

2013–14 Annual Report



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

at the **University of Virginia**

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From the Director Michael Levenson

As I step down, I want to claim just a few words, simply to say how these last three years have been the most fully engaged of my academic life, the time when I have seen how ambitious our vocation can be and how our highest ideals can belong to our everyday practice. We are students, teachers and scholars; we are also citizens of the planet. I have learned, too slowly but irrevocably, that there is no excuse for separating the strands of our calling. They must be woven or broken.

The founding of a Humanities Institute at UVa, after so many years of discussion and deliberation, has given us a surprising chance to invent on a blank space. We had no building for the first ten months; we had no choice but to have visions. These took many shapes, but above all, the shape of local intensity and global partnership. I had two thoughts for every eight that were suggested to me, but what has mattered most is the upward lift of common purpose. So many people have moved quickly into shared work; the good temper spreads like jam; we admire and also enjoy one another.

All right, nothing is perfect: our space is cramped, our resources limited. No one should ignore the everyday stresses of the university; it would be wrong to cover over difficulties. But that's not what I'm doing here. The truth is so simple. When it works well, when you sit around a table planning a new curriculum in the global humanities, or when you sit on the floor laying out plans for Humanities Week, or when you just sit back and enjoy the parade of philosophers and poets, humanistic scientists and scientific humanists, then it's not only university life at its best.

It's also an image of human society, vital and invigorated.



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Global Partnerships

It started as a gleam of possibility—a network of partnerships in the humanities stretching across the round globe—and now it stands as a firm, ongoing, practical (but still visionary) commitment. Colleagues from Nanjing University, Delhi University, Oxford University, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the University of Virginia have joined in a network that has allowed for ambitious collaboration. We have exchanged research, taught together and worked strenuously to show the importance of the humanities to the wider world. It hasn't taken long to deepen ties that are personal as well as academic and that move us beyond the temporary buzz of a conference or a visit. Now when we meet, we remember one another's views and situations, and we build on one another's research, teaching missions and social hopes.

With the Humanities World Report, we sponsored a conference in October on Cosmopolitanism, which brought seven scholars from Latin America to Grounds. In December, in collaboration with Shanghai International Studies University, we organized a three-day meeting on "Global Modernism." In the spring, the

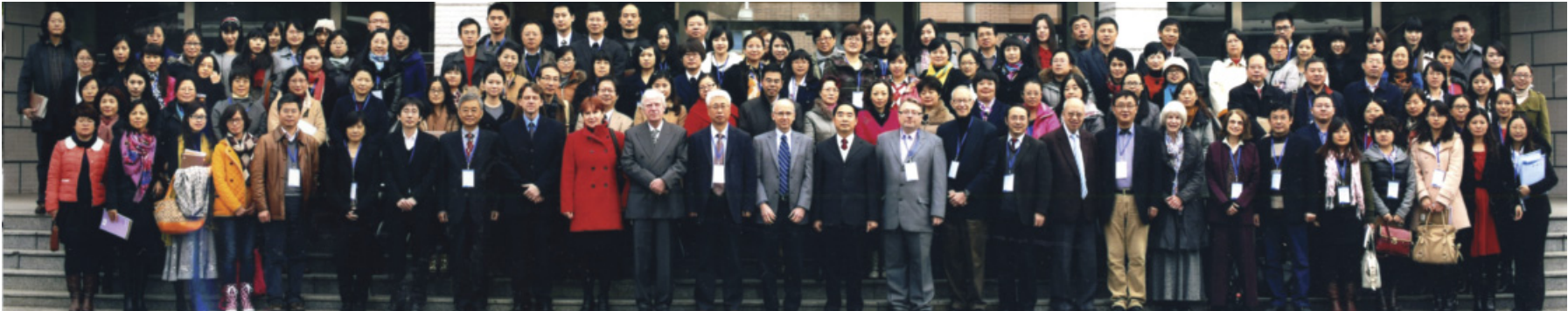
IHGC collaborated with its partners at Oxford University and the School of Oriental and Africa Studies to present a conference in London and Oxford on "Activist Humanities." Attendees came from North Africa, India, China, the United States and the United Kingdom. Speaking from the widest diversity of perspectives—national and regional perspectives, but also the standpoints of poets and activists, musicians and translators, historians and filmmakers—the participants converged on the need to bring the humanities into the world, and to bring the immediacies of social engagement into the reflective spaces that universities provide.

The Global Humanities Initiative began with a commitment to slow, steady growth, and we have won the benefits of human-scale community developing on the basis of faculty-to-faculty exchange. After the experience of this past March, it's clear that Centers and Institutes from other nations on different continents want to join the web of partnerships. From the start, our commitment has been to an expanding network, built on the principle of inclusion, and now is the time to extend connection to Africa and to Latin America. **It will remain our task, and our chance, to develop a circle of scholars who share their research and their views on sustaining the humanities, but who also aim to exemplify the virtues of a small good society based upon honest self-reflection and open exchange.**



Cosmopolitanism
Charlottesville

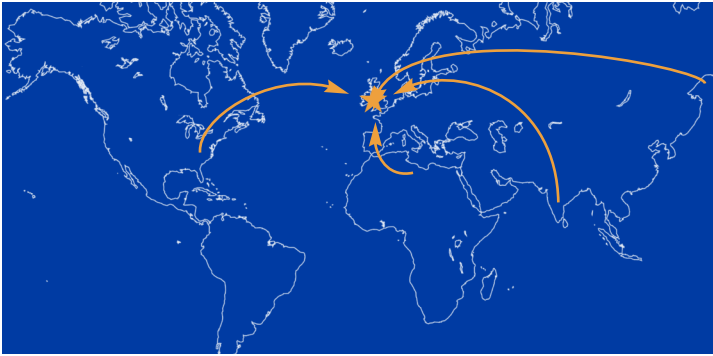
October



Global Modernism
Shanghai

December

现代主义的文学世界与世界文学中的现代主义国际学术研讨会



Conference
Activist Humanities
London and Oxford

March

Humanities Week

Three years firmly establishes a tradition here at Jefferson's university, but the new tradition of Humanities Week—the second week in April when breezes stir blossoms—hasn't stood in the way of novelty and invention. This year's Week was the largest, though large doesn't matter. What counted was the quickening of intensity and the unquenchable desire to gather, exchange, and invent, to eat and to eat thought.

For eight weeks a group of grads, undergrads and faculty, prepared for the occasion. They met Wednesdays over dinner to plan the events, design the space, and to return to first principles as a way to plan new steps. Humanities Week began with hundreds attending a session on "Emergency Poetry." Over the next five days, panels were held on subjects such as "The Ethics of Food," the "Life of Ideals" and the relations of "Science and Culture." Literary readings alternated with musical presentations, while each evening concluded with a festival of global film shorts and post-film discussion. A piano was rescued from oblivion to be painted and played (and safely tarped at night). We had wind-chimes and archways, and a labyrinth of stones arranged as a symbolic act and immediate pleasure. **Always, we kept consciousness of how small humanistic acts can sprout larger meanings.**



Humanities Week

April



Mehr Farooqi



"Global Poetry Locally"



"Keats and Yoga"



Herbert Tucker



Michael Levenson



Elizabeth Fowler



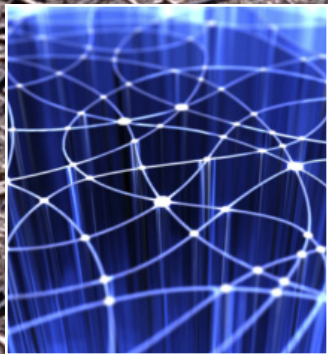
"Emergency Poetry"

The Future of the University



Don Randel

November



Internet Education

February



The Future of
Graduate Education

April

We continued our program of events on “The Future of the University.”

It’s no surprise that the subject has become inexhaustible. Don Randel, former president of the University of Chicago and the Mellon Foundation, visited in the early fall, offering incisive words on the value (and economy) of humanistic study. Given the force of the lecture and the strength of response, it became clearer than ever that the humanities are stubborn, unrepentant, defiant.

Soon after, the Graduate Advisory Board (GAB) held a day-long symposium on internet education. Early in the spring, the group met again on “The Future of Graduate Education,” with contributions from grad students and faculty.

And during Humanities Week, an evening on “Our Gadgets, Ourselves” brought together the Charlottesville community and UVa students and faculty to think about the likely academic effects—on concentration, attention, memory and empathy—of all these screens now attached to our fingers

Between events, we met over coffee, crackers and cookies (sometimes over broccoli, red pepper and hummus), always thinking and talking, feeling both the urgency and the depth of the questions we ask. The future never arrives, but then it’s never wrong, especially in universities, and most especially in the humanities, to remember that the possible and the actual are near neighbors.



Terry Eagleton

February



Daniel Mendelsohn

March



Supriya Chaudhuri

April



Elleke Boehmer

October

Scholars in Residence

A new program of *Scholars in Residence* brought three distinguished visitors

to the Institute in the spring. Terry Eagleton visited for a week in February, Daniel Mendelsohn in March, and Supriya Chaudhuri in April. They gave well-attended public lectures—on hope, on reading the *Odyssey* with a father in the last year of his life, on the possibilities for a world literature. But at least as important were the small-scale encounters with students and faculty, the mix of food and food for thought. We continue the program early in the fall of 2014 with the visit of Elleke Boehmer from Oxford, who will speak on Nelson Mandela and the struggles of South Africa.

“On Being Human”

“On Being Human” came out of the imagination of Eric McDaniel

(undergraduate, humanist)—his imagination and resourcefulness and stamina. Seven students speaking for seven minutes out of their innermost convictions, in front of friends, family and total strangers, with everything on the line. These have been among the most deeply enjoyed, requested, remembered (and well-attended) of our events. This past year, we had “On Being Human” twice, the first time as capstone to the fall semester, and the second as a highlight of Humanities Week. What stood out most was the sheer blooming being-humanness in the sparky leap between speakers and audience. The talks were almost always funny, sometimes side-splittingly so, but they were also straight and true and authentic. Authenticity isn’t a word that always trips off the tongue nowadays, but it names a virtue that can stop you in your tracks when you stand before it.



On Being Human

December

On Being Human

April

Other Events, Courses, and Initiatives

GABfest 2013: MOOCs

In November of 2013, the Graduate Advisory Board of the IHGC hosted its second annual GABfest, a day-long event that brought together faculty, students and staff in panel discussions. This year’s GABfest was devoted to the topic of MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses. Panelists addressed the pedagogy of the new courses, considered their global reach and the people behind them and engaged with a series of case studies. Presenters included faculty and graduate students who have collaborated to teach MOOCs and MOOC skeptics (sometimes one and the same), as well as staff who have worked on administering MOOCs and scholars studying the science of MOOC learning. The diverse range of perspectives included people from the humanities and social sciences, as well as the Curry School of Education, who gathered at OpenGrounds. GABfest 2014 will take place in October.

IHGC Sponsored Courses

The 2013-14 academic year brought with it an opportunity for undergraduates to engage in exciting interdisciplinary coursework through the IHGC. In the fall, Willis Jenkins of the Religious Studies Department offered an IHGC course called “The Moral Ecology of Food.” Anthropologist James Igoe taught “Culture and Environment” in the spring. Also in spring, graduate students Brandon Walsh and Eliza Fox, both of English, designed and team- taught “American Youth and Film” as a short course. During summer term, “Science, Religion, and Politics” was offered by Physics professor Seung-Hun Lee as part of the Jefferson Global Seminars program in Hong Kong.

IHGC in the Community

During Humanities Week 2014, the IHGC co-sponsored two events in the community. The first, entitled “Our Gadgets, Ourselves,” was held at, and co-sponsored by, the Bridge Progressive Arts Institute, adjacent to the Belmont Bridge near downtown Charlottesville. The other, “When Science and Culture Collide,” occurred in conjunction with Science Straight Up! and the science outreach office of the College of Arts & Sciences and took place at the Woolly Mammoth restaurant and bar.

The IHGC sustained its partnership with the Bridge PAI in the form of an ongoing poetry reading series, “Outside the Window,” organized by English graduate student and GAB member Lindsay Turner.

In summer 2014, the IHGC offered a community writing prose workshop. Open to UVa students and staff, as well as the wider Charlottesville community, the workshop allowed six writers to shape ongoing fiction and non-fiction prose projects.



Our Gadgets, Ourselves
Humanities Week

April



Bridge PAI
Community partner

2013-2014



Writing Workshop

Summer 2014

Get Involved!

Undergraduate Students. Meet other humanities and humanities-oriented students from around Grounds for reading groups, films and discussions. Join us for dinners with the IHGC Graduate and Faculty Advisory Boards. And help us with our capstone event of the year: Humanities Week, held the second week of April.

Graduate Students. Join GAB! Our Graduate Advisory Board is a forum for meeting other humanities graduate students and faculty from around Grounds. Help plan the GABfest, work on Humanities Week, propose courses and bring speakers to Grounds.

Faculty Colleagues. 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, send us a proposal. 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 Events email.

Alumni of UVa. The IHGC depends on alumni support in order to fulfill its mission. If you would like to help 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: phb4x@virginia.edu or 434.924.7213.

Community Members. Part of our mission is to promote the humanities and arts and to extend their reach beyond university boundaries. To that end, we forge collaborations with community organizations and welcome opportunities to participate in events in the Charlottesville area. If you are a community member with an idea for an event that would be a good fit for the IHGC, please get in touch!



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