

Mellon Foundation

Humanities for All Times

Proposal Narrative

Project Abstract

Humanities for Our Times: From Epistemologies and Methodologies to Liberatory Creative Practices and Social Justice

Colorado College (CC) seeks funding to support professional development for humanities faculty engaged with our newly implemented General Education (GE) curriculum and ongoing work towards becoming an antiracist institution. Faculty development will focus on expanding innovative and impactful course offerings in two critical learning categories: *Equity and Power* and *Creative Processes*. Funding will provide faculty with a range of opportunities focused on course design, pedagogy, and antiracist praxis with the aim of supporting the following endeavors: two *Equity and Power* summer seminars; a year-long *Creative Processes* seminar series with speakers, workshops, and an online and open-access published component; an academic conference open to non-CC faculty; and a retreat focusing on antiracist pedagogies, social justice, and empowerment. Students who take these new courses will also be eligible to apply for grants to support social justice work based on humanities methods.

We recognize the myriad ways in which white supremacy has shaped our institution and have been taking steps to work our way out of its grip. Our GE requirements were developed after a 2015 student petition challenged the faculty to undertake thoroughgoing curricular reform focused on DEI concerns. In 2018, following an external review of racism at CC, we made the commitment to become an antiracist institution. At this pivotal historical moment, our students are demanding an education that will empower them to make social change. CC faculty recognize the central importance of the humanities to help students identify, understand, and solve the systemic problems of racism, injustice, and oppression. This work demands that each of us reflect critically not just on how and why we create knowledge, but also on how and why we teach--and on the classroom environments we create. Centering these and related questions will position the Humanities Division, History Department, and interdisciplinary program that provide our students with a significant foundation to enact social change and create a more just, equitable, and liberating society.

Rationale

The dominant claim in the mid-century American academy was that the humanities disciplines dealt with some of the most important questions of our time. In the wake of postmodernism, Critical Race Theory, postcolonialism, and intersectionality. Where does the debris of an idea of a secular universal human being (gendered cis male and raced white) that emerged during the European Enlightenment era uninflected by the particularities of history, identity, and

in the struggle for social justice and inclusion. I

students to reflect on their own creative experiences and connect them to their critical or contextual understanding of creativity; prepare students to bring knowledge and experience of the creative process to

The generation and interpretation of creative processes is at the heart of many humanities disciplines, including music, art history, art studio, literary studies, film studies, theatre, dance and aesthetic philosophy. All humanities disciplines provide students with insights into the

are seeking

Mellon funds would foreground communities of color in both the course content and associated activities. While *Equity and Power*

Seminar #1: Foundational Texts of New Humanistic Traditions and Approaches. Faculty will read, revisit, and discuss foundational texts that represent and give voice to historically marginalized and silenced perspectives. Readings will focus explicitly on anti-oppressive interrogations of humanities traditions, with an emphasis on antiracism. Discussions will focus on the past and present influence of these texts on various humanities disciplines, theories, and methods. The reading list may include works

The Souls of Black Folk *Modern Negro Art*
Orientalism *The Black Atlantic* *Awakening of Race Consciousness,*
The Grand Camouflage, and extra-institutional critical work produced by a diversity of authors and practitioners before the 21st century.

Seminar #2: Opening New Doors in the Humanities Disciplines. Faculty will read and discuss several contemporary works that have provided (or seem poised to provide) major re-sets in humanistic fields of study around race, difference, equity, and inclusion. Texts may include

Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human, James Edward
Thinking Through Crisis: Depression-Era Black Literature, Theory, and Politics, or Dorothy
The Alt-Medieval: Digital Whiteness and Medieval Studies.

Academic Years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024: Creative Processes Seminar Series

Beginning in the Fall semester of 2022, we will run two seminar series open to all humanities faculty. These series will focus on the intersections of *Equity and Power* and *Creative Processes*. Some faculty may choose to build on the discussions from the summer seminars in order to design a course that carries both the *Equity and Power* designation and the *Creative Processes* designation, while others may participate in these series in order to develop a new course that carries one designation or the other. In Fall 2022, the seminar series will be run by Assistant Professor Jameel Paulin (Art), and in Fall 2023 it will be run by Assistant Professor Natanya Pulley, who is being reviewed for tenure in AY 2021-2022 and whose rank in 2023 will likely be Associate Professor. As they are currently pre-tenure faculty, we recognize that they might need particular support in taking leadership roles in this project by offering these seminars. First, our messaging will emphasize the importance of these two seminars in the context of the larger, multifaceted project that is supported by a team and the project manager. Second, we will communicate that Drs. Pulley and Paulin are at the forefront of new ways of thinking about the humanities and its relationships to populations outside of the academy and their issues and lived realities. They are at the forefront of new ways of thinking about the humanities and its relationships to populations outside of the academy and their issues and lived realities. These seminars reflect their activities and stature in their fields. The Dean of the Faculty and the Diversity & Equity Advisory Board (DEAB) are available to address and resolve any concerns raised by Drs. Pulley and Paulin in a timely manner.

another area of contemporary life in which there are great power inequities. There are multiple layers of irony in the fact that many oppressed peoples have found digital technology a source of self-expression, community building and a tool for social change, yet many platforms and digital resources are controlled by white and capitalist powers. In support of this semi

our ACM Mellon Graduate Studies Fellowship will expire in 2022, we are committed to supporting and mentoring students who are interested in pursuing graduate degrees in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, and the arts. Thus, Dr. Pulley will invite such students to work with her on these projects, and any student compensation or support will come from already existing department budgets. We have

The *Creative Processes* Seminar Series will include a capstone event featuring a marquee keynote speaker that brings together students, faculty, activists, and social justice organizations.

Spring 2023 and Fall 2023: Solicit Student Project Proposals and Award Student Grants

All students who take one of the new *Equity and Power* and/or *Creative Processes* courses will be eligible to apply for a Student Grant of up to \$1500 to work on a social justice project in the United States. Students may apply individually or as a team, and the faculty member who taught the course that

conceptual frameworks and understand potential connections between humanistic methods and social change.

Academic year 2022-2023 and Fall 2023: Reflective Luncheons

Once per block, faculty will meet over lunch to discuss and reflect on the new courses they developed (or are developing). These will be unstructured opportunities to continue building community, and individuals can participate by sharing their experiences, asking questions, soliciting feedback, or just listening.

Communication Plan

We will employ social media and a dedicated webpage on the CC website to promote events associated with the grant, some of which will be open to the community. Dr. Pulley and a team of students and

Explicit and Precise Account