

# UB Humanities Institute

University at Buffalo *The State University of New York*

## Inside...

- 2-3: 2013-2014 HI Faculty Fellows
- 4: Scholars@Hallwalls Series
- 5: Humanities on Main Street: UB in the 1970s
- 6: The Civil Wars: Narrating Horror & Hope
- 7: New Faculty Seminar Series
- 8: English Literature Scholar Receives Multiple Awards

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

—ERIK R. SEEMAN

**IN** June the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) published to great fanfare a report on the state of the humanities. Commissioned by a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators and Representatives, the report generated widespread media coverage. Among the many commentaries, one by David Brooks in the *New York Times* caught my eye.

Brooks claims that we humanists have lost our missionary zeal, the passion with which we help students cultivate their “most inward and elemental” selves, their “spirit,” their “soul.”

Although I don’t often agree with Brooks, there is more than a grain of truth to what he says. I think he’s all wrong about *why* this change has occurred: he claims that professors spend too much time talking about race, class, and gender. This is a red herring. To the extent that we do talk about identity politics, it is not at all incompatible with a passionate effort to help students orient their moral compasses.

But I do think that humanists too often defend what we do with a narrow emphasis on skill-building. We talk about how humanities students learn to think critically, write persuasively, and communicate clearly.

This strategy – with its focus on creating an employable workforce – acknowledges the economic fears of students and parents. But it’s not the whole story.

Studying the humanities gives a person, in the AAAS report’s phrase, an “enlarged selfhood.” As a secular humanist, I won’t put this in terms of the “soul.” But there is something at the core of a person that is enlarged by wrangling with the big questions that have engaged humans for millennia.

When it comes to spreading the gospel of humanism, many of us don’t feel comfortable acting like missionaries. I write about missionaries, and I know that their frequently self-righteous certitude doesn’t mesh with the ironic, relativistic sensibility of most academics. But for this cause, a bit of righteous zeal is called for. Try it.

Think of yourself as a missionary for the humanities. Believe me, it feels better than building a skill set.



Scholars  
at Hallwalls

September 20, 4PM

**Andreas Daum, History**  
*Do Biographies Matter? Exploring Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859)*

October 18, 4PM

**Marion Werner, Geography**  
*Latin American Development in a Neoliberal Age*

November 15, 4PM

**Walter Hakala, English/Asian Studies**  
*Two Dictionaries, One Poet, and a Mughal Prince's Struggle Against British Colonialism*

December 6, 4PM

**Joseph Conte, English**  
*Transnational Politics and the Post-9/11 Novel*

February 7, 4PM

**Gwynn Thomas, Transnational Studies**  
*Las Presidentas: Challenging Masculine Norms in Latin American Politics*

March 7, 4PM

**Deborah Reed-Danahay, Anthropology**  
*Pierre Bourdieu, Social Space, and the Vietnamese Diaspora*

April 11, 4PM

**Joan Linder, Visual Studies**  
*Observing Love Canal: A Drawing Project*

May 2, 8PM

**Jonathan Golove, Music**  
*World Premiere Performance: Mental Radio for Theremin Cello, Voices, and Ensemble*

\*\* All Scholars@Hallwalls events take place on Fridays at the Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center (341 Delaware Avenue).

# 2013-2014 HI FACULTY FELLOWS

Each year, the UB Humanities Institute offers fellowships for tenured and tenure-track UB faculty to engage in humanistic research. We are delighted to present this year's class of Fellows, whose proposed research projects have shown exceptional quality and potential.



**Joseph Conte** is Professor of English and the author of *Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern American Fiction* (Alabama 2002)—recipient of the Elizabeth Agee Prize for Best Manuscript in American Literary Studies—and *Unending Design: The Forms of Postmodern Poetry* (Cornell 1991). His essays have appeared in *The Cambridge Companion to Don DeLillo* and journals such as *Modern Fiction Studies* and *Twenty-First Century Literature*, for which his work will be translated into Korean. Conte has served as a SUNY Senior Fellow at the New York—St. Petersburg State University Institute of Cognitive and Cultural Studies in St. Petersburg and Visiting Professor in Comparative Literature at Capital Normal University in Beijing.



**Andreas Daum**, Professor of History, is the author of *Kennedy in Berlin* (German: Schönigh 2003, English: Cambridge 2008) and *Popularizing Science in the Nineteenth Century: Civil Culture, Scientific Education, and the Public Sphere in Germany, 1848-1914* (in German; Oldenbourg 1998, 2002). Prior to coming to UB, Daum was

research fellow and Deputy Director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. He has received many grants and awards including the John F. Kennedy Fellowship at Harvard. Daum has coedited several books, including *Berlin—Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representations, and National Identities* (Cambridge 2005) and *America, the Vietnam War, and the World: Comparative and International Perspectives* (Cambridge 2003).



**Jonathan Golove**, Associate Professor of Music, is a cellist and composer who has performed and recorded classical, new, and improvisational music throughout the world. He is also an electric cellist and one of a handful of musicians to have mastered the theremin cello, an electronic instrument created by Russian inventor Leon Theremin. Recent performance venues include Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the Festival d'Automne in Paris. Golove's original compositions have been performed at the Kennedy Center, the Venice Biennale, and the Festival of Aix-en-Provence. His awards include a composer grant from France's Académie Européenne de Musique.



**Walter Hakala** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English and the Asian Studies Program. In 2010, he received his Ph.D. in South Asian Regional Studies with Highest Distinction from the University of Pennsylvania; he also holds a Master's degree (2004) in Urdu Literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India, where he was born. His publications have appeared in the journals *Education About Asia* and *The Journal of Geophysical Research* and in the edited volume *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and its Neighbors* (Brill 2012). He is currently at work on a book titled *Diction and Dictionaries: How Hindi and Urdu Lexicography Defined South Asia*.

## HI 2012-13 Facts

Events Organized

**104**

Attendance

**2694**

Events Co-sponsored

**17**

Attendance

**4728**

# 2013-2014 HI FACULTY FELLOWS



**Joan Linder** is Associate Professor of Visual Studies. Her drawings single out everyday objects and, through painstaking detail that emphasizes the process of their making, render these objects both banal and special, so that their relationships to life, the body, sexuality, and domesticity are exposed. Linder has exhibited throughout the US as well as in Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Japan, and Korea. Among her awards are residencies at MacDowell Colony (NH) and Yaddo (NY), as well as a Pollock Krasner Foundation grant. In 2012, Linder was commissioned by New York City's Metropolitan Transit Authority to complete a permanent public artwork at the 71st Street D Line Station.



**Deborah Reed-Danahay** is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for European Studies at UB. She is the author of *Locating Bourdieu* (Indiana 2005) and *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling* (Cambridge 1996), and the editor of *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (Berg 1997). Together with Caroline Brettell she coauthored *Civic Engagements: The Citizenship Practices of Vietnamese and Indian Immigrants* (Stanford 2012) and coedited *Citizenship, Political Engagement, and*

*Belonging: Immigrants in Europe and the United States* (Rutgers 2008). Reed-Danahay recently served as the president of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe and is a Fellow of Magdalene College at Cambridge.



**Gwynn Thomas** is Associate Professor of Global Gender Studies in the Department of Transnational Studies; she holds a doctorate in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2005). She is the author of *Contesting Legitimacy in Chile: Familial Ideals, Citizenship, and Political Struggle, 1970-1990* (Penn State 2011) and of articles published in journals including *The International Feminist Journal of Politics* and *The Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*. Thomas's has received fellowships from the Social Science Research Council and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In 2007 she was the winner of the Latin American Studies Association's Elsa Chaney Award for innovative scholarship on women and gender.



**Marion Werner**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, received her doctorate from the University of Minnesota (2010); her dissertation was singled out for the Best Ph.D. Dissertation Prize from the

Economic Geography Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers. She has published in journals including *Economic Geography*, *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, and *Gender, Place, and Culture*. Before joining the UB faculty in 2010, Werner was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at York University. Her current book, *Global Displacements: Work and Development in the Dominican Republic and Haiti*, focuses on the implications of contemporary restructuring of global industries for workers and communities.



## 2012-13 Books by HI Fellows

- **Carole Emberton** (History), *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (University of Chicago Press)
- **Amy Graves-Monroe** (Romance Languages and Literatures), *Post-Tenebras Lex: Preuves et propagande dans l'historiographie engagée de Simon-Goulart (1543-1628)* (Droz)
- **Vasiliki P. Neofotistos** (Anthropology), *The Risk of War: Everyday Sociality in the Republic of Macedonia* (University of Pennsylvania Press)
- **Kalliopi Nikolopoulou** (Comparative Literature), *Tragically Speaking: On the Use and Abuse of Theory for Life* (University of Nebraska Press)
- **Cynthia Wu** (Transnational Studies), *Chang and Eng Reconnected: The Original Siamese Twins in American Culture* (Temple University Press)
- **Ewa Plonowska Ziarek** (Comparative Literature), *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* (Columbia University Press)

# Scholars@Hallwalls Brings UB Faculty to Downtown Buffalo for a Third Season

**H**allwalls Contemporary Arts Center—one of Buffalo’s premier venues for music, art, film, and performance, located in a renovated church on Delaware Avenue—will again offer an ideal environment for this year’s Humanities Institute Faculty Fellows to present their work. This year’s lineup showcases the broad interdisciplinary range and international scope of humanities research at UB. We kick off the series with a famed early nineteenth-century explorer of South and Central America and end it with the world premiere of music for an electronic instrument that, when first heard by audiences in the 1920s, seemed to be magic. Each of the talks in this series is sure to offer much to discover through our scholars’ cutting-edge research.

Talks are on **Friday afternoons from 4 to 6 p.m.**, with the exception of our final event, an evening concert (detailed at the far right). Lectures are free and open to the public, and complimentary wine and hors d’oeuvres are served. We hope to see you there!

Our series begins on Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup> with a talk by distinguished historian **Andreas Daum** on the world-renowned German naturalist, polyglot traveler, and interdisciplinary scholar Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), best known for his exploration of the South and Central American contents. While the genre of biography is sometimes dismissed as “old fashioned” today, Daum asserts that it may in fact help us to understand the emergence of a modern—and global—world over two hundred years ago.

Cultural geographer **Marion Werner** will speak on October 18<sup>th</sup> on “Latin American Development in a Neoliberal Age.” She focuses on what has become of the project of development since its core institutions—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—faced a groundswell of opposition from

Latin America and Asia at the turn of the millennium. Despite opposition and serial financial crises, development practitioners continue to advocate practices meant to administer competitiveness amongst workers and small producers through global market integration.

“Two Dictionaries, One Poet, and a Mughal Prince’s Struggle Against British Colonialism” is the November 15<sup>th</sup> presentation by **Walter Hakala**, a specialist in Asian Studies. It will focus on the Urdu poet Mirza Jan ‘Tapish’, who in 1799 was arrested and charged with conspiring to overthrow East India Company rule. He had prepared a dictionary on “the idioms of the houses of Delhi” for his previous employer, the rebellious ruler of Dhaka (capital of present-day Bangladesh), and would later collaborate with his British captors in compiling bilingual Urdu-English dictionaries.

**Joseph Conte**’s December 6<sup>th</sup> talk, “Transnational Politics and the Post-9/11 Novel,” suggests that literature produced after Sept. 11, 2001, reflects a shift from the provincial politics of nation states to those of transnational politics. Examining Don DeLillo’s “Falling Man,” Orhan Pamuk’s “Snow,” and J.M. Coetzee’s “Diary of a Bad Year,” Conte shows how these works resist globalization and confront a range of issues that require adjudication across national, geographic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and racial borders.

A political scientist from the program in Global Gender Studies, **Gwynn Thomas** will start us off in the new year with her February 7<sup>th</sup> talk on “Las Presidentas,” the female presidents who—despite popular stereotypes of Latin American countries’ domination by machismo—are challenging masculine norms in politics. Thomas will examine how gender has shaped the meaning and social significance of the office of the presidency and how the work of

these women presidents is eroding the often taken-for-granted connections between men, masculinity, and political power embedded within political institutions.

**Deborah Reed-Danahay** of the department of Anthropology will speak on Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> on the work of French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bordieu. She will focus on how his concept of social space can be applied to the study of emplacement among immigrants, particularly those of the Vietnamese Diaspora. This perspective goes beyond a transnational lens to explore ideas of visibility or invisibility in social space, social distance or nearness, and the relationship between physical/geographical space and social space.

On April 11<sup>th</sup>, artist **Joan Linder** will discuss drawings from her new series, *Love Canal: A Drawing Project*. These large-scale works on paper incorporate marker, ink, watercolor and pen, and are created on-site in the *plein air* tradition. Linder’s work thus records visual observations of present day Superfund and Brownfield sites throughout the Buffalo Niagara Region.

Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, from **6-8 p.m.**, our only evening presentation, will feature the World Premiere of **Jonathan Golove**’s “*Mental Radio* for Theremin Cello, Voices, and Ensemble,” a musical-dramatic realization of Upton Sinclair’s 1930 *Mental Radio: Does it work, and how?* in which Sinclair recounted his attempts to verify his wife’s psychic abilities. The theremin cello, like Leon Theremin’s other electronic instruments of the 1920s and ‘30s, is difficult to master but simple to play; it thus represent a democratization of musical means of production. A discussion of the instrument and composition will follow the performance.



# Humanities on Main Street: UB in the 1970s



Featured Speakers: Renee Levine-Packer, Mark Shechner, and Michael Frisch (from left)



Listening to the panel presentations

The 2012-2013 academic year ended with a bang with the Humanities Institute's third annual Gray Matter event, "Humanities on Main Street: UB in the 1970s." The evening event—which was held at the Anderson Gallery on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with well over one hundred people in attendance—honored the intellectual and artistic innovations occurring on South Campus in the 1970s with a special focus on musical collaborations between the university and the city, poetry readings at Main Street bars, and the emergence of a distinctive campus culture.

The event featured a distinguished panel of speakers, beginning with Renee Levine-Packer, who co-directed UB's Center of the Creative and Performing Arts from 1965 to 1978. She is also the author of *This Life of Sounds: Evenings for New Music in Buffalo* (Oxford UP, 2010), which documents the role UB played in the making of

avant-garde music through the work of such seminal figures as Lukas Foss, Morton Feldman, and Julian Eastman.

Mark Shechner, Emeritus Professor of English at UB and the author of four books, spoke on the vibrant local avant-garde poetry scene of the 1970s that fell below the national radar. He focused his remarks on the Outriders Poetry Project that convened in local bars in Buffalo such as the One Eyed Cat and the Tralf. In a nice moment of synchronicity, Max Wickert, Emeritus Professor of English at UB, was on hand to sell his recently published anthology of *Outriders Poetry*.

Finally, Michael Frisch, professor and senior research scholar in American Studies, synthesized developments in music and poetry in terms of the three C's: citizenship, community, and culture. He distributed copies of a program for a community fundraiser to pay the legal fees for the Hayes Hall 45,

a group of faculty members who were arrested in the spring of 1970 for their on-campus activism in response to the police presence on campus and as part of a local and national wave of student protests.

After an intermission, the event continued with break-out sessions that included a presentation of the poetry archive by Michael Basinski, as well as more discussion-based groups with Renee Levine-Packer and Mike Frisch.

HI is grateful to the CAS Development Team, headed by Elizabeth Siderakis, for their assistance in advertising this well-attended event and for providing refreshments, as well as to the staff of the Anderson Gallery for their help in making this such a memorable evening.

We are all looking forward to the next UB in the 1970s event in May 2014.



Michael Basinski giving a presentation of the poetry archive during breakout session



Michael Frisch and participants during breakout session

# Civil Wars: Narrating Horror & Hope

## March 28-29, 2014



2011-2015 marks the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, a defining event for U.S. history that is being marked in numerous ways throughout the country. Yet often lost in discussions about this conflict is the opportunity for an interdisciplinary examination of civil wars in many societies across the centuries. On March 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Humanities Institute is sponsoring *Civil Wars: Narrating Horror & Hope*, a conference that will place the American Civil War in a broader context and provide a range of perspectives for examining the phenomenon of civil conflict. The goal of the conference is to yield a better understanding of how human beings cope with the violence and dislocations such conflicts precipitate.

*Civil Wars: Narrating Horror & Hope* will be an international gathering of scholars, writers, and artists—listed at right—whose work on these issues represents some of the most provocative and imaginative explorations on the relationship between war and society. For up-to-date information on the conference, please see the Humanities Institute website.



### Chris Abani

A self-described “zealot of optimism,” poet and novelist Abani was born in Nigeria. His experiences of civil conflict there as a child inform much

of his work, including the acclaimed novella *Song for Night*, from which he will give a reading at the conference. Abani is also a member of the Department of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside.

### Lisa Brady

Brady's first book *War Upon the Land* traced the transformation of the southern landscape during the American Civil War and pioneered a new field of environmental studies of that conflict. She is currently writing a comparative ecological study of the American Civil War and the Korean War. Brady teaches at Boise State University.

### Veena Das

Professor of Anthropology at Johns Hopkins University, Das uses an ethnographic approach to examine questions of violence, social suffering, and subjectivity. Her major works include *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* and *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*.

### Thavolia Glymph

A historian of U.S. emancipation, Glymph is currently a faculty member at Duke University. Her first book, *Out of the House of Bondage*, explored the everyday violence between enslaved women and their female owners during and after the American Civil War. Currently, Glymph is researching the experience of “contraband” slaves—those who had escaped their enslavement but who remained without clear legal status—and the perils they faced during the war.

### Stathis Kalyvas

Professor of Political Science and Director of the Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence at Yale, Kalyvas is the author of *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, a winner of numerous awards including the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award for the best book

on government, politics, or international affairs. A comparative look at the causes and dynamics of civil war, the book argues against the prevailing view that such violence is an instance of impenetrable madness.

### Stephen Platt

Platt's acclaimed history of the Taiping Civil War, *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom*, reveals the international scope and devastation of what might be the bloodiest civil war of all time. A historian of late-imperial China at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Platt also was a 2008-2010 fellow of the Public Intellectuals Program of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations.

### Rebecca Schneider

Schneider, a professor of Theater Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University, has written extensively on theatre and performance practices that stretch accepted borders around media, writing on performance art, photography, architecture, and “performative” everyday life. Her most recent book, *Performing Remains*, engages historical reenactment in popular culture, theatre, and visual art.



Tamara Thornton (History) giving a talk for the Scholars@Hallwalls Series

# NEW FACULTY SEMINAR SERIES

(Papers will be pre-circulated and available through online reserve under HIS-000)



**Lewis Powell**  
**Philosophy**

**September 18, 3:30PM**  
**830 Clemens Hall**

## **“Malebranche vs. Hume on Whether Belief is Voluntary”**

Many early modern philosophers were concerned with the question of whether we have voluntary control over our beliefs. Rene Descartes maintained that belief was voluntary, and appealed to this feature of belief to ensure that mistaken beliefs were attributable to errors on our part, rather than on the part of God. David Hume denies that we have voluntary control over our beliefs, because we cannot form beliefs at will, and because introspection does not reveal to us a unique decision preceding each and every judgment we form. This paper examines the relationship between Hume's challenges to voluntarist accounts of belief, and the innovative version of voluntarism put forward by Nicholas Malebranche, arguing that Malebranche's approach can sidestep the challenges raised by Hume.



**Katja Praznik**  
**Arts Management**

**October 9, 3:30PM**  
**830 Clemens Hall**

## **“Autonomy or Disavowal of Socioeconomic Context? The Precarity of Cultural Workers in Slovenia Since the 1980s”**

Cultural workers often criticize capitalist modes of production, but they often don't apply that criticism to their own working conditions. They tend not to see their production process as part of the capitalist system because they understand themselves as situated in an autonomous social sphere. This paper scrutinizes this claim for the autonomy of arts and cultural production in Europe by focusing on the position of freelance cultural workers and artists during the period of transition from self-managed socialist Yugoslavia to the independent nation state of Slovenia. Drawing upon policy analysis and fieldwork, this paper argues that the claim for the autonomy of art is in fact a structural disavowal of the socioeconomic context and therefore a reaction against rather than a progressive response to the destruction of the welfare state during past three decades.

**December 3, 3:30PM**  
**830 Clemens Hall**

## **“Paper Projections: Aaron Hill's Beech Oil Bust (1714-1716)”**



**David Alff**  
**English**

This essay examines the role of print in the attempted invention of a new eighteenth-century commodity: beech seed oil. It shows how the inventor, Aaron Hill, exploited the material conventions of patents, pamphlets, newspapers, and panegyric poetry to promote beech forests as a cheap source of lubricants for use in Britain's woolens and soap-making industries. Although this enterprise failed (and disastrously so), its archival remains shed incredible light upon the rhetorical life of an eighteenth-century corporation. Analyzing the folds, fonts, binding, images, and sales venues of beech oil proposal literature, this essay argues that print was an enabling force of entrepreneurship in eighteenth-century Britain, and that publishers, printers, and printed objects themselves were active agents in shaping the composition and reception of projects to improve the nation.

**UB Humanities Institute Staff**

Director: **Erik R. Seeman**  
Executive Director: **Elizabeth Otto**  
Program Administrator: **Jinhee Song**



## Humanities Institute

University at Buffalo The State University of New York

712 Clemens Hall  
University at Buffalo  
Buffalo, NY 14260

### English Literature Scholar Receives Multiple Awards

Associate Professor of English and Spring 2010 HI Faculty Fellow Rachael Ablow has garnered three additional prestigious grants. Ablow received an American Council of Learned Societies Research Fellowship for 2012-13, a competition which awards fellowships to less than 6% of its applicants. In addition, a fellowship from UB's Gender Institute allowed her to travel to London's Wellcome Library, one of the best for the history of medicine. Lastly, Ablow received a three-month fellowship from the Pain Project at the University of London, Birkbeck, which she declined for logistical reasons.



Ablow, a specialist in Victorian literature, is the author of *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot*. (Stanford 2007). She is currently at work on a book titled *Speaking Pain in Victorian Literature and Culture*, in which she explores the nineteenth century's particularly close relationship to historical discussions of pain. It was during this time that, with the introduction of anesthetics and other medical discoveries, pain came to be seen as eradicable. This new understanding also made pain the subject of much scrutiny; Ablow uncovers discussions of it in literature, medical and philosophical treatises, and even political tracts. Ablow credits the HI Fellowship for enabling her to do the preliminary research necessary to write persuasive fellowship applications, since this broad-ranging project required her to become acquainted with new scholarly fields such as the history of medicine. "Without the HI fellowship semester," states Ablow, "I'm not sure I would have tackled the project in the first place."