June 30, 2017, will be my last day as dean. I will, however, continue on the faculty through the end of the 2020 academic year, and will then face the uncertainties of retirement. Why uncertainties? Because since I was 5 years old, an academic unit of some sort has always organized my life. New Year’s never meant much to me since my life has moved from September to September and not from January to January.

I have found great satisfaction in my career because I love teaching and research. I particularly love universities and would argue that no institution in our world matches the overall excellence of U.S. universities. Foreign universities are increasingly restructuring their curricula and hiring and promotion practices using U.S. models.

Among North American universities, Rice stands out. In my interviews for the position of dean, I repeatedly asked “What makes Rice special? To which universities might Rice compare itself?” Since I never got a good answer to these questions, I’ve come up with my own. If you mix together a superb liberal arts college, a chunk of MIT or Caltech, a topmost school of music and an equally ranked school of architecture, you would come up with something approximating Rice. But you would also need to place that university in 285 wooded acres surrounded by a major city with internationally recognized cultural institutions and a world-famous medical center. Add to this, 11 residential colleges for undergraduates, along with some of the world’s best students and faculty, and you will understand why I never got a good answer to those questions. Rice is like itself. No other university really looks quite like us.

The School of Humanities is every bit a match for the rest of the university. Person per person, I have never worked with a more productive faculty; and it is a delight to work with Rice students. Student evaluations of humanities courses are on average the highest in the university, and the exit surveys of graduating seniors with few exceptions give their highest marks to Rice humanities programs. Moreover, we do a great job of attracting students to the humanities. Historically, only 8 or 9 percent of Rice undergraduate applicants express interest in a humanities major. Over the last six years, however, a whopping 23 percent of our graduating seniors have completed either a first or second major in the humanities. The story behind these numbers is easy to understand. Once on campus, students become aware of the excellence of our courses and faculty along with the inherent interest of the subjects we teach.

Our continued health in the humanities, however, also depends on how well we define what we do and why it is important. A major difference between the humanities and other disciplines on campus is that all our subjects are historicized. If you take a philosophy course, it will almost always include a heavy dose of the history of philosophy. The same is true of courses in literature and religion. Curiously, however, although humanists take very seriously our role as curators of the past, we tend to speak in the present: “Plato maintains that …”; “Don Quijote challenges us to …”; “Rembrandt’s use of light reveals …”; and so on. G.K. Chesterton once argued that a true democracy must include the opinions of those who came before us. In the humanities, this kind of democracy frames much of what we do.

So as I leave my position as Rice’s dean of humanities, I’m happy to report that our school is in excellent shape. A large percentage of our students graduate with humanities majors because we do an excellent job of attracting students to our side of campus. Part of our attraction lies in our insistence that the past is always present — that present-tense questions like, “What does Shakespeare suggest in …?” or “Does Marx’s notion of false consciousness help us understand …?” or “Do we see reflections of the conflict between Cicero and Cataline in today’s politics …?” remain valid and current. Shakespeare, Marx, Cicero and Cataline most certainly died many years ago, but in the humanities they remain our contemporaries.
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It’s late afternoon at Atatürk International Airport and thousands of people mill around in the terminal for arriving flights. Out of the countless heads bobbing in the crowd, 11 are American students, bleary-eyed from their 11-hour flight and the shock of finding themselves in a land so far from their own. Around them, foreigners from across the globe, shouting children and women in burkas push past. In a few short minutes, the students from Houston have met their professors, exchanged their American dollars for Turkish lira and boarded a bus. Under colorful election banners and past ancient walls, along the Bosphorus and through Roman aqueduct arches, the bus takes the students through the city of Istanbul and into the Otaköy neighborhood, where they will stay for the coming weeks.

This afternoon in mid-May 2015 was the beginning of a learning experience different from anything that Rice University had ever offered. With no classroom, no whiteboards and no PowerPoints, participants discussed course material at Turkish coffee shops, professors lectured on site and students kept travelogues of each day’s discoveries. Of course, there were a good deal of challenges that went hand-in-hand with this one-of-a-kind course, but on the whole, the experience was immersive and hands-on in a way that no other course could be.

HART in the World: Istanbul took its students and professors all across the extensive city — from the Roman Hippodrome to the Museum of Modern Art — in a whirlwind three-week period, connecting students directly to works of art and architecture.

Since 2014, every HART major has had the opportunity to travel to New York to experience the artwork of the city. Building off of this idea, Shirine Hamadeh, an associate professor in the art history department, proposed the idea of teaching a summer course in Istanbul to Dean Shumway and Linda Neagley, associate professor of art history. Met with an enthusiastic response, the course developed into the first of a recurring summer program focused on a different city every year. According to the art history website (arthistory.rice.edu), the Istanbul course was designed to give learners the chance to “explore some of the most impressive museums, cities and collections” in one of the “greatest centers for art in the world.” Historically the capital of the Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Empires and a culturally thriving metropolis today, Istanbul became the centerpiece for the first course of this kind.

“I was both surprised and touched by the war, the refugee boy listened to the discussion carefully although he did not speak English. There are around three million Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Students after a class about Byzantine Hippodrome and Hagia Sophia (the latter partly featured in the background).
how moved the students were by some of our on-site experiences,” said Hamadeh, “as in Gezi Park, the Tarlabasi neighborhood, on a boat as we traversed the Bosporus, in a mosque for the first time.”

Following the rise and fall of the several empires centered in the city, the course was co-taught by Hamadeh and Umit Firat Açıkgöz, a Rice graduate student, and took students through landmarks, museums, neighborhoods and galleries. Focused at first on artistic contributions from the Roman and Byzantine Empires, the class spent its first few days in Istanbul at the Hippodrome, Aya Sofya, Chora Church and ancient city walls. The issue of religion, too, remained vitally important in the cultural and artistic history of Istanbul and the HART students pursued this issue in the coming weeks. Divided by ethnic and spiritual issues and set apart from other areas of the city, the Fener and Balat neighborhoods came to represent Greek Orthodox and Jewish areas, respectively, in the decades following the Ottoman conquest of 1453. Islam’s supremacy in Istanbul at the time of the newly expanded Ottoman empire manifests itself first in several of the mosques the class visited. The Ottoman Turks ushered in a period of widespread Islam that remains today where religion, art and architecture engaged in constant dialogue; despite focused study of this dialogue, the HART students visited only a small portion of the roughly 80,000 mosques scattered across the city.

By the final week, students arrived at more contemporary issues facing Istanbul today — issues that were made real and immediate in their visit to more modern areas of the city. Visiting the Galata and Pera neighborhoods, students witnessed and discussed the evident moves toward westernization and urbanization from the 19th century. Urbanization continues to be a central issue in Istanbul even today, and it remained the focus of the course until the end. Hearing lectures in Gezi Park and the Tarlabasi neighborhood, students learned about the recent protests surrounding Taksim and Gezi through the lens of urban development and political power as well as the deeply disruptive effects urbanization has on people in some Istanbul communities.

“My most valuable takeaway from the trip is to look at the world in a fresh eye,” said Emma Wu, a Lovett junior. “The first-hand experience of visiting historical and modern sites, having meaningful discussion about current issues with scholars, interacting with the locals and gathering their opinions on things, and most importantly, immersing myself in a new environment and making the most of it taught me to look at the world’s complexities in an emphatic eye.”

— EMMA WU ’18

An on-site lecture at Taksim Gezi Park. A project to demolish the park triggered the largest popular uprising in modern Turkish history in 2013.

“‘My most valuable takeaway from the trip is to look at the world in a fresh eye,’ said Emma Wu, a Lovett junior. ‘The first-hand experience of visiting historical and modern sites, having meaningful discussion about current issues with scholars, interacting with the locals and gathering their opinions on things, and most importantly, immersing myself in a new environment and making the most of it taught me to look at the world’s complexities in an emphatic eye.’”

— EMMA WU ’18

Sophie Schnietz ’18 is majoring in English and French Studies.
Raphael Hythloday, the leading interlocutor in Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), argued that in an ideal society, people “have very few laws, for their education is such that very few suffice.” As for lawyers, “a class of men whose trade it is to manipulate cases and multiply quibbles, they exclude them entirely.”

Like many of his colleagues in the legal profession, Thomas More (1478-1535) had a good line in lawyer jokes. An important irony of More’s *Utopia*, however, is that this “best place” and “no place” had rid itself of attorneys by training all its citizens to think and act like lawyers. “They think it practical for each man to plead his own case,” Hythloday explained, “in Utopia everyone is a legal expert.” The best training for the citizen-lawyers of Utopia was, it turned out, a liberal education. All Utopian children, regardless of background received “an introduction to good literature.” Those who proved particularly apt pupils continued to study the humanities throughout their lives. Judges and city governors were typically elected from this learned group but liberal education prepared all Utopians for lives of active citizenship and self-government.

Like Utopia, Rice has no law school and like Utopia, it has produced many distinguished citizen-lawyers. In 2015, Professors Peter C. Caldwell (History) and Christian J Emden (Classical and European Studies) inaugurated a new transdisciplinary minor in Politics, Law, and Social Thought (PLST) at Rice that promises to enhance this strong tradition.

The minor offers undergraduates an introduction to normative political theory—what Thomas More might have called “principles useful to the commonwealth”—and emphasizes the development of humanistic skills of close-reading and contextualization, verbal reasoning, and argumentative writing.

Thirty-six undergraduates are currently serving as law interns, an optional component of the minor. Their experiences in the legal-system are directed by the Honorable Lee H. Rosenthal, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, the Honorable Evelyn Keyes, Judge of the First Court of Appeals, Texas, and Professor David Dow, Director of the Texas Innocence Network, among others. Graduating PLST senior, Meredith Bouchein, who interned at the First Court of Appeals, said that the experience solidified her “desire to pursue a future in law, policy, and justice. I thoroughly enjoy how the minor allows students to couple the theoretical concepts of politics and law with experiential learning opportunities.” Anna Durham also emphasized the connection between classroom and courthouse. PLST courses have not only taught me new ways of thinking about politics and social thought, but they’ve opened the doors to new experiences and career paths. I’m currently interning at the Harris County District Attorney’s Office and will attend law school this fall. Both these decisions,” she concluded, “were influenced by my experiences in PLST.”

In keeping with President David Leeborn’s counsel, the PLST academic advisory board has been careful to ensure that the minor is not reductively preprofessional. Like the Utopians, students of political, legal and social thought value education that gives them opportunities to ask normative questions. Mathematics and Economics major Jiyang Cai claimed that his PLST classes have given him “a ‘guided tour’ of books and thinkers that we should read in college. I think we should read them,” he continued, “because they are helpful for us in thinking about and participating in political life, which is a part of a good life.” There will be more opportunities to examine the good life in Cai’s future. He has won Rice’s Abraham-Broad Fellowship to read for Part IIa of the Philosophy Tripos at Trinity College, Cambridge in 2017-2018.

At the conclusion of the first book of *Utopia*, Raphael Hythloday concedes that Utopians were no more naturally intelligent, wealthy, or virtuous than other people. Their capacity to create the “best place” on earth was derived from their “readiness to learn.” The study of PLST at Rice is challenging its students to go beyond describing the ills of contemporary politics, law and society and to imagine the “no places” and “best places” that law and education might build.

— AYSHA POLLNITZ

Aysha Pollnitz is an assistant professor of history and teaches a core-course for the PLST minor on “Pre-Modern Political Thought, from Cicero to Locke.” She is currently researching the translation of liberal education to the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
At a time when the number of humanities majors nationwide is declining, a panel held at Rice last fall highlighted the growing opportunities for critical engagement among the humanities, medicine and the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. The panel featured the chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), William Adams.

“I think it is becoming clear across the country, and I think Rice is a little bit further along in this than many institutions ... that new fields of engagement are opening up ... for the integration of the humanities, classically understood, with the STEM fields and medicine,” Adams said.

Adams visited Rice as part of a tour of Texas universities. “Our interest in this at the NEH is to find ways in which we can insert ourselves in this interesting development and begin soon to support initiatives at undergraduate institutions that seek to take advantage of these opportunities for integration,” he said.

Hosted by Dean of Humanities Nicolas Shumway, the panel was moderated by Kirsten Ostherr, professor of English and director of medical humanities at Rice, and featured presentations by Marcia Brennan, professor of religion and art history at Rice; Thomas Cole, director of the McGovern Center for Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston; and Ann Saterbak, associate dean of undergraduate education at the George R. Brown School of Engineering and professor in the practice of bioengineering education; and Ostherr.

Brennan spoke about her experiences as an artist-in-residence in the Department of Palliative Medicine at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, a position she has held since March 2009. Working in this clinical context, Brennan applies her skills as a creative writer when visiting critically ill patients and encouraging them to reflect on their lives and experiences in words. She recounted insights a patient felt Brennan should share with her pre-med students: “Doctors need to know what is humanly tolerable, not just in the body,” the patient said. “Most doctors treat the disease. The disease is a physical organism. In this hospital, they treat humans with the disease. It’s the human that is important, its feelings, its spiritual needs. People encourage you to keep fighting the cancer. To know when to surrender is also a fight. Also, the hospital is an international center, and it’s helpful for doctors to have background on where patients come from and what is important to them.”

As an educator in medical humanities, Cole serves students seeking degrees in the health, medical and biomedical fields. “Our students are pursuing professional careers; they’re pursuing practices. They’re driven. They’re goal oriented. They want to know what’s going to be on the next test,” Cole said. “For us, the issue partly is how to get them to care, how to get them to see the personal relevance to learn about and reflect on existential, ethical, historical, literary and cultural dimensions of science, technology and clinical care.”

Cole said the medical humanities must prod today’s students to not only learn about the history of medicine or bioethics or health policy, but to ask the question, “Who am I in relationship to what I’m learning? How do I understand myself, my historical location, my religious, familial and cultural influences, and what are my beliefs? Strange to say, no one has asked them these questions since they applied to medical school,” Cole said.

In her remarks, Saterbak discussed her work bringing together undergraduate humanities and engineering students on engineering projects designed to improve people’s lives locally and globally. She highlighted the unique qualities humanities students bring to the engineering design process. “There are lots of places where I believe that students in the humanities and the social sciences can really integrate well within engineering,” Saterbak said. “There’s usually a part that exists before the design process that we teach, where you have to find appropriate problems. And then there’s this part at the end, too, called implementation, where you work with the individuals who will be using the product to really fully understand how they’re using it and what is some feedback they might have. And then also, not to knock on engineers, but we’re not always creative all the time, and so (for) this idea of developing solutions, options and brainstorming, I think that multidisciplinary teams are much more effective.”

Ostherr, who specializes in health and medical visualizations, highlighted digital medical humanities projects led by Rice students. “In terms of health, we know that we are facing an aging population that is heavily burdened with preventable chronic disease and that is facing crushing medical debt at the individual and the national level,” Ostherr said. “We’ve also had this revolution in digital culture, where we’ve been able to amass more and more data about the things that we do in our daily lives, the things we are exposed to and how all those things may relate to health. This is giving us the potential to be much smarter about health care, about urban design ... but it’s also raising some really big challenges about the ways that we understand ourselves, if that is primarily through data, and how we interact with others, if that is often vectored through a screen rather than face-to-face human interaction.”

For example, working with physicians at MD Anderson, Ostherr’s students used digital innovation and technology to enhance enrollment to complicated yet critical cancer clinical trials so that discovery is accelerated.

“We do know in the medical humanities that the human experience of illness does not equate to the numerical values that are inscribed on a patient’s chart,” Ostherr said of the opportunities that lie ahead for her field. “We also know that the human experience of illness cannot be reduced to data sets and digital signals, but how do we get the human piece of that story brought back out from the data that’s enabling us to do new things in health care?”

JEFF FALK
After feeling like there wasn’t really a space at Rice where the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences could mix, Sally Huang ’15 and Sonia Pothraj ’14 co-founded the Rice Medical Humanities Club to create a space where premed and non-premed students alike were encouraged to explore their interdisciplinary interests.

Three years later, the club has grown significantly to be a place where students with an interest in medicine in any capacity can engage with the subject as it intersects with a world of other fields. With events ranging from a personalized tour of the Texas Medical Center Historical Research Center to informal discussions with faculty or physicians over coffee, the club provides all members, premeds and non-premeds alike, with a way to explore both their own personal interests as well as a variety of underexplored topics related to health.

One of the most significant contributions since the club’s founding has been the annual medical humanities symposium. The symposium has served as a way to bring together speakers from a variety of backgrounds to discuss their field of interest and spark discussion. The first symposium, Bridging the Gap, provided an introduction to the broad field of the medical humanities. The following year, Grey Matter: Controversies in Medicine, brought together ethicists, physicians and researchers to present points of controversy and discussion in their field.

Most recently, the symposium, Serving the Underserved, was chaired by Zoe Tao ’15, who said her goal was to key in on issues of human health that are largely unaddressed in both prehealth education and general conversation such as spirituality, sexuality and mental health. And her efforts were very successful. The symposium was attended by the Baylor Medical Humanities Honors Council and the director of the Baylor University Medical Humanities program, who said the event “set the standard for student-led symposiums.”

A more recent addition to the club has been the weekend Coffee Chats. About once or twice a month, the club hosts a guest for an informal discussion over coffee and bagels. The chats have covered topics ranging from transgender health, to immunity and vaccinations, to indigenous Mayan understandings of health and illness. The chats not only help interested students engage with a new subject matter more thoughtfully, but also help students get to know each other.

What does the medical humanities club mean to you?

“Medical humanities is an amazing way to learn how the humanities and social sciences interact with the medical fields, from the role of music and religion in therapy to the role of social issues in health care. I really love being a part of this organization because it offers so much for students who are interested in knowing how medicine relates to all aspects of study.”

— YUNA CHOI, HANSZEN ’17
In summer 1962, Rice history professor and Civil War expert Frank Vandiver was conducting research at the Huntington Library when he noticed something odd. Like others who studied Jefferson Davis (1808–1889), best known as the president of the Confederate States of America, Vandiver relied upon an edition of Davis papers published in 1923. But at the Huntington Library, Vandiver discovered several Davis letters he had never seen before. Realizing that more such unpublished correspondence might be surfacing across the country, Vandiver decided to prepare a new collection of Davis papers. The Civil War Centennial Commission officially recognized the project, LSU Press became its publisher, and Rice University agreed to be its sponsor, providing housing and access to library sources, and administering the funds contributed by federal, state and private sources. In 1964, The Papers of Jefferson Davis officially moved into Fondren Library, where it remained until the final volume was published last year.

For the first seven years, editor Haskell M. Monroe travelled the South in search of Davis documents. His initial efforts, and those of the succeeding editors and a small number of full-time staff, eventually resulted in a collection of over 100,000 documents, the publication of a 14-volume edition of Davis papers, and an award-winning website (http://jeffersonanddavis.rice.edu) providing not only information on the papers and on Davis, but also genealogical records for generations of Davis relations. And in turn, the editors’ efforts have made possible dozens of new works of scholarship on Davis, his family, the Civil War and numerous related topics.

For more than 50 years, because of the collaboration between Rice and the papers, researchers, the papers’ staff fielded thousands of phone and email inquiries on a wide variety of topics from the press and public alike. And to make each document in the collection immediately accessible to all readers, the editors — including Suzanne Gibbs, the newest assistant editor — also researched every aspect of Davis’ life. They wrote short biographies for many individuals and created annotation for all potentially obscure references in Davis’ documents, covering everything from the political events of the day to Davis’s pets’ names to literary and religious allusions. Over the years, a series of Rice students assisted in these projects, some going on to careers in public history, archival work or publishing.

One of the first Rice students to work on the collection was Lynda Lasswell Crist ‘67, who began as a part-time typist shortly after the office moved into Fondren. Crist majored in European history and French, and then received a Ph.D. in southern history at the University of Tennessee. UT’s attraction for Crist was that it housed the Papers of Andrew Johnson, a similar Civil War-era documentary project, but while completing her dissertation Crist left her position there, returning to Rice and the Davis Papers. Just a few years later, Crist took over following the death of the second editor, James T. Mcintosh. Along with Mary Seaton Dix, who became co-editor emerita in 1995 after 26 years, Crist worked on or oversaw the publication of all 14 volumes.

In 2012, I became the last Rice student to work on the collection. Like many other such students, I intended to write a dissertation on the American South, and I was interested in the documentary editing process. As I worked, I also became intrigued by the man whose letters I was reading: Jefferson Davis. Although most Americans know him as the symbol of the Confederacy, few are aware that he was most proud of his work representing his home state of Mississippi in Congress; or that he was a hero of the Mexican-American War; or that he was secretary of war under President Franklin Pierce; or that he is largely responsible for the way the U.S. Capitol Building appears today. He may represent state’s rights, but ironically enough, he was also a reluctant secessionist who supported many nationalist policies.

As president of the Confederacy, Davis agreed with most of General Lee’s decisions, but was more lenient toward deserters. Because of his reputation as a compassionate man, Davis was constantly being stopped on the street by southerners in need of financial assistance and receiving long, agonized letters from distressed widows, soldiers and others whose lives were turned upside down by the hardships of war. After Lee’s surrender, Davis was imprisoned for two years, but never brought to trial. His citizenship revoked, his health impaired, Davis spent the rest of his life living quietly, encouraging his fellow southerners to reconcile with the North, to accept the end of slavery and to build new lives. However, he never believed that he had committed treason, nor did he ever come to feel that slavery had been morally wrong.

In recent months, Davis has come under national scrutiny again, this time as part of the debate over which American leaders we choose to memorialize and how. The Houston Independent School District decided to rename Jefferson Davis High; in Austin, the University of Texas has moved a statue of Davis away from the main part of campus. Indeed, one of the best parts of living in a democracy is that we can choose to stop honoring leaders who supported the continued oppression of millions of our citizens’ ancestors. On the other hand, if graduate school has taught me anything, it is that the past is a complicated place: the best way to understand someone like Davis is to study the context in which he lived, and the best way to deal with his actions and legacy are to discuss them openly. In providing the raw historical data necessary for such an ongoing discussion, the Davis Papers has served a vital purpose.

— Cara Rogers
Ph.D. Candidate, History
Religion Department GEM Certificate Reflects Emphasis on New Comparative Methodologies

Can disciplines practiced by desert monks provide insights for neuroscientific approaches to religion? Do UFO encounters function as religious experiences? How are magic and Christianity related? Questions as diverse as these are taken up by a group of scholars in the Department of Religion known informally at Rice as the GEM Collective. GEM stands for gnosticism, esotericism and mysticism. Although these are modern categories, each deals with secret or forbidden knowledge and each has an ancient and a modern sense, representing the broad sweep of interests in the department. They reflect some of the most cutting-edge ideas about ways of knowing and the role of rejected knowledge in the formation and transformation of religion and culture.

The GEM Collective has recently formalized access to their interdisciplinary research in a new certificate offered to Ph.D. students in the humanities and social sciences, known as the Gnosticism, Esotericism and Mysticism Certificate, which was approved by the faculty senate in February 2016 but had been in place as a dean’s certificate since 2014. “The GEM Certificate is about training students to remember the margins and incorporate them in their explorations and discussions of whatever their traditional area of study might be,” according to April DeConick, chair of the Department of Religion and the Isla Carroll and Percy E. Turner Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, who has overseen the development of the certificate. “It provides students with a theoretical orientation, which they then can apply to their chosen concentrations.”

The certificate reflects a decision by the department beginning in the early 2000s to adopt a niche focused on the role of marginalized currents in transforming religion throughout history. “The intent was to create an atmosphere that could bring a kind of synergy together among faculty and students,” recalled Jeffrey J. Kripal, the J. Newton Rayzor Chair in Philosophy and Religious Thought, who promotes a new comparativism in the study of religion and provided much of the impetus for the GEM orientation. Kripal worked closely with William Parsons, professor of religion, who describes the orientation as “a way to establish a graduate program that was new and different and yet very current, tapping into the modern interest in spirituality.” In March 2016, Parsons held a conference at Rice titled Being Spiritual but Not Religious: Past, Present, Future(s). The conference attracted a variety of prominent scholars from religion, psychology and history. The GEM orientation relates to modern interest in “spirituality,” a category strongly related to the counterculture, which emerged from the margins of society during the 1960s to claim broad influence.

Of the 13 professors in the Department of Religion, nine are members of the GEM Collective, and their work touches in some way on hidden knowledge. For example, Brian Ogren, the Anna Smith Fine Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies, focuses on Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism. David Cook, associate professor and renowned expert in Islam, studies Sufism, Islamic mysticism. Professors and students alike remark on the collaborative atmosphere fostered by the GEM Collective, in which professors mentor each other’s students and read one another’s work. Claire Villarreal ’99 used methodologies gained while pursuing the GEM certificate (of which she received one of the first two awarded) to work on her dissertation, which concerned ways of knowing in Tibetan Buddhism.

Rice has the largest department in the world focusing on marginalized religious knowledge and collaborates closely with European universities with a similar focus, including at the University of Groningen, which modeled its master’s program on the Rice approach. The emphasis has clearly been a draw for graduate students. “Half of applicants express an interest in GEM,” according to DeConick.

As part of the certificate requirements, students enroll in the GEM Research Forum, which allows them the opportunity to learn about current faculty projects. The certificate is open to graduate students from any discipline in the humanities or social sciences. “Having all of us here in this environment, we are really generating new ideas and perspectives because we are in different time periods and different data sets,” said DeConick. “It makes what we are doing here really comparative — other schools can’t compare.”

— ERIN PROPHET
We arrived in Nanjing on a typically overcast day, as a miasma of air pollution and rainy season cloud cover completely obscured the sun. Despite my hunger, jet lag and cynical estimation of my Mandarin proficiency, I was about to embark on one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Our driver attempted to make casual conversation as we hurtled down an elevated highway through unbelievably dense, seemingly endless cityscape of the southwestern Jiangsu province. Well aware of our obligation to speak exclusively Mandarin for the entirety of the trip, we didn’t want to appear rude, but also didn’t want to embarrass ourselves either: A month removed from completing Chinese 263, our conversational Mandarin skills were rusty, to say the least.

When I eventually engaged the one-sided barrage of questions being launched at us from the front of the van, my awkward grammar and horrendous tones aroused a hearty laugh from our driver. Discouraged, I resigned myself to silence, but our driver kept prodding. I braced myself for further mocking, but instead, with each verbal exchange, my new friend became more and more interested in our conversation, though he never did stop giggling as I stumbled through my limited repertoire of set phrases and idioms. By the time we arrived outside of our apartment building, I was already beginning to feel more comfortable with my Mandarin, and the idea of forgoing English for a month and a half seemed like a less insurmountable task.

Our driver paid us a quick compliment on our Chinese, flashed us a grin and we parted ways. That first awkward exchange serves as a metaphor for our entire Nanjing experience. Certainly, the beginning of the trip was difficult: linguistic blunders, misunderstood directions and the struggle to be understood frustrated us all. Native speakers couldn’t help but smile as we made basic grammar and pronunciation errors that often led to our bewildering confusion. (In Chinese, spicy, mother, horse and hemp are homonyms.) However, interactions with local speakers never left us completely discouraged. As they watched our errors unfold, they also showed us how to correct them. Be they teachers, homestay hosts, waitresses or even passerbys, local Chinese speakers were always happy to help us improve our Mandarin.

As we made this realization and began to take our lighthearted humiliation in stride, our confidence grew. Instead of fearing the consequences of speaking incorrectly, I jumped at the opportunity to order for our table at dinner or negotiate on the price of a trinket at the temple market. Along with our self-confidence, our Mandarin proficiency began to blossom, growing by orders of magnitude until our public interactions were greeted not with mirth, but with deference and pleasant surprise.

The concordant growth of our confidence and language proficiency echoed throughout every venue of our six-week stay in Nanjing. Because the experience was truly immersive, we were required to use Mandarin in every context that a native speaker would. Be it on the train to Shanghai, in the classroom, on the badminton court or touring cultural heritage sights, the Rice-in-China curriculum constantly pressured us to leave our linguistic comfort zones and use Mandarin in a way we had not before. As a result, during the six weeks we spent in China, our Mandarin abilities grew by leaps and bounds. Though it was admittedly frustrating at times, the amount of academic and personal growth that each of us experienced was truly 不可估量, or “inestimable.”

Jackson Neagli is a junior Brown College majoring in Asian Studies with a focus in Chinese language and policy studies with a focus in law and justice.
IT DOESN’T PAY TO BE A QUIET STUDENT IN SHIH-SHAN SUSAN HUANG’S CLASSES. IN THE MIDST OF LECTURES OFTEN PLANNED TO THE MINUTE, HUANG, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY, SPECIFICALLY ENGAGES LESS-TALKATIVE STUDENTS BY NAME, ENCOURAGING THEM TO OFFER THOUGHTS WHILE CHALLENGING THEM TO DEVELOP NEW CAPABILITIES. THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE THUS IS BROADENED THROUGH A RANGE OF OPINIONS BEYOND WHAT A SMALL GROUP OF ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS COULD OFFER.

As a Chinese art scholar, Huang’s ability to engage the entirety of the class is all the more remarkable given the limited familiarity most students have with her subject. I saw this firsthand in Introduction to Asian Civilizations, a popular introductory Asian studies course co-taught by Huang, Richard Smith, the George and Nancy Rupp Professor of Humanities and professor of history, and Lisa Balabanlilar, associate professor of history. The course is taken by a varied group of students, almost none of whom have a background in art history. In lectures peppered with constant student engagement, Huang demystified Chinese art and the visual analysis techniques critical to her discipline.

Huang’s well-received monograph, “Picturing the True Form: Daoist Visual Culture in Traditional China,” published in 2012 by the Harvard University Asia Center, launched a paperback edition in 2015. Her current book project, “First Impressions: Chinese Religious Woodcuts and Cultural Transformation,” focuses on ninth- to 15th-century Buddhist woodcuts from China’s first “golden age” of print-making. In this project, Huang draws from a wide range of materials, including archaeological findings, and compares Chinese works to Japanese and Korean prints and paintings to address issues including media and mediation, standardization and ritual function. This project has received generous support from the Scholar Grant of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, the travel fellowship of the Asian Cultural Council, and the teaching release fellowship of the Humanities Research Center at Rice. Recently, Huang was awarded the prestigious Frederic Burkhardt Residential Fellowship for Recently Tenured Scholars granted by the American Council of Learned Society; she will be on leave in 2017-2018 as a fellow at the Huntington Library in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Interestingly, neither Chinese art nor art history were Huang’s initial academic interests despite growing up in Taiwan. Initially an English literature major, Huang began studying art history late in her undergraduate years. Inspired by Flemish art and other painters such as Johannes Vermeer and Paul Cézanne, she studied in Aix-en-Provence, France, after graduating and before returning to Taiwan for master’s work. Here, a lack of Flemish art resources and a particularly influential mentor spawned an interest in Chinese art. Huang continued her education at Yale, where her dissertation on a Daoist triptych reflected her desire to work on anonymous objects outside of the canon of widely known masterpieces that she had studied in Taiwan.

After earning her PhD., Huang completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia, incorporating unique topics into her lectures. While teaching an Asian humanites course for the general undergraduate curriculum, Huang realized she needed to engage and challenge engineers and other non-art history students in creative ways. She learned to use popular culture, modern art and anime to make Chinese art more accessible, elements that appear regularly in her classes today.

This past spring, Huang also helped lead the spring break New York trip for art history majors. A group of eight spent six days visiting museums and enjoying the city, including a “Madame Butterfly” production by the Metropolitan Opera. Huang Linda Neagley, associate professor of art history, and Diane Wolfthal, the David and Caroline Minter Professor of Humanities and professor of art history, arranged special behind-the-scenes looks at collections and objects. As a participant, I found the on-site learning experience to be an invaluable component to my art history education.

Huang’s interest in understudied objects testifies to her ability to see value in the most seemingly ordinary of objects. Similarly, she challenges even those without backgrounds in Chinese art to participate in the classroom. In this way, class discussions are filled with diverse perspectives, shedding new light on understandings of objects, artworks and the world that they reflect.

Bo Kim ’16 graduated in May, earning a B.A. in art history and economics.
DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

CLASSICAL AND EUROPEAN STUDIES

BY TOM CARROLL

Formed last year as an amalgam of the Departments of Classical Studies, French Studies and German Studies, the new Department of Classical and European Studies (CES) covers a range of interests in the cultural and linguistic phenomena of Europe. While the focus of each of the three programs is different, the department is united by engagement and student-to-faculty interaction both inside and outside of the classroom.

CES boasts a range of courses that encourage students to explore how language interacts with the culture, arts, history, politics and philosophy of a given people. Courses crafted on the tradition of the German folktale, courtly love in medieval France, and the conception of self in the Greco-Roman tradition draw in CES majors and the general student body alike. One of the highlights of CES course offerings for students is the ability to respond to student interests, something made possible by the high level of student-teacher engagement within each program. For example, several students approached Ted Somerville, lecturer of Classical and European Studies, about teaching an Old English course. Somerville responded by designing a class that teaches the language through reading “Beowulf,” a course which now is eagerly attended by students and faculty alike. The versatility and commitment of the CES department to engage
with and respond to students in its course offerings is a great part of what makes the department thrive.

The recent combination of classical, French and German studies under the helm of CES also provides new opportunities for interdisciplinary offerings that add a new dimension to the curriculum. For instance, the CES department is an integral component of the Politics, Law and Social Thought program, an interdisciplinary minor designed to have students engage with contemporary political issues using a developed historical and cultural perspective.

The program has been growing quickly, placing students in a number of internship positions in state and federal courts. Additionally, the program has held a number of well-attended events, including a joint event with the Baker Institute after the recent Paris attacks, which discussed the challenge of Islamic State terrorism. Other CES collaborations include a program with the Jewish studies department studying the memory of the Holocaust in modern Germany and a partnership between German studies and the projected minor in film and media studies.

As the CES department continues to evolve, the new structure will afford it a wealth of opportunities for interdisciplinary innovation to continue to enrich the student experience.

One defining characteristic of the Department of Classical and European Studies is the engagement of both students and faculty in a number of research projects. Brown College junior Susannah Wright worked with Scott McGill, professor of classics, to polish her verse translation of a previously untranslated Christian epic by the fourth-century author Juvencus. Wright wrote that her work taught her about both the process has really “taught [her] to think comparatively about all literature genres.”

Students and faculty also collaborate outside of the classroom to create a vibrant extracurricular community for the department. The German studies program has a student German Club and a film screening series titled “Kino Dienstag” organized by Martin Blumenthal-Barby, associate professor of German studies. The group meets monthly to watch movies fitting in with the theme Screening the Law.

The classical studies program also has a strong extracurricular focus, particularly as of late with the resurgence of the Rice Senior Classical League (RSCL) under the direction of Scott McGill, professor of classical European studies. In addition to social gatherings, RSCL held its largest annual event, a day-long academic contest for over 100 area high school classicists from Houston and San Antonio, in late January. RSCL also has worked with David Riesbeck, lecturer of classical and European studies, to create a weekly reading group where students meet over dinner to translate works from different authors at sight, allowing classicists to continue building their skill set even if unable to register for ongoing classes.

Club Chouette, the extracurricular group of French studies students, hosts a weekly lunch meeting to practice speaking in French, and they also sponsor movie nights and other social outings for students in their program. These various extracurricular events and organizations give the CES programs a strong sense of community.

The strength of the department is further enhanced by its strong ties to the community outside the hedges. Whether by attending a discussion about the interaction of the theories of Pythagoras with contemporary space science at the Menil or listening to faculty and local artists muse about cultural reuse at the Rice Gallery, CES students have many chances to apply what they learn in the classroom to connect with the local community. But the involvement of the department ranges internationally as well.

French studies works with the Junior Year in France program to facilitate a robust study abroad program, with recent CES majors conducting studies in Nice and Paris and even authoring publications in noted French journals. In addition, the Rice-in-France program offered through the Center for Languages and Intercultural Communication offers students the chance to improve communication and cultural competency with six weeks of stay in Aix-en-Provence.

The classical studies program maintains several opportunities to study in the Mediterranean, including a relationship with the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome and a study trip led by CES faculty to Greece and Rome that allows students in the classical legacy track to study the cultural inheritance provided by the surviving monuments.

German studies offers its students the opportunity to study at the Berlin Consortium of German Studies. The program also has a strong relationship with the University of Leipzig; Rice students can take an intensive summer language course at Leipzig that replaces six credit hours of German, and the faculty have collaborated to form an international research collaboration termed the Rice/Leipzig Lovett Seminars.

Additionally, CES seminars and symposia bring renowned academics from around the world to talk about topics ranging from satire in ancient Rome to the representation of terror across national boundaries.

The learning experience delivered by the CES department, combining different disciplines and learning styles, meshes with the multifaceted pursuits of its majors. Some of us will continue on as academics in CES, German or French studies, and others will pursue careers in medicine, law and politics. But whatever it is we do, we will be armed with a perspective honed by the careful study of Western civilization and its history from many different angles. As we come to the end of the first year of the CES department’s new structure, we can say the future is bright, both for this department and for the students it forges.

Kailynn Balkum ’16, another recent graduate, worked with Klaus Weissenberger, professor of German studies, to compose a thesis on literature from Jewish authors exiled during World War II. She wrote that her experience profoundly impacted her work inside and outside of CES, and said that the process has really “taught [her] to think comparatively about all literature genres.”

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PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Program in Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities

— ANNE DAYTON
LECTURER AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR
POVERTY, JUSTICE AND HUMAN CAPABILITIES
“Imagine telling people you worked at a Bolivian circus for the summer,” said Camila Kennedy ’17. She faced the expected raised eyebrows and barrage of questions when she came home from her Susan McAshan Summer Service Internship in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in fall 2015. “When I returned from my internship at the social circus nonprofit Fundación Enseñarte, I had trouble explaining the details of my work to my friends and family.”

Kennedy found she was better able to convey her experience after completing a digital story in the post-internship reflection course offered by the Program in Poverty, Justice and Human Capabilities (PJHC). In this half-semester course, which I teach, students learn digital storytelling as a means to reflect on and communicate their experiences. A genre dating back to the 1970s, digital storytelling combines spoken narration, images and music in short three- to five-minute films. Desktop software has made this type of personal narrative accessible to students with no prior filmmaking experience. Returning interns produce their digital stories in the first half of the fall semester and screen them publicly in mid October.

“The Susan McAshan Summer Service Internship, like all of the PJHC program’s service learning experiences, is purposefully designed to avoid treating community members as research subjects,” explains Diana Strassmann, the PJHC’s director. “We encourage students to spend their internships listening and learning rather than trying to fit their experiences into academic theories. Digital storytelling provides a compelling means for students to communicate what they’ve learned while becoming part of these communities.”

McAshan Internships are awarded each year to a select group of PJHC minors, who spend their summers serving full time in disadvantaged communities here in Houston, throughout the United States and in developing countries. This experience of becoming part of another community affects students profoundly.

Through her service in a nursery school and shelter for young women in Cuzco, Peru, Micaela Canales ’15 “learned that work in human capabilities is intensely emotional labor. The McAshan Internship was an invaluable gift and the best, most profoundly practical and educational experience that I had as an undergraduate. The internship emboldened me to pursue PJHC work post-Rice and helped me to see that this type of work was truly possible.”

Interns return to Rice in the fall brimming with stories and frequently dozens of photographs as well as sound recordings of their experiences. Narrowing this wealth of material into a short story at first seems a daunting task even for a professional. “When I initially viewed the photographs that students had taken during their internships, I was concerned about the difficulty of forming coherent narratives with the mix of casual snapshots, landscapes and curious documentation of billboards, signs and buildings,” observed Paul Hester, lecturer of photography, who provides students with feedback on their photographs.

Through a series of posts to the course blog, in-class presentations and lots of feedback from me, their peers, Hester and Elizabeth Festa of the Center for Oral, Written and Visual Communication, students narrow their focus to a single narrative that can be told in the brief time allotted.

Jennifer Muturi ’15, who spent summer 2014 at Point Hope Rehabilitation Center in Buduburam, Ghana, recalls that sorting through her photos to choose images for her story helped her understand what she had experienced while serving children with physical disabilities. “Looking through all of the photos,” she said, “I was able to see again what had captured my attention. When I gave the camera to the kids and the caretakers, I was able to see how they saw their home. I found all of the beautiful parts of my summer that made me love the community even more.”

For Samantha Love ’16, who also spent summer 2014 in Ghana at Maranatha Preparatory School in Kasoa, choosing which story to tell was challenging. “Trying to communicate an experience so complex is extremely difficult — choosing what story to tell (and how to tell it) feels impossible.” Love decided to focus on her efforts to encourage the girls in the fifth-grade classroom where she taught for six weeks. “The digital story I ultimately made was one story of many, but it leads to conversations about the more complicated stories I believe are important to tell.”

Kennedy found that her story not only helped her to explain that no, she hadn’t run away to join the circus, but also to “share not only my day-to-day experience, but also my reflections on international development work in general.”

The resulting stories are spectacular. “Digital stories take us to locations where the interns served and give us a feel and appreciation for their daily life, their achievements, and the opportunities and the challenges the local community faces in a global economy,” observed Elias Bongomba, the Harry and Hazel Chavanne Chair in Christian Theology and a PJHC Steering Committee member.

Hester said, “I was wonderfully surprised to see the final presentations. This way of organizing their sometimes overwhelming involvement in the lives of others introduces a way to digest the intensity of their internships.”

We gratefully acknowledge the Clayton Fund, Inc., Cathryn Rodd and Douglas M. Selman, and anonymous donors for their support of the Susan McAshan Summer Service Internship program.

A selection of digital stories from 2014 and 2015, including stories by Kennedy, Canales and Love, are available on the PJHC program’s website at pjhc.rice.edu/digital-stories/.
The Rice Seminars are designed to promote humanistic research, broadly understood. They bring together a select group of Rice faculty members, visiting scholars and Rice graduate students to study a common theme from several disciplinary perspectives (funding is available to bring in outside speakers to present public talks, provide feedback, meet with the seminar participants, participate in a year-end conference, and otherwise engage with seminar participants and the broader Rice community). The most visible goal of the seminars is a scholarly publication to which all participants will contribute. Equally important, but less visible, is the creation of international and interdisciplinary scholarly communities that will outlive the seminars themselves. The focus of the Rice Seminars changes each year.

The ubiquity of today’s connectedness, in addition to the ongoing production, collection and curation of massive amounts of data, has produced a new textual medium. Made of tweets, posts, messages, chats, etc. (all associated with time, date, and longitude and latitude), this new medium now flows through a pervasive network of computers, tablets, smartphones, PDAs, media players and GPS navigation units. This “text” needs a new reader, one as critical and perceptive as previous semioticians who interpreted the signs and signals of often equally disruptive literary scripts.

Unimaginable amounts of publicly accessible data reside on the databases of government agencies, corporations and municipalities, from which a multitude of file formats can be downloaded, read, studied and interpreted. It is perhaps due to this open access to digitally borne information about the cities we live in that Roland Barthes’ maxim, “the city speaks to its inhabitants,” now operates at a much greater scale thanks to digital repositories that are, in fact, treasure troves for scholarly work.

If the humanities are the study and interpretation of the experiences, beliefs, constructs, behaviors and artifacts associated with human beings — who now happen to be in permanent data mode and unable to move without leaving a digital trace behind — contemporary humanists face the unprecedented possibility of analyzing programming languages much as Ferdinand de Saussure once constructed a linguistic model made of signifiers and signifieds. Insights and solutions from multiple disciplines will inevitably be necessary in order for this new medium to look at contemporary society and explore not only such phenomena as the “hypersurveillance” of communication protocols, the “instantaneity” of transactions, the “immateriality” of production or the “color” of profiling algorithms, but also more esoteric topoi such as the “closetedness” of avatars, the “virility” of machines, the “coerciveness” of data validation functions, the “anonymity” of Anonymous and the “reflexivity” of selfies — not to mention the style, syntax and rhetoric of algorithmic bias in clouds made of zeros and ones.

As a site for such an investigation, the 2016 - 2017 Rice Seminars propose to look at specific nodes along a network of contemporary life. These nodes, or intelligent “endpoints” able to communicate without hierarchical agency, are the very cities that today aspire to be mega, ideal, sustainable, virtual, smart or resurgent formations. Interlinked by computers, mobile devices and real-time sensors, these are places where the implicit connectedness of how we ought to live together depends on distributed networks, rules, codes, protocols and infrastructures, all bound by a paradoxical, if not panopticistic, social contract now located in Cyberia. In such cities, the social fabric continues to collide (and potentially collide) with the very resilience of disciplinary and control societies. The regularity of social or architectural form has, in fact, become far less relevant than the orchestration of the data that a city produces, collects and curates.
It was the pulpit and the manuscript, the spoken and the written word quailing before the printed word.

— VICTOR HUGO, “NOTRE DAME DE PARIS”

As Alexander Galloway points out in the book “Protocol,” this inevitably poses an epistemological and ontological challenge when information technology insists on fitting data within the positivistic parameters of discrete locations and closed polygons. Humanistic research is, by definition, open ended, not necessarily linear, and most definitely interested in meaning, not proof. Even false data in the humanities is meaningful. The fact, however, that people, goods and ideas move across urban or geographic space makes something like Geographic Information Systems (GIS), for example, extremely useful to humanists who are able to mathematically integrate geometric abstractions of how we live together while transgressing underlying topologies made only of points, lines, polygons and pixels. A spatial humanist would have to work against the very grain of GIS in order to privilege complexity and ambiguity over authority and certainty or reveal how a computer need not be bound by mutually exclusive categories in its data structures. Room ought to be made for chronotopic imaginaries, for the shifting of scale in both time and space, for selectivity, for simultaneity, all combined with emerging technologies in multimedia, GIS-enabled W3 services, geovisualization, cybergeography, exploratory spatial data analysis, on-the-fly 3-D modeling and augmented reality.

To read and interpret available streams of code, however, requires “looping together ... several tastes, several languages,” as Barthes also wrote. Certain long-standing conflicts will need to be addressed, if not resolved, between the functional necessities of cities and the semantic charge of their histories; between the mathematical assimilation of urban form and the evidence that a city is not a fabric of equivalent elements; and between the reality of geography and the instability of meaning, lest we forget that a city is often experienced in complete opposition to objective data and lest we also forget that the meaning and value of quantitative assessments are often cloaked in veils of objectivity when they often add up to no more than forms of obliteration and censorship.

Farès el-Dahdah is the director of the Humanities Research Center and professor of humanities.
Rice University's premier undergraduate literary magazine, R2: The Rice Review, publishes an annual collection of the best poetry, prose, and visual artwork Rice's undergraduate student body has to offer, alongside staff-conducted interviews with renowned writers from a multitude of genres. R2, as a dedicated and ever-enlarging group of students, also works to encourage a community of creativity and collaboration on campus by facilitating a short writing contest monthly — Rice Writes — and publishing its winners in the Rice Thresher, and by hosting such events as our fall Open Mic Night and our spring Launch Party. R2: The Rice Review has even been nationally recognized as a high-quality publication by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. In 2015, R2: The Rice Review was awarded the AWP National Program Directors' Prize for Best Content in an Undergraduate Literary Magazine, the highest honor bestowed or given.

As the former editor-in-chief of R2: The Rice Review, I worked with R2 in a number of capacities ranging from published author to various senior editorial roles, and I can personally testify to just how much R2 has grown even over the past few years and how much of an impact this magazine has on Rice's creative community. Current faculty advisor, Ian Schimmel, a lecturer in creative writing, describes R2 as being "at a point where we are making a product that is so much more than just a repository for fine writing. We're creators in our own right, and we're more conscious than ever about creating an object that reflects our community and stands as a cogent piece of art unto itself."

Since 2010, Schimmel has been a constant source of knowledge and support for a staff whose individual makeup shifts regularly as students make their way through their undergraduate years. With his encouragement, R2 has not only been able to maintain a relatively consistent vision and production standard — to raise its bar, even, and to expand its horizons — but, "staff and contributors [have increasingly come to] think of R2 as a community where editors, creators and all of Rice can share in an artistic sense of belonging."

R2 was founded in 2004 by creative writing professors and published authors Justin Cronin and Amber Dermont. In that year, Dermont was the first writer-in-residence (what would later become the Parks Fellow) at Rice. Cronin approached Dermont with the great idea — a literary magazine produced entirely by and for Rice University undergraduates. "We [Justin and I] met and decided that the journal would be most successful and in-

www.r2mag.rice.edu

"I’m Fine, Thanks for Asking" by Marcel Merwin ’17, Architecture

structive if students managed all aspects of production from editing to publishing and distribution, Dermont said. I remember being present at the first all-night editorial meeting and being in awe of how quickly and seamlessly the students organized themselves."

Winning the AWP National Directors’ Prize last year was simply vindication for over a decade of hard work from a long line of talented and passionate individuals. According to Dermont, winning this award says a lot about student
leadership and Schimmel’s guidance. The cover art continues to be world class and the content consistently blows me away. The stories, poems and essays are sensitive, innovative and lyrically composed.” But R2 is not simply a project that its staff and contributors complete and then move on — students often carry the experience with them for years, utilizing the skills they garner in their future endeavors. “R2 has enabled students to achieve a level of professional experience that will prepare them for the world of publishing,” Dermont said. “After working at R2 or publishing in R2, students have a stronger idea of the kind of writers, artists and editors they would like to be.” Many former R2 editors and contributors have gone on to pursue graduate degrees in creative writing, receive MFAs, find work in publishing and otherwise continue to put their experience from working with R2 to productive use.

Yet, beyond the potential opportunities and experiences R2 may lead to in the future, R2: The Rice Review continues to have a significant impact in the present, as well. According to Schimmel, “Whether that’s through the production of the actual magazine, submitting to it, entering one of our monthly contests, joining us at a public event, or simply picking up and reading the journal, we’re finding more and more ways for writing and art to intersect with everyone’s daily life.” And that is ultimately R2’s mission, to give Rice’s undergraduate writers and artists a space to showcase their work, to give R2 staff a variety of projects through which to hone their editorial skills, and to regularly engage the Rice community at large with a yearly work of art built from the flesh and bones, the talent and heart, of its own undergraduate body.

— AMBER DERMONT

— COURTNEY BROWN ’18
R2 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, 2015–16
LITTERARUM LUMEN: A NEW STEP FOR UNDERGRAD HUMANITIES

IN MANY WAYS, THE FOUNDING OF LITTERARUM LUMEN, THE NEW UNDERGRADUATE HUMANITIES CLUB HERE AT THE UNIVERSITY, WAS A HAPPY ACCIDENT.

I’d been playing with the idea of starting a group to bring together humanities majors across Rice, but wasn’t really sure how to go about it. When I saw the flyers posted by Lora Wildenthal, associate dean of humanities, at the beginning of this year, I was amazed at how lucky I was that the folks in the dean’s office shared my desire to see undergraduate majors brought together and were willing to put their considerable resources behind the job. Over the course of the fall semester, Wildenthal and I worked together to create a general overview for what we thought the club would look like, what sort of role it would fill in the School of Humanities and at Rice at large, and the types of events that such a group could participate in. About midway through the fall, we were thrilled to see our hard work pay off when other undergrads proved to be just as interested in the group as we were and the Student Association officially approved us as a student organization.

Throughout my brief tenure as Litterarum Lumen’s president, I was amazed at the level of passion I see in other humanities majors. Not only has our group become a hotbed for discussion of the role of humanities at Rice and in our society, it also has become a social space allowing students from many different majors to reach out and connect with one another. Many of our younger members expressed frustration about social alienation in their own classes as humanities majors, feeling that they miss out on important social opportunities by not being part of popular freshman STEM courses like gen chem. Litt Lumn (as our club is sometimes known) is a space for these individuals to meet other undergrads and form friendships that will last through the rest of their Rice career. We’ve also been working toward giving humanities students a greater voice on campus, by attempting to create dialogues with the Student Association and the school administration, which are finally beginning to pay off. Though we are certainly a young club, we are thriving as an organization; most of our members are underclassmen, who seem well-poised to continue the fight for the humanities at Rice even after the older members of our organization graduate in the next year or two.

To my knowledge, there has never been an organization on campus dedicated to bringing together undergraduates from across the humanities. The work that we are doing is unprecedented at Rice and represents a bold step forward for humanities students. While we are only just beginning our work, and I doubt it will not come to fruition until well after many of us graduate, I believe that Litterarum Lumen can really bring change to the culture that surrounds the humanities at Rice and in doing so change the perception of the humanities in our culture at large in some small way.

— JOHN HAGELE ’17
2015 marked a milestone year for SEL as the journal celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Diana Hobby Editorial Fellow program, which provides generous stipends to English department graduate students while they learn about scholarly rigor, professional behavior, and publishing standards and protocols. Since the establishment of the program in 1995, 69 Hobby Fellows have worked alongside journal editors to prepare accepted essays for publication, process books for reviews and send offprints to publishers. SEL toasted the success of the program and honored the memory of the late Diana Hobby ’81 at a special celebration held during the 2016 annual convention of the Modern Language Association in Austin. Along with Nicolas Shumway, dean of humanities, and past and present Hobby Fellows, Diana’s daughter, Laura Beckworth, was on hand for the occasion, and music was provided by a Texas swing band.

During the reception, the editors of SEL also presented the fourth Robert Lowry Patten Award, the 10th Elizabeth Dietz Memorial Award and the 19th Monroe K. Spears Award. Rosemary Hennessy, the L.H. Favrot Professor of Humanities in English and chair of the Department of English, and Logan D. Browning, SEL’s publisher and executive editor and professor in the practice of English and humanities, made the presentations to the winning authors and publishers.

The Patten Award was created in 2012 to honor the 40-plus-year distinguished scholarly and pedagogical career of Rice University professor and SEL editor emeritus Robert Lowry Patten. “The Architecture of Concepts: The Historical Formation of Human Rights” (Fordham University Press, 2013) by Peter de Bolla, professor of cultural history and aesthetics and director of the Cambridge Concepts Lab, King’s College, Cambridge University, was selected as the most outstanding recent contribution to studies of the restoration and the 18th-century. The judges lauded the work for its “highly nuanced history of the numerous contradiction and aporias built into the concept of ‘human rights’” and its “novel way of thinking about the very idea of a ‘concept’ in the first place.”

The judges for the 2015 Patten Award were Frances Ferguson, the Ann L. and Lawrence B. Buttenwieser Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Chicago; Daniel O’Quinn, professor in the School of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Guelph; and W. J. T. Mitchell, the Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor of English and Art History at the University of Chicago.

The 2015 Elizabeth Dietz Memorial Award, administered by SEL for the dean of humanities and the Department of English, was given to “The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales” (University of Chicago Press, 2013) by Laurie Shannon, the Franklyn Bliss Snyder Professor of English Literature at Northwestern University. As the judges report, “The Accommodated Animal” is an “ambitious, exciting, and often moving” book that demonstrates early modern “humans were interconnected with all kinds of animals in a broad community of creatures that shared affective, social and legal bonds.”

The judges for this year’s contest were Leah Marcus, the Edwin Mims Professor of English, Vanderbilt University; Barbara Fuchs, professor of English and Spanish, University of California at Los Angeles; and Patricia Fumerton, professor of English, University of California at Santa Barbara.

The journal’s own Monroe K. Spears Award was given to Shannon E. Kelley, associate professor of English at the University of Memphis, for her Winter 2015 essay, “Amber, the Helia-des, and the Poetics of Trauma in Marvell’s ‘The Nymph Complaining.’” The editors voted and agreed that Professor Kelley’s article most completely met the award’s criteria: being “marked by clarity, economy and felicity of expression and by elegant and discerning interpretation” and “the essay that has given the editors the greatest pleasure to read.”

SEL, a quarterly journal of British literary studies founded at Rice by Carroll Camden, longtime chair of the English department, began publication in 1961. For more information on the journal and upcoming issues, please visit sel.rice.edu.

Becky Byron is the associate editor/business manager for SEL Studies in English Literature 1500–1900.
The new gallery initiated by Provost Marie Lynn Miranda last semester is located on the fourth floor of Allen Center, consisting of the hallway leading up to her office. The hallway’s walls, which were blank before, now stand out visually as it showcases a wide range of student artwork.

Not only is it a new exciting way for students to display a work of art in a professional setting, it also is a great opportunity for students in Rice’s Visual and Dramatic Arts program to connect to supporters of the arts and network with the professors in the art department.

Students who had works in Life Drawing, Drawing I, and Introduction to Black and White Photography classes from previous semesters were individually selected by their arts professors. Works were chosen based on the appropriate theme, which required it to be in black and white. I gladly offered my piece, which is a 5-foot-tall self-portrait of myself that also was shown earlier in the year at the student exhibition at the Rice Media Center.

On Dec. 8, there was a reception for the artists who had their works displayed. The professors of the featured art classes and others in the department, as well as the people working in the fourth-floor office, were invited to attend. During the reception, the provost gave a brief speech about why she initiated this gallery. For her, she said, it felt like a personal way of approaching students, a chance to call a few Rice Owls her own.

As a studio art major, there is something satisfying about other people viewing a piece of work that I put a lot of effort and thought into. The placement of my art made me once again perceive my art in a different way, in context with my peers’ art, and through the eyes and interpretations of others. Although brief, I hope I can speak for the others in saying that it was an exciting, personal accomplishment that has motivated me to continue producing art.

CINDY NGUYEN  
RICE UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 2018  
PSYCHOLOGY & STUDIO ART  
WIESS COLLEGE
This spring, the School of Humanities’ HEDGE program and the School of Social Sciences’ Gateway program launched an initiative to provide undergraduate students at Rice an opportunity to explore their interests in law. The Law, Justice and Society Scholars program (LJASS) provides academic and professional support through a structured experience with law organizations, faculty, staff and alumni. While earning academic credit, students participate in internships with various legal entities, including federal and state judges, district attorneys and lawyers focusing on areas such as human rights, legal aid and immigration law. Throughout the year, students also participate in workshops to gain an understanding in legal research, court structure, confidentiality, and professional conduct.

Each semester, students are provided the opportunity to travel outside Houston to further explore law at the state and national level. For two days in February 2017, a group of 12 students shadowed attorneys Austin, learning firsthand the practice of law. The students spent their first morning at the Office of the Texas Attorney General, followed by an afternoon of shadowing attorney mentors to gain a glimpse of what their day-to-day activities entail.

Carlin Cherry ’18 (economics and philosophy) first became interested in law during high school, where she participated in policy debate and law-related clubs. She plans on attending law school upon graduation, but joined LJASS hoping to narrow which field on which she’d like to focus. “I gained a tremendous amount both personally and professionally. I particularly enjoyed shadowing at the OAG in the morning to get a feel for work in the public sector, followed by shadowing at Holland & Knight in the afternoon to see how differently lawyers operate in the private sector.”

In the evening, students and the Rice Austin Attorneys group gathered for a

“This trip really helped to reinforce my ambition for law. I learned that there are so many more fields to law than I knew and I am excited to explore them!”

— SELASE BUATSI ’20

LJASS participants gather outside the capital building in Austin.
“Careers in Law” alumni luncheon, hosted by Richards, Rodriguez & Skeith, LLP in Austin.

“My favorite part of the trip was the one-day shadowing in Texas Attorney General’s Office, which has given me an insider’s look into what the litigators’ day-to-day life truly entails. This experience not only broadens my perspective on different areas of law, but confirms my interests to pursue legal education and career.”

— Selina Chen ’18

mixer thanks to Manuel Escobar ’01 at his firm McGinnis Lochridge. In attendance were Nicholas Shumway, the Frances Moody Newman Chair, professor of Spanish and Portuguese and dean of the School of Humanities; Antonio Merlo, the George A. Peterkin professor and dean of the School of Social Sciences; Association of Rice Alumni president Shannon Vale’77; Toya Bell ’87, president of the Austin Rice alumni group; members of the Rice Austin Attorneys group; and Rice students.

The final day of the trip included a morning session with the Travis County District Attorney’s Office and was facilitated by Emily Edwards ’06, Keith Hennenke 04 and Holly Taylor ’89, who talked about their careers and gave advice about law school. The students then witnessed court proceedings and observed how lawyers asked questions to the presiding judges.

The culmination of the trip included a lunch panel with alumni attorneys Bell, Tonia Lucio ’90 and Adrienne Waddell ’12. They shared their journey into law, including preparing for law school and how they manage a demanding career. “The Austin trip gave me a chance to interact with Rice alums who have found success in a broad spectrum of fields within the legal profession,” remarked Jackson Neagli’17 (Asian studies and policy studies. “As a result, I absorbed invaluable information about topics ranging from the law school admissions process to the bar exam to the work-life balance of private versus public practice.”

The program is currently gearing up for its fall 2017 trip, where students will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to explore law from national perspective.

The Law, Justice and Society Scholars program is made possible through the partnerships and generous contributions of those within and beyond our campus community. To learn more about LJASS, please contact Nyeva Agwunobi, manager of student programs, at nyeva@rice.edu.
2016 Campbell Lecture Series

‘What We Do and Don’t Understand About Photographs’

The pointed insights and observations of Anne Wilkes Tucker, who built one of the nation’s great photography collections during nearly 40 years with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, took center stage in the Rice Media Center during the School of Humanities’ 2016 Campbell Lecture Series March 15–17.

Over the course of three evening lectures, Tucker, the Baton Rouge, La.-born curator emerita of photography at MFAH, displayed a passion for history, a belief in photography’s critical and cultural influences and a delight in discovery.

On opening night of “What We Do and Don’t Understand About Photographs,” Dean of Humanities Nicolas Shumway highlighted the importance of the series to the school. “One of the great pleasures of my job is that I’m able to welcome people to the Campbell Lecture,” Shumway said. “(It) is the most prestigious series that we have in the School of Humanities ... and always consists of three lectures ... by an eminent scholar or artist or writer.”

Tucker was introduced by friend Geoff Winningham, an accomplished photographer and the Lynette S. Autrey Chair in the Humanities at Rice, who called her “a Houston treasure” and “photography’s consummate gardener,” and underscored the fact that it’s hard not to talk numbers when talking about her. “Anyone who is fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to introduce Anne Tucker will soon find themselves facing a major challenge. You might even call it a curatorial challenge: the problem of looking at a 40-page resume and an enormous and impressive body of work and trying to decide, ‘What must I mention? What can I possibly leave out? How do I proceed?’”

Indeed, during 39 years, as MFAH grew from a modest provincial institution, Tucker built a collection that is the envy of arts institutions around the world. When she arrived in 1976, the museum owned 141 images, half of which had just been donated by Target. Today the collection holds more than 30,000 works representing 4,000 artists and encompassing the history of the medium across every continent – and into space. Many of the more than 40 exhibitions Tucker organized broke new ground, one of the reasons Time magazine named her the nation’s best curator in 2001.

In her first talk, titled “Looking, Not Seeing,” Tucker set out, as she said, to “deprive” the audience of the illusions that seeing is “easy, automatic, natural” and that “sight is primarily a document-
tary moment of recording data with your eyes.”

She talked about the mechanics of how people see and use their eyes and discussed how completely personal and individual people’s perceptions are. “Once cognitive and emotional responses enter the process, ‘projection’ is a more appropriate word than ‘perception,’” Tucker said.

“At the most initial stage, what we ultimately perceive depends in small but significant part on the health of our eyes and how they function,” Tucker said. “Light is converted into electrical signals that go through our eyes to our brain, and the quality of that input depends in part on the situation and in part on our visual acuity,” she said. “One must also consider individual variations in peripheral vision, depth perception, color perception, the ability to perceive contrast.”

It’s therefore common that two people looking at a piece of art or photograph do not “see” the same thing, she said.

Various other factors also affect perception. “How many in this room have seen the same work of art multiple times and remembered it differently?” Tucker asked. “Our impressions can shift if the works on either side of it are changed or if we’re in a different mood.”

Tucker voiced concern with certain contemporary experiences of art in an age of social media and selfies, showing a photo depicting a mass of tourists scrambling to take a photo of Leonardo da Vinci’s “Mona Lisa” at the Louvre in Paris. “What can the viewers possibly be seeing, much less perceiving?” she asked. “Even if desired, they could not study the enigmatic smile, the curl of her hair, the tones and fold of her gown ... all of which da Vinci painted with minute consideration. Are they aware of Leonardo da Vinci’s genius in other disciplines beside art? I think they primarily care that the painting is famous and that they can photograph it, or, even better, can frame themselves in the painting in a selfie.”

Her Wednesday talk, “Title or Caption? And Why Does That Matter,” focused on the powerful, potential impact of words on people’s perceptions of pictures. Tucker discussed what is gained and what is lost when words are stripped away and a picture speaks for itself.

She finished Thursday with “Teaching Empathy With Photographs,” in which she discussed whether photographs can be effective in creating empathy by exposing people to experiences, often horrific, of others.
Leading LGBT historian discusses decades of discrimination

George Chauncey, a historian of gay life and a professor at Yale University, discussed the history of discrimination against and harassment of gay people in the United States during the School of Humanities’ 2017 Campbell Lecture Series April 3-5. His lectures also highlighted the vibrancy of LGBT culture, particularly black queer culture, in the face of such discrimination and attacks.

“The political history of gay life is not a linear story of liberalization,” said Chauncey, the Samuel Knight Professor of History and American Studies at Yale, in his opening night lecture April 3. “It’s counterintuitive, but the early 20th century was more open for queer people than the most repressive years from the 1930s to the 1960s would be, and it’s been a constant struggle ever since. A key lesson that we can take — a lesson that feels all too relevant today — is that progress on gay rights issues has never been steady and has never been secure.”

Dean of Humanities Nicolas Shumway, who has known Chauncey for more than 30 years, welcomed the attendees gathered at the Moody Center for the Arts’ Lois Chiles Studio Theater. Shumway was an assistant professor at Yale when Chauncey was a graduate student there.

Chauncey is best known for his book “Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940” (1994), which Shumway called “a major turning point in gay history.” Not only has Chauncey written about gay history, he has participated in it as an expert witness in more than 30 gay-rights court cases. Five of those cases went to the U.S. Supreme Court, including the recent marriage-equality cases.

The fateful impact of Prohibition

In his first lecture, Chauncey spoke on “The Politics of Antigay Discrimination in the McCarthy Era and Beyond.” He painted a picture of how harsh life was in America for gay men during this time. Bars were not allowed to serve alcohol to known homosexuals, movies couldn’t portray them in a favorable light and careers were ended if one’s sexual orientation became known.

The persecution and harassment had begun decades earlier. “In the early 20th century, municipal police forces began using a wide range of misdemeanor charges to harass homosexuals, including disorderly conduct, vagrancy, lewdness and loitering,” Chauncey said. “These were misdemeanor charges, so they carried lower evidentiary standards, requirements and fewer procedural protections than the felony charge of sodomy. So it made it easier to use them to harass people.”

Between 1923 and 1966, when gay activists in New York City forced police to stop using entrapment to arrest gay men, there were more than 50,000 arrests on such misdemeanor charges in that city alone, Chauncey said.

There was a short time of reprieve, though. Lesbian, gay and trans culture became much more visible in many American cities during the 1920s, when Prohibition made almost all nightlife illegal and the speakeasy culture that emerged in response challenged many legal and cultural barriers, Chauncey said. “In this context, heterosexuals’ curiosity about gay life led many of them to visit gay clubs and drag balls and African-American and white working-class neighborhoods,” he said. “By 1931, there was a so-called ‘pansy craze,’ and two of the three most popular nightclubs in Times Square had openly gay masters of ceremony whose entire act revolved around their camp repartee with their customers.”

Gays and employment discrimination

In the 1950s, the discrimination took on further dimensions, Chauncey said. “In 1953, one of President Dwight Eisenhower’s first acts in office was to issue an executive order banning the employment of homosexuals throughout the federal government and civilian federal agencies, as well as the military, and requiring that private businesses with federal contracts seek out and fire their gay employees,” Chauncey said.

“We still live with the legacy of this discrimination, and also with the demonic stereotypes of gay people to justify it,” Chauncey said. “No other group in American history has ever faced so many popular initiatives designed to take away its rights.”

Chauncey also lectured on “From Drag Balls to Vogue Balls: Black Gay Culture and Politics Before and After Stonewall” (April 4) and “AIDS, the Lesbian Baby Boom and the Campaign for Marriage Equality” (April 5). He highlighted the lives of gay African-Americans and how they took a very different trajectory than their white counterparts and explored the realities of AIDS, the parenting responsibilities of lesbians raising children and the legal protections of marriage for the LGBT community.

The Campbell Lecture Series was made possible by a $1 million contribution from Rice alumnus T.C. Campbell, who wanted to further the study of literature and the humanities with a 20-year annual series of public lectures. Through special arrangements with the University of Chicago Press, most lecture series are later published as a book. A list of previous Campbell lecturers is online at http://campbell.rice.edu.
Atlantic Environments and the American South
Feb. 5, 2016

This conference explored how people altered, interacted with and thought about the environments of the American South in the Atlantic World. While the past decades have seen the phenomenal growth of both environmental history and Atlantic studies, they have, curiously, remained separate lines of inquiry. This conference sought to place these two dynamic subfields in direct dialogue.

Organized by: Randal Hall, associate professor of history and editor of the Journal of Southern History; Blake Earle, graduate student (history); and Andrew Johnson, graduate student (history)

Paper and Parchment: Medieval Music, Architectural Drawings and Illuminated Books
April 6, 2016

This conference explored medieval music, architectural drawings and illuminated books. Specialists in art history and literature examined new directions in architectural drawings; workers and manuscripts; gender on paper; and medieval music manuscripts. This was co-sponsored by the Minter Chair and the Department of Art History.

Organized by: Diane Wolfthal, the David and Caroline Minter Chair in the Humanities and professor of art history; Peter Loewen, associate professor of musicology; and Linda Neagley, associate professor of art history

Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies
Feb. 18, 2016

Established in 2002, Vagantes is North America’s largest and most successful medieval studies conference for graduate students. The primary aim of this national conference is to provide graduate students from all fields and disciplines the opportunity to discuss their research on any aspect of medieval studies while highlighting the resources of the host institution. In addition to some 30 student presentations, this conference featured two keynote speakers; a workshop with two conservators from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and a tour of the Menil Collection’s medieval and Byzantine collections with an internationally recognized scholar.

Organized by: Diane Wolfthal, the David and Caroline Minter Chair in Humanities and professor of art history; Linda Neagley, associate professor of art history; Kyle Sweeney, graduate student (art history); and Carolyn Van Wingerden, graduate student (art history)

Digital Frontiers
Sept. 22, 2016

Digital Frontiers, a project of the University of North Texas Libraries, annually brings together scholars and students, librarians and archivists, genealogists and public historians as well as community members to share their experience of using digital resources in the humanities.

Co-organized by the School of Humanities’ Humanities Research Center and Fondren Library
The Collaborative Futures conference presented the crucial first outcomes of the Collections Analysis Collaborative, a research and educational initiative developed to probe questions of cultural heritage and to generate a rich, historical understanding of nearly 600 objects from the ancient Mediterranean in the Menil’s permanent collection. In 2016, scholars from across the United States were granted extraordinary access to the Menil’s object records in order to investigate the biography, history and significance of works in the collection. Their charge was to explore how open collaboration between museums and scholars can shed new light on the collection and on challenges that face art historians, archaeologists and museum professionals in a new era of cultural stewardship. By fostering open dialogue between scholarly communities with diverse perspectives, the project aims to generate new models for research partnerships, collection stewardship, and the study of art from the ancient world.

Organized by: John Hopkins, assistant professor of art history and classical studies

CSWGS 9th Annual Graduate Symposium

Rice’s Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality held its 9th annual graduate symposium on April 15, 2016. For several decades, the center has created and promoted interdisciplinary programs, research and teaching opportunities in the study of women, gender and sexuality. In line with this mission, each year the symposium is organized by and for CSWGS graduate certificate students, encouraging conversation among scholars from across the disciplines on a wide variety of topics. This year’s keynote address was given by Christina B. Hanhardt, associate professor of American studies at the University of Maryland, and was titled “Broken Windows at Blue’s: A Queer History of Quality of Life Policing and Gentrification.” In addition to the keynote, certificate students presented papers in thematic, cross-disciplinary panels that explored how gender and sexuality intersect with technology, bodies, discourse, and space and engaged in lively discussions facilitated by CSWGS-affiliated faculty.

2017 CLIC Conference on Study Abroad: Understanding the Study Abroad Experience

Researchers and practitioners spent two days at Rice discussing current trends in study abroad research. The 81 participants traveled from Asia, Oceana, Europe, and across the United States and Canada to participate in the conference. Presentations centered around topics related to identity, student interactions and language gains. Center for Languages and Intercultural Communication (CLIC) faculty also had the opportunity to represent Rice in Country, a program that offers language study-abroad opportunities in Argentina, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Korea and Spain. A poster session featured Rice in Country students alongside posters by invited researchers.

Organized by: the Center for Languages and Intercultural Communication

Speakers, Papers and Presentations
New Faculty

**Lacy M. Johnson** (English)
Assistant Professor • Ph.D., University of Houston

Lacy M. Johnson is a Houston-based artist, curator, professor and activist and is the author of the memoir “The Other Side” (Tin House, 2014). For its frank and fearless confrontation of the epidemic of violence against women, “The Other Side” was named a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in Autobiography, the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, an Edgar Award in Best Fact Crime and the CLMP Firecracker Award in Nonfiction; it was a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writer Selection for 2014; and was named one of the best books of 2014 by Kirkus, Library Journal and the Houston Chronicle. She is also author of “Trespasses: A Memoir” (University of Iowa Press, 2012), which has been anthologized in “The Racial Imaginary” (Fence Books, 2015, edited by Claudia Rankine, et al) and “Literature: The Human Experience.”

Johnson worked as a cashier at Wal-Mart, sold steaks door-to-door and was a puppeteer with a traveling children’s museum before earning a Ph.D. from the University of Houston’s Creative Writing Program, where she was both an Erhardt Fellow and Inprint Fondren Fellow. Her writing has appeared in Guernica, Tin House, Los Angeles Times, Dame, Fourth Genre, Creative Nonfiction, TriQuarterly, Gulf Coast, GOOD and elsewhere. As a writer and artist she been awarded grants and residencies from the Sustainable Arts Foundation, the Houston Arts Alliance, the Kansas Arts Commission, Millay Colony for the Arts and the University of Houston’s Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts.

She is currently at work on her third book of nonfiction. This fall she joins Rice’s faculty as assistant professor of English in creative nonfiction.

**Aysha Pollnitz** (History)
Assistant Professor • Ph.D. and M. Phil., University of Cambridge • B.A., University of Sydney

Aysha Pollnitz is an early modern historian whose research focuses on the transmission of knowledge and ideas in Europe and the Atlantic. She has published articles on Renaissance translation theory and practice, humanism and court culture, women’s education, and Shakespeare and political thought. Her first book, “Princely Education in Early Modern Britain” (Cambridge University Press, 2015), won the Royal Historical Society’s Whitfield Prize in 2016. Pollnitz is currently researching the translation of liberal education to the Americas in the 16th and 17th century. In 2016–2017, her research will be supported by fellowships from the John Carter Brown Library and the Newberry Library. At Rice, she teaches in the history department, for the political, legal and social thought minor, and the medieval and early modern studies major.

**Vida Yao** (Philosophy)
Assistant Professor • Ph.D., Philosophy, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill • B.A., University of British Columbia

Vida Yao works in philosophical ethics and moral psychology, focusing on providing novel explanations and justifications for cases in which a person experiences a discrepancy between her judgments of what would be good or right to do, and her emotional or motivational responses. She is currently focusing on the kind of emotional and motivational defeat one can feel in times of despair or pessimism, and the character virtues that one may need to cultivate when that despair or pessimism is epistemically justified. She has published in Res Philosophica and The Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility.
Faculty Publications and Shows

**Art History**

John North Hopkins  
Assistant Professor of Art History and Classical Studies  
“The Genesis of Roman Architecture”  
London: Yale Univ. Press, 2016

Gordon Hughes  
Associate Professor of Art History  
“Richard Serra: Vertical and Horizontal Reversals”  
(David Zwirner Books/Steidl, 2015)

Joseph Manca  
Nina J. Cullinan Professor of Art and Art History  
“Subject Matter in Italian Renaissance Art: A Study of Early Sources”  
(ACMRS Publications, 2015)

Martin Blumenthal-Barby  
Associate Professor of Classical and European Studies  
“Der asymmetrische Blick: Film und Überwachung”  
(Verlag Wilhelm Fink, 2016)

Scott McGill  
Professor of Classical and European Studies  
“Juvencus’ Four Books of the Gospels: Evangeliorum Libri Quattuor”  
(Routledge, 2016)

**Classical and European Studies**

Maya Irish  
Assistant Professor of History  
“Jews and Christians in Medieval Castile: Tradition, Coexistence, and Change”  
(Catholic University of America Press, 2016)

Caleb McDaniel  
Associate Professor of History  
“The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery”  
USA: LSU Press, 2015

Gwen Bradford  
Assistant Professor of Philosophy  
“Achievement”  
Oxford Univ. Press, 2015

Marcia Brennan  
Professor of Religion and Art History  
“Life at The End of Life”  
Univ. Chicago Press, 2017

**Philosophy**

John Boles  
William P. Hobby Professor of History  
“Jefferson: Architect of American Liberty”  
(Basic Books, 2017)

Maya Irish  
Assistant Professor of History  
“Jews and Christians in Medieval Castile: Tradition, Coexistence, and Change”  
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**Religion**

**Visual and Dramatic Arts**

Geoff Winningham  
Lynette S. Autrey Professor of Humanities and Professor of Visual and Dramatic Arts  
A) “In the Eyes of Our Children”  
(The Pozos Art Project, 2017)

Brian Huberman  
Associate Professor of Visual and Dramatic Arts  
“Busted by Demons: The Lou Perryman Story”  
Documentary, co-producer, camera and editor; premiere screening at the Austin Film Society, Sept. 16, 2016

Josh Bernstein  
Lecturer of Visual and Dramatic Arts  
B) “Moon Finger”  
Solo exhibition; Devin Borden Gallery, Houston, Texas  

Allison Hunter  
Humanities Artist-in-Residence (Visual and Dramatic Arts)  
C) “Zoosphere”  
Solo exhibition; Eastfield College Gallery, Mesquite, Texas  
March 3–April 28, 2016

Christina Keefe  
Professor in the Practice and Rice Theatre Program Director (Visual and Dramatic Arts)  
“Eurydice”  
Public performance, director and producer; Hamman Hall, Rice University  
Feb. 12–14 and Feb. 18–20, 2016
Lisa Balabanlilar wins Rice's top teaching award

Lisa Balabanlilar, associate professor in the Department of History, received Rice’s highest teaching award, the George R. Brown Prize for Excellence in Teaching, at the university’s annual teaching awards ceremony April 26, 2016. The Brown Award is given based upon surveys of Rice alumni who graduated two, three and five years ago.

Read the full story here: news.rice.edu/2016/04/25/balabanlilar-wins-rices-top-teaching-award/.
Retiring Faculty

Edward Cox
(History)


Cox was a sought-after adviser and thesis director and a very popular and effective teacher. When he was one of seven professors honored in 1999 for Creating an Engaging Learning Environment, Cox said as a student he was “...inspired by some of his teachers and came to see teaching as a way of touching other lives.” As a teacher, he said he has an opportunity to explore and share ideas with students, to challenge and be challenged. His teaching philosophy was to “explore and share ideas with students, to challenge and be challenged” and to “...strive to help his students achieve their full potential, fully recognized at the same time the uniqueness of each individual.” Cox was a four-time recipient of the George R. Brown Teaching Award (1994, 1996, 1999 and 2008) and was recognized as the Outstanding Faculty Associate of Martel College in 2003 and 2015 and Outstanding Faculty Associate of Wiess College every year from 1991 to 1997.

Dennis Huston
(English)

Dennis Huston began teaching at Rice in 1969 as an associate professor of English. He was promoted to full professor in 1980 and holds the Gladys Louise Fox Endowed Chair. Huston is the past president of Rice’s Beta of Texas chapter of PBK and has served on the PBK Alumni Association of Greater Houston’s board of directors since 1999. He also served as Hanszen College master from 1978 to 1982, and again from 1992 to 1998.

Huston was named the National Case Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation in 1989 and has won Rice’s George R. Brown Award for Excellence in Teaching (1986) and the award for Superior Teaching four times: 1977, 1978, 1979, 1981 and 1988. Huston also won the Nicholas Sago Distinguished Teaching Award in 1975, 1984, 2003 and 2016, and the Minnie Steven Piper Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2002. He was awarded the Rice Pre-Medical Society Award, the Brown College Teaching Award, a Graduate Students Teaching and Mentoring Award and an Annual Faculty Award of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs. In 1990, Houston Metropolitan magazine named him one of the “90 Best Things About Houston.” A Rice video profiled Huston for his unconventional teaching and, over time, he became one of the most popular undergraduate teachers on the campus.

“A course with Dennis is not simply a course that ends at a certain time,” said Nicolas Shumway, dean of humanities at Rice. “It is the beginning of a dialogue that lasts a lifetime.”

Richard Smith
(History)


As well as holding appointments as the George and Nancy Rupp Professor of Humanities and professor of history, Smith is a Baker Institute Public Policy scholar, director of Asian and Global Outreach (Center for Education), and co-founder and co-adviser of the Baker Institute’s Transnational China Project. He was also a master at Hanzen College from 1982 to 1987, interim director of the Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao Center for Asian Studies in 2007–2008 and associate director of that center in 2009.

A superior teacher, Smith garnered a number of prestigious teaching awards during his 41 years at Rice. Included in those awards are the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Texas Professor of the Year in 1998–99 and the Minnie Steven Piper Professor Award (for college teaching in the state of Texas) in 1987. He received the George R. Brown Prize for Excellence in Teaching in 1985 and 1992. Smith also won George R. Brown Superior Teaching Awards in 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1990; the Nicholas Salgo Distinguished Teacher Award in 1978; and the Sophia Meyer Farb Prize for Teaching in 1996.
Rice study abroad programs teach students to think on a global scale.

Chelsea Ward ’16 changed the course of her education after studying abroad in Nanjing, China, through the Center for Languages & Intercultural Communication (CLIC) Rice-in-China Summer Study Abroad Program. Carefully examining marketing practices and interviewing residents with CLIC associate director Meng Yeh — in addition to intensive Chinese language study — sparked Chelsea’s passion for marketing and international business.

“Traveling abroad completely shifted my perspective and even led me to change my research focus,” Chelsea said. “My Rice-in-China experience helped me to realize that I wanted to use the Chinese language that I love learning to research marketing in its cultural context.”

Funding for CLIC’s summer travel fellowships is crucial to ensure that all Rice students can shape their path through a global perspective. To learn more about supporting the School of Humanities, please contact Jeanette Zey, interim assistant vice president for development, at jzey@rice.edu or 713-348-4669.

“It’s invaluable to have travel experience, especially at a young age. Learning about a culture by being there is completely different from studying it in a book.”

Chelsea Ward ’16
+ Rice-in-China fellow + Asian studies major
+ Rice Asian Studies Organization President

Through the Initiative for Students, the School of Humanities focuses support on programs that give students opportunities to expand their horizons and gain deeper understanding of global communities in their unique historical, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, political and social context.