

PERSPECTIVES

FALL 2024

A Year in Review:
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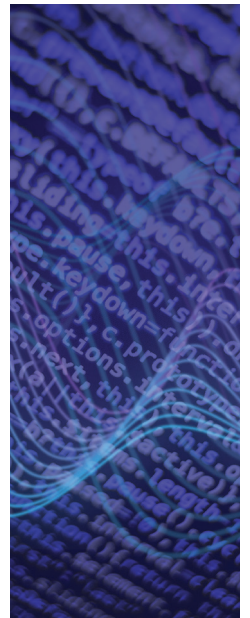
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THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES



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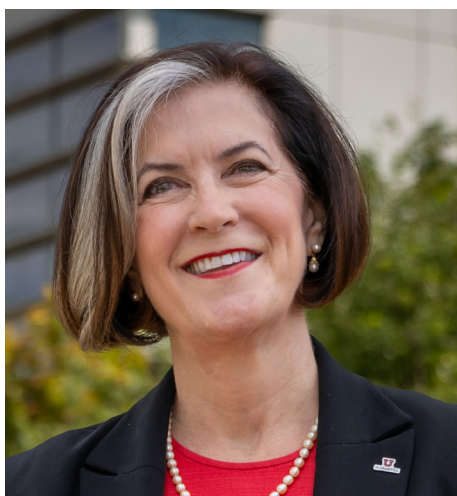
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A Message from the Dean

Welcome to this year's *Perspectives*, the College of Humanities annual magazine. Collected in these pages are prismatic visions of the humanities: some articles serve as lenses into the past, while others refract possible futures, and still others stand in this moment and ask us who we are and what we believe in. We are glad to have you with us on this intellectual journey.

In these pages, we highlight the college's sophisticated research environment and the notable scholarly achievements of our faculty on national and international stages. We visit the hugely popular Great Books course for first-year undergraduate students, observing a broad vista of intellectual history from which the next generation of scholars can launch into deeper humanistic inquiry.

We explore the proposal of a new AI center to bring together campus, community, and industry partners to address the intersections and opportunities that this technology can open for people with disabilities. We celebrate the revitalization of the university's renowned Middle East Center while somberly reflecting on the painful realities currently wracking the region itself. We delve into thoughtful considerations of the symbiotic relationship between culture and religion, making space for all who are curious about the role religion plays in individual identity as well as society writ large.

We consider the narrative forms and immersive art of video games, the capabilities of computational linguistics, and how to educate students in the subtle and delicate interdisciplinary craft of diplomacy. We hear a distinguished alumni's reflections and a graduating student's profoundly moving story about what the humanities have meant to them from two very different vantage points in their lives.

Studying the humanities gives us the ability to see the world through multiple lenses, a gift that perhaps we take for granted. It gives us the capacity to forge strong connections, ask adept questions, and think more critically, deeply, compassionately, and creatively. As you peer into this prism of *Perspectives* with us, we hope that it throws new light onto old ideas, casts unexpected and provocative shadows where perhaps you hadn't looked for a while, and splashes brilliant color over every aspect of life.

Sincerely,

Hollis Robbins

Dean, College of Humanities
University of Utah

Introducing Acting Dean, Wanda Pillow



In October 2024, the College of Humanities welcomed Acting Dean Wanda S. Pillow. Pillow, a professor of gender studies, has served as chair of the Gender Studies Division and as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the School for Cultural and Social Transformation. She is a first-generation student and an award-winning teacher, mentor, and scholar.

Currently serving as co-Editor of the journal *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* and as principal investigator on a Mellon Multivocal Humanities grant, Pillow's work is widely read across multiple fields of study and has been recognized with several prestigious fellowships, including at the Huntington Library, the

Newberry Library, and the National Humanities Center. Her work focuses on analyses of power, subjectivity, and representation in feminist inquiry and theory as well as applied research projects that show how these issues impact American identity in policy and popular culture.

"I am honored to be working alongside such talented colleagues," says Pillow, "and I am eager to work with the college to promote the forthcoming diplomacy degree, extend humanities scholarship on AI and disability, and support the groundbreaking work our faculty are doing in game studies, among other exciting initiatives."

Please join us in welcoming Acting Dean Pillow to the college!

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A person is walking on a cobblestone path. Their right leg is a prosthetic, glowing with bright blue light and particle effects. They are wearing dark pants and white sneakers. The background is a wall with a repeating diamond pattern.

Advancing AI

HARNESSING HUMANITIES TO OPEN NEW OPPORTUNITIES AROUND DISABILITIES

In October 2023, Taylor Randall, president of the University of Utah, announced a new research initiative focused on artificial intelligence that aims to responsibly use advanced AI technology to tackle societal issues. In response, the U's College of Humanities has proposed a new center to

bridge campus, community, and industry partners to address the complexities and opportunities AI may afford individuals with disabilities. This will be the first national center to bring together experts in humanities, social sciences, communication, disability studies, research ethics, computer science,



AI IS CREATING MORE POSSIBILITIES FOR **INCLUSIVENESS** OF INDIVIDUALS WITH **DISABILITIES**

law, psychiatry, population health, and many other disciplines, collectively building a sustainable and community-engaged platform for scholarly activities focused on the ethical, legal, and social implications of AI with respect to disability.

A first-of-its-kind, the proposed center will focus on integrating humanities scholarship into AI design as it impacts people and communities with disabilities. More than a quarter of the U.S. population—about 61 million people—currently live with or identify with a disability.

Avery Holton, chair of the Department of Communication and project director of the proposed center, said there are abundant possibilities for new pathways through the center's collaborative efforts. "Now we have real

opportunities to work together with organizations and communities to ask difficult questions about AI and how it fits into our daily lives," Holton said.

The proposed center will focus on three key aims:

- 1) Understanding disability and the lived experiences of people with disabilities, and AI.
- 2) Exploring interrelationships between AI, identity, and agency.
- 3) Considering data, disability, and ethical applications of AI.

Along with new pathways, Holton discusses the personalized approach AI has for different types of disabilities and their accommodations.

"Rather than AI being built for individuals with disabilities or being modified later for uses by individuals with disabilities," Holton said, "it's being created from the start, in many cases, for and by individuals with disabilities."

“As AI becomes ever more powerful...we need to explore human rights beyond freedom of expression and conscience, to consider a right to freedom of thought.”

This unique experience gives individuals with disabilities more of a seat at the table, where AI techniques can cater directly to those individuals throughout the process. Holton describes the involvement of people with disabilities as “critical” and as the “upstream part of the process,” encompassing the importance of inclusion in disability studies.

“From artificial limbs with cognitive response mechanisms, AI-assistive programs that allow individuals with physical paralysis to navigate virtual worlds, and systems that invite new forms of cognitive programming, AI is creating more possibilities for inclusiveness of individuals with disabilities,” he said.

With an interdisciplinary approach, AI can address multiple perspectives, allow for personalized assessments, and can allow for those with either or both physical disabilities and mental disabilities to be a part of the process.

In the creation and utilization of AI, legal and ethical aspects need to be considered when assessing the benefits and risks of the tools. Leslie Francis, Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Law and co-director of the proposed center, discusses how she has used her background in philosophy and law to study anti-discrimination in disabilities and hopes to help people with disabilities get improved civil rights. She describes advancements in AI as being a modifier to the world that can become an enabling tool instead of a helpful one.

“Stephen Hawking famously selected the voice to speak for him,” Francis said, “but how should we be thinking about ChatGPT helping people with autism to negotiate social situations or providing therapy for adolescents with depression?”

Until they lead to more control over and less autonomy in an individual’s life, the tools are beneficial, said Francis.

Francis highlighted the awareness of the advantages and disadvantages for AI as a part of better understanding and improving methodologies. “A prosthetic leg using AI to help navigate local conditions in real time will also reveal sensitive information about the individual’s location,” she said, citing one example.

According to Francis, the complexities of utilizing AI technologies and the requirement of law-making to be included for fairness are critical. Other aspects to look at when balancing the effects of AI are potential risks involved with a learning system and those systems developing “a mind of their own,” she said. Because private information could be shared, it is necessary for the involvement of laws and technology that protect an individual’s rights.

“As AI becomes ever more powerful—say, developing the capacity to identify what you might be thinking—people are arguing that we need to explore human rights beyond freedom of expression and conscience, to consider a right to freedom of thought,” Francis said. As students and educators navigate the utilization of AI,





a deeply unified collaboration among experts will play a key role in addressing some of the challenges individuals with disabilities face.

Due to the complexities and opportunities AI affords individuals with disabilities, the College of Humanities looks forward to an interdisciplinary approach to better understand the lived experiences of people with disabilities, to foster inclusive and responsive forms of communication, to

challenge attitudes and behaviors toward people with disabilities, to improve personalized and individual support through tailored communication and engagement, to build and amplify advocacy and ally narratives, to inform law and policy around disability, and to center ethics and individual rights in ways that benefit all people, including those with disabilities.

Revival, Renewal, and Optimism

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

MICHAEL CHRISTOPHER LOW
DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST CENTER

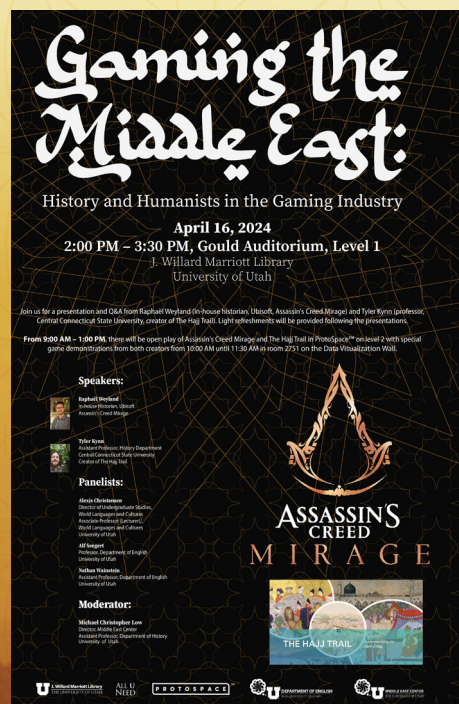


The 2023-2024 academic year was an exceptionally exciting time for the Middle East Center. Working closely with Dean Hollis Robbins and the College of Humanities, the Middle East Center has charted a bold new course. Having written an ambitious five-year plan and hosted an external review of our programs, the Middle East Center is undergoing nothing short of a renaissance.

Over the past year, the center played a vital role in the intellectual life of the College of Humanities and wider university. We hosted incredible lectures from world-renowned scholars like Alan Mikhail, chair of History at Yale University, and Asad Q. Ahmed, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at University of California, Berkeley. In October 2023, in collaboration with Qatar Debate, the University of Utah hosted the 4th U.S. Arabic Debating Championship, drawing some 40 universities and over 200 competitors from across the country. In April 2024, we hosted Gaming the Middle East, featuring roundtable discussions and gaming demonstrations on the role of historians and humanists in the video game industry.

In the wake of the tragic events of October 7, 2023, and the ongoing war in Israel and Gaza, the center has sought to facilitate the hard, serious conversations necessary to bring about sober understanding and sustainable change. In the immediate aftermath of these events, we hosted roundtables for the College of Humanities and Student Affairs to provide our faculty and staff with a realistic sense of the roots and future directions of this conflict. Since then, we've given a platform to rigorous scholars who've been able to navigate these complexities and nuances with integrity. In March 2024, International Studies and the Middle East Center co-hosted University College-London's Seth Anziska for the Dolowitz Lecture in Human Rights. Anziska's incredibly prescient talk on Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon was proof positive that even the most difficult subjects can be handled with grace and care.

As we look forward into the future, we do so with a sense of brimming optimism. Addressing strategic needs across multiple departments, geographies, and themes, we are thrilled to welcome an exceptional cohort of four



*Gaming the Middle East, 2024;
Event Poster*

THE MIDDLE EAST CENTER IS UNDERGOING NOTHING SHORT OF A RENAISSANCE

new faculty members. We welcome Edith Chen, Annie Greene, Yuree Noh, and Rawad Wehbe.

Collectively, this stellar group boasts doctoral training from some of the world's leading centers of Middle East scholarship, including University of Chicago, UCLA, UPenn, and Princeton, as well as postdoctoral fellowships from Harvard and Oxford. They bring a stunning array of research and field work experience from Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, and the United

Arab Emirates. They also command language and paleography skills ranging from Arabic, Ottoman, and Turkish to Chinese, Hebrew, and Judeo-Arabic. Their research and teaching interests range from Arabic poetry, intellectual life in Ottoman Iraq, and Jews of the Islamic world to the Mongol empire in Iran and authoritarian regimes in the contemporary Arab world.

We're exceptionally proud of our growth and progress. We look forward to welcoming students and faculty from across the university to join us for an exciting slate of new courses and stimulating events this fall.



EDITH CHEN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, HISTORY

Edith Chen is an historian of the premodern Islamic world and the Mongol Empire. She completed her Ph.D. at Princeton's Department of Near Eastern Studies in 2021 and was the Bennett Boskey Fellow of Global History at Exeter College, Oxford from 2021-2024. Her book project, "The Formation of the Mongol Empire: The Mongols and Their Local Allies in the Islamic World," is under contract with Cambridge University Press.



ANNIE GREENE

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, HISTORY

Annie Greene is a cultural and intellectual historian of Iraq and the late Ottoman Empire. Her research and teaching interests also include gender history and religious minorities of the Middle East. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Her book project focuses on the contributions made to the Arab Renaissance (*Nahda*) by Iraqi intellectuals during the late Ottoman period.



YUREE NOH

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE

Yuree Noh's research is primarily concerned with authoritarian institutions and publics in the Middle East and North Africa, with a focus on gender and politics, electoral institutions, and public opinion and survey research. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from UCLA. She has conducted fieldwork in Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco, the UAE, and South Korea (Yemeni refugees in Jeju Island).



RAWAD WEHBE

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW, WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

Rawad Wehbe's work focuses on structural poetics and emotion across different poetic modes and moments in the Arabic literary tradition. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He is the translator of "Where Not to Be Born" (Litmus Press, 2023) and co-translator of "Home: New Arabic Poems" (Two Lines Press, 2020). His translations have appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Read, Doublespeak*, and *Words Without Borders*.



Video Games:


THE ARTISTIC MEDIUM OF THE FUTURE

According to the Academy of Animated Art, 3.2 billion people across the globe play video games and that number continues to increase. Video games are a major form of cultural expression in the contemporary world, and by some estimates draw larger audiences than film, music, and literature combined. But for too long, games have been dismissed as merely popular entertainment by scholars in higher education. The University of Utah's College of Humanities has long recognized that video games are a significant modern artform and has pioneered courses in the study of video games. Our courses explore video games in all their dimensions, from the impact of formal and design decisions on players' experiences, to the aesthetics and narrative innovations of this new form of storytelling and art, and the ways that video games express important social and cultural questions of identity,

ethics, gender, and equity. The College of Humanities has become a national leader in developing an interdisciplinary curriculum and engaging in groundbreaking research examining the history, culture, and aesthetics of video games.

The college currently offers courses such as Video Game Storytelling and Literature, Film, and Video Games in English; Video Games and Antiquity in world languages and cultures; and The Aesthetics and Philosophy of Play in philosophy. These courses have been extremely popular with students, and the college continues to add more courses each year. Scott Black, director of the Tanner Humanities Center, said, "we can't offer enough sections of Video Game Storytelling to fulfill the demand. Students come from the Games Division as well as from departments across campus to take our video games courses—they are our highest enrolling classes. Clearly, video games are where this generation of students are finding their

HUMAN BEINGS ARE UNABLE TO **EXPERIENCE** SOMETHING EXCEPT AS A **NARRATIVE**



stories. It's important for us as a department and a college to study and teach this dynamic and important form of culture and contemporary art."

There are nearly 20 faculty who study and teach games studies in the College of Humanities. One professor who has become a staple within the field is Dr. Alf Seegert, professor (lecturer) of English and affiliate professor in the U's Division of Games. A lifelong player of video games and a board game designer himself, Seegert has been teaching ENGL 2090: Video Game Storytelling since 2014, and the class regularly fills with 75 students each semester. The course focuses on the mechanics and the aesthetics of games, how players interact with games and how games offer new kinds of narrative, and aesthetic experiences.

One of Seegert's examples of this comes from the game, "Thomas Was Alone," which features "characters" that are simple two-dimensional rectangles. "These simple shapes come to life through interaction," said Seegert. "They must literally support one another mechanically, one on top of another, to support each other emotionally and overcome obstacles together through teamwork." He names this specific type of incident, "the IKEA effect." Much like building a piece of furniture from IKEA, players of video games help create the experience and so become more invested in it and emotionally attached to it. The simplicity of this type of game is an important teaching tool for Seegert because it shows students the fundamental building blocks of narrative and how stories work.

"Human beings are unable to experience something except as a narrative," Seegert said. "As soon as we apply causes, we imply that there's an agent involved, which means there's a character involved, which means there's a

storyline involved." This tendency has significant implications for game design and aesthetics. "I try to give students games that are as basic as possible, so they recognize it isn't the fancy graphics that get them invested. It's the fact that we bring so much meaning and narrative to the simplest cues, because that's how we're wired."

As Seegert's courses became more popular, he started teaching other, more advanced courses on games, such as ENGL 5090: Literature, Film, and Video Games, which pairs literary texts with video games, and ENGL 5095: Advanced Video Game Storytelling, where students expand their abilities in analyzing video game narratives.

Another faculty member contributing to advancing games studies in the college, is Dr. Thi Nguyen, associate professor of philosophy and adjunct associate professor of Division of Games. Nguyen's book, "Games: Agency as Art," which was awarded the American Philosophical Association's 2021 Book Prize, positions games as a unique art form designed to offer players the experience of being particular kinds of subjects and caring about particular goals. According to Nguyen, one of the key values of games is offering players the experience of immersing themselves in a compelling simulated environment that allows them to adopt new forms of agency and temporary goals for the duration of the game.

In his upper-division course, PHIL 3320/ GAMES 3025: The Aesthetics and Philosophy of Play, Nguyen further explores the philosophy of games and play. Although it's a philosophy class, the course is designed for students majoring in Games and examines the value of games from the perspectives of design, aesthetics, and ethics.

Students explore questions about games, art, and the role of play in human life. And the course addresses key issues in players' experiences of games, the role of frustration and difficulty, how games communicate, and the relationship between play and creativity.

With the popularity of courses in video games, the college has recently hired new faculty to meet the demand for more courses and scholarship. Dr. Justin Carpenter, assistant professor of English, was hired last year to teach Video Game Storytelling alongside Seegert. Like Seegert, Carpenter is a lifelong player of video games. Though he initially went to college for post-colonial studies, Carpenter discovered—through a paper he wrote on eco-criticism—the game “The Last of Us,” which prompted him to pivot his focus to games. At the time, the field of games studies was just a few years old, but still there was already a large amount of academic analysis about games for him to engage.

Carpenter's research has primarily focused on comparing games with pre-existing literature and generative storytelling—a method of creating personalized stories using basic rules and algorithms. Examples of stories being generative come in the forms of lipograms—written works restricted from using a certain letter of the alphabet—and choose-your-own-adventure style books. Carpenter explains that video games have this kind of generative storytelling baked into the medium. Games inherently create worlds and spaces with their own rules for how to interact with them.

One of Carpenter's recently published works revolves around this topic and its relation to the game, “No Man's Sky.” The world of “No Man's Sky,” a planetary exploration game, is procedurally generated—meaning there is a near infinite number of distinctly unique planets to interact with. There is no one-size-fits-all way to play the

game to completion and no two players will have the same experience with it. This produces not only thousands of hours of gameplay but also stories that can only be uniquely achieved through this kind of rulebound narrative. With the sheer scope of the game and near-limitless possibilities, games like this generate player stories in the same ways stories unfold in the non-virtual world.

“I think we are quite interested in how these machines can mirror us and be reflections of us,” Carpenter said. “We may not like all the answers that it gives us, but this somehow allows us to enhance the kind of passion we have for [games].”

Procedural generation has already been leveraged by many games to produce player stories like these. This is most popularly done in the game, “Minecraft,” a sandbox game that randomly generates a world and gives players the broad goal to “survive.” Within the confines of the game's rules, no two players will have the same experience or generate the same stories in “Minecraft.” Creating procedurally generated games can be cheaper for game companies, but it also allows for a type of player experience that mimics life in the intertwining of novelty and redundancy.

Also new to the college is Dr. Nathan Wainstein, assistant professor of English, who works both in the literature of modernism and the relationship of games to modernist aesthetics. His courses focus on video game aesthetics, difficulty, narrative, and design. In a recently published essay, Wainstein analyzes the video game, “Death Stranding,” in relation to 20th-century literature concerned with labor. Like other arts, video games express the particular values of their historical time and place. However, as Wainstein explains, it's only very recently that scholars have taken video games seriously as an aesthetic and cultural form, and begun to do the important comparative work that will allow us to see how video games participate in the broader histories of literature and art.

“I do think that in the early 2000s, and maybe even earlier, there was a polemical emphasis on separating video games from other artistic traditions,” said Wainstein. Many of these discussions revolved around belief that works in this new medium required completely new critical frameworks. However, younger scholars like Wainstein are recognizing that even new media like video games still depend on familiar narrative structures and other conventions of aesthetics and design. Wainstein doesn’t believe that we need to continually reinvent the wheel, an opinion that is now shared by many academics in the field. “Even if you grant the point that it was polemically necessary, I think that necessity is no longer present,” Wainstein said. Like other new artistic mediums, such as film, video games at once offer new kinds of experiences and new forms of familiar pleasures. As the study of video games becomes more accepted by academics and the public, games will be recognized as important cultural forms and legitimate objects of study.

With their passion for the medium of video games, its forms and ways of telling stories, the humanities faculty and students studying games are pioneering one of the most exciting areas of contemporary cultural research. Indeed, the faculty are learning as much from their students as the students are from them. “We’ve entered an era where professors know less about these things than students,” Carpenter said. “My students know just as much about the games that I’m talking about as me, maybe more...It’s like a conversation with people that are your peers, and that’s really exciting.”

Beyond English and philosophy, exciting and innovative offerings are also happening in other areas of the college. For instance, Dr. Alexis Christensen, associate professor (lecturer) of world languages and

“Clearly, video games are where this generation of students are finding their stories. It’s important for us as a department and a college to study and teach this dynamic and important form of culture and contemporary art.”

cultures, teaches Video Games and Antiquity. The course examines how “Assassin’s Creed Odyssey” makes use of history, myth, and archaeology from the ancient Greek world. Throughout the course, Christensen and the students explore how video games represent the ancient world and ask whether they represent it accurately—and if that matters. The course also considers central ethical issues such as stealing and killing in a game, and asks about the lessons that can be learned from the past while playing video games.

Christensen, whose scholarship focuses on Roman and ancient Italic social history and material culture, created this course because so many students are becoming interested in the ancient world through video games like “Assassin’s Creed.” And learning about the historical culture of “The Odyssey” has helped students appreciate the game even more.

With some of the most exciting young scholars in the field of Video Game Narrative, Aesthetics, and Ethics, close working relationships with the game design faculty and students in the U’s world-renowned Division of Games, and a large cohort of enthusiastic students, the College of Humanities has become a top destination for students interested in more fully understanding the art and significance of video games.

THE **GREATEST** BOOKS ARE THOSE
THAT HAVE HAD A DISCERNIBLE
IMPACT ON OTHER BOOKS AND
FIELDS OF STUDY

Great Books Returns

The Great Books/Great Science Books sequence (HUM 1500, 1550) is in its second year in the College of Humanities, capturing the interest of students and faculty keen to focus deeply on important books and timeless concerns in the humanities. Think of Great Books as a kind of old-fashioned social media—books read and discussed together with top professors in the College—with life-changing staying power.

“The deep and profound experience that Great Books creates comes from reading books together, sharing characters, tragic awakenings, obstacles, funny turns of phrase, lost loves, great battles, and races against time,” said Hollis Robbins, dean of the College of Humanities. “Of course, it is excellent to be introduced and helped through a foundational text by an expert professor and to read late into the night by yourself. But the greatness of a Great Books course is the collective learning experience and the sharing of allusions and histories, and valuing that shared experience.”

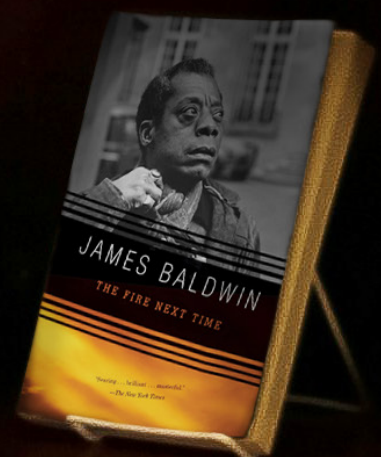
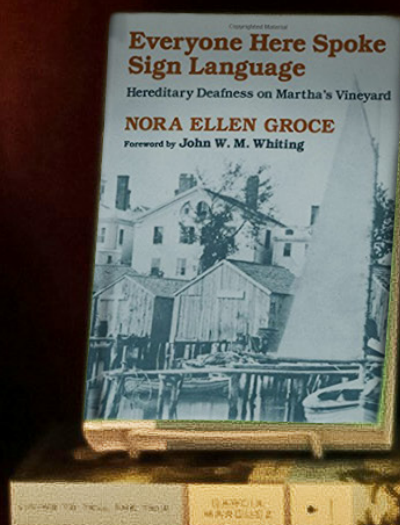
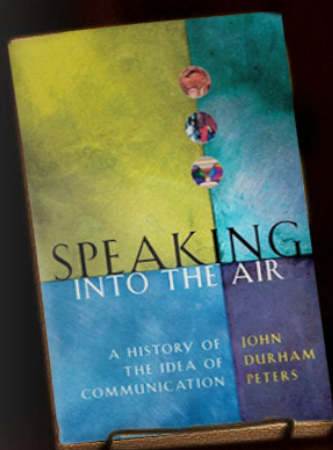
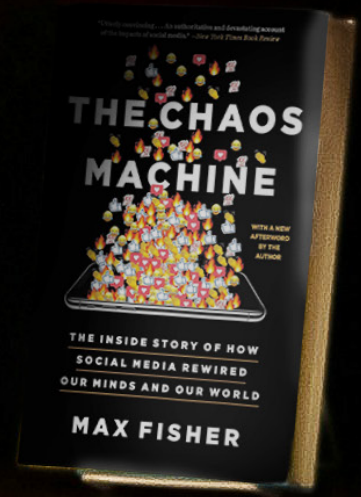
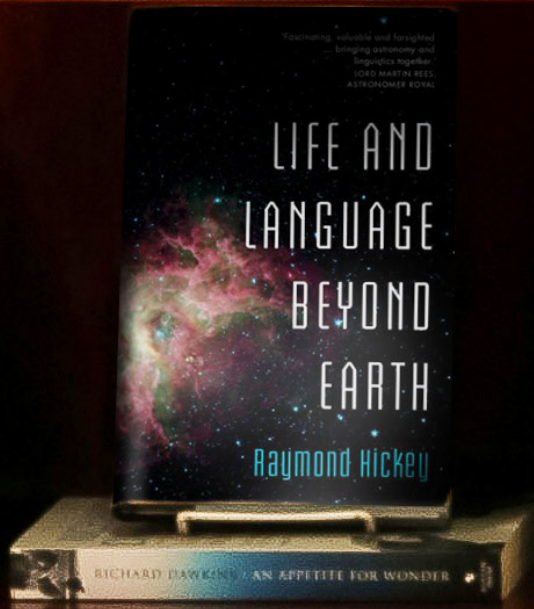
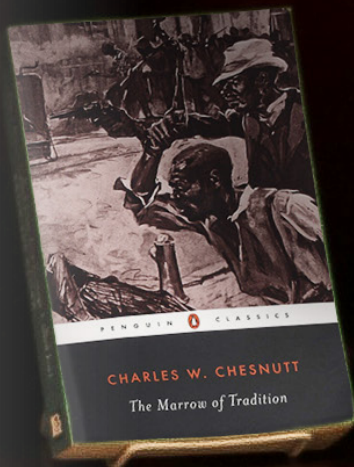
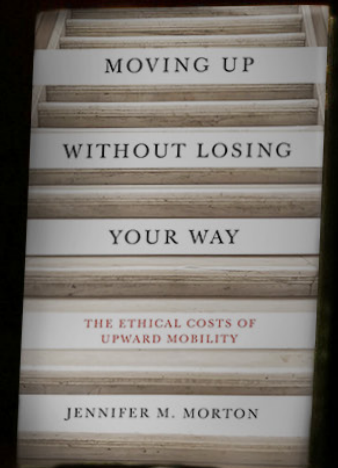
Last year’s Great Books roster included Charles Darwin’s “On the Origin of Species” (1859), Franz Kafka’s “The Trial” (1915), Virginia Woolf’s “Mrs. Dalloway” (1926), and James Baldwin’s “The Fire Next Time” (1963). This fall’s will reach further back in time to begin with Sophocles’ “Antigone”

(441 BCE) and William Shakespeare’s “Richard III” (1592) as well as offering more modern texts, including Charles Chesnutt’s “The Marrow of Tradition” (1901); Jennifer Morton’s “Moving Up without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility” (2019); Max Fisher’s “The Chaos Machine” (2022); and Raymond Hickey’s “Life and Language Beyond Earth” (2023).

Students (and parents) may be surprised to see that humanities faculty rank books written in the past decade as highly as a text like “Antigone,” written over 2 millennia ago. The idea is that greatness is still open to individuals thinking and writing today. “Antigone,” “Richard III,” and “The Marrow of Tradition” are three of the most profound political and family dramas ever written, separated by centuries yet demonstrating how literature of every age captures human struggles for decency, for power, and against legal and social constraints.

“Great books are those that engage students in the big and enduring questions that have and continue to shape the human experience,” said Mike Middleton, associate dean of academic affairs for the College of Humanities. “The course is a gateway to all the humanities has to offer.”

Richard Preiss, associate professor of English, chose “Richard III” because of the resonance



of 16th-century politics with today's. "Men of ambition claim to speak for 'the people,' use humor to mask their authoritarianism, and construct reality with propaganda. Literature shows us how to resist such figures: chiefly, by reminding us that they're not new." Preiss will offer students an accessible, absorbing introduction to Shakespeare, as well as to the basic methodology of English by concentrating on key passages in a text and noticing patterns that generate deeper levels of meaning.

Erin Beeghly, associate professor of philosophy who will teach Jennifer Morton's "Moving Up without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility," said she's excited to dive into the text with the students and

examine its connection with their lives. "It's an award-winning philosophical exploration of the ethical costs of upward mobility, especially for first-generation college students. The book is beautifully researched and compelling to read, as well as incredibly personal."

Fulfilling the humanities general education requirement, Great Books not only allows first-year students to study influential and thought-provoking books, it also offers them an opportunity to explore their academic interests across a variety of texts and to think and respond critically to enduring questions raised by those texts.

"Of the millions of books ever written, the greatest books are those that have had a discernible impact on other books and

fields of study. So, our faculty members choose books that have changed the way other authors write. Both 'Antigone' and 'Richard III' have had an incalculable impact on world literature. Raymond Hickey's 'Life and Language Beyond Earth' is newly influential and ever more urgent as technology brings us closer to possible engagement with other worlds," said Robbins.

Students looking for an engaging and unique opportunity that develops critical reading, thinking and writing skills, that will support their academic success, and provide a better understanding of extraterrestrial life, can join the next installment of the Great Books Series, Great Science Books, scheduled for Spring 2025.

ABOUT THE BOOKS:

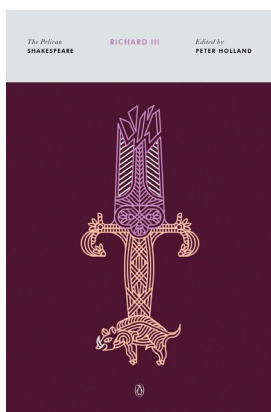


"ANTIGONE" BY SOPHOCLES (441 BC)

Taught by **MARGARET TOSCANO**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF WORLD LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

"Antigone" is a Greek tragedy that explores the conflict between familial duty and the laws of the state. The play centers around Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, who defies the orders of King Creon by burying her brother, Polynices, who was declared a traitor. Creon, the king of Thebes, has decreed that Polynices should not be buried, but Antigone believes that she must honor her brother's body according to the laws of the gods. As a result, Antigone is sentenced to death, leading to a tragic chain of events that culminate in the deaths of several characters, including Creon's son and wife. "Antigone" explores themes of morality, loyalty, loss and mourning, women's place in society, and the nature of justice, and is considered one of the greatest works of ancient Greek literature.

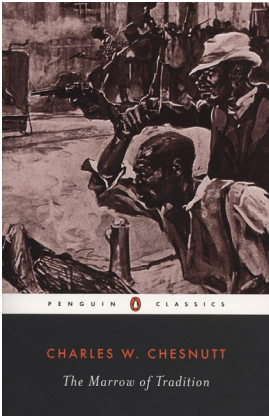


"RICHARD III" BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1592)

Taught by **RICHARD PREISS**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

"Richard III" was Shakespeare's first big hit—probably his most famous play during his lifetime—and it features one of literature's greatest villains, based on one of England's briefest, bloodiest tyrants. A study of evil and a study of power, it follows Richard's rise to the throne through murder, deception, and manipulation. What makes him such a skilled politician also makes him a magnetic character: not despite but because of his physical disabilities (history says he was a hunchback), he is funny, charming, sexy, able to convince others—and us—that he is on their side when he is only ever on his own.



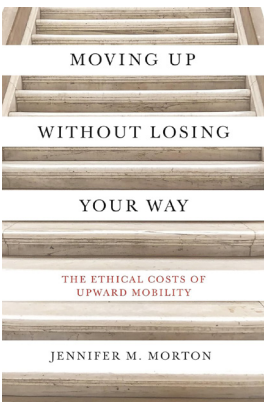
"THE MARROW OF TRADITION" BY CHARLES CHESNUTT (1901)

Taught by **STUART CULVER**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

AND FORMER DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

A landmark in the history of African-American fiction, this gripping 1901 novel was among the first literary challenges to racial stereotypes. Its tragic history of two families unfolds against the backdrop of the post-Reconstruction South and climaxes with a race riot based on an actual 1898 incident. The author relied upon eyewitness accounts of the riot to create an authentic setting and mood, and his sensitive artistry transcends a simple retelling of the facts with a dramatic rendering of the conflict between racism and social justice.

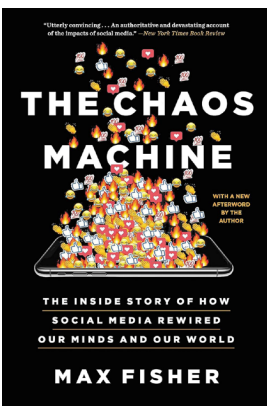


"MOVING UP WITHOUT LOSING YOUR WAY: THE ETHICAL COSTS OF UPWARD MOBILITY" BY JENNIFER M. MORTON (2019)

Taught by **ERIN BEEGLY**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

"Moving Up without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility" explores the challenges faced by individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds as they strive for upward mobility. Morton argues that while upward mobility can bring material benefits, it often comes at a cost to one's sense of identity and familial relationships. She examines the ethical dilemmas faced by individuals navigating the education system and the workplace and offers suggestions for how individuals and society can support upward mobility without sacrificing ethical integrity. Through personal narratives and philosophical analysis, Morton highlights the complex interplay between ambition, ethics, and social mobility in contemporary society.

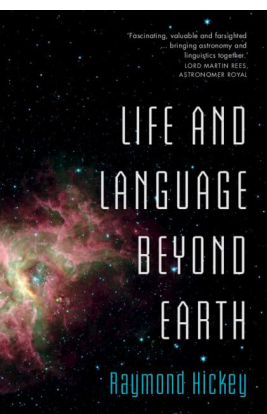


"THE CHAOS MACHINE: THE INSIDE STORY OF HOW SOCIAL MEDIA REWIRED OUR MINDS AND OUR WORLD" BY MAX FISHER (2022)

Taught by **AVERY HOLTON**

PROFESSOR OF COMMUNICATION AND LEAD INSTRUCTOR

Building on years of international reporting, Fisher tells the gripping and galling inside story of how Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social networks preyed on psychological frailties to create the algorithms that drive everyday users to extreme opinions and, increasingly, extreme actions. As Fisher demonstrates, the companies' founding tenets, combined with a blinkered focus on maximizing engagement, have led to a destabilized world for everyone.



"LIFE AND LANGUAGE BEYOND EARTH" BY RAYMOND HICKEY (2023)

Taught by **ANIKO CSIRMAZ**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LINGUISTICS

"Life and Language Beyond Earth" explores the possibility of life and communication with extraterrestrial beings. The book delves into the scientific theories and methods used to search for signs of life on other planets, as well as the challenges of interpreting and understanding potential extraterrestrial languages. Hickey discusses the cultural and linguistic implications of discovering alien life and considers how contact with extraterrestrial civilizations could impact human society. Overall, the book offers a comprehensive look at the intersection of science, language, and the search for life beyond Earth.

Computational Linguistics Strength

The arrival of ChatGPT in the fall of 2022 brought new attention to the field of linguistics. Scholars of the science of language have long been involved in the development of AI, particularly LLMs (large language models), and have stood to one side while their humanities colleagues are suddenly taking notice that machines were writing, and writing (sometimes) decently well.

Like all humanities disciplines, linguistics is a complicated and wide-ranging field, still shaped by the Chomskian revolution of the 1960s that emphasized the innate properties of language acquisition, while researchers have in the past decades also engaged with AI and machine learning. These “computational linguistics” researchers ponder the prospect of a final solution to the old Turing Test in creating artificial intelligence: can we build a machine so competent at using natural language that a human interlocutor, blind to the nature of the respondent, cannot tell whether that respondent is a human or a machine? At the same time, computational linguistics aims to resolve some of the oldest questions that have been asked about language acquisition.

The national reputation of the University of Utah’s computational linguistics strength is due to a trio of brilliant young scholars new to the College: assistant professors Aniello De Santo, Caleb Belth, and most recently Yang Wang, who joins the department this fall.

Our departmental focus on the fundamental properties of language will provide research to make possible new AI models for languages with a very small corpus of digitized texts. The English language corpus of training data for large language models such as Chat GPT is vast. De Santo, Belth, and Wang are interested in formal properties that make it possible to envision AI arising from even the world’s smallest linguistic communities. Their work holds promise not just for a computational reformulation of Chomsky’s paradigm about language learning, but also for a more universal approach to AI.

“The field of computational linguistics is broad: some scholars work on language technologies, from spell-checkers and spam filters to chatbots and voice assistants. Others are interested in adapting formal computational methods to study the fundamental properties of human language. While keeping an eye on recent technological advancements, our computational linguists explore the computational aspects of language as a cognitive system, with a special focus on understanding the mechanisms behind language processing and acquisition. *How do humans understand and produce sounds, words, and sentences? How is human language processing tied to cognition, like memory and attention? When learning a language, given limited input, what strategies do humans adopt? What cognitive principles constrain these strategies? How are processing and acquisition related to the patterns observed in languages across the world?* We begin from the interdisciplinary perspective of the cognitive sciences, integrating computational work with human experiments and ultimately drawing insights from computer science, mathematics, cognitive psychology, and linguistics.”

**ANIELLO DE SANTO, PH.D.****ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

Aniello De Santo works at the intersection of linguistics, psychology, and computer science, focusing on the role of structural representations and cognitive resources in sentence processing and morphophonological acquisition. He publishes in venues including the Proceedings of the Society for Computation in Linguistics, the ACL Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics, Language, Computational Brain & Behavior, and Language, Cognition, and Neuroscience. De Santo joined the department in 2020 after receiving a Ph.D. in linguistics from Stony Brook University and an M.S. in computer science from the University of Pavia.

**CALEB BELTH, PH.D.****ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

Caleb Belth studies computational linguistics, theoretical phonology, and language acquisition, with secondary interests in the history and philosophy of science. His research goal is to make concrete theoretical proposals about language acquisition and to work out their implications for linguistic theory using computational, experimental, and corpus based approaches. He has been awarded an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, an NDSEG fellowship, and the University of Michigan's Richard and Eleanor Towner Prize for Distinguished Academic Achievement. Belth joined the department in 2023; he received his Ph.D. in computer science from the University of Michigan and a B.S. in computer science from Purdue University.

**YANG WANG, PH.D.****ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

Yang Wang focuses on theoretical phonology (sound systems) and morphophonology (how words are formed), particularly on how structural properties of natural language (morpho) phonology are represented, computed, and learned. Her most recent publication examines the computational nature of the naturally occurring copying operation as word-formation processes, such as in Ilokano (Austronesian, Philippines), where the plural of “pusa” cat is “pus-pusa” cats. Wang joined the Department of Linguistics in Fall 2024; she received both a Ph.D. in linguistics and a B.S. in linguistics and mathematics of computation from UCLA.

Research in the Humanities

Research in the College of Humanities tackles the big questions that shape human societies—past, present, and future. Our faculty researchers are dedicated to finding answers, pursuing expertise, and developing a voice to guide and explore humanity’s most significant intellectual and cultural conversations. It is a valuable and rigorous endeavor in part because innovative research undergirds and energizes how we think, teach, and evolve. Moreover, as part of the important work being done in the humanities, researchers in our college contribute to the university’s broader research agenda and expand their knowledge base across the globe.

As members of a Carnegie R1 Research Institution, research is an important part of our college culture and is at the core of what we do. This past year saw some exciting research-focused events in the college. Highlights included campus visits by influential figures in the humanities research world. Last November, we welcomed Christopher Thornton, research director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, who shared insights about national trends in research funding and who led a mock NEH review panel aided by our dedicated faculty, Ben Cohen, Katharina Gerstenberger, Robin Jensen, and Kent Ono. In January, Shelly Lowe, chair of the NEH, visited the university and, at breakfast with college faculty, outlined her vision for the future of the humanities and the NEH. Finally, in March, Niko Pfund, president of Oxford University Press (USA), joined us for four days—meeting with individual faculty, discussing the future of AI in publishing, and educating students on careers in publishing.

In further support of humanities research, our college launched several noteworthy programs and resources last year. A new mentorship program brought together new faculty and post-docs with established researchers to talk about research projects, publication plans, and careers in academia. Our new afternoon Lightning Talks series provided a lively venue for new faculty to share their research interests and connect over orange blossom-scented tea and baklava. A new Faculty Manuscript Review Program invited national and international experts to review faculty book manuscripts before publication. Plus, grant-writing resources, workshops, and retreats engaged researchers throughout the year, thanks to our college grants specialists and the NEXUS Research Institute staff.

Our faculty’s dedication to excellence has made the College of Humanities at the University of Utah a national leader in humanities research. We now rank in the top quartile of humanities colleges nationwide for all measures of research productivity—publications, citations, grants, and more—over the past few years. Impressively, our college is in the 92nd percentile for total number of faculty citations—a strong indicator of the faculty’s success in bringing knowledge and expertise into public dialogue through publications and other public media.

Due to the merit of their research and other scholarly work, faculty members in our college are increasingly engaged with and recognized by top national funders. Faculty regularly receive fellowships and grant awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities,

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES RESEARCH TEAM



HOLLIS ROBBINS
DEAN



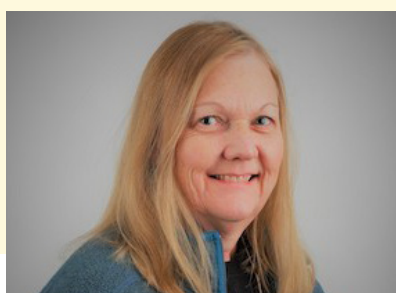
ISABEL MOREIRA
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR RESEARCH



JENNA TAYLOR
GRANT WRITER



JOHN BOYACK
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER



CINDY BROWN
GRANTS AND CONTRACTS
MANAGER



CHRISTINE GORE
GRANTS AND CONTRACTS
OFFICER

National Institutes for Health, National Science Foundation, American Council of Learned Societies, and Guggenheim Foundation. Additionally, larger college projects have been funded by the Mellon Foundation, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and Luce Foundation, to name a few.

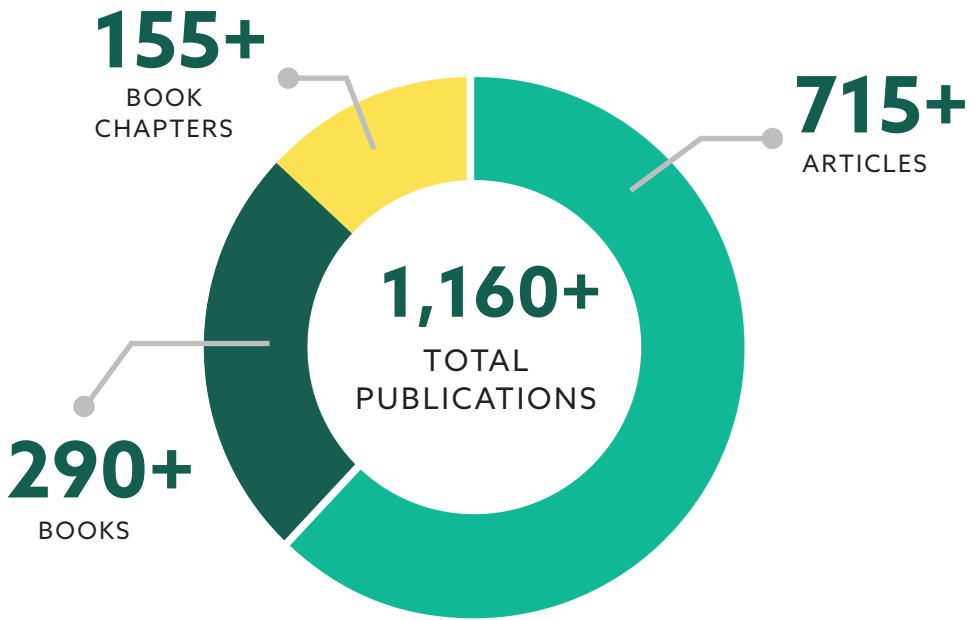
With the University of Utah's entry into the prestigious group of the country's 38 leading public research universities as part of the American Association of Universities (AAU), the College of Humanities is actively involved in the University of Utah's elite research environment. Across the many interdisciplinary centers and programs housed in the college, humanities research plays a valuable role in expanding the university's prominence and impact. In particular, the Religious Studies Program, Second Language Teaching and Research Center, Middle East Center, and Center for American Indian Languages, have entered a new era of vitality and

importance against the backdrop of crucial national and international conversations.

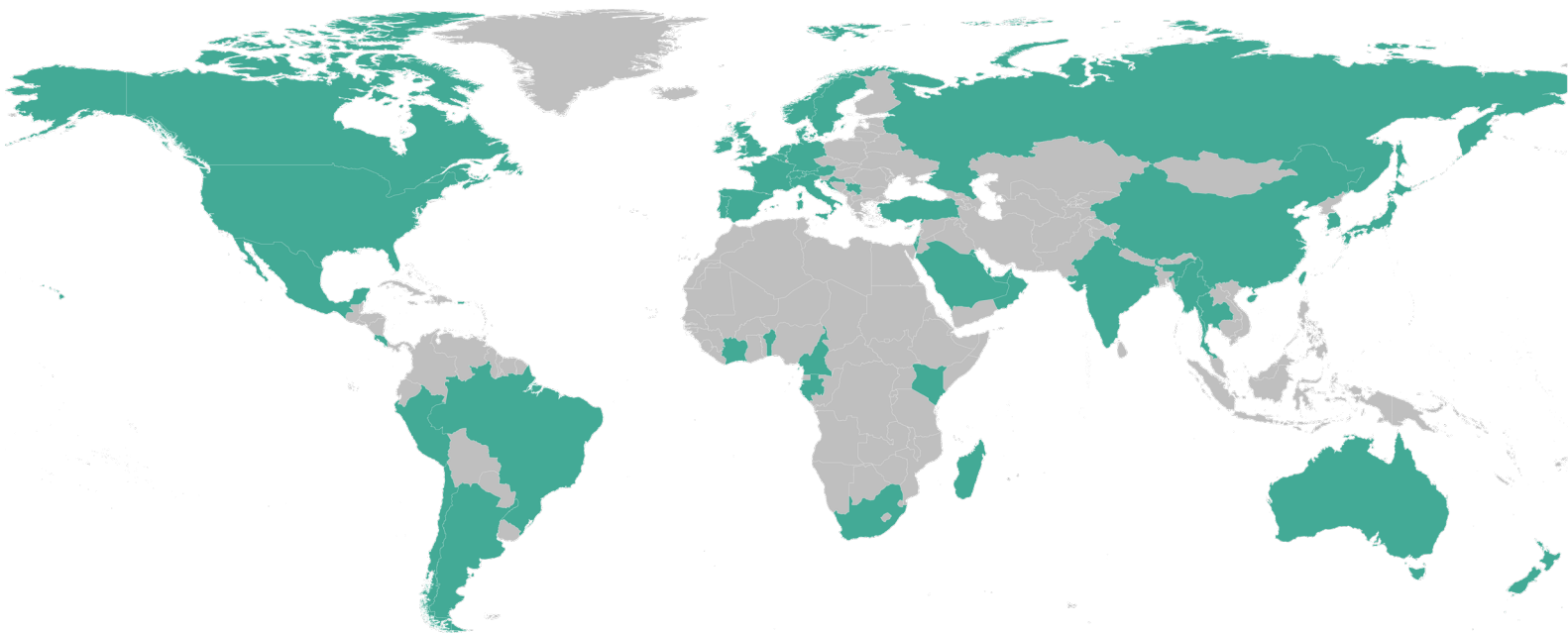
Furthermore, the research-informed teaching provided by our faculty is inspiring a new generation of groundbreaking researchers, such as last year's winners of the university's Undergraduate Research Award for the Humanities, Krista Leggit and Pierce Christoffersen, mentored by philosophy professor Matt Haber.

Thanks to our vibrant research community, the future of humanities is here and thriving! Innovative initiatives in our college—such as a Computational Linguistics Program, Video Game Narrative Program, Religious Reporting Certificate, and Humanities Artificial Intelligence (AI) projects—are opening new areas of meaningful research and global engagement that will continue to drive our work to invigorate and define the reach of the humanities for decades to come.

FACULTY PUBLICATIONS
2019-2024



FACULTY RESEARCH TRAVEL
2019-2024



ARGENTINA
AUSTRALIA
AUSTRIA
BELGIUM
BENIN
BRAZIL
CAMEROON
CANADA
CHILE
CHINA

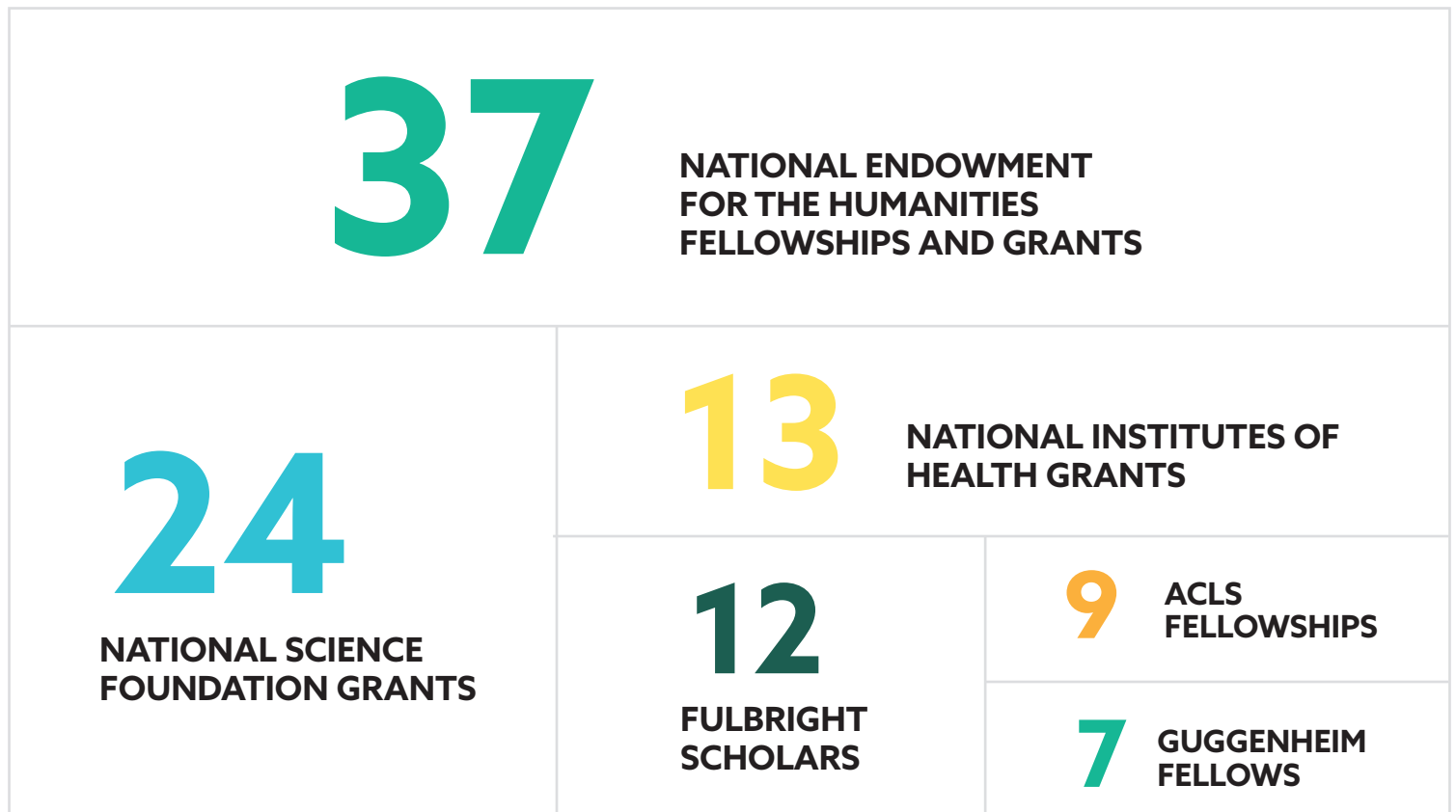
COSTA RICA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
CROATIA
DENMARK
FRANCE
GABON
GERMANY
HONG KONG
INDIA
IRELAND

ISRAEL/PALESTINE
ITALY
JAPAN
KENYA
KUWAIT
MADAGASCAR
MEXICO
MYANMAR
NETHERLANDS
NEW ZEALAND

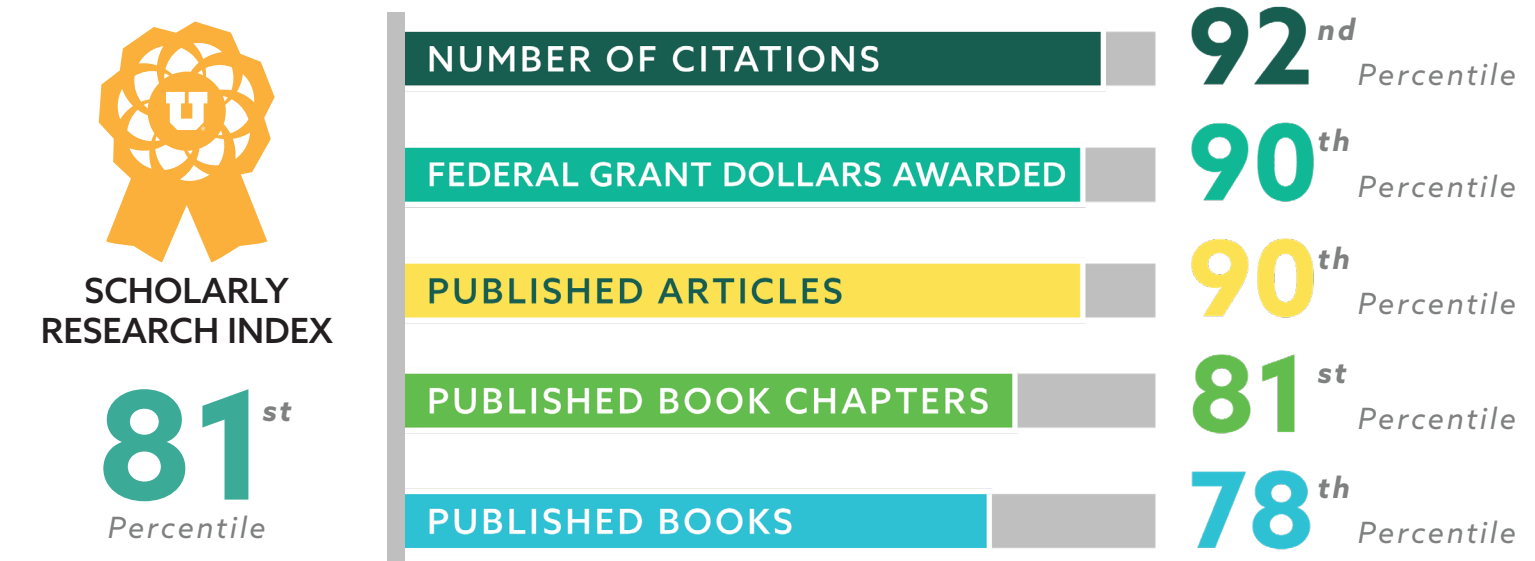
NORWAY
OMAN
PERU
PORTUGAL
PUERTO RICO
QATAR
RUSSIA
SAUDI ARABIA
SERBIA
SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH KOREA
SPAIN
SWEDEN
SWITZERLAND
TAIWAN
THAILAND
TURKEY
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
UNITED KINGDOM

FACULTY GRANT AWARDS 2000-2024



NATIONAL LEADER IN HUMANITIES RESEARCH



Among our peer institutions, the College of Humanities at the University of Utah ranks in the top quartile for key publication and grant metrics, according to Academic Analytics.

Source: Academic Analytics Scholarly Research Index and College/Field Level Analysis, Data Release Version: AAD2022.06.02594; Release Date: 4/24/2024; Dataset: 17,458 faculty from 175 institutions with a dedicated College/School of Humanities; metric date ranges vary from 2013-2022 to 2019-2022.



From Church to the Classroom:

INSPECTING RELIGION THROUGH A SCHOLARLY LENS

Texts about ancient Roman religions, books exploring beliefs about the afterlife, Bibles in multiple different languages; these printed works, and many more, decorate the ceiling-high shelves of Margaret Toscano's office. Toscano is an associate professor of world languages and cultures at the University of Utah. For over 25 years, she has been teaching a plethora of topics in religious studies, ranging from Greek religious studies to immortality.

With experience studying religion both in and outside the classroom, Toscano believes that there is much to be gained by taking a scholarly approach to religion. Her religious studies teaching focuses on understanding the roots of a particular society's beliefs, not stereotyping those beliefs or comparing them to modern beliefs society holds. When Toscano teaches her classes, her focus is to guide her students to grasp the idea that "these ancient people were not stupid,

and that their belief in these gods had a valid underlying reason. The scholarly study of religion I try to put forth in a class is trying to get students to think deeply about things, and not on a superficial level." Taking this type of perspective on religion creates a space for these spiritual beliefs to be examined in a way that creates understanding, and acknowledges all aspects of religion, tearing down the preconceptions people have when discussing spiritual topics.

What many people don't realize, according to Toscano, is that religion and culture are fundamentally intertwined, with many cultures outwardly reflecting this religious influence through architecture and rituals. For example, in Oviedo, Spain, churches line the streets and crosses adorn the buildings. However, this doesn't mean that the entire city is full of "devout Catholics." As Toscano notes, this is simply "a part of their

CULTURE AND RELIGION HAVE A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

At the U, while examining ancient religious beliefs and their effect on culture are a large component of religious studies, there are many different disciplines students are able to choose from within the religious studies major and minor. From Hinduism to Greek mythology, students can choose to explore a variety of religious studies areas that pique their interest. Religious studies courses allow students to explore religion in the classroom and ask questions about the history of religious scholarship over the centuries, creating a space for students of varying religious and non-religious backgrounds to engage in an academic examination of faith and practice.

The religious studies program isn't just for those who wish to pursue a career in religion, but is open to any student of any major at the U. In fact, according to Brandon Peterson, an assistant professor of religious studies, pairing religious studies classes with other fields of inquiry can be beneficial to those who intend to work in areas where human interaction occurs often. Peterson had a student who was pursuing nursing and she paired her biology and anatomy courses with classes that explored divinity; she did this to understand her patients better, saying that "people aren't just reducible to their respiratory function... and religious identity is a really important part of who a person is." Understanding the impact of religion on someone's identity and character is key to being successful in people-oriented fields of work, and helps cultivate openness when engaging with people. Studying religion also aids in having compassion for others, and according to Toscano, can help people avoid cultural disconnections. For example, with a major like "engineering, if you're

going to build something somewhere, you better be sensitive to the local beliefs of people." Having the knowledge about how religion influences different cultures allows students to build respect for other cultures, fostering diversity and breaking down cultural barriers.

In the Department of World Languages and Cultures, all students who are curious about religion are invited to join the conversation, and Peterson wants to make sure that no student feels attacked or dismissed throughout their inquiry. When studying religion and faith, Peterson doesn't "want anybody to feel like they're not welcome as part of this community or like they have to change or that they're going to change who they are as a result of coming out of [a religious studies course]." The religious studies program is designed to bring together the diverse identities of students at the U, and everyone is encouraged to participate and immerse themselves fully into the program.

Peterson's end goal is to dispel religious stereotypes and educate others about the complexity of religion. He wants students at the U to be able to enter into conversations about their religious and non-religious beliefs without dismissing others in the process. By learning how to best approach these difficult conversations, students can engage in fruitful intellectual discourse about religion without having to conceal who they are. "What I'm trying to do is make sure that as people gain that sort of religious literacy, they can be better classmates, they can be better community members, and we can turn this into a place where people are entering into those... really rich conversations."

culture." This influence of religion on culture is more than just what someone believes in; its interlacement is present in the daily lives of almost everyone, even those who live in Salt Lake City. The grid system itself, which plays a key role in helping the residents of the city navigate the town, has roots and connections to Latter-day Saint history. To Toscano, this is what makes the examination of religion in a scholarly way so important, because "every culture around the world has some kind of religious tradition that is absolutely integrated with that culture." Culture and religion have a symbiotic relationship, with each influencing the other, and this concept is a key part in understanding the roots of religion and its effect on modern society.

WE ARE CREATING
SKILLED **PEACEMAKERS**
TRAINED IN CULTURAL
SENSITIVITY



Diplomacy by Design

In the U.S. and around the world, a succession of dramatic processes—among them: the digital revolution, the COVID pandemic, and destructive shifts in our planet’s biosphere—have collided. The consequences have been profound and often devastating. But new possibilities beckon. The promise of AI, the prospect of a green-energy transition, and efforts to create more inclusive politics are all cause for cautious optimism. With both division and opportunity so ubiquitous, few fields are as critical to our shared future as is diplomacy. Yet only a handful of universities offer such a degree. The University of Utah is about to become one of them.

Based in the College of Humanities, the new diplomacy major will be a first-of-its-kind program in the Mountain West and among the few such undergraduate degrees anywhere—distinguishing Utah among peer research institutions nationally.

More than foreign affairs, Utah’s program will focus on the fundamental causes of conflict and on the cultural and communicational competencies demanded for effective negotiation and consensus-building. Especially in a world of digitally-mediated encounters, college graduates who understand the texture and nuance of human interaction are essential. As Hollis Robbins, dean of the College of Humanities explains, “Diplomacy graduates will be increasingly valued in an age when rhetorical sophistication, understanding of etiquette and protocol, and a subtlety of thinking and expression remain beyond AI ability.”

The innovative program represents “a vision of diplomacy designed to address the rapidly evolving challenges of the 21st century,” says Hugh Cagle, associate professor of history and director of international studies, where the proposed major will be housed.

“There are two things to understand about diplomacy,” says Cagle. “The first is that it has changed dramatically in recent decades.” Traditionally, diplomacy has been understood as the delicate work of negotiation between sovereign states, often in areas like politics or trade. “A lot of things about that vision,” explains Cagle, “are inherited from the 19th century, a time when European empires encompassed much of the globe, and when a narrow group of imperial rulers claimed to speak on behalf of an extremely diverse range of imperial—often colonized—subjects.” Following the end of World War II, Cagle continues, “decolonization and globalization created a new kind of global politics.” Interlocutors are now more diverse. The world is more interconnected. “Diplomacy,” insists Cagle, “has to be more culturally grounded and communication-oriented.” It also demands sensitivity to new issues. As Cagle explains, “Calls

specifically for environmental diplomacy began 20 years ago. The COVID pandemic drove calls for global health diplomacy. Now AI and the digital revolution have prompted calls for tech diplomacy. This new degree is an attempt to bring into alignment the way we think about diplomacy and the need for specific areas of diplomatic practice in the world today.”

“The other thing about diplomacy,” says Cagle, “is that it’s not a specialized academic discipline, like history or political science. It’s more like an interdisciplinary craft.” Hence, the new degree focuses on diplomacy-as-practice, in all of its cultural complexity. As Robbins put it, the new degree will “focus on craft and methods, the ‘how to’ of negotiation and mediation in multiple languages toward conflict resolution,” which is a demand that Robbins hears among current international studies and communication majors.

Because diplomacy is inherently interdisciplinary, many colleges and universities struggle to field programs in it. “But here at Utah,” says Cagle, “within the College of Humanities, we have international and area studies, which is already a thriving home for globally-oriented interdisciplinary programs. It’s a perfect place for the diplomacy major, with lots of experienced staff and faculty support.” The new major capitalizes on particular areas of diplomacy in which the college enjoys distinguished national and international reputations: communication, language and culture, and area studies, specifically for the regions of Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

“Diplomacy graduates will be increasingly valued in an age when rhetorical sophistication, understanding of etiquette and protocol, and a subtlety of thinking and expression remain beyond AI ability.”



The degree also strengthens connections to programs across campus. Like the other majors in International and Area Studies, the proposed diplomacy major—offered as both a B.S. and B.A.—is designed to facilitate a double-major for those students interested in pursuing it. Mike Middleton, associate dean for academic affairs in the college, who has advised on the curriculum and helped shepherd it through the approval process praises “the generous support that the proposal has received from across the university.”

The proposed degree replaces the former peace and conflict studies major—maintaining the flexibility and interdisciplinarity of the old program but providing clearer structure and a much stronger focus. PCS understood conflict as a generalized human phenomenon. The new degree understands conflict through context. It is a more sensitive approach—both historically and culturally. As Robbins explains, “We are creating skilled peacemakers trained in cultural sensitivity able to communicate in multiple languages.” The diplomacy degree is attuned to more specific and urgent challenges. In addition to a core focused on language, culture, and communication, students will build their degree in one of four thematic focus areas: (1) tribal sovereignty and cultural heritage; (2) conflict, displacement, and humanitarian affairs; (3) health, climate, and sustainability; and (4) science, technology, and society. These represent key convergences between some of the most consequential issues of our time, the research strengths of both the college and

the wider university, student interest, and labor market demand.

That combination of practical skills and specialized knowledge will distinguish graduates of the program, setting them up for well-paying careers in an expanding area of professional opportunity. As Robbins explains, “Our diplomacy major aligns with the U’s mission of preparing students from diverse backgrounds to have impact as global leaders.” An essential premise of the new degree is that the craft of diplomacy is valuable anytime that competing interests collide, and especially when they lead to heightened tension or threaten violence. This is true at every scale, from community engagement to international negotiation. Career opportunities range widely from politics and the foreign service, to corporate leadership and governance, sustainability, translation and interpretation, project management, public relations, and human resources.

The degree is expected to receive its final approvals by state and regional accreditors in Fall 2024 and will launch the following academic year.

Acting Dean Wanda Pillow is enthusiastic about this new degree offering. “Our talented faculty are exceptionally well-placed to lead this program, and I expect that it will become a nationally and internationally respected degree in short order,” says Pillow. “University of Utah students will benefit tremendously from this educational experience.”



THE **PAST** EXISTS AND WE HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH IT AND IT TRIES TO KILL US, BUT WE'VE **SURVIVED** IT.

-CARMEN MARIA MACHADO

A Year in Review

O.C. TANNER HUMANITIES CENTER

Carmen Maria Machado



LaToya Ruby Frazier



Min Jin Lee



Kyle Whyte Dinner

PUBLIC OUTREACH

40+

Events
Hosted

10+

Venues
Utilized

1,762

Total
Attendees

22%

Increase
in Event Attendance
from 2022/2023

RESEARCH FELLOWS

10

Presentations

11

Academic
Disciplines

348

Total
Attendees

38%

Increase
in Attendance
from 2022/2023

2,867

Total In-Person
Attendees

5,528

Social Media
Engagement

11,318

YouTube Views

19,713

Total Engagement

Philanthropy Connects the Generations

SCHOLARSHIPS IN THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Thanks to hundreds of individual donors who invest in humanities students, the College of Humanities provides a wide range of scholarship opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students throughout our departments, centers, and programs. This support is critical for students; scholarship support is often the reason they are able to pursue coursework at the University of Utah, as it significantly reduces the financial burden of higher education. Scholarships allow students to focus wholly on their studies, take full advantage of the many opportunities on campus and in the college, participate in extracurricular activities, and build the professional network that leads to ongoing success. These scholarships would not be possible without support from individuals who recognize the importance of a humanities degree and value the role humanities plays in our future.

Each person who contributes to humanities scholarships is supporting academic excellence and a robust student experience. But as you'll read in the words of the students below, you are giving more than dollars. For many students, being chosen to receive a scholarship is a much-needed vote of confidence, a pat on the back, or a boost in what feels like a long and daunting climb towards graduating. These scholarships represent much-needed material support, but also an intellectual affirmation and even an emotional bolster. With the generosity of our amazing community, the College of Humanities was able to award **\$318,600** in scholarship funds to **133** students, an average of **\$2,400** per student during the 2023-2024 academic year.

SHIRLEY GAUFIN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

The Shirley Gaufin Endowed Scholarship in the College of Humanities was established by Shirley Gaufin, French alum. After an inspiring and successful career in Human Resources for various global engineering and construction companies, she now supports students in the College of Humanities as they pursue higher education.

Recipient: Daphne Rosales



"My name is Daphne Rosales and I am a fourth-year student at the University of Utah, where I am pursuing a triple major in international studies, French, and world languages and cultures, with a minor in Spanish. I was born and raised

in the Salt Lake Valley, although my parents are originally from Mexico. Growing up in a bilingual household, with Spanish as my first language, I always had a strong desire to explore the world around me and was always fascinated by how my experiences in two different cultures compared to those around me. I would eventually come to learn French in high school and completely fall in love with both the language and the rich culture.

Now at the University of Utah, I continue to study these foreign languages and hope to someday work in a field where I can use my international experiences to help others, perhaps in foreign language education or as an advocate for human rights. I have been on the Dean's List every semester since starting at the university in 2020, and am currently on a semester-long study abroad trip in Pau, France. I take pride in the work that I do, whether it be in academics or in my volunteering, both in the U.S. and abroad. Finally, as the child of immigrant parents and a (soon-to-be) first-generation college graduate, I know firsthand the struggles that can arise for immigrants and their children. In my future career, I want to use the skills and knowledge I have gained to support those who are navigating similar situations.

This scholarship is not only a source of financial relief for my family and me, but also a source of great encouragement as I work to complete my final semester of my undergraduate studies at the University of Utah. I am finishing up my triple majors in French, international studies, and world languages and cultures, and my minor in Spanish. Studying at the U has been an incredibly rewarding and enriching experience, and it is thanks to scholarships like yours that I have been able to continue my education and pursue my passion."

“It is an honor and a pleasure for me to support deserving students in the College of Humanities through the endowed scholarships in my name. As a U alumna (B.A. '67), I know that the education and leadership experience I gained while attending the university and participating in campus organizations provided a strong foundation for achieving my career goals. It is my hope that these scholarships will help the recipients achieve their educational and career goals as they continue on their journey forward."

– Shirley Gaufrin



OPHELIA FLORES LAURELLA PATHFINDER ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

The Ophelia Flores Laurella Pathfinder Scholarship in Humanities was established by Carl L. and Vanessa B. Laurella in 2015 as a way to honor Carl's late mother, Ophelia. The scholarship is available to first-generation college students studying humanities at the University of Utah with demonstrated financial need. While Ophelia could not attend college herself, she made sure her children could. Carl was the first in his family to graduate from college and has established this scholarship with his wife to help encourage other first-generation college students to graduate in the humanities.

Recipient: Kira Kammerer



"My name is Kira Kammerer. I am a first-generation student and I expect to graduate in the fall of 2025. I graduated with an advanced diploma from Hillcrest High School in Midvale, Utah. I have completed 37 credit hours so far at the University of Utah.

I knew I wanted to major in communication prior to beginning college classes in the fall of 2021. Being in the College of Humanities at the University of Utah has vindicated this decision by being everything I hoped for and more. Political science was what I wanted to major in at first but now I'm considering it for my minor. I was intrigued by the broadness of communication which enables me to continue exploring different opportunities in this field of study. I've already experienced some of the benefits of enhancing my communication skills by receiving a higher education on the subject. It's such a dream to be able to pursue what I am passionate about and I

anticipate that the success I've achieved so far is just a beginning.

I strongly wish to be able to continue my education whilst supporting myself without having to take out student loans or go into debt. **Being offered this is an honor that I won't take for granted. I appreciate the generosity of Carl L. and Vanessa B. Laurella for the opportunity to apply for this scholarship, and I admire the legacy of Ophelia to support first-generation students studying the humanities."**

“

Both my wife Vanessa (MSN '86, Ph.D. '96) and I (B.S. '82) are U alumni and first-generation college graduates. We have two endowed scholarships; one at the College of Humanities and one at the College of Nursing supporting first-generation students. The one in humanities is in honor of my mother and the one in nursing is in honor of my wife Vanessa. My view is that an advanced education—for those seeking it, of any type, is the most significant stepping stone available in the pathway to a more substantive, generous, and productive citizenship. We were fortunate that even though no one in our family before us attended college, they encouraged and sacrificed to the best of their abilities to help us achieve our dreams of a college education. These scholarships reflect our goal to offer a leg up in that path for other first-generation students to fulfill their dreams of a college education and the benefits they will bestow on all of us in their journey forward. Hearing the stories of our scholarship recipients and the genuine impact on their lives are some of the most valued gifts I could ever hope to receive. And for that, I am grateful."

– Carl Laurella



KENNETH AND EVA MENG WOLLAM ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Jean Wollam created the Kenneth and Eva Meng Wollam Endowed Scholarship to honor her parents and support students pursuing writing and rhetoric studies. This scholarship supports incoming writing and rhetoric students who will be the first-generation of their family to earn a bachelor's degree.

Recipient: Derek Wooley



"When someone like me, who is a first-generation, low-income student, receives financial support, it is worth far more than the money alone. People from my background don't receive encouragement to attend college. Tuition is a hurdle that must be

overcome with grit and many hours working jobs that are often menial and unfulfilling. For me, receiving a scholarship is a vote of confidence and an affirmation that I am on the right path. It is a hand-up in a life with few free opportunities and many obstacles.

My scholarship came to me at a time when I didn't know how I was going to pay my rent. Between frantic convenience store applications and visits to the local foodbanks, I hardly had time to attend class and finish homework. Optional readings were thrown to the side and eventually, the mandatory ones went the same way. **Your endowment gave me the opportunity to learn—I could focus and apply myself to my studies.** Thank you for relieving some pressure that is felt too often by first-generation college students."

“ I created the Kenneth and Eva Meng Wollam Endowed Scholarship to honor my parents. As students graduating high school during the Great Depression, they did not have the opportunity to attend college. However, they fervently valued education and supported my pursuit of a degree from the University of Utah.

I believe philanthropy connects the generations and expresses hope for the future.”

– Jean Wollam



DAVID WELLS BENNETT AND BONNIE S. BENNETT SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Established by Amy Johnson, the David Wells Bennett and Bonnie S. Bennett Scholarship supports philosophy students who are excelling in their coursework. In addition to supporting tuition, this scholarship helps cover the cost of textbooks, providing overarching support for students in philosophy.

Recipient: K. Hudson Guttman



“My name is Kyle ‘Hudson’ Guttman, and I am a steadfast student and worker. Through my many pursuits around the university, I aim to engage with relevant coursework in a contemporary fashion, applying the skills and information

learned in philosophy to modern topics like psychology research or systems design. This

past semester, Spring 2023, I took part in two psychology research labs, took 21 credits which included a Ph.D. level course (full marks), gained second author on a psychology research paper, led a discussion group of freshman students for the Honors College, presented a paper at an international conference, and worked a part-time job as a line cook in a downtown SLC restaurant. I will continue most of these pursuits in the coming semesters and hope to publish a philosophy paper in my third year of undergraduate studies.

This scholarship is extremely important to me for many reasons. The financial burden on students is massive, and with it focusing on schoolwork becomes extremely difficult. This support lowers the price of my education, and allows me to work less on top of school. Further, it brings me happiness to know that my education is being supported by a stranger. The fact that someone is kind enough to help me with my financial difficulties gives me hope. Thank you so much for giving me the chance to work more on my education, and less on paying for it. This scholarship helps me stay on track and continue an educational career where I can work as much as I want when building a future.”

“ My grandparents, father and siblings all benefited from attending the U over the span of the past 100 years! My late husband, Kevin Johnson, particularly benefited from donors who made his college education possible when his own family couldn’t manage it. So when we realized how simple it is to create a scholarship and how impactful it could be, we decided to do it and honor my father, a much beloved philosophy professor. It’s not hard, and it can change the lives of students, families and our community.”

– Amy Johnson



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES CLASS OF

2024

“Me imagino que no soy la única cuando digo que este sueño ha sido tan increíblemente difícil. When I made the decision to return to school I did not know it would be one of the most difficult periods of my life. This journey unfolded against the COVID-19 pandemic, weaving an intricate web of change for which none of us were prepared. I bore witness to the heart-wrenching loss of loved ones, navigating the complex layers of grief as life unfolded.

My international studies classes took on a profound significance as I observed their direct impact on my family. Immigration policies like the Temporary Protections Program became not just theoretical concepts but tangible forces altering our lives. In Nicaragua, the political situation kept making life more and more difficult for my family. When a door opened for Nicaraguan loved ones to join us in the United States, I made the reckless and life-altering decision to sponsor 12 family members to come live with us.

A veces, el universo nos pide que hagamos el bien imprudentemente.

Sometimes, the world asks us to do good recklessly.

In the 1960s, during the height of the civil rights movement, reformists like Dolores Huerta gathered to fight for justice. When Huerta, a then mother of 11, left her children with the communities where she organized, the world saw the sacrifices that change would require. While some believed her choices were reckless, she knew she was going to change the world for all of us. Her sacrifices led to agriculture reform that improved the lives of thousands, perhaps even millions of farm workers today.

As my family's sponsorship applications were approved, our family grew from three to four,

and ultimately 12 within a matter of months. Our *sobrinas* and *sobrinos*, *hermanas* y *hermanos* all became part of our daily lives again, we became the members of the family we had always wanted, *un sueño que muchos de nuestros padres no vivieron*. But the joy of growth was tempered by the complexities of navigating classes, full-time employment, ever-changing immigration systems, and welcoming our loved ones into this land.

There were days that dropped me to my knees, and in tears, I wondered many times if that semester would be my last. *Hubo tantos días que sentía que no lo iba a lograr.*

I found myself torn between attending classes and volunteering at a food bank where I knew I would receive free food for my growing family. My class participation floundered; at times, it felt like my world was falling apart. I knew that I was changing lives and yet my grades didn't reflect that. When my professors began to worry I had to trust that they'd understand. From Dolores Huerta, I had learned there comes a time to ask *mi comunidad* for help carrying the load.

I began to see that this journey was not a solitary one; my professors became beacons of support, thank you Dr. Quinn and others; because of them deadlines were extended, my 8-year old child, Frida, was welcomed in class and even got to be an assistant professor a few times. When financial hardships became hard to ignore, scholarships poured in and with the neverending support of the Women's Resource Center and the Student Union, I learned to believe in the innate goodness of others. My community responded with unparalleled generosity, transforming our home with things like mattresses, furniture, clothes, and more. But most of all, they shared the support and care I needed to keep going.



Student Speaker

EVELYN CERVANTES

Speech given by the May 2024 College of Humanities' Student Speaker.

I formed a small but meaningful community, one that didn't shy away from the chaos of my life. Here, I discovered the ways that the threads of community, academia, and the will to move forward weave through our lives to create beautiful masterpieces. *Mi comunidad* transformed my challenging journey into a testament of collective strength and compassion.

The decision to sponsor 12 loved ones during a pandemic, parenting, and a double major journey was likely one that some would describe as reckless; it certainly feels so at times. But sometimes the world needs us to be a little reckless to create the catalysts we need for change. So, wherever you go, believe in the power of your community and do good, recklessly."

“Good afternoon, Utes! I have to say, it’s one thing to give a speech. It’s another to give a speech to a university college. And it’s another thing entirely to give a speech to a room filled with graduates and academics from a college that includes the departments of communication, English, history, linguistics, philosophy, world cultures, and writing.

Never before have I given a speech that could so easily be evaluated and critiqued by experts in every facet of that speech. I hope you’ll forgive the occasional “um,” grammatical mistep, misused word, or oversimplified fact.

About 12 years ago, I was a relatively young Facebook employee meeting with OMD, one of the biggest ad agencies in the world, at their office in Lower Manhattan. We gathered in a conference room and as we settled into our chairs, someone casually mentioned that we were sitting in the room from which the very first transatlantic phone call originated.

The meeting got underway pretty quickly, but I was absolutely taken aback. I couldn’t believe I was sitting in the very room that played such a role in history. I guess that’s what makes me a humanities student.

I’ve been thinking a lot lately about what the most important inventions are. Let me pose that question to you: What do you think the most important inventions in history are? I’ll pause for a moment while you think about it.

Reasonable people can disagree on the exact list, but there’s a pretty strong consensus around the top 10 or so.

The first one I find listed is the wheel, invented sometime around 3,500 BC. And then the list goes dark for literally thousands of years until the year 1440, which of course gave us the printing press.

A couple hundred years later and we get the steam engine.

Then there’s another (roughly) 200-year gap, at which point we see a huge amount of life-changing innovation over the span of just 20 years:

First, Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone. The light bulb. The radio. The automobile.

Fast forward another 20 or so years and we get the airplane. Another twenty for the television, followed shortly by the computer.

A decade or so later, we get the transistor, which miniaturized electronics, dramatically expanding the everyday use of electronics and ultimately finding its way into mp3 players, cameras, and smartphones.

The 80s brought us the internet and the rest, as they say, is history.

Of course, I should at least parenthetically mention the more-recently invented artificial intelligence that helped me research this list.

So, we have a list of what: the most influential inventions of the past few hundred years.

And we could also compile a list of how, because underlying each of these inventions is a whole host of science, mathematics, and engineering innovations. Moveable type. Pistons. Filaments. Circuit boards. And so on.



Distinguished Alumni

KEVIN KNIGHT

Speech given by the May 2024 recipient of the College of Humanities' Distinguished Alumni Award.



But I am far more interested in the why. And that is maybe what makes me a humanities type.

So let's look at a few of the whys that led to the most important inventions in human history:

Gutenberg invented the printing press because he wanted more people to be able to read — and to think — for themselves.

The sudden ease with which ideas could be shared so widely and efficiently is often credited with paving the way for the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution.

Alexander Graham Bell first developed an interest in the technology of sound as he tried to better communicate with his mother whose hearing aid was failing.

The very first words uttered into the first telephone were from Bell to his research colleague: “Mr Watson, come here—I want to see you.”

In that very first transatlantic phone call, the unknown American speaker says to his British counterpart: “Distance doesn't mean anything anymore.”

The ultimate why behind the telephone was of course to facilitate communication between people. To connect people.

The why behind the radio was to facilitate the broadcast of communication to masses of people.

One why behind the light bulb was to be able to sit around a table longer and later into the night and see the expressive face of others engaged in that great art of conversation.

The automobile allowed us to more quickly get to other people over long distances.

The airplane over even longer distances.

The internet makes distance effectively irrelevant.

In other words, the why behind the most important inventions in human history is to connect people, inform people, and inspire people.

The why behind the most important inventions in human history is humanities.

We live in a world that is completely consumed by technology. Completely driven by technology. Completely captivated by technology. I myself have spent my entire career working in technology.

But I'm not a technologist. I'm a humanities graduate. And as a humanities graduate, I have often felt underqualified or ill-equipped to navigate this technology-oriented world because I didn't study science, mathematics, or engineering.

What I've learned almost 20 years later, though, is that I don't believe there could have been any better

preparation for my career than a humanities education. In fact, I don't think that there's a better educational foundation for anyone than the humanities.

Because without the why, we wouldn't even have the what.

I began my remarks with a question — what are the most important inventions ever?

One of the great benefits of education is that it teaches us how to ask questions. But I would suggest that even more important is the role that education plays in teaching us how to answer those questions.

And, my fellow Utes, as we navigate a complicated, troubled, broken world, there is no answer more important, more noble than that which we learn in this college. Humanities is the answer.

The humanities are what make us human. They're what make our world bright, creative, informed, inspired. Connected.

The greatest inventions in the history of the world were all invented with one goal in mind: to connect people with one another and with the ideas that shape our society, our humanity.

So to the visionaries of the University of Utah from 1850 until today, thank you for making it possible for us to pursue humanity's why.

Thank you too, to those — past and present — who've dedicated their lives to filling the world with the wonder of humanities, many of which we've been privileged to study here.

Now, to those of you graduating today, who now embark on your own journey: don't ever for a second question the value of the education you have received. No matter what you go on to achieve in your career. No matter what contributions you make to your community. No matter what mark you go on to leave on the world. The why will almost certainly be traced back to your experiences here at this university — to the humanities.

You are better equipped than you may know to thrive both personally and professionally because of the degree you've earned at this university. The pace of innovation will only quicken. Inventions will still continue to come even faster than we can keep track of them.

But the ones that matter — the ones that truly make a difference — will all have one thing in common. They will have answered not only the what, not only the how, but most importantly the why. And the world needs each of you to answer that question. And the answer to that question is really what advances humanity.”

2024

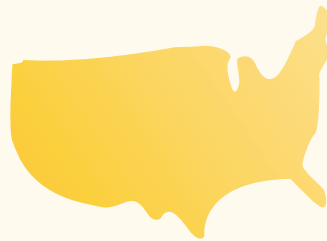
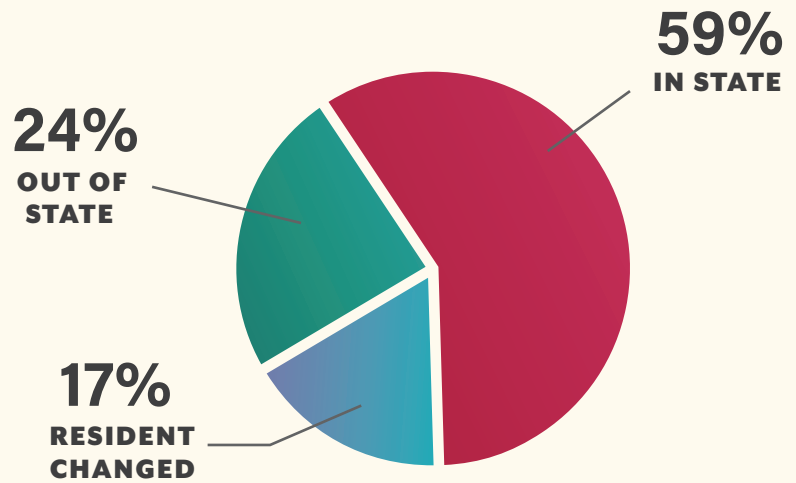
HUMANITIES GRADUATING CLASS



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GRADUATES



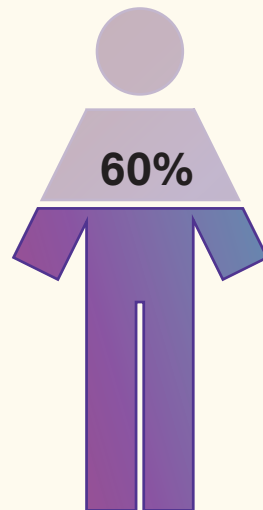
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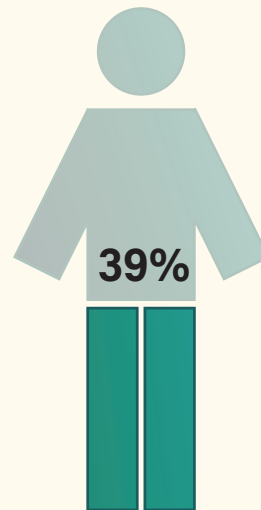
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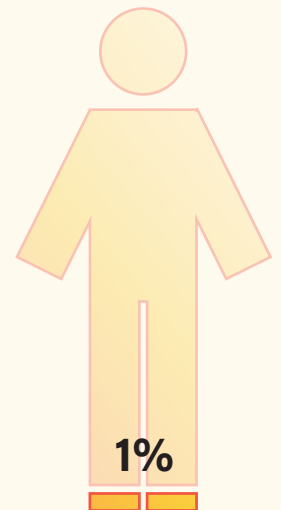
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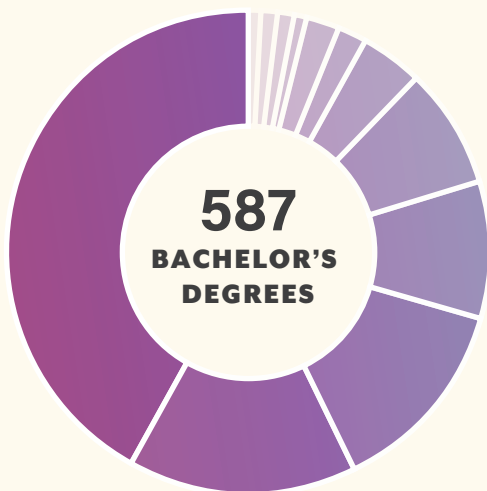
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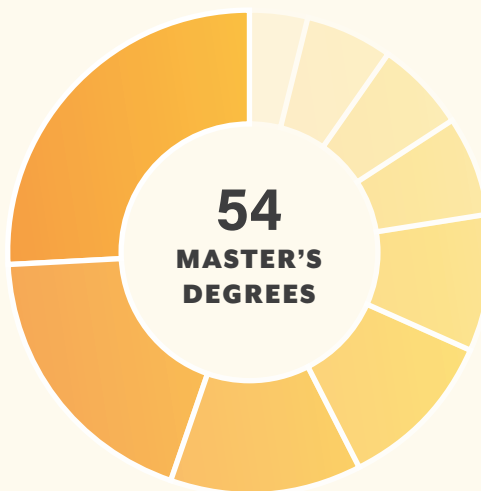
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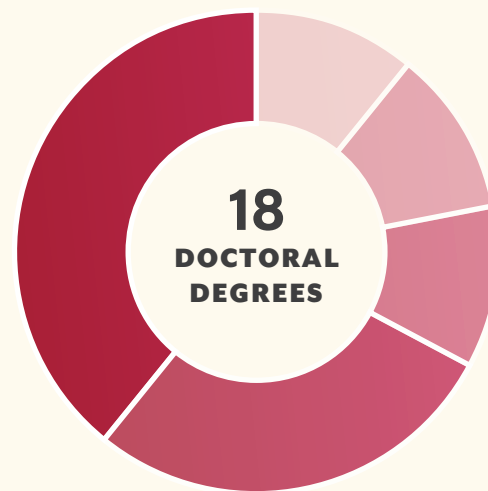
6
UNIDENTIFIED



- 243 **COMMUNICATION**
- 88 **ENGLISH**
- 75 **INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**
- 54 **HISTORY**
- 49 **WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES**
- 25 **PHILOSOPHY**
- 14 **WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES**
- 13 **LINGUISTICS**
- 8 **LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**
- 7 **PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES**
- 6 **MIDDLE EAST STUDIES**
- 5 **ASIAN STUDIES**

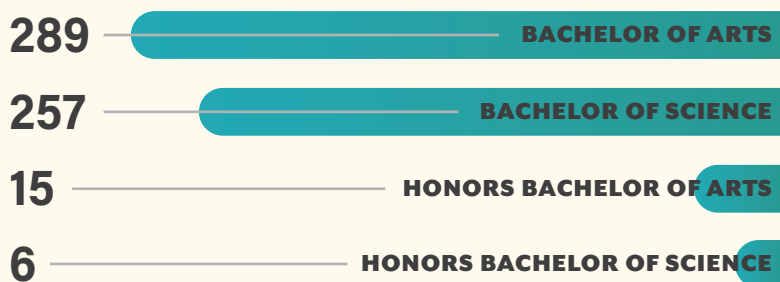


- 14 **WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES**
- 10 **ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES**
- 7 **LINGUISTICS**
- 6 **COMMUNICATION**
- 5 **ENGLISH**
- 4 **HISTORY**
- 3 **LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**
- 3 **WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES**
- 2 **ASIAN STUDIES**



- 7 **ENGLISH**
- 5 **PHILOSOPHY**
- 2 **COMMUNICATION**
- 2 **LINGUISTICS**
- 2 **WRITING & RHETORIC STUDIES**

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED



GRADUATE DEGREES AWARDED



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MINORS AWARDED

TOP 10 MINORS

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| 38 SPANISH | 13 FRENCH | 12 CREATIVE WRITING | 11 PORT. & BRAZILIAN STU. | 10 MEDIA STU. |
| 23 STRATEGIC COMM. | 12 CHINESE | 11 JAPANESE | 10 COGNITIVE SCIENCE | 9 PHILOSOPHY |



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2.13.25 TANNER CONVERSATION WITH

ISABEL MOREIRA

Author of *Balthild of Francia: Anglo-Saxon Slave,
Merovingian Queen, and Abolitionist Saint*

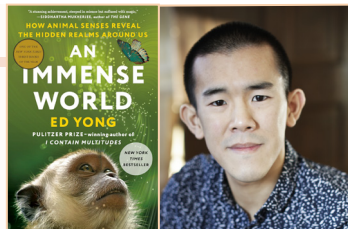


2.25.25

TANNER TALK WITH

ED YONG

Author of *An Immense World*

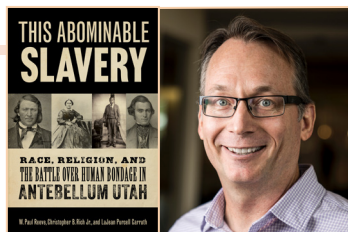


3.4.25

TANNER CONVERSATION WITH

PAUL REEVE

Author of *This Abominable Slavery: Race, Religion,
and the Battle over Human Bondage in Antebellum Utah*

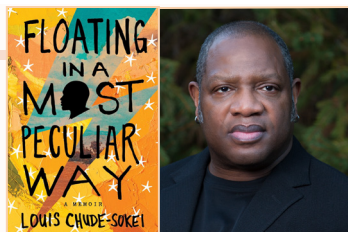


4.1.25

TANNER CONVERSATION WITH

LOUIS CHUDE-SOKEI

Author of *Floating in a Most Peculiar Way*



4.9-10.25

TANNER LECTURES
ON HUMAN VALUES WITH

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Harvard University



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