

Annual Report
Center for Humanistic Inquiry
May 26, 2021

The Center for Humanistic Inquiry (CHI) provides resources for Amherst faculty, staff, and students to engage a broad vision of the role humanistic thinking can play in scholarly and public life.

The CHI Research Seminars support humanities-oriented research and include writing workshops, reading groups, and guest speakers. The CHI sponsored five seminars this year with 40 faculty and staff participants: “Black and Indigenous Political Imaginaries,” “Asian American Studies,” “Feminist Thought,” “How Free Should Speech Be?” and “Composed of Nows: New Directions in Emily Dickinson Scholarship.”

A virtual iteration of the CHI Salon series, a series of public events designed to bring the Amherst community together around humanities scholarship, yielded a rich and full season of events, including book talks, presentations of research in progress, panel discussions, and performances. Notably, the virtual format allowed for larger and more diverse audiences in some cases than the CHI has ever had in person.

The CHI also helped to produce the sixth annual, and first virtual, version of Litfest, the college’s literary festival. Guests included National Book Award winner for fiction, Charles Yu, National Book Award finalists Megha Majumdar and Tommye Blount, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist Anne Applebaum. In observance of the college’s bicentennial, the festival featured several distinguished alumni authors. The event attracted over 1,100 participants.

The Folger Undergraduate Fellowship provides an annual opportunity for students to engage the Folger Shakespeare Library’s collection through in-depth archival research. In previous years, students have spent the fellowship at the Folger in Washington, DC. This year, the virtual format allowed for a robust roster of guest lecturers and virtual excursions around the world (a pepper farm in Vietnam, an all-women’s B-corporation coffee roaster in Baltimore, an Indigenous food collective in Holyoke). Students joined the Folger’s research team of professional scholars and postdocs under the rubric, “Before Farm to Table: Early Modern Foodways” to investigate, from multiple disciplinary perspectives, an 18th-century manuscript recipe book from the Folger’s collection.

The CHI Fellows, research fellows in residence at the college, completed the second and final year of their residencies. Among their scholarly accomplishments this year were a book manuscript submission, a book contract, nine article publications/submissions, three research awards, two book reviews, and several conference presentations. CHI Fellows engaged in a weekly series of writing workshops, shared readings, and professional development workshops. Their culminating research activity was a collaborative virtual exhibit called *Hidden Drives: The Scene and Unseen of Home*. And they offered five courses at the college. The Advisory Board is

pleased to welcome a new cohort of five CHI Fellows in the coming fall under the theme, "Black: Here and Now."

Though the shift to remote learning limited the Center's activities in certain ways, the CHI was able to carry out much of its work, thanks in no small part to support from our colleagues.

With sincere thanks, and on behalf of the CHI Advisory Board,



Darryl Harper, Director
Center for Humanistic Inquiry

The CHI Advisory Board is comprised of nine members representing a cross-section of humanities interests at the college.

Sony Coráñez-Bolton (Spanish and LatinX Studies)
Andrew Dole (Religion)
Martin Garnar (Library)
Michael Kunichika (Russian)
Emily Potter-Ndiaye (Mead Art Museum)
Austin Sarat (Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought)
Jane Wald (Emily Dickinson Museum)
Amelia Worsley (English)
Karamatou Yacoubou Djima (Mathematics)