

Humanities Newsletter

September | 2017

In this issue: Dean's Message; Chair of English Scott Black; Graduate Student Joseph Stuart; and History Professor Bradley Parker Awarded NEH Grant

DEAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

What a delight it is every year to watch our students return to campus to start their fall semester! The first day of classes is always exciting, but it was made even more special this year because it coincided with the spectacular solar eclipse. As I gathered with students and colleagues outside our office to watch the eclipse (aided by special glasses provided by the Marriott Library!), I had the privilege of hearing some of our faculty talk about the ways they planned to use the event as a “teachable moment.” One faculty member, for instance, planned to teach his students about the ways William Shakespeare frequently evoked natural wonders as signs of symbolic importance. The eclipse thus provided yet another way to help our students understand the timeless relevance of the humanities, yet we daily witness events that bring that message home to all of us. If the eclipse brought smiles of joy and expressions of wonder to our faces, we also must increasingly contend with the turmoil wrought by a politically and socially divided nation. Those topics, which can pose tremendous intellectual and emotional challenges for us all, are at the core of the humanities as well. As I watched the violence that unfolded in Charlottesville in August, I could only take consolation in knowing that we are educating thousands of students in our college, helping them to better understand the past and critically evaluate the present, and providing them with the tools to create a better future. That is our work, it is our commitment, and it is the promise we make and will keep to all of our students as they embark on their various academic journeys in the year ahead. Thank you for supporting our work.

Wishing you peace,
Dianne Harris, Dean



Humanities staff and Dean Dianne Harris watching the solar eclipse.

FACULTY FEATURE



Dr. Scott Black
Chair | English

Dr. Scott Black is the new Chair of the English Department. He came to the College of Humanities from Villanova University in 2005, and earned his Ph.D. in English Literature at The Johns Hopkins University, where he specialized in

eighteenth-century British literature and the history of the English essay. In his recent research he has been exploring a “longer, wider, and weirder history of the novel,” which includes less realistic genres like romance and fantasy, as well as the distinct kinds of readerly experiences those genres invite and allow. These questions also inform Dr. Black’s teaching.

In courses like “History and Apocalypse in Contemporary World Fiction,” “Experimental Fiction from Cervantes to Calvino,” and “Fantasy,” he invites students into collaborative explorations of new directions for literary history and new ways of understanding prose fiction in a globalized and digital world. Here, he explained how the U’s diverse student populations impact class discussion:

Because of the diversity of the University of Utah’s student population, which includes people from a remarkably varied range of backgrounds and experiences—immigrants, military veterans, returning missionaries, refugees—discussions in my classes are especially rich, with students exchanging remarkable insights into the ways that fiction is understood, used, and enjoyed across the globe. I always come away from these discussions with new appreciation of the value of fiction and the importance of storytelling in helping us explore our world and ourselves.

Dr. Black’s wide range of interests and academic expertise are invaluable to the University of Utah. We look forward to the continuation of his excellent teaching and research as he begins his service as Chair of the English Department.

ALUMNI FEATURE

Vanessa Seals
B.A. | 2010 English

While growing up in Price, Utah, Vanessa Seals developed an early love for reading. As an English student at the university of Utah, She was surprised to discover a brand new area of literature as an English student that sparked her passion for years to come. “When I took my first class with Dr. [Wilfred] Samuels at the U, an African American novels class, it



gave me a new perspective on my own experience,” she explained. “I’m black, but I hadn’t ever read African American literature before. I liked Victorian literature, but then I read books by authors like Toni Morrison and loved it. I didn’t know people were writing like that!”

Seal’s interest in the genre solidified her decision to major in English and minor in African American Studies, graduating from the U with an Honors B.A. in 2010. As a standout student, her professors weren’t surprised when she was accepted to her top-choice doctoral program at Stanford University. Vanessa is finishing up her dissertation titled *The Loving Family: Writing Multiracial Families in U.S. Literature since 1967*, and will graduate from Stanford with her Ph.D. in English in September 2017.

Read more about Vanessa and her research [here](#).

STUDENT FEATURE



Joseph Stuart

Graduate Student | History

A Ph.D. student in American history, Joseph examines the ways in which predominantly Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic religious people's views on race and gender led to their opposition to the Civil Rights Movement. He has received the prestigious Dean L. May Fellowship, been awarded funding from the Western History Association,

the Mormon History Association, the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, and the University of Virginia.

Joseph grew up in Sandy, Utah. He recalls: "During the first two years of my undergraduate studies, I realized that I was much more interested in developing skills championed by the humanities, especially reading, writing, speaking, and thinking critically. I did not look forward to my science classes in the same way I did my courses in the humanities. I realized that I would be much happier if I spent my time doing what I loved, knowing that the ability to read, write, and speak are transferable to any profession."

After graduating with a B.A. in American Studies from Brigham Young University, Joseph earned an M.A. in Religious Studies from the University of Virginia. There, he was the first student accepted to work with the Richard L. Bushman Chair for Mormon Studies.

"At the University of Virginia, I recognized for the first time the ways that racial, religious, political, and gendered ideologies all reinforce one another. Each view is created in relationship to other ideologies, which create a person's worldview. Understanding the multifaceted aspects of intellectual and social views instilled in me a deep desire to teach others for a living."

Joseph has certainly taken advantage of opportunities made available to him directly or indirectly through the College of Humanities. He works as a research assistant for several professors in the College, helps professors write contracts and balance the books on grants they receive, and now works as a graduate development assistant.

Joseph hopes to work as a History Professor in the future, although he is also open to working in administration or non-profit employment. Whatever the professional field of his future career, he is confident that the humanities will serve him well.

"Skills I've learned as a humanities student have taught me to find common ground and find solutions between groups that may not have recognized the benefit of working with one another. The ability to think critically, read, write, digest information, and present arguments to others are the bedrock of my professional and intellectual life. I want to help others use those skills to make the world a better place."

NEWS

Shauna Edson Helps Pioneer Adult Digital Literacy with the Salt Lake City Public Library

Shauna Edson, an M.A. student in Communication and Writing & Rhetoric Studies, has been working with the Salt Lake City Public Library to help make our local communities more digitally inclusive. In 2016, Edson was named as a national Digital Inclusion Fellow, a partnership program through Google Fiber and the Nonprofit Technology Network. [Read More.](#)

Bradley Parker Awarded NEH Grant

Associate professor of History, Bradley Parker, has been awarded a \$200,000 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant to study Inca and Wari Imperialism in Peru. Parker will explore archaeological sites in Ayacucho, Peru, that were active during the rise and fall of both the Wari and Inca Empires. [Read More.](#)

Anne Lair Honored by Republic of France's Ministry of National Education for Work in French Language and Culture Teaching

Anne Lair, Associate Professor/Lecturer of French in World Languages & Cultures and in the College of Humanities' Second Language Teaching and Resource Center (L2TRC), has been recognized as Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques (Knight in the Order of Academic Palms) by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of France. The Order of Academic Palms is a national order and medal created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808 to recognize outstanding members of the University of Paris. In its modern form, the award may be granted to individuals making extraordinary achievements in the realms of French education and culture.

[Read More.](#)

Ph.D. Alum Lindsay Kite to Speak at TEDxSaltLakeCity on Body Image Resilience

Lindsay Kite, who earned her master's (2009) and Ph.D. (2013) in the Communication Department, has been invited to speak at TEDxSaltLakeCity on Sept. 9, 2017. Her talk is based on her doctoral research about positive body image, which includes a focus on representation of women in media and how that affects people's perceptions of female bodies. [Read More.](#)



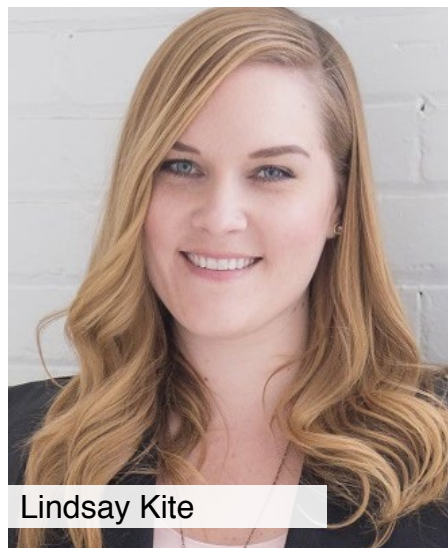
Shauna Edson



Bradley Parker



Anne Lair



Lindsay Kite



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?

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.

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