

# Letters

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## New World Networks

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A simple Google image search for “network” yields a kaleidoscope of options—from a biologist’s map of protein cells to a visualization of the Twitter universe. Physicists and computer scientists have also worked on mapping the ever-expanding network of the Internet itself. One of these maps, rendered in 2002 by physicist Albert-László Barabási, depicts the directed networks of the Web “through the topology of continents, archipelagos, and islands,” in which the centralized “continental” traffic of the Internet is surrounded by smaller “disconnected” islands and peripheral “tendrils,” dispersed and separated from the major continents. These networks spread across and beyond the mappable space, often drifting beyond the margins of the constructed visual plane (Terranova 48; Barabási 166-67).

An earlier chapter in the evolution of network visualization took place in 1963, aboard the *New Hellas*, which carried a group of thirty-four intellectuals from around the world for the inaugural installment of an annual, week-long retreat through the Greek Islands. The Delos retreats, as they came to be known, were the brainchild of Greek architect and urban planner Constantinos Doxiadis, father of ekistics (the science of human settlements). The purpose of these symposia, as architect Mark Wigley has explained, was to mix “intellectual activity” with “sensual pleasure,” as the boat traveled the isles. The group would have intense theoretical debates about architectural discourse in the morning, and would leave the boat in the afternoon to swim, tour, eat, and enjoy the offerings of the islands. The retreats included experts from fields as diverse as psychiatry, engineering, anthropology, literature, history, and metalurgy. Among them was theorist Marshall



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McLuhan, who advocated, along with Doxiadis, for a joint vision of networks and settlements as living, changing “organisms” that were “at once biological and technological, a technology with a biology” (Wigley 377).

Networks became the theme of subsequent Delos retreats, helping to solidify McLuhan’s notion of the electronic “global village,” and Buckminster Fuller’s notion of the computer as a prosthetic brain. In one of his more animated presentations, Fuller actually rolled around on the floor of the ship to demonstrate his ideas of synergy (Wigley 386). These trips, then, both theorized and performed the rudiments of network structure: adrift amidst the islands, the group agreed to forego all forms of media communication (though announcements and press releases always turned them into media events before the group even set sail), and created a community

out of this staged severance that would have global implications. This staged “primitivism” went right through to the closing ceremony of the inaugural session, in which a declaration (urging universities to create academic disciplines devoted to the study of human settlements) was signed by everyone in an ancient theater on the island of Delos (380).

There is a striking peculiarity to all of these images—of a model of the Web that resembles an infinite series of continents and archipelagos, of a sailing vessel that brings together diverse peoples to ruminate on the links between embodied and virtual networks, and of an annual retreat that performs a white fantasy of primitivism as an inspiration for technological innovation. They all link the organic to the technological, and the historic to the contemporary. The cartographic imagery of the Web and the imperialist “New World” fantasy of the Delos retreat remind us, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have done, that empire, too, functions as “a network of powers and counterpowers” (166).

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This evolving vision of the postindustrial new world of the information age, expressed as it is through the familiar visual cues of empire—of maps, ships, islands, and declarations—also harkens back to the original New World architects who first linked the embodied and the virtual together in Atlantic waters, as they reached the “meta-archipelago” of the Americas aboard slave ships over four centuries ago (Benítez-Rojo 4).

The New World archipelago, as Caribbeanist scholars like Antonio Benítez-Rojo and Édouard Glissant have described it, merged the histories of Europeans, Africans, and indigenous populations together in a complicated web that mirrored the “sociocultural fluidity” of today’s virtual Web, with its own “historiographic turbulence and its ethnological and linguistic clamor.” Benítez-Rojo described this New World space as a “repeating island,” not unlike like today’s expansive Internet mapped by Barabási and others, continuously “unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and lands of the earth, while at the same time it inspires multidisciplinary maps of unexpected design” (3).

Like images of the contemporary Internet universe, the culture of this historic meta-archipelago also resists mapping and situatedness, because it is similarly rhizomatic, “a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently” (Glissant 11; Deleuze and Guattari 7). Slave networks of this earlier period—diverse, invisible, and proliferating—were like the virtual networks of today, traceable only through the flow of information.

These are the links I seek to trace in my research here at the Warren Center. In my new book project, “Virtual Emancipation: Slavery and New World Networks,” I employ historical and contemporary readings of literature and social network theory to look back at earlier acts of social and political resistance that thwarted narratives of origin and the traceability of individual acts even as they relied on hierarchical structures within the institution of slavery to achieve their aims. From carefully-orchestrated slave revolts like those in Haiti and Louisiana, to spontaneous and continued acts of marronage that sprouted in independent communities in Brazil, Suriname, Jamaica, and other parts of the Americas, I trace the emergence, the survival, and the spread of community networks forged by alliances of communal kinship and secrecy, and backed by a common desire for freedom that was (economically) wrested from, but (ideologically) parallel to, the founding propositions of New World settlement.

### *Slave Networks*

In *Digital Diaspora* (2009), race and media scholar Anna Everett discusses the emergence of African diasporic consciousness in “the darkened abyss below the decks” of European slave ships during the Middle Passage. “Severed from the familiar terrain of their homelands and dispatched to the overcrowded bowels of slave vessels,” she explains, these “ethnically and nationally diverse Africans” forged “a virtual community of intercultural kinship structures,” and developed “paralinguistic and transnational communicative systems,” as well as “new languages in which to express them” (2). Some of these new social relations, as historians like Richard Price have also demonstrated, were formed in the journey itself. “Saramaccan máti and síbi,” ritual kinship forms that imply solidarity, he explains, “referred originally to the experience of having shared passage aboard the same slave ship” (27-8).

These burgeoning networks, of course, lay the foundation for the formation of maroon communities, the foment of revolt at sea and on land, and the movement of information across the Atlantic, as scholars like Keletso Atkins, Orlando Patterson, Marcus Rediker, Julius Scott, and many others have discussed. For example, Atkins points to the “Afro-North American sailors” and “sea kafirs” from the United States and the Caribbean who were key players in a Black Atlantic communication network that “gathered news and disseminated accounts” as far south as the Cape of Good Hope about the revolution in Saint Domingue in the 1790s. This intelligence “relayed by word of mouth along trade routes, inspired resistance in slave communities throughout the region” (23). In this broader Atlantic space, explains Atkins, “the Cape of Good Hope was strategically positioned at the southernmost end of a great commercial and information highway. It carried a flow of news—including sensational rumors, foretelling immediate emancipation, whispered intelligence of slave insurrections,” and of course, “continuous updates on Saint Domingue” (24).

The movement of information across networks in and beyond the New World and its colonial metropolises is similar to the way information moves across the Internet—not in terms of simultaneity, of course, but certainly in its multidirectional proliferation, in the collapse of geographic and cultural distance, and in the use of ephemerality and invisibility. The way this space has been described by scholars of the Black Atlantic is similarly diffuse and as constitutionally

expansive as the map of the Internet. Indeed, from sixteenth-century maroon communities to Sun Ra’s *Space is the Place* (1974), New World architects of the African Diaspora have been re-rendering space in this dispersive way long before the architectural planners of the 1960s and the Internet mappers of the 1990s.

### *Network Temporality*

The spatial terminology used to define the Internet—cyberspace, website, email address—belies its ephemerality, mobility, and nowhere-ness. Even the old-school tagline of “information superhighway” was at least more accurate, as it suggested movement and flow. But as the Delos intellectuals performed with their exploratory voyage out to sea, metaphors and histories of conquest, territory, and the marking of space are irrepressible. And so the Internet came to be defined as a new “electronic frontier” that had to be harnessed and populated by the right minds for the right purpose (Rheingold 1993). From the chaos of data and information would emerge the harmony of the virtual network.

Slave networks resisted this spatial harmony in two key ways. First, they emphasized and relied on the productivity of chaos as a camouflaging strategy for achieving their goals of freedom. Second, they understood that networks are inherently temporal not spatial. This is, in particular, what makes slave networks an interesting and useful comparison to our contemporary networked lives. For the enslaved, as an accidental assemblage of people in the transatlantic network, the organizing connection was one of shared trauma and shared journey, or more specifically, of “cultural unmaking,” as Hortense Spillers has called it (75). But this unmaking and eventual transformative remaking is not locatable as a singular site of trauma, but rather is an ongoing and multiple process of remaking. From kin to culture to religion to politics, slave communities carved a new world ontology out of uprootedness and spacelessness—a temporal ontology that revolved around movement, performance, and change. For “real networks,” as researcher Duncan Watts has explained, are not “objects of pure structure whose properties are fixed in time” as they have been viewed in the past. Instead, they “represent populations of individual components that are actually doing something—generating power, sending data... making decisions” (28).

Props and staging aside, Doxiadis had also argued that “the real dimensions of cities is not space, but time” (Wigley 378). To understand these dimensions, we must replace

the fictional ideal of settlement, borders, and form with the constitutive reality of migration and change. Migration, too, is not simply the movement of people from one space to another, but rather, a movement that continuously alters people and space—the becoming that happens in and through duration, as philosopher Henri Bergson has argued. For Bergson, movement is not merely “a linear translation of an object through space,” but rather, a complicated process of potential growth that emphasizes “the virtuality of duration,” or “the qualitative change that every movement brings, not only to that which moves, but also the space that it moves in” (Terranova 51).

Édouard Glissant’s idea of “circular nomadism” exemplifies this in specifically cultural terms, as the nomadic group ensures its survival through constant movement, forming “an impossible settlement,” like the Arawak, for example, who moved from island to island in the Caribbean, and like African maroons, rebels, and planners who resisted the unilateral direction of their commodification (12). These early networks, as I argue in my own work, did not just occupy the New World, but rather did something novel to and for this space. Keenly aware of the spatial and legal parameters of personhood, they also understood the porousness of these borders, and “hacked” them whenever they could (Everett 160).

Established maroon communities were, of course, dependent on space and territory to solidify their separatist claims, but the key to their viability was inaccessibility. From the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia to the rugged “cockpit country” of Trelawny, Jamaica, these bands of fugitives staked out portions of land that were strategically nowhere to those outside the group. Even those who were new to the community were led in by blindfold or circuitous routes so they could not betray their location to enemies and outsiders (Price 5, 17). Acts of petit maronnage—of repetitive, periodic truancy—are also good examples of this kind of invisible viability and power, as are the more complicated movements of individual fugitives.

Harriet Jacobs’ 1861 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* stands as one such example of the performance of a network temporality that resists the terms of spatial confinement. Readers can see how attenuated space gives way to a wider temporality in Jacobs’ detailed narration of her slow escape. In a preamble to her eventual journey to the North, Jacobs first hides from her master in the home of her (free) grandmother, close to the North

Carolina plantation where Jacobs had been enslaved since birth. By burying her body for seven years in the coffin-like garret above her grandmother’s house, “covered with nothing but shingles . . . only nine feet long and seven wide . . . with no admission for either light or air” (114), Jacobs trades her (legally limited, nineteenth-century) physical mobility for a ghostly social mobility, relying on a network of family and friends below to deliver her letters to her master. Through these letters (which she has people from her network mail from New York during her exile), Jacobs’ words move in place of her body, and she is able to make Flint chase her narrative ghost across the northeast for years. Her disembodied presence and her puppeteering of the people below allow her to exercise a virtual, non-corporeal power that prophesies a more contemporary performance of personhood in the virtual space of the information age.

Such performances resisted political erasure but they also resisted the constant informational accounting of slave bodies, as evidenced in the numerous, detailed advertisements written by masters in search of fugitive slaves like Jacobs herself, in the immaculate ledgers kept by captains of slave ships, and of course, in rulings like the three-fifths compromise that would allow southern U.S. states to count their slave demographic in determining seats available in the House of Representatives. Information technology certainly had a vital role to play in the transatlantic slave trade, but it worked alongside these resistant networks—the ghosts inside its meticulously ordered machinery.

These acts of disruption, whether temporary or permanent, help us to think about slave temporality as resistant to fixity and situatedness in the same way that information flows are resistant. The sudden erasure of space and time for slaves boarded onto European sailing vessels—the social death of which Orlando Patterson has famously written, and the birth of a necropolitics that emerges from it, as Achille Mbembe has discussed—opened the possibility of a new model of becoming that was inherently mobile, resistant, and political.

### *Technologies of Race and Emancipation: Past and Present*

Slave experience in the New World, as my work explores it, is not intended to stand as a symbolic or heroic origin story of contemporary social network theory. And certainly, the physical, psychological, and political costs of slavery require a more sustained and expansive treatment than what I am able to offer in this brief introduction. Rather, what this compari-

son seeks to encourage is a reconceptualization of race as a technology and foundational element of New World political formation. As Wendy Chun has elegantly argued, a reconfiguration of “race as technology” allows us to “shift the focus from the what of race to the how of race, from knowing race to doing race” (38). It also collapses the manufactured distance between disciplinary practices such as biology, engineering, art, and culture, which are part of the same technological apparatus of making, unmaking, and becoming. Without this shift in focus from disciplinary and disciplining spaces to an interdisciplinary process that emphasizes the productive centrality of race in the construction of globality, there can be no radical politics of difference—only the mapping, ordering, managing, or obliteration of it, all of which are byproducts of an old, disciplinary order invested in the fiction of stasis.

As our Sawyer Seminar, “Black Freedom in the Atlantic World,” explores the unauthorized movement of bodies, ideas, and artifacts across Atlantic spaces in the Age of Emancipation, we are continually addressing similar questions about the spread of information, people, and objects across the New World, and the limits of the archive in tracing and documenting these filtered or occluded histories. A facile reading of the information age might lead us to utopian conclusions about the democratic potential of today’s networks, and the long-anticipated arrival of a global, electronically-mediated revolution, as McLuhan had forecast, in which there are, finally, “no secrets.” But our seminar discussions about the original hackers of the New World reveal the ways in which networks, as inherently informational and performative, are in fact capable of keeping all manner of secrets, thereby always holding the potential to dismantle the system from the inside (viii).

This political hacking continues in the networked political revolutions of today, as in January 2011, when the Egyptian government failed in its attempt to shut down protests through the disabling of Internet access and mobile messaging systems. Thousands of young Egyptians managed to spread the word, and blanketed the streets of Cairo, Port Said, Alexandria, Mansoura, Ismailia, Damietta, and Suez, among others, demanding an end to Hosni Mubarak’s thirty-year rule. Journalists and social media theorists have, of course, pointed to the significant role played by Facebook, Twitter, and blogs in contributing to the diffuse yet organized nature of these protests; the use of social media enabled an unprecedented number of separate dem-

onstrations to occur simultaneously on what was dubbed beforehand—in online posts and tweets—as an upcoming “day of wrath.”

But as I’ve outlined here, and hope to elucidate in my larger project, the power of social networks to achieve such momentum has a long, if less well-documented history in the Americas and throughout the world, especially within the complex structure of New World slavery. Exactly two centuries prior to these catalyzing events of the Arab Spring, for example, we can look back to the German Coast Uprising of January 1811, in which slaves spread word of a planned revolt among hundreds of their peers at plantations up and down the east coast of the Mississippi. Although Charles Deslondes is often credited as the hero of the uprising, historians have now pointed to as many as 11 separate leaders, representing various ethnic groups, and a vast network of communication that extended back through the Caribbean.

I believe that slave organizers of January 1811 have much to teach us about the kinds of social networks that inspired radical change in 2011. For as slave ships repeated their journeys across and back through Atlantic ports, new patterns of kinship were formed, sometimes temporary, sometimes lasting, and a new kind of network collectivity emerged. This new collectivity, as I’ve attempted to show, was not tied to the traditional organizations of geography, culture, or blood kin, but, like today’s global Internet, was a collectivity that emerged and strengthened precisely because of its lack of boundaries or traceable origin—anonymity and alienation became acts of strategic camouflage: because they were suddenly nowhere and no one, they could use information to be everyone everywhere—a collective movement against oppression.

*Professor Nihad M. Farooq is the 2012/2013 William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow from Georgia Technical Institute.*

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## 2012/2013 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows Lecture Series



*2012/2013 Warren Center Graduate Student Fellows. From left: Caroline L. Hovanec, G. Cory Duclos, Jennifer A. Vogt, Elizabeth S. Barnett, Paddy M. McQueen, Michael J. Alijewicz, Lara L. Giordano. Not pictured: Rosie M. Seagraves.*

Now in its seventh year, the Warren Center's annual Graduate Student Fellows Program currently sponsors seven outstanding Vanderbilt graduate students in the humanities and qualitative social sciences in a year-long fellowship program. These awards are designed to support innovation and excellence in graduate student research and allow the students a service-free year of support to enable full-time work on the dissertation. It is expected that students who receive this award will complete the dissertation during the fellowship term. Additionally, one graduate student from Queen's University in Belfast is selected to participate in the Graduate Student Fellows Program.

As part of their affiliation with the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, Fellows are integrated into the center's interdisciplinary scholarly community through participation in a weekly seminar, occasional seminars with visiting speakers, and special events. The capstone of the fellowship is the delivery of a public lecture during the spring term. The Graduate Student Fellows Lecture Series is an intellectually invigorating time at the Warren Center and we encourage you to plan to attend one or more of these talks by these outstanding young scholars.

Following is the schedule for this year's talks which will all take place at 4:10 p.m. in the Warren Center's conference room.

### *Tuesday, March 12*

**Paddy M. McQueen**

*Department of Philosophy, Queen's University (Belfast)* "The Struggle for Subjectivity: Recognition and the Politics of Gender"

### *Friday, March 15*

**Rosie M. Seagraves**, Joe and Mary Harper Fellow *Department of Spanish and Portuguese* "She as He: Cross-Dressing, Theater, and 'In-Betweens' in Early Modern Spain"

### *Tuesday, March 26*

**G. Cory Duclos**

*Department of Spanish and Portuguese* "Fighting from the Margins: Discourse, Subversion, and Realism in Early Modern Spanish Narrative"

### *Tuesday, April 2*

**Caroline L. Hovanec**, Elizabeth E. Fleming Fellow *Department of English* "Zoological Modernism: Literature, Science, and Animals, 1895-1933"

### *Monday, April 15*

**Michael J. Alijewicz**

*Department of English* "Nothing Is but What Is Not': Planning and Narrative in Early Modern England"

### *Wednesday, April 17*

**Elizabeth S. Barnett**, American Studies Fellow *Department of English* "A 'Curiously Irreconcilable Inheritance': Lynn Riggs and the Possibilities of Queer Allusion"

### *Tuesday, April 23*

**Jennifer A. Vogt**

*Department of Anthropology* "Respecting the Competition: Artisans, Development, and Cooperative Practices in Peruvian Andes"

### *Thursday, May 2*

**Lara L. Giordano**, George J. Graham Jr. Fellow *Department of Philosophy* "Redemptive Criticism: Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin, Stanley Cavell, and Democratic Culture"

# Highs and Lows: Sustaining the Humanities

Edward H. Friedman

When folks who still can ride in jitneys  
Find out Vanderbilts and Whitneys  
Lack baby clo'es,  
Anything goes.

Cole Porter, "Anything Goes"

This brief essay was inspired by the eighteenth annual Harry C. Howard, Jr., Lecture, "The Humanities in Our Times," delivered with conviction and eloquence at Vanderbilt University on October 18, 2012, by Dr. Edward L. Ayers, eminent and award-winning historian of the American South, president of the University of Richmond, and former professor and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia. Dr. Ayers addressed the importance of intersections among technology and the humanities, with a focus on his own work in digital history. He emphasized that the latest technologies have aided research scholars and students in all disciplines and that the way of technology is the path toward the future. It would be difficult, not to mention counterproductive, to refute the message of Dr. Ayer's talk. We must be aware—and train our students to be aware—of the exceedingly sophisticated resources that are available to them. There is no sacrifice involved in this enterprise. What Edward Ayers advocates is complementary to other analytical methods; it is a mode of expanding our horizons and supplementing the approaches that have served us in the past. In short, the use of advanced technologies is a win-win situation. For example, the Warren Center is hosting a HASTAC Scholar, Miriam Martin, and sponsors a seminar on the digital humanities. Here, I want to move to the other extreme in order to look at a low-tech phenomenon that strives for a meeting of minds: the simple act of reading, reflection, writing, discussion and debate, and further reflection. The method is as old as education itself, but it calls attention to the act and the art of word-processing from ground zero, and it is a part—substantial, but decidedly only a part—of a comprehensive pedagogical design, where high technology and low technology can intermingle and serve each other.

In one of my classes during the fall semes-

ter of 2012, I had the opportunity to discuss with students such topics as the casualties (broadly defined) of war, nostalgia for the Old South, family dynamics and dysfunction, racism and reactions to the civil rights movement, variations on the theme of the class system, feminism, gay and lesbian rights, Affirmative Action, identity in multiple combinations and permutations, civility and lack thereof, and the creation of art. The course was not in the field of the social sciences, but an Honors seminar with the title "Contemporary American Drama: Art, Culture, and Society." The primary readings included fifteen plays, five one-act plays, and a history of theater in the United States in the twentieth century. The course had a heavy aesthetic dimension, with emphasis on the structure of drama, approaches to performance, and what can be labeled the languages of the theater, but each of the plays—from Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* (1947) to Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* (2010)—offers a symbolic representation of American society and its pervasive polemics. Theater is, after all, dependent on conflict, and playwrights in the United States and elsewhere have no problem finding issues upon which to draw. The format of the course was, in many regards, old-fashioned. The sixteen students, from freshmen to seniors, and I sat in a circle with books in front of us and talked about the readings and the themes and artistry contained within them. I often referred students to websites and online sources of information, but I used no technology in the classroom. I wanted our sessions to be about dialogue, and the group complied brilliantly, in class discussions and in weekly papers. Given my pre-technological spirit and, alas, mindset, I feel energized by the eloquence and analytical skills of students who, though generally versed in all measures and means of communication, can feel comfortable with a book in hand. This also has been true, as recently as the summer of 2012, in a course

called "Analyzing Fiction" in the Vanderbilt Summer Academy (part of the Programs for Talented Youth) for twelve- and thirteen-year-olds, and offered with "cooler" and higher-tech options within the course selections.

Despite the fact that they have been raised on computers, texting, and so forth, the students in the Honors seminar, to a person, wrote clearly, correctly, and elegantly, and the depth of their thoughts matched their writing ability. They belied the perception that grammar, spelling, punctuation, and care with expression have been lost in translation (and transition) to the new media. They were comfortable with the structure and openness of art and with the wide range of referents inscribed within a work of art. Their comments on *form* were rich, nuanced, and on target, and their comments on *content* were, as their elders tend to say, wise beyond their years. And they knew, probably intuitively, that form and content are ultimately inseparable. I was especially struck by the perceptions evidenced in the discussion of Affirmative Action: how engaged, understanding, empathetic, candid, and—in the best sense of the term—critical they were. They were attuned to flaws in the system, but they were willing to consider problem-solving, rather than dismissal, as the more viable option. Our dialogue was going on during the time leading up to the national election, and thus we were attuned to the power, plays, and universality of rhetoric. We could revel at the range and reaches of interpretation and at the elasticity and mutability of language. One could not help but note, in contrast, that some of our leaders, including politicians and even justices of the Supreme Court (not always mutually exclusive sets), as well as spiritual guides, insist on the viability of *literal* meaning of texts, including laws and the most sacred scriptures. Rhetoric, from classical antiquity to post-poststructuralism, is arguably the key link among discourses, fictional and non-

fictional, and I was glad to observe that the students recognized on their own that reality, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. We were not seeking compromise but shared insights, and the members of the group listened to their colleagues' ideas, debated points in a highly courteous manner, and accepted differences of opinion as natural and positive. I was captivated and enlightened by the conversations, which stood in stark contrast with what I was reading about and seeing on the political scene, where uncompromising attitudes were the order of the day, disrespect was rampant, and polarization was the operative code. Dramatic literature and theatrical performance functioned as the centerpiece for the course, but texts and their seemingly limitless contexts blended and invited us to explore the fascinating dialectics of word and world. My goal was to select plays that lent themselves to scrutiny as compelling artistic creations and social documents, mirrors on and off stage, as it were.

As an undergraduate in the distant past, I was impressed by points of contact in the subject matter of my courses—mathematics and geology excepted—and by unexpected correlations between the old and the new, and I still am affected by anticipated and unanticipated associations. In the semester in which I taught the theater course, my second class was an undergraduate Spanish course on Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, which the students read in its entirety, along with introductory materials and criticism. The two parts of *Don Quixote*, published in 1605 and 1615, are cultural artifacts of imperial Spain, the age of the Habsburgs and of the Inquisition, of New World explorations and the Counter Reformation, of obsession with blood purity and honor, and of baroque art and baroque sensibility. By reading *Don Quixote* alongside contemporary American theater, I realized that an obvious common denominator was the theme of identity, with a corresponding

ingredient of self-conscious art, that is, art about the making of art, art that links process and product. As the *Quixote* class was completing the novel(s), the theater class was reading David Henry Hwang's *Yellow Face* (2007) and John Logan's *Red* (2009). *Yellow Face* examines Asian-American identity and identity in general, mixing—and confusing—the playwright's real-life experience with a meta-theatrical format in which Hwang fictionalizes himself and in which a number of actors play multiple roles. *Red* enters the domain of the artist Mark Rothko and the realm of artistic production. As in *Don Quixote*, reality and fiction collide with remarkable ease, and the insights into human nature and the outside world alternate with highlighting of the design and composition of art. The middle-aged landowner who becomes mad from reading romances of chivalry and who takes to the road as a knight errant shares the spotlight with a corps of narrators, storytellers, and inventors of fiction within fiction. In the second part of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes alludes with great frequency to Part 1 and responds to the pseudonymous author of a "false" second part; notable characters in Part 2 have read Part 1, some have read the spurious continuation, and another is *in* the illegitimate tome, but the real world is never elided or forgotten. The final play in the Honors seminar was *Clybourne Park*, in which Bruce Norris builds upon Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), a play that the class had read toward the beginning of the semester. The deep structure of the two courses was close, and so was the pedagogical style: students talking in groups of two or three, and together, about books. *Don Quixote* helps to project literature into a future that is the playwrights' present. Cervantes's book about books—and, correspondingly, about readers, writers, critics, theorists, the nature of art and its ties with external reality—stands as an emblem of the force of rhetoric. *Don Quixote*

figuratively brings art and the artist to center stage, as do literally, to greater or lesser degree, today's playwrights. To my delight, one student, perhaps now suffering from over-saturation, took both of these classes, with only fifty-five minutes between them. (He did exceptional work in each). The code-switching notwithstanding, he likely noted the parallel universes and, I hope, the benefits of books and readers in near isolation. Even in the theater, individual spectators can become captured by the dramatic moment.

*Don Quixote* is the archetypal character consumed by reading and motivated to transform himself into a commentator on art and life, without differentiating between the two. Viewed allegorically, his scheme—like the anachronistic knight himself—may not be as crazy as it seems. The contemplation of works of art exposes readers and observers to the world at large. In this case, novels and plays are not addenda to reality but fundamental elements of the big picture. Classical antiquity gave us rhetoric, and the most renowned thinkers of all times have been men and women with dazzling minds and with books (or what preceded books) in front of them, to ponder and write about and to discuss and debate with others. Technology has taken us to places unimagined mere decades ago, and technology rightly should be revered. So should the apparatuses of earlier periods, which at their simplest can be extraordinarily profound.

*Edward H. Friedman is Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of Spanish and Professor of Comparative Literature at Vanderbilt University. He is also director of the Warren Center.*

# Looking into the Future with Digital Humanities: Vanderbilt's 2012/13 HASTAC Scholars

By *Miriam R. Martin*

I am a graduate student in the Vanderbilt University history department who is also the proud recipient of the 2012/13 HASTAC Scholar Award through the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities. In this capacity, I work closely with the Warren Center to plan and implement Digital Humanities events on campus, such as conferences and seminars. I am joined in these activities by three additional graduate students who are also 2012/2013 Vanderbilt HASTAC Scholars, each sponsored by a different campus program. Annette Joseph-Gabriel (French) is sponsored by Vanderbilt's Center for Second Language Studies; Zoe LeBlanc (history) is affiliated with the Center for Teaching; and Don Rodrigues (English) is associated with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy. We are all extremely excited to be part of the HASTAC community at Vanderbilt, and are enjoying being part of a collaborative and vibrant scholarly community.

HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) is a consortium of individuals and institutions inspired by creative uses of technology and committed to collaboration and communication on networked research that extends across traditional disciplines. The HASTAC Scholars Program is a lively community of graduate students who are interested in Digital Humanities in academia. We represent over seventy-five universities and many dozens of disciplines. Vanderbilt's cohort of HASTAC Scholars will attend the international HASTAC symposium in Toronto in April, 2013. We will thus have the opportunity to supplement our "virtual" conversations with the HASTAC scholars from other universities with in-person conversations and cross-pollination of ideas.

Vanderbilt has hosted a number of Digital Humanities events in recent months. While there is a growing awareness and excitement in these conversations, I often hear the question asked: "What exactly are the Digital Humanities?" I endorse Kathleen Fitzpatrick's definition of Digital Humanities: "a nexus of fields within which scholars use computing technologies to investigate the kinds of questions that are traditional to the humanities" (*Fitzpatrick, Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010*). Fitzpatrick suggests that DH is

yet another tool by which we can answer conventional research questions. Indeed, many of us have come to DH by way of our traditional research in the humanities, and have engaged with DH foremost as a tool. But it is significant that Fitzpatrick also suggests that Digital Humanities are a "nexus of fields" insofar as this nexus, or network, can provide a directly accessible forum for interdisciplinary scholarship.

Patricia Cohen in the *New York Times* writes, "Members of a new generation of digitally savvy humanists argue it is time to stop looking for inspiration in the next political or philosophical 'ism' and start exploring how technology is changing our understanding of the liberal arts. This latest frontier is about method, they say, using powerful technologies and vast stores of digitized materials that previous humanities scholars did not have" (*New York Times*, November 17, 2010, page C1, [nytimes.com/2010/11/17/arts/17digital.html](http://nytimes.com/2010/11/17/arts/17digital.html)). I believe that this frontier represents the future of academic research and teaching.

It is understandable that some scholars would be skeptical of yet another "emerging" field. However, the digital age is now entrenched in our society and culture. We have all heard of the powers and problems of social media and the uses and abuses of instant communication and smart phones. Few could now envision a world without the Internet. The accessibility and ease by which people consume information is remarkable, and this accessibility has changed the dynamics of the classroom and the methods of scholarly research in highly visible ways.

Digital Humanities in academia engages all of these developing technologies for use in our traditional research. We strive for a connection between our socially engaged lives and our research, sometimes merely for the purpose of camaraderie and connection, but increasingly for the purpose of disseminating research projects faster and to wider audiences. As a historian, I often spend many hours in a dusty archive, pouring over worm-eaten correspondence serials from the eighteenth-century. And as a specialist of Latin America, often my research takes me to remote areas. Meeting fellow scholars is always an encouraging connection, although invariably our overlap is only a few days or a week. Using DH tools

and methodologies, we can address many of these difficulties and create new avenues for collaboration, communication, and scholarship. For instance, the dusty archival material in Latin America where I spent three months examining documents now exists digitally on my hard-drive, available for close re-examination under programs like Adobe Lightroom years later. Likewise, scholars exchanging business cards will always hold a traditional place in the "meet and greet" ritual, but now it is supplemented by a Twitter feed. Finally, I engage with public historians from remote archives, and we often use blogs and forums to examine archival finds and share information available on digital archival databases. And this is merely the beginning of the Digital Humanities intersection. Scholars in this field are pushing boundaries in many new avenues. Here are some thoughts from my fellow Vanderbilt HASTAC Scholars on their own digital crossroads.

**DON RODRIGUES:** *As a current Ph.D. student in English and a former computer programmer, I'm instinctively curious about academic opportunities that might allow me to synthesize my current research interests with my professional experience. In ways that I could not have anticipated before coming to Vanderbilt this fall, the HASTAC program has proven to be a perfect "fit" for me. It is great to be in rigorous dialogue with people interested in breaking down the artificial (but seemingly very real) partitions that continue to stand between humanistic and scientific methodologies.*

**ZOE LEBLANC:** *I was initially attracted to HASTAC in part because I was starting teaching for the first time this year, and I wanted to know more about what technologies I could use in the classroom. I also passionately believe that humanities have largely been left out of discussions shaping new technologies. Lastly, I figured that it would be good to have some structure to my unbridled Internet addiction.*

**ANNETTE JOSEPH-GABRIEL:** *I teach introductory French and I am always looking for ways to incorporate technology into my classes. [After] taking a digital humanities class here at Vanderbilt I became very interested in tools that bring my students and me closer to an*



Vanderbilt HASTAC Scholars Miriam Martin, Don Rodrigues, Annette Joseph-Gabriel, and Zoe LeBlanc.

*immersion experience of language learning than the more traditional modes of instruction allow. HASTAC seemed like a fantastic opportunity to engage with like-minded teachers and researchers who are exploring the same questions and to have productive exchanges.*

The Digital Humanities community is highly collaborative. We have academic interests that coincide with our public interests. The Internet is more than just a social tool though; it is a discourse and a platform for conversation. To that effect, many of us connected with HASTAC are working on projects of collaboration. Under the direction of Mona Frederick and the Warren Center, I have taken part in Digital Humanities conferences and conversations like THATCampVU. My own projects with Digital Humanities involve crowd-sourcing archival transcription and geo-spatial mapping of revolutionary era military interactions in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World. I am experimenting with mediums like Wordpress or Twitter, whereby the specialized micro-history that dominates so much of academic writing can find greater readership and a more dynamic interaction with interdisciplinary communities. Digital archives supplement my dissertation's primary scholarship, and I am excited to explore the future of these mediums using Vanderbilt's "Who Speaks for the Negro? Digital Archive" as an example of an online archival database brilliantly executed. Collaboration with the Warren Center has helped develop our understanding of the HASTAC community, and the other HASTAC Scholars are also exploring ways to engage this new medium.

**DON RODRIGUES:** *Through HASTAC, recent coursework, my work through Vanderbilt's Curb Center, and my experience at Vanderbilt's THATCamp, I've very recently gained new and invigorating perspectives on possibilities for research in DH. I'm particularly interested in the idea of forming a collaborative research project with Ph.D. students interested in mobilizing energies around DH at Vanderbilt and in the greater Nashville community. This year and next, I'll be working closely as a Research Assistant to Professor Jay Clayton of Vanderbilt's English Department; through the Coursera platform, he'll be teaching a "MOOC" (Massive Open Online Course) titled "Online Games: Literature, New Media, and Narrative." I'm also working with Elizabeth Long Lingo, Director of the Curb Scholars Program, to promote DH-related events housed at the Curb Center.*

**ZOE LEBLANC:** *[After] reading the posts on HASTAC, I'm not only developing a much more profound understanding of digital humanities, but I'm also being exposed to a whole new lexicon. From discussions about Omeka to Text-Mining, the breadth and scope of digital humanities seems endless.... I hope to use everything from GIS to Neatline for my research and teaching further down the road.*

**ANNETTE JOSEPH-GABRIEL:** *[I am] interested in exploring the collaborative aspect of technology use in the classroom...in reaching out to language teachers and native French speakers beyond Vanderbilt and Nashville via Skype, weekly bilingual tweets, etc., in order to bring more authentic input to students who may*

*not have the opportunity to travel and/or engage with the target culture and speakers of the target language. I am currently working on an English-Creole language interactive instruction manual in eBook form.... Martinican Creole is not taught in US institutions so I'm trying to figure out how technology can allow me to incorporate both the role of instructor and textbook into one super program.*

This past fall semester as the Warren Center HASTAC Scholar has been an inspirational and creative whirlwind. My own research questions have expanded in unique ways, and our HASTAC Scholar collaborations have shown that there are new opportunities using rapidly developing research tools and within evolving intellectual domains. THATCampVU was a huge success on our campus and we are exploring the possibility of hosting another THATCamp next fall. The Vanderbilt HASTAC Scholars group is collating the various Digital Humanities research projects conducted at Vanderbilt in order to foster a digital space for disseminating information about Digital Humanities projects and DH events at Vanderbilt and beyond. The digital era has greatly expanded our potential learning landscape and we must explore these new boundaries of academia in order to better service our scholarship and our teaching. It is invigorating to be part of this community at Vanderbilt, and I look forward to the collaborations and conversations to come.

## What We Are Writing

What books are our colleagues in the humanities and social sciences writing and editing? LETTERS has asked Vanderbilt University's scholars to share their 2012 publications. Their answers show an active and diverse mix of scholarly interests on our campus.

**Laura M. Carpenter** and John DeLamater, co-editors. *Sex for Life: From Virginity to Viagra, How Sexuality Changes Throughout Our Lives*. New York University Press.

**Nancy Chick**, Regan A. R. Gurung, and Aeron Haynie, co-editors. *Exploring More Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*. Stylus Publishing.

**Larry R. Churchill and David Schenck**. *Healers: Extraordinary Clinicians at Work*. Oxford University Press.

**Lynn Enterline**. *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

**James A. Epstein**. *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge University Press.

**Christin Essin**. *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America: Artists, Activists, Critics*. Palgrave Macmillan.

**Gerald Figal**. *Beachheads: War, Peace, and Tourism in Postwar Okinawa*. Rowman & Littlefield.

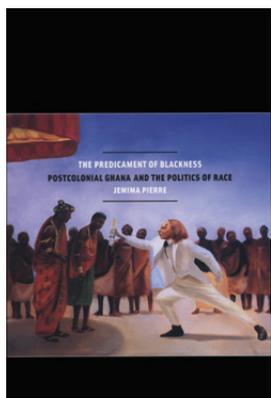
**Elsa Filosa** and Michael Papio, co-editors. *Boccaccio in America. Proceedings of the 2010 International Boccaccio Conference at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*. Ravena: Longo.

**Leonard Folgarait**, Alejandro Anreus, and Robin Greeley, co-editors. *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History*. University of California Press.

**William Franke**. *Dante and the Sense of Transgression: "The Trespass of the Sign."* Bloomsbury Publishing.

**Edward H. Friedman**. *Crossing the Line: A Quixotic Adventure in Two Acts*. Juan de la Cuesta.

**Rick Hilles**. *A Map of the Lost World*. University of Pittsburgh Press.



**Robin M. Jensen**. *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*. Baker Academic.

**Cathy L. Jade**. *Delmira Agustini, Sexual Seduction, and Vampiric Conquest*. Yale University Press.

**Vera Kutzinski**, Ottmmar Ette, and Laura Dassow Walls, co-editors. *Alexander von Humboldt and the Americas*. Edition tranvia, Verlag Walter Frey.

**Vera Kutzinski**, editor. *Alexander von Humboldt's Transatlantic Personae*. Routledge.

**Vera Kutzinski**. *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas*. Cornell University Press.

**Paul C. H. Lim**. *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England*. Oxford University Press.

**Lorraine M. López** and Margaret Crumpton Winter, co-editors. *Rituals of Movement in the Poetry and Prose of Judith Ortiz Cofer*. Caribbean Studies Press.

**Larry May**. *After War Ends: A Philosophical Perspective*. Cambridge University Press.

**Larry May and Andrew Forcehimes**, co-editors. *Morality, Jus Post Bellum, and International Law*. Cambridge University Press.

**Larry May and Paul Morrow**, co-editors. *Procedural Justice*. Ashgate Publishing.

**José Medina**. *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*. Oxford University Press.

**Holly J. McCammon**. *The U.S. Women's Jury Movements and Strategic Adaptation: A More Just Verdict*. Cambridge University Press.

**Thomas A. J. McGinn**, editor. *Obligations in Roman Law: Past, Present, and Future*. University of Michigan Press.

**Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore**. *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline*. Eerdmans.

**Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore**, editor. *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. Wiley/Blackwell.

**Catherine Molineux**. *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain*. Harvard University Press.

**Elizabeth J. Moodey**. *Illuminated Crusader Histories for Philip the Good of Burgundy*. Brepols Publishers.

**Bruce T. Morrill**. *Encountering Christ in the Eucharist: The Paschal Mystery in People, Word, and Sacrament*. Paulist Press.

**Kelly Oliver**. *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Film*. Columbia University Press.

**Charlotte Pierce-Baker**. *This Fragile Life: A Mother's Story of a Bipolar Son*. Lawrence Hill Books.

**Jemima Pierre**. *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*. University of Chicago Press.

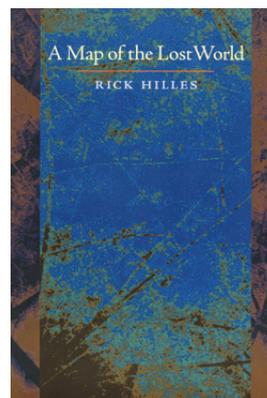
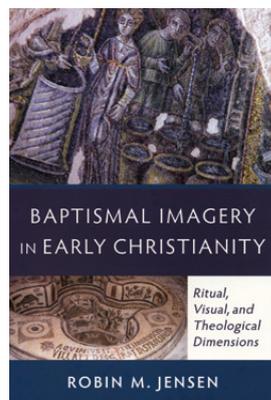
**Richard N. Pitt**. *Divine Callings: Understanding the Call to Ministry in Black Pentecostalism*. New York University Press.

**Joseph L. Rife**. *Isthmia IX: The Roman and Byzantine Graves and Human Remains*. American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

**Helena Simonett**, editor. *The Accordion in the Americas*. University of Illinois Press.

**Martina Urban**. *Theodicy of Culture and the Jewish Ethos: David Koigen's Contribution to the Sociology of Religion*. Walter de Gruyter.

**Mark Wollaeger**, editor, with **Matt Eatough**. *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*. Oxford University Press.



## 2012/2013 Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities Seminars

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

**Affective Inquiries: Embodiment in Language and Culture Seminar:** Beginning with an Aristotelian definition of affect as the “capacity to be acted upon and the capacity to act,” this graduate-led seminar will work through philosophical reflections on affect to consider what it is and how it has been used. Paying particular attention to race, gender, and belonging, the seminar will examine how affective investments play a critical role in these areas of inquiry and will also extend and challenge individual group member’s work by bringing forth these reflections in conversation with poetry and film. Seminar coordinators: Geoffrey Adelsberg (philosophy) geoffrey.adelsberg@vanderbilt.edu and Hubert Cook (English) hubert.a.cook@vanderbilt.edu.

**Between Persons and Things: Human Beings and the World of Material Production and Consumption Seminar:** This seminar seeks to delve into the uneasy relationship between subjecthood and objecthood by looking critically at the study of persons—especially in terms of slavery and colonialism—in conjunction with the study of objects, things, and material culture—an area of inquiry that is particularly fraught in our current post-modern and capitalist world. They also seek to understand how the human might become object or possession, inactive or inanimate, as well as how materiality itself can become sensuous, affective, and vibrant. Discussion topics may include how human beings relate to or react against their material surroundings, the concept of ownership and property, classifications and descriptions of the human and the non-human; and the cultural and social lives of material objects. Seminar coordinators: Jennifer Bagneris (English) jennifer.bagneris@vanderbilt.edu and Dan Fang (English) dan.fang@vanderbilt.edu.

**Caribbean Studies Reading Group:** This seminar focuses on the study of literature, history, politics, culture, and society in the Caribbean Basin, or the nations bordering and surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, including the Bahamas and parts of Central and South America, as well as its diaspora in the Americas, Africa, and Europe. This graduate-led seminar will provide a forum for the reading and discussion of seminal Caribbean writers, as well as recent scholarship emerging from and about

the region. Co-Directors: Annette Joseph-Gabriel (French) annette.quarcoopome@vanderbilt.edu, Megan Mishler (Spanish) megan.j.mishler@vanderbilt.edu, Petal Samuel (English) petal.k.samuel@vanderbilt.edu, and R.J. Boutelle (English) russell.j.boutelle@vanderbilt.edu.

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

**Digital Humanities Discussion Group:** Digital humanities projects are rich new additions to the intellectual life of humanities scholars. If you are currently working on a digital humanities project or hope to do so in the near future, please join this discussion group to learn more about resources and innovations in this area. The direction of the group will be determined by the interests of those who participate. Seminar coordinators: Lynn Ramey (French) lynn.ramey@vanderbilt.edu and Mona Frederick (Warren Center) mona.frederick@vanderbilt.edu.

**Exploring the “Religious Turn” in Early Modern Studies:** This graduate-led seminar explores the scope and significance of the “religious turn,” which has marked a shift in research methodologies and explanatory paradigms across the humanities, particularly in work relating to the early modern period (c. 1500-1720). The seminar will broaden participants’ understanding of this movement and encourage them to discuss ways that addressing religious themes might enhance their own reading and research. In addition, this seminar seeks to bring heightened attention to the polysemous term “religion” as it is utilized in the humanities and a more nuanced understanding of religious studies within scholarly practice. Seminar coordinators: Amy Gant Tan (history) amy.gant.tan@vanderbilt.edu and Chance Woods (English) chance.b.woods@vanderbilt.edu.

**Film Theory & Visual Culture Seminar:** This seminar aims to foster dialogue among faculty and graduate students across campus working in film, visual culture, art history, literature, and cultural studies interested in theories of the image, philosophies of perception, aesthetic and critical theory, media histories, and the history of vision. The group will meet monthly to discuss readings, share work, and engage the research of invited scholars. Seminar coordinators: Jennifer Fay (film studies and English) jennifer.m.fay@vanderbilt.edu, James McFarland (German) james.mcfarland@vanderbilt.edu, and Paul Young (film studies and English) paul.d.young@vanderbilt.edu.

**Food Politics: Labor Organizing Among Food Workers:** The Food Politics seminar is a non-hierarchical group that combines the research and study of food politics with a praxis of collective liberation through student-community alliances. This year we are focusing on the history, theory, and contemporary trends in labor organizing among food workers, following the diverse elements of the supply chain from field to table. The seminar will have a special but not exclusive emphasis on Tennessee and the South and will provide a space for reflection and action on food labor issues affecting the larger university community. Seminar coordinators: Tristan Call (anthropology) tristan.p.call@vanderbilt.edu and Jonathan Coley (sociology) jonathan.s.coley@vanderbilt.edu.

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

*continued on page 12*

## 2012/2013 Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities Seminars

*Continued from page 11*

### **Group for Pre-modern Cultural Studies:**

The purpose of the group is to serve as a forum for those with interests in pre-modern studies, including not only history but language and literature, chiefly, though not exclusively, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, as well as music, art, and culture. The group meets monthly to discuss ongoing research by a faculty member, recent publications in the field, or the work of a visiting scholar. Seminar coordinator: Bill Caferro (history) [william.p.caferro@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:william.p.caferro@vanderbilt.edu).

### **Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life:**

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

**Literature and Law Seminar:** This reading group will meet to discuss current approaches, new challenges, and new possibilities that are offered to legal and literary scholars when they use insights from both fields to illuminate their work. The seminar welcomes anyone interested in the many topics now addressed in this field, including the use of obscenity laws to regulate creative work, the representation of law in literature, law as literature, the application of literary methods to legal texts, the challenges of constructing "characters" appropriate to literary and legal settings, and the revitalization of law through reference to humanistic texts and approaches. Seminar coordinator: Robert Barsky (French and Italian) [robert.barsky@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:robert.barsky@vanderbilt.edu).

**Mexican Studies Seminar:** The goal of this group is to raise the profile of research related to Mexico on the Vanderbilt campus and support members' individual scholarly endeavors regarding this important nation bordering the United States. The group brings together faculty and graduate students from history, political science, literature, sociology, art, anthropology, music, and Latin American studies. At monthly meetings the group will discuss work-in-progress authored by members and invited scholars from beyond Vanderbilt. Seminar coordinators: Helena Simonett (Latin American Studies) [helena.simonett@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:helena.simonett@vanderbilt.edu) and Edward Wright-Rios (history) [edward.wright-rios@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:edward.wright-rios@vanderbilt.edu).

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

## THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

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**For a listing of Warren Center programs and activities, please contact the above address or visit our Web site at [www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw\\_center](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center).**

### **Statement of Purpose**

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and named the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in 1989 in honor of Robert Penn Warren, Vanderbilt alumnus class of 1925, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and, when appropriate, natural sciences. Members of the Vanderbilt community representing a wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center's programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.

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

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