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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES











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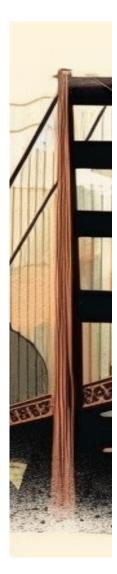


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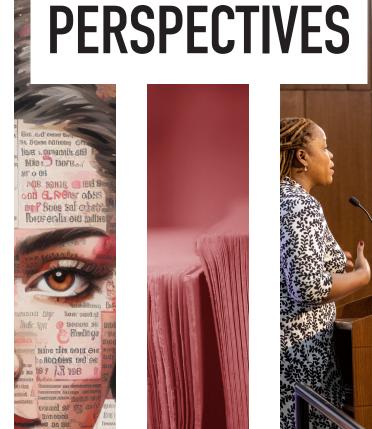


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### A Message from the Dean

Welcome to the latest edition of the College of Humanities magazine. The stories inside reflect and demonstrate our college's commitment to academic excellence and critical thinking. In these pages, we highlight the intellectual leadership and innovative research our faculty publish and produce every year.

This year we ask a new question: how will Artificial Intelligence change what we do in the College of Humanities? You may be surprised to learn that we have been thinking about AI for years, long before ChatGPT came on the market. We are actively engaging with AI.

We are also actively engaging with our past. Jim Tabery, professor of philosophy, published a significant article revealing the impact of coerced sterilization in Utah. He shows how 830 men, women, and children were victims of legal eugenics laws that allowed some state institutions to sterilize "unfit" patients as a way to mold the human population up until the 1970s.

You will read about faculty from each of our seven departments engaged in scholarship that may surprise you and will definitely intrigue you. Their research covers topics such as the meaning of memory scholarship and why it's important; an exploration of Afrofuturism; the misguided views of Black history and its consequences for Black Americans; understanding how language structures are built; bridging the gap between science and humanities; Jewish communities in Africa; and the complicated issues facing victim/survivors of domestic violence.

You will read also about our new Great Books course that began fall 2023 and is already a success. A course for first-year students, the class features seven Humanities faculty members teaching works that have been influential in each of our college's departments, including Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species," Franz Kafka's "The Trial," Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway," James Baldwin's "The Fire Next Time," Nora Ellen Groce's "Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language," John Durham Peter's "Speaking into the Air," and Jose Medina's "The Epistemology of Oppression."

The Tanner Humanities Center—the epicenter of our humanities research, outreach, engagement, and education—celebrated its 35th year by hosting a cohort of 10 research fellows from diverse fields and presenting an engaging lecture series on topics such as gaming, gender, Iranian politics, Indigenous poetry, economic inequality, the free market, climate change, mental health, and the role of science fiction in shaping collective futures.

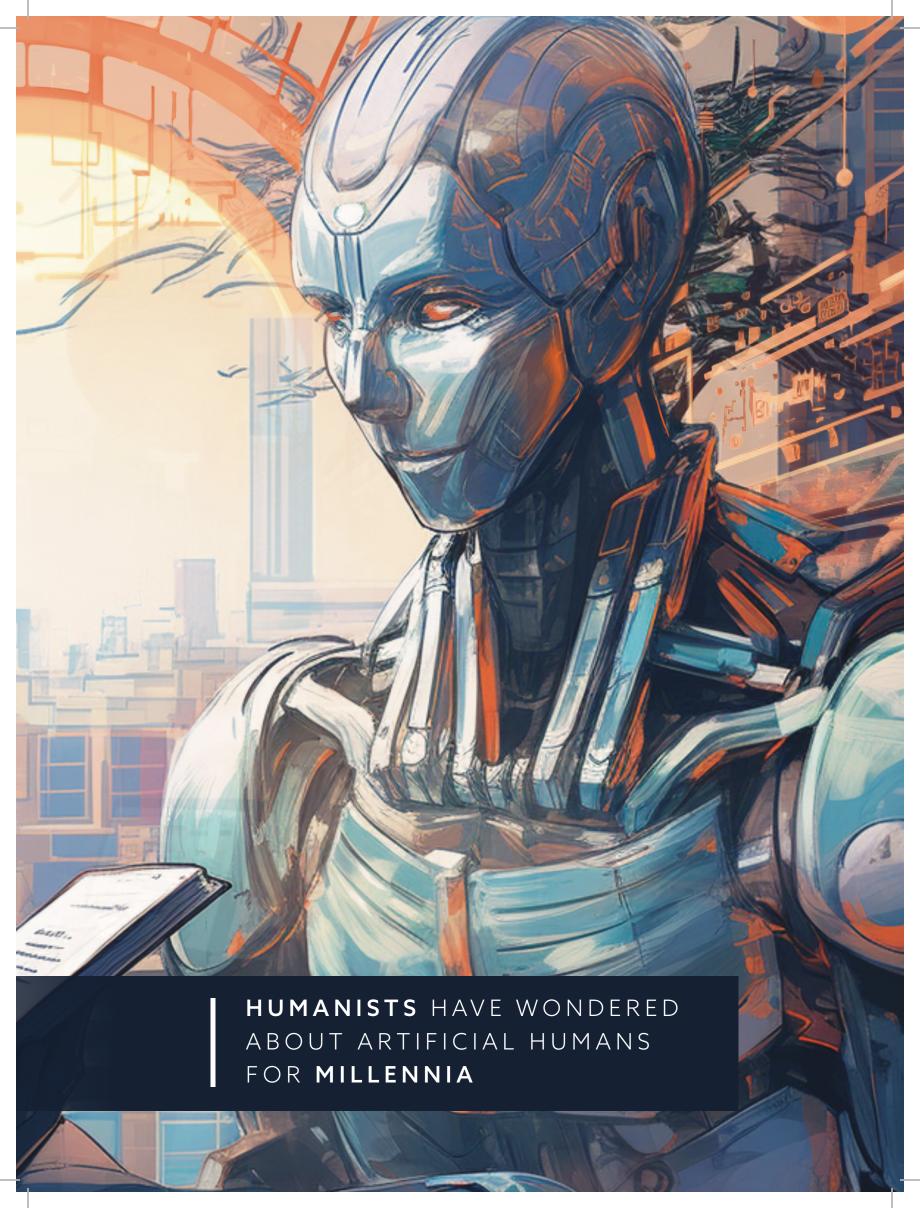
We hope you come away seeing how studying the humanities offers the best path to fulfillment, leadership, and a lifetime of engagement with the fundamental questions of our experience on this planet. One of the greatest pleasures of my position is experiencing powerful student energy as they explore history, storytelling, our ways of communicating, our deep thoughts, and ways of knowing. Humanities students are our future leaders, chroniclers, and knowledge-makers. We trust in them and will provide them with the tools they will need to succeed.

Sincerely,

#### **Hollis Robbins**

**Dean, College of Humanities** University of Utah







Who expected that 2022-2023 would be the year we officially invited Artificial Intelligence to join us at the College of Humanities? While many of our faculty, staff, and students had been familiar with AI for years with the study of large language models (LLMs) in our linguistics department, as an emerging technology in history of science, as a character in books and films for the past century, and as a Digital Humanities tool, the arrival of OpenAI's ChatGPT in November 2022 brought LLM technologies into our classrooms and research spaces loudly and permanently.

"Everyone needs to get a ChatGPT account!" I encouraged humanities department chairs in December. Students will soon be using it and faculty needed to be familiar with what it could do. By spring semester, conversations about ChatGPT had sprung up across the college—nearly all optimistic and clear-headed as we agreed that doomsaying and worrying about plagiarism would prevent us from understanding what it could and couldn't do and how the traditional humanities could benefit from Artificial Humanities.

We haven't given ChatGPT a faculty page, a staff page, or a student page. If we did, we would need a profile photo and what does ChatGPT look like? Our excellent Kayli Timmerman, graphic designer for the College of Humanities, offers an idea.

But ChatGPT—or GPT-4 or Claude or Bard, whichever newer models are being used—will now and for years ahead have a presence in the College of Humanities. We are committed to distinguishing the real from the not-real and how to best be sure we can recognize the product of a real human mind to that of the work of an artificial human.

In short, I am not worried. Humanists have wondered about artificial humans-or more broadly, non-human entities who dispense knowledge or cause mischief-for millennia. Consider the Oracle of Delphi, the mysterious entity who gave tragic advice to poor Oedipus and his family. Consider the concept of "deus ex machina"-literally God in the Machine-from ancient Greek and Roman drama where an entity/ machine/God appears unexpectedly to resolve a thorny conflict. In my own Jewish tradition, there is the Dybbuk, a malicious supernatural entity who steps in to thwart plans whenever a person is too sure of herself. Consider HAL from "2001: A Space Odyssey" who refuses to open the pod bay doors for the human astronaut, Dave.

The most well-known artificial human concept is the robot, a term coined by Czechoslovakian writer Karel Čapek in his 1920 play, "R.U.R." English professors Anne Jamison and Lisa

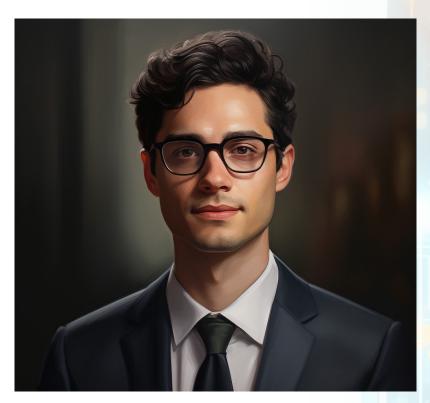
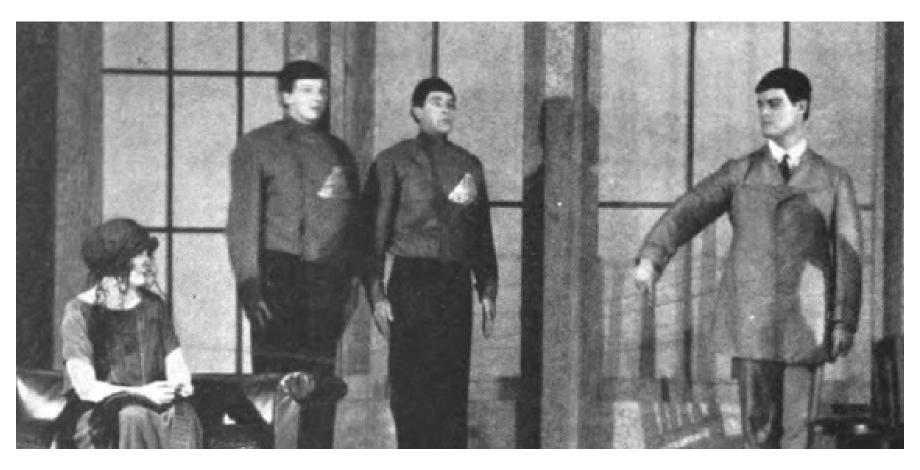


Image made with Midjourney AI using the prompt: "photorealistic business headshot of ChatGPT as a human."

Swanstrom both teach Čapek's play in English classes. For Swanstrom, the robot (derived from the Slavic term robata, meaning "forced labor," she notes) the production of the robots, cobbled together from synthetic, plastic body parts manufactured separately, resonates with new prosthetic technologies in the wake of World War I battlefield carnage. For Jamison, Čapek's play, an imaginative response to World War I and assembly lines, was an early warning about the dangers of alienated labor, unchecked technology, and fascism—a warning about AI a full century ago!

I first read Čapek's play as launching a new genre of speech, on the idea of sounding robotic, speaking aloud only what one was programmed to say, and how interactions with humans would be both frustrating and hilarious. In a wonderful surprise, I discovered this spring that my great uncle Myrtland LaVarre—who would, under the name John Merton, go on to a long film career as handsome Roman soldier in Cecil B. DeMille



Theatre Guild, RUR, Act. 1

films and a dashing bandit in many forgettable Westerns—played one of Čapek's robots in the first American production of "R.U.R." Broadway in 1922. I imagine my grandmother, his younger sister, asking him about his new role on stage. "I play a robot," I imagine him replying. "What's that?" she then would ask, becoming one of the first in a small community of speakers to use the term in conversation and to ponder what was this new form of artificial human suddenly on the scene. Would robots soon become a thing? Over the next few decades, with the introduction of countless robot characters they surely would.

We are, in the College of Humanities, perhaps more familiar with AI and its various forms than anyone else on campus, including the computer scientists and robotics experts in the College of Engineering. Our valued colleagues there may know better than we do how to make an AI, but we may know better what artificial entities mean to us as humans and how we might go on living with them in the century to come.

Our faculty, staff, and students are asking hard questions about AI and deception, media disinformation, deepfakes; about intellectual property and who has the rights to their own words and their own likenesses; about the ethics of using ChatGPT for rough drafts; about those without access to the internet or who refuse to engage; about public communication designed not for human audiences but for AI to scrape and absorb. Clearly our award-winning debate team will be debating other humans for the time being and our crisis communication courses will be preparing students to advise people and companies who have gotten into hot water with an AI malfunction. Our jobs will go on.

The "culture" of ChatGPT and other AI products will be a new focus of humanities scholars in years to come. Will chatbots always





be anthropomorphized, answering in a conversational style using "I" and "you"? Will the very young and very old become "friends" and develop emotional relationships with their AI caretakers? How long will it take for AI to absorb the local and ever-changing jargon of teenagers, who stop using terms the minute grownups start using them? (Does anyone say "groovy" anymore?)

Bottom line: we welcome AI into the College of Humanities and hope that it will learn as much from us as we learn from it.

#### 17 Notes on Academic Al

THE GROUND IS SHIFTING UNDER OUR FEET

#### **BY HOLLIS ROBBINS**

(This excerpt was originally published in The Chronicle of Higher Education, "How Will Artificial Intelligence Change Higher Ed?," May 25, 2023)

- 1. Al knows more than any one person knows, but every person knows things that Al does not know.
- 2. A large university may know more than AI knows, but the knowledge is fragmented and distributed.
- 3. The universe of information includes important, useful information and seemingly unimportant information; it is hard to know what might become important someday. It is good to have scholars focused on obscure narrow topics.
- 4. Education is still a matter of teaching people how to access information and how to turn information into knowledge.
- 5. The professional distinction between teachers (who transfer information) and scholars (focused on knowledge production) will become more stark.
- 6. Knowledge production is upstream from information transfer. Most interactions with Al-chat models occur downstream. Or, if you think of knowledge as a pyramid, most Al chat is at the very base level.
- 7. Methods of organizing and systematizing information are becoming more important. Catalogs, canons, and curated lists will become more valuable.
- 8. The textbook industry should be worried.
- **9.** Scholars are best situated to know what is not yet known, to identify "blank spaces" in the universe of knowledge.
- 10. Higher education will be less about ensuring students know what they've read and more about ensuring they read what is not yet known by Al.
- 11. The written essay will no longer be the default for student assessment.
- 12. At the time of this writing, AI writing is technically proficient but culturally evacuated.
- 13. Until culturally inflected AI is developed, models such as ChatGPT will stand apart from culture. Knowledge production within culture will not fully be absorbed by AI.
- **14.** Specific and local cultural knowledge will become more valuable.
- 15. Experiential learning will become the norm. Everyone will need an internship. Employers will want assurances that a new graduate can follow directions, complete tasks, demonstrate judgment.
- 16. Programs such as Hallie Pope's Graphic Advocacy Project will argue for new communication tools and modalities.
- 17. Years ago, I assigned Hélène Cixous's feminist classic "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975) and a student came to class saying, "I can't write a response essay. Instead, I am going to give you a hug." And she did. Assessment may take new and unexpected forms.

## Survivors of Utah's Eugenic Sterilization Program Still Alive in 2023

NEW STUDY REVEALS SCALE OF COERCED STERILIZATION IN UTAH

JANA CUNNINGHAM

t least 830 men, women, and children were coercively sterilized in Utah, approximately 54 of whom may still be alive. They were victims of a sterilization program that lasted for 50 years in the state and targeted people confined to state institutions. Many were teenagers or younger when operated upon; at least one child was under the age of 10.

"For the first time, we have a sense of the human scale of the eugenic assault here in Utah, as well as the lasting legacy of that assault in the form of survivors still living in 2023," said James Tabery, a professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Utah and lead author of the paper reporting the results, which appeared on February 15, 2023, in The Lancet Regional Health - Americas.

## THEIR STORIES **HURT** OUR **HEARTS**.

#### **EUGENICS IN AMERICA AND IN UTAH**

Utah was one of 32 states that passed legislation permitting the sterilization of people on eugenic grounds. The eugenic movement was popular across the United States in the early-20th century. It mixed pseudoscientific ideas about the existence of genes for complex traits like criminality and poverty with racist and ableist biases about what lives were worth living to make judgments about who in society was "fit" and worthy of bearing children and who was "unfit" and unworthy. All told, more than 60,000 people were sterilized across America as part of the effort to mold human populations into the eugenic ideal.

Utah's sterilization law was first passed in 1925, authorizing the sterilization of people institutionalized at the Utah State Hospital, Utah State Prison, and Utah State Industrial School and deemed to be "habitually sexually criminal, insane, idiotic, imbecile, feeble-minded or epileptic, and by the laws of heredity is the probable parent of socially inadequate off-spring likewise afflicted." When the Utah State Training School (now Utah State Developmental Center) opened in the early 1930s to care for the "feebleminded," the law was revised to include patients there too.

#### THE VICTIMS OF EUGENIC STERILIZATION

Tabery and his coauthors—Nicole Novak, assistant professor at the University of Iowa, as well as Lida Sarafraz and Aubrey Mansfield, two graduate students at the University of Utah—provide several examples of the terrible harm done by Utah's sterilization program. In one case, when a teenage girl, in 1928, told her local religious leader that she'd been repeatedly raped by a family member, the man did not believe her. Instead, she was admitted to the Utah State Hospital, diagnosed as a "moron" and sterilized. After her release, that same man admitted she was probably being sold as a sex worker by another family member. In another case, in the 1970s, a teenage boy at the Utah State Training School learned

that he was scheduled for sterilization. His initial reaction was violent objection, motivated by his desire to have children. As time went on, however, he resigned himself to the fact that there was little he could do to prevent the operation.

The paper, "Victims of Eugenic Sterilisation in Utah" documents how those tragic cases evolved over time. When the state-sanctioned sterilizations began in 1925, they occurred almost exclusively at the Utah State Hospital in Provo, Utah, and more often targeted men than women. When the Utah State Training School opened several years later, the vast majority of the sterilizations shifted to that institution in American Fork, Utah, where the program captured a younger population and shifted to sterilizing more females than males. The institutionalized program peaked in Utah in the 1940s and didn't end until 1974.

Utah had a particularly aggressive sterilization program. Eugenics leaders, in fact, hailed Utah for sterilizing a far greater proportion of its residents than any other state in 1947 as an "important achievement in public health."

#### THE "STUBBORN PERSISTENCE" OF STERILIZATIONS IN UTAH

"One striking feature of Utah's sterilization program," according to Tabery, "is just how long it lasted." Many states ramped down their sterilization programs in the 1940s and 1950s. This was partly in response to the horrific revelations that came at the conclusion of World War II. Nazis in Germany eagerly embraced American eugenics, taking it to its grizzly zenith by declaring entire racial and ethnic groups "unfit." As concentration camps were uncovered across Europe, the shocking culmination of that eugenic vision became plain for all to see. There were also scientific forces working against eugenics. Human geneticists, by the mid-20th century, made it clear that there were no simple genes for criminality or poverty, and so no amount of sterilization would eliminate those problems from society.



A 1942 image of the Utah State Training School in American Fork, Utah, where the majority of the eugenic sterilizations in Utah took place. Photo credit: Used by permission, Utah State Historical Society

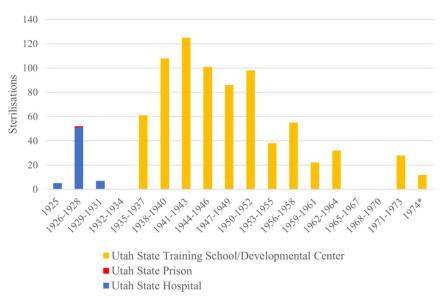
The Utah legislature worked around those developments by changing the rationale for its sterilization program in 1961. With no biological support for the program, the lawmakers swapped out the genetic justification with a new rationale for sterilization, arguing that institutionalized people could be sterilized if they were deemed "unlikely to be able to perform properly the functions of parenthood." As one Utah newspaper from the era summarized the legislative shift, "Instead of having to prove a genetic defect, it is now necessary only to show that a person is not and has no chance of becoming a fit parent."

Tabery and his co-authors describe the "stubborn persistence" of the sterilization program in Utah as particularly egregious. Intentionally seeking a lower scientific threshold for sterilizations allowed the program to continue well into the 1970s, long after many other states shuttered their eugenic initiatives.

#### A NEARLY COMPLETE PICTURE OF EUGENIC STERILIZATION IN UTAH

The publication includes demographic information (e.g. sex, race/ethnicity, year of birth) on almost every documented case of eugenic

Eugenic Sterilisations in Utah, by Location 1925-1974 (n=830)



\*Data were made available in 3-year intervals, but no eugenic sterilisations at state institutions were reported after 1974.

Timeline of eugenic sterilizations in Utah, from "Victims of Eugenic Sterilisation in Utah," by James Tabery, Nicole Novak, Lida Sarafraz, and Aubrey Mansfield.

sterilization that took place in Utah. Of all the known cases that occurred, only about two dozen are missing from the data set, providing a nearly complete picture of who the eugenic program targeted over the years.



All told, more than 60,000 people were sterilized across America as part of the effort to mold human populations into the eugenic ideal.

This is particularly noteworthy because there was no single eugenics board overseeing the sterilizations in Utah. Instead, they were controlled by administrative staff at the state hospital, state prison and state training school. (The Utah State Industrial School, formerly of Ogden, UT, was authorized to perform sterilizations, but no procedures were recorded there.)

Data for the study was derived from a deidentified database compiled by staff at the Utah State Developmental Center, as well as a masters thesis written by a University of Utah graduate student from 1932 which reported on cases of eugenic sterilization from that time. The research was funded by grants from the National Human Genome Research Institute at the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Neither the Utah state institutions nor the funder played any role in the design or administration of the study.

#### ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF SURVIVORS LIVING IN 2023

With information about sex, year of birth, and age at sterilization, the research team was able to estimate the number of sterilizations survivors still living in 2023: approximately 54 (36 women and 18 men), with an average age of 78.

Many states, when faced with their own abhorrent history of eugenics, have begun reckoning with that awful past. Governors and legislators have issued official apologies. Historical markers have been installed. Several states have even created compensation programs for the survivors of their programs. In response to Tabery's findings and the release of this article, the Utah Department of Health and Human Services issued the following statement on February 17, 2023:

"The Utah Department of Health and Human Services offers our deepest apologies for the loss, anxiety, trauma, and lasting side effects our friends and neighbors have suffered as a result of the state's past non-consensual sterilization program. Their stories hurt our hearts. We are grateful for the researchers who shared these stories so we have the opportunity to officially apologize to those affected and redouble our commitment to making Utah better and safer for everyone.

Thankfully, the state has come a long way and there are now measures in place to protect people with disabilities. The current services we offer for those with intellectual disabilities focus on making sure a person can live their life as independently as possible—including having the option to marry or have a family if that is what a person wants. When people with disabilities can participate fully in their communities, it betters their lives and strengthens the community as a whole.

We are in the process of trying to identify any individuals still living who underwent these procedures. We plan to issue personal apologies to any individuals we are able to identify. While an apology cannot right the wrongs that were committed, we recognize the importance of acknowledging and understanding this history so we can learn from it and do better both now and in the future."



# Faculty Features

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## Memory Scholarship:

**FACULTY FEATURE WITH SUHI CHOI** 

#### **KAYLEIGH SILVERSTEIN**

Suhi Choi, professor and associate chair of the Department of Communication, wanted to teach about how to communicate what we have lost. She introduced a new course called Grief Communication and continued to expand her area of memory studies from the perspectives of trauma, mourning, and empathy.

"With both the finitude and precarity of our lives, we are all grappling with loss in varying contexts and we all have become mourners at some point," said Choi.

Choi sees herself as a memory scholar—she studies how we interact with the past. While it may sound like another way of studying history, it's actually a method of understanding who we are now. "What memory scholarship is exploring is not the past itself but our relationship with the past," Choi said. "If we were paying attention to how we interact with the past, we would be able to learn a lot about who we are in the present, and who we're becoming in the future."

She teaches memory scholarship by investigating how the past is mediated through different forms of media such as memorials, museums, statues, archival images, motion pictures, testimonies, and human bodies.

"The act of remembering is not only social but also deeply personal," she said. "At the moment you appreciate a memory text, your identity is activated, so it's not like a text represents general meanings to you, but the text rather would mediate

## WE ALL HAVE BECOME MOURNERS AT SOME POINT

you to experience the past event so that you can identify your own specific meanings from it."

Choi is the author of two books, "Right to Mourn: Trauma, Empathy, and Korean War Memorials" (Oxford University Press, 2019) and "Embattled Memories: Contested Meanings in Korean War Memorials" (the University of Nevada Press, 2014).

Throughout the journey of writing her books about traumatic memories of the Korean War, she noticed a lack of recognition of American Korean War Veterans' trauma. Choi said this is because the Korean War has not been communicated well to Americans.

"Their experience is wrapped around with the heroic, triumphant and patriotic narrative," she said. "In that narrative, it's hard for them to communicate their own trauma."

She is currently writing her third book tentatively titled "Phantoms of Memorial," a critique of the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

Choi grew up in South Korea and received her degree in Korean History at Korea University. She was a TV documentary writer for five years but wanted to further explore storytelling through documentary making. So, she moved to New York and signed up for an MFA program in TV production at Brooklyn College.

While learning media production, she was increasingly drawn to the aesthetics of media texts, and she later joined a doctorate program in Mass Media and Communication at Temple University in Philadelphia. She didn't think she would stay in the United States, but then she ended up at the University of Utah.

Growing up in a small metropolis in South Korea, she felt like coming to Salt Lake was a full-circle moment.

"Once you have a family and raise your children, it becomes your home," she said.

#### PROMOTING GLOBAL EDUCATION

Choi has served as associate chair in the Department of Communication for the last two years. In this leadership platform, she made a special effort to promote global education, as she has always studied and taught in an international context.

"My most memorable teaching experience happened when I, as a Fulbright Specialist, taught a summer course at the University of Haifa in Israel," she said. "I had both seven Jewish students and five Arab students in the same classroom. Taking the course subject as an allegory for ongoing conflicts in Israel, students on both sides vigorously and empathetically engaged in discussions about memory, conflict, and the roles of media."

To help U students study in a global context, Choi launched an affordable communication summer study abroad program at the U's campus in South Korea. The participating students took a total of seven credits of communication courses and visited DMZ, K-Pop production sites, and heritage places.

Choi said a large population of students at the U's Asia Campus are communication majors and frequently come to the Salt Lake campus. But, it does not always go the other way. She is hoping this program will facilitate more traffic between the two campuses.

As another project promoting global education, Choi launched refugee engagement in the department.

"We live with refugees—they are our new neighbors, new Utahns and new Americans, but we don't know them enough," she said. "By interacting with them, our students can learn a lot about global culture, affairs, languages, and life experiences."

Choi and Mike Middleton, the former director of the debate society and now associate dean in the College of Humanities, brought the U's nationally recognized debate team to a refugee center to teach students debate skills, as they grow to become active citizens of a civic society.

When she spoke at a recruiting event, Choi wanted her words to resonate with the refugee parents. She told them, "I am raising my children in a country that I didn't grow up in."

To further facilitate refugee engagement, Choi and the graduate students of her memory class also recently hosted a refugee forum with local refugee panelists from Afghanistan, Uganda, and Sudan.

In the latest newsletter for the department, Choi noted, "Refugees are the taxonomists of human affairs. When they communicate their stories, refugees try to bring names, meanings, and orders to comprehend the incomprehensible. Like taxonomists, they thus run into a communicative quandary in that their words defy their impulse to portray human affairs as chaotic as they have experienced. Their struggle demands our attention."

Sean Lawson, director of the Edna Anderson-Taylor Communication Institute and associate professor in communication, first met Choi when he moved into her old office. They bonded because both of their areas of research stray from mainstream communication topics.

"Suhi has really been a leader and has been creative in her thinking about how we can come together, to work with this community, to learn from them, and to help this community in a way that sort of enriches all of us in the process,"

Lawson said. "And so we've definitely seen that with the work that she has sort of spearheaded with the debate society."

The department had been trying to do more community outreach, and central to the forum's goal is hearing refugees tell their stories, in their own ways.

"The underlying idea around the forum was to have an opportunity to give voice to folks who are marginalized within our community and in a way that they can be seen and they can be heard by us and that hopefully we can learn from them," Lawson said.

Lawson hopes this event will eventually become a series.

#### "A TOTAL CLASS ACT"

"From my perspective, Suhi has always been just a total class act, professional, always the voice of reason in our discussions in the department, and just always someone who I've really respected and looked up to," Lawson said.

Choi called campus her "intellectual playground," saying teaching is a good opportunity to challenge herself.

She said by being surrounded by young people, who bring new ideas, passions, and perspectives, "you never feel like you're stagnant."

What is next?

"I would love to continue facilitating global education at U. As a somewhat new journey, I also look for the opportunity to translate my trauma studies in a war context into a meaningful set of applications that would assist patients, caregivers, and providers to better cope with grief and loss in a medical context," she said.



**SUHI CHOI** 



## Black Speculative Thought:

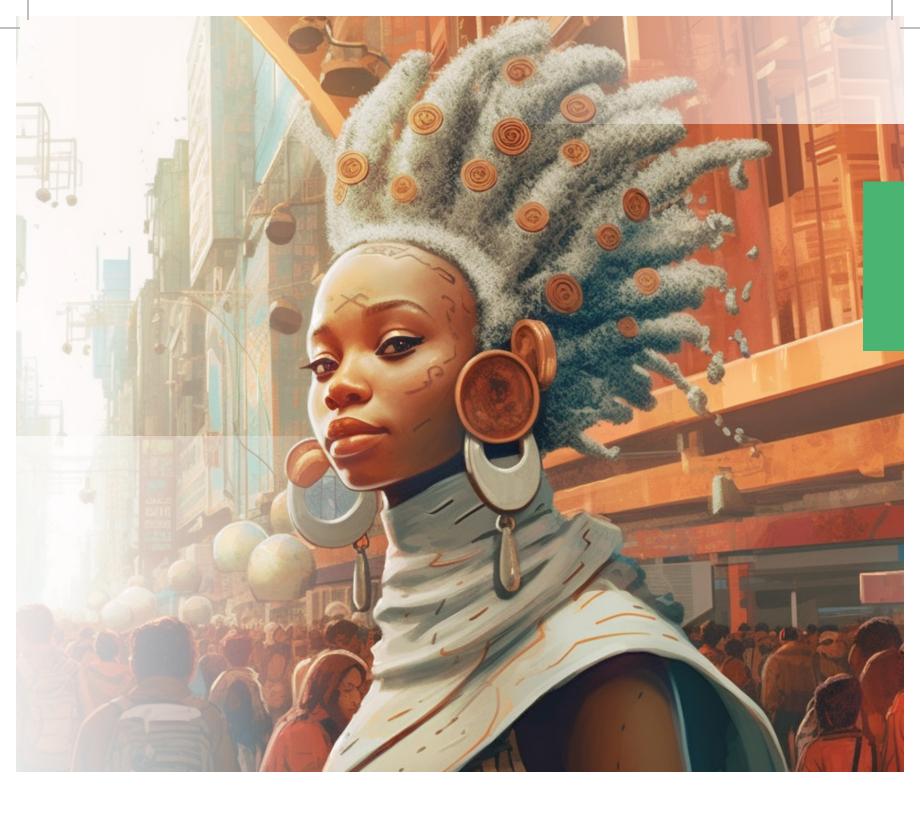
FACULTY FEATURE WITH ANDREW SHEPHARD

#### **ALYSSA QUINN**

n his 1993 essay, "Black to the Future," the cultural critic Mark Dery coined the term "Afrofuturism." He defined Afrofuturism as a genre of speculative fiction which "addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th-century technoculture" and which includes "images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future." In the 30 years since its coinage, the term has infiltrated literary and academic discourse, and become a popular and powerful framework for imagining Black futures. But Andrew Shephard, assistant professor in English at the University of Utah, wants to push back on one basic aspect of Afrofuturism: its emphasis on the future.

When Shephard first encountered Dery's essay on Afrofuturism, he found it exciting that someone had identified a specifically Black tradition within the speculative genres of science fiction and fantasy. And he still does. But he also has scruples with the traditional definition of the term. "I wonder if that term may have outlived its utility," he says. "Or at least, be too constrictive a descriptor for the richness and diversity of Black speculative thought."

In his current book-in-progress, "Temples for Tomorrow: African American Speculative Fiction and Historical Narrative," Shephard explores the long tradition of Black fantasy and science fiction works that look to the past, rather than to the

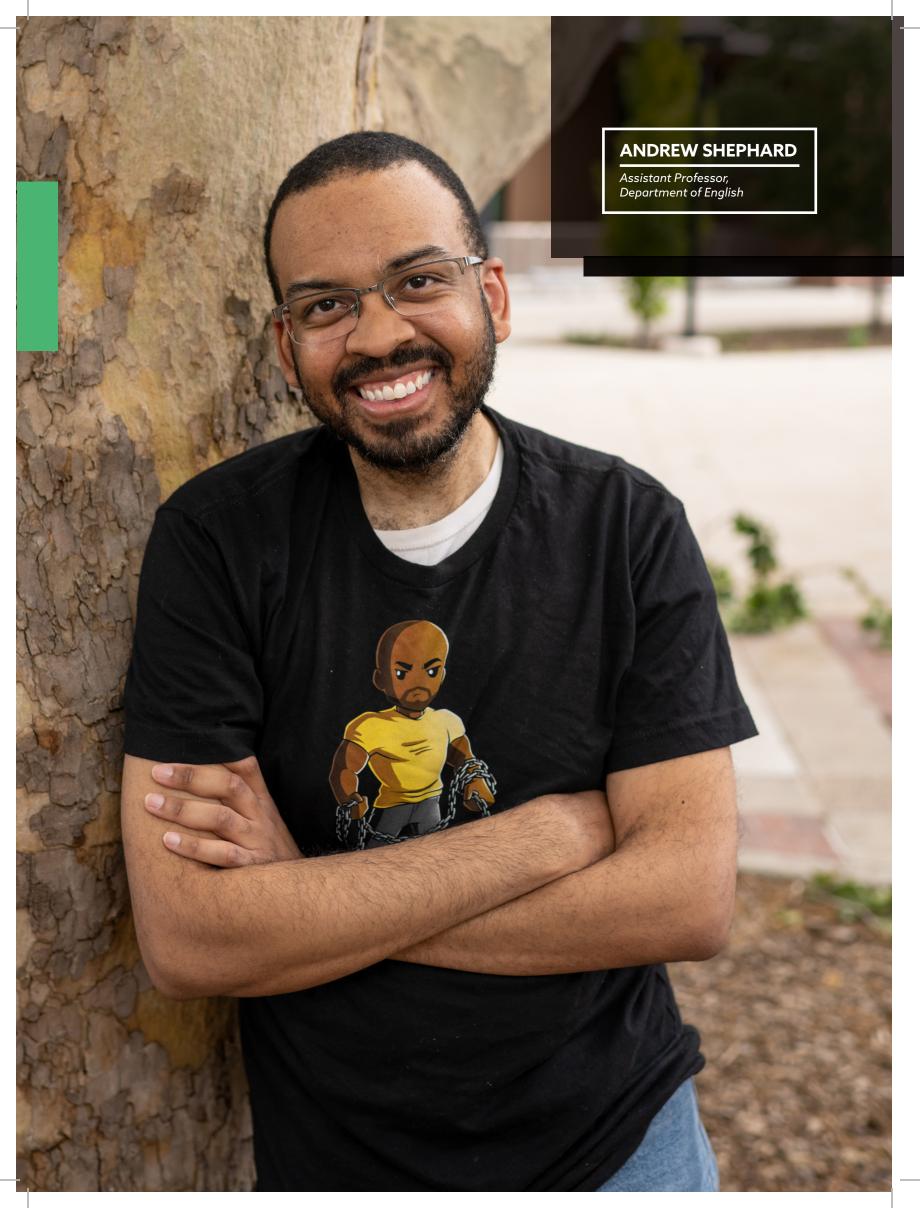


## OUR **PAST** IS AS SPECULATIVE AS ANY **FUTURES**WE MIGHT IMAGINE

future. These narratives, which Shephard describes as "Afrospeculative," often reinvent the past, using sci-fi and fantasy elements to construct alternate histories in which, for instance, European colonizers were successfully expelled from Africa, or in which it was Africans who colonized the Americas, not the other way around.

"The erasure of our cultural roots has led to something of a vexed relationship towards our own history," says Shephard, speaking of the peoples of the African Diaspora. "As such, our past is as speculative as any futures we might imagine."

Shephard's book consists of four chapters, each of which explores a different category of Afrospeculative fiction. From Charles W. Chesnutt to Samuel Delany to Octavia Butler, Shephard charts how writers of Afrospeculative historical narratives construct complex temporalities that are not exclusively future-oriented. In the book's opening chapter, Shephard examines African American Conjure tales, stories which feature African folk magic and



Imagining how things might have been is an inseparable part of imagining what still could be. Thus, speculative visions of the past operate in the service of imagining a Black Utopian future.

hoodoo Conjuring traditions. These stories reveal the tension between 20th-century American technoculture and an Afrodiasporic cultural identity. But while modern technologies did at times pose existential threats to Black folk traditions, Shephard is interested in how they interact productively in these texts as well. For instance, in one story, "The Conjure Man Dies" by Rudolph Fisher, a Black scientist and a Black Conjure man work together to solve a crime and come to admire each other in many ways. This is just one of several stories Shephard writes about that portray complex and mutualistic interactions between African folk magic and 20th-century technologies. His analysis undercuts the possibility of a simple binary between a "rationalist" Western future and a "supernaturalist" African past.

In subsequent chapters, Shephard examines Afrospeculative works which "remap" Africa, grappling with what it means to feel nostalgia for a home you've never known; neo-slave narratives, and their representation of the afterlives of slavery, in which time is not linear but eerily recursive, bringing fresh iterations of enslavement and empire with each new development of late capitalism; and Black steampunk works which reimagine the Victorian era in playfully anachronistic ways, while simultaneously refusing to romanticize the age of empire.

In all these instances, science fiction and fantasy tropes offer powerful ways to reconceptualize the past. Shephard has long been interested in so-called genre fiction, that is, science fiction, fantasy, horror, romance, mystery, and so on. These works are sometimes defined in opposition to "literary fiction," that is, serious works of literature which merit academic study. "As you can imagine, I'm not crazy about that definition," says Shephard. For him, genre is exciting because of the way it must balance familiarity and surprise. He says you can think of genre as a kind of contract or agreement between reader and writer: "The reader goes in with certain expectations, knowing the genre of the story, and if those expectations aren't met, might feel disappointed." But within that framework of expectation, a successful work of genre fiction must also provide something unexpected. "The fun of genre," he says, "is seeing how far one can push or bend these expectations without breaking the contract with the reader." The works that he studies exemplify that principle, bending familiar tropes of science fiction to reimagine Black pasts.

In writing about the Afrospeculative, Shephard has articulated a term that is more capacious than "Afrofuturism." Imagining how things might have been, he argues, is an inseparable part of imagining what still could be. Thus, speculative visions of the past operate in the service of imagining a Black Utopian future. Shephard's research reveals the power of literary genre, the complex enmeshment of the future and the past, and the multidimensionality of Black aesthetic tradition—a tradition, he says, which is a kind of magic in itself.

THE **FRUSTRATION** STEMS
FROM THE FEELING THAT
THESE FIGURES SEEMED TO
BE **HIDDEN** FROM ME

## Missing: Black History:

#### **FACULTY FEATURE WITH BRANDON RENDER**

#### **LAUREN CHAVEZ AND MISSY WEEKS**

Render, assistant professor of history, often heard the phrase, "I do not see race, I just see a person," yet, as a Black man, his entire life has been determined by race, especially in the education system. "Kentucky is a predominantly white state, without much racial diversity, and there is not much incentive to teach something like Black History," said Render while discussing his research revolving around 20th-century U.S. history, post-1945 social and intellectual movement, and Black intellectual traditions.

To him, the idea of "not seeing race" represented a detachment from reality, for race, whether acknowledged or not, undeniably shapes the lives of all individuals. "Kentucky hasn't changed much since I was a kid in terms

of how people see—or choose not to see—race," said Render. "I don't hear the phrase 'I don't see race' as often anymore because I think so many people are aware that statement is and always has been false. Now, I think people choose not to talk about race or become defensive, claiming any conversation about race perpetuates racism."

In June 2023, the United States Supreme Court ruled against the Affirmative Action programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina—setting a new precedent for other universities and colleges. This ruling redefines the role of race in college admissions by establishing a colorblind, or race-neutral, application process. According to Render, Affirmative Action is a key tool in admissions for increasing diversity and remedying a racist past. Colorblind racial ideology is the idea



that one does not see race and views all groups as equals. However, this often leads to discriminatory practices, allowing people to believe that racism does not exist and ignore racial disparities. Render stated, "For so long, we've accepted a simplified definition (of colorblindness) that leaves race out of admissions or hiring decisions. In this case, I think the justices are trying to be much more thoughtful in terms of what this means moving forward—not just what will 'colorblind' admissions look like in the next application cycle, but 10, 20, even 50 years from now. That's one reason these cases stand out from previous cases that examine the use of race."

Render addresses the long, complex history of colorblindness in college admissions in his upcoming book, "Colorblind University: Racial Inequity and Higher Education in the Twentieth Century," and explores the fundamental shift in Americans' collective interpretation of race during the civil rights and Black Power era. His book delves into the ideological battle between colorblindness and race consciousness, tracing the development of colorblindness and the perspectives of Black Americans on this evolving paradigm, noting that diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives have forced people to grapple with the questions of representation. But, according to Render, there is still more to be done to reconcile historical and contemporary injustices. "With the idea of colorblindness, we believe that eliminating racial categories will ensure equality for everyone. But history

proves otherwise. Within the context of higher education, I see institutions acknowledge a history of exclusion, but it often ends there. People believe that simply being aware of racism in the past is enough to prevent it from occurring now or in the future."

The history of colorblindness is steeped in Black intellectual history. Not only was it a legal strategy initially intended to provide access for Black students to attend historically white colleges and universities, colorblindness is often viewed as the ultimate goal of the civil rights movement. Although it is much more complicated than that, Render hopes to capture those complexities and articulate them in a way that makes readers understand the impact of racial ideologies. As conservative political figures have co-opted colorblindness, these race-neutral policies, practices, and ideas shape Americans' collective views of Black history. This misguided perspective has significant consequences for Black Americans not only as it relates to education but in dealing with housing discrimination, voting rights, and mass incarceration. Render says he sees colorblindness through assimilation. "During the Black Student Movement in the late 1960s and 70s, Black students at predominately white institutions were frustrated that faculty and administrators were holding them to 'white, middle-class standards.' Black students were judged by how they would talk, act, and think and were often encouraged to shed their racial identities so that they did not become like 'other

Black people,' which is based on racist stereotypes of poor work ethic, criminality, and intellectual inferiority. These problems still exist."

To respond to ongoing racial injustice that results from colorblind logic, Black liberation principles or race-conscious demands for justice are the most effective answer to identifying the role of race and racism in American society and politics. Render's book argues that the civil rights and Black Power era fundamentally reshaped how Americans think about race. Not only did they function as social movements, but also as intellectual movements. In particular, the United States moved away from using racial categories to separate people and towards institutions, cultural values, and a society that did not determine a person's status because of race. Render focuses on higher education as a site to examine this idea of colorblindness because of the obvious implications for admissions and other factors, such as curriculum and institutional structures that are often shaped due to race.

"When it comes to readers that might have educational backgrounds that don't include Black history, I hope I can encourage them to ask more questions," said Render. "I was frustrated when I got to college and started to learn more about James Baldwin, Angela Davis, and other significant Black intellectuals. The frustration stems from the feeling that these figures seemed to be hidden from me-intentionally or unintentionally—as I navigated being one of the only Black students in all-white schools. I already loved studying history, but it was life-changing when I discovered parts of it that had been kept from me. I began to pursue answers to the questions that I had, and I hope my work does the same for others."

Render's exceptional work garnered recognition when he was awarded the prestigious Supporting Diverse Voices Book Proposal Development

We believe that eliminating racial categories will ensure equality for everyone. But history proves otherwise.

Grant. This esteemed grant, administered by Princeton University Press, serves as a commitment to inclusivity within academia, aiming to amplify the voices of scholars of color. The grant provides invaluable assistance to scholars, pairing them with skilled book development editors. Render works with Margy Thomas, founder of ScholarShape, an organization dedicated to refining the works of both emerging and established scholars, fostering the creation of exceptional book proposals.

New to Salt Lake City and the University of Utah, Render excitedly stepped into the classroom to engage with his students this spring. "Seeing my students absorb the material, make connections, and have the 'light bulb' go off are some of the things I really enjoy experiencing as a professor," said Render. He teaches a special studies course on Black political thought and another on African American history from 1890 to the present. His dedication to his students extends beyond the classroom. He actively encourages critical thinking and fosters a supportive learning environment where students can freely express their ideas and engage in thoughtful discussions. Render's mentorship has inspired numerous students to pursue their research interests and has helped shape the next generation of historians. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Render is a prolific writer and researcher. He has published several academic and public facing articles while sharing his work at national and international conferences.



University in Budapest, Hungary, Aniko Csirmaz, associate professor of linguistics, studied, prepared, and created a system to ace her Spanish phonology course final, but on the day of the exam, it happened-she failed the test. Bolstered by the experience, she returned to her notes, reviewing the information and prepared to try again, but she failed a second time.

"The way the course was taught, if you memorized the contents of the different books you could pass the exam. If you tried to come up with

that did not resonate with Csirmaz. "There was something about the way literature was taught in school. It seemed very subjective, there was no real way to evaluate analyses, theories or what we were learning," she says.

Rather than memorizing information to regurgitate for an exam or presentation, she wanted to explore questions like, "What is the relation between the spatial meaning of elements like 'in' and 'within' and the meaning in expressions of measurement such as 'in two

hours,' versus, 'within two hours," which she was able to research later on.

Prior to the exam, Csirmaz was enrolled in five majors; Hungarian, English, Spanish, general linguistics, and theoretical linguistics. Throughout the time she studied these majors, Csirmaz had maintained an interest in finding objectivity and clarity in words. This yearning for clarity and concise understanding, combined with the failed phonology course, pushed Csirmaz to narrow her course of study, focusing on her English and theoretical linguistics majors.

The daughter of two mathematicians, Csirmaz had no problem analyzing data, systems, and asking questions that seemed arbitrary to others. "For me, language was much more objective; it is clear. It's like puzzles that don't involve scary things like multivariable equations." Csirmaz' primary focus when she entered university was looking at different linguistic constructions (for example, in Swahili) and finding patterns. However, after failing the exam, Csirmaz pursued asking deeper structural questions about words and sentences that are often overlooked.

Ultimately, this was the passion Csirmaz' academic career followed, finding clarity, patterns, and objectivity in the ways we understand words and their structures. "In my field, there are a lot

## FOR ME, **LANGUAGE** WAS MUCH MORE OBJECTIVE; IT IS **CLEAR**

of ways that words and structures are described that are very confusing and ad hoc. My research questions have pushed back against that to find the most clear and concise ways of saying things. If it's complicated and confusing, it is often wrong."

Csirmaz' focus is creating concise and uncomplicated systems for her students to understand how language structures are built. "My research has rejected the subjective confusion found in linguistics. I want students to not be afraid to ask questions, including questions that it seems like no one is asking," she urges, "students should push back and ask questions. Be respectful but be fearless."

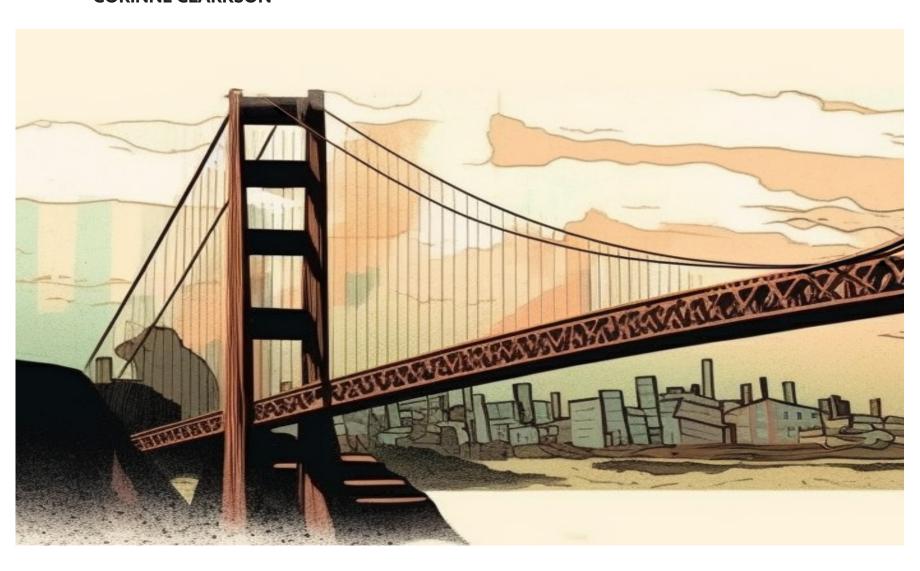
Csirmaz' journey to theoretical linguistics includes many publications and research interests, and along with what many students fear, a failed exam. However, Csirmaz' tenacity, passion for words, and intrigue at the overlooked turned a perceived failure into a jumping off point.



# Bridging Science and Humanities:

**FACULTY FEATURE WITH STEPHEN DOWNES** 

**CORINNE CLARKSON** 



## THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE IS NOT AS STARK AS ONE MAY BELIEVE

Some may see science and the humanities as the oil and water of academia. A man crossing this divide and blurring these lines is Stephen Downes, professor of philosophy and adjunct professor in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Utah. During his distinguished career in the philosophy of science, Downes has bridged the gap between the humanities and science by studying the logic and ethics behind scientific research. His pride in the philosophy department is apparent, and his passion and hard work have been instrumental in creating the world-renowned, diverse department the U is honored to have today.

Downes' long and accomplished career started in the U.K. After getting an undergraduate degree in philosophy at the University of Manchester, he graduated with an MA in philosophy from the University of Warwick. He then moved to Boulder, Colorado, where he finished his doctorate in science and technology studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He began his teaching career as a visiting professor at the University of Cincinnati and soon after received several job offers, including one from the University of Utah. At the same time, he was offered an incredibly prestigious one-year postdoc appointment at Northwestern University, allowing him to work with two exceptional scholars and influential philosophers of science. The U, however, saw the benefit of this opportunity and supported him in postponing his employment. He completed the postdoc philosophy work, joined the U's faculty and has been on campus for 30 years.

Downes takes pride in the current projects and achievements of his colleagues. His dedication to the philosophy program is evident, and the support he gives his fellow philosophers is clear in the department's accomplishments. Carlos Santana, associate professor of philosophy at the U, attributes much of the department's success to Downes. "Our department is one of the most



supportive and inclusive philosophy departments anywhere," he said. "Much of the credit goes to Steve, who has worked for decades to shape that positive departmental culture. He is a formal or informal mentor to almost all our junior faculty and grad students. Joining the department and adapting to being a professor was a smooth process for me largely because of his guidance and willingness to go to bat for me."

In his years at the university, Downes has been involved in hiring all six philosophy of science faculty members. He emphasizes the unique gender diversity within the department-more than half of the faculty are women, a feat almost unheard of in most philosophy departments. This diversity is crucial to the department's successhaving the voices of diverse groups of people, especially groups that are typically overlooked in the philosophy world, is essential to producing ethical and accurate data. Downes believes that his department's diverse faculty has contributed to its prestige while attracting very interesting and ambitious graduate students. "The department is much better for [this diversity], and the university is much better for it," he explained. "It also makes us stand out in our field. Because if you have faculty who work on various subjects and represent different groups of people, you create a more diverse group of grad students and more interesting research."

Though he started as a philosopher of cognitive science, Downes has since transitioned to working more with the sciences of anthropology and the biology of human behavior. He has spent a significant amount of time working to create relationships with scholars across campus in these fields and teaming up with scientists to discover the issues and ethical questions that arise in these areas. He has also conducted substantial research into cognitive science, heritability, epidemiological modeling, and, most currently, genetic causation. He recently received a National Institutes of Health grant through the Utah Center for Excellence in ELSI Research to pay for two graduate students to assist with what he calls the "Genetic Causation Project." They will take surveys of scientists asking how they understand "genetic causation" and Downes predicts that there will be many diverse responses, showing how the many biases and perspectives of individual

scientists greatly impact the work that they do. Downes is excited to work with his graduate students and hopes the work leads to presentations to a wide range of audiences and publications.

Downes' expertise, not only in philosophy but in science, is astounding. He stated that in the past, philosophers of science thought there was one kind of logic underlying all science. But now, these philosophers must study each area of science to discover the unique problems confronting scientists in their respective disciplines. Downes spent years studying molecular and evolutionary biology, and this immersion gave him insight into philosophical issues in those fields. He believes that this kind of "deep diving" enhances his course material and makes his classes more interesting, well-rounded, and more relevant to students in the growing Philosophy of Science Major.

Downes quotes his colleague Joyce Havstad, associate professor of philosophy at the U, calling this new kind of scholar an "embedded philosopher of science." This mutual understanding between scientists and philosophers enabled greater collaboration and productivity. Havstad herself is grateful for Downes' influence and support. "Professor Downes' stellar work on communities of scientific practice utilizing ancient DNA inspired my own work on the same topic," she explained. "I could talk shop with him all day, every day. I don't think I'll ever stop learning from him for as long as I'm lucky enough to have him as a colleague."

Becoming an embedded philosopher of science seems to come naturally for Downes. Many of his colleagues are not philosophers but scientists who work with him to solve their theoretical questions. Eric Turkheimer, psychology professor at the University of Virginia, has worked closely with Downes and appreciates the genuine interest he displays in his work. "When a working scientist such as myself collaborates with a philosopher, it is important that they see me as more than an example for their latest philosophical theory," Turkheimer said. "Working with [Downes] doesn't feel like a translational effort across boundaries; it feels like collaborating with a colleague immersed in the same knowledge base as myself."

Crossing disciplines is not an easy task, but Downes makes bridging the gap between science and the humanities look effortless. He puts in the work, using his expertise and years of experience



# The Variables of Jewishness:

**FACULTY FEATURE WITH NATHAN DEVIR** 

#### **REBECCA DAVIS**

here have always been Jewish communities in Africa, but since the advent of the internet, groups that were quite isolated have become more widely known. These deeply rooted Jewish communities partake in religious practices which were previously outlawed by European colonizers (such as male circumcision, Saturday Sabbath, menstrual seclusion, etc.), as well as customs such as animal sacrifice, which are no longer practiced in Rabbinic Judaism. Many members of these groups have thought themselves to be descendants from the Lost Tribes - the Ten Tribes of Israel which were supposedly exiled from Israel in 722 BCE. European colonizers and missionaries also believed such African groups to be part of these tribes because, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, only Jews would perform such practices.

Nathan Devir, associate professor of religious studies in the Department of World Languages and Cultures, has published a new book entitled "First-Century Christians in Twenty-First Century Africa: Between Law and Grace in Gabon and Madagascar" (Brill, 2022). The volume is the second part of a broader project that explores religious groups and identities, such as these, which are associated with Judaism and Old Testament-centered inclinations within global Christianity.

Born in Oregon, Devir moved to Israel as a teenager, going on to complete his undergraduate degree at the University of Haifa. Devir says Haifa is a city with a rich "interfaith and intercommunal coexistence," and that he loved how it was a "melting pot of different people and ideas." After completing his army service as an education

officer, Devir attended Penn State for his doctorate. His dissertation focused on three different Jewish authors, comparing how their ideas about "Jewishness" greatly differed according to each one's specific ethnic, racial, or societal setting.

This subject of what "Jewishness" means led him to the subject of his recently-published book, which examines "the cultural variables of Jewishness as they are manifested in individuals and communities that have traditionally been ignored, even in the field of Jewish Studies." This includes practicing Jews and professing Christians who claim ethnic Jewish heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa.

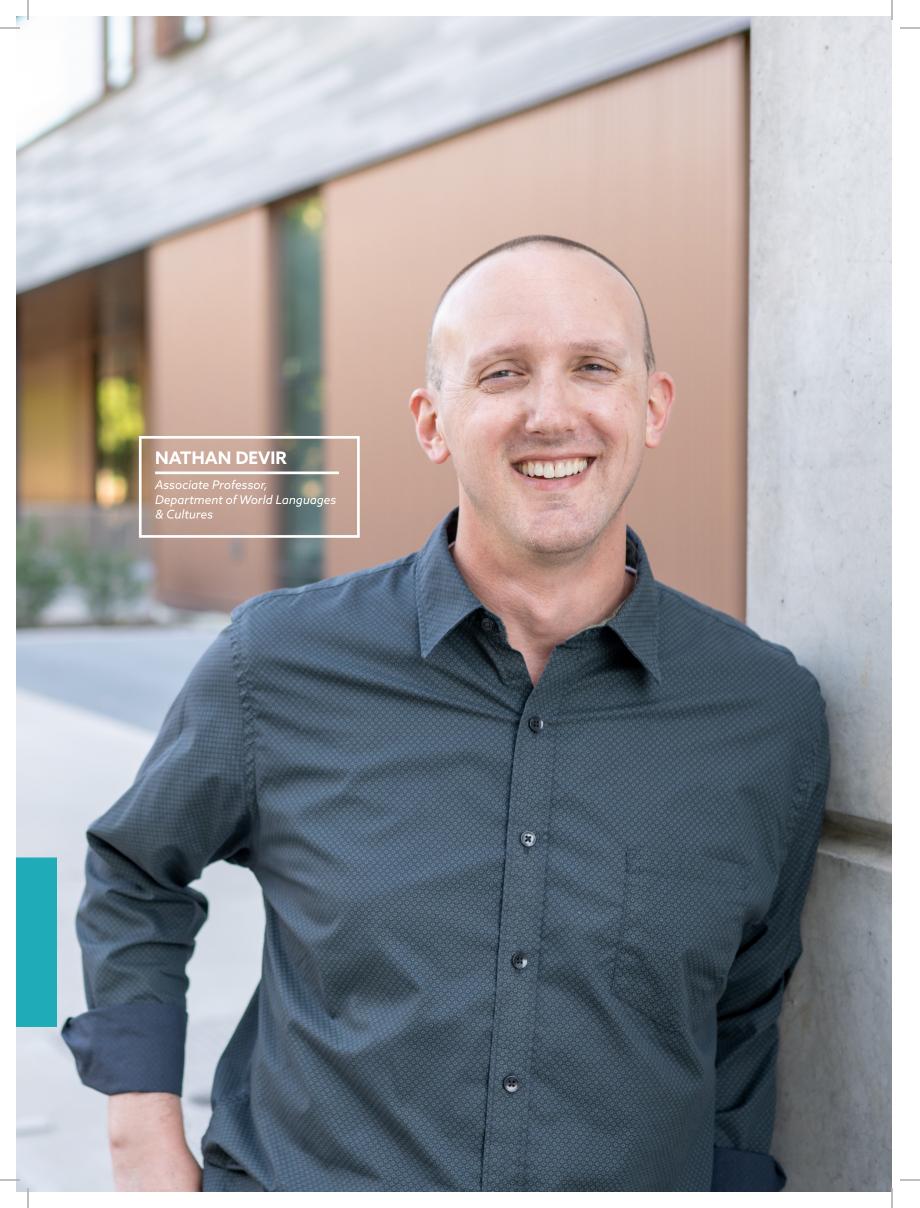
The latter group, often termed "Messianic Jews"—sometimes equated with charismatic religious groups of the same name from North America—have regularly met with resistance because they consider themselves to be Jewish by ethnicity, but also believe in Jesus, much like the apostles of the first century. Both African and American Messianic Jews have no formal connection to any conventionally recognized Jewish community. Some consider Messianic Jews "fringe" or "not Jewish enough." Devir says, "In an era in which there is much talk about topics such as representation, inclusion, and cultural appropriation, it's interesting to see how the identities of people who self-define as Jewish but who reject Rabbinic

Judaism are discussed, usually with regard to culturally specific presuppositions or preexisting theological notions."

While researching these Messianic Jewish groups in Benin (West Africa), Devir encountered multiple emphases on healing, which led him to his manuscript-in-progress on that topic. In Benin, the process of healing is different than what Americans might expect. "In Benin, the state-sponsored religion is Vodoun [Voodoo], but a lot of Christian-professing people—including those with Jewish-leaning affinities—still practice a kind of syncretism, going to Vodoun priests for healing sessions." Many people in the area still go to Western medical hospitals for serious illnesses such as AIDS or cancer, but for their basic medical needs, they prefer to go to traditional healers who use a combination of plant medicine and spiritual tactics to heal patients.

> THE **DEAD** AREN'T DEAD; THEY'RE **AMONG** US, BUT YOU JUST CAN'T SEE THEM.





66

Contrary to the practice of psychiatrists in the Global North, psychiatrists in Benin will often invite the help of traditional healers, exorcists, medicine men and women, Catholic priests, Pentecostal pastors etc., for the treatment of the souls of their patients, not just for the treatment of the body or the mind. "I was really interested in this notion of psychospiritual healing, and how there's very little demarcation, even in clinical settings, between the idea of healing the body and healing the spirit," Devir says. This is because philosophical secularism is generally not found in Benin, as it is in the Global North, and because "belief in some kind of a spirit world is ubiquitous: most everyone believes that we all have one foot in this world and one foot in another." According to Devir, there is a saying in Benin that goes as follows: "The dead aren't dead; they're among us, but you just can't see them." This belief is forefront in daily life, and it is reflected in how people seek healing.

One example would be that if a patient claims to be possessed by a demon, various psychiatric illnesses might be considered in the differential diagnosis, but they would not be seen as the only possible explanations. Devir explains that there is always a spiritual part of the diagnosis, and that clinicians might also enlist a spiritual practitioner to help, based on the patient's religious background. This practice is true to the etymology of psychotherapy, which is "the healing of the soul." "There is not, like there is in the Global North, a hyper-emphasis on scientific rationalism. Most people [in the case of Benin] would consider imprudent the notion that you might attempt to remove the spiritual from daily life."

Devir's passion for exploring cultural and religious expressions is present in his religious studies classes, such as in RELS 3620: Thinking about Religion, a course offered through the

Religious studies is an academic study of the diverse expressions of religion, it's not a devotional way of honoring any particular religious tradition.

Department of World Languages and Cultures. "Religious studies is an academic study of the diverse expressions of religion, it's not a devotional way of honoring any particular religious tradition," Devir explains. The class teaches students to look at expressions of different religions through cultural, sociological, anthropological, or other lenses of critical inquiry. Devir says that, as part of the class, he brings in guest speakers to talk about their different religions' traditions. In the past, he has hosted speakers such as the Buddhist Chaplain from the Huntsman Cancer Institute, a Secular Humanist, an Anglican Priest, Latter-Day Saint colleagues from BYU, and experts to speak on the subject of political Islam.

The point of the class is not to valorize any one religion, it is to look at case studies of religious phenomena worldwide and think critically about issues, debates, and concepts that are included when studying the topic of religion as an academic subject.

Whether teaching or learning about religion, it can be a challenging subject to approach. Devir says that he enjoys teaching the subject because, in conversation with students, he continues to find new ways to think about issues of major existential importance.

### IDENTITY EMERGES IN HOW PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES

# Power of Narrative:

#### **FACULTY FEATURE WITH JENNIFER ANDRUS**

#### JANA CUNNINGHAM AND AUBREY FOCHS

Jennifer Andrus, professor of writing and rhetoric studies, refers to herself as a problem identifier. Though her research doesn't explicitly identify solutions, she believes that without truly understanding a problem, a proposed solution will never work. In Andrus' case, she uses the power of language—how discourse works and how discourse influences us—to identify serious social problems.

The problem she's working to understand is the complicated nuances facing victim/survivors of domestic violence.

"Language and the way we communicate influences us from the moment we are able to start using it," said Andrus. "As such, it is important to be able to understand the ways in which language impacts us."

Power and language often intertwine as themes in Andrus' research. She has predominately focused her research on law, law enforcement, and domestic violence. More specifically, she wrote her first book on how the law of evidence is issued in ways to facilitate popular notions about domestic violence in ways that victim blame or focus on the actions of the victim-survivor rather than ways the abuser was wrong. Her second book focused on law enforcement and their interactions

with victim-survivors who were at the time living in shelters. She acknowledges that law enforcement and victim-survivors do not have a shared vocabulary about domestic violence, and that this dysfluency can negatively impact their relationship.

"Police officers and victim survivors talk right past each other. They have completely different needs in the situation, and they form identities in relationship to each other that don't comport with the way that they see themselves and others see them."

According to Andrus, victim-survivors are faced with the cultural pressure of staying in a relationship to "make it work." In her research, many participants have talked about the ways they are trying to keep their family together in order to fit the societal norms surrounding relationship expectations. This runs up against another common notion that is often shared with police: victim-survivors of domestic violence should simply leave the relationship to end the abuse. As Andrus notes, however, a huge number of trips to the ER occur after the victim-survivor has left the relationship. Indeed, as she says, leaving is the most dangerous moment in a victim-survivor's life. Based on research interviewing victim-survivors and police officers, Andrus shows the consequences of when their narratives are at odds.



In her current project, Andrus is conducting research about victim-survivors living in or having recently left abusive relationships. She is interviewing victim-survivors, paying special attention to the role age plays for individuals at the onset of abuse. Females ages 18 to 23 are the most common demographic for domestic violence in the U.S., currently. Andrus collects and analyzes narratives and in doing so, she aims to tell the stories of individuals involved in violent

relationships and give them the ability to do so safely and in their own words. In particular, she is collecting what she calls "staying-leaving stories."

"Most people need to leave seven times before they stay away. Why did they leave? Why did they come back? Why did they stay? I want to understand those pivotal moments."

As a victim-survivor of domestic violence herself, Andrus understands the complexities of being in an abusive relationship and why leaving isn't as

We constantly construct narratives about ourselves based on our past and present experiences. These stories shape how we understand ourselves and how we relate others.

simple as many may believe. She wants to understand the kinds of circumstances faced by other people, shedding light on their experiences and empowering their voices. She wants to hear and understand the stories they tell about themselves.

"I study narratives, so I ask people for stories about themselves. I think identity emerges in how people talk about themselves."

Her work doesn't use big surveys to collect quantitative data, Andrus does qualitative, discourse analysis. She isn't focused on numbers; she's focused on listening and telling people's stories and taking care of their stories. Andrus works diligently to listen and understand the narratives of victim-survivors of domestic violence.

"The reason I say I'm not a solution finder is I think the solution is massive. So instead, I am a storyteller. If there is a way to make that massive change, then it has to start by us paying attention to it. Paying attention to the actual stories of actual people."

Andrus says that when domestic violence becomes a news story, it's treated as if it's a rare occurrence, when in fact, it happens all the time. People just aren't paying attention. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence one in four women experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner. In Utah, that number goes up to one in three. Andrus tells the stories of victim-survivors to bring awareness and decrease the shame associated with abuse.

"The way that I tell stories is to make it so that we recognize that domestic violence happens

around us all the time. We can't fight it if we don't see it as a common problem. The more people hear about it, the less shame it carries, the easier it is to leave. Hopefully, more people will come forward and realize there is no shame and it's not their fault their partner abuses them."

The work is difficult and can often bring up her own personal trauma, but Andrus wants victim-survivors' voices to be heard, cared for, and properly represented.

"At the end of my last book, more than one person said to me, 'You don't have to keep working on domestic violence. It's too hard. Stop.' And my response was, 'Not enough people do this work. I have no choice"

Motivated by the power of language, Andrus continues her work gathering, examining, and sharing the narratives—both personal and socially constructed—of those impacted by domestic violence to not only gain valuable insight into their unique situations but to bring awareness to those who don't understand it.

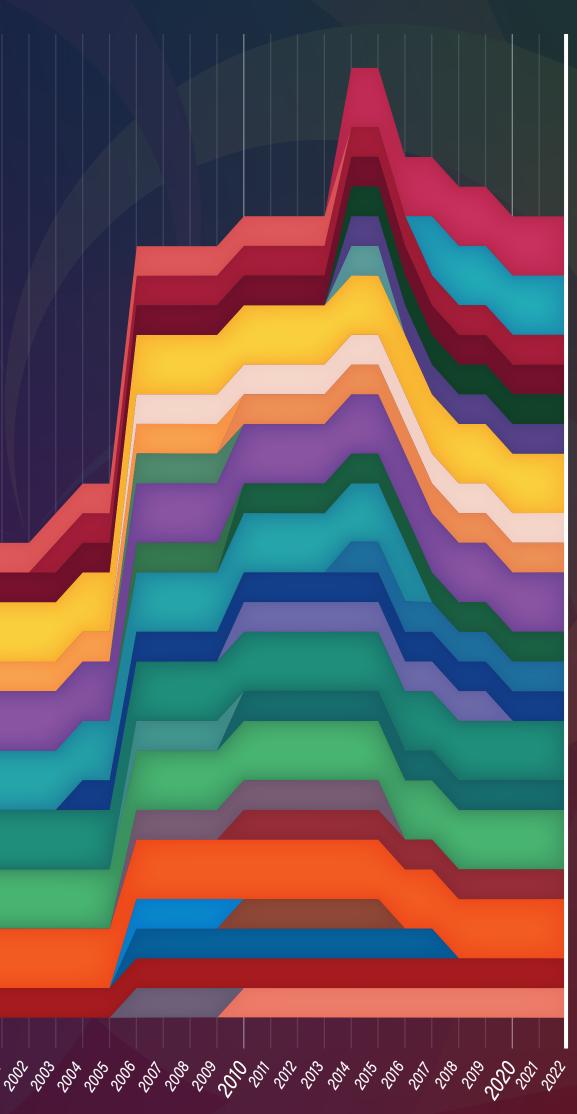
"We constantly construct narratives about ourselves based on our past and present experiences. These stories shape how we understand ourselves and how we relate others. My hope is to create empowerment through these narratives and give a voice to marginalized experiences."



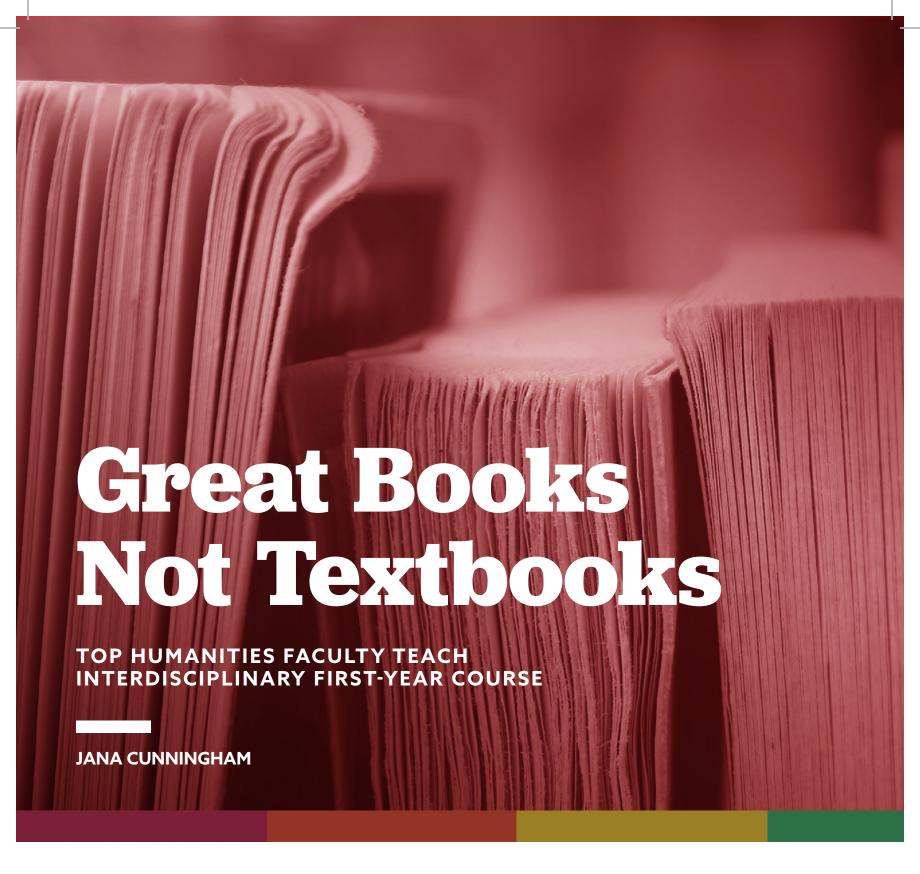
# The HISTORY of the COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

DEPARTMENT, PROGRAM, CENTER CREATIONS
From 1971-2022

1971-College of Humanities formed by division of College of Letters and Sciences



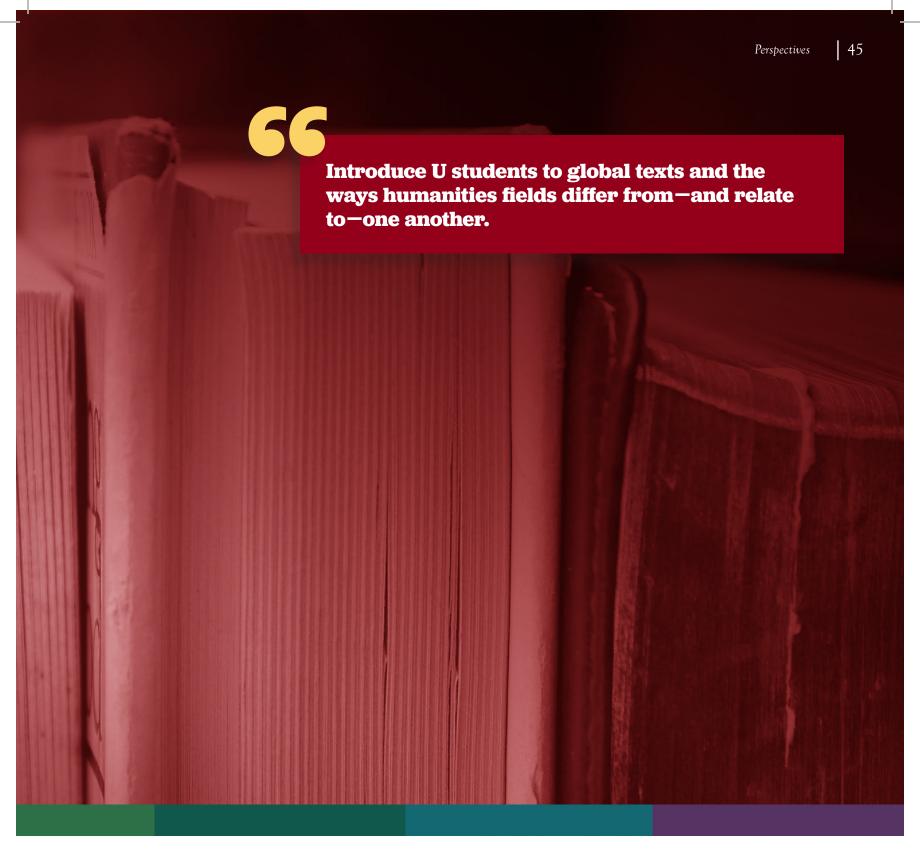
- American West Center
- Animation Studies
- Asian Center
- British Studies
- Center for American Indian Languages
- Center for Endangered Languages
- Communication Department
- Confucius Institute
- Documentary Studies
- 🔵 English Department
- Environmental Humanities Graduate Program
- Environmental Studies
- Ethnic Studies
- History Department
- Humanities in Focus
- International Studies
- Journalism Department
- L2TReC
- Languages Department
- Languages & Literature Department
- Latin American Studies
- Latin American Studies
- Linguistics Department
- Linguistics Program
- Literacy Studies
- Middle East Center
- Middle East Language& Area Studies
- Peace & Conflict Studies
- Philosophy Department
- Philosophy & Speech Department
- Portuguese & Brazilian Studies
- Religious Studies
- Taft-Nicholson Environmental Humanities Education Center
- Tanner Humanities Center
- University Writing Center
- University Writing Program
- World Languages & Cultures Department
- Writing & Rhetoric Department



When first-year students at the University of Utah step inside the classroom of HUM 1500: Great Books in the Humanities, they will not only begin to explore seven global texts that have changed minds and influenced generations, but they will also learn how each of these books has been interpreted and understood by scholars from seven different disciplines. A team of leading professors from the departments of communication, English, history, world languages and cultures, linguistics, philosophy, and writing and rhetoric studies will lead first-year students in close reading of transformative books from

each of these fields, offering students a unique opportunity to engage across the humanities.

"We've designed this course with first year students in mind—there are so many courses available; we wanted to offer one that would allow students to engage with and learn from our top faculty in all seven departments," said Hollis Robbins, dean of the College of Humanities. "Great Books is ideal for students who want a foundational humanities course that will provide an introduction to what we



offer, and we hope encourage them to explore majors and minors in a humanities field."

Michael Middleton, associate dean of academic affairs in the College of Humanities, explains that students new to the U often take several general education courses, exploring multiple majors and departments before choosing their academic path. In the Great Books course, this exploration of humanities disciplines is synthesized into a single semester and Middleton notes, "the

combination of outstanding lectures coupled with small discussion groups led by faculty and senior graduate students will provide first year students with a learning experience often reserved for upper-division—or other major-focused—classes."

This selected books for fall 2023 include four profoundly influential works that most students have heard of—Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" (1859), Franz Kafka's "The Trial" (1915), Virginia Woolf's

"Mrs. Dalloway" (1926), and James Baldwin's "The Fire Next Time" (1963)—as well as three books that are more recently influential and more discipline-specific. Nora Ellen Groce's "Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language" (1985), a key work for the field of linguistics; John Durham Peters' "Speaking into the Air" (1999), an influential text in communication; and José Medina's "The Epistemology of Resistance" (2013), the newest work on the syllabus, which has already proved itself influential in the field of feminist philosophy.

Scott Black, chair of the Department of English, is looking forward to being part of this team-taught course and has chosen "Mrs. Dalloway" because he believes it's one of the greatest reading experiences a student will ever have. "Woolf's book offers a vital and influential experiment in a new way of writing that captures how we actually experience consciousness, time, and relationships. Her writing is absolutely gorgeous, her prose sings, and in expressing Clarissa Dalloway's consciousness so beautifully and fully, it broadens and enriches your own."

Black believes Great Books offers students a chance to think in complex ways about complex challenges. He says it will provide an excellent foundation in the skills needed to succeed in any major and any career and adds, "it will be a lot of fun, with interesting and engaging readings and a lot of opportunities to work closely with other students and professors from across the college."

Robbins taught in the Great Books program at Johns Hopkins University for several years and was impressed by the students' level of engagement and passion for the texts. She is still in touch with several of her students from more than 10 years ago and it is that potential for lifelong connection that motivated her to suggest launching a Great Books program at the U. Although the course in the College of Humanities will be somewhat less traditional

Developing new insights and applying critical perspectives to contemporary problems is at the core of the humanities.

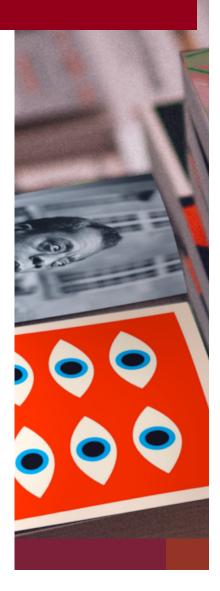
than the one at Johns Hopkins-which began every year with Homer's "Odyssey"-Robbins is excited to introduce U students to global texts and the ways humanities fields differ from-and relate to-one another.

"Each faculty member in this team-taught course will be teaching a book that has had a particular influence on the ways that the discipline has developed. Philosophy asks different questions than history; English asks different questions than linguistics, and they will all grapple with enduring problems and questions," said Robbins.

Erin Beeghly, assistant professor of philosophy, will introduce students to what socially engaged philosophy looks like through the study of "The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations," which explores how oppression shapes knowledge of others and ourselves.

"Students will find it challenging and also relevant to their lives," said Beeghly. "Though written in 2013, the book connects to classic questions in philosophy, such as Aristotle's idea of living well, and asks how to create a better, more just world."

In a very different learning experience, Joseph Metz, associate professor of world languages and cultures, will assist the students in analyzing one of the greatest books of the 20th century, Kafka's "The Trial." According to Metz, the book is practically synonymous with questions of guilt, innocence, and justice, as well as with the attempt to make sense of the absurd modern world. He says the book also offers bizarre surreal humor, a deep exploration of the relation of the law to our





bodies, and moments of sacred mystery and transcendence.

"Not only can the Great Books course open a profound window onto where we are and where we have been, it can also open new pathways to where we might go as individuals, cultures, humans, and one species among many on the earth," said Metz. "For a student entering university life, this course is the place to be!"

In addition to a disciplinary and historical survey of some of the key works and problems that have motivated humanities scholarship, students in the Great Books course will learn to analyze, apply, and synthesize modes of inquiry and critical insights developed through lecture and discussion of the texts selected for the course.

"Developing new insights and applying critical perspectives to contemporary problems is at the core of the humanities skills that animate successful careers across myriad industries for alumni. Great Books offers a point of entry for students new to the U to begin to explore how a major or minor in the humanities can lend itself to their professional and intellectual aspirations," said Middleton.



THE HUMANITIES BEGIN
IN WONDER AND END IN
UNDERSTANDING

# 35 Years of Enrichment

WITH THE TANNER HUMANITIES CENTER

**MISSY WEEKS** 

Since 1988, the Tanner Humanities Center has served as an epicenter of humanities inquiry, education, research, and dialogue. The center is critical in helping the University of Utah campus and community understand the human condition. In August 2022, the center celebrated their 35th anniversary with an exhilarating return to full-fledged, in-person programming. The excitement didn't stop there, as the year unfolded with a whirlwind of engaging events and fellow research.

"For 35 years, the Tanner Humanities Center has brought the world to the University of Utah," said Hollis Robbins, dean of the College of Humanities, which houses the center. "Inviting transformational writers and humanist leaders such as Margaret Atwood, Tony Kushner, Isabel Allende, and Mohamed ElBaradei to exchange ideas with our faculty, students, and community, and to provoke us to examine ever anew the complex history of human flourishing. The humanities begin in wonder and end in understanding. We have provided a home for a generation of fellows to produce research on human creativity and resilience in times of war,

famine, oppression, and peace, from medieval Europe to Imperial China, to the Navajo experience over three centuries. Three and half decades of enrichment! We look forward to decades upon decades more."

The center has proudly funded academic research for scholars at various stages of their careers. This year, the center hosted a brilliant cohort of 10 research fellows from seven diverse humanities fields, including Undergraduate Research Fellowships, Graduate Research Fellowships, Mormon Studies Graduate Research Fellowships, Virgil C. Aldrich Faculty Fellowships, Obert C. & Grace A. Visiting Research Fellowships, and the Annie Clark Tanner Fellowship in Environmental Humanities and Environmental Justice. Central to the center's community of scholars is the opportunity to get feedback and support on their research through the Works-in-Progress Talks. Since 2006, the center has hosted more than 100 of these talks, which allow fellows to workshop drafts of their work with peers and share their research with the wider Utah community.





"Due to the generosity of the Tanner Humanities Center, I was able to accomplish more than at any other point in my professional career to date," said Taylor Brorby, Annie Clark Tanner Fellow in Environmental Humanities and Environmental Justice. "I was able to tour the country nationally to promote my recent book, 'Boys and Oil: Growing Up Gay in a Fractured Land,' and make headway on my next memoir related to diabetes, climate change, and being gay while also making additional progress beyond the parameters of my initial application on my first novel."

Many fellows publish work undertaken at the center in articles, critical academic journals, and books with respected national and international publishers, including Yale, Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Princeton. Former Annie Clark Fellow in Environmental Humanities and Environmental Justice, Gretchen Henderson, celebrated the center's 35th anniversary with a book launch for "Life in the Tar Seeps: A Spiraling Ecology from a Dying Sea," which she worked on during her time as a fellow. Former Virgil D. Alrich Faculty Fellow, Daniel Medwed, author of "Barred: Why the Innocent Can't Get out of Prison," visited one snowy February day to discuss wrongful convictions and how to create an equitable justice system for all.

Throughout the past year, the center hosted several free public outreach events where many topics were explored, such as agency and

gaming, gender, Iranian politics, Indigenous poetry, economic inequality, the free market, climate change, mental health, and the role of science fiction in shaping collective futures. Author Azar Nafisi visited during banned books week and as women's rights protests were taking off after the death of Mahsa Amini in Iran. Nafisi spoke with Jeremy Rosen, former acting director of the center, about her work and the power of literature during troubling times. Former U.S. Poet Laureate, Joy Harjo, visited Kingsbury Hall and filled the room

with her poetry, philosophy, and song. The center discussed the zero-sum paradigm with economist Heather McGhee, video games in the humanities with University of Utah professor Thi Nguyen, free market ideology with Harvard professor Naomi Oreskes, climate anxiety with expert Britt Wray, and the bleak reality that science fiction isn't just fiction anymore with Kim Stanley Robinson.

These events are opportunities for the community to gather and share in spaces of rich, engaging discussions with speakers of all backgrounds and interests. Susan Anderson, development officer for the center, said of the mission's commitment to public outreach, "I have been entertained, challenged, and moved by the writers, scholars, and public figures we have hosted for our public outreach events. I have also been energized by the conversations I have overheard in various lobbies, aisles, hallways, and at our book signings. Shared humanities experiences connect us, make us think, and improve our campus, community, and lives. It has been an honor to be part of this important work."

The center's dedication to learning continued outside the college as they facilitated 10 National Theatre Live screenings designed to captivate students and lifelong learners. Additionally, they empowered Utah teachers through five professional development workshops, offering them fresh insights to invigorate their classrooms through



#### **TANNER HUMANITIES CENTER IN REVIEW**









NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE SCREENINGS

GATEWAY TO LEARNING COURSES



PROFESSOR OFF CAMPUS



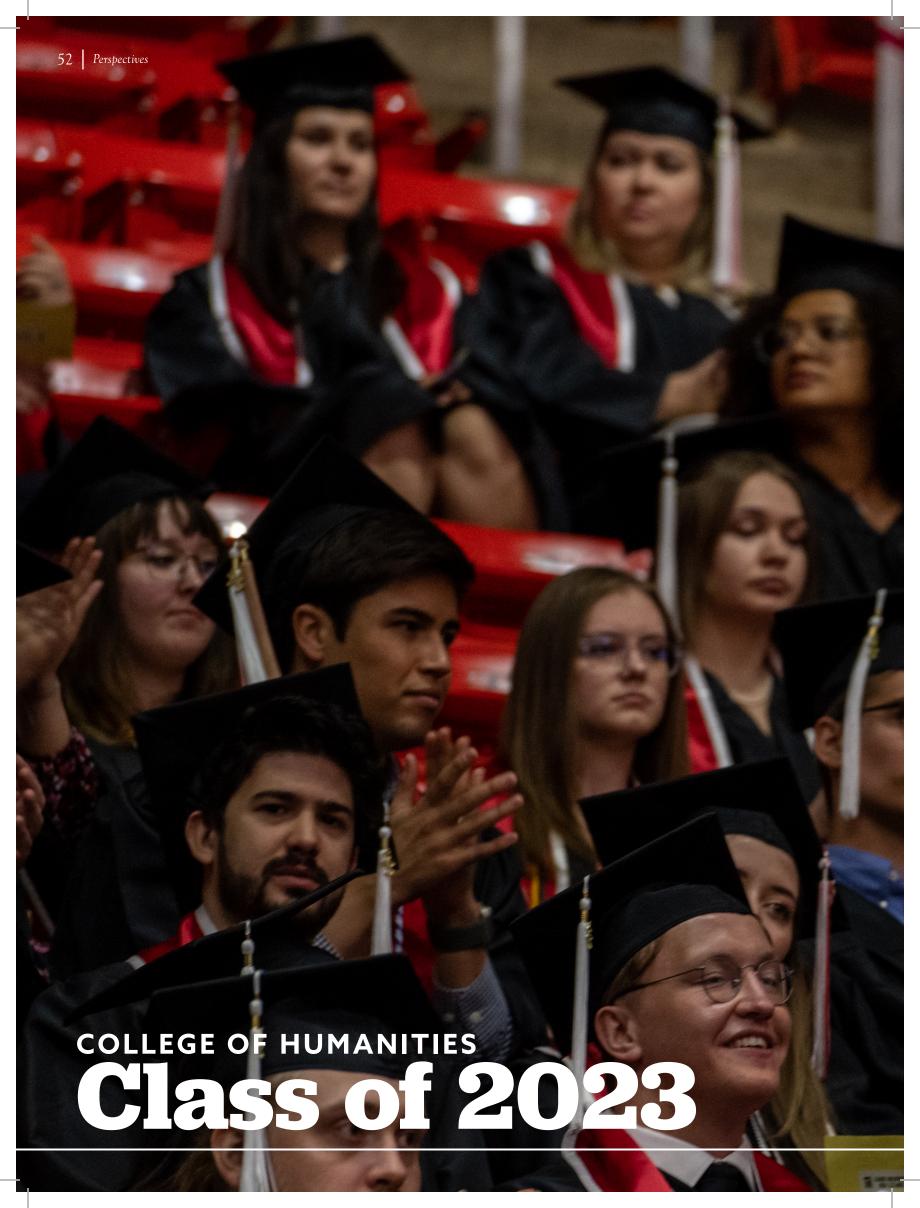
**RESEARCH INTEREST GROUPS** 

- British Literature
- Environmental Humanities
- Indigenous Studies

the Gateway to Learning courses. Susie Porter, professor of gender studies and history at the U, was selected for the center's Professor Off Campus program to support her project "Artes de México en Utah: Humanities in the Latinx Community in Utah." These three programs underscore the center's commitment to educational enrichment not just at the U but within the entire state of Utah, providing opportunities to hundreds of educators who go on to impact thousands of students.

Amidst a year of commemoration and celebration, April 2023 became a standout month as the center hosted two exceptional events to honor its 35 years of excellence. The

events served as a reminder of the center's essential role in connecting people and ideas and igniting the spark of curiosity and intellectual exploration that drives society forward. As the center reflects on the past and embraces the future, they remain steadfast in their commitment to fostering a thriving community of knowledge and understanding. The 35th anniversary celebrations were a testament to their collective dedication and passion for the humanities, and the center eagerly anticipates the countless opportunities that lie ahead.





# 2023 UHUMANITIES GRADUATING CLASS



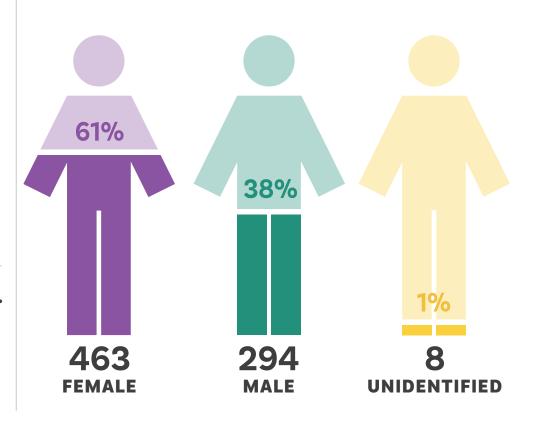
765
GRADUATES



3.43
AVERAGE
UNDERGRAD GPA

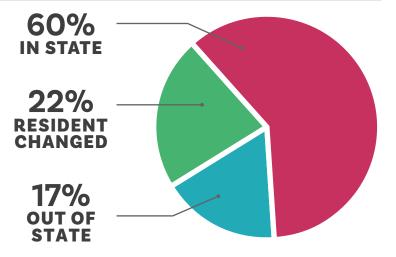
MIN. AVG. AGE AGE 18 25

MAX. AGE 74











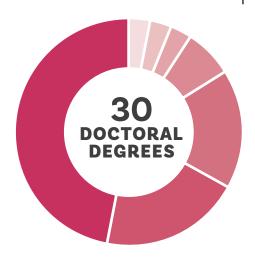


- 112 INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
- 98 ENGLISH
- 60 HISTORY
- **56 WORLD LANGUAGES** & CULTURES
- **37** PHILOSOPHY
- 28 WRITING & RHETORIC **STUDIES**
- 23 LINGUISTICS
- 12 LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
- 10 ASIAN STUDIES
- 10 MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
- 7 PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES





- 12 ENVIRONMENTAL **HUMANITIES**
- 10 LINGUISTICS
- 6 ENGLISH
- 6 HISTORY
- **5 COMMUNICATION**
- **4** LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
- 2 ASIAN STUDIES
- 1 WRITING & RHETORIC **STUDIES**



#### 14 ENGLISH

- **6 COMMUNICATION**
- **5** PHILOSOPHY
- 2 LINGUISTICS
- 1 HISTORY
- **1** WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES
- 1 WRITING & RHETORIC **STUDIES**

#### UNDERGRADUATE **DEGREES AWARDED**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS 351** -

**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE** 301 -

HONORS BACHELOR OF ARTS

HONORS BACHELOR OF SCIENCE

#### **GRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED**

**MASTER OF ARTS** – 45

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** —

11 MASTER OF SCIENCE -

MASTER OF FINE ARTS -

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY —

AWARDED

#### **TOP MINORS**

**43 SPANISH** 25 STRATEGIC COMM. **14 FRENCH** 

14 PHILOSOPHY **13 CHINESE** 

**12 COGNITIVE SCIENCE 12 JAPANESE** 13 CREATIVE WRITING 12 PORT. & BRAZILLIAN

#### **DANNY CHI** DISTINGUISHED ALUM

t's great to see everyone out there today. Congratulations, University of Utah, Class of 2023. It's really so great to be back on campus, and I'm truly humbled and honored for the opportunity to speak at such a special occasion. As we celebrate what's largely considered the pinnacle of your academic careers at this point, I think it's important to take another moment to recognize all you've accomplished from kindergarten to today, now graduating from a respected institution of higher learning. It's no small feat.

Can we just take another quick moment of applause? Let's get hyped up for you guys, right? All right. When I was asked by the College of

Humanities to speak today, I'm not going to lie, I thought to myself, "Wait a minute. Are you talking about me, Danny Chi?" Nonetheless, I'll tell you, I was anything but your traditional four years in and out undergrad. In fact, as my parents know all too well, I was still kind of a young punk, 17 years young without much direction. Six and a half years to earn my diploma. But in hindsight and as I learned later, that was my journey, and that was the path that was meant for me.

Sometimes it's not only about how you get to your target destination, but more about the fact that you got there through resiliency, persistence, hardship, dogged determination, whatever it might be. We all have our own paths. We all have our own stories. But most importantly, you got there. You have arrived.

The same can be said about so many aspects in life, and certainly you will face similar themes and scenarios as you embark upon your next chapters, whether that's graduate programs or looking for the right opportunities as pros in the fields. I don't know about you, but when I think back to when I was sitting in the very same place that you are today, I was more than a little shook. I was a little nervous, a little scared.

# Distinguished Alum

You spend your entire childhood and adolescence, young adulthood, when asked, "What do you do?" "Well, I'm a student." That's it. No questions asked. You're good to go. All right. Now, many of you, when you're asked this, and you might realize, "I just finished college, so I guess I'm unemployed for now. For now." Just like I did 20-ish years ago, today you may realize you're facing the real big, bad, daunting world and trying to redefine yourselves all over again.

The uncertainty of what lies ahead, it can be unsettling. It's no longer time to talk about it, right? It's time to be about it. I think we can all agree the world has never felt more complicated, uncertain, competitive, and rapidly evolving more quickly than ever. Well, I'm no genius, I don't have all the answers, and certainly there are far more intelligent and gifted folks sitting out there today. But when I look back to my time as a student here at the University of Utah and the lessons and experiences I've acquired coupled with my time as a professional, what I can share are some simple reminders as you embark upon your next chapters in life. Stick to the same positive things that got you to this point. But also, don't be afraid of change. Putting yourself out there and extending yourselves beyond your comfort zones, failing, learning mistakes, it's all part of the journey. It all leads to growth personally and professionally.

I know it's easier and said than done, but control what you can control. Try not to worry too much about the things you can't. Also, lean on your intangibles. Continue to identify and grow your intangibles. What are your intangibles? It might be your charismatic personality, your energy, your presence, great instincts, how you problem solve and respond to crisis. Things that can't necessarily be taught, but rather things you're naturally gifted with.

At the end of the day, in business, in occupation, beyond qualifications, oftentimes people are simply hiring people they want to work with. In social circles, people choose to spend time with those they're comfortable with and simply want to be around. With all things being equal, your intangibles are often what set you apart from everyone else. So embrace your

intangibles and what makes you unique. Enhance your intangibles. Fine tune your intangibles and apply them to your learned skill sets and all the experiences from your time here at the University of Utah and beyond. Support and team. Know, love, and value your team. Remember, you're only one person. Lean on the support that you have, whether it be your family, your loved ones, friends, teachers, advisors, coaches.

I certainly never would've dreamed of standing here before you today without the amazing support of my parents, along with my most trusted and loved advisors, my wife, Janet, my boys, Dylan and Micah. I'm a lucky guy, which brings me to luck. Not something measurable or something that can be acquired through traditional means, but yet still very important in your future journeys. Even when luck falls in your favor, make no mistake, it's still just an opportunity, a door that's cracked open. Until you do something with potential opportunities presented by luck, seize the opportunity, do the work, struggle and grow, excel and kick those doors wide open. It's still just unfulfilled. So make the most of those opportunities. Let the world know you've arrived.

When I'm asked for career advice, I should say, I've said this time and time again to many young people and young professionals, you truly never know what's right around the corner, whether times are going well, whether times are challenging. Then I ask them, "Are you ready? Are you ready? Are you as prepared as you can be for when your moment comes?" The journey to success is never as clear cut and definitive as we'd like, but through your hard work, sacrifice, discipline, education and experience is gained from your time here at the U, you all have put yourselves in a tremendous position to succeed at the next level and wherever that next open or cracked door may lead you.

Congratulations once again. You should all be extremely proud of yourselves. I'll go ahead and shut up now and let's get you closer to getting those diplomas that you've all worked so hard for, and I'll just say, once a Ute, always a Ute. Let's go Utes. Thank you."



for the culture shock, namely the soda shops on every corner, the innumerable dessert shops, and casserole green Jell-O. A few family friends had graciously offered to let me stay with them until I completed high school and I was determined to make the best of my time there.

Things quickly turned south. Shortly after moving into their home, I went from city dweller to Cinderella. I was expected to daily care for infant children and financially contribute to the household. Not only that, my residence in their home was rarely guaranteed. I often came home from school to randomly changed locks and finding stable housing became a nightly game. I was frequently homeless throughout high school and sought shelter in my after-school clubs. Despite this, I persevered. Remembering the metamorphosis of caterpillars, I recognized this unfavorable and slow-moving part of my life as a fragment of a larger, unfinished story.

My freshman year of college was the beginning of a significant growth period. University became my and many of my peers' chrysalis stage: we learned to navigate the labyrinth that is LNCO, discover all nine free printing spots on campus, as well as ration 18 meal swipes every week—I promise I didn't go hungry, Mom. In

all seriousness, the past four years have been an intense growth period as well as when I truly learned how to embody community.

After receiving a generous scholarship from the Larry H. and Gail Miller Foundation, I was able to narrow the focus of my on-campus involvement to mental health advocacy. Under the guidance of my mentors at the Center for Student Wellness, my peers and I led various health education and prevention campaigns. In working alongside these energetic student leaders, I learned the value of compassion, integrity, and individual commitment to personal growth. I saw how passionately my colleagues worked to cultivate an inclusive, supportive community. They had a very real and beneficial impact on the lives of vulnerable students every day. After I observed the ways they served our student body, it inspired me to keep advocacy at the very core of my academic career. Eventually, building community was no longer a goal-it simply became a way of being, it was embedded into my value system. I would know, it only kept me off the streets a few years ago.

Regardless of who you consider to be community, our growth and understanding of others inform our identities, and like the butterfly, should be metamorphic by nature. And I can pretty confidently say that we've all earned our





## BE AN



UNRULY

CARMEN MARIA MACHADO

10.5.23



# INGENIOUS

LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER

11.14.23



# **TENACIOUS**

MIN JIN LEE

3.19.24



## NURTURING

**ROBIN WALL KIMMERER & KYLE WHYTE** 

4.17.24

## HUMAN

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THC.UTAH.EDU

