

National Humanities Conference 2017

Experiential Humanities Program Examples

Experiential Humanities Programs engage conference attendees in actual humanities programming, modeled on successful programs carried out throughout the year. Sessions that draw on the city or surrounding area and/or convey a sense of place are especially encouraged. Examples from previous conferences can be found below:

HUMANITIES IN THE WILD

Environmental sustainability is an urgent global topic, with effects on current affairs as diverse as the militia occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon and rising sea levels in Louisiana. How we define wilderness, whether we live in a “post-wild Anthropocene,” how our sense of place influences our identity, and how we address the risks to those whose livelihoods rely on both wilderness and resource extraction are all primary concerns for Americans. This session will explore how the humanities can be at the center of these and other important conversations while creating indelible experiences by taking such programs outside! Join us as we trek to Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake where we’ll take a short hike, pausing to read aloud the words of important Utah and western environmental writers. We’ll talk about the ways literature helps forge a sense of place and calls on us to care for the natural world. On the bus ride to and from, we’ll discuss partnerships, funding, logistics, new audiences, and other process-based questions about doing public humanities programs in the wild.

Hike will be 1-2 miles on Buffalo Point Trail, an easy-to-moderate trail. Tennis shoes or hiking boots and water bottle recommended.

Speakers, Michael McLane, *Utah Humanities*; Jacqueline Cromleigh, *Indiana Humanities*, Leah Nahmias, *Indiana Humanities*

POP-UP HUMANITIES LAB – EXPERIENTIAL HUMANITIES PROGRAM

In 2015 and 2016 the Applied Humanities Learning Lab, or AppHuLL, was created as an experimental and experiential course in order to make visible to Five College (Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) undergraduates how to “bridge” their humanities education into careers in the profession. The program, part of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Five Colleges Inc. supported Bridging Initiative in the Public and Applied Humanities, partnered with local humanities institutions and professionals to create a supported skills and project-based learning experience. Armed with project prompts and mentors, students embodied their role as public humanists, created innovative exhibitions, oral histories, programming guides, documentaries, advancement proposals, etc., and at the end of the three-month program transformed their projects into a theme based public exposition-style event in which to showcase their work. Here, for the 2017 National Humanities Conference, we propose to transform the Applied Humanities Learning Lab into the “Pop-up Humanities Lab” as an Experiential Humanities Program session.

The Pop-up Humanities Lab will allow participants to experience major aspects of AppHuLL in an exciting and intense 3.5-hour session under the guidance of the course facilitators. Participants will be given an overview of the program, provided with course materials and learning exercises, and then divided into teams to complete “The Being Human Project” on the streets of Boston. At the end of the session participants will come back together and present their work to the conference “public.” The goal of The Being Human Project is to evoke our humanity in the most unlikely of places. In mentor-supported groups, participants will be provided with prompts and the necessary materials in which to answer this call. Examples might include creating a pop-up exhibit in the Boston Public Gardens about the city’s public water system, the environment, and displacement; using cell phones to collect micro oral histories from marginalized communities; designing temporary memorials about the past or the vanquished from the landscape with sidewalk chalk and participants bodies; creating interesting juxtapositions that somehow put the nearby Public Welfare Office, the Bank of American Financial Center, and the Boston Opera House in conversation in order to spark a dialog; canvassing the Boston Common armed with evocative questions about heritage and immigration; or simply shining a light on the places and ways in which the local neighborhood’s stressed or disconnected inhabitants can quickly connect or find refuge to support a happier and healthier community.

Speakers: Cheryl Harned, *University of Massachusetts-Amherst* and Mark Roblee, *University of Massachusetts-Amherst*