ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

Humanities Research Center

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY





CRISTINA STANCIU

Director

CHRISTINE CYNN

Acting Director, Spring 2024

ELI COSTON

Acting Assistant Director, Spring 2024

RANI SISAVATH

Communications & Administrative Coordinator

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Designed by Rani Sisavath, Ellie Musgrave, and Amy Huynh.

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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the HRC,

It is my pleasure to report on another great year for the Humanities Research Center at VCU during 2023-2024! In recognition of our center's vitality and significant contributions to VCU, the HRC's designation as a university-wide center was renewed for 3 more years by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation (2024-2027). We started the year with a wonderful lecture by Kirsten Ostherr, Rice University, on AI and Health Humanities, and ended the year with an international symposium on the 100th anniversary of the Indian Citizenship Act at Bordeaux Montaigne University, France, featuring keynote speakers Ned Blackhawk (Yale), Philip Deloria (Harvard), and Maggie Blackhawk (NYU). As conflicts across the globe intensified in 2023-24 (the wars in Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Sudan, as well as the Israel-Palestine conflict), the HRC offered a site for both free expression and rigorous scholarship, as well as opportunities to meditate on how we continue to define the human condition in times of crisis, and how we strive to make meaningful contributions toward equity and social justice.

As usual, there is a lot going on at the HRC: in the Valentine House, online, on campus, and in community spaces. In addition to hosting our signature speaker series, Meet VCU Authors series, and Research Fridays seminars, we collaborated with many campus units to co-sponsor events across campus and throughout Richmond (including at the Library of Virginia, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture).

Our thematic focus at the HRC put the spotlight on Health Humanities in 2023-24, and our residential fellows, external speakers, and working groups created a wonderful community of collaboration and exchange across the VCU campuses around questions of health equity and health disparities. We continued our History and Health collaboration with the VCU Office of Health Equity, co-organizing a symposium on "New Perspectives on Health Equity through the Humanities" on Sept. 27, 2023. In Spring 2024, members of our Health Humanities Lab were awarded a highly-competitive National Endowment for the Humanities Connections grant, enabling them to craft a minor in Health Humanities in the College of Humanities and Sciences. Thanks to the wonderful work of the lab, the Introduction to the Health Humanities course for the minor will be offered in Spring 2025.

This year, the HRC seeded and launched 5 humanities labs centered on Memory, Migration Studies, AI Futures, Graphic Narratives, and Public Humanities. These labs are preparing the groundwork for more collaborative work and public humanities projects integrating undergraduate student research, as the HRC plans to offer several more lab fellowships for undergraduate students in 2024-2025. Humanities labs are interdisciplinary incubators of research and community-engaged work guided by humanistic methods and questions. They offer opportunities to meet, study together, build community, apply for grants, work on curricular development, and collaborate across disciplines and spaces.

I am pleased with the level of engagement in our events, collaborations, and partnerships across campus this year, and I especially value the opportunities to meet colleagues across the university, the country, and globe who share a passion for the work of the humanities and the arts. Many thanks to my colleagues Dr. Chris Cynn and Dr. Eli Coston, who served as HRC Acting Director and Acting Assistant Director, respectively, in Spring 2024, while I completed a Fulbright fellowship semester in Canada, and to Rani Sisavath, our communications and administrative coordinator, for keeping our daily operations running smoothly and for elevating our visual presence.

We thank you for your continued support of the humanities at VCU, and look forward to seeing you at our next public event! We invite you to continue to visit our website, read our newsletter, attend our events, and support the center in other ways.

Sincerely,
Cristina Stanciu, HRC Director



About the Humanities Research Center

The Humanities Research Center is a hub for the humanities at Virginia Commonwealth University. Its mission is to provide a forum for intellectual exchange and humanistic inquiry, promote cutting-edge interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences, and raise the visibility of scholarly work in the humanities within and beyond VCU. The HRC fosters innovative and inclusive collaborations between faculty, students, staff, local communities, as well as other institutions, to provide critical perspectives and context to some of our most pressing societal questions.

FACULTY ADVISORY BOARD

EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD

STAFF

OUR WEBSITE

Year in Review



Faculty Residential **Fellows**



Internal NEH Summer Stipends Awards



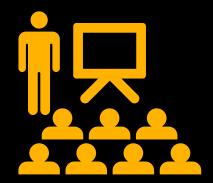
Faculty Grants



Student Fellowships and **Assistantships**



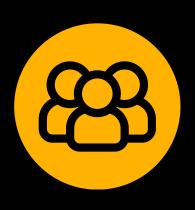
Publications Supported



Public Lectures

Attended events

26 1,378 1,657 Viewed event videos



New Humanities Labs Seeded



External Grants Submitted

Funding Received

HRC Labs



Abolition Lab

CO-DIRECTORS

Liz Canfield, Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies Travis Williams, Sociology

VISIT OUR PAGE



Health Humanities Lab

DIRECTOR

Chris Cynn, Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies CO-DIRECTOR, East Marshall Street Well Oral History and Memorialization Project

Michael Dickinson, History

VISIT OUR PAGE



Environmental Humanities Lab

DIRECTOR

Jesse Goldstein, Sociology

VISIT OUR PAGE



Migration Studies Lab

CO-DIRECTORS

Daniel Morales, History **G. Antonio Espinoza**, History

VISIT OUR PAGE



Al Futures Lab

DIRECTOR

Jennifer Rhee, English

VISIT OUR PAGE



Graphic Narratives Lab

CO-DIRECTORS

Bernard K. Means, School of World Studies Grace D. Gipson, African American Studies SJ Sindu, English

VISIT OUR PAGE



Memory Studies Lab

CO-DIRECTORS

Gabriel Reich, School of Education **Hilary Levinson**, Focused Inquiry

VISIT OUR PAGE



Public Humanities Lab

CO-DIRECTORS (FORMER)

Brian Daugherity, History Maggie Unverzagt Goddard, Postdoctoral Fellow, History

VISIT OUR PAGE

2023-2024

Residential Fellows

HEALTH HUMANITIES



Grace D. Gipson

Department of African American Studies

Creating "New Normals" within Black Womanhood and Disability in Marvel Comics' "Misty Knight"

66

The HRC fellowship allowed me to increase my professional and personal network/community. Having a reduced teaching load also played a significant role because I was really able to focus and get a great deal of work done towards my manuscript. [...] Each Monday was a breath of fresh air knowing that I was coming into a space that was supportive and transparent. I was able to have moments of vulnerability and it was a safe space. It definitely contributed to pushing through and seeing the end goal of completing my project."

66

I finally have a sense of my current book project, which I've been swimming around in for years. [...] The fellowship gave me mental space and time to renegotiate a crucial part of my intellectual and creative life."



Adin E. Lears

Department of English

Vital Flesh: Scales of Nature and Creature Futures in Later Medieval England



Gabriela León-Pérez Department of Sociology

Invisible No More: Understanding the Health and Well-Being of Indigenous Immigrants from Latin America in the US

66

This project is a scoping review of the literature on the health of Indigenous immigrants from Latin America. During the fellowship year, I met with a librarian who provided guidance, developed a scoping review, trained an undergraduate research assistant, and began compiling and reviewing the literature that will be part of the paper."

66

The HRC Fellowship provided me with an interdisciplinary cohort that I had been lacking since completing my doctoral program in 2022. The cohort members each brought unique perspectives, experiences, and shared wisdom that elevated my own practice and studies."



Tori Tucker VCU Health System

Position, Power, and Identity: Black Nurses in Virginia, 1950s-1980s

ACLS Postdoctoral Fellows



Melanie Chambliss

History in the
Making: Black
Archives, Black
Liberation, and the
Remaking of
Modernity

In Fall 2024, Dr. Chambliss will start at the University of Rochester as an Assistant Professor of History.



Mimi Winick

Ecstatic Inquiry:
Religion, Literature,
and the Feminist
Mythological
Imagination,
1870-1980

In Fall 2024, Dr. Winick will start at VCU as the Powell-Edwards Distinguished Chair for Religion and the Arts and Assistant Professor of Religious Studies.



UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWS

Naomi Begunov

Psychology

Arya Hanjagi

Biology

Abeer Haroun

Interdisciplinary Science

I-Kamilah Hiwott

African American Studies and History

Rome Kamarouthu

Financial Technology

Cynthia Lin

Urban Studies and History

Neha Potla

Biology

Michael Verner

Social Work

Olivia Washington

Psychology and Sociology

Sunday Wright

Biology and Bioinformatics

GRADUATE FELLOW

Micah White

Counseling Psychology



SEP. 14, 2023

AI AND HEALTH HUMANITIES: A CRITICAL NEXUS FOR RACE, DATA, AND CLINICAL ALGORITHMS

KIRSTEN OSTHERR, PHD MPH Rice University

OCT. 5, 2023

THE BORDERS OF AIDS AND THE USES OF DISEASE

KARMA CHÁVEZ, PHD University of Texas at Austin

NOV. 30, 2023

MEDICINE, LITERATURE AND A DESIRE CALLED UTOPIA

RISHI GOYAL, MD, PHD Columbia University

FEB. 8, 2023

BREATHING LIFE INTO BLACK WOMBS:
ABLEISM, MISOGYNOIR, AND THE
REPRODUCTIVE INJUSTICE WITHIN THE
MEDICAL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

ANNA LAQUAWN HINTON, PHD University of North Texas

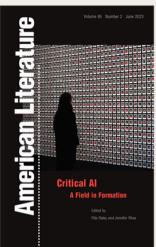
APR. 11, 2023

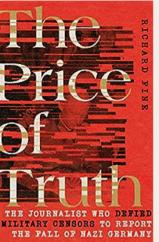
CLAIMING SPACE IN THE "BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICA:" LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS AND STRUGGLES FOR BELONGING IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

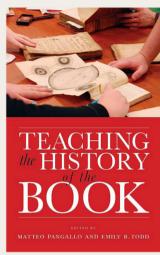
JENNIFER BICKHAM MENDEZ, PHD William & Mary

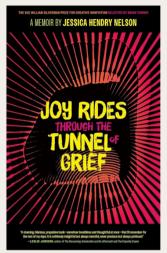
Meet VCU Authors

EVENT VIDEOS

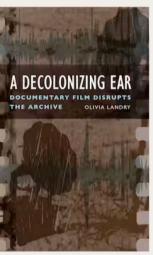


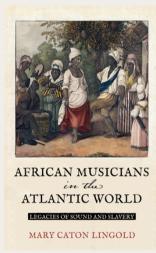




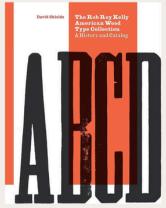


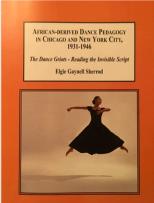














SEP. 11, 2023

CRITICAL AI: A FIELD IN FORMATION

JENNIFER RHEE, PHD
Associate Professor of English

SEP. 25, 2023

GRAPHIC NARRATIVES AND VISUAL STORYTELLING: A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT SHAKTI

SJ SINDU, PHD Assistant Professor of English

OCT. 23, 2023

TEACHING THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK

MATTEO PANGALLO, PHD Associate Professor of English

EMILY B. TODD, PHD, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, Eastern Connecticut State University

NOV. 13, 2023

EXPLORING THE ROB ROY KELLY AMERICAN WOOD TYPE COLLECTION

DAVID SHIELDS Associate Professor, Graphic Design

NOV. 27, 2023

THE PRICE OF TRUTH: THE JOURNALIST WHO DEFIED MILITARY CENSORS TO REPORT THE FALL OF NAZI GERMANY

RICHARD FINE, PHD
Professor Emeritus, English

JAN. 29, 2024

THE MAKINGS AND UNMAKINGS OF AMERICANS: INDIANS AND IMMIGRANTS IN AMERICAN CULTURE

CRISTINA STANCIU, PHD Professor of English

FEB. 12, 2024

CLIFFHANGER!: THE FIRST MOVIE SUPERHEROES

CHRISTOPHER IRVING Assistant Professor, Communication Arts

FEB. 26, 2024

A DECOLONIZING EAR: DOCUMENTARY FILM DISRUPTS THE ARCHIVE

OLIVIA LANDRY, PHD Associate Professor, School of World Studies

MAR. 25, 2024

AFRICAN MUSICIANS IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD: LEGACIES OF SOUND AND SLAVERY

MARY CATON LINGOLD, PHD Associate Professor of English

APR. 8, 2024

INTERCONNECTIONS: THE RESEARCH AND WRITING PROCESS FOR JOY RIDES THROUGH THE TUNNEL OF GRIEF

JESSICA HENDRY NELSON
Assistant Professor of English

APR. 22, 2024

READING THE INVISIBLE SCRIPT: HOW BLACK DANCE PIONEERS OF THE 1930s-40s DANCED BETWEEN THE LINES

E. GAYNELL SHERROD

Professor, Dance + Choreography

Research Fridays

Click on the title to view video.

SEPT. 29, 2023

GRANTS IN THE HUMANITIES: HOW TO APPLY AND GET FUNDED

ARIANA BRACALENTE, SUZANNAH STORA AND MELISSA THROCKMORTON

FEB. 2, 2024

RECOVERY IN PRACTICE

JOHN FREYER

Associate Professor of Cross Disciplinary Media, School of the Arts

FEB. 23, 2024

JUSTICE UNDONE: WOMEN ACCUSED OF NAZI-ERA WAR CRIMES

JESSICA TRISKO DARDEN, PHD Associate Professor of Political Science

2023-2024

International and Cross-Campus Collaborations













On Native Ground

In 2023, the HRC welcomed Alicia Aldaz as our 2nd Karenne Wood Native Artist-in-Residence.

Alicia Aldaz is a textiles and beadwork artist and designer from the Monacan Indian Nation of Virginia. Growing up in Amherst County, Virginia, she traveled with her family and tribe all over the east coast, performing at powwows and native performances. At the age of 15, she started exploring her passion in art, and her drive to design, and began to create dance regalia for herself and her family for powwows. While continuously creating and designing regalia for her family and her tribe, Alicia's creative passion has shifted into creating unique native-inspired contemporary wearable art for daily life to allow cultural connectiveness and representation to empower her clients. She debuted her line of Native inspired punk/street wear collection in the 2022 Virginia Tech Indigenous Community Center Fashion Show.



During her HRC residency in Fall 2023, Alicia worked on campus in the Middle of Broad, or mOb studiO, led two wrap-stitch beadworking workshops (co-sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs), taught classes in the School of the Arts, and gave a public talk at the Valentine House titled, "Empowering Threads: Alicia Aldaz on Textiles, Beadwork and Native Artistry."

Alicia's work can be found on **Instagram**.

News Highlights



SEPT. 20, 2023

LOOSE PARTS CONNECTS ART AND PLAY TO THE SERIOUS WORK OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Building on an overseas tradition, a VCUarts and humanities team is creating engaging local play spaces where children won't hear the common refrains "Don't touch" or "Get down."



OCT. 13, 2023

BRINGING TO LIGHT HEALTH DISPARITIES IN THE COMMUNITY AND ON CAMPUS, VCU HOSTS SECOND HISTORY AND HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

Professionals from diverse health disciplines explore the historical underpinnings of current health disparities.



FEB. 14, 2024

'RACISM IS DESTRUCTIVE TO BLACK BODIES': LECTURER DISCUSSES MEDICAL INEQUALITY

"The VCU Humanities Research Center presented "Breathing Life into Black Wombs: Ableism, Misogynoir, and the Reproductive Injustice within the Medical Industrial Complex" on Feb. 8, 2024.



FEB. 23, 2024

CRISTINA STANCIU, DIRECTOR OF VCU'S HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTER, ELECTED TO ADVISORY BOARD OF GLOBAL CONSORTIUM

She will provide intellectual leadership and nurture collaboration tied to prominent issues of public concern.



APR. 2, 2024

VCU STUDENTS, FACULTY DOCUMENT ORAL HISTORY OF THE EAST MARSHALL STREET WELL PROJECT

The Health Humanities Lab, a research lab at VCU's Humanities Research Center, is conducting the project in collaboration with the Family Representative Council.



APR. 18, 2024

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES AWARDS TWO GRANTS TO VCU PROJECTS

One will establish a health humanities minor, while the other supports a professor's book project on visual images of African Americans in leisure contexts from slavery through the Jim Crow era.

Events 2024-2025

2024



SEPTEMBER

FIRST ANNUAL HUMANITIES WEEK

Residential Fellowships in Focus: A Panel Discussion

Rohan Kalyan, Gabriela León-Pérez, Brooke Newman and Ryan Smith

Why Humanities? Why Now? Paula Krebs

UFO Studies in Realms of the Indigenous and the Aesthetic J. Molina Garcia

Career Pathways for Humanities Students

Scott Muir

Lightning Talks: HRC Humanities Labs

HRC Lab Directors

What Can You Do With a Humanities PhD?

Allison Bennett Dyche, Michael Means, Paul Robertson, Tracy Stonestreet

How the Humanities and STEM Can Find Common Ground in the History of Technology

Mar Hicks, University of Virginia

The HRC at 10: Roundtable & Reception

Matthew Gibson, Virginia Humanities

MEET VCU AUTHORS

Entitled Opinions: Doxa After Digitality

Caddie Alford

Sep. 23, 2024

WORK-IN-PROGRESS SEMINAR

Nasty Girls and Bastard Killers: Abortion Folklore Contesting Purity Culture

Paulina Guerrero

Sep. 27, 2024

OCTOBER



CO-SPONSORED

Improving Birth Outcomes: Health Disparities & Black Birthing People

2024 History and Health Annual Symposium

Oct. 2, 2024

RESEARCH FRIDAYS

Working with University Press Publishers

Matt Bokovoy, University of Nebraska Press

Oct. 4, 2024

MEET VCU AUTHORS

Tales of Koehler Hollow: An African American Family in Rural Appalachia

Christopher Brooks

Oct. 30, 2024

NOVEMBER

MEET VCU AUTHORS

Cyborgs, Ethics, and the Matrix: Simulations of Sex and Gender Rebecca Gibson

Nov. 4, 2025

ON NATIVE GROUND SERIES

Denying Blackness: The Enduring Legacy of the "Science" of Racial Purity in the Federal Recognition Process

Arica L. Coleman

Nov. 14, 2024

Empowering the Self Through Indigenous Frameworks
Ray John Jr.

Nov. 20, 2024

1666: A Novel Reading and Q&A

Lora J. Chilton

Nov. 21, 2022

8th Annual Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival

Nov. 22-24, 2024



2025



FEBRUARY

HEALTH HUMANITIES LAB

Black History Found and Forged: Chronicling the East Marshall Street Well Project

Feb. 1, 2025

MEET VCU AUTHORS

Dual Pandemics: HIV and the Coronavirus in Several Kenyan Communities
Christopher Brooks

Feb. 10, 2025



TECHNOLOGY HUMANITIES SPEAKER SERIES

Beyond "Always On" CultureDamien Pfister, in conversation with
Caddie Alford

Feb. 13, 2025

MEET VCU AUTHORS

Building Embodiment: Integrating Acting, Voice, and Movement to Illuminate Poetic Text Karen Kopryanski and Baron Kelly

Feb. 24, 2025

WORK-IN-PROGRESS SEMINAR

Plotting Bigamy: Marital Surplus in the Eighteenth-Century Novel Rachel Gevlin

Feb. 28, 2025

MARCH

MEET VCU AUTHORS

Between Here and There: Creating the Political Economy of Mexican Migration Daniel Morales

Mar. 3, 2025

WORK-IN-PROGRESS SEMINAR

The Clap Back: A Look into Digital Misogynoir and Online Harm Reduction Practices KáLyn Coghill

Mar. 21, 2025

MEET VCU AUTHORS

The Arab Nahda as Popular Entertainment: Mass Culture and Modernity in the Middle East Hala Auji, Raphael Cormack, and Alaaeldin Mahmoud

Mar. 24, 2025

MIGRATION STUDIES LAB

Migration Studies Lab Symposium

Mar. 28, 2025

APRIL

MEET VCU AUTHORS

The Bad Corset: A Feminist Reimagining
Rebecca Gibson

Apr. 7, 2025

HEALTH HUMANITIES LAB

Health Humanities Lab Symposium

Apr. 12, 2025

CO-SPONSORED

Recovery in Practice Symposium

Apr. 17-19, 2025



TECHNOLOGY HUMANITIES SPEAKER SERIES

Public Interest Technology in the Age of Al Margaret Hu, William and Mary

Apr. 23, 2025

VIEW ALL UPCOMING EVENTS

Giving Opportunities

Along with support for our core original programming, your gift will help the Humanities Research Center empower student and faculty research in 3 key initiatives over the next 3 years.

01

Graduate and Undergraduate Student Research Funding

We are committed to expanding our research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students through lab fellowships, residential (cohort) fellowships for advanced graduate students, and professional development funds for students working on humanistic projects. 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.

03

Faculty Fellowships

These fellowships provide oncampus, 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.

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 community. 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

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.

Connect with the HRC

WEBSITE

humanitiescenter.vcu.edu

EMAIL

hrc@vcu.edu

SOCIAL





In Memoriam

David Golumbia

1963-2023

In September 2023, we joined our colleagues in English and from all around the world in sorrow over the death of Professor David Golumbia, a dedicated supporter of the HRC and a passionate advocate for the humanities. David brought integrity and energy in his passionate advocacy for the humanities, including at the HRC. As we mourn his loss, we see his legacy at VCU and across the country in the students he mentored, the communities he built, and the scholarship he shared with us, including his forthcoming book, Cyberlibertarianism: The Right-Wing Politics of Digital Technology (U of Minnesota Press, 2024).

