

## FALL 2021

- Margaret Beck, Anthropology  
Making Sacred Things: Red Pigment in the Eastern Great Plains
- Asha Bhandary, Philosophy  
Being at Home: Liberal Autonomy for an Unjust World
- Daria Fisher Page, College of Law  
An Exploration of Visual Advocacy: The History of Images and Design in U.S. Movement Lawyering and a Pedagogy of Visual Rhetoric for Systemic Change
- Megan Gilster, School of Social Work  
Social Benefits of Permanent Supportive Housing Policy
- Alfred Martin, Jr., Communication Studies and African American Studies  
On the Black Hand Side: Black Fandoms and Cultural Politics
- Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez, Spanish & Portuguese  
Muslim-Christian Encounters on the Edges of the Spanish Empire (1565–1898)

## SPRING 2022

- David Cassels Johnson, Teaching & Learning  
Multimodal Language Policy Analysis
- Corey Creekmur, Cinematic Arts; English; Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies  
The Comic Book: An American Artifact / Racial Reckoning through Comics
- Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz, Communication Studies and Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies  
New Grammars for Reproductive Justice
- Rebekah Kowal, Dance  
War Theatre: Dances of American Empire and Citizenship during World War II

**HUMANITIES FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD: AN INTEGRATIVE, COLLABORATIVE, PRACTICE-BASED GRADUATE CERTIFICATE AND MASTER'S DEGREE**

- Teresa Mangum, Ph.D., Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies and English
- Laura Perry, Postdoctoral Fellow
- Luke Borland, History, Graduate Research Assistant

## SPECIAL COLLABORATIONS

**INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE EDUCATION – A P3-FUNDED COLLABORATION**

- David Cwiertny, Civil & Environmental Engineering
- Teresa Mangum, Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies and English

## OPERA STUDIES

- Robert Ketterer, Classics

## PROJECT ON RHETORIC OF INQUIRY (POROI)

- Naomi Greyser, English; American Studies; and Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies

## WORKING GROUPS

- Addressing the Crisis: The Stuart Hall Project
- Algorithms and Social Media
- The Cassandra Project: Critical Approaches to the Study of Scripting and Reading Apparatuses
- Chinese Humanities and Arts
- Circulating Cultures
- Contemporary Literary and Film Theory
- Decolonizing Acting in the Classroom
- Facilitating Transformation
- Global Media Studies
- Jewish Studies
- Legal Theory Reading Group
- Museum Futures
- Performance Studies
- The Practice and Ethics of Digital Storytelling
- Redesigning Graduate Student Support
- Scholarship of Public Engagement
- Social Intervention and Photography
- Spanish Heritage Speakers in the Classroom
- Teaching with Writing
- Transform(ED) Justice Collaboratory
- Translation in the Humanities
- Undergraduate Pedagogy

# Shining Light on Difficult Questions

## Obermann Scholars in Action



The Obermann Center took 2021–22 as an invitation to pause and reflect on the mission of our work. After returning to campus—yet not back to “normal”—it made sense to reexamine how we serve the research mission of the University of Iowa.

Through focus groups and a survey, we received two strong messages: first, that the Obermann Center's support for marginalized scholars in the form of funding and safe space is critically needed; and second, that when we consider which programs to fund, we should give special consideration to work that addresses “wicked problems,” those seemingly intractable issues that cross disciplines, geographic lines, and other strata.

We are excited, impressed, and humbled by some of the big questions that our scholars are asking. They are shining light on issues that defy easy answers and invite cross-disciplinary attention. Many of these scholars are working beyond the walls of campus, partnering with local, state, national, and global organizations, governmental agencies, and community-based artists and activists. We believe that the future of higher education lives in these kinds of risk-taking questions and the untidy answers they produce.

As our state's student population becomes more diverse, how do we recruit and retain the educators of color our children need?

We know that students of color perform better when they have a teacher who looks like them. But in an already stressful profession, teachers of color experience a much higher rate of burnout than their peers—as much as 25% more. Ain Grooms, Duhita Mahatmya, and Ebonee Johnson are combining their methodology and research knowledge from the areas of educational leadership, youth and adult development, and rehabilitation counseling to better understand the lived experiences of this educator cohort. They are developing evidence-based psychological interventions as well as school-wide professional development trainings to help curb this trend.

Ain Grooms, formerly Education Policy & Leadership, College of Public Health; Ebonee Johnson, Community & Behavioral Health, College of Public Health; Duhita Mahatmya, Grants & Research Services Center, College of Education

Award: Spelman-Rockefeller Grant



At the onset of the pandemic, Kirsten Kumpf Baele received a piece of good news: her application to the Anne Frank Center USA for a sapling propagated from the chestnut tree that once stood outside Anne Frank's Amsterdam annex had been accepted. Because of delays caused by Covid, she had two years to plan the sapling's celebratory planting, all the while watching as memorials around the country were removed or questioned. Working with a team of community and campus partners, Kumpf Baele devised programming that situated the tree as a living and inclusive memorial, and as a symbol of sustainability, free speech, social justice, and a living Judaism.

Kirsten Kumpf Baele, German, CLAS

Award: Co-sponsorship and in-kind

Can a tree related to the Holocaust serve as an inspirational and relevant contemporary memorial?

## SPELMAN ROCKEFELLER-FUNDED SCHOLARS AND PROJECTS

- Hannah Baysinger, College of Education, 2021–22 Spelman Rockefeller Community Scholar
- Working Groups
  - Antiracist Education: Changing Practices, Curriculum, and Policies
  - Reproductive Justice
  - University-Community Partnership: Leveraging Expertise & Resources to Improve Mental Health Access for the Homeless

## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GRANTS

### THE ABUNDANT ECOLOGIES COLLABORATIVE

- E Cram, Communication Studies and Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies
- Constance Gordon, Communication Studies, San Francisco State University

### INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF LINGUISTIC COMPLEXITY ON ELL'S STATE-MANDATED MATH TEST PERFORMANCE: DIF ANALYSIS

- GoMee Park, Teaching & Learning
- Catherine Welch, Quantitative & Psychological Foundations

### STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: A LIFECOURSE APPROACH

- Maithreyi Gopalan, Education & Public Policy, Pennsylvania State University
- Shannon Lea Watkins, Community & Behavioral Health

### THE EFFECT OF THIRD-PARTY PRESENCE IN CONFLICT PERCEPTIONS

- Semin Park, Management & Entrepreneurship
- Si On Yoon, Communication Sciences & Disorders

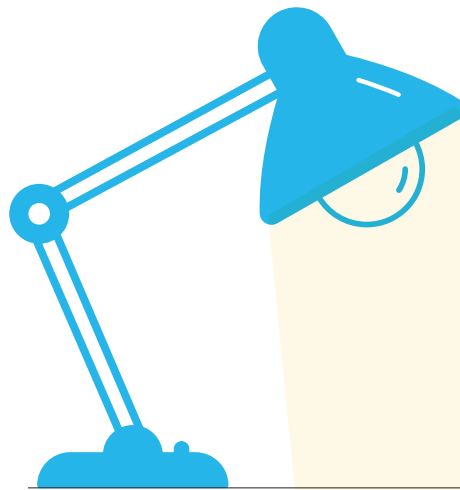
## BOOK ENDS: OBERMANN/OVPR BOOK COMPLETION WORKSHOP

- Thalassa Raasch, Art & Art History  
Project: *In Over My Head*
- William Rhodes, English  
Project: *Work, Waste, and Reform: The Political Ecology of the Piers Plowman Tradition, 1350–1600*
- Louise Seamster, Sociology & Criminology and African American Studies  
Project: *Heads I Win, Tails You Lose: Flint, Black Debt, and the Right to Infrastructure*

## OBERMANN ADVISORY BOARD

- Jennifer Buckley, English, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Hyaewol Choi, Religious Studies, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Claire Fox, English and Spanish & Portuguese, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Paul Gilbert, College of Public Health
- Christopher Harris, Cinematic Arts, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Lauren Lessing, UI Stanley Museum of Art
- Maurine Neiman, Biology, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Roland Racevskis, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences (ex-officio)
- Ann Ricketts, Office of the Vice President for Research (ex-officio)
- Amanda Thein, Graduate College and College of Education
- Stephen Warren, History and American Studies, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

## In a moment when reproductive freedom is diminishing, how can those seeking to safeguard reproductive care use language that represents the rich diversity of gender in the context of conception, pregnancy, birth, and parenting?



Language lies at the intersection of reproductive justice and the rights of trans people. And that language often complicates and even polarizes groups that should be allies. Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz and Sharon Yam are co-authoring a book, *New Grammars for Reproductive Justice*, to demonstrate how anti-trans discourse that polices the boundaries of gender, reproduction, and family formation is a kind of reproductive injustice that has grave impacts not only on trans and gender non-conforming people, but also on people of color and cis-gender women.

Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz, Communication Studies and Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies; Sharon Yam, University of Kentucky

Award: Interdisciplinary Research Grant

## What is the role of language in creating equitable opportunities for all learners?



Driven, in part, by the fact that Iowa's English Language Learner population has grown by 250% in the last two decades with numbers still on the rise, educational linguist David Cassels Johnson wants to leverage language policy to promote social justice for students who speak minoritized languages. Raising awareness about language in educational spaces, Johnson seeks to help create policies that are transformative and will produce resources and opportunities for learners.

David Cassels Johnson, Multilingual Education, College of Education

Award: Obermann Fellow-in-Residence, Spring 2022

## How is our community preparing for climate change, and what role can the humanities play?

A group of graduate students from multiple departments visited the offices of university and community partners working broadly in the areas of environmental activism and community organizing. Their visits were the central "text" for Eric Gidal's environmental humanities course that pushed the boundaries of graduate education toward more local sources, including farms and watersheds. "These experiences were illuminating and exciting in comparison to the theory-based learning that is inherent to graduate school. I feel that I have been waiting for this practical and action-based component for several years, so it was exciting to finally pair ideas with experiences, values with actions," wrote one student.

Eric Gidal, English

Award: Humanities for the Public Good: Graduate Humanities Lab Course Grant, supported by the Mellon Foundation



## How does the contemporary university define and reward "research"? What is the role of the research university in responding to intractable societal issues?

The mission of the Obermann Center is to support the research mission of the University of Iowa. When this mission was established, academic disciplines had clear expectations of what counted as research in their areas. Today, the questions scholars are responding to necessitate cross-disciplinary thinking that moves beyond the one-author monograph, that has more urgency in the need to share outcomes, and that invites creative frameworks and accessible language. Through a series of online "What Do We Mean by Research Now?" panel discussions with a diverse array of guest speakers, Obermann Center Director Teresa Mangum questioned the nature of current university research and provided hopeful examples of its application to issues (seemingly) far outside the academy.

Teresa Mangum, Gender, Women's, & Sexuality Studies; English; and Obermann Center

Award: This program was free and open to all; participating scholars freely gave their time.

