

Amherst College
CHI
CENTER FOR
HUMANISTIC
INQUIRY

Annual Report
Center for Humanistic Inquiry
May 31, 2022

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 served as the lead organizer for the **Presidential Scholars** program, a series that brings together some of the most distinguished voices in the area of anti-racist scholarship and policy to the college for short-term residencies. During their time at Amherst, visiting scholars each presented a public lecture as part of the President's Colloquium on Race and Racism and held over 40 seminars and meetings with students, faculty and staff. The scholars for 2021-22 were science writer and ethicist Harriet Washington, ethicist and philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, author Viet Thanh Nguyen, and astrophysicist Chanda Prescod-Weinstein.

During his residency, Viet Thanh Nguyen also headlined the seventh annual **LitFest**, the college's annual literary festival. He was joined by National Book Foundation authors Katie Kitamura and Elizabeth McCracken, as well as Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Natalie Diaz, and journalists Vann Newkirk and David Graham.

The **CHI Salons** make up another series of public events designed to bring the Amherst community together around humanities scholarship. This year's season was marked by a return to in-person gatherings at the CHI Think Tank with the wonderfully adhesive informal conversation that had become a hallmark of the series before the pandemic, mixed with virtual programming designed to expand audiences and exploit the advantages of teleconferencing technologies. One program on Black Queer Futures, for example, employed translators and captions to allow the interlocutors each to speak in their first languages, whether Brazilian Portuguese or English.

The CHI sponsored seven **CHI Research Seminars** this year involving over 50 faculty and staff members: Conversations About Care; Ruins, Artifacts, Aftermath; Thinking Democratically; Black Queer Diaspora Studies; Dis/Information; The Premodern at Amherst; and Free Speech.

The center hosted a wide-ranging and thought-provoking discussion including the provost and academic department chairs on **the state of the humanities at the college**. This was the third such summit since the CHI came into existence seven years ago.

The **Folger Undergraduate Fellowships** provides an annual opportunity for students to engage the Folger Shakespeare Library's collection through in-depth archival research. This year's cohort included: Olive

Amdur '24 ("Self, Surrounding, and the Commonplace Between: New Forms of Early Modern Climate Writing"); Anurima Chattopadhyay '23 ("Native American Identity and Colonial Perspectives"); Sarah Lapean '23 ("Representations of Rape in Early Modern Literature"); Sydney Scanlon '22 ("Mental Health in the Early Modern Period"); and Muhammad Sabally '23 ("Understanding Illustrations of Othello").

The center has also led the **Humanities and the Practice of Hope** initiative, a curriculum development program designed to connect coursework with social justice work through partnerships with community organizations.

The **CHI Fellows**, a cohort of five postdocs-in-residence at the college, completed the first year of their residency under the theme "Black: Here and Now" with a focus on the scholarship of race. One fellow submitted their first book manuscript; several fellows submitted articles, and three had their articles published; one gave a conference talk; and all of them were invited to speak in classrooms across campus, including engaging with all first-year students at the beginning of the year. Courses fellows taught this year included "The Architecture of Race" and "Theorizing the Black Queer Americas."

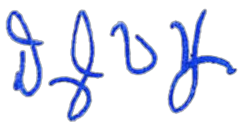
The CHI served as co-host of the New England Faculty of Color Symposium, an initiative of the **Faculty of Color Working Group (FOCWG)**, which is itself a spinoff of the **New England Humanities Consortium (NEHC)**. The symposium, now in its third year, had over 70 participants.

In addition to the CHI Fellows above, filmmaker **Anais Cisco** joined us from Smith College as a scholar-in-residence this year via a program managed also by the FOCWG that relieved her of teaching and service duties to allow her to concentrate on her research/creative work for a year.

Members of the CHI Advisory Board attended the **National Humanities Alliance (NHA)** annual meeting in March, and conducted meetings with Congressional staff to advocate for increased funding of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Archives, and Title IV funding.

The CHI also sent a delegation to the **Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI)**, the college's international consortium with over 250 member organizations around the globe.

Respectfully submitted 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: Martin Garnar (Library), Rafeeq Hasan (Philosophy), Sheila Jaswal (Chemistry), Emily Potter-Ndiaye (The Mead Art Museum), Yael Rice (Art and the History of Art), Austin Sarat (Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought), Olufemi Vaughan (Black Studies), Jane Wald (Emily Dickinson Museum), Amelia Worsley (English)