Humanities research set to make wide-reaching impact with new $770,000 Mellon Foundation grant

By Jovana Jankovic

Fake news. Cryptocurrency. Data theft. Xenophobia. Climate change. At a key moment when the world strives to understand rapidly unfolding changes, increased attention is being paid to the crucial role of the humanities, with their focus on the history, technologies and aesthetics of human cultures.

Now, scholars in the humanities will have new opportunities to publicly share the wide-ranging impacts of their work thanks to a $770,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the Jackman Humanities Institute (JHI) at the Faculty of Arts & Science. The Mellon Foundation is a valued long-term partner to U of T, having already funded a number of projects such as the Dictionary of Old English and the development of innovative digital tools for manuscript study.

The JHI has already established a stellar record of promoting work in the arts and humanities and fostering connections between humanities projects, scholars and communities, including the launch of a Digital Humanities Network in 2016 and events like Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience, an exhibition of new works by Indigenous contemporary artist Kent Monkman which drew more than 20,000 visitors to the Art Museum at the University of Toronto in 2017. The JHI has also collaborated with the Mellon Foundation for a multi-year international research project, “Aesthetic Education: A South-North Dialogue.”

The Mellon grant will significantly expand the JHI’s resources and bring new fellows and staff on board to diversify their already rich slate of programming. In particular, the JHI’s public humanities initiative, Humanities at Large, will foster knowledge exchange between the academy and the public while supporting new forms of communication and collaboration through six initiatives over three years:
An annual creative non-fiction workshop will train scholars in reaching non-academic audiences through popular outlets like The Walrus and The New Yorker.

Annual social media training sessions will help humanities scholars communicate to a wide variety of audiences while growing the reach of their research and public profile.

Two annual community-engagement workshops will share best practices in knowledge transfer, community-engaged research, and taking specialized research outside of the academy.

An outreach program will place graduate students and exceptional undergraduate students in high school classrooms to share their research in humanities subjects like English, foreign languages, history, social sciences, music and art.

The Talking Books series will feature discussion events hosted by JHI faculty fellows based around a literary anniversary or best-selling author, with a particular focus on public appeal.

The JHI’s humanities research will be profiled in radio and podcasts, increasing public awareness of and engagement in key issues across humanities disciplines.

In addition to these initiatives, the newly created Visiting Public Humanities Fellow and Early-Career Fellow in Community-Engaged Humanities Research will join the existing New Media and Humanities Journalism Fellow and Distinguished Visiting Indigenous Faculty Fellow. The JHI also plans to create new staff positions in order to bolster the Institute’s administration and communications initiatives.

Humanities at Large will “foster the transfer of knowledge and specialized research from a publicly-supported academy to the local, national and global communities that contribute to it in so many ways,” says Alison Keith, director of the JHI. “It will address the need for a better public understanding of the role, value, and unique contributions of the humanities in contemporary society.”

“We are deeply grateful for this major investment by the Mellon Foundation in world-leading humanities scholarship at the University of Toronto,” says U of T President Meric Gertler. “It will enable us to disseminate ideas through new platforms and technologies, and to share our research with non-traditional audiences. Ultimately it will strengthen our ability to facilitate thoughtful public conversations on a wide range of vital questions.”

The JHI’s current fellows include undergraduate students like Talise Beveridge, whose research in history and criminology investigates the FBI’s mid-20th century monitoring and suppression of domestic political organizations; graduate students like Deanna Del Vecchio, who is considering the role of photography in documenting border struggles such as the one along the US-Mexico line; faculty fellows like Professor Jennifer Nagel, whose research project explores the relationship between belief and knowledge, and asks how it is that we attribute these states to ourselves and others; and community partners like artist-in-residence David Rokeby, whose new media art practice explores human relationships with digital machines.
New Annual Themes!
The Jackman Humanities Institute structures many of its programming decisions around an annual theme - this is true for all residential fellowships, events funded by the Program for the Arts, and the exhibition of art that is on display each year at the Institute. The annual theme enables scholars from across the disciplines to find fruitful discussion together, and often, it can be a catalyst that sparks other kinds of research at the University of Toronto. Themes are chosen by the JHI Advisory Board every three years with the goal of bringing as many researchers as possible into the conversation. We are delighted to announce our directions for the years 2020 to 2023.

2020-2021: Collectives
From political parties to literary coteries, from fan groups to sports teams, from terrorist organizations to on-line groups, our collectives, associations, and communities are multiform and complex. How do we band together and why? In teaming up, how does membership of a collective affects one’s own agency and standing – what do we lose, what do we gain? Can collectives truly be agents and how do group dynamics emerge? How do we balance the interests between collectives, of individuals and collectives, and of the individual within the collective?

2021-2022: Pleasure
Whether understood as light amusement or passionate pursuit, as pure enjoyment, sensual gratification, bliss or hedonism, pleasure may be the most agreeable motivator. Yet pleasure has been described as “curious and appalling,” one of modern civilization’s most deadly poisons. Through its diverse manifestations — as intellectual satisfaction and the pleasures of knowledge, across studies of media audiences, addiction, virtual sex — when, and how, has pleasure become divorced from ideology, politics, and power? Uneasiness concerning pleasure resonates readily with humanists’ tendencies to formulate our subjects of study as constellations of problems, but is there space in our discourses for unironic joy?

2022-2023: Labour
From the labour of childbirth to the travail of making a living, human beings are labouring animals who derive meaning and experience meaninglessness in work. Historically, human creativity has long flourished both through and against labour-saving technologies. In a globalizing and climate-changing world, rising nationalist movements call for the fortification of borders that would stop seasonal flows of labour, while women call for pay equity and harassment-free workplaces to allow for the freedom to work in peace. In a world of increasingly precarious labour, thanks in part to automation, what does the future of work portend for both people and the planet? What forms of resistance are possible when workers face both the irrelevance of their labour and its exploitation?

Previous Themes at the JHI

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<td>2018-2019: Reading Faces--Reading Minds</td>
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Scholars-in-Residence Deadline for Applications
22 February 2019

Jackman Scholars-in-Residence (SiR) is an intensive 4-week residency in interdisciplinary humanities and humanistic social-science research for upper-year undergraduates. SiR provides the opportunity to acquire advanced research skills and experience while collaborating with an interdisciplinary and intellectually vibrant community of peers, professors, and research professionals. Students selected for SiR will live in residence 6-31 May 2019 and work in small teams on one of 20 research projects, each led by a professor. Students share meals and group activities including multidisciplinary workshops on research methodologies, standards, protocol, and professional communication; excursions to archives, museums, and cultural events; and talks featuring professionals such as lawyers, policy-makers, and documentary filmmakers that highlight research-intensive career trajectories.

Eligible students must apply by 22 February 2019 and be selected to work on one of the projects (see project descriptions). Ten research projects will be located at the University of Toronto St. George campus, with student participants living in College residences. Five projects will be located at the University of Toronto Mississauga, and five projects will be located at the University of Toronto Scarborough; students participating in those projects will be living in the on-campus residences at those locations.

Student applications will be accepted from 18 January to 22 February 2019. The application form is available at: https://www-humanities-utoronto-ca.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/funding/2022/apply

Scholars-in-Residence is a research community supported by the Jackman Humanities Institute; the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education; the Vice-Provost, Research and Innovation; UTM; UTSC; the St. George Colleges; and by Bader Philanthropies Inc. through Victoria University.

Contact: Dr. Ira Wells, Program Manager

In May 2018, Professor Teresa Lobalsamo's research group, "From Script to Stage: Research and Writing in Theatre Production" worked on a new adaptation of a play by Luigi Pirandello. For this group, doing humanities research included script-writing, copy-editing, investigating theatrical production history and second-language pedagogy, and work-shopping blocking and stage directions.
Welcome back, Elizabeth Parke!
We are delighted to welcome former DHN postdoctoral fellow Dr. Elizabeth Parke back in an administrative role this spring. She will be managing events and communications for the Digital Humanities Network for the next few months. You can reach her at dhn.admin@utoronto.ca

Lightning Lunch, Tuesday 26 February 2019

App Studies

Sponsored by the Jackman Humanities Institute, the DHN lightning lunches focus on a specific topic or contemporary issue with experts from different disciplines to explore threads of commonality and nuance. It is always our hope that these lightning lunches will lead to the formation of new networks, research projects, and shared knowledge.

At App Studies, our speakers will present for 5-7 minutes, followed by lunch and informal discussion on the role of apps and platforms within and beyond the university. We are extremely fortunate to have three scholars who work closely on this topic in their research and teaching.

- Stefanie Duguay, Concordia University
- Aphra Kerr, Maynooth University
- David Nieborg, Department of Arts, Culture and Media, UTSC

Registration is mandatory for catering purposes. Registration will begin two weeks before the event (12 February 2019) on the DHN EventBrite page.

Aesthetic Education: A South-North Dialogue

Jane Taylor, the Mellon Chair of Aesthetic Theory and Material Performance at the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR) and director of the Laboratory of Kinetic Objects (LoKO), will be in Toronto March 11-16 as the guest of the Puppetry sector. Jane will give a talk on Wittgenstein and will meet with academics and artists interested in puppetry, artificial intelligence, and posthumanism. More details to come in the March newsletter!

Kass Banning, of the Cinema Studies Institute and leader of the Movement/Image/Sound sector, will have a residency at the CHR in Cape Town February 9 to April 3. During the residency she will give a talk, lead a workshop, and participate in weekly activities.

Aesthetic Education: A South-North Dialogue is a collaborative research community generously funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the Humanities. It brings scholars and researchers from the University of Toronto's Jackman Humanities Institute and the University of the Western Cape's Centre for Humanities Research together to think, write, and teach in Toronto and Cape Town, South Africa. The project has teams working on Puppetry, Museums & Public History, Literature, Movement/Image/Sound, and Truth & Reconciliation Commissions.
Featured Events

A Vital Politics: Water Insurgencies in Europe
Andrea Muehlebach, UTM Anthropology

Andrea Muehlebach’s research deals with struggles over public water in austerity-era Europe. Traversing the varied terrains of Ireland, Germany, and Italy, Muehlebach tracks the financialization of water and the popular mobilizations that have arisen as citizens have sought to reclaim ownership over this precious resource. In so doing, she explores how these insurgencies have simultaneously also engaged in struggles over the meaning of democracy and the question of rights, social contract, and public property.

In 2017-2018, Professor Muehlebach was granted a six-month JHI Faculty Research Fellowship to travel for research that will lead to a book on this subject. Join us to learn more!

Friday 15 February, 2:00 p.m. Jackman Humanities Building, 170 St. George Street, Room 100
This event is free and open to all. Registration is not required. JHB100 is an accessible space.

Practices of Commentary:
An Interdisciplinary Workshop

Commentary is all around us – as journalism and scholarship, in the political domain, and via social media. The JHI Working Group, Practices of Commentary, has been working to place this practice in its historical perspective, exploring and disseminating fundamental knowledge of the religious, literary, and scientific uses of commentary in pre-modern cultures. From East and South Asia, through the Middle East and Europe, commentary functions as a central mode of the Humanities’ engagement with the world.

The keynote speaker, Andrew Hicks (Cornell University), is a specialist on medieval philosophical and musicological commentary.

Friday 8 February, 9:30-6:00 p.m.
Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, 59 Queens Park Crescent East, Shook Common Room
For questions, please contact the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures:
gayle.grisdale@utoronto.ca
https://humanities.utoronto.ca/events/practices-commentary
Applying to SSHRC?
Helpful Hints collected by Suzanne Jaeger

Normally, a researcher may not apply, as the lead applicant, for (both) an Insight Grant and Insight Development Grant within the same calendar year. However, since the launch of the smaller Insight Grants Stream A in 2017, SSHRC approved an exception to this regulation to allow researchers who applied unsuccessfully for an Insight Development Grant in February the option to apply for an Insight Grant in October. Therefore, researchers who apply for an Insight Development Grant in February 2019 and are not successful may apply for an Insight Grant in October 2019. In a calendar year, an individual may participate as co-applicant or collaborator in any number of grant applications.

Researchers in the Faculty of Arts & Science can contact Suzanne Jaeger for a grant funding consultation, proposal development and review and feedback. For sociology researchers across all three campuses, Sherri Klassen. For UTSC researchers, Sharon George, and for UTM researchers, please contact Carla DeMarco. For OISE please contact Heather Gibb; for the John M. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, please contact Shirley Chan; for the Faculty of Music, contact Ely Lyonblum; and for the Faculty of Information contact Stephanie Fisher.

Grants Workshop
The SSHRC Suite of Partnerships
Wednesday 6 March, 9:30 am to noon
JHB1040 (170 St. George Street)
This session provides information about three useful funding programs that cover a range of research partnership activities: The Partnership Engage Grant (PEG); The Partnership Development Grant (PDG); and the full Partnership Grant (PG) with its vetted two-step application process. Learn more about the funding available for all kinds of research partnerships, from small and single-partnered to large and complex collaborations. Please RSVP: suzanne.jaeger@utoronto.ca
This workshop is sponsored by the Jackman Humanities Institute and the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science.

Upcoming Deadlines for JHI Competitions

We have a lot of competitions coming in the next few months, including a few newly-created posts. Watch the JHI website for announcements. Each competition should go live about a month before deadline.

Scholars-in-Residence -- 22 February 2019
JHI Graduate Fellows -- 11 March 2019
JHI Program for the Arts -- 20 March 2019
NEW! Public Humanities Early Career Fellow -- 29 March 2019
NEW! Public Humanities Visiting Faculty Fellow -- 29 March 2019
JHI-UTSC Early Career DH Fellowship – 5 April 2019
Digital Humanities Network Postdoctoral Fellowship -- 15 April 2019
JHI Undergraduate Fellowships -- 15 April 2019
New Media and Humanities Journalism Fellowship -- 17 April 2019
JHI Working Groups -- 15 May 2019
Humanities Events in February 2019

4 February 4:00-6:00 pm *A Tale of Two Exiles, or, The Dalai Lama and Me.* Talk by author Nathan Katz.
6 February 4:00-6:00 pm *What Does it Take to be " Truly One of Us"? Lessons from a Toronto Public School.* Lecture by Robert Vipond, Political Science, University of Toronto
8 February 9:30 am -- 6:00 pm *Practices of Commentary.* Interdisciplinary workshop
8-9 February *Early Modern Songscapes.* Conference
13 February 7:30-8:30 pm *Political Theology in the American Female.* Lecture by Paul Downes, English, University of Toronto
15 February 2-4 pm *A Vital Politics: Water Insurgencies in Europe.* Lecture by Andrea Muehlebach, Anthropology, University of Toronto Mississauga
19 February 4-5:30 *Modelling Reconstruction: Post-Katrina Reconstruction in Puerto Rico.* Lecture by Christien Tompkins, Anthropology, Rutgers University
25 February 11:00 am – 1:00 pm *Demographic Change and the Future of Korean Democracy.* Lecture by Katherine Moon, Political Science, Wellesley College
25 February 4-6 pm *Einstein's Jewish Science.* David Lipson Memorial Lecture by Steven Gimbel
26 February 12-2 pm DHN Lightning Lunch on *App Studies* [registration required]
27 February 2-4 pm *Not Paved with Gold and Ritual: Documentary Photography of Italian-Canadians.* Lecture by photographer Vincenzo Pietropaolo.
28 February 4:30-6 pm *Build Race and Nation: Slavery, Dispossession, and American Civic Architecture.* R.K. Teetzel Lecture in Architecture by Mabel Wilson, Columbia University

See the Events tab on the JHI website for a full and frequently-updated listing of humanities events at the University of Toronto: https://humanities.utoronto.ca/events

Contact Us

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