



University of Virginia

# Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures

2012-13 Annual Report



University of Virginia  
**Institute of the Humanities  
& Global Cultures**

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## CONTENTS

FROM THE DIRECTOR | 3

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS | 4

HUMANITIES WEEK | 6

THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY | 8

OTHER EVENTS, COURSES, AND  
INITIATIVES | 9

2013-14 CALENDAR | 10

JOIN THE IHGC | 12





## Much has happened More is planned All is possible

Our Institute of the Humanities & Global Cultures has completed its second year, a year that elevated our ambition and anchored our conviction. What began in 2011 as the stubborn beating of a drum has become a chorus of voices (the drum still beats). Not everyone sees the point and glory of the humanistic vision, but many do; it's been gratifying to learn how our efforts find echo in the hopes of others.

Local and Global still give the name of our double mission. Here at the university we held a regular series of events last year: lectures, seminars, coffees, celebrations. Under the heading of "The Future of the University," we hosted distinguished speakers (Hunter Rawlings, Martha Nussbaum and Stefan Collini) who attracted large audiences and stirred urgent conversation. The Institute continued its program of Theory Desserts, in which a faculty member discusses a recent article on issues of wide cross-disciplinary interest, such as sustainability, gothic television, or the new information age – while the audience ponders and

then responds. We sponsored an undergraduate evening organized by Eric McDaniel beneath the banner "On Being Human." Small coffees brought a mix of graduate students and faculty into informal animated exchange. The IHGC co-sponsored events with the U.Va. Art Museum, with the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, and with academic departments and programs. Our local year culminated with Humanities Week, a merry assembly of students and faculty, humanists and scientists, university and community, thought and expression, poetry, film, and music.

Our global initiatives have grown apace. During the last eighteen months the Institute has worked to assemble a network of partners – at Delhi University, Nanjing University, at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and at Oxford University. The first meeting of the Global Humanities Initiative took place in April 2012 in Charlottesville; we met in Delhi in August of the year and in Nanjing this past May. Next,

in March 2014, our partners will gather again, this time in London and Oxford, for a two-day meeting.

It's been a year crowded with events, but founded on a simple perception: that the central concerns of the humanities – the sense of history, the consciousness of (global) others, the pursuit of meaning, and the articulation of value – go well beyond the traditional humanistic disciplines. They enter all the fields of the liberal arts, and they also belong to the everyday life of each self-aware person.

We call it an Institute, but it's also a community, a web of committed individuals, here in Charlottesville and around the world. The press likes to notice the stiff winds facing us, but there are other winds blowing strongly at our back. It's still early days for our Humanities Institute, but then it's always early days for the humanities, which complete one task in thought only to begin immediately again.





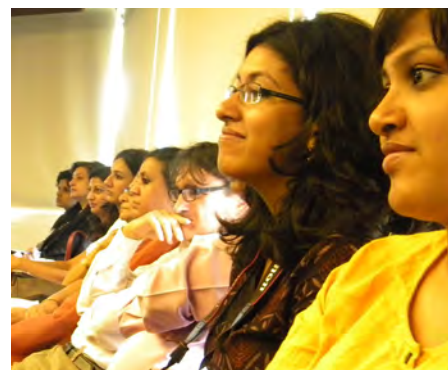
दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय  
University  
of Delhi



# Global Hur

In April 2012, a group of scholars from India and the United Kingdom traveled to Charlottesville for an intimate conference on the state of the global humanities, and so the Global Humanities Initiative was born. Our founding partners were Professors Brinda Bose and Prasanta Chakravarty from the University of Delhi, leaders of Marg Humanities in India. “Marg” means “road, track, path, thoroughfare” and on its road, the Marg Humanities movement “witnesses, marks, chronicles, pauses and participates, with passion and engagement, a spirit of inquiry and interrogation, a lustre of hope in risk and revelation.”

In the name of “risk and revelation,” the second conference of the Global Humanities Initiative took place in August of 2012. A diverse group of scholars from the University of Virginia, the University of Georgia, and Oxford University traveled to Delhi to take part in a two-day conference at the



beautiful Nehru Memorial Library in the center of the city. The title of the event, “The Humanities in Ferment” suggested not a crisis in the humanities, as is popularly perceived, but something more hopeful: dialogue leading to productivity and creativity, celebrations and a little headiness. We discussed Tagore and Joyce, the Global Digital Humanities, the role of the Humanities in the public university, film and video games, and the way we think about nations, borders, history and identity. Future collaborations were planned, friendships made, and a community formed.





中华人民共和国  
Nanjing  
University

# Humanities Initiative

In May 2013, the Global Humanities Initiative met again, this time in China as guests of our second allied institution, Nanjing University's Institute of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences. Our friends from Delhi University and Jadavpur University joined us along with Professors Helen Small from Oxford University, Wen-Chin Ouyang from SOAS, University of London and the three editors of the Humanities World Report, Dominic Scott (U.Va.), Arne Jarrick (Stockholm University) and Poul Holm (Trinity College, Dublin). Our hosting nation was well represented by scholars from Nanjing, Peking, and Fudan Universities, and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. The discussions ranged from neo-Confucianism to Max Weber's thoughts on China, from anthropological musings on empathy to the Islamic influence on Chinese art, from gender studies and performance in

Chinese opera to the circumstances of transgendered persons in India.

What started as a conversation among friends and scholarly collaborators has now become an increasingly active and productive movement. In October 2013, scholars from Latin America will join us in Charlottesville for a conference on Cosmopolitanism, jointly sponsored by the Humanities World Report. And in March of 2014, we will again

meet abroad, this time hosted doubly, by Oxford University and the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. In these exchanges, we enact our vision of an international community founded on respect, intellectual curiosity, and belief in the power of the humanities to cross our habitual boundaries and connect people across conceptual, imaginative and continental divides.



Humanities World Report



# Humanities Week

Celebrating the strong tradition of the Humanities at the University of Virginia



On a gorgeous April evening, a group of students and faculty gathered on a square of lawn in front of Dawson's Row to watch a dancer's interpretation of the question, "What does it mean to be human?" The dance gave way to poetry readings, a song, a film, and a display of art, all engaging the same formidable question. That evening's events were just some of the many during Humanities Week, which took place on April 9-13, 2013. Those days saw the IHGC collaborating with student groups and faculty across many departments to celebrate the strong tradition of the humanities at the University of Virginia.

To mark the occasion and the space, a small group of undergraduates, graduate students and faculty designed and constructed "tents" in a short course led by Director of the IHGC Michael Levenson (Professor of English) and Director of the OpenGrounds Studio William Sherman (Professor of Architecture). For the first eight weeks of the semester, undergraduates, graduate students and faculty discussed both the central values of the humanities and the physical spaces where they can prosper. Over the next four weeks, the group moved from theory to practice, from conversation to tent-building, finishing the assembly just hours before Humanities Week began.





During these April days, Dawson's Row saw book and article swaps, performances and readings, workshops and conversations of all sorts. In the evenings, we gathered for photo exhibitions, student films, personal testimonies on the humanities and everyday life, experimental music from U.Va.'s Mobile Interactive Computer Ensemble, and theater pieces from the First Year Players and Shakespeare on the Lawn. U.Va. poets writing in English, Urdu, Spanish and French read and translated each others' works. A pastor from a local church talked about how the Beach Boys influenced his understanding of

human frailty and vulnerability. Professor Clare Kinney held her audience rapt as she recited Michael Drayton's Sonnet LXI, "Since there's no hope, let us kiss and part". We learned that squeaky toys can be musical instruments, too. It was part education, part support-group, but mostly it was a grand celebration of the myriad ways that the humanities enliven the university and everyday life.

The IHGC is already planning the next Humanities Week, April 8-12, 2014. Please contact us if you have an idea for an event at [humanities@virginia.edu](mailto:humanities@virginia.edu).





# The Future of the University

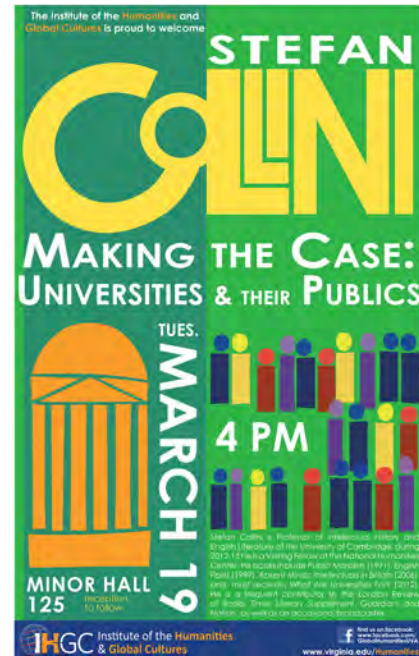
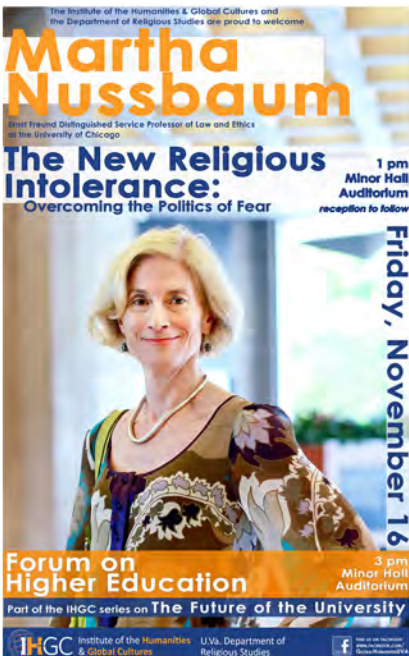


Photo by Cole Geddy, U.Va. Office of University Communications

The summer of 2012 found the University of Virginia in deep and urgent discussion about the future of higher education. The response of the IHGC was to launch its Future of the University initiative, to extend and develop the conversation. Throughout the academic



year, we hosted a series of distinguished speakers. The President of the Association of American Universities, Hunter Rawlings spoke to a packed audience of deans, faculty, staff and students about the plight of the public university and some strategies of effective response. In November, renowned scholar of philosophy and law, Martha Nussbaum, spoke about religious intolerance and then met with members of the U.Va. community in a forum on higher education. In the spring, in partnership with the Institute of Advanced Studies in Culture, the president of Bard College, Leon Botstein warned us on the encroaching Philistinism

in today's universities. Stefan Collini, Professor of Intellectual History at Cambridge, argued against the utilitarian/economic argument for the humanities in favor of one that stresses the importance of the humanities simply for living a full, rich and complex life. Alongside the well-attended formal lectures, we organized small coffees and colloquia in order to stimulate engagement among a diverse group of students and faculty. By the end of the year, it was evident that much more remains to be thought and said. We look forward to more conversations in 2013-14 about the future of the university and the place of the humanities in it.

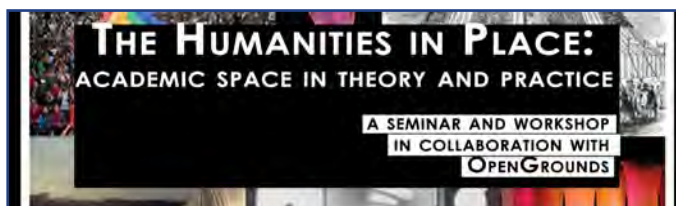




Twice a term, the IHGC brings together faculty, graduate students and advanced undergraduates for a Theory Dessert, a free and open discussion of a recent article in the company of the author and always accented with tea, coffee and, of course, desserts. We began with Jahan Ramazani (U.Va.) thinking through the present state of post-colonial theory - an event developed in partnership with *New Literary History*. There followed a series of panels in collaboration with *The Hedgehog Review*. The first, also sponsored by the department of Environmental Science, addressed the project and meanings of "Sustainability." A dialogue on ethics took off from an essay by John H. Zammito, Professor of History at Rice University. The year concluded in discussion with Professor Paul Cantor (U.Va.) on the dystopian vision of the American Dream in the television show *The Walking Dead*. Look for more Theory Desserts in 2013-14!

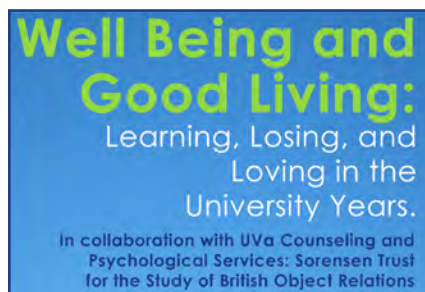


In November of 2013, the Graduate Advisory Board of the IHGC hosted its first GABfest, a day-long event that brought together faculty, students and staff in informal conversations about the future of the university in a global context. There were panels on "Global Communities," "Theorizing the Global," "Online Education," and "The Humanities and the Sciences." Participants gathered from all many places around the university: the humanities and sciences, the Jefferson Public Citizens Program, the Library's Scholars' Lab and the Medical School. GABfest 2013 will be held on Friday, November 8<sup>th</sup> at the OpenGrounds studio. If you are interested in participating or in joining our Graduate Advisory Board, please contact us at [humanities@virginia.edu](mailto:humanities@virginia.edu).



## Sponsored Courses

The IHGC is piloting a series of short courses: shorter-than-a-semester seminars designed for focused thought on an ambitious subject in a low-stakes setting. These courses are open to all students, from first years to graduate students and can be audited or taken for 1 credit. The IHGC sponsored two short courses in Spring 2013. The first was "Humanities in Place: Academic Space in Theory and Practice," led by Professors Michael Levenson and Bill Sherman to design and build structures to mark space and start conversations during Humanities Week. The second course was "The Global Short Story," led by English graduate student Ann Mazur. This approaching year will see the beginning of our sponsorship of full-term interdisciplinary courses. In Fall 2013, Willis Jenkins will offer "The Moral Ecology of Food," and in Spring 2014 James Igoe will give a seminar on the subject of "Culture and Environment."



In collaboration with the Sorensen Trust for the Study of British Object Relations, the IHGC presented a spring series on Well Being and Good Living. Each session focused on a topic of concern among undergraduate students: finding a job, facing debt, feeling isolated. In order to launch the free-ranging conversations, an undergraduate student, a faculty member, and a psychotherapist would each offer some reflections on the topic, and then discussion would open to the audience. The series began with a TED-style talk by Dr. Meg Jay, best-selling author of the book, *The Defining Decade*. Dr. Salman Akhtar, Urdu poet and professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the Jefferson Medical College, presented on the relationships between poetry and healing.



# Looking Forward: Fall 2013 Calendar of Events

**Thursday, September 12**

**Sukanta Chaudhuri**  
2:30 pm, Alderman Library  
Scholars' Lab

Professor Chaudhuri is emeritus Professor of English Literature at Jadavpur University and a digital humanities scholar. He is the Principle Investigator of the *Bichitra: Online Tagore Variorum*. He is in residence September 9-13 as IHGC Clay Distinguished Visiting Professor.

**September 19 & 20**

(Thurs. & Fri.)

**Interpretation & Its  
Rivals**

**Harrison Institute**

The conference, organized by the scholarly journal *New Literary History*, brings ten internationally known scholars in the humanities and interpretative social sciences to grounds to address key questions of method and argument. Is interpretation a limited and historically specific practice that is now in decline? Or, at a time when the humanities are under attack, should we defend interpretation as lying at the very heart of what we do?

**October 3 & 4**

(Thurs. & Fri.)

**Cosmopolitanism**

**Harrison Institute**

This conference will examine the nature of cosmopolitanism from several perspectives and with the help of various academic disciplines: history, literature, philosophy, political science and sociology. Appropriately enough, our participants come from several countries all over the world, with a noticeable presence from Latin America. Our keynote speaker is

Thomas Pogge (Yale). Presented in partnership with the Humanities World Report (a project of the Swedish and Dutch Governments) and the Darden School's Olsson Center for Applied Ethics.

**Thursday, October 10**

**Academy Fight Song**

Thomas Frank, author of *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, in conversation with John Summers, editor of *The Baffler*.

**5 pm, Nau Hall 101**

College is the best thing in the world; college is a complete ripoff. How are these two statements compatible? How can we assess the campus battles of this era, which are more focused on money than the niceties of Western Civ and Great Books? And what are we to make of the fact that a college education today fastens the bonds of inescapable indebtedness to an entire generation of students? Presented in partnership with Media Studies.

**Saturday, October 26**

**African-American  
Artists in Stalin's  
Russia**

**Campbell Hall 153**

Organized by The Fralin Museum of Art and the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, the symposium will include a diverse group of scholars drawn from Slavic studies, African-American studies, literature, history and art history, who will discuss the experience of African Americans, in particular African American artists and intellectuals, who visited and worked in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era.

**Monday, October 28**

**Aleksandar Hemon**

**5 pm, Harrison Institute**

Born in Bosnia and emigrating during the war in the former Yugoslavia, Hemon came to the United States in the early nineties and began publishing fiction soon after his arrival. He has often contributed to *The New Yorker*, as well as *The Paris Review*, *The New York Times* and *The New Republic*.

**Friday, November 1**

**Don Randel**

**5 pm, Harrison Institute**

Professor Randel has been President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Provost of Cornell University and President of the University of Chicago. Alongside his many positions of academic leadership, he has also long been recognized as a distinguished musicologist. He will give an important lecture on the conditions and prospects of higher education, as part of our ongoing series on The Future of the University.

**Friday, November 8**

**Global GABfest**

**All day, OpenGrounds Studio**

Our annual student-led conference on global issues in graduate studies.

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**And watch for the return of the  
Well Being series and On Being  
Human in November.**







# Join the IHGC

*The Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures promotes the mission of the humanities, locally and globally, as a vocation in teaching, a central area of research, and an indispensable civic ideal.*



Although founded upon the traditional humanistic disciplines, the IHGC locates its audience throughout the liberal arts and sciences, in all domains of reflective and rigorous thought. Within the university it traverses boundaries between undergraduate, graduate and faculty communities, seeking to enhance the social force of intellectual exchange. Through public events, curricular reform in higher and secondary education, and regional and global partnerships, the Institute extends the reach of conversation across generations and intellectual disciplines, and from academic to everyday life.







## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Meet other humanities students from around grounds for reading groups, films and discussions. Join us for dinners with the IHGC Graduate and Faculty Advisory Boards. Help plan the events for Humanities Week in the spring (the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April).

## GRADUATE STUDENTS

Join the Graduate Advisory Board! Meet students from other humanities departments from around grounds. Help us plan the Global GABfest, a graduate-student-led conference on current global initiatives and research at U.Va. and help organize events for Humanities Week in April.

## FACULTY

Do you have an idea for an event that would be a good fit for the IHGC? We often co-sponsor events that look at the humanities and global cultures in new and experimental ways. If you have an event that you would like us to co-sponsor, please send a proposal to the director, Michael Levenson, at [humanities@virginia.edu](mailto:humanities@virginia.edu). Also, please make sure to let us know of your department's or center's events so that we may include them in our weekly humanities calendar.

## ALUMNI

The IHGC depends on alumni support in order to fulfill its mission. If you would like to ensure that the strong Jeffersonian tradition of humanities-based education continues at the University of Virginia, please contact Pattie Burgh at the College of Arts & Sciences Development Office:

Pattie Burgh  
Senior Development and Parent Giving  
Programs Officer  
[phb4x@virginia.edu](mailto:phb4x@virginia.edu)  
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