



Humanities Newsletter

April | 2017

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Dean's Message



Dear Friends,

We've had several pieces of good news to help us usher in the spring semester:

For the first time in University of Utah history, our John R. Park Debate Society (Department of Communication) earned the season-long national championship awarded by the National Parliamentary Debate Association! Often ranked in the top 5, this season brought the team their long-awaited and well-deserved top honors. With the help of their director, Professor Michael Middleton, the team competed against dozens of others from the best universities and colleges in the country. We couldn't be more proud of their success.

We also have good news that impacts every student on campus: In 2017, student fees at the University of Utah held steady or decreased, while our annual average tuition remained the lowest compared to similar schools. Our tuition compares very favorably to our Big Ten and Pac-12 peers. Meanwhile, a recent Brookings Institute study indicated that a University of Utah degree yields higher earnings than expected according to their national research, making a degree from the U one of the best values in the nation. We can also be proud that we have the highest graduation rate and the lowest rate of students with debt of all public 4-year institutions in the state. I'm enormously proud to be part of an institution that continues to make good on its promise of a high-quality, research-informed education that remains accessible and affordable to those who are ready to take up the intellectual challenges we offer.

As these last weeks of the semester speed along (yes, we're already flying towards the finish line), it seems more important than ever to take a minute to reflect on the important work we do here in the College of Humanities. In our rapidly changing world, we need the humanities now, more than ever; the subjects we teach and the questions we ask in our college light the way along darkening paths, and provide the framework that allows us to dream a better future. As I look out my office window, I see students walking not just to and from classes, but also towards their goals, towards their dreams, and towards their aspirations. I see our future moving along the U's sidewalks, and it looks bright.

We're already busily preparing for the year ahead and we hope you'll join us. Thank you for your support.

Wishing you peace,
Dianne Harris, Dean



Featured Alumni



Matthew Lalli

B.A. English & Philosophy

Matt Lalli earned bachelor's degrees in both English and Philosophy before becoming an attorney. He is now a partner at Snell & Willmer, L.L.P. in Salt Lake City. Though his law degree has solidified his earning potential as a successful trial attorney in Utah,

Lalli believes his foundation in the humanities gave him a strong advantage going into law. In his last summer before starting law school, Lalli took four Philosophy courses to finish off a second major after discovering a strong interest in the field.

"I took an informal logic course that summer and loved it. I'm a very linear thinker, and I had that class in my mind when I went into law school," he said. "We were discussing the 'rational basis test' in my Constitutional Law class, and I remember I raised my hand and said, 'If you look at philosophical logic, the Supreme Court is not even close.' My teacher said, 'You're going to be a great lawyer.'" Matt went on to practice law in San Diego and San Francisco for several years before coming back to Salt Lake City for the past 21 years.

[Read more here](#)

Featured Faculty



Sean Lawson

Associate Professor, Communication

On March 8, 2017, Professor Lawson delivered a lecture at the NATO Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) in Ankara, Turkey. His lecture was part of a course on Operational Planning for Counter-Terrorism held at the COE-DAT headquarters. Dr. Lawson's lecture was titled *Scientific Approaches to Counter-Terrorism as a Complex Military Problem*. His lecture drew extensively from his prior research on the U.S. military's attempts to learn and apply lessons from scientific theories of chaos, complexity, and networks to information-age security threats.

The aim of the NATO course was "to provide planning staff working at the operational level with the ability to incorporate counter-terrorism into advance and crisis response planning, and to subsequently oversee the execution of these plans." Dr. Lawson's lecture provided relevant historical context for, and critical evaluation of, the evolution of analytical techniques used by security professionals to understand and respond to terrorist threats.

[Read more here](#)



Featured Student

Daniel Ybarra

Senior, Middle East Studies, Communication, and Writing & Rhetoric Studies



Daniel Ybarra is quickly becoming an expert on all things humanities. He is triple majoring in three Humanities majors (Communication, Writing & Rhetoric Studies, and Middle East Studies), lives in the Humanities House on campus, and is among the star competitors of the top debate team in the country housed in the college of humanities, the John R. Park

Debate Society. He is also the winner of the prestigious Steffensen-Cannon Scholarship for the 2017-18 school year.

Daniel was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, and first discovered his love of debate while attending Rio Hondo Community College in LA county. "Forensics challenges me to communicate critical theories, develop techniques in communicating my arguments, and allows me to advocate for diversity – of voices, people, and ideas – within my community," he explains.

I chose the University of Utah because of the John R. Park Debate Society. When I first attended the U's college tournament in 2014, I was both charmed by the campus and enamored with the presence of the competitors from across the nation. I was certain that I wanted to be involved with this university – it attracted me instantly.

For Daniel, the Debate Society offers an unmatched opportunity to hone his communicative skills, form clear and concise arguments on both sides of issues, and compete with teammates he'll cherish for a lifetime. He says he has gained much from immersing himself in so many humanities fields. His triple majors in Communication, Writing and Rhetoric Studies, and Middle East Studies contribute to a worldview and self-confidence he could not have fathomed before setting foot on campus.

I believe a background in the humanities bridges every gap in society. I have sharpened my skills as a leader by learning from excellent models of pedagogy. The coursework is an interactive experience for me. I have gained a definite

respect for all walks of life and I am always seeking out new experiences to diversify my thinking.

In an effort to expand his worldview, he will travel to Tajikistan for a study abroad program this summer to immerse himself in another language and culture. Funded by a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship he received through the Asia Center in the College of Humanities, he will learn Farsi.

I plan to integrate everything I have learned as a student of the humanities and absorb as much information as I can of the Tajik culture. It is an experience of a lifetime and reinforces the fact that studying the humanities is the path to discovery and understanding. I learn how to relate to others. I learn from the experiences of my professors and colleagues. The humanities is overflowing with rich experiences that satisfy my soul.

Daniel is now applying for the Conflict Resolution Graduate Certificate Program in the College of Humanities, where he says he will learn to better facilitate how to discover shared interests between opposing parties. He plans to apply to become a Fulbright Scholar and attend the University of Amsterdam to earn a master's degree in Conflict Resolution and Governance. He says he has a dream of facilitating conversations of understanding between Atheists, Christians, and Muslims within the United States that would be centered on culture and community. "I hope to practice the traditions of storytelling to spark better understanding of others' lifestyles. I want to moderate open discussions to find common links between our differing interests and backgrounds," he explains. "I believe shared interests of all sorts will be essential tools, uniting ourselves in this country, and creating friendships with people across the world."

I am a budding Communication scholar who hopes to practice these methods I've learned to create dialogue between groups that will subvert tensions and bring much-needed perspectives to different situations. I want to see people be less afraid of the other, and I believe the College of Humanities has given me the tools to facilitate these types of unifying conversations.

Events

Humanities in Focus 11th Annual Film Screening

April 18, 2017 | 6pm | Marriott Library Gould Auditorium

Humanities in Focus and Life Through the Lens invites you to the 11th annual screening of original documentary films made by students of the Honors College and non-traditional adult learners. This event is free and open to the public.

[Find out more here](#)

[Find out more about the Humanities in Focus program](#)

Humanities in Focus and Life through the Lens invites you to the...

11TH ANNUAL SCREENING OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENTARY FILMS

TUESDAY
APRIL 18TH 6:00PM
Gould Auditorium Marriott Library
University of Utah
Free and Open to the Public
APPETIZERS 6-7 PM
FILMS: 7-8 PM

"We all carry stories in our bones. Once our students find their voice there is no turning back"
-Jeff Metcalf

Buddhism's Engagement with the World

April 21, 2017 | 1pm | CTIHB 101

April 22, 2017 | 9am | CTIHB 101

Buddhism has frequently been portrayed as a tradition promoting a self-centered interest, a disengagement from the world and from its desires, attachments, aversions, and ignorance. This view is a caricature, and Buddhist practitioners as well as scholars of Buddhism have been trying to correct this misperception. The latter have, over the last few decades, explored many different aspects of how Buddhism has invested the political, social, intellectual, and cultural spheres of the societies it has influenced, but spreading recognition of these facets of Buddhism remains an important task that needs to be done. This conference aims to highlight how Buddhist thought can engage with a variety of issues ranging across philosophy, religious studies, politics, ecology, literature, and medicine, among others.

[Find out more here](#)

Buddhism's Engagement with the World

April 21: CTIHB 101

1:00-1:15 Opening Remarks (Matt Haber, Chair of Philosophy)
1:15-2:30 Laura Guerrero: "Buddhist Fictionalism Reconsidered"
2:30-3:45 Amod Lele: "Disengaged Buddhism: Why South Asian Buddhists Rejected Engagement with Systemic Institutions"
4:00-5:15 Charles Goodman: "Two-Level Consequentialism, Śāntideva's Ethics, and the Justification of Punishment"

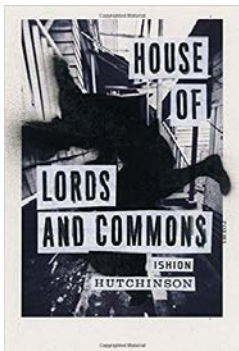
April 22: CTIHB 101

9:00-10:15 Dale Wright: "Buddhist Atheism as a Challenge to the Philosophy of Religion"
10:30-12:00 William Edelglass: "Nature and Buddha-Nature: Poetry, Place, and the Transmission of Buddhism"
1:30-2:45 Pierce Salguero: "Beyond Mindfulness: Buddhism and Health in Historical Perspective"
3:00-4:15 John Dunne: "Phenomenological Reduction as Therapeutic Technique: The Buddhist Theory and Practice of Dereification"
4:30-5:30 Closing discussion, led by Pierre-Julien Harter

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News

Ishion Hutchinson Wins 2017 National Book Critics Circle Award



The National Book Critics Circle has chosen Ishion Hutchinson's *House of Lords and Commons* for its 2017 poetry prize. Ishion studied in the doctoral Creative Writing Program of the U's English Department, where he completed his first book of poems, *Far District* (2010), under the direction of Prof. Jacqueline Osherow. That book won the PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for a first book, and his other honors

include a Whiting Foundation Award and the Academy of American Poets' Larry Levis Prize.

[Read more](#)

Karin Baumgartner honored at Sigma Chi Professor Appreciation Night



World Languages & Cultures Associate Professor Karin Baumgartner was nominated by her student, JC Chun, to be honored at the Sigma Chi Professor Appreciation night on March 8, 2017.

[Read more](#)

John R. Park Debate Society Earns National Championship

The University of Utah's John R. Park Debate Society earned the season-long national championship awarded by the National Parliamentary Debate Association and finished in sixth place (first in Pac-12) at the NPDA National Championship Tournament held at the Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado.



"This year's success in the season-long rankings marks a historic level of success for the John R. Park Debate Society and cements the U as the most successful collegiate

debate program in the state," said Michael Middleton, director of the debate society. "The staff and students of the debate society could not be more thrilled to have helped achieve this accomplishment on behalf of the U."

The overall rankings, which determine the season-long championship, are based on points earned from tournaments throughout the year. This year, the U broke the record for most points earned in a single season by a public institution and established the second highest point total in the NPDA's history, solidifying their number one position. Importantly, these rankings are a squad-wide honor reflecting the overall strength of the U's 18 active debaters.

The tournament included more than 140 teams from 41 universities and colleges. In addition to the debate society's collective success, the U advanced four debate



partnerships to elimination rounds and senior Alex Cadena earned an NPDA All-American Award and freshman Jacob McShane earned fifth place among all first-year competitors at the tournament.

"I am very proud of my team," said Cadena. "We are a young and large squad compared to other schools. For the team to come together, work together and encourage each other to achieve the top ranking

is a tremendous success. This year I have seen people on the team go from little to no forensics experience, to developing the skills, confidence and courage to take on the top debaters in the nation. Witnessing and being a part of this has been an honor."

[Read more](#)

For all **news stories** and to read more about these, please visit: humanities.utah.edu/news

Give to the Humanities

Your contributions provide scholarships for students, help develop new programs, and fund innovative research that keeps this college on the cutting edge.

humanities.utah.edu/giving.php



Our theme for the year reflects a powerful truth: **Humanities Gives You the Edge.** Alumni of Humanities not only lead lives of extraordinary fulfillment, but they also excel at whatever they do. Our thousands of alumni unanimously tell us that **Humanities gave them the edge** that helped them succeed as excellent communicators; multi-lingual and culturally sophisticated global citizens; critical, ethical,

and logical thinkers; and outstanding creative partners. And research backs this up! Studies show that Humanities students find careers that provide financial security and job satisfaction that matches those of students in nearly every other major. Employers increasingly seek employees who have strong skills learned in Humanities (writing, problem solving, listening, speaking, critical thinking, etc.). Humanities gives people the edge they need to thrive today. How does Humanities give YOU the edge?

