UCI Humanities Commons

2014-2015
ANNUAL REPORT

Director's Message

Julia Reinhard Lupton
Associate Dean for Research

In 2013-14, Dean Georges Van Den Abeele convened a task force to consider future directions for UCI's School of Humanities. Their report recommended

> *the creation of a new Humanities Commons that would coordinate and support the work of various centers and groups and provide new synergy and connectivity for research in the Humanities.*

With these goals in mind, we are fostering a culture in which faculty and students from all departments can pursue their research and articulate the impact of their work. I see the following as the main challenges and opportunities for the humanities today:

- Continuing to cultivate new formats, resources, and audiences for the humanities in response to changing media platforms, analytic tools, and political and economic conditions
- Engaging in joint research projects and problem-solving around social, cultural and environmental issues with colleagues across campus and in the community
- Forging living links between creativity and critique through meaningful and innovative partnerships with the arts
- Furthering the work of translation, preservation and interpretation in their several senses and dimensions

As the Commons works next year to address these and other challenges, I know that UCI's extraordinary faculty, graduate students and staff will continue to educate and inspire me with their many projects and commitments.

Associate Director's Message

As Associate Director of the Humanities Commons, I have the opportunity to see the value and vitality of the humanities on a daily basis. On any given day, I get to read a faculty research proposal that has the potential to change a scholarly field or learn about digital tools that are reinventing methods of academic research and publication, to talk to graduate students about their future careers or visit a program that provides opportunities for elementary school students to engage in humanistic inquiry. Our programs serve as incubators for scholarly work capaciously defined, both work that illuminates a particular topic in a specific field and work that brings insights and knowledge to broader academic and public audiences. In our first year of operations, we've put together a staff team that is committed to fostering a thriving humanities community. We look forward to a second year that is equally dynamic.

Amanda Jeanne Swain
Associate Director

About the Humanities Commons

The UC Irvine Humanities Commons explores the scope of human experience by supporting faculty and graduate student scholarship, engaging in collaborative projects, and providing opportunities for campus-public partnerships.

SCHOLARSHIP

The Humanities Commons provides grants to School of Humanities faculty for research expenses, publication subvention, and conference travel. School of Humanities graduate students can apply for funding to support expenses, including travel, related to dissertation research. We work closely with faculty on research development and administer external faculty grants.

COLLABORATION

The Humanities Commons serves as a liaison and coordinator for cross-campus and multi-campus projects. We provide project management for large faculty-led collaborative projects such as Medical Humanities, a UCI Interschool Initiative for Excellence. School of Humanities faculty and graduate students can apply for grants to support collaborative research projects and for conferences and symposia. We co-sponsor cross-campus and public events.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Humanities Commons builds partnerships that engage UCI faculty, undergraduate students and graduate students with community organizations and public institutions. We believe that such collaborations enrich both our university and our community. The Humanities Commons coordinates programs in collaboration with public libraries and K-12 schools, among others.

Advisory Committees & Staff

FACULTY

Edward Dimendberg
Zina Giannopoulou
Virginia Jackson
Aaron James
Arlene Keizer
Susan B. Klein
Matthias Lehmann
Santiago Morales-Rivera
Beryl Schlossman
Linda Trinh Vo
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Cécile Whiting

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Philip Anselmo
Michael Berlin
James Goebel
Racquel Gonzales
Sharon Kunde
Meredith Lee
Soodabeh Malekzadeh
Dana Murphy

STAFF

Amanda Jeanne Swain, PhD
Associate Director

Angélica Enríquez,
Program Manager

Michelle Maasz,
Events & Communications

RESEARCH CLUSTERS

Research Clusters allow groups of faculty from multiple departments to define focused areas for sustained study and then scale up their enterprises by tapping different organizational and funding opportunities. More lightly structured than Residencies, the Clusters aim to foster a range of new ideas throughout the School, wherever they might be taking shape. Activities include conferences, guest speakers, and reading groups.

CURRENT REASEARCH CLUSTERS

Creative Economies; Early Cultures; Science, Technology, and Race; Latin American Studies; Food Studies; Desert | Structure | Modernism; *and* Jurisprudence.

NAIS COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Glen Mimura (FMS) and Adria Imada (History) received an ADVANCE award to run a series on Native American and Indigeneous Studies. BELOW: seminar with Noelani Arista, "I ka mo'olelo no ke ola: Nation and Native Narrativization from the Hawaiian Language Archive."

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Scholarship

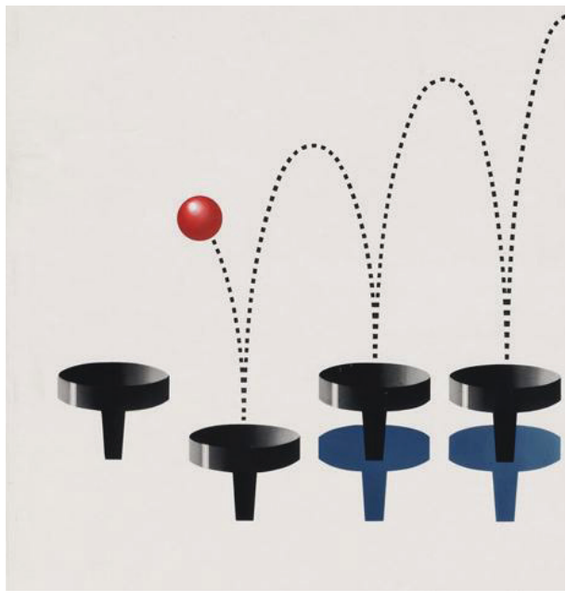
RESEARCH RESIDENCIES

Research residencies convene a group of faculty to work together on an area of shared concern that contributes to larger conversations in the School of Humanities. Annual residency topics are selected by the Humanities Commons in consultation with the Dean and the Advisory Board and are linked to other ongoing pedagogical or public projects that draw a substantial cross-section of the School together around a common theme.

The 2014-15 research residency program, under the direction of Professor Carol Burke, addressed war, which is also the topic of the current cycle of the Humanities Core Course, UCI's freshman humanities program. The War Research Residency created synergy and built connectivity among faculty research, general education, and graduate training in the School of Humanities. The War Research Residency led to a succesful grant proposal for "Documenting War," a Mellon Sawyer Seminar that will be held at UCI in 2016-17.

"The effort to document a war or even a single event in a war is an effort to construct meaning out of the ruins of death and destruction. The images we produce and the stories we tell about war will always be influenced by our proximity to the events and by our roles in the conflict. We trust that this Sawyer Seminar will allow us to engage in conversations with other scholars, with journalists, and with artists about how war is given meaning."

Carol Burke
Professor of English &
Co-PI, Mellon Sawyer
Seminar,"Documenting War"



Highlights, 2014-2015

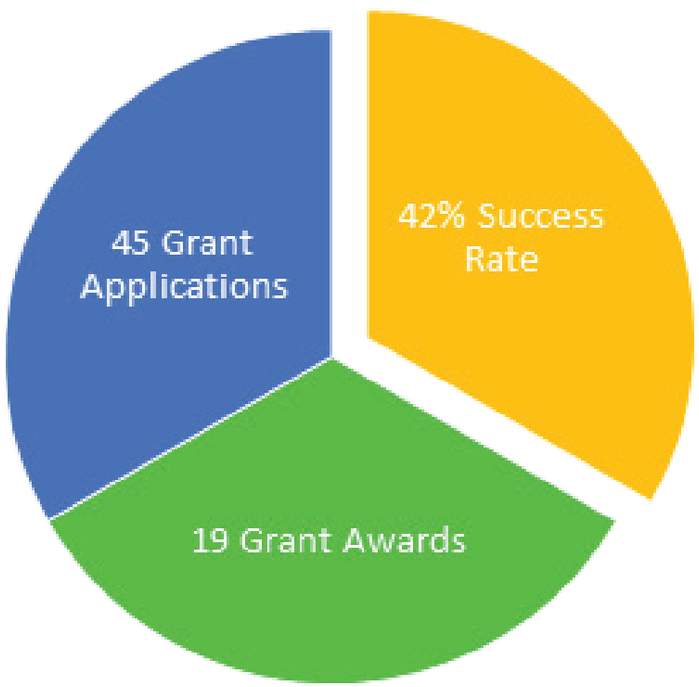
SAWYER SEMINAR

Carol Burke (English) and Cécile Whiting (Art History) received a $175,000 Mellon grant for "Documenting War" seminar, to be organized by the Humanities Commons in 2016-17.

MELLON 5+2 GRANT

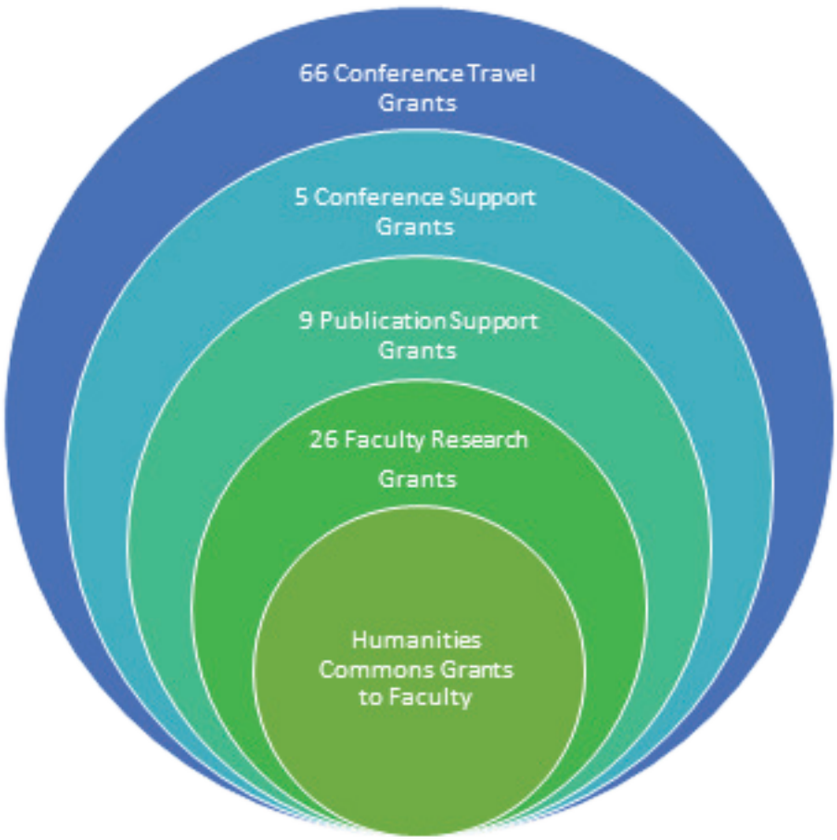
Commons assisted in writing a successful Mellon proposal that will support the new 5+2 graduate initiative as well as pedagogy efforts in Humanities Core.

EXTRAMURAL FUNDING



GRAD LAB SUMMER COFFEE HOUR

FACULTY GRANTS AWARDED



CRITICAL THEORY

Catherine Malabou addressed neurohumanities in her Wellek Lectures. “Is Theory Critical?” conference brought major theorists from several generations to UCI. Jacques Rancière, Slavoj Žižek and Alenka Zupančič gave talks in partnership with UCLA.

K-12 OUTREACH

TH!NK program brought philosophical inquiry to 5th grade students. New partnership with Bowers Kidseum will relaunch Humanities Out There.

GRAD LAB

The Commons reached out to graduate students with special programming on identifying funding opportunities, writing grant proposals, and exploring multiple career paths.

TH!NK is a four-week program developed by UC Irvine's Department of Philosophy to familiarize students with philosophical thought and discourse. Canyon View Elementary School in Irvine hosted the program this spring, where 134 fifth-grade students were introduced to philosophy.

TH!NK presents philosophy as a skill rather than a subject matter, says Marcello Fiocco, associate professor of philosophy and TH!NK creator.

Fiocco and four graduate students gathered in small groups with students at the Irvine school to read aloud short stories and then raise questions intended to illustrate the difference between obtaining information about a situation and critically engaging in it. The literature ranged from *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* to selections from the Tao Te Ching. "I wanted to use texts that students can return to indefinitely," Fiocco says, "stories that have depth and can apply to different stages of their lives." Referring to philosophy as a "language and skill" that pertains to real-world situations, such as deciding what type of car to purchase or how to deal with family conflict, he hopes to inspire the next generation of philosophers – or at least demystify the subject for local students. "Philosophy is not something that's only for geniuses," Fiocco says. "The field is directed at solving real-world problems. It's for everybody, and chances are these students are already using it in their daily lives."

The TH!NK program is coordinated by UCI's Humanities Commons and funded by the UCI ADVANCE Spirit Grant for Inclusive Excellence. *Article adapted from UCI News brief.*

"Philosophy is more like reading or riding a bike than American history or psychology. Philosophy is critical thinking; it's the skill of examining presuppositions, recognizing connections, seeking justification – all toward the end of providing insight into something of interest."

Marcello Fiocco
Associate Professor of Philosophy and creator of TH!NK

Community Engagement

An important part of the Commons' mission is to foster new forms of public humanites and community engagement. Humanities Out There was founded in 1997 as an educational partnership between the School of Humanities and local schools. The recipient of grants from the NEH and the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, HOT provided many graduate and undergraduate students with formative service-learning experiences during its peak years. The Commons has been tasked with reorganizing and revitalizing Humanities Out There. The newly conceived program reflects the School's goals for undergraduate education ("applied liberal arts for the twenty-first century") and for graduate education (including opportunities to explore public humanities and multiple career paths). Beginning in Fall 2016, Humanities Out There will partner with the afterschool program at the Bowers Kidseum in Santa Ana. Culture and Theory PhD student Lucena Lau Valle will train a group of undergraduates to work with students on homework and on art and culture projects in a community museum setting.

"I am so excited for the opportunity to collaborate in the Humanities Out There program, and I am eager to share my enthusiasm for inquiry-based and participatory learning."

Lucena Lau Valle
PhD student in Culture & Theory; Humanities Out There Teaching Fellow, 2015-16

HUMANITIES OUT THERE (HOT)

Digital Humanities

The Digital Humanities Working Group explores formats for digital work that is responsive to local institutional culture, research strengths, regional opportunities, national trends, and resource realities. Addressing the digital culture of scholarly work with a sense of inventiveness, the Digital Humanities Working Group aims to explore and evaluate new tools for collaboration, research and publication in the humanities. The group is designed to encourage experimentation with digital, social media and computing tools. The Working Group approaches digital tools not as technocratic panaceas but as the means towards building depth, synergy, and visibility for UCI's humanities research enterprises.

This year we sent three faculty plus Associate Director Amanda Swain to study digital humanities at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute in Victoria, one of the longest-running DH training opportunities in the country. RIGHT: faculty reflect on their experiences.

Braxton Soderman
Assistant Professor of Film & Media Studies

In "Advanced Criticism and Authoring of Electronic Literature," I began work on a hybrid creative and critical text exploring ambient poetics and generative prose that appears or disappears over long periods of time. The workshop provided time for invaluable discussions concerning the state of the field of electronic literature and also opportunities for receiving feedback on our new projects.

Fresh from a week at the DHSI, I'd like to see a series of lively debates at UCI on technology, coding, neo-positivism, design, and other issues central to DH and in need of critical engagement.

James Steintrager
Director, UCI Critical Theory

The course introduced me to Oxygen, a TEI editor. I found the course immensely helpful—mostly because it convinced me not to make extensive use of TEI for my digital edition on the Jewish astronomer who transmitted knowledge of the astrolabe to the West. I am convinced that a computer algorithm needs to be developed to take text into basic TEI, but that extensive use of this tool is not warranted at this time.

Pat Seed
Professor of History

I am committed to ensuring transparency and graduate student involvement in key aspects of our education and professionalization at UCI. I have personally benefited from the information and skills provided through past events and workshops held and sponsored by the Humanities Commons, and I am eager to ensure the continuance of such opportunities and their relevance for graduate student interests and needs.

Philip Anselmo
PhD student in Comparative Graduate Advisory Board

I have enjoyed working within a graduate division that has made interdisciplinary work its priority. I look forward to helping organize the sort of interdisciplinary conversations in which I have enjoyed participating.

Michael Berlin
PhD student in Classics and Comparative Literature; Graduate Advisory Board

The professionalization events offered by the Humanities Commons, support discussions and opportunities not often found in our home departments. The Commons provides spaces to explore wide applications of humanities in and outside the classroom. As an attendee, I have gained new awareness of the possibilities for applied humanities.

Racquel Gonzales
PhD student in Visual Studies; Graduate Advisory Board and Digital Humanities Working Group

Grad Lab

Grad Lab events address the research and professionalization needs of UCI graduate students, alumni, and lecturers. In 2014-15, the Commons ran workshops on finding funding opportunities and writing grant proposals; public speaking; multiple career paths; and academic publishing. We also recruited and convened our first Graduate Advisory Committee, with representation from six departments in the School. Our aim is to engage graduate students as partners in thinking about and working to shape the future of humanities teaching and research.

The Humanities Commons awarded 5 conference grants and 14 research grants to graduate students in 2014-15.

2015 Wellek Lectures

Wednesday, May 20
Thursday, May 21
Friday, May 22
4:00 pm
Humanities Gateway 1030

METAMORPHOSES OF INTELLIGENCE

three lectures by
Catherine Malabou
Kingston University

First Annual Critical Theory Institute Conference

IS THEORY CRITICAL?

Friday, May 22
Saturday, May 23
Langson Library
(Friday Morning)
Humanities Gateway 1030
(all other events)

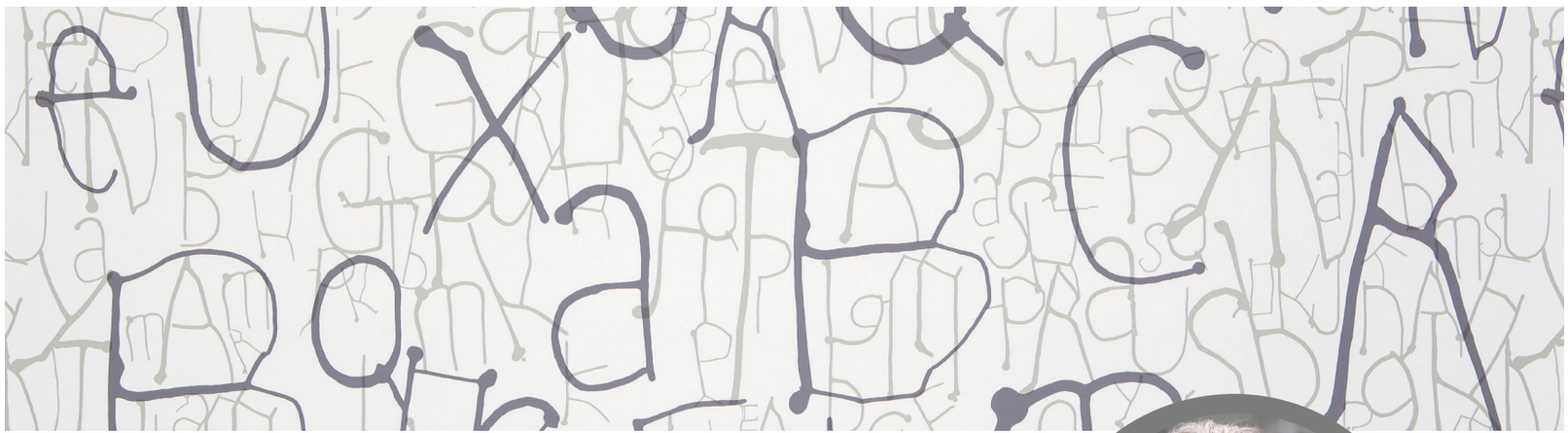
SPEAKERS INCLUDE
Geoffrey Bennington
Jonathan Culler
Robert Doran
Irving Goh
Peggy Kamuf
Ethan Kleinberg
Jacques Lezra
Lisa Lowe
David Palumbo-Liu
Steven Mailloux
Catherine Malabou
J. Hillis Miller
John Carlos Rowe
Stuart Sim
David Simpson
Gayatri Spivak
Xudong Zhang

IMAGE: Dripping Letters designed by Abbott Miller for Knoll.

UCI Critical Theory

Critical theory has been an ongoing theme in UCI's formation. Theory's capacity to effect disciplinary reflection and transformation remains a key part of our identity and our planning processes. In 2014-15, the Commons contributed to critical theory at UCI by sponsoring lectures (Rancière, Žižek, and Zupančič); by hosting the Wellek Lectures, featuring Catherine Malabou; and by helping organize a major conference, "Is Theory Critical?"

Next year the Critical Theory Institute and the Critical Theory Emphasis will be reconvened under one umbrella, **UCI CRITICAL THEORY**. Directed by James Steintrager (English) UCI-CT will receive staff support from the Commons and Graduate Studies. The Commons looks forward to working with Professor Steintrager to execute his vision "to approach theory as an ongoing and evolving set of questions rather than a project that might somehow be concluded."



"We aim, in lieu of a celebratory and inevitably nostalgic gathering for a high theory that is no more, to ask harder and indeed more relentlessly critical questions about critical theory. Hence, our phrasing of the conference agenda in response to the question: *Is theory critical?* Phrased otherwise, what are the limit conditions for a critical theory in the 21st century?"

Georges Van Den Abbeele
Dean, School of Humanities,
"Is Theory Critical?"
Conference

Centers & Initiatives

UCI Critical Theory

JORDAN CENTER
FOR PERSIAN STUDIES

Medical Humanities

UCI Shakespeare Center

FORUM FOR THE ACADEMY
AND THE PUBLIC

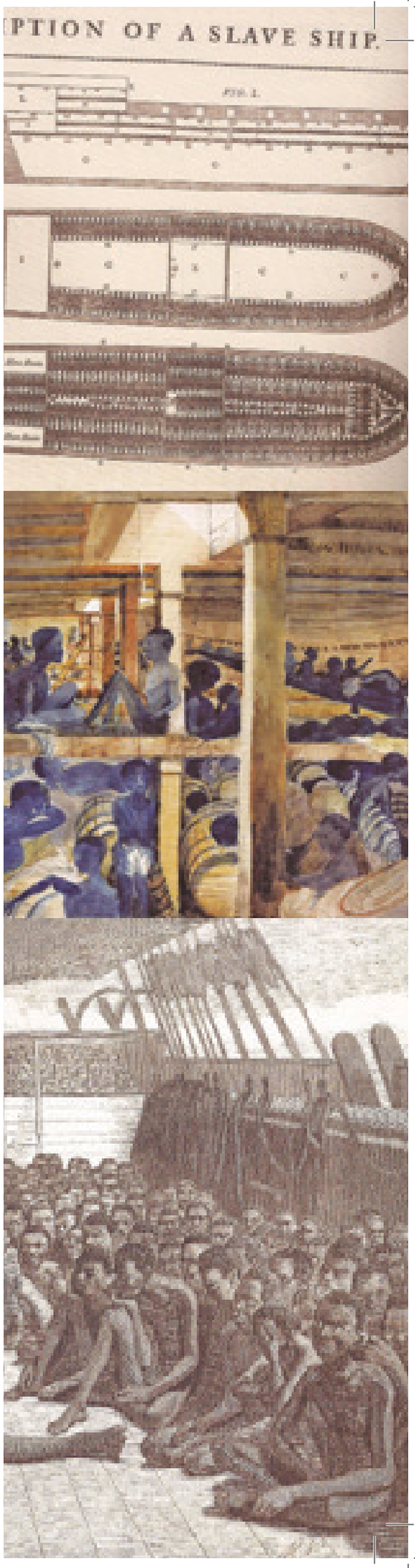
The Humanities Commons was envisioned by Dean Georges Van Den Abbeele as a "center of centers," supporting a range of faculty-initiated scholarly activity. In 2014-15, our inaugural year, we have worked hard to realize that charge, reaching out to existing centers, encouraging faculty to organize as clusters, and working with the Dean on a new structure for Critical Theory. We are proud to provide staff support and organizational energy to a number of centers and forums, and to collaborate and intersect with many more in the School and across campus.

ABOVE: Medical Humanities Initiative Executive Committee at the Launch Reception. Douglas Haynes, Johanna Shapiro, Richard Brestoff, Aaron Kheriaty, and Jayne Lewis.

Events, 2014-15

10.14.2014 — Digital Humanities Working Group Organizational Meeting
10.23.2014 — Medical Humanities Initiative Opening Reception
11.10.2014 — Richard Morrison, Editor, Fordham University Press
11.19.2014 — MedHum: Lyle Massey, "Against the Statue Anatomized"
12.04.2014 — MedHum: Keith Wailoo, "Pain"
12.09.2014 — Cal Humanities Workshop
01.14.2015 — CT: Jacques Rancière, "Fictions of Time"
01.20.2015 — Grad Lab: Teaching in Private Schools
01.22.2015 — DH Live!
01.27.2015 — DH Skill Share
02.03.2015 — DH Tools for Research
02.10.2015 — Grad Lab: "And the Winners Are ...:"Grads on Grant Funding
02.23.2015 — Grad Lab: The Digital Humanities as a Contact Zone
02.25.2015 — DH: NEH Virtual Workshop on digital humanities grants
02.27.2015 — DH: Brianna Wu, "Choose Your Character"
03.05.2015 — Grad Lab: ACLS Public Fellows Workshop
03.12.2015 — NAIS: Bethany Berger, "Citizenship in Red and Yellow"
03.16.2015 — NAIS: Josh Reid, "An Indigenous Marine Borderland"
04.11.2015 — CT: Slavoj Zizek and Alenka Zupacnic
04.16.2015 — NAIS: Robert Warrior, "The New Indian (Art) Hating"
04.21.2015 — Grad Lab: Grant-Writing Workshop with Ed Dimendberg
04.23.2015 — Stanley Fish, "John Milton, Marriage Counselor"
04.24.2015 — DH: Scalar Workshop
04.28.2015 — Grad Lab: After the Doctorate: Paths Outside Academe
05.05.2015 — DH: Scholars in a Digital World
05.12.2015 — Grad Lab: Power Speech with Eli Simon
05.20.2015 — CT: Wellek Lectures: Catherine Malabou
05.22-2015 — CT: Is Theory Critical? Conference
05.26.2015 — Humanities Out There Open House
06.04.2015 — DH: Africa, the Diasporas and the Atlantic Slave Trade

DH: Digital Humanities Working Group
CT: UCI Critical Theory
MEDHUM: Medical Humanities Initiative
GRAD LAB: professional development for graduate students
NAIS: Native American and Indigeneous American Studies



Africa, the Diasporas, and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Explorations in Digital History

FRONT COVER: Negar Farajiani's *Made in China* installation, UCI May 7, 2015. PHOTO: Shahriar Tooryani.

BACK COVER: "Is Theory Critical?" Conference attendees, UCI School of Humanities, May 22, 2015. PHOTO: Carlos Puma.

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