "The jobs are...dirty, difficult

North Carolina Humanities Council, once observed: "Many people are not quite sure what the humanities include—but they include all human endeavor." As Jefferson, de Tocqueville, Whitman, and many others have argued through the centuries, an understanding and an appreciation of those endeavors offer the best way to preserve the opportunity to achieve them. ☐

As the nation engages with constant change in the nature of its work, its demographics, and its educational missions, the arts and humanities continue as a resource at the cutting edge of democracy.

and dangerous'...Nobody wants to do them, and the immigrants fill the gap."

The plant where many of these newcomers work has established communication with Wayne Community College. There, as Director of Continuing Education Larry Johnson explains, workers find job skill training, but also classes in English as a Second Language, programs in job certifications, courses for personal enrichment, and a curricular track to degrees in higher education—in other words, an introduction and invitation to the twenty-first-century version of the American Experiment. Benjamin Eagles Fountain, Jr., president emeritus of North Carolina's community college system and a founding member of the committee that established the

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A New Publication on Civic Learning



A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future By the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

This report calls on the nation to reclaim higher education's civic mission. Emerging from a project supported by the US Department of Education, it also advances a 21st-century vision of college learning for all students—a vision with civic learning and democratic engagement an expected part of every student's college education. The entire report is also available as a PDF document online at www.aacu.org/
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[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Place-Based Reflection as a Foundation for Civic Engagement

■ SHARON MEAGHER, professor of philosophy, chair of the Department of Latin American Studies and Women's Studies, and director of Women's Studies, University of Scranton

On the first day of my course Philosophy and the City, I invite students to introduce themselves and share which cities they like and dislike, and why. This exercise has value for several reasons. Pragmatically, it helps me know which cities I might most fruitfully draw on for examples as the course progresses. Pedagogically, it encourages students to think of themselves as capable

cities are making themselves over to appeal to the suburban middle class, constructing professional sports stadiums, shopping centers, and entertainment districts that are sanitized of other urban realities. Suburban visitors are often grateful for that, because they perceive cities in harsh terms: as places of danger, poverty, and otherness. Only rarely

It is crucial that we help students examine their ethical views about urban places if we are to have a positive impact on their capacity and motivation for civic engagement.

of philosophical arguments, and to practice making arguments that are more than assertions of preference. I help students do this by pointing out that Western philosophers have been making arguments about cities since philosophy originated in ancient Athens, and that students should seek those philosophers' aid in strengthening and refining their own views.

But students' answers also tell me much about their understandings of cities and attitudes toward them. Many of my students, who mostly hail from suburbs and small towns, struggle to find anything positive to say about any city. When they do identify cities they like, it is usually because "there's lots to do." Most students perceive cities as places to visit for entertainment—which is no surprise, as many

have students identified Scranton, where they study and where most live during the school year, as a city about which they have any views at all.

The introductory exercise therefore opens students to the course's two primary objectives. First, the course aims to demonstrate the value and relevance of philosophy in shaping our sense of self and community, including our civic responsibilities. While all philosophy courses arguably contribute to students' civic development by fostering critical thinking and communication skills and introducing students to key concepts in Western culture, this course aims to make more explicit connections between philosophy and public life. Second, the course encourages students to reflect on where they

are and how they interact (or fail to act) with the place and its people.

Bringing the City into the Philosophy Classroom

The course's second objective is not addressed in most curricula, with the possible exception of those that include service-learning pedagogy. Indeed, service learning forces students to interact with people in places beyond the academy's walls. Yet to the extent that civic engagement occurs in and with our cities, we educators must address the fact that many students have already absorbed decidedly anti-urban attitudes by the time they do community-based learning or work. These attitudes fuel student alienation and disengagement, and a service-learning experience alone is unlikely to reverse them.

While some of the current literature on civic engagement addresses issues that might arise from students' attitudes towards volunteerism (see, for example, McCarthy and Tucker 1999; Andolina et al. 2003), none of it attends to anti-urban attitudes. These attitudes are rooted in the United States' legacy of anti-urban theory, which extends at least as far back as Thomas Jefferson and has deeply affected public policy (White and White 1962). Anti-urban philosophies encourage victim-blaming, construct cities as moral evils in themselves, and fuel discourses that are often tied to racism, class-based prejudices, or both. These discourses discourage civic engagement by suggesting that urban problems are intractable or the fault of those most victimized by them. If we believe such arguments, then why should we, our students, or other citizens try to make change?

It is crucial that we help students examine their ethical views about urban places if we are to have a positive impact on their capacity and

motivation for civic engagement. A course in urban philosophy can play a central role in college and university civic engagement programs by confronting and critically analyzing the philosophical history of anti-urban views and offering alternative philosophical perspectives. As students discover a long tradition of thinking about not only what cities are but also what they should be, they can come to realize the value of imagining a better city and the roles they might play in working to create such places. Legitimate critique motivates engagement by identifying not only problems but potential solutions, countering the sense that nothing can be done. Thus the philosophical study of cities helps uncover the promise embedded (and sometimes buried) in city life that we can work to actualize.

Taking Philosophy into the City

I have taught a range of courses focused on philosophy and the city, including an undergraduate first-year seminar, an intermediate philosophy elective, and a community-based course for working adults. I am currently team-teaching an interdisciplinary honors seminar on the city and theater that critically examines and explores what Plato termed “the old quarrel” between philosophy and poetry, where theater and philosophy have competed for authority in shaping our understanding of cities and citizenship. While readings and assignments vary depending on the particular course, I conduct each course as a small city itself, with assignments that require students to specialize in a particular reading or urban problem. This pedagogical approach encourages students to recognize the value of specialization and interdependence and to trust the processes of collaborative learning so essential to civic life.

Following Daniel Kemmis, I believe that the humanities disciplines become meaningful as they are “sought in and brought to bear on the real life of the real city” (1995, 59). In every course, I therefore include what I call “philosophical walking tours” that take students into the city to observe and reflect. In my current course on the city and theater, we require students to develop performance pieces (to be staged on a public green) that address or highlight an urban issue revealed to them by their philosophical readings and their interactions with the city and its citizens.

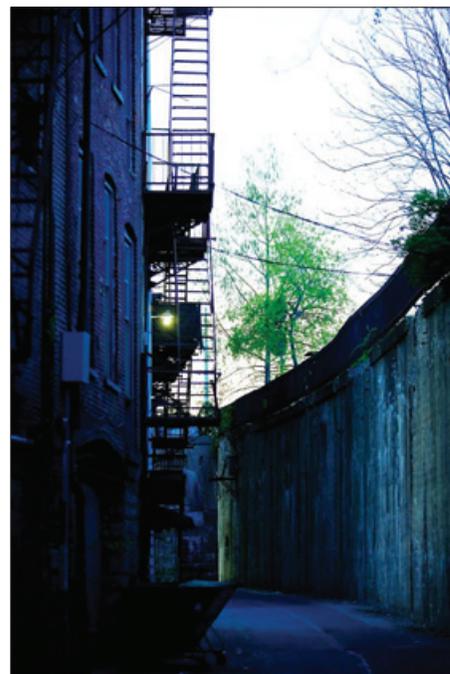
While these exercises focus on the immediate context of Scranton, course assignments also encourage students to connect the local and the global. Using readings and internet-based resources, students explore case studies on topics like “Urban Identity and Diversity,” mentally mapping trends, connections, common issues, and differences across locales. Course resources, including sample syllabi and guidelines for developing walking tours, can be found on my website, www.philosophyandthecity.org.

Learning Outcomes

Student comments suggest that course objectives are being achieved. Recent responses to the student survey question “What is the most important thing you learned from the class?” included the following:

- “what it truly means to be a citizen, as opposed to just being a taxpayer”
- “diversity is important to the city, but at the same time there are needs for common goals”
- “to look more closely at the city around me”

These three remarks sum up what I hope all courses aimed at promoting civic engagement do: (1) teach stu-



Scranton, Pennsylvania. “Downtown Spring I” by Susan Scranton Dawson, copyright 2007. Reprinted with permission.

dents to become lifelong learners who understand the places and communities where they live; (2) help students understand the importance of both diversity and shared concerns for justice in civic life; (3) empower students to think of themselves as citizens so they can exercise their civic as well as economic responsibilities. ☺

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[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Humanities in the Lab: Rethinking Haitian Studies

■ **LAURENT DUBOIS**, professor of Romance Studies and History and director of the Center for French and Francophone Studies, and **DEBORAH JENSON**, professor of Romance Studies and incoming director of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies—codirectors of Duke University's Haiti Lab

The terms “Haiti” and “laboratory” have not always been happily mated. In Haiti, “laboratory” has been used to designate a nexus of US military intelligence and Haitian authoritarianism, and Haiti recoils at being seen as a laboratory for humanitarian or scientific experiments. But when the Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke proposed devoting its first humanities laboratory to Haiti in the wake of the devastating January 12, 2010 earthquake, the impetus for proceeding was clear.

The humanities are able to grapple most usefully with human experience when they draw on the full array of academic expertise that responds to human dilemmas.

Academic resources focused specifically on Haiti are scarce. There are no departments, centers, or institutes devoted solely to Haiti, Haitian Creole is not commonly taught, and departments and even entire universities may at best have a single specialist focused on Haiti. Meanwhile, the humanities are able to grapple most usefully with human experience when they draw on the full array of academic expertise that responds to human dilemmas, across disciplines and languages, focused on the present and past, drawing on qualitative and quantitative research. Thus by concentrating resources, we hoped to meld a broad array of research questions, methodologies, and social purposes in one alchemical dream: Duke's Haiti Lab.

Designing the Lab

Science laboratories typically advance knowledge through collaborative projects led by visionary directors and implemented by junior researchers whose contributions refine and surpass their directors' vision. Much laboratory research aims for instrumental relevance—“heal this,” “create that”—whether at present or in the distant future. These principles guided the Haiti Lab's architecture.

We began by composing a team of faculty collaborators, including

Guy-Uriel Charles, a legal scholar interested in Haitian law; David and Kathy Walmer, colleagues at the Duke Global Health Institute who created a summer service-learning initiative in Haiti; Jacques Pierre, a linguist teaching a sequence of Creole courses; and Victoria Szabo, an expert in new media. We recruited a starting cohort of fifteen undergraduate collaborators through group independent studies centered on faculty-defined research projects. Funding from the Franklin Humanities Institute (supported by the Provost's Office and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) allowed us to create a laboratory space outfitted with computers, bookcases, a seminar room, and a state-of-the-art projection system.

Preserving Memory

The first project for which we literally rolled up our sleeves (and donned our breathing masks) was a studio art venture with Haitian-born artist Edouard Duval-Carrié. Within days of opening its doors, the Haiti Lab morphed into a cooperative art studio, a true *konbit* aimed at finding healing and understanding through art. In Haitian Creole, a *konbit* is a community work detail—like a barn-raising in the United States—where neighbors volunteer to help in construction or reconstruction. Ultimately, two dozen faculty, student, and community participants gathered together to construct something at once material and ineffable. In the tradition of Duval-Carrié's art, ours was a work of memory, connecting worlds visible and invisible through images, words, and symbols that condensed our visions and understandings of Haiti. Many of us couldn't stop thinking about the project as we pondered how to communicate history though amber's layers of light and shadow.

Why amber? On the island of Hispaniola, which houses Haiti in the west and the Dominican Republic in the east, amber has preserved vestiges of organic life for tens of millions of years. Resin, the lifeblood of trees, dripped and flowed in Haiti's ancient tropical forests, trapping plants, invertebrates, and small vertebrates in sticky goo that would harden into golden (or clear, blue, or green) amber, sometimes preserving scenes of combat (such as a spider attacking a fly). Like a time machine, amber transports us to these transparently preserved scenes, some that occurred when Cuba, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico may have been one landmass. And yet amber is also subterranean, buried deep in geological layers like valuable jewels forged by earth's alchemy.

Amber is, in short, the perfect metaphor for the imperative we felt after the 2010 earthquake. We were driven to mine, reveal, and collect vestiges of Haiti's past—both the immediate past

morphed by the earthquake and the longue durée history found in cultural forms like Amerindian zémès (fetishes), architecture, and song. We wanted to use resin—in this case, plastic rather than arborial—to catch and preserve losses and memories as innumerable as the world’s insects. Soon we realized we had stepped into a perfect web of meaning. Objects trapped in amber are frozen in motion, commemorated as they are destroyed. We wanted to take advantage of this phenomenon to attempt the reverse: to bring the dead alive, illuminated in amber. Now a permanent installation at the Franklin Humanities Institute (<http://www.fhi.duke.edu/haitiamber/>), Haiti: History Embedded in Amber is a conduit between these meanings.

Interrogating across Disciplines

Simultaneous to the art project, we began working with Guy Charles, along with his Law School colleague Larry Helfer and law students, on a study of gender and violence in Haitian legal codes. The Haiti Lab is providing historical and linguistic mediation to the Law School team and its Haitian partners as they consider how these codes might be updated. Undergraduate French students translate conversations with Haitian law experts and furnish original research, such as summaries of existing studies of violence against women in Haiti. Their work suggests the practical value of language and cultural studies in a changing world.

When cholera emerged in Haiti in October 2010, reports differed regarding how long it had been since Haiti’s last cholera outbreak. Jenson and Szabo, working with a small group of students from a range of disciplines, asked, had epidemic cholera *ever* existed in Haiti, and was this a researchable question? After digging through historical, journalistic, and medical resources from the nineteenth century onward, we concluded that there had never been epidemic cholera in Haiti, in part



Duke University’s Haiti Lab created the permanent installation *Haiti: History Embedded in Amber* in spring 2010. (Photo by Alfredo Rivera)

due to the abolition of slavery in 1793. We published our conclusions and a digital map of nineteenth-century Caribbean cholera epidemics in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* in 2011 (see http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/17/11/11-0958_article.htm).

With colleagues at Duke’s Global Health Institute and School of Medicine, we are studying the diverse discourses that have helped make sense of trauma and post-traumatic stress in the aftermath of the earthquake. Supported by a research grant from the Office of the Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies, Kathy Walmer, Pierre, and undergraduate students are comparing related genres: for example, the scales used to measure post-traumatic stress disorder and the Vodou songs expressive of local and historical “idioms of distress.” We are considering current mental health debates in light of observations about psychic life and pathology that predate the modern mental health apparatus, such as commentary by colonial physicians on how enslaved people manifest distress. We are also analyzing Haiti’s mental health innovations, particularly the important

“ethnopsychology” movement that lasted from the 1930s to the 1960s and yielded groundbreaking work on trauma in both mental health and cultural contexts. (Editor’s note: See videos about the project at www.diversityweb.org.)

Realizing the Rewards of Diversity

With so many projects percolating, the scope of our work as Haiti Lab codirectors can be confounding. On a given day, one of us (Laurent) might be playing mbira with students as he learns about the Central African roots of Afro-Atlantic musical cultures. The other (Deborah) might be hunched nervously at a workshop on trauma, an incognito humanist among psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists. We have learned, ruefully, that previous achievements, no matter how recent and innovative, cannot atone for a new day’s unmet commitments. But just as the laboratory format brings a new diversity of approaches to the study of Haiti, the study of Haiti is diversifying our university—building opportunities for the reciprocal interrogation and bonding that lies at the heart of what the humanities can contribute to democracy. ☐

[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Disrupting Institutional Barriers through Digital Humanities Pedagogy

■ **MATTHEW K. GOLD**, advisor to the provost for Master's Programs and Digital Initiatives at the City University of New York Graduate Center and assistant professor of English at New York City College of Technology

In “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” Walt Whitman’s famous meditation on the possibilities of connection across space and time, the nineteenth-century poet projects himself into the future to imagine a fellow Brooklynite gazing at the island of Manhattan across New York’s East River. Asking this prospective New Yorker what the “count of the scores or hundreds of years between us” might amount to, the narrator decides that “Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not” (1992, 310). For Whitman, the printed page provided a vital connection to the future, one that would bridge differences of many kinds.

Over a hundred and fifty years later, Whitman’s poetry formed the basis of a pedagogical experiment that tested new kinds of bridges across space and time. “Looking for Whitman: The Poetry of Place in the Life and Work of Walt Whitman,” a project sponsored by two Digital Humanities Start-Up Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), brought together classes from four academic institutions in a collaborative digital environment that emphasized place-based learning and progressive educational techniques. The project set forth a new model for engaged learning that mirrored Whitman’s poetic ideals of democracy and diversity.

Place-Based Learning across Distance

Following from Whitman’s suggestion at the conclusion of “Song of Myself”

that readers “look for me under your bootsoles” (1992, 88), “Looking for Whitman” was designed to help students and faculty members trace the lingering imprints of Whitman’s footsteps in the local soil. Using open-source tools to connect classrooms in multiple institutions, the project asked students to research Whitman’s connections to their individual locations and share that research in a dynamic, social, web-based learning environment.

As originally designed, the project would engage classes at four academic institutions (New York City College of Technology [City Tech], New York University [NYU], University of Mary Washington, and Rutgers University–Camden) located in Whitman’s three principal areas of residence (New York; Washington, DC; and Camden, New Jersey) in a concurrent, connected, semester-long inquiry into the relationship of Whitman’s poetry to local geography and history. In New York, students from my class at CUNY and Karen Karbiener’s class at NYU would explore Whitman’s early-career connections to the Brooklyn Waterfront, Lower Manhattan, and Long Island, focusing on the texts he wrote during the years he lived there. At the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, students in a class team-taught by Mara Scanlon and Brady Earnhart would consider Whitman’s mid-career writings and experiences as a Civil War nurse in Washington, DC. Students in two classes taught separately by Tyler Hoffman and

Carol Singley at Rutgers University–Camden would investigate Whitman’s late career in the city where he spent the final decade of his life. The roster of schools eventually expanded when Karen Karbiener received a Fulbright Fellowship to Serbia and decided to include her class at the University of Novi Sad rather than the one at NYU.

A year of planning began in 2008 after the project received its first grant from NEH. During this phase, the project team, including faculty members, instructional technologists, and consulting Whitman scholars, held a series of in-person and online meetings to create shared assignments and activities and to train faculty members on project technologies. During this planning year, a team of technologists and web designers constructed the project website (<http://lookingforwhitman.org>) and began to create supporting materials. A second grant in 2009 helped fund additional technical support, curriculum development, project meetings, and a student conference that brought participants together in person at the end of the project.

Assignments created during the planning year formed the basis of connection among classes, fostering the creation of a project-wide community during the fall 2009 semester. Assignments ranged from “The Frontispiece Project,” where students across locations introduced themselves to one another using Whitman’s 1855 *Leaves of Grass* frontispiece as a model, to “The Material Culture Museum,” a collaboratively built virtual museum in which students examined the context of Whitman’s work through objects mentioned in his poetry, such as surgical saws or a ticket to one of Lincoln’s lectures. Other projects included networked annotations of Whitman’s poetry and “Finding Whitman,” a map of short videos of students reading Whitman’s poetry in locations relevant to his work.

Innovative Cross-Institutional Collaboration

While “Looking for Whitman” operated within existing curricular and disciplinary frameworks, it also subverted codified elements of those structures. Perhaps most radically, the project brought participants into virtual learning spaces linked across very different types of schools, including an open-admissions public college of technology, a highly selective and private research-intensive university, a public liberal arts college, and a public research university. Each course explicitly engaged learners with very different backgrounds and knowledge bases. At the University of Mary Washington, senior English majors took the course as a capstone experience. At Rutgers, one class engaged a mix of undergraduate English majors and master’s students, while the other served as an introduction to disciplinary methodology for new graduate students in English. At City Tech, third-year undergraduates took the course as part of their general education requirements. Graduate students at the University of Novi Sad added an angle of international collaboration that resonated with recent trends in Whitman scholarship and American Studies and reframed the poet’s work within global contexts.

In a significant way, the act of bringing together students from selective and open-admission colleges, undergraduate and graduate departments, struck at the heart of the systems of privilege and exclusivity that gird the power and prestige of many educational institutions. Elite schools typically promise prospective students sheltered learning experiences with accomplished faculty and the best and brightest of their peers. Just as Whitman’s vast poetic catalogues leveled differences between citizens, so too did “Looking for Whitman” penetrate the boundaries that educational institutions have erected around themselves. In the spirit of Whitman’s democratic beliefs,



Students participating in the Looking for Whitman project visit the Brooklyn Historical Society. (Photo by Matthew K. Gold)

it offered the possibility that a radically diverse mix of students could enrich one another’s learning, with the place-based orientation ensuring that even the least advanced student could contribute unique material that would be valuable to students in other venues. Place-based learning thus became a great leveler, one that buttressed the ability of all students to contribute to the larger conversation.

Future projects based on this model of interconnected courses across institutions might benefit from some lessons learned through “Looking for Whitman”:

- Real barriers to connection—socio-economic differences between institutions and students, level of academic preparedness in shared subject matter, and willingness to share material—must be addressed openly. Students indicated that more face-to-face social engagement with students from other classes, especially at the beginning of the semester, would have made them feel more at ease with one another.
- Given funding limitations, future experimenters hoping to foster

cross-campus projects should consider options to reduce costs. These might include implementing shorter periods of cross-campus collaboration and connection (week-long as opposed to semester-long projects), working with faculty members who are already proficient in the technologies to be used, and building on platforms for collaboration that have already been developed.

Ultimately, the learning experiences that can be fostered through cross-campus digital collaborations are too powerful to be ignored. As one student wrote in response to a survey question, “I am taking an English class unlike any other English class I have ever taken.” ☐

Editor’s note: For more examples of digital humanities work supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, see www.neh.gov/ODH.

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[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Discourse and Democracy

■ **MARTIN LANG**, associate professor of communication studies, and **LEILA BRAMMER**, professor of communication studies—both of Gustavus Adolphus College

“Life changing,” “empowering,” and “inspiring”: this is how students have described Public Discourse, an innovative approach to civic education at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. Strategic planning and assessment led the Communication Studies Department to infuse the core disciplinary concepts of deliberation, democracy, and civic life throughout our curriculum. Public Discourse, created to replace the traditional public speaking course, emerged as a keystone in that curriculum and has revolutionized our approach to civic education. In teaching methods of effective

the city council, organize neighborhood committees, or persuade businesses to modify their practices. As they refine and implement their plans, students facilitate public dialogue through presentations, meetings, and open conversations with community members. They also engage in dialogue in the cooperative classroom setting, where they share progress and advice and reflect together about community, citizenship, and democracy.

Through their exchanges with community members, students come to recognize the complexity of their chosen issue and the differing perspectives of stakeholders.

Students come to see themselves as vital contributors to, not mere observers of, community conversations.

citizenship, Public Discourse has empowered students, energized faculty, and spurred sustainable community change.

The course—required for our major but drawing enrollment from across campus—teaches the skills of deliberative inquiry and collaboration, including collaborative research, critical thinking, argument development, and problem solving. At its heart is a semester-long civic engagement project that requires students to identify and address a problem in a community of which they are part. Each student selects and defines a problem, researches the issue to establish its causes and implications, studies other communities facing similar challenges, and actively engages the community in addressing the issue.

After identifying appropriate ways to address their chosen issue, students take action. They propose motions to

They quickly learn that realistic, sustainable progress is impossible without addressing the breadth of relevant perspectives; in this way, engaging diversity becomes a practical resource for problem solving as well as a tool used in service of real and inclusive democracy. Thus the projects provide important *intrinsic* motivation (beyond extrinsic moral obligations or social mandates) for students to deeply and authentically engage diversity.

Throughout the process, students come to see themselves as vital contributors to, not mere observers of, community conversations. Their projects give them real-world opportunities to hone new skills in uncontrolled environments, requiring them to practice effective deliberation in meeting actual community needs. Over the course of the semester, students embrace both the opportunities and responsibilities of their newfound role

as citizens. Past projects have addressed a range of concerns, including bovine growth hormone in local school lunches, toxic chemicals in local well water, food waste at a local bakery, and traffic control at dangerous intersections. (See Madison Pettit’s article on page 19 of this issue for more examples.) About one-quarter of students reach their intended project goals within the course, but most continue their advocacy well after the semester ends.

Students achieve community outcomes, encounter their communities as active citizens, and show significant gains in content knowledge, skill acquisition, and community investment. They complete the class with the capacity and motivation to make positive change in the world around them. They also become practiced in the deliberative collaboration essential to effective membership in diverse communities. Moreover, assessment data show that Public Discourse yields stronger student gains in critical thinking, research, communication, and leadership skills than were generated by the traditional public speaking course it replaced.

These powerful outcomes result from the pairing of course content with the principles of active citizenship, allowing students to see classroom learning put to consequential use. Their personal investment in community dialogues (and the diverse perspectives therein) drives them to new levels of engagement and proficiency. The successes of Public Discourse have provided the foundation and momentum for our department to continue implementing other ambitious curricular innovations, including establishing a new faculty line in public advocacy and civic leadership, developing related course offerings at advanced levels, and launching a new minor in civic leadership. Ideally, our efforts will continue to enhance and enrich deliberative democracy by empowering citizens to act in their communities. □

[PERSPECTIVE]

Realizing Our Potential as Active Citizens

■ **MADISON PETTIT**, senior majoring in communication studies at Gustavus Adolphus College

“The class inspired me to be an agent of change for the rest of my life, beyond just the one semester.” Matthew Wasson’s reflection about his Public Discourse experience is one that many students share. Throughout the semester, students actively engage outside of the classroom, thoughtfully take action as citizens of their communities, and gain marketable skills for the future. They leave Public Discourse changed both inside and out.

My personal Public Discourse journey began in fall 2010. I regarded the class as a mandatory requirement and worried that my project would “fail.” I soon realized the class was about much more than the outcome of a single project: it would be a significant influence on me and my education.

For my project, I chose to help improve residential life at a local nursing home by initiating student visits from a nearby school. My project entailed strategic thinking, numerous phone calls, and speeches to the entire staff of an elementary school. I had to research and develop solutions, negotiating actions that were satisfying to all parties involved. I was pushed far beyond my comfort zone, but I now regard myself as an agent of change: someone who does not wait for others to act but steps up as a responsible member of her community.

As I spoke recently with my classmates, I realized that aspects of our experiences with Public Discourse were universal. Regardless of our projects’ outcomes, we all left the course empowered with newfound realizations about ourselves as individuals and as members of communities.

For Brittany Knutson, the process of researching a problem and its solution taught her to appreciate her role in community as well as diversity in the world around her. “My project began as a search for solutions to the economic and other problems that Native Americans face on reservations; however, following a question from a peer, I realized I needed to shift my focus to raising awareness of

We all left the course empowered with newfound realizations about ourselves as individuals and as members of communities.

a culture that is an integral part of our diverse community,” said Brittany.

That question, regarding Brittany’s status as a non-Native American who cannot know Native experiences firsthand, brought her project into focus and created a clear, attainable goal. “I realized that community is something in which I am integrated. Although the problems Native Americans face seemingly do not affect me, they are members of a community in which I have a stake. In response, I decided to create a conversation about Native American culture on campus.”

Blia Xiong’s project lasted much longer than one semester. While working in Minneapolis to help an immigrant community whose businesses were adversely affected by a long-term construction project, Blia contacted an organization that later offered her a summer

internship. Through it, Blia gained a new perspective on community and a sense of purpose.

“I realized that as a member of my community, I am the one who needs to take initiative and get things done instead of waiting for someone to do it for me. I look for solutions now when I see problems,” said Blia.

Matthew Wasson’s project successfully implemented a recycling program in his local school district. His sense of accomplishment is symbolic of the power Public Discourse has to reshape student outlook and instill a sense of self and purpose.

“Public Discourse has empowered me to talk more confidently, and the time-management and project-manage-

ment skills [I learned] are responsible for my success in college. . . . I focus more on the problems I see in my surroundings now rather than just ignoring them, and I focus on what can be done. I ask bigger questions and am confident in asking the ‘whys,’” said Matthew.

As our generation moves into the future, we face many daunting problems. Diversity of ideas and experience are critical to maintaining vibrant democracy. Experiences like Public Discourse are a critical step toward realizing our power to face and overcome problems while working with communities and learning to coexist with our neighbors. ☐

Editor’s note: For more about Gustavus Adolphus’s Public Discourse Requirement, see Martin Lang and Leila Brammer’s article on page 18.

[PERSPECTIVE]

Global Learning through Hip-Hop

■ SOPHIA SERGHI, professor of music at the College of William and Mary

In summer 2009, driven by a desire to meet Nobel Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai, I signed up for a service trip to help build an orphanage and school in Kibera, the largest slum in Africa. I embarked for Nairobi, Kenya, with no tools or knowledge specific to the task at hand. But I did bring along my flute and baby guitar, thinking I'd use them for composing music while on the trip.

On arriving, our team started building a new kitchen for the school using giant stones and hand-mixed

each student came to the microphone to deliver a solo that the others supported with beat-boxing antics. Each rap included the student's name and age, and an account of his or her personal story and hopes for the future. The students became rappers, while the local social workers collected ample information to begin re-establishing contact with lost family members.

Inspired by this experience, I returned to William and Mary ready to teach a new freshman seminar

I hoped that students would come to see hip-hop as a common language and a tool for social change, around the world and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa.

cement. During our first lunch break, I interacted with teenage students who had recently been orphaned by civil unrest following the 2007 presidential election. The school's social workers and teachers were anxious to understand these students' stories, but they were unsure of how to encourage students to share them.

During lunch the next day, I engaged with students by playing my instruments and making up songs. I quickly realized that their innate musical ability was far advanced. On the third day of our visit, I pulled out a microphone to record their indigenous songs—but I ended up using it as a hip-hop prop instead.

In the following days, some 350 students rapped about losing their families in the 2008 riots. One by one,

called Hip-Hop in Sub-Saharan Africa. Facing fifteen eager first-year students on the first day, I began by admitting that I knew nothing about the topic and was counting on them to join me in a collective process of teaching and learning. I almost expected students to stand up and leave *en masse*, but they allowed me to share my experience in Kibera. I hoped that they would come to see hip-hop as a common language and a tool for social change, around the world and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa.

I assigned each student a sub-Saharan country to adopt and represent for the duration of the course. Students would learn about the history of their assigned country and the evolution of local musical styles and genres by creating portfolios that fea-

tured local hip-hop musicians, dancers, and graffiti artists, and included political journalism. They would also interact with local university students and hip-hop artists through new media like Facebook and Skype.

To complement their developing knowledge, students composed original hip-hop music on a weekly basis. These compositions focused on raising awareness about cultural, health, and political issues such as AIDS, female genital mutilation, political unrest, and hunger. The class held an exhibition of original student graffiti art at sanctioned spaces around campus, and we hosted a hip-hop party where students deejayed their own and local artists' music and led hip-hop dancing workshops. Students also completed rigorous writing assignments, including weekly papers on current events and two large research papers.

Student evaluations confirmed the course's success, and recent interviews conducted with students (now juniors) revealed that the course was instrumental in their development into open-minded scholars who actively seek crossroads between disciplines and ways to engage in the global community. My own knowledge of this evolving and diverse genre has deepened and grown. I am excited to teach Hip-Hop in Sub-Saharan Africa as an upper-level seminar in spring 2013.

I did meet Wangari Maathai during my first trip to Kenya. I remember her passionately describing how the privilege of higher education broadened her horizons and encouraged her to work to improve life for people in Kenya and in Africa at large. I hope my students feel that the privilege of studying African issues through hip-hop has broadened their horizons and encouraged them to focus on global solutions that improve life in the developing world. ☐

[PERSPECTIVE]

Humanistic Mathematics: An Oxymoron?

■ GIZEM KARAALI, assistant professor of mathematics, Pomona College

Mathematics faculty are trained as mathematicians, first and foremost. If we did not experience the soul-expanding possibilities of liberal education during our own undergraduate years, we may hesitate to bridge disciplinary divides when pursuing our core human need to inquire and understand. Although most mathematicians I know are amazing teachers, communicators, and mentors, many still teach the same material that their professors and their professors' professors taught. This time-tested approach can be powerful, fascinating, and even quite entertaining. But it can also seem far removed from the world we inhabit. Yes, we teach "real world applications" of mathematical concepts. Yet our students rarely feel the need to take math outside of the classroom, live with it, and incorporate it into their understanding of life.

After several years of trying to tease humanistic elements into my otherwise standard mathematics classes, I volunteered in Fall 2011 to teach one of Pomona College's first-year seminars. These writing-intensive, discussion-oriented courses require students to read analytically and write experimentally, to critically examine works of art while creating original art of their own. Although I found the seminar format unfamiliar, I was eager for the opportunity to develop a truly interdisciplinary course in humanistic mathematics.

Following my humanist colleagues' example, I chose an intriguing question to guide the semester's activities: Can Zombies Do Math? Clearly, the focus on zombies was strategic: I knew students would be attracted to the bloody stench of the undead. But beneath the

catchy title lay serious course goals. Mathematics is a decidedly human endeavor, requiring a certain comfort with ambiguity balanced with a deep desire to find elegant simplicity in complex patterns. Mathematicians often struggle to convey these ideas to society at large; I wanted to create a course where students, fresh off the factory line that is high-stakes-testing-driven K–12 education, would be exposed to them.

Over the course of the semester, we explored several written texts and movies that spoke to the seminar themes, including the summer reading for first-year students, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*. Students reviewed novels, interviewed mathematicians, and wrote about the two serious questions underlying the course title: What does it mean to be human? What is the true nature of mathematics? They also tackled the notions of proof, ambiguity, and generalization through hands-on activities on fractals, tropical geometry, graph theory, and permutation groups. The culminating writing assignment asked students to resolve the puzzle that began the journey: Can zombies do math? In other words, what makes us human, and how does this relate to mathematics?

I hoped that these questions would engage students in inquiry about math as a value-laden system. A mathematical modeling research article on zombie attacks introduced the idea of values in a lighthearted way, but underscored that "possible real-life applications may include allegiance to political parties, or diseases with a dormant infection" (Munz et al. 2010, 146). As the class

engaged with this and other texts, G. H. Hardy's oft-cited quip—"A science is said to be useful if its development tends to accentuate the existing inequalities in the distribution of wealth, or more directly promotes the destruction of human life" ([1940] 2005, 33)—was often in the foreground. We challenged this quote by exploring ethically positive mathematical contributions, including mathematical models of tumor growth and Lily Khadjavi's work on racial profiling in Los Angeles traffic stops (1996). In the process, students confronted ethical ambiguities that arise when using mathematics as a tool.

Throughout the semester, students enthusiastically discussed course themes with roommates, suitemates, and friends who were intrigued by the class. They felt obligated to develop a coherent stance, not only for the sake of their grades, but because they wanted to share an intellectually stimulating experience with their peers and contribute to it as experts. In the end, we reached course goals—including comfort with a certain level of ambiguity and appreciation for the human dimensions of mathematics—while reveling in undead fiction and straightforward mathematical fun. ☐

Editor's note: For more information about the course described here, see Gizem Karaali's article "In Defense of Frivolous Questions" in the April 10, 2012 issue of Inside Higher Education.

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In Print

***“Come Closer”*: Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed, edited by Toby Emert and Ellie Friedland (Peter Lang Publishing 2011, \$33.95 paperback)**

This engaging collection illustrates the variety of ways in which Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed can be adapted to address socially pertinent issues in a range of educational settings. Although readers will benefit from previous knowledge of Boal’s techniques (and of Paulo Freire’s educational theories, which heavily influenced Boal’s work), the book will surely evoke interest among those newly acquainted with this much-loved methodology. Chapters feature provocative perspectives on how theater arts can be used to empower students toward social change, and generative critique of Boal’s approach to doing so.

The Word: Black Writers Talk About the Transformative Power of Reading and Writing, edited by Marita Golden (Broadway Paperbacks 2011, \$14.99 paperback)

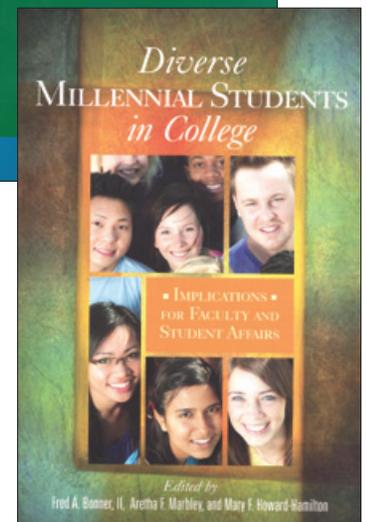
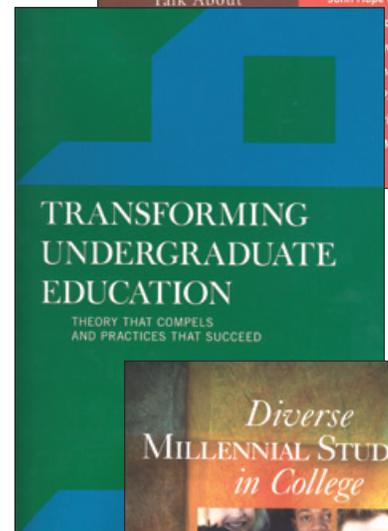
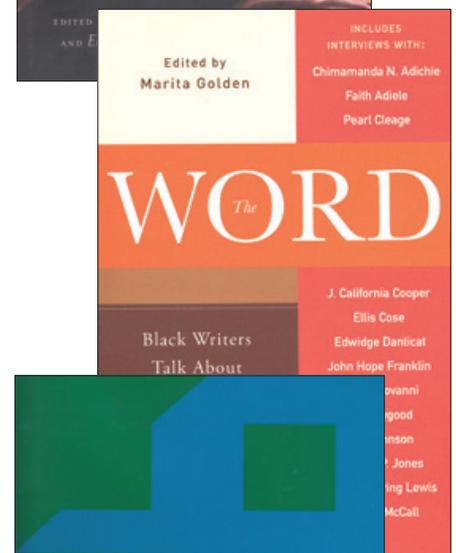
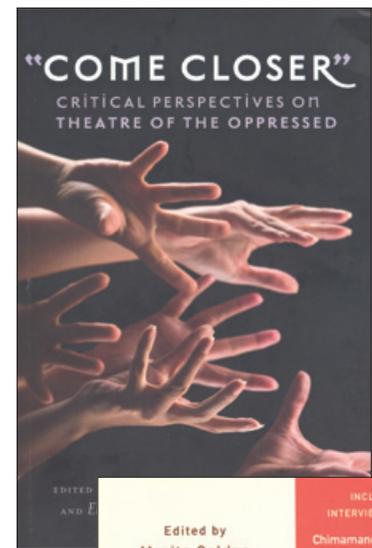
Marita Golden’s interviews with thirteen preeminent black writers explore the powerful role of the written word in shaping their personal and cultural identities and fostering their sense of citizenship and interdependence with others. Golden engages insightfully with writers such as Ellis Cose, Edwidge Danticat, Nikki Giovanni, and Edward P. Jones, who form a choir of voices calling for renewed national investment in reading and writing education. This book may be valuable for educators seeking to demonstrate the power and possibilities that reading and writing offer all learners, particularly underserved or misrepresented students.

Transforming Undergraduate Education: Theory that Compels and Practices that Succeed, edited by Donald W. Harward (Rowman and Littlefield 2011, \$30.00 hardcover)

This provocative and forward-looking collection of essays envisions the possibilities for a transformed academy where liberal education is central to student and civic well-being. Edited by Donald W. Harward, director of AAC&U partner project Bringing Theory to Practice, the book combines big-picture thinking with concrete analysis of existing programs to explore ambitious possibilities for higher education’s future. With several chapters written by AAC&U leaders, the volume resonates deeply with AAC&U’s work in support of liberal education as a civic good.

Diverse Millennial Students in College: Implications for Faculty and Student Affairs, edited by Fred A. Bonner II, Aretha F. Marbley, and Mary F. Howard-Hamilton (Stylus 2011, \$29.95 paperback)

This edited volume interrogates the stereotypes ascribed to millennial students in relation to those students’ diverse characteristics, primarily their race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In revealing how assumptions about millennials may or may not apply across different groups, contributors challenge the view of millennial students as a monolithic group while confirming aspects of millennial identity. The book makes important advances toward complicating assumptions about today’s traditionally-aged college students without eschewing a level of generalization necessary to understanding particular groups and subgroups.



Resources

Imagining America

Imagining America is a consortium of stakeholders within and beyond higher education “dedicated to advancing the public and civic purposes of humanities, arts, and design.” The consortium exerts leadership in aligning higher education values and practices for the public good with projects on tenure structures and full participation, among others. To learn about the consortium and its work, visit www.imaginingamerica.org.

Public Philosophy Network

The Public Philosophy Network is a free online forum designed to “create a democratized space where reflection on public philosophy [can] take place” and to “support philosophers (and those in related fields) who do publically engaged work.” The forum includes affinity groups on topics such as “Gender and Love,” “Ethics and Social Media,” and “Philosophers in the City.” To join, visit <http://publicphilosophynetwork.ning.com>.

Community College Humanities Association

The Community College Humanities Association (CCHA) “serves as a catalyst for defining the issues which face humanities faculty and administrators today, finding solutions to problems in the field, and establishing a communications network for humanists.” Drawing national membership from five regional divisions, CCHA coordinates conferences and grant projects related to its mission. To learn more, visit www.ccha-assoc.org.

Opportunities

Modeling Equity, Engaging Difference: New Frameworks for Diversity and Learning

AAC&U’s biennial meeting on diversity in higher education will take place on October 18–20, 2012, in Baltimore, Maryland. Titled “Modeling Equity, Engaging Difference: New Frameworks for Diversity and Learning,” the meeting will engage participants in a series of questions about the contemporary meaning of diversity and the role of higher education in addressing inequity in today’s world. To learn more or to register, visit www.aacu.org/meetings/diversityandlearning/DL2012/index.cfm.

American Democracy Project 2012 National Meeting

The American Democracy Project, an initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, will hold its tenth annual National Meeting on June 7–9, 2012, in San Antonio, Texas. This year’s meeting will focus on the theme “Civic Engagement 2.0: Re-Imagining, Strengthening and Deepening Our Civic Work,” and will explore strategies to “move the preparation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy from margin to center on our campuses.” To learn more, visit www.aascu.org/programs/ADP.

Imagining America 2012 National Conference

Imagining America will hold its annual conference, titled “Linked Fates and Futures: Communities and Campuses as Equitable Partners?” in New York City on October 5–7, 2012. The conference will invite participants to explore three thematic areas: Full, Equitable Partnerships; Linking Diversity and Engagement; and Arts, Culture, and Community and Economic Development. To learn more about the conference and its connection to Imagining America’s mission of advancing the public and civic purposes of humanities, arts, and design, visit <http://imaginingamerica.org/convenings/national-conference>.

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Upcoming AAC&U Meetings

MEETING	LOCATION	DATES
Modeling Equity, Engaging Difference: New Frameworks for Diversity and Learning	<i>Baltimore, Maryland</i>	OCTOBER 18-20, 2012
Next Generation STEM Learning: Investigate, Innovate, Inspire	<i>Kansas City, Missouri</i>	NOVEMBER 8-10, 2012
AAC&U Annual Meeting 2013	<i>Atlanta, Georgia</i>	JANUARY 23-26, 2013

AAC&U Associates

Enrollment in the Associates program provides an opportunity for individuals on AAC&U member campuses to advance core purposes and best practices in undergraduate education and to strengthen their collaboration with AAC&U's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives. Associates pay \$60 per calendar year and receive the same benefits as AAC&U Campus Representatives, including subscriptions to our print publications, *Liberal Education*, *Peer Review*, and *Diversity & Democracy*, electronic copies of *On Campus with Women*, invitations to apply for grant-funded projects, and advance notice of calls for proposals for institutes and meetings. For more information, please visit www.aacu.org or call Renée Gamache at 202-884-0809.

About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,250 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

From AAC&U Board Statement on Liberal Learning

AAC&U believes that by its nature...liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.