

CENTER FOR HUMANITIES

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

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A Message from the Director, Sylvester Johnson



As we embark on a new decade, we should consider the profound importance of humanistic scholarship for our time. The 2020s will certainly bring unprecedented opportunities for human flourishing. It is easier than ever before to connect across distance to engage friends, conduct business, and extend learning. Global wealth is growing faster than in the twentieth century. And the ease with which we can access knowledge would be staggering or barely believable to previous generations. At the same time, we face tremendous uncertainty in the midst of climate change, wealth and income inequality, and a global upsurge in racial politics that target our world's most vulnerable populations.

The Center for Humanities is committed to supporting scholarship that engages with a range of humanistic studies amidst these momentous challenges. This includes open-ended inquiry, creativity, and socially engaged studies of problems that shape the human condition. Given the future outlook, we should be more certain than ever that humanities education and engagement are essential to preparing future generations of learners and expert understanding of human society.

We are collaborating with partners across the university to promote research and to bring excellent programming that includes guest lectures, performances, and open discussions to advance humanities and the greater mission of Virginia Tech, which is grounded in our purpose as a comprehensive university. Together, we can help realize the exciting promise that this new decade can bring. We hope you will take time to attend our sponsored events and to partner with us through your support.

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded \$44,000 to support a collaboration between the Center for Humanities and the Virginia Tech University Libraries to host a workshop on ensuring access to digital records. The workshop will be conducted in partnership with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). This effort aims to ensure future access to the massive and ever-growing collection of government records in NARA's digital catalog.

The project team consists of Bill Ingram of VT University Libraries (Principal Investigator), Sylvester Johnson, Director of Virginia Tech's Center for Humanities; and Pamela Wright, Chief Innovation Officer at NARA.

This planning grant from The Mellon Foundation will enable Virginia Tech and NARA to convene a group of archivists, librarians, humanists, technologists, information scientists, and computer scientists for a two-day workshop at the Virginia Tech campus in Arlington, Virginia. During this workshop, VT and NARA will identify requirements, develop conceptual models, and devise and articulate a work plan for a subsequent pilot project that will test state-of-the-art tools and technologies to increase the effectiveness of archival programs and broaden public access to the important content in the NARA collections.

UPCOMING PROGRAMMING

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE COLLOQUIA

The Virginia Tech Center for Humanities presents a series of talks by faculty research associates who will discuss their work. All talks are from **12pm – 1:15pm** and will be held in **room 005 in the Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Bldg., 200 Stanger St, Blacksburg, VA**, unless otherwise noted. A light lunch will be provided during the presentation, with a Q & A session to follow. All talks are open to the public and we invite anyone to attend.

- ◆ February 7, 2020 - **“Corporations, Race and Responsibility: Mapping Connections to Theorize New Directions for Corporate Communicative Action”** Nneka Logan is an associate professor in the Department of Communication. Her research and teaching interests include corporate discourse, organizational communication, race, diversity and rhetorical studies. Prior to receiving her doctorate, she worked in corporate communication management for nine years in various roles. As a scholar, her work aims to push the conceptual boundaries of corporate communication theory and practice.



- ◆ February 19, 2020 - **“Children’s Active Learning with Technology”** Koeun Choi is an assistant professor of human development and family science at Virginia Tech. Her research aims at understanding how children learn in a complex and dynamic digital media environment.



- ◆ March 4, 2020 - **“Black Southwestern Pennsylvanians’ Freedom Claims and Free Soil in the Slave South, 1780-1850”** Lucien Holness is an associate professor in the Department of History. He specializes in African American history and the early United States. His current manuscript project examines the making of free soil and black freedom, as well as the abolitionist movement in southwestern Pennsylvania from 1780 to 1865. ***Please note location change: Newman Library room 207A, 560 Drillfield Drive**



- ◆ March 20, 2020 - **“Magic and the Making of the Christian Apostle”** Shaily Patel is an assistant professor of Early Christianity in the Department of Religion and Culture. Dr. Patel’s research explores the various, often contradictory ways in which so-called magic was used to advance a number of theological ends in early Christian texts.



- ◆ April 8, 2020 - **“‘Reenlisting’ After the War: Veterans as Public Poets and Ministers of Culture”** James Dubinsky, an associate professor in the Department of English, is the founding director of the Professional Writing Program and was instrumental in helping to shape the first liberal arts PhD at VT (in Rhetoric and Writing). He is also the founding director of the Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships (now VT-Engage) and the lead faculty member in Veterans in Society initiative.



- ◆ April 17, 2020 - **“Black Feminism, Postcolonialism and American Higher Education: Gender, Race and the Body”** Andrea Baldwin is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology. Her areas of research include Black Feminism, Black Feminist Pedagogy, Caribbean Feminism, and Transnational Feminism.



- ◆ May 1, 2020 - **“Towards Decolonizing Media: A Discussion of Creative Work”** Charles Dye is an assistant professor of cinema production in the School of Performing Arts. His multi-modal film work supports decolonizing projects around the world. He seeks to create not only culture-shifting, widely-seen movies, but also to define more equitable and inclusive ways of making cinema.



ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING

- ◆ February 13, 2020 - Lecture: **“Self Care and Student Protests: The Case in Hong Kong”**. Assistant Professor of Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies, and a Faculty Affiliate of Gender and Women Studies at the University of Kentucky, Dr. Sharon Yam will give a talk via Zoom at the Asian Cultural Engagement Center, 140 Squires Student Center from 5 - 6:30pm.

- ◆ March 27, 2020 - **Choices and Challenges: Technology and Disability** Choices and Challenges is an ongoing public engagement series exploring ethical and social issues created by advances in science and technology. This free event will be held at the Inn at Virginia Tech, 901 Prices Fork Rd. The schedule of events is as follows: Mental Health and Educational Institutions 10:30 - 11:45am; Autism Tech and Autistic Experience 1 - 2:15pm; High Tech 'Fixes' and Disability 2:45 - 4pm; Spoken Word Poetry 2:15pm and Cyborg Promenade 4pm.

- ◆ March 31, 2020 - Lee Pierson will be giving a presentation titled **“Introspection Introspected: Reading Your Own Mind as the Key to Critical Thinking”** from 12pm - 1:15pm in room 005, Liberal Art and Human Sciences Building, 200 Stanger Street. A light lunch will be provided during the presentation, with a Q & A session to follow.

- ◆ March 23, 2020 - E Patrick Johnson will give a reading from his book **Honeypot: Black Southern Women Who Love Women** followed by a discussion and book signing from 3 - 5pm in the Ann and Ellen Fife Theater, Moss Arts Center, 190 Alumni Mall.

- ◆ March 23, 2020 - A screening of the award-winning documentary **Making Sweet Tea** will be shown at 7pm in the Ann and Ellen Fife Theater at the Moss Arts Center, 190 Alumni Mall. **Making Sweet Tea** combines footage from the productions of E Patrick Johnson’s play **Sweet Tea** with documentary moments from the lives of both Johnson’s interview subjects from his book **Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South** and his own life. Following the screening, Johnson will present **From Page to Screen: Aesthetic Methodologies in the Making of Sweet Tea**. In this talk, Johnson will discuss how he drew on incorporated multimodal methodologies to present oral history and ethnographic research on African American gay men in the South. A reception will follow in the Grand Lobby.

CENTER FOR HUMANITIES PUB TALKS

The Virginia Tech Center for Humanities supports a broad range of expert engagement with topics focusing on the human condition broadly conceived: from history to societal issues to performance to literature to the intersection of humanities and technology—all in an effort to promote informed engagement with topics that enlighten and broaden understanding of human experience, identity, and humanistic concerns about the world.

Because we are especially interested in engagement with a broader community beyond campus, we have partnered with local businesses where Virginia Tech faculty in the humanities might discuss the broad significance of their research in ways that connect to people from the local community.

Please check our webpage at <https://liberalarts.vt.edu/research-centers/center-for-humanities.html> for updates and a list of speakers and locations.

RECENT EVENTS

The Center for Humanities continues to sponsor a robust series of programming. As part of our ongoing Faculty Research Colloquia, the following talks were held by researchers pursuing human-centered scholarship.

- ◆ November 13, 2019: Amy Azano, associate professor in the English Education, Reading Specialist, and Foundations of Education programs, presented **"Rethinking Rural: Talent Development and the Power of Place"**
- ◆ December 3, 2019: Cara Daggett, assistant professor of political science in the Department of Political Science, presented **"From Climate Denial to Climate Defiance: The U.S. Far Right on a Warming Planet"**
- ◆ December 11, 2019: Fabian Prieto-Nañez, postdoctoral associate at the Department of Science, Technology and Society, presented **"Informal Everyday Technologies - Improvisation and Local Design in Latin America"**
- ◆ January 24, 2020: Vinodh Venkatesh, professor of Spanish in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literature, presented **"Madness at the Margins: Literature and Justice in Latin America"**
- ◆ January 29, 2020: Karen Kovaka, assistant professor of philosophy, presented **"How Not To Evaluate Community Science"**

Additionally, the Center also co-sponsored the following presentations:

- ◆ September 27, 2019: Sara Peach **"The Humorous Side of the Climate Story: A workshop on the bizarre, unexpected, and delightfully weird side of climate change"**
- ◆ October 3, 2019: **"Seeds of All Things"** film screening and discussion
- ◆ October 28, 2019: Evelyne Ender lecture **"The Physics and Metaphysics of Handwriting"**
- ◆ November 4, 2019: Tyechia Thompson **"Love and Suspense in Paris Noir: An Interactive Literary Analysis"**
- ◆ November 8, 2019: **"Challenging Human Supremacy: Degrowth, post-growth, and the future of life on earth. A Symposium in Honor of Eileen Crist"**
- ◆ January 14, 2020: **"amplifying unheard voices: a community-based symposium"**
- ◆ January 29-31, 2020: Ghassan Nakad & Judy Barsalou **"Memory, Representation, and Everyday Life in Post-Uprising Egypt"**
- ◆ January 30, 2020: Poet and translator of Latin American poetry Mark Weiss lecture: **"A Talk on Translation"**
- ◆ January 30, 2020: Poetry reading by poet and translator Mark Weiss



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