
Guest: James Leach, UI Chair in Public Affairs and Visiting Professor, College of Law; former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities; and former member of the U.S. House of Representatives

Approval of 9/5/13 Minutes: Amended and approved.

Announcements:

- Health Humanities Constellation Course—welcomes participants.
- Humanities Summit in Chicago—is open for registration. Thursday, January 9, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at the Gratz Center at Fourth Presbyterian Church in downtown Chicago. Convened by the Modern Language Association, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Chicago Humanities Festival. (The UI Obermann Center is a co-sponsor.) To register: https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07e860snat7a0a0a7100&oseq=&c=&ch
- Helen Small’s book The Value of the Humanities, Oxford UP, 2013. Would the committee like to host a discussion of this book to engage humanities colleagues in our project of making the humanities more visible and cross-disciplinary on campus?

Guest speaker: Professor Leach surveyed the challenges facing funding proposals and the National Endowment for the Humanities in particular. As the recent letter of Alabama Senator Sessions to the NEH suggests, some legislators perceive the humanities as problematic due to a scholarly commitment to reflect diverse perspectives and to address cultural conflict through education and critical questioning of mainstream beliefs and practices. “Secular humanism” is often conflated with “the humanities,” and both are perceived as a threat to those committed to shaping a government and social practices upon religious rather than secular civic values. Another challenge is that support for the NEH and other cultural programs is being pitted against funding for health care. Professor Leach offered several suggestions—

- Follow and express support for the Congressional Humanities Caucus (which includes Tom Latham and Dave Loebsack from Iowa) and the Senate Cultural Caucus http://www.nhalliance.org/advocacy/caucus/.
- Develop courses, curricula, and majors that actively encourage interdisciplinary approaches, for example combining politics/philosophy/economics (such programs succeeding at other universities).
- Design first-year courses in which students encounter faculty members from a range of disciplines so they better understand the different perspectives disciplines bring to a shared topic—as a way of introducing students early on to possible majors and careers.
- Consider a “world cultures” course that incorporates geography and global cultures.
• Review the courses required for any undergraduate degree to ensure that students are introduced to diverse disciplines, including the humanities, early.
• Consider creating a School for Public Affairs with a strong humanities emphasis.
• Contact Professor Leach for a copy of a recent talk on the role of the humanities.

The committee warmly thanked our guest for his insights.

Discussion of Areas of Focus for the Committee

After some discussion, committee members chose several topics to focus on this year, and volunteers kindly stepped up. We will consult with Chris Merrill, Kristy Nabhan-Warren, and Jon Wilcox to see which topics might interest them most.

Common book university-wide project—Russ Ganim, Craig Gibson, and *Chris Merrill

Notes from previous minutes fyi:
• a “common book” experience for first-year students or the campus more generally. Consider teaming up with the Center for Human Rights (One Community, One Book), the shared book project of the UNESCO City of Literature, and On Iowa (the academic component of which could be strengthened). The common book could be read and discussed by faculty, staff, and students in colleges across campus.

Resources—see U of Wisconsin’s “Big Reads” program: http://www.gobigread.wisc.edu and the UW Center for the Humanities “Great World Texts” program that connects faculty members with high school teachers statewide http://humanities.wisc.edu/public-projects/gwt/about-gwt. (The director of the UW Center will be here in March 2014.)

Website development— Omar Valerio-Jiménez and Teresa Mangum

Undergraduate course possibilities—Lena Hill, Rebekah Kowal, and Glenn Penny

Notes from previous minutes fyi:
• a “why do you go to college?” course for all CLAS students, team-taught by a wide range of faculty
• team-taught, cross-departmental core courses on “big questions,” emphasizing communication and collaboration among faculty, students, and disciplines. See BYU’s Humanities College and UI team-taught course on the origins of life for possible models.

Resources—The Provost’s Office has agreed to support a Humanities Constellation Course in the humanities (Teresa is the official organizer, but very happy to work with this committee and others. Planning begins next semester). The course is modeled on Cornelia Lang’s Constellation course on “Origins.” http://astro.physics.uiowa.edu/origins/. Helpful overview in IOWA NOW. http://tile.uiowa.edu/news/origins-life-universe-big-history-done-big Cornelia/Provost’s Office/Obermann Center will be bringing a leader of the UCLA “Freshman Clusters” program that inspired the idea to UI for meetings in the spring. Collaboration would be welcomed. For more about the UCLA program, see http://www.uei.ucla.edu/clusters.htm.
Graduate studies “alt-ac” opportunities—Ali Hasan *and Kristy Naban-Warren (with assistance from Craig and Teresa)

Notes from previous minutes fyi:

- Are we producing too many PhDs in humanities?
- Are we open to having multiple tracks for grad students? Cross-disciplinary tracks? (For example, a humanities PhD who completes some sort of business certification.)

Resources—See the new Graduate College pages on ALT-AC CAREERS http://www.grad.uiowa.edu/alt-ac-careers. Also, professors who head leading national programs in the public humanities for graduate students will be on campus in March 10, 2014: http://obermann.uiowa.edu/news/designing-future.

Faculty development opportunities—*Jon Wilcox

Action Items:

- Doodle coming to help us schedule spring 2014 meetings
- Organizers for the sub-committees above will meet this semester
  - to plan the work of their committees
  - to draw up a description of their topic and general goals to share with the HAC members and with others who might serve on their committee who are not on the HAC
  - to discuss additional sub-committee members—in consultation with Craig and Teresa (so that everyone doesn’t ask the same people to serve)

Goal—to have the sub-committees selected, invited, and ready to get to work by the beginning of spring semester.

*Indicates committee members who agreed to serve on sub-committees after the meeting.