

# Humanities Newsletter

January | 2018

In this issue: History Assistant Professor Noel Voltz;  
Featured Alumni Mark Mollinet; Communication Student  
Heather Stone; and International Studies Alumni Kevin Knight  
Featured in New Video

# FACULTY FEATURE

## Noel Voltz

Assistant Professor | History



Noel Voltz is a scholar of African American and African Diasporic History. She earned her PhD in History in 2014 from the Ohio State University, and prior to coming to the U Voltz was an Assistant Professor of American History at Trinity Washington University in Washington, DC.

Voltz's particular research interests focus on women of color in slavery and freedom in the United States and the Atlantic World. More specifically, her first book project, tentatively titled, *The Sword in Her Hands: Louisiana's Free Women of Color and Their Sexual Negotiation for Freedom*, seeks to understand how free women of color used sex across the colorline as a tool of negotiation in various spaces in antebellum Louisiana. More specifically, utilizing contemporary travelers' journals, newspapers, poems, songs, letters, notarial and ecclesiastical records, court cases and other legal documents, her work examines the sexual agency that Louisiana's free women of color exerted in five sites of contestation – the body, the ballroom, the storeroom, the courtroom and the sanctuary. She contends that in literal and figurative spaces, Louisiana's free women of color drew upon their sexuality to make strategic claims to their freedom and advance themselves socially and economically.

This work pushes the boundaries of current scholarship engaging questions of intersectionality, sexual agency and trauma, race and identity, and hegemonic myth and cultural re-appropriation. In so doing, it builds upon and pushes beyond historiographic discussions of the fetishizing and fantasizing gaze of white men and the overly simplistic dichotomous images of the hypersexualized Jezebel and the totally victimized yet "respectable" free woman of color. Ultimately, this book project will illuminate a more nuanced understanding of black female agency in the antebellum era.

In addition to her active research agenda, Professor Voltz is enjoying teaching a range of courses in the department, including courses on African American, Early American and African Diaspora History.

# ALUMNI FEATURE

## Mark C. Mollinet, MD

BA | World Languages & Cultures  
Radiologist | Colorado Permanente Medical Group  
Denver, Colorado

As an undergraduate, Mark Mollinet knew he wanted to go to medical school, but took some time to explore majors before discovering what he enjoyed the most: studying world languages and cultures. After earning a BA in German with a minor in Chemistry, he went on to the U's School of Medicine and eventually settled into his radiology practice in Denver, Colorado.



Even though a major in German might sound like an unlikely foundation for medical school, Mark says it was a huge benefit in the application process. "It actually made me stand out as someone who was unique," he said. "Ninety percent of the other applicants were biology majors, so having German on my transcript was different. For medical school in particular, it's a people-oriented science, so people really liked that I had a humanities background."

For Mark, having an education in World Languages and Cultures has been a benefit not just in his career, but also in his personal life. "There is more to life than just your job," he emphasized. "Part of the educational experience at a university is to enrich the rest of your life. The ability to speak another language is useful for many reasons, and whether it's useful in your job is not the only thing that matters. Those skills are useful in *life*."

"My career is fascinating and challenging," he said, "but travel, languages, literature, and the arts are what truly bring me joy in life. Those are the things I have taken with me throughout my life and the things I will continue to pursue when I retire from my career. That is why I am so glad that I have a background in the humanities."

# STUDENT FEATURE

## Heather Stone

Doctoral Student | Communication



Eight years ago, Heather Stone decided to apply for a Master's program in creative-nonfiction. The program rejected her, even denying her a place on a waiting list. However, despite their answer, the program suggested that Heather apply for a PhD program in Communication.

Although frustrated, she decided to explore the possibility of applying to such a rigorous course of study. "Turned out I was a great fit for a doctoral Communication program, and I lived less than an hour from one of the best programs in the country, the Communication Department at the University of Utah," she said. She earned admission to our prestigious program—and this summer will add a Communication PhD to her shelf, next to her MBA and BA in English.

Heather smiles when she thinks about her experience at the University of Utah. "I have learned some immensely practical skills here: how to write, how to develop and teach an online course, how to extract important themes from a text. I have also learned more about perspectives that don't come naturally to me—other ways of seeing circumstances, people, organizations, governments, societies that I wouldn't have imagined on my own." We often speak about humanities giving students an edge, but sometimes we forget that students may not know what type of edge that they are gaining. The Department of Communication and the College of Humanities work to help each one of our students learn more about themselves—as well as the world around them. Heather reflects, "I came here to be something different, not to do something different, and the University of Utah has been amazing at helping me meet that goal."

As mentioned before, Heather had already earned a BA and MBA before matriculating with the University of Utah. It's clear, though, that the humanities have been central to each step of her education and her life. "The humanities have my heart. Even when I was in business, it was the people side of the workplace that fascinated me. My personal mission is to help people realize a better world is always possible, just as soon as we can think of a good path to get there." She loves that the humanities exposes her to ideas and ways of thinking that she had never before considered. She firmly believes that "the next good idea" to help the world is always right around the corner. "For me," she says, "humanities is the absolute best disciplinary space to generate those "next good ideas" and then put those ideas to work improving lives."

# NEWS



## Two Communication Professors Included Among Harvard Nieman Lab's Top 10 Digital and Social Media Research Articles of 2017

Two University of Utah Department of Communication professors have been included in the [Harvard Nieman Lab's 2017 list of most important new research in digital and social media](#). The inclusion of Professor Shannon McGregor and Professor Avery Holton marks the first time that two University of Utah professors have landed on the list, which selects from hundreds of peer-reviewed national and international articles the Top 10 most influential of the year.

[Continue Reading](#)



## John R. Park Debate Society Finishes Fall Season on a High Note

The John R. Park Debate Society traveled to Rock Springs, Wyoming for its final outing of the Fall 2017 competitive season at the 'Winter is Coming' Invitational hosted by Western Wyoming Community College. At the tournament, the team accomplished success across each of its competitive endeavors, including the top 9 speakers in debate, a debate close-out in semifinals (meaning all four semi-finalists were representing the U), and winning 11 of 22 public speaking events across 2 days of competition. [Read More](#)



## Why Humanities? Kevin Knight, CMO at Experticity explains.

Head to our [home page](#) to check out our latest video featuring International Studies alum Kevin Knight, who went on to jobs at Google, Facebook, and Pinterest, as he talks about the incredible value of a Humanities degree in the world of marketing.

[Watch the Video.](#)



## Former Dean Dianne Harris interviewed by *Continuum Magazine* on "Why the Humanities Matter"

History, literature, languages, philosophy, and more... these subjects have always occupied a place of central importance at the University of Utah. The earliest curricula at the U focused on liberal arts and classics, and the College of Humanities will celebrate its 50th anniversary as a free-standing college in 2020. Yet today, with increasing emphasis on the disciplines of science, business, and technology, the value of a humanities education has become a debated topic on campuses, in workplaces, and on the political scene.

[Read her answers in the full article here.](#)



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

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