Summer Institutes in Public Humanities

SAVE THE DATE! June 2-8, 2019

Important Dates:
January 25, 2019 – Participating Institution Nominations Due
February 22, 2019 -- Faculty and Grad Student Applications Due
March 15, 2019 -- Notification of Acceptance
June 2-8, 2019 -- Institute Convenes (Portsmouth, NH)

Funded by the Mellon Foundation and co-sponsored by the New England Humanities Consortium, the first week-long institutes, or “boot camp,” in public humanities will ground humanities faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students in the intellectual rationale, history, foundational skills, and prospects for doing engaged work in the humanities. Student and faculty participants will each receive a stipend of $2000 (within New England) or $2500 (outside New England) to cover travel and evening meals for the week. Lodging and parking costs, as well as breakfast and lunch, will be covered for all participants.

Faculty and grad student participants will make three commitments beyond their attendance. They will agree to: a) plan and initiate an engaged project in the following academic year (for which they will be eligible to apply to the institute for a $5,000 start-up award); b) commit to using the summer’s institute as a basis for initiating curricular or institutional change; and c) submit a written report before the following year’s institute.

What is Meant By Public Humanities? What Work is Eligible?

Public humanities bring humanities scholarship to bear in the context of advancing democracy, civic life, and the public good. We are seeking to help participants develop collaborative projects in partnership with community or other public organizations/groups. Emphasis is on sustained collaboration and partnership, mutual respect and benefit, and the recognition that knowledge and expertise are not the exclusive purview of academic practitioners. Your project should further community interests and work toward a clearly defined outcome or product. Community work need not be confined to your immediate community or even the United States, so long as it represents a committed relationship and benefits the community with which you are partnering.

Some examples of public humanities projects might include: 1) a group of military veterans meeting to discuss The Iliad for college credit — and to give meaning to their own experiences — in discussions facilitated by a classics professor, 2) an oral history-based audio tour that invites listeners to learn about a particular geographic feature from those native to the region, 3) construction of a building done, in part, by tribal youth who are learning about traditional culture and indigenous technologies with guidance by a historian, 4) a testimonial writing workshop for survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking, 5) development of a crowdsourced digital archive that allows people to upload materials related to a historic event directly from smartphones, 6) collaboration with residents of one county to gather stories of place and infuse them into local land use planning processes, 7) training sessions for community leaders and facilitators to manage anger and disruption in public meeting settings through an interactive theater model.
Public humanities does not, for our purposes, include the following: lectures by faculty in libraries, faculty books written “because the public will be interested,” and other such endeavors, all of which are indisputably valuable but do not demonstrate the kind of ongoing partnerships we intend to encourage.

Who is Eligible and How Do I Apply?

Full-time faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates are eligible, with the endorsement of their home institutions. Nominees for the first “boot camp” in public humanities should either already be engaged in public humanities work or have an idea for public humanities project that they will initiate after the institute, with some evidence of an ability to engage with the public and create sustained partnerships.

Participating institutions will nominate potential faculty participants and motivated graduate students by January 25, 2019. We will personally invite nominated faculty members and grad students to apply by February 22, 2019 at our site: https://cola.unh.edu/center-humanities/summer-institutes-public-humanities and will notify the summer 2019 cohort of their acceptance to the institute in mid-March. We will also welcome public humanities teams to apply to the institute. Included in the online application form will be a place for nominated faculty to list the name(s) and contact information for undergraduate and/or graduate student(s) with whom they’re collaborating or hoping to collaborate on public humanities projects. We will then reach out to those students personally to invite them to join us in June.

The Boot Camp Curriculum

Visiting scholars and practitioners who have deep engagement in public humanities will serve as instructors. The program will encompass thoughtful considerations of what we mean by “the public good" and how to communicate and collaborate beyond the academy.

The week’s program will include:

- establishing an intellectual context for public work in the humanities
- developing skills such as communicating with the public, understanding how to build sustainable collaborations with community organizations and colleagues, and fund-raising
- creating scholarly projects that help advance the work of public partners while also contributing to the scholar’s career
- examining case studies of successful public humanities projects
- considering "grand challenges" and cultural diversity program opportunities
- integrating engagement and public work in teaching and academic programs, as well as developing strategies for connecting engaged work with promotion and tenure standards

For more information:

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