The Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry remained open for business online since we were asked to work from home in March 2020. Pursuant to Emory University’s pandemic protocols, our three buildings were largely shuttered for the first half of the 2020-2021 academic year. Staff cycled in on a syncopated rotation with no more than one person on site at a time and visits limited to a few hours. Senior Fellows based in Atlanta began using their offices again starting in fall 2020, when it became possible for ‘on-boarded’ faculty and staff to be on campus. Amongst our four Postdoctoral Fellows, one lives in-state whereas the other three find themselves elsewhere. These circumstances likewise apply to our Graduate Dissertation Fellows. I have been primarily based in Chicago since the pandemic began, although I intend to return to Atlanta in late April once vaccinations have become more widespread. All the more reason why we relied on our weekly work-in-progress seminars and the annual Response Forum to foster a sense of community amongst ourselves and the university community.

Calvin Warren, associate professor of African American Studies, delivered the opening remarks at this year’s Response Forum. He posed a series of interlocking ethical questions: “How are values propagated within research institutions, such as ours, that claim to be anchored, wholly or partially, in the humanities?” “How do we, as constituent members of the academy, propagate and experience value?” “In a social situation and under institutional circumstances that reduce being to a mere exchange value, how might we cultivate a countervailing metaphysics, as a therapeutic antidote to reductive ontologies that do violence against the self?”

Quite fortuitously, Warren’s remarks were complementary to those made a few weeks later by the distinguished Historian and Public Scholar Jill Lepore, who opened our co-sponsored lecture-discussion series, “Emerging Technologies and the Future of the Humanities,” with a provocative talk titled “The End of Knowledge: How Data Killed Facts.” In her lecture and her new book, If Then: How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future, Lepore argues that whereas facts were once seen as necessary to the acquisition of knowledge and the discernment of truth, they have now been displaced by numerical data which are appreciated mainly as presumptive sources of predictive knowledge. The next speaker in our series will be renowned film and media theorist Akira Mizuta Lippit, professor of
Cinema and Media Studies and of Comparative Literature and East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Southern California. For more on “Emerging Technologies and the Future of the Humanities,” please see the article in the full newsletter.

Just before Lepore’s visit, the FCHI inaugurated another co-sponsored series, “Race, Social Justice, and African American Art,” on the representation of Blackness in contemporary art. Artist Kevin Beasley gave a brilliant presentation on his Whitney exhibition, “A View of a Landscape.” The exhibition, as Beasley poignantly and eloquently explained, was his way of unpacking the heavy weight of thought and emotion that attach to cotton-growing on the Beasley family farm in Virginia. The next speaker will be the noted art historian and critical theorist Darby English, Carl Darling Buck Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago. For more on “Race, Social Justice, and African American Art,” please see the article in the full newsletter.

As some of you may know, the FCHI underwent its first external review in late fall 2020. Preparing for such a review takes time, thought, energy, and a great deal of planning. The same holds true for the multi-day visit by the review committee, which consists of many interviews conducted with multiple constituencies. The committee then files a report, luckily in our case the report took about a month to write. Constructive and largely positive, the report has been circulated amongst our Executive Advisory Committee, many of whom appended insightful comments. I look forward to discussing the committee’s recommendation in a meeting scheduled with Deans Elliott, Tedesco, Freeman, Roy, et al. this month.

There’s much more to report, of course, but I wanted to keep the letter brief, so, let me conclude by saying how pleased Keith Anthony and I are to be co-teaching EC 470, a new seminar designed for the Fox Center’s undergraduate Honors Fellows. The interdisciplinary seminar immerses them in research culture of the FCHI, allowing them to consider what a commitment to interdisciplinarity entails. It’s a real privilege to be teaching the twelve gifted students in this year’s cohort.

We invite our alumni to stay in touch through the Fox Center Facebook page or by emailing Executive Director Keith Anthony. We hope you are so inspired by the work and accomplishments you’ll read about that you'll consider a gift to the Fox Center. You can engage with other Emory alums at events – see what’s coming up next on the calendar listing.

Walter S. Melion
Director, FCHI

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2020-2021 Fellows and Scholars

For descriptions of the Fellows’ projects, please click here.

President’s Humanities Fellow
Susan Youngblood Ashmore (History, Oxford College)

Senior Fellows
Irene Browne (Sociology); Lynne Huffer (Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies); Joy Ann McDougall (Candler School of Theology); Donald Tuten (Spanish and Linguistics); Subha Xavier (French)

Post-Doctoral Fellows
Two-Year Fellow Julie J. Miller (History, Harvard University); NEH Post-Doctoral Fellow in Poetics Nick Sturm (English, Florida State University); One-Year Fellow Martha Groppo (History, Princeton University); One-Year Fellow Byrd McDaniel (Ethnomusicology, Brown University); Visiting Fellow Jorge Dagnino (History, University of Oxford)
Dissertation Completion Fellows, Laney Graduate School
Mike Lehman (English); Abby Scribner (Comparative Literature)

HASTAC Scholars
Amelia Golcheski (History); Hannah C. Griggs (English); Brittany Landorf (Graduate Division of Religion); Tyler A. Tennant (English)

Undergraduate Humanities Honors Fellows
Claire Beiter (American Studies); Yiqing Hu (International Studies and East Asian Studies); Colin Hutton (History); Cameron Katz (History and English/Creative Writing); Ryan Kelly (History and Art History); Carissa Martin (Classics and Chemistry); Halla Maynard (Interdisciplinary Studies); Rachel Silver (Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies)

Halle Institute/Fox Center Undergraduate Honors Fellows
Nayive Gaytán (Spanish and History); Christie Jones (Environmental Studies and Master’s in Public Health); Faith Kim (Art History); Shreya Pabbaraju (Political Science and English/Creative Writing)

Halle Institute/Fox Center Undergraduate Global Research Fellows
Tara Djukanovic (International Studies and Philosophy, Politics, and Law); Jiarong (Vincent) Fan (East Asian Studies and Film and Media Studies); Nayive Gaytán (Spanish and History); Madelyn Haden (Middle Eastern Studies and Human Health); Christie Jones (Environmental Studies and Master’s in Public Health); Faith Kim (Art History); Shreya Pabbaraju (Political Science and English/Creative Writing); Kassie Sarkar (Interdisciplinary Studies)

Race, Social Justice, and Contemporary African American Art Series

In an NPR interview dated March 28, 2017, the great painter Kerry James Marshall commented on his decision to center his painting on the representation of black persons, making them ‘undeniable.’ He stated: “What you're trying to create is a certain kind of an indispensable presence. Where your position in the narrative is not contingent on whether somebody likes you, or somebody knows you, or somebody's a friend, or somebody's being generous to you. But you want a presence in the narrative that’s not negotiable, that's undeniable.”

The series focuses on the representation of black persons in contemporary African American art and on the various ways in which contemporary artists have engaged with the project of representing blackness. How do such representations attend to past and present articulations of race; how do they deal with such pressing issues as the imbrication of race and class; what diagnostic and/or therapeutic strategies do they apply to the vexed relation between race and social (in)justice.

In spring 2021, we look forward to welcoming renowned artist Kevin Beasley (left), followed by Darby English, Carl Darling Buck Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago

This series is a collaboration with the James Weldon Johnson Institute and the Department of Art History.
Emerging Technologies and the Future of the Humanities

This new series examines pressing contemporary issues in both theoretical and historical ways. “Emerging Technologies and the Future of the Humanities” originated as a response to Jill Lepore’s *These Truths* (left) and Bruno Latour’s *Down to Earth*, both of which, in different ways, address the problem of how authoritative arguments are constituted in and through mutually contingent networks of knowledge-production. For Lepore, the humanities, even while striving to assimilate “numbers” and “data” as evidentiary sources, turn historically on the making of “facts” as the prime unit of knowledge. In *These Truths*, she cites Thomas Jefferson’s admonition, “Let facts be submitted to a candid world,” to drive home her point that American constitutional democracy, as construed by Jefferson, Franklin, et al., was founded on a fact-based paradigm of persuasive argumentation. She then goes on to show how digital technologies or, better, digital ways of knowing have called the “fact” into question. It is by discerning the place of the authoritative “fact” within the humanities (a relation that goes back to the thirteenth century), and distinguishing fact-based evidence from “numbers” and “data,” which she associates to some extent with paradigms respectively anchored in the social sciences and the natural sciences, that Lepore strives to understand the shifting and contested epistemologies of our technology-laden present; as she so deftly states, “We have a much better vantage on the tenuousness of our own grasp of facts when we understand where facts come from.”

The questions posed and issues raised by the seminar are fundamental to how we conceive and practice the humanities in relation to the social and natural sciences. The interactive fora give our trend-setting faculty the opportunity to participate in cross-disciplinary conversation with distinguished scholars from outside Emory, whose publications have opened new areas of inquiry and set the state of the question at the intersection of the sciences and the humanities. We are very pleased that Professor Lepore will present via webinar the inaugural lecture ‘The End of Knowledge: How Data Killed Facts’ early in the spring semester. She will also be speaking about her latest book *If Then: How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future*.

Later this spring we will host Akira Lippit (at left), Vice Dean of Faculty in the School of Cinematic Arts and Professor in the Division of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Southern California and Professor of Comparative Literature and East Asian Languages and Cultures in the USC Dornsife College. His recent publications include *Cinema without Reflection: Jacques Derrida’s Echopoiesis and Narcissim Adrift*.

This series is cosponsored by The Hightower Fund, ECAC Provost Office, Candler School of Theology, Center for Mind, Brain, and Culture, Rollins School of Public Health, Institute for the Liberal Arts, and the departments of Art History, Computer Science, English, Film & Media Studies, French & Italian, German Studies, History, Mathematics, Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Physics, Psychology, Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures, Religion, Spanish and Portuguese, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.
Current Interdisciplinary Research Seminars

Lift Every Voice 2020 | Europe and Beyond | el Club de lectura | Contemporary Women Novelists Reading Group | The East Asian Studies (EAS) Writing Group | Experimental Ethnography | GALACSI: Georgia Atlantic, Latin American, and Caribbean Studies Initiative

Great Works Seminars


Georgia Seminars

'I felt strange, as I always do in Georgia': The Interdisciplinary Humanism of Jean Toomer’s Cane | Close Escapes: Four Poets on Leaving Georgia | The Okefenokee Swamp: The Past, Present, and Future of “Trembling Earth”
Recent Publications by Fox Center Alumni

Kubrick's Men — Richard Rambuss (2006-07)
Testing the Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Archaeology — Amy Gansell (2010-11), co-editor
Black Women, Black Love — Dianne Stewart (2017-18)
Investigations in Medieval Stained Glass: Materials, Methods, and Expressions — Elizabeth Pastan (2019-20), contributor
Revisiting redemption: A lifespan developmental account of the functions of narrative Redemption — Joshua D. Perlin (2017-18) and Robyn Fivush (2016-17), published in Human Development
Political Aesthetics in the Era of Shakespeare — Andrew Sisson, contributor (2016-17)
Arrow — Sumita Chakraborty (2017-18)
Annotating Modernism: Marginalia and Pedagogy from Virginia Woolf to the Confessional Poets — Amanda Golden (2010-11)

Alumni news...

2017-2018 Fox Center Post-Doctoral Fellow
Christopher D.E. Willoughby, Junior Visiting Fellow
Center for Humanities & Information, The Pennsylvania State University

Next year, I will be the Molina Fellow in the History of Medicine at the Huntington Library, and will also be a Visiting Scholar Fellowship at Harvard’s Charles Warren Center for the Study of American History. The Warren Center Fellowship is an especially amazing opportunity as the theme is Slavery and Universities, led by Evelynn Hammonds and Sven Beckert. The chance to be part of these communities will help launch my next project on medical schools, capitalism, and imperialism. My current book is under peer review, so my time at Penn State has really allowed me to build on what I started first at Emory and later at the Schomburg.

During my fellowship year at Emory, I co-organized "Medicine and Healing in the Age of Slavery" at Rice University, and the collection of essays based on it comes out this fall with LSU Press. And keep an eye out for an event with my co-editor Sean Morey Smith and me as a part of the Schomburg Center’s Conference this Fall on "Pandemic Legacies."

The Fellowship was such a great opportunity— it was an insanely productive year for me!