

2022 — 2023

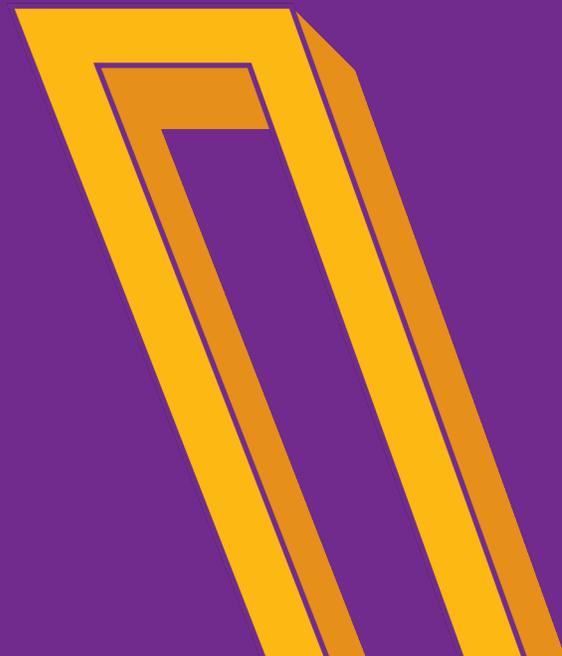
HRC

ANNUAL REPORT

# HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTER



**VCU**



**Cristina Stanciu**

Director, Humanities Research Center and  
Associate Professor, English

**Jesse Goldstein**

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and Associate Professor, Sociology

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**Kristen Stewart**

Research Assistant, Humanities Research Center  
and PhD Student, MATX

**Ramin Fazeli**

Research Assistant, Humanities Research Center  
and PhD Student, MATX

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# Letter from the Director



Greetings, humanities supporters, practitioners, fans, and enthusiasts! I am happy to report that we've had a stellar first year as a university-wide research center in 2022-23. We started the year with an international symposium on Indigenous Print Cultures at the Obama Institute in Mainz, Germany, in July 2022, and rounded it off with a public lecture by Brown University Associate Professor Bathsheba Demuth in May 2023. Attendance at our events has nearly doubled from the previous year, as we made an effort to expand our in-person and hybrid offerings. In the past year alone, the HRC reached an audience in the thousands through event attendance and video viewings. Through the HRC's increase in visibility and our emerging community partnerships, such as the John R. Lewis Lecture Series and Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival, we are making a lasting impact on the Richmond community. Our Speaker Series in Environmental Humanities brought to campus some of the greatest minds working on one of the grand challenges of our time. Our Meet VCU Authors series put the spotlight on our own researchers, who generously shared exciting work from their recent books published with major university presses. We launched two new humanities Labs—Environmental Humanities and Health Humanities—which have created the momentum for inspiring collaborative work in the humanities. We thank all our supporters and collaborators for helping us amplify the voices of the humanities at VCU!

Building on this work, in 2023-24, we will be launching 5 more humanities labs fostering collaborations across fields and ranks among faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students: Public Humanities, Critical AI Studies, Memory Studies, Graphic Narratives, and Migration Studies. Bringing our research focus on Health Humanities at the HRC this year, our speakers and residential fellows will examine systematic and structural inequities that produce healthcare disparities; they will both imagine and propose alternatives by bringing together perspectives from the humanities, arts, and social sciences, as well as from the Richmond community and beyond. Our On Native Ground Initiative continues this year, spotlighting local Native artists and speakers. As you peruse this report, I also invite you to visit our website, attend our events, visit us in our office in the Valentine House, join us for Write-on-Site every Friday morning, sign up for our newsletter, and support the center in any way you can. We look forward to continued institutional support and recognition of the value and visibility the Humanities bring to an institution like VCU.

This first annual report as a university center is more than a record of the past year's successes. It is also a commitment to continue to bring humanistic inquiry into every corner of the university. The Humanities are for **all** of us.

**Cristina Stanciu, Ph.D.**

Director, The Humanities Research Center, Associate Professor of English

“ This first annual report [...] is also a commitment to continue to bring humanistic inquiry into every corner of the university. The Humanities are for all of us. ”

“Since initiating the founding of the Humanities Research Center more than a decade ago, I’m thrilled to see it achieve status as a university center under Dr. Stanciu’s able leadership. The mission of the HRC has never been more timely or more critical, and the pivotal role it plays in advancing the research of humanities faculty in the College of Humanities and Sciences, as well as faculty and students throughout the university, is profound. I look forward to many discoveries that emerge from the cross-campus collaborations and innovative programming nurtured by the HRC.”

**Catherine Ingrassia, Ph.D.**  
Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences



“I am proud of what the HRC has accomplished in its first year as a designated, university-wide center. Through its public programs and various initiatives, the HRC connects scholars with internal and external audiences, facilitating research and important conversations on society’s most pressing questions and intractable challenges. In 2022-23, the HRC’s focus on Environmental Humanities engaged VCU’s campuses in interdisciplinary conversations about how social and cultural relationships with the natural world are crosscut by texts, media, art, history, and embodied experience. As the HRC approaches its 10-year anniversary in 2024, I know university leadership joins me in continuing to support humanities-based projects, which are so vital in our rapidly changing world.”

**P. Srirama Rao, Ph.D.**  
Vice President for Research and Innovation

# The Year in Review

2 Humanities Labs Launched

2 National & International Symposia Hosted

3 Lecture Series Launched

5 Faculty Fellows Supported

12 Humanities Research Groups Supported

25 Faculty Grants Awarded

1,845 Attended Our Events

## Join the Conversation

Subscribe to our monthly newsletter to stay caught up on all our upcoming events, programming highlights, and opportunities at [humanitiescenter.vcu.edu](http://humanitiescenter.vcu.edu)

“

*The HRC is one of the university's gems—Under Dr. Stanciu's leadership, the HRC has prominently advanced and increased awareness of research in the humanities, and created space for more interdisciplinary collaborations. There are always a variety of activities, events, and initiatives—something for everyone.”*

**Faye Belgrave**

Associate Dean For Equity and Community Partnerships,  
College of Humanities and Sciences

“

*The HRC is thriving thanks to supporting a true diversity of VCU humanities faculty research. That work is so often transdisciplinary, aligning with current goals at the university. The humanities are stronger here because of the HRC!”*

**John Glover**

Associate Professor and Humanities Research Librarian, VCU Libraries

“

*Though interdisciplinary research gets a lot of attention, space for sustained conversation like this can be rare to find. The HRC's support gave [us] the ability to find such time for meaningful conversation and interdisciplinary collaboration.”*

**Kai Bosworth**

HRC Residential Fellow, 2022-23 and Assistant Professor, School Of World Studies,  
College of Humanities and Sciences

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# Fellows

## HRC Residential Fellows, 2022-23



**Kai  
Bosworth**

**SCHOOL OF WORLD  
STUDIES**

"Grottograph:  
Mapping the  
Intimate Social  
Relations of Cave  
Conservation"



**Kathleen  
Chapman**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
ART HISTORY**

"Wild,  
Domesticated,  
Modernized:  
Animal Art in  
Wilhelmine  
Germany"



**Rocío  
Gomez**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
HISTORY**

"From Peru  
to Pittsburgh:  
Vanadium Mining,  
Toxic Legacies,  
and Extractive  
Colonialism"



**Jennifer  
Rhee**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
ENGLISH**

"The Ecological  
Materialities  
of Artificial  
Intelligence  
in the Racial  
Capitalocene"



**Andrea C.  
Simonelli**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**

"Climate Migration  
as Earth Systems  
Migration: Global  
Relocation in the  
Anthropocene"

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**HRC  
Health  
Humanities  
Student  
Fellows,  
2022-23**



**Linda  
Hamrick**

**GRADUATE  
ASSISTANT**

"Automated Bias  
and Discrimination  
in Healthcare"



**Jayla Davis**



**Abeer Haroun**



**Rome Kamarouthu**

"Mental Health  
Disparities in  
Marginalized  
Groups"



**Naomi Begunov**



**Emma Geisler**



**Arya Hanjagi**

"Skepticism Around  
Clinical Trials"



**Neha Potla**



**Grace Smith**

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## HRC Health Humanities Faculty & Community Fellows, 2022-23

### Black Maternal Health



**Kenda Sutton-El**

**BIRTH-IN-COLOR RVA**

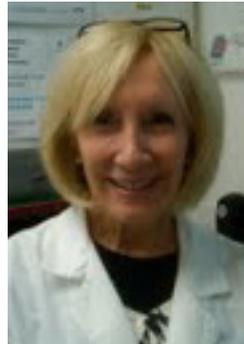
Founder And Executive Director



**Sequoi Phipps-Hawkins**

**BIRTH-IN-COLOR RVA**

Director of Communications and community-based doula



**Nancy Jallo**

**DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING**

Associate Professor



**Susan Bodnar-Deren**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

Associate Professor and Chair



**Terri Erwin**

**VIRGINIA INTERFAITH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY**

Organizer for New Leadership Development



**Ayesha Taylor**

**VIRGINIA INTERFAITH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY**

Communications and Digital Media



**Mary Boyes**

**HONORS COLLEGE**

Associate Professor



**Faye Prichard**

**HONORS COLLEGE**

Director of Writing and Former Chair of Virginia State Board of Health

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# Collaborations



JULY 6–9, 2022

## Symposium on Indigenous Print Cultures, Media, and Literatures

The Humanities Research Center and Obama Institute at Johannes Gutenberg University organized an international symposium on Indigenous Print Cultures, Media, and Literatures in July of 2022. A special issue for the journal *American Periodicals*, co-edited by symposium organizers Cristina Stanciu and Oliver Scheiding, is forthcoming in October 2023, and a volume is in preparation for the University of Nebraska Press. We are in the early stages of organizing another international symposium in Bordeaux in June of 2024, “The Indian Citizenship Act at 100: Indigenous Rights, Indigenous Futures.”

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OCTOBER 14–15, 2022

## Intersections: Black and Indigenous Sound in the Early Atlantic World

“Intersections” brought together scholars and community members around the subject of Black and Indigenous music and dance in the early Atlantic World. Co-organized by Sarah Finley (Christopher Newport University), Mary Caton Lingold (Virginia Commonwealth University), Miguel Valerio (Washington University in St. Louis), and Sarah Eyerly (Florida State University), and co-sponsored by the Humanities Research Center, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture at William & Mary University, Christopher Newport University, Washington University of St. Louis, the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.





2021-PRESENT

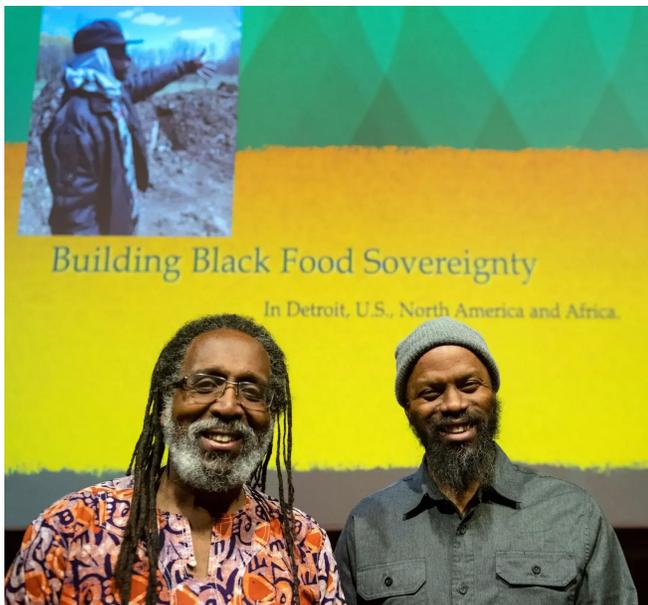
## History and Health Program

The HRC continued its ongoing partnership with the Office of Health Equity, co-organizing several events including **Skepticism Around Clinical Trials** and **Mental Health Disparities in Marginalized Groups**, and creating corresponding modules on clinical trials, mental health disparities, and maternal health, which are scheduled to be released this fall. The HRC and Office of Health Equity are currently co-organizing a symposium for September 27, 2023 with the theme “New Perspectives on Health Equity through the Humanities.”

2021-PRESENT

## Pocahontas Reframed

For the second year in a row, the HRC co-sponsored the annual Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival in Richmond. The Festival aims to raise awareness about Native American language, cultures, and societies through films that share Native American perspectives. Several undergraduate students at VCU volunteered at the festival, and the HRC hopes to offer future opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to engage with the festival through internships and other opportunities.



FEBRUARY 21, 2023

## John R. Lewis Memorial Lecture Series

In February 2023, the HRC launched the **John R. Lewis Memorial Lecture Series**, in collaboration with Sociology at VCU, the Institute for Contemporary Art, and several community organizations including Renew Richmond, Happily Natural Day, and the Kinfolk Community Empowerment Center. This series celebrates the legacy of the late John R. Lewis, co-founder of Renew Richmond and an inspirational figure in the Richmond Black Food Justice community. Each year, this lecture series will invite a central figure in Black Food Justice to Richmond for a talk and community workshop on topics such as urban agriculture, environmental justice, sustainability, and food sovereignty.



APRIL-MAY 2023

## VCU Research Weeks 2023

In partnership with the OVPRI and the Office of the Provost, the HRC co-organized and co-hosted several events for VCU Research Weeks:

- **“Humanities and Public Interest Technology: Leading the Ethical Governance of Innovation”** with Sylvester Johnson, Virginia Tech
- **“Innovation in Participation: Public Humanities and Social and Economic Sciences in Research”** with Rayvon Fouché, NSF, and Matthew Gibson, Virginia Humanities
- **“Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Moving Science Forward”** moderated by Gary Cuddeback, with faculty panelists Charlene Crawley, Gina Longo, Kevin Allison, Cristina Stanciu, Jesse Goldstein and Christine Cynn.
- **“Do Whales Judge Us?: Interspecies History and Ethics”** with Bathsheba Demuth, Brown University



# Environmental Humanities Lab

**Director**  
Jesse Goldstein, Sociology

## 2022-23 Highlights

**TRANSDISCIPLINARY INCUBATOR** Through a partnership between the EH lab and VCU Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environment, the incubator awarded its first four projects in 2023 for a combined \$66,000 in seed funding. The four teams were comprised of a diverse range of scholars, from fields including urban policy, philosophy, sculpture, art education, interior design, history, sociology, religious studies, supply-chain analytics, engineering, and environmental science.

**BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY** This initiative, led by Jesse Goldstein, Stephen Fong, and Molly Ransone, hosted a Climate Justice Charrette that brought together over 80 students from across campus to brainstorm and develop projects that address the systemic roots of unsustainability on campus, and in the world as a whole. In March 2023, student teams presented projects with topics such as food sovereignty, rooftop gardening and greenspaces, and a plan to implement pedestrian-first infrastructure on campus.

**LECTURE SERIES** The lab facilitated the launch of the John R. Lewis Memorial Lecture Series, in collaboration with VCU Sociology, the ICA, and several community partners. The lab also co-organized an urban agriculture workshop at Sankofa Community Orchard with Duron Chavis and Malik Yakini.

**GRANTS** The Environmental Humanities lab received a \$15k grant from Virginia Humanities for the project, “Loose Parts: Exploring the Public Humanities of Child-Directed Adventure Play.”

### WEBSITE

<https://humanitiescenter.vcu.edu/labs/environmental-humanities-lab>



Climate Justice Charrette, Feb. 15, 2023



Duron Chavis at Sankofa Community Orchard, Feb. 21, 2023

# Health Humanities Lab

**Director**  
Chris Cynn, GSWS

**Associate Director**  
Maggie Unverzagt Goddard,  
History Postdoc

**Associate Director**  
Daniel Sunshine, History Postdoc

## 2022-23 Highlights

**HEALTH HUMANITIES FELLOWS** With support from the Office of Health Equity, Honors College, and School of the Arts, the lab awarded eight student fellowships (1 graduate, 7 undergraduate), two undergraduate research assistantships, and 8 faculty and community fellowships. The undergraduate fellows worked in two teams to develop online modules on the topics of Clinical Trials and Mental Health, and both groups presented their work at the annual Cultural Studies Association conference in June 2023, and NURVA Conference in January 2023.

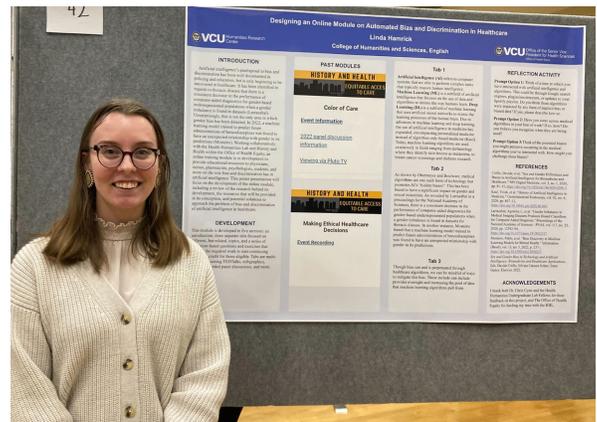
**BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH** Faculty and community fellows have created publicly accessible educational modules for the History and Health program, a collaboration between the Office of Health Equity and the Humanities Research Center, which include “Health Disparities and Black Birthing People: Where we are and where we CAN go!” and “Unequal Burdens: Black Maternal Mortality and Bereavement Office.”

**AWARDS AND DESIGNATIONS** The lab received a Transformative Learning Fund: VIP Award for 2023-25 research fellowships and activities. And in July 2023, the Health Humanities Lab undergraduate research fellowships were given VCU REAL status at level 4 classification. The lab is thrilled to be able to support 1 graduate and 10 undergraduate fellows for the 2023-24 academic year, who will be working closely with the lab and the [East Marshall Street Well Project](#) on their Oral History and Memorialization project.

**MEDICAL HUMANITIES MINOR** Lab members Adin Lears and Sachi Shimomura are working with the lab director on an NEH Connections grant to bring a medical humanities minor to VCU.

### WEBSITE

<https://humanitiescenter.vcu.edu/labs/health-humanities-lab>



Graduate fellow Linda Hamrick at the Women's Day Health Conference



Undergraduate fellows presenting at the NURVA Conference

# On Native Ground

## 2022-23 Highlights

**ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE** The inaugural Karenne Wood Artist-in-Residence Ethan Brown came to VCU in September 2022. Brown is a Pamunkey artist who works in gourd art, oil painting, sculpture, and film. His work, inspired by Pamunkey history and culture, Virginia's flora and fauna, dreams, intuition and spirituality, was displayed during a film screening in October 2022 entitled, "Fractures of Memory: Indigenous Futurisms and Experiential Symbolism." Thanks to the School of the Arts, Ethan Brown was given studio space to work at VCU during his residency.

**LECTURE SERIES** The *On Native Ground* initiative invited several Indigenous speakers to VCU whose talks coincided with the HRC's annual theme of Environmental Humanities. Kelsey Leonard, Shinnecock Nation, University of Waterloo, discussed Indigenous climate change adaptation strategies, Bethany Hughes, Choctaw Nation, University of Michigan, explored Indigenous music and performance as a form of protest, and novelist Diane Wilson, Dakota Nation discussed Indigenous food sovereignty through the lens of her novel *The Seed Keeper* in November 2022.

**PAMUNKEY MUSEUM TOUR** In collaboration with VCU Alumni, the HRC organized a tour of the Pamunkey Indian Museum & Cultural Center on the Pamunkey Indian reservation. Alumni and students in attendance were given a glimpse into the rich history and way of life of the Pamunkey tribe in Virginia.

### WEBSITE

<https://humanitiescenter.vcu.edu/initiatives/on-native-ground>



Gourd art from Ethan Brown



Tour at the Pamunkey Museum and Reservation, Nov. 5, 2022

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# Events

## Environmental Humanities Speaker Series

The HRC Environmental Humanities Speaker Series invited leading and emerging scholars in the fields of environmental humanities and environmental justice, to address topics such as solarpunk fiction, Indigenous climate change adaptation strategies, building food sovereignty in BIPOC communities, and our ethical ties to the whales of the Arctic. All of our events are free and open to the public, and many of our events videos are available on Youtube ([@hrc\\_vcu](#)).

SEPTEMBER 7, 2022

### Thinking at the End of the World: The Work of the Environmental Humanities

Stephanie Foote  
West Virginia University



OCTOBER 3, 2022

### Gathering Futures: Speculative Fiction as Transformative Possibility During the Climate Crisis

Phoebe Wagner  
Lycoming College



NOVEMBER 3, 2022

# WAMPUM Framework: Indigenous Climate Change Adaptation Strategies

Kelsey Leonard  
University of Waterloo



NOVEMBER 10, 2022

# Water and Land: Indigenous Performance as Invitation to Action

Kelsey Leonard  
University of Waterloo



NOVEMBER 10, 2022

# *The Seed Keeper* Reading and Discussion

Diane Wilson  
Novelist





FEBRUARY 21, 2023

# Growing Kale and Building Food Sovereignty

**Malik Yakini**  
Detroit Black Community Food Security Network



MARCH 2, 2023

# Petro-time

**Heather Davis**  
The New School



MAY 1, 2023

# Do Whales Judge Us?: Interspecies History and Ethics

**Bathsheba Demuth**  
Brown University



# Meet VCU Authors

The HRC's Meet VCU Authors series gives faculty and administrators the opportunity to share their recently published books. We invite colleagues, students, nearby local universities, and the Richmond community as a whole to come meet VCU authors as they discuss their work and answer questions from the audience. In 2022-23, we featured nine authors.

## *Pipeline Populism: Grassroots Environmentalism in the 21st Century*

**Kai Bosworth**

School of World Studies, VCU

## *Ageism Unmasked: Exploring Age Bias and How to End it*

**Tracey Gendron**

Department of Gerontology, VCU

## *Almost Dead: Slavery and Social Rebirth in the Black Urban Atlantic*

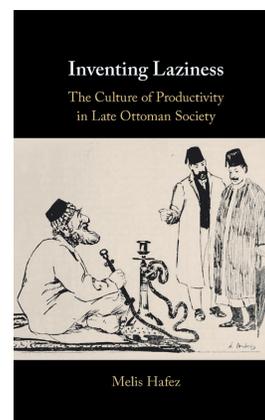
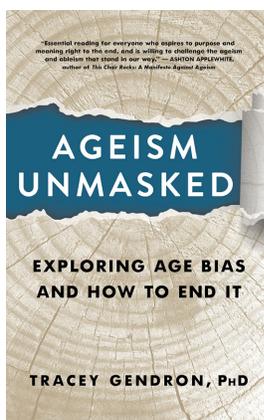
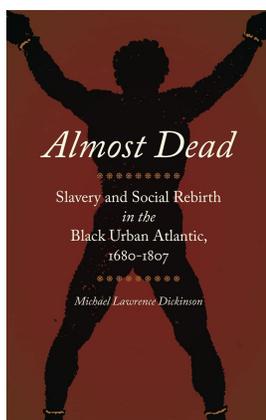
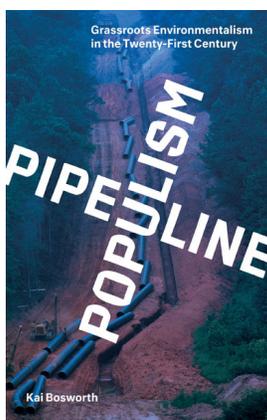
**Michael L. Dickinson**

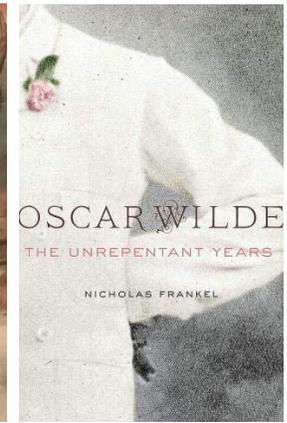
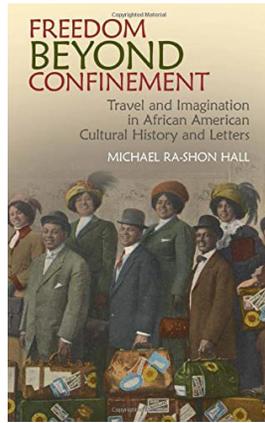
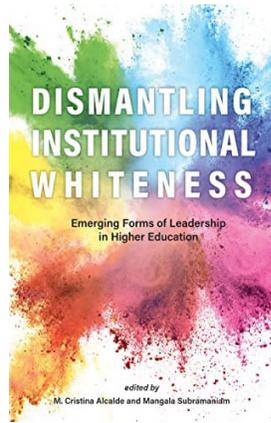
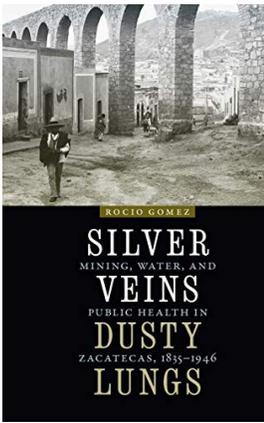
Department of History, VCU

## *Inventing Laziness: The Culture of Productivity in Late Ottoman Society*

**Melis Hafez**

Department of History, VCU





*Silver Veins, Dusty Lungs:  
Mining, Water, and Public  
Health in Zacatecas, 1835-1946*

**Rocío Gomez**  
Department of History, VCU

*Dismantling Institutional  
Whiteness: Emerging Forms of  
Leadership in Higher Education*

**Mangala Subramaniam** (Editor)  
Office of the Provost, VCU

**M. Cristina Alcalde** (Editor)  
Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion,  
Miami University

*Freedom Beyond Confinement:  
Travel and Imagination In  
African American Cultural  
History and Letters*

**Michael Ra-shon Hall**  
Department of English, VCU

*The Unexpected Dante:  
Perspectives on the Divine  
Comedy*

**Bernardo Piciché** (Contributor)  
School of World Studies, VCU

*Oscar Wilde: The Unrepentant  
Years*

**Nicholas Frankel**  
Department of English, VCU

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# Faculty Research

The Humanities Research Center offers several small grants each year to support faculty research travel, conference travel, book subventions, collaborative research efforts, etc.

## RESEARCH TRAVEL GRANTS

**Katie Logan**, Department of Focused Inquiry  
**Bernard K. Means**, School of World Studies  
**Michael R. Hall**, Department of English  
**Elizabeth G. A. Fagan**, Department of Focused Inquiry  
**Melis Hafez**, Department of History

## CONFERENCE TRAVEL GRANTS

**Patricia Cummins**, School of World Studies  
**Brian Daugherty**, Department of History  
**Carolyn Eastman**, Department of History  
**Antonio Espinoza**, Department of History  
**Grace D. Gipson**, Department of African American Studies  
**Julian Kevon Glover**, Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies  
**Rohan Kalyan**, School of World Studies  
**Hilary Levinson**, Department of Focused Inquiry  
**Bernard K. Means**, School of World Studies  
**Daniel Morales**, Department of History  
**Ryan Smith**, Department of History  
**Rivka Swenson**, Department of English  
**Allison Tharp**, Department of Focused Inquiry  
**Michael R. Hall**, Department of English

## BOOK SUPPORT

**Caddie Alford**, Department of English, *Entitled Opinions: Doxa for the Digital Age*  
**Matteo Pangallo**, Department of English, *Teaching the History of the Book*

## 5X5 COLLABORATIVE GRANTS

The HRC 5x5 grants encourage faculty in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts to organize around a topic of common interest, meeting 5 times over the course of a semester to discuss readings, collaborations, and research proposals.

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## SPECULATIVE FICTION GROUP

**Grace D. Gipson**, Department of African American Studies  
**Julian K. Glover**, Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies  
**Michael R. Hall**, Department of English  
**Jonathan Molina-Garcia**, Department of Photography + Film, School of the Arts  
**Jennifer Rhee**, Department of English

## Application Deadlines

### October 15, 2023

Fall deadline for Research Travel and Conference Travel grants

### November 1, 2023

Deadline for HRC Residential Fellowships, 2024-25

### March 15, 2024

Spring deadline for Research Travel and Conference Travel grants

HRC 5x5 Collaborative Grants are accepted on a **rolling basis** until all slots are filled.

# Giving Opportunities

Along with support for our core original programming, the HRC is working on three initiatives over the next three years:

## 01

### Faculty Fellowships

These fellowships provide on-campus, semester-long leaves for faculty members in the humanities and humanistic social sciences to pursue research and creative work that leads to publication, exhibit, community engaged project, or public-facing event. This type of faculty support is in the service of students and the public good.

## 02

### Humanities Labs

These highly interdisciplinary humanities labs bring together faculty and students (post-docs, graduate, and undergraduate) to work on ground-breaking research projects responding to the most pressing challenges to humanity today. Humanities labs launching in 2023-24 include: Public Humanities, Graphic Narratives, AI Futures, Memory Studies, and Migration Studies.

## 03

### Graduate and Undergraduate Student Fellowships

These fellowships provide residential (cohort) fellowships for advanced graduate students and professional development funds for MA, MFA, and MATX students working on humanistic projects, and support undergraduate student research and professional development.

Making a recurring pledge over the next three to five years is especially meaningful as we seek to expand our programs and share the work of humanities scholars with the Richmond community and the world.

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Unrestricted gifts to the Humanities Research Center General Fund enable the work of the HRC to continue to grow and meet the needs of the center. Your gift, no matter the amount, supports the following initiatives:

**Programs and Partnerships:** Support strategic campus partnerships and new, original programming that benefit the wider community.

**Innovation in the Humanities:** Support leadership initiatives that advance the urgent needs and priorities of the Center.

## Ways to Give

**To make a gift online visit:**

[support.vcu.edu/give/fund?fund=4562](https://support.vcu.edu/give/fund?fund=4562)

**Checks may be made payable to:**

Gifts and Records Management Office, 111 N. Fourth Street, Box 843042, Richmond, VA, 23284-3042 with 045028 HRC in the memo line

For more information on how you can support the HRC, please contact Mary Riddick at [riddickm2@vcu.edu](mailto:riddickm2@vcu.edu)



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