

Graduate Humanities Program

Toward an Applied and Public Humanities

– an excerpt from the 5-Year Program Review (AY 2008–2009) –

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Program Mission Statement

The Graduate Humanities Program is an interdisciplinary program that brings together faculty and students from a variety of backgrounds to collaboratively explore the intersection of the arts, culture, literature, and history within an open, exploratory, and experimental graduate-level educational environment. The Program provides students with varied undergraduate backgrounds in humanities the opportunity to continue their studies at the graduate level with an integrated and interdisciplinary perspective on human inquiry. As a Full Member of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (based at Duke University), the Program is charged with serving students at the highest level in graduate liberal studies. The program is thus charged with enhancing students' abilities to deal critically and flexibly with intellectual, social, political, historical, literary, or artistic issues through a broad humanistic perspective. In this capacity, the Program is designed to serve three groups of students: (a) students working toward an M.A. in the Humanities; (b) students seeking professional development (such as in Appalachian Studies, per the Program's certificate program), and (c) lifelong learners. Students in all three groups are to be engaged in critical thinking, directed inquiry, and independent study.

Program Vision Statement: Toward Applied and Public Humanities

The Graduate Humanities remains a strong and viable Marshall University Program. But like many U.S. graduate humanities programs, ours faces a changing set of challenges in the 21st Century Academy (see Kellogg Commission 2001, but esp. 1999 and 2000): in addition to the obvious economic challenges, graduate programs like ours are now challenged with defining ourselves anew to shifting constituencies, casting our curriculum within an ever-changing academic environments, extending our training beyond the classroom, and—perhaps most importantly—more effectively incorporating our students into local and regional community engagements and initiatives (see, e.g., Ehrlich 2000; Stanton and Wagner 2006; Veninga and McAfee 1997).

Several interdisciplinary humanities programs across the country have navigated these changes by emphasizing applied and public humanities curriculum, collaboratively engaging local communities and organizations in humanities-based initiatives and programs (for a comparative sample, see Ohio State University's Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities [<http://icrph.osu.edu/>], Brown University's John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage [<http://www.brown.edu/Research/JNBC/>], and UC-Santa Barbara's Public Humanities Initiative [<http://www.english.ucsb.edu/initiatives/public-humanities>]). In the main, applied and public humanities emphasize how the humanities can facilitate a larger project of public scholarship, teaching, and learning--a project built on collaboration, community involvement, and public interest. This developing trajectory calls for a reorientation of both student training and community engagement—a program of inquiry and action that is squarely situated within larger streams of collaborative and community-engaged initiatives across the sciences and humanities (see, e.g., Barker 2006; Benson et al. 2005; Bloomfield 2005; Kezar et al. 2005; Lassiter 2005a, 2005b). Importantly, multi-disciplinary research on these collaborative, publicly-based partnerships and projects suggests that students develop a deeper sense of responsibility to local communities in particular and to their larger roles as American citizens in general (see, e.g., Boyte 2008; Campus Compact 2007; Gelmon et al. 2001; Lassiter et al. 2004; Moses 2004; Zlotkowski et al. 2006). Local communities, in turn, directly benefit from the resources provided by the universities and colleges based in their communities (see, e.g., Adler-Kassner et al. 1997; Sullivan and Kelley 2001; Wali 2006). Indeed, local communities become much more invested in academic programs that foster more immediately relevant programs, initiatives, and projects (see, e.g., Anyon and Fernandez 2007; Champagne 2002; Flower and Heath 2004). This research also suggests that these partnerships strengthen markedly the relevance of individual units to the larger academic institution: academic programs that include an aggressive, publicly-focused outreach curriculum are more likely to grow and prosper in today's challenging academic environment (see, e.g., American Council of Learned Societies 1990; Battistoni et al. 2003; LaLone 2005).

In sum, the evidence clearly suggests that among the most viable areas of expansion for interdisciplinary graduate humanities programs is the development of applied and public humanities (cf. the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs 2005), a still-emergent development that was anticipated by the American Council of Learned Societies (1990) over a decade and a half ago. While previous and current leadership of the Graduate Humanities Program have taken note of these developments--indeed, the Graduate Humanities Program has a long history of engaging in local and regional outreach initiatives, community-university partnerships and projects--lack of significant resources have inhibited the Graduate Humanities from expanding more aggressively into the realms of applied and public humanities.

Given these challenges, however, in January 2006 the Advisory Board of the Graduate Humanities Program approved the development of a modest, long-term strategic plan for expanding our vision for applied and public humanities along the lines stated above, a strategic plan titled the "Public Humanities Project."

Program Strategic Plan: The Public Humanities Project

The Public Humanities Project is a long-term plan to augment, strengthen, and grow a curriculum in public humanities, one that will directly benefit both our students and the communities and organizations surrounding the Marshall University Graduate College. Our Public Humanities Project will complement our already solid and rigorous graduate level humanities training in the interdisciplinary study of the arts, cultural, historical, literary studies. Specifically, it will emphasize and organize projects and initiatives of our diverse, interdisciplinary faculty and students along public lines--the base from which we will grow new projects and initiatives meant to augment our mission and strengthen our emphasis on outreach.

Our Public Humanities Project directly builds on Marshall University's new Strategic Vision, "Our Bold Constellation for the Future," particularly that which targets the plans "Intellectual Capital," "Community and Service," and "Discovery and Innovation." In each of these areas, the Public Humanities Project seeks to: enlarge the intellectual capital of our students by designing public humanities curriculum that emphasizes work in the public sphere (see the Public Humanities Course Initiative, below); promote a public scholarship centered on community and service and built on collaboration, community involvement, and public interest (see the West Virginia Project Archeology Partnership and the GSEPD Partnership below); and amplify discovery and innovation through a humanities-based approach to integrative thinking and learning (see the Oral History Program Initiative, below).

Current Initiatives and Programs

Public Humanities Course Initiatives: A new program designed (1) to introduce the problems and issues central to a public humanities scholarship, and (2) to offer skills (for example, in organizational communication, historical preservation, development, and nonprofit public relations) for thinking and working in humanities-based public settings in and out of academia. This initiative focuses on building a successful public humanities course curriculum that can lead to new certificate programs in the public humanities.

Activity to Date: To gauge and develop student interest in applied and public humanities, faculty and students have designed several experimental seminars as Special Topics Courses, including Exhibits for/in Local Communities (Fall 2008), Seminar in Public Humanities (Summer 2008), Museum Studies and Exhibit Design (Fall 2007), Grant Writing in

the Humanities (Spring 2007), and Public Relations for Nonprofits (Fall 2006).

West Virginia Project Archaeology Partnership: The Marshall University Graduate College is a full partner of West Virginia Project Archaeology, a program of the Council for West Virginia Archaeology whose mission is "to promote cultural awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of the state's cultural heritage" and "to educate children and youth . . . so that are equipped to make wise decisions concerning the use of and protection of archaeological sites and cultural material." The Graduate Humanities Program is closely involved with this initiative through graduate course offerings, teacher training, professional development, programs and workshops.

Activity to Date: Experimental Special Topics Courses include The Glenwood Estate (Summer 2007), West Virginia Archaeology for K-12 Classroom Use (S / F 2006) (Professional Development Series), Archaeology of Appalachia (Fall 2006). Current Projects include The Glenwood Project (Phase I & II), and Project Archaeology Facilitator Training and State Handbook Project (a statewide curriculum project funded by the West Virginia Humanities Council)

GSEPD Partnership: The Marshall University Graduate School of Education and Professional Development (GSEPD) is "actively involved in addressing regional and state level educational, mental health, and social issues." As a part of the School's mission to use "innovative approaches to address educational and community needs," the Graduate Humanities Program is closely involved with several of the School's programs and initiatives, including outreach and university-community partnerships (e.g., Graduate Humanities recently partnered with the Social Studies Curriculum division of the Kanawha County Schools to facilitate teachers' training and student learning in the areas of West Virginia history and oral history methodology).

Activity to Date: Experiments in Joint Curriculum have included (Spring 2007) EDF 626: Advanced Qualitative Research in Education & CULS 600: Advanced Qualitative Research Methods; (Fall 2006) EDF 625: Qualitative Research in Education & LITS 600: Writing Culture, Writing Ethnography. Experiments in Professional Development Courses for Teachers: West Virginia Archaeology for K-12 Classroom Use (Summer & Fall 2006); and Appalachia in the Classroom (Spring & Summer 2006).

Oral History Program Initiative: The Oral History of Appalachia Program is an important part of the Graduate Humanities Program's Appalachian Studies Certificate. This collection of well over 500 interviews "documents the history of Appalachia and specifically, West Virginia, through the spoken memories of those who participated in that history." Partnering with other organizations, programs and initiatives based at Marshall University -- including the Center for

the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia, the Appalachian Studies Association, and Marshall University Libraries -- the Graduate Humanities Program is currently involved in university-wide discussions to expand this collection, boost its role in the university and community, and actualize new curriculum in graduate humanities.

Activity to Date: Faculty and students have developed experimental Special Topics courses involving oral history and ethnography, including Social Memory and Oral History (Fall 2008); Folklore (Fall 2007); Reading and Creating Appalachia (Spring 2007); Writing Culture, Writing Ethnography (Fall 2006); Appalachian Folklore (Summer 2006); Appalachian Studies: Themes and Voices (Spring 2006); Social Memory and Oral History (Spring 2006). Current Projects include: Digital Content Management Project (a university-wide digitization initiative based in MU Marshall Libraries); and the creation of the new Center for Ethnographic and Oral History Research (forthcoming in Spring 2009).

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